

CONSTRAINED POPULISM IN INDONESIA: JOKO WIDODO, ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS AND PARTY POWER

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University.

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Candidate Statement

I declare that all work contained in this thesis is my own original work prepared and submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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4 OCTOBER 2022

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Abstract

Populism—a political strategy in which a personalist leader aims to mobilise voters through charismatic appeals, with a minimum of institutional intermediation—is squarely implicated in the global crisis of liberal democracy. The populist threat to democracy has tended to be most acute in cases where executive power has been captured by a populist *outsider*—that is, a figure whose political origins and power base lie outside mainstream party organisations. An urgent question for scholars of democracy has therefore been to identify the conditions that allow populists to rise to power from outside party-based political establishments and to govern in opposition to them.

The literature has settled upon two broad areas of consensus. First, that populism fares better in contexts where ties between voters and traditional parties have degraded, leaving voters available for recruitment by populist candidates. By the same token, the prevalence of strong, stable patronage or identity-based linkages between parties and voters serves to limit the constituency for populism. Second, that the relationship between the structural conditions born of the decline of parties and other institutionalised representative vehicles on the one hand, and the actual viability of populist politics on the other, is intermediated by several key institutional variables. These start with the overall form of government, with presidential democracies offering an easier path to executive power for populists than parliamentary systems. Within presidential systems, more specific electoral system features such as runoff provisions and concurrent legislative–presidential elections have also been proven to facilitate the success of outsider presidential candidacies.

One feature of existing institutionalist accounts of populism, however, is that they have drawn almost entirely on cases in Latin America. Because of this, they have implicitly assumed that electoral systems pose low formal barriers to entry to individuals' ability to contest presidential elections. In Latin America, populist outsiders have serially won office after being unilaterally nominated by small or newly founded parties, freeing them to campaign as 'anti-party' candidates and subsequently govern free from the constraints of pre-election power sharing deals with incumbent parties. In short, in the presidential democracies of Latin America the structural correlates of populism have coincided with electoral rules that make it relatively straightforward for those with the greatest incentive and opportunity to exploit populist strategies to gain access to the presidential ballot.

By contrast, in Indonesia key structural and institutional correlates of populism exist in tension with distinctive features of the country's electoral system. Hollowed-out parties, fragmented patronage systems, and direct presidential elections combine to create strategic opportunity for political entrepreneurs to 'reach past' sclerotic party and patronage machines to amass national popularity through populist tactics. Yet as this thesis demonstrates via a study of the career of President Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo, Indonesia's electoral rules force outsider candidates to channel their political ambitions through alliances with established elites, because of onerous party registration rules and the requirement for presidential candidates to gain the nomination of incumbent parties. The result, as Widodo's presidency has illustrated vividly, is a populism shorn of the anti-establishment, anti-party elements that have seen populist presidents spark destabilising conflicts with incumbent elites elsewhere, and the domestication of outsider challenges to the norms of coalitional presidentialism that have dictated Indonesia's elite politics since the transition to democracy.

This thesis uses the case of Indonesia, the world's second-largest presidential democracy, to highlight the critical role those electoral barriers to entry play in shaping the form populism takes. I examine Widodo's use of populist political strategies to gain national political prominence during his time in local elected office, and how he used his overwhelming popularity as a bargaining chip to secure a presidential nomination in 2014. As president, some elements of the outsider populism that marked his rise to power have survived. Widodo has put down very shallow roots in the political system, remaining content not to control a party of his own and dispensing with an organised supporter base—in short, he remains something of an outsider. As such, much of his governing strategy has followed a populist logic. He has remained obsessively focused on maintaining popular approval, and has used repressive tactics to demobilise potential sources of opposition to his government within civil society. At the same time, he has been consistently friendly to the interests of party leaders and respectful of the prerogatives Indonesia's traditions of coalitional presidentialism afford parties. I argue that Widodo's accommodation of oligarchic interests, in spite of his initial desire to assert his autonomy from them, was conditioned by the alliances he was forced to form with party leaders as part of gaining a presidential nomination in 2014. Indonesia's electoral institutions did not prevent the rise of a populist outsider to the presidency, but they have been instrumental in attenuating the effects of his populism has on the systemic role parties play in upholding Indonesia's oligarchic democracy.

The Indonesian case does not invalidate the core assumptions about the relationship between populism and party strength. Rather, it invites scholars to consider the issue of 'party strength' as it relates to populism with more nuance. Indonesian parties are 'weak' in the sense usually implied by the literature: organisationally hollowed-out, elitist, and growing more disembedded from society. Yet they are 'strong' where it counts: their grassroots weakness is mitigated by the electoral-system barriers to entry that force outsiders into accommodation with

incumbents. My thesis suggests that models of the relationship between party weakness and populism must take more account of the critical role that electoral rules can play in affording parties an artificial strength at the apex of the political system that mitigates against their weakness at the grassroots.

Glossary

BLT	Bantuan Langsung Tunai, an unconditional cash transfer program
BPJS Kesehatan	Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Social Kesehatan, the body that administers Indonesia's JKN national health insurance program
BPJS Ketenagakerjaan	Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Sosial Ketenagakerjaan, the body that administers Indonesia's workers' social security program
BUMD	Badan Usaha Milik Daerah, companies owned by subnational governments
BUMN	Badan Usaha Milik Negara, companies owned by the Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises
DJSN	Dewan Jaminan Sosial Negara, a board that oversees the management of Indonesia's health payments and social security systems
DKI	Daerah Khusus Ibukota, the Special Capital Region located in Jakarta
DPD	Dewan Perwakilan Daerah, a chamber of Indonesia's legislature
DPP	Dewan Pembina Pusat, the national executive board of a political party or civil society organisation
DPR	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, the main chamber of Indonesia's legislature
DPRD	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, subnational legislatures
FPI	Front Pembela Islam, a hardline Islamic group banned in 2020
HTI	Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, the local branch of the transnationalist Islamist group
JKN	Jaminan Kesehatan Nasional, Indonesia's single-payer healthcare program
JPK-GAKIN	Jaminan Pemeliharaan Kesehatan Keluarga Miskin, a national health insurance program that was superseded by JKN
KADIN	Kamar Dagang dan Industri Indonesia, the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
KIP	Kartu Indonesia Pintar, a rebranding of a cash payments program to families of school-age children
KIS	Kartu Indonesia Sehat, a rebranding of the JKN program
KJS	Kartu Jakarta Sehat, a public health insurance program initiated by Joko Widodo during his term as Governor of Jakarta (2012–2014)

KMP	Koalisi Merah Putih, a coalition of parties that supported the candidacy of
KPK	Prabowo Subianto in the 2014 presidential elections and briefly acted as the political opposition to Joko Widodo after his election
KPU	Komisi Pemilihan Umum, Indonesia's electoral commission
KSP	Kantor Staf Presiden, the Presidential Staff Office established by Joko Widodo after his election in 2014
KSPI	Konferensi Serikat Pekerja Indonesia, a major trade union confederation
KTP	Kartu Tanda Penduduk, a government-issued identification card
KUHP	Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana, Indonesia's national criminal code
MPR	Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, a joint sitting of Indonesia's two main houses of parliament that has a number of ceremonial and constitutional functions
MUI	Majelis Ulama Indonesia, a quasi-official body of Islamic clerics
NU	Nadhlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Islamic organisation
OJK	Otoritas Jasa Keuangan, Indonesia's prudential regulation body
PAN	Partai Amanat Nasional, a moderate Islamic party
PBB	Partai Bulan Bintang, a minor Islamist-linked party
PBI	Penerima Bantuan Iuran, a program within the JKN national health insurance system that covers the premia of poorer participants
PBNU	Pengurus Besar Nadhlatul Ulama, the national administrative office of Nadhlatul Ulama
PD	Partai Demokrat, the party founded by former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
Perppu	Peraturan Pemerintah Pengganti Undang Undang or 'Government Regulation in Lieu of Law', a presidential decree amending legislation, subject to post-facto review by the DPR
Pilkada	Short for <i>pemilihan kepala daerah</i> , a subnational executive head election
PDI-P	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, the secular-nationalist political party headed by former president Megawati Soekarnoputri
PKB	Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, a moderate Islamic party with an electoral base in NU communities
PKH	Program Keluarga Harapan, Indonesia's major conditional cash transfer program
PKPI	Partai Kesatuan dan Pembangunan Indonesia, a minor party founded by former general and Jakarta governor Sutiyoso
PKS	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, an Islamist party

PLN	Perusahaan Listrik Negara, Indonesia's state-owned electricity company
PPATK	Pusat Pelaporan dan Analisis Transaksi Keuangan, Indonesia's financial transactions surveillance body
PPP	Partai Pembangunan Persatuan, an Islamic party with roots in the New Order
RPJB	Relawan Penggerak Jakarta Baru, a volunteer association formed to support Joko Widodo's 2012 candidacy for the governorship of Jakarta
Relawan	Literally 'volunteer', especially on a political campaign

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INTRODUCTION

For many years after Indonesia's transition to democracy in 1998–99, the prospect of a populist president was anticipated with trepidation by observers of the country's politics. Indonesia in the long aftermath of president Soeharto's New Order regime (c. 1966–1998) seemed to exhibit many of the socio-economic and socio-political correlates of populism. These included: public disenchantment with the insularity and corruption of the elite, and with political parties in particular (Johnson Tan 2012a: 169–171, 2012b); the persistence of immense socioeconomic inequality (Muhtadi and Warburton 2020, Warburton 2018); and the fragmentation and disorganisation of mass politics, marked by an absence of viable vehicles for class-based representation (Aspinall 2012, 2013a, 2013b; Hadiz and Robison 2013, Lane 2019). Indeed, so prominent were these features in the post-Soeharto democracy that 'the rise of an authoritarian populist...was almost overdetermined in contemporary Indonesia' (Aspinall 2015: 3). In speculating about the rise of populism, it was generally assumed that such a populist reaction would come attached to a neo-authoritarian nationalism, as exemplified by the former New Order general and serial presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto (Aspinall 2009, Slater 2014: 313–314).

Instead, in the presidential elections held in July 2014 it appeared that Indonesia elected a remarkably benign populist in the form of the then governor of Jakarta, Joko Widodo—who is known widely in Indonesia by his nickname 'Jokowi'. Defying the idea that a 'common denominator' of populism is a 'politics of antagonism' (Carey 2013), Widodo exemplified a distinctively 'polite' (Mietzner 2014), 'inclusive and vaguely reformist' (Gammon 2014a) populism. With his record of reducing corruption, increasing the performance of the bureaucracy, and expanding welfare programs, he represented an unprecedentedly popular example of the sort of pro-poor, anti-corruption leadership often held up as the pathway to political change in Indonesia (Bunnell & Miller 2013, von Lübke 2014). His portrayal of himself on his rise to national prominence as a 'man of the people' standing up to corrupt vested interests was conveyed not via stereotypically strident, polarising 'populist' rhetoric directed against *status quo* politics or outside enemies. Rather, he signalled his alienation and autonomy from establishment politics through subtle demonstrations of being an everyman who understood the needs of ordinary people. Widodo promised to maintain his personal autonomy from the political parties he maintained a nominal affiliation with, and scarcely involved himself in the internal affairs of PDI-P, the political party to which he maintained a nominal affiliation. Liberal civil society, foreign governments, and investors welcomed Widodo's rise to national prominence

with a cautious optimism that as president he would renew efforts at institutional reform (McRae 2013). To many Indonesians, his victory in the 2014 presidential elections signalled that established elite figures with political roots in the New Order were losing their grip on power, to be replaced by a fresh leadership at addressing the unfinished business of Indonesian democratisation from reducing corruption, reforming the bureaucracy, expanding the welfare state, and giving more weight to the input of civil society and the needs of marginalised social groups when making policy.

But as Muhtadi (2015b: 350) observed, once ‘the election ended, politics shifted from the volunteers and voting masses back to the elites’. Widodo ditched his pre-election ambitions to assert his autonomy from his oligarchic allies and instead quickly capitulated to their demands over personnel and policy. Over the course of his presidency, he would gradually achieve a more equitable working relationship with party leaders and key state officials. In this new equilibrium, he has been allowed significant leeway to craft policy to his own priorities, while leaving extensive oligarchic prerogatives undisrupted. While oligarchs have been indulged under the Widodo administration, the president has taken a markedly illiberal approach to opponents located in civil society. The use of the legal system to harass and coerce opponents, and systematically demobilise their organisations, has become commonplace. Important checks on the power of the executive have been eroded or abolished, and ideological divisions have been deliberately heightened to consolidate the government’s supporter base and delegitimise anti-government activism. There is now widespread agreement among experts that Widodo’s behaviour has been instrumental in taking what was a democracy experiencing reform stagnation and putting it on a path of democratic regression (Power & Warburton 2020, Mujani and Liddle 2021).

There is a surface-level incongruity to the fact that ‘Jokowi’—once the consummate man-of-the-people outsider—has played a central role in reinforcing oligarchic power in Indonesia, and in insulating its exercise from accountability and criticism from civil society and watchdog institutions. This is but one of numerous axes of apparent contradiction within Widodo’s presidency. He has sought to liberalise Indonesia’s labour and investment laws in a neoliberal direction (Rajah 2021, Mietzner 2021), while strengthening the dominance of state-owned enterprises in key sectors of the economy (Kim 2018, 2020). He has at turns sought to ingratiate himself with conservative Muslim voters by making appeals to Islamic identity politics (Fealy 2019), while encouraging paranoia about the threat of Islamism (Nuraniyah 2021, Fealy 2020). He has at turns made unpopular decisions to appease his oligarchic allies in the face of public opposition, and sometimes resisted pressure from his party coalition in order to achieve his most important personal priorities on questions of policy and personnel appointments (Mietzner 2018b).

Amid the superficial discontinuity—between Widodo’s background as outsider to the national elite with a track record of institutional reform, and his strengthening many of the pathologies of oligarchic politics—it has been a persistent challenge to identify an overarching logic to his presidency that explains both a) how he was able to subvert the stranglehold of New Order legateses over the presidency, and b) why he has subsequently been so instrumental in reversing the reform achievements of the post-New Order democracy. Existing accounts have rightly emphasised themes of contradiction and incoherence in Widodo’s politics. Bland (2020: 125) writes that in his presidency we see ‘the contradictions of Indonesia’s post-independence history’—namely between Islamism and pluralism, statist and liberal economics, and democracy and authoritarianism. This is accurate but analytically unsatisfactory: every political leader to some extent embodies the contradictions of their own society, and the incoherence of their own behaviour or rhetoric is similarly a product of the complex and often-contradictory mix of incentives arising from institutional frameworks, political economies, and ideologies. To say that Widodo reflects these factors as they exist in Indonesia, even though it may be true, does not help us understand what makes him distinctive within a global context. It also fails to get at what makes him distinctive among other Indonesian politicians, literally all of whom have to bridge the country’s ideological, cultural and socioeconomic divides if they are to build the electoral and elite coalitions needed to gain power at the national level. Widodo is perhaps only unusual in the *extent* to which he has been a cipher for the agendas of the diverse ideological and economic interests that have played a part in propping up his presidency.

A more compelling framing of Widodo’s politics has come in the form of Warburton’s (2016, 2018b) argument that he has pioneered a ‘new developmentalis[t]’ approach to governing—it would perhaps be too much to call it an ideology—that sees economic modernisation and socio-political stability as mutually intertwined goals of state action, overriding the importance of good governance and human rights and other quality-of-democracy concerns. In Warburton’s analysis these policies and the developmentalist ideas that accompany them conveniently dovetail with the economic interests of Indonesia’s oligarchy; the roots of this ‘new developmentalism’ that arose in lieu of liberal reform therefore lie as much in the structure of the post-Soeharto political economy as they do in the ideological legacies of the Soeharto dictatorship. In a similar vein, Mujani and Liddle (2021: 72) have suggested that the illiberal characteristics of Widodo’s presidency stem from his resurrection of a political bargain that marked Cold War-era developmentalism. Widodo, they say, presents Indonesians with the promise that he is ‘curbing democracy now in order to secure it later...forcing democracy to wait in order to build a modern economy quickly despite rising religious polarization and the threat, since early 2020, of covid-19.’

Without contradicting these analyses, I provide an alternative explanation of the relationship between the economic developmentalism and the political illiberalism of Joko Widodo’s

presidency: namely, that they are both outgrowths of the *populist* structures of his relationships with the Indonesian electorate and his oligarchic peers. From this starting point my thesis takes on the challenge of interpreting the overall political character of his presidency using the conceptual tools of populism studies. I use a material, rather than ideational, understanding of populism that defines it, per Weyland (2001: 14), as ‘a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers.’ Such a strategy implies a focus on disintermediating and personalising the linkage between the leader and their electoral base. The requirements of creating and reinforcing this populist linkage have myriad implications for the design of policy, the distribution of patronage, intra-elite politics, and patterns of repression. I put the design of Indonesia’s political institutions and the incentives they create at the centre of my account of Widodo’s populism, exploring the institutional drivers of how he used populist political strategies to become the first president from outside the national oligarchy, but also why he failed to achieve the autonomy from oligarchs that he wanted.

Seeing Widodo first and foremost as a populist helps us understand the common roots of the economic, political, and ideological elements of his presidency which scholars have so far tended to analyse separately. Analysing him as one part of a global phenomenon of populism helps us both understand which set of institutions have encouraged his rise, but also allow us to understand his politics within their international context more readily than if we were to analyse discrete elements of his approaches to politics and policy. Scholars have documented extensively the different political and policy trends that have been driven by Widodo’s agency as president—the meticulous management and balancing of a broad presidential elite coalition (Mietzner forthcoming, 2018b), the assertion of executive prerogatives over political and policy processes (Liddle and Mujani 2021, Power 2020), the growth of the state’s role in key areas of the economy (Warburton 2017, Kim 2018, Kim 2020) and the attempts to demobilise oppositional movements with the power to influence the president’s public standing (Nuraniyah 2020, Setiawan 2020, Power 2020). I argue that these trends flow from the logic of populism: Widodo’s policy decisions, his relationship with the key players in the oligarchy, and his treatment of opponents are in their overall form instrumental to his maintaining the populist linkage with an electoral base that was the primary political resource he had to work with in his dealings with other elites.

But despite the many ways that Widodo’s populism has shifted political norms and approaches to policy, the systemic role of political parties has remained basically undisturbed by the capture of the presidency by a populist outsider to the national party elite. Widodo’s acquiescence to Indonesia’s norms coalitional presidentialism, and especially the prerogatives of party leaders in influencing policy and personnel decisions that are a major part of it, that make him a distinctive populist president in an international context. Indeed, Kenny (2018: 8)

argues that the degree to which Widodo has been ‘constrained by [his] legislative coalition partners’ as president marks him as a ‘*partial* populist’ (emphasis in original). Explaining why Widodo’s presidency has been ‘partial’, at least in terms of fulfilling the standard template for populist president–party relations, is ultimately the central question I address in this thesis, and it is in answering it that my study gains its comparative relevance. I offer an explicitly institutionalist account both of why Widodo’s populism was so successful in making him president, but also why it has in some areas been constrained by party power while he has been in office. My analysis highlights what I see as some unaddressed issues within the existing institutionalist models of why populism emerges, and how the form it takes is conditioned by institutional frameworks—in particular, how the strength of political parties acts as a ‘buffer’ to populist challenges from outside the political mainstream.

There is a well-attested association between the decline of parties’ ability to influence and mobilise voters through programmatic, identity or patronage appeals on the one hand, and the opening up of strategic space to mobilise voters through charismatic populist appeals on the other (Kenny 2017, Levitsky & Cameron 2003). And because the directly elected presidency offers an avenue to executive power without the burden of party-building relative to parliamentary systems, the particular threat of populist *government* and its effect on democracy has in effect mostly been the study of populism in presidential systems (Kyle and Gultchin 2018: 37–41). Much of the literature on the institutional influences on the causes and consequences of populism in presidential systems has therefore emerged from investigation of Latin American cases, where presidential systems are the norm (Carreras 2014, 2015, 2017; Weyland 2001; Ruth 2018).

It is with this body of work—on the causes and effects of populism in presidential democracies—that I am interested in adding to with my analysis of the Indonesian case. One feature of this literature is that it implicitly assumes electoral systems that pose low formal barriers to entry to individuals’ ability to contest presidential elections. In the Latin American presidential democracies where populism has become all but endemic, the structural correlates of populism coincide with electoral rules that make it easy for populists to gain access to the presidential ballot by establishing or commandeering parties which they then use to unilaterally nominate themselves for the presidency. In Indonesia, by contrast, key structural and institutional correlates of populism exist in tension with key features of its electoral system. On the one hand, Indonesia is a highly decentralised multiparty presidential system in which bonds between parties and voters are weak. This creates strategic opportunity for political entrepreneurs to ‘reach past’ fragmented and sclerotic party and patronage machines to amass national popularity through populist tactics. Yet Indonesia’s electoral system puts significant barriers in the way of those outsiders’ ability to access the presidential ballot—despite the great potential populist political tactics have in allowing them to build a mass support base independent of their party affiliation. Electoral rules require presidential candidates to gain the nomination

of broad coalitions of incumbent parties, who are in turn protected from newcomer parties by onerous party registration rules. The result, as Joko Widodo's presidency has illustrated vividly, is that populist challenges to the establishment—whether mounted from inside or outside of it—necessarily have to be channelled through incumbent oligarchic parties. In Widodo's case, this has resulted in a populism that has been substantially adapted to the norms of Indonesia's oligarchic power-sharing.

That the Indonesian framework gave rise to what I shall term a 'constrained populism' in the Widodo years does not invalidate the existing literature's conclusions about the relationship between populism and party strength; indeed, it is impossible to understand Widodo's rapid rise to national power from the relative margins of the political system without reference to the weak influence of party machines in shaping voter preferences and behaviour. Rather, it invites us to embrace more nuanced understandings of the meaning of party 'strength' and 'weakness' insofar as they relate to populism. Indonesian parties are 'weak' in the sense usually implied by the literature: organisationally hollowed-out, elitist, and growing more disembedded from society. Yet they are 'strong' where it counts: their grassroots weakness is mitigated by the electoral-system barriers to entry that force outsiders into accommodation with incumbents. My thesis suggests that models of the relationship between party weakness and populism must take account of the critical role that electoral rules can play in affording parties an artificial strength at the apex of the political system that mitigates against their weakness at the grassroots, and how such institutional features can blunt the challenge that populism poses to incumbent political oligarchies.

Defining populism

It remains a frustrating reality for the study of populism—and especially for studies with comparative aims—that its foundational concept is at once vital to understanding countless contemporary political movements, yet so difficult to define and operationalise. The result is that the term 'populist' is both 'widely used and widely contested' (Gidron and Binkowski 2013: 1). The term 'populism' has been ubiquitous in academic and journalistic accounts of post-New Order Indonesia, and its use has generally reflected the imprecision with which it is applied in other contexts. In this section I review the main ways theorists have understood populism: as a particular form of cross-class alliance, as an ideology or discourse, and as a political strategy. I discuss the differences between the concepts of 'outsider' and 'populist' and the relationship between the two. I illustrate how each of the main strands of thought on what populism is have been used by scholars studying populism in contemporary Indonesia, and critique some of the theoretical and practical shortcomings of current usage.

As Kenny (2018: 1–2) reminds us, '[t]here is of course no true definition of populism any more than there is a true definition of democracy or justice. What we need therefore is a definition of populism that is useful.' With this in mind I embrace the definition by Weyland (2001: 14) that

populism is best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers. This direct, quasi-personal relationship bypasses established intermediary organizations or deinstitutionalizes and subordinates them to the leader's personal will.

In taking up this logic, as Kenny (2017: 24) explains, we are able to distinguish populists from their non-populist rivals by observing 'how they mobilize their support in seeking office.' Populist parties and candidates 'are distinguished by the way they seek to establish direct links between leader and mass constituencies of otherwise relatively unattached voters.' This material–organisational definition of populism offers an analytical framework that can 'travel' across diverse national and regional contexts and time periods for the purposes of comparative research. This definition, I argue, can be applied to the Indonesian context to a) allow scholars to accurately distinguish populist from non-populist political actors and b) understand the causal links between populist political strategies, 'populist' rhetoric, redistributive economic policies, and populists' attacks on democratic institutions.

Populism as political organisation

Thinking of populism in terms of a particular pattern of political organisation, mobilisation and patronage distribution has had appeal for scholars since the earliest efforts to theorise populism. Populism as it came about in the so-called 'Third World' was frequently seen as a political side effect of socioeconomic modernisation—a way for leaders to amass support from dislocated and atomised urban workers and rural migrants who had failed to be integrated into political life by parties, trade unions or peasant organisations. Di Tella (1965: 47) described the coalitions that underpinned populist leaders in what is now known as the 'classical populist' period in Latin America between the 1940s and 1960s:

[populism] may be defined as a political movement which enjoys the support of the mass of the urban working class and/or peasantry but which does not result from the autonomous organizational power of either of these two sectors. It is also supported by non-working-class sectors upholding an anti-status quo ideology.

Migration to urban areas caused by industrialisation created a large mass of newly enfranchised but politically unincorporated voters whose support a populist leader could draw upon. The inability 'of the urban working class to develop independent autonomous

organizations and the delayed emergence of an identifiable working-class culture' (Hennessy 1969: 30) created strategic opportunity for personalist leaders to politically incorporate mass constituencies through populist appeals and construct for them a political identity in which a charismatic bond between the leader and the led was central. The *disorganisation* of these classes undergirding the populist coalition, and the top-down nature of their mobilisation, was a key feature of populism as defined in these terms. For this reason, despite their enlistment of mass constituencies in challenging the dominance of established oligarchies, populism was regarded by scholars as distinct from the genuinely revolutionary left-wing political movements active in the region at the time (Conniff 1982: 5). Alongside this, large scale economic redistribution—largely in the form of lavish state spending, subsidies, and protectionist trade and industry policy—came to be near-synonymous with populist leadership during the classical populist era (Dornbusch & Edwards 1992).

With its emphasis on the structural changes wrought upon the character of the electorate by economic modernisation, the 'classical' approach has found favour with structuralist scholars working on Indonesia. Hadiz (2016, see also Hadiz and Robison 2017) takes up Oxhorn's (1998: 222–223) framing that 'populism represents an asymmetrical multi-class coalition...a form of interest intermediation' that 'allows relatively small, privileged groups to gain greater access to state power and resources by mobilizing mass followings among the lower classes on the basis of the latter's perceived socio-economic and /or political exclusion'. It is with this concept that Hadiz analyses the 'Islamic populism' that has gained renewed traction in Widodo-era Indonesia, defining the phenomenon as 'a variant of populist politics' where 'the concept of the *ummah* substitutes for the notion of "the people"' (2016: 28).

Defining populism in terms of the class origins of the elites and popular constituencies it brings together in political action, however, risks categorising an implausibly diverse array of Indonesian parties, organisations and campaigns as populist simply because they include disingenuous appeals to lower-class voters in their rhetoric. Almost by definition, patronage-based political machines link wealthy elites with poorer grassroots clients. As Mouzelis (1985: 332) has highlighted, clientelism and populism may similarly represent 'two fundamental modes of vertical political inclusion' linking elites and the masses—though, as he demonstrates, they are also fundamentally different. Whereas clientelist organisations' relationship with voters is intermediated by a dense network of brokers who derive legitimacy in their own right by distributing patronage in exchange for support for a party or movement, under populism 'it is plebiscitarian leadership rather than intricate patronage networks that provides the basic framework for political incorporation' (334). Clientelist organisations may incidentally use the stereotypically 'populist' rhetoric of popular sovereignty and defending the 'people' from scheming elites and foreigners. But insofar as such organisations are bureaucratised and non-personalistic, and their connection with voters sustained primarily by the exchange of particularistic patronage rather than the charismatic appeal of its leader, they are not populist.

In any case, the class-centric definitions of populism that grew mainly out of the study of mid-20th century movements in Latin America were subject to extensive critique and reformulation in response to the re-emergence of an ideologically and programmatically heterogeneous set of populist leaders in the region after the 'third wave' of democratisation, beginning in the 1980s. Scholars identified in the rise of leaders such as Fernando Collor de Mello in Brazil, Alberto Fujimori in Peru, and Carlos Menem in Argentina the re-emergence of populism in a supposedly post-populist era. As Weyland (2001: 4) observed:

Populist politics unexpectedly reappeared...in a very different socioeconomic setting from classical populism...some presidents who reached and maintained office through populist political tactics enacted neoliberal reforms that diverged radically from economic populism. Thus, the overlap among the presumed [political and economic] attributes of populism diminished drastically.

The mass media, especially television, was critical in building support amongst what Boas (2005) termed the 'atomized poor' whom these so-called 'neopopulists' targeted: Despite their reliance on the atomised masses of largely lower-class voters, they enacted often radical liberal economic reform once in office (Stokes 2001). The seemingly contradictory combination of populist mobilisation based on appeals to lower-class voters and neoclassical economics posed the analytical challenge of how to adapt theories of populism to take into account its new post-authoritarian, economically liberal variety. A parsimonious reconceptualisation of populism was proposed by Weyland (2001), who suggests understanding populism as a form of political strategy aimed at gaining 'direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers'. This material-mobilisational understanding does not consider any particular rhetoric or ideology as a definitional property of populism. In applying it to the Indonesian case, it is important to exclude from categorisation as populist those politicians who, whatever their possible enthusiasm for 'populist' ideological constructions, derive their power from their control of patronage-based political machines.

Populism as ideology?

An equally influential body of work has analysed populism as an ideology or rhetorical idiom. The 'ideational approach' to populism grew, like the 'neopopulism' literature, out of the new conceptual challenges posed by the rise of neoliberal populists after the third wave of democratisation, but also in response to the need to identify the common essence of populist movements that emerged in diverse institutional and socioeconomic contexts: western and non-western, democratic as well as non-democratic, presidential and parliamentary. A main empirical and theoretical concern has been how populist movements construct ideas of 'the people', 'elites' and 'outsiders', and how rhetoric is deployed to gain support on such a basis (e.g. Hawkins 2009); on the whole, the empirical focus has been on the development of nativist

right-wing movements in western countries (e.g. Kaltwasser and Mudde 2012, Mudde 2005, Norris 2005). More broadly, the focus on the ideological features of populist movements has led to influential ideas such as that of Mudde (2004) that populism constitutes a ‘thin ideology’ that can affix on to primary ideological agendas as diverse as socialism, libertarianism and right-wing nativism. Pappas (2019), meanwhile, has argued that populism is simply an expression of an illiberal, majoritarian conceptualisation of democracy.

The pitfalls of defining populism in discursive or ideational terms, and of using ideology or rhetoric as heuristics for determining who is and isn’t populist, become clear when we apply such a definition to the Indonesian case. If the playing up of foreign threats, stigmatising minorities, or invoking illiberal notions of political sovereignty and legitimacy make a politician populist, then an implausibly broad array of Indonesian political elites and movements could be considered populist—including highly bureaucratised patronage-based parties and organisations. Organicist ideas about the state and democracy are endemic across the political spectrum (Bouchier 2016), and Indonesian nationalist thinking has long had a xenophobic streak (Aspinall 2016). Similarly problematic is the use of rhetoric as a heuristic for distinguishing populists from non-populists. Nostalgia for Indonesia’s anticolonial revolution has meant that ‘words that in other countries connote radical or leftist agendas ...such as “struggle” (perjuangan), “the people” (rakyat) and so on’ are ‘part of everyday political discourse’ in Indonesia (Aspinall 2012), employed by progressive and conservative, populist and non-populist, and elite and grassroots-based actors alike across the secular–Islamic ideological divide that structures Indonesian politics.

For this reason, a focus on expression of ‘populist’ ideological tropes can lead scholars to unduly exclude important cases of populism from our analysis because they do not exhibit stereotypically divisive rhetoric. For example, for scholars who approach their subject from ideational understandings of populism, the lack of antagonism in Joko Widodo’s politics is reason enough to argue that he is not a populist, since his ‘political style’ involves ‘limited engagement in “othering” or discussions of threats facing the Indonesia nation’ (Hatherell & Welsh 2019: 66). Widodo was dropped from a global database of populist leaders maintained by the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change after researchers concluded that ‘[w]hile he is a charismatic leader who rose to power outside the normal political establishment by relying on mass mobilization... his explicit commitment to pluralism means that he doesn’t meet the ideological definition of populism’ upon which their coding of populists vs. non-populists was based (Kyle and Meyer 2020: 17). In the views of the authors working from an ideational–rhetorical definition of populism, it seems, the idea of ‘inclusive’ (Gammon 2014a) or ‘polite’ (Mietzner 2014) populism is oxymoronic.

Rhetoric, however, is only one means by which a populist leader can forge a direct connection with the diffuse mass constituency that fuels their political ambitions—as we will see in the

narrative I offer of Joko Widodo's rise to national prominence, a successful populist political strategy can be based on far more subtle appeals to that constituency. Indeed, amid the ubiquity of the rhetoric of popular sovereignty and unity in Indonesia, the sociocultural realities of the Indonesian nation-state limit the utility of stigmatisation of ethnic or religious minorities as a part of a strategy for attaining national office with the result, as Okamoto (2009: 147–148) has observed, being that 'politicians at the centre to choose the politics of consensus or balance.' Add to this an 'extremely sharp' socioeconomic divide between the rich and poor and the Java–Outer Islands divide, and 'i[t] is hard for a national leader to construct a populist rhetoric that can attract a majority of Indonesia's diverse population'. Certainly, in recent times there have been attempts by political entrepreneurs to gain the support of disaffected Muslim voters through appeals to a sense of shared grievance that cuts across the myriad cultural and socioeconomic divisions within the Islamic community (Hadiz 2016, Mudhoffir 2020), yet in a country where almost one in ten electors are non-Muslim, and many more are heterodox Muslims, stigmatising religious minorities and secularists can be electorally disadvantageous in a nationwide election.

Certainly, there is a strong empirical association between populist strategies and the expression of stereotypically 'populist' ideological constructions. Yet if this is the case, then it simply because 'populist ideology such as it exists, is *endogenous to populist mobilizational practices* [emphasis added]' (Kenny 2017: 28). Gaining support by playing to popular disaffection with mainstream elites or constricting a threat from a malign out-group is often an efficient way of generating support from a diffuse, heterogeneous and thinly organised electoral base. Populist leaders'

[a]ppeals to "the people" as an undifferentiated mass follow from a lack of institutionalized attachments with voters. Moreover, if a leader comes to power without a cohesive party in control of the legislature, it naturally follows that she should promote a strong executive with a direct channel of communication to the masses. The opposition to pluralist institutions, direct top–down appeals to the people, and the circumvention of the law are not just the product of an abstract ideological commitment to illiberalism or anti-elitism but a product of the political imperatives faced by political movements whose support base is flexible and contingent rather than deeply institutionalized (Kenny 2017: *ibid.*)

Finally, a bigger problem with the ideational conceptualisation of populism precedes all of the above issues: namely, that '[w]hat populists say doesn't necessarily provide a great guide to what they do' (Kenny 2017: 27–28). As I will touch upon throughout this thesis, the political imperatives created by a politician's reliance on populism entail particular approaches to many aspects of their politics: their organisational strategies, their ties to the media and political parties, and their respect for democratic checks and balances. These relationships between populism and political behaviour flow not from a *belief* in 'populist' ideology, but rather from

the practical imperatives arising from the need to sustain the populist political linkage. Populists are far from being the only politicians who shape political economies for political ends, erode democratic checks on their power, or promote social unrest—but they do so in distinctive ways that are instrumental to populist political goals. I will explore this logic in more detail in Chapter Six as part of my discussion of the role that populism is—and is not—playing in Indonesia’s present-day democratic regression.

In a similar vein, just as ‘populist’ ideology and discourse are outgrowths of the imperatives of populist mobilisational strategies, so is so-called ‘populist policy’. Economists, and some political scientists, have long used ‘populist policy’ as a shorthand for policies that violate technocratic norms of efficiency or evidential rigour in favour of keeping the voters happy. Scholars of politics have implicitly conceived of populism in *policy* or *distributional* terms. The re-election of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in 2009, for example, was attributed to his deployment of ‘populist’ cash transfer policies (Mietzner 2009). In Indonesia’s regions, ‘electoral populism’—defined as ‘contestants for political office [offering] redistributive policies and other concessions to their lower class constituents’ (Aspinall 2013a: 103) is now commonplace in local electoral contests. In journalistic and colloquial usage, ‘populist’ is a label for electorally expedient but technically imprudent policies and decisions, from protectionist regulations to fiscally unsustainable subsidies and welfare programs. As I will detail in Chapter Five, I agree that the term ‘populist policy’ is a valid one deserving of theorisation—yet I believe it is mistaken to reduce populism to a synonym for an economic agenda that ‘is the opposite of technocratic—and thus “rational”—economic policy-making’ (Hadiz and Robison 2017: 490). Instead, I suggest that populist policies are ‘populist’ insofar as they are instrumental to substantiating and reinforcing a populist political linkage that links a leader and his or her mass constituency.

To summarise, there are sound conceptual and practical reasons to define populism in terms of a political linkage and the organisational and mobilisational forms that accompany it. By focusing on the materiality of the populist linkage, and seeing ‘populist’ ideology, rhetoric, or policy programs as being merely instrumental to its construction, we are equipped to distinguish populist style from populist substance (Weyland 2021). While Joko Widodo may in some senses be lacking in populist style, in terms of the substantial forms of his political origins and the means by which he gained political power he is a textbook populist. As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, with no control over national-level elite networks, he became Indonesia’s most popular politician using a quintessentially populist political strategy. That strategy subverted the power of his elite opponents by reaching past established party and patronage machines gain political sustenance from a charismatic linkage with his electoral base. His relationships with his populist supporter base remained unorganised, and his volunteer networks dwindled after the election. His ambitions of governing as president autonomously from the oligarchy through use of populist tactics, however, were quickly abandoned when it

became clear to him just how much Indonesia's institutional framework would force him into accommodation with the oligarchs around him. From early in his presidency, Widodo's efforts at securing political dominance have seen him reach *across* to fellow elites as much as downwards to voters.

Insiders and outsiders

A major part of this thesis' analysis rests on my categorisation of Joko Widodo not only as a *populist*, but also as an *outsider*. As Hatherwell & Welsh (2020: 64) rightly identify, there is a tendency within scholarship and commentary on Widodo's political career to conflate his non-establishment origins with populism. As such, it is important to clearly explain how I define outsider status and its relationship with populism; Widodo's status as an outsider is a complicated question for reasons that are both particular to him and the Indonesian institutional context, but also for reasons generic to the scholarly discussion about what makes a political outsider. Merely categorising as 'outsiders' those politicians who describe themselves as such is unsatisfactory in a political era 'when it has become fashionable to claim outsider status' (Kenney 1998: 58). Instead, the categories of populist and outsider ought to be held as conceptually distinct. While credible claims to outsider status are often an asset in populist mobilisation strategies, they are not the same thing: while the populism/non-populist distinction is made with respect to a politician's *practices*, the insider/outsider distinction refers to their *origins* and *position* with regard to the political establishment, the party system, or oligarchy. Populism is a mode of mobilisation available to any politician, regardless of their position on the insider/outsider divide. For this reason, 'whether outsiders are populists or antiestablishment politicians is an empirical question that should not be assumed a priori by researchers. Even if all outsiders are populists, it could still be the case that some insiders are populists too' (Carreras 2015: 1455); by the same token, it is theoretically possible for an outsider to attempt to gain power through non-populist modes of mobilisation.

With that in mind, by what criteria do we distinguish an insider from an outsider? The idea of a binary insider/outsider distinction grew out of comparativists' interest in testing the claims of scholars such as O'Donnell (1994) and Mainwaring (1993) on the threats posed to the stability of presidential democracy by political neophytes' capture of the presidency (e.g. Kenney 1998, Carreras 2014, 2015, 2017). Such binary distinctions have understandable utility in multi-country studies: making the insider/outsider distinction based on a particular individual's relationship with political parties became an easy way to operationalise the concept of outsider: Kenney (1998: 62) defined an outsider as something 'who has risen to political prominence from outside of a particular party system' (ibid: 62), while Barr (2009: 32) similarly provided a relatively strict definition, writing that 'an outsider is someone who gains political prominence not through or in association with an established, competitive party, but as a

political independent or in association with new or newly competitive parties'. But the problem with a framework that proposes a simple insider/outsider binary, based on a particular politician's party membership, is that it can lead us to arbitrarily attribute insider status to politicians who gain political prominence or executive power from a position of de facto marginality to the political establishment despite maintaining a nominal affiliation with a mainstream party. As I have outlined above, a key benefit of the material–mobilisational concept of populism is that it holds that what makes a leader 'populist' is constant across different socioeconomic, cultural, and institutional contexts. By contrast, what makes a politician an *outsider* with regards to a particular political establishment, however defined, will vary across national contexts depending on different institutions and informal configurations of political power that prevail in a particular country.

Therefore, what we need in a concept is that captures the essence of outsider politics but is not so based on rigid benchmarks—in terms of party affiliation or political experience—that it cannot 'travel' to be applied to diverse institutional contexts. Samuels and Shugart (2010) offer precisely such a framework as part of their analysis of parties' practices of cultivating candidates for executive government. They proposed replacing a binary insider/outsider distinction with a 'continuum distinguishing insiders from outsiders' based on '*the nature and extent of a prospective [party] agent's links to a central party organization [emphasis in original]*' (67). Rather than arbitrary benchmarks of party affiliation or time in office, they argue for discerning, on a case-by-case basis, '[party] agents' true preferences, [and] the strength of their ties to their principals...through analysis of their career paths.' The 'ideal-type insider', they propose, 'will not only be a member of a political party but will also have served as formal leader of the party, and for a relatively longer period of time than an outsider.' (ibid.) While they confirm the strong intuition in the literature that presidential systems offer pathways to power for individuals with tenuous connections to political parties, their framework allows for the possibility that outsiders may attain executive office at the national level in parliamentary and semi-presidential systems. Critically, they also de-emphasise the importance of *subnational* service in signalling insider status—elected office under party affiliation at the subnational level is not, they say, necessarily indicative of reliability to party institutions in the same extent as being a party official at the centre or representing a party in the legislature (p75).

Samuels and Shugart's logic of the insider–outsider 'continuum' gives proper acknowledgement of the nuances of the insider/outsider distinction across different institutional frameworks and political cultures. It takes into account the rare but nonetheless notable cases of politicians who emerge to leadership roles from marginal positions within parliamentary

systems,¹ as well the ambiguities of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ status in highly decentralised polities, especially those where parties are ideologically and organisationally inchoate. In such systems, nominal affiliation with a national party at the subnational level does not necessarily imply a coherence of political interest or common purpose with national party leaders. To take the example of President Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines: the idea that Duterte rose to the presidency as ‘a political outsider from the southern island of Mindanao’ (Thompson 2016: 56), a ‘tough outsider’ (McCargo 2016: 189) to ‘Manila’ (ibid. 188) who was relatively alien figure to the Luzon-based oligarchic establishment, is uncontroversial among scholars of Philippine politics. His origins within the national political landscape meant that he exhibited the ‘defining characteristic of outsider national politicians’ in that he did not ‘enter office with a robust, pre-existing apparatus of allies in other parts of government’ (Ravanilla et al 2020: 4). Yet Duterte per the benchmarks set by Carreras (2014, 2015, 2017) Duterte would be considered an ‘insider’ because he came to the presidency after a long period of being mayor in Davao and maintaining affiliation with his PDP-Laban party. In the Indonesian context, applying an arbitrary insider/outsider distinction based on a politician’s nominal party affiliation is similarly problematic. As I will explore in the chapters to come, electoral rules put significant barriers in the way of running as an independent or establishing new parties—yet many politicians in effect govern and campaign like independents, maintaining tenuous and transactional connections with local party organisations.

With outsider status thus understood in terms of a politician’s relationships with political parties—not merely whether they have a party affiliation per se—it becomes clear why there is such a strong empirical association between outsider status and populist electoral strategies. Outsiders generally seek office from a position of alienation from party leaderships, and correspondingly from a position of weak control of party-based patronage networks and any mobilisational potential they offer. As a result, the ‘[t]hinly socially embedded political movements’ outsiders typically end up leading ‘are compelled to mobilize political support directly, through top-down appeals from leader to unattached potential followers’ (Kenny 2017: 28). Indeed, the more of an outsider a politician is, the greater the incentive they have to rely on

¹ Indeed, an insider/outsider binary based upon party affiliation can’t admit for cases of outsider success in parliamentary systems. For instance, before he was elevated to the leadership of the UK Labour Party in a grassroots membership vote in 2015, Jeremy Corbyn had served for many years as an obscure backbencher at the leftmost fringes of the party. In the United States, the long-serving independent Senator Bernie Sanders emerged to present an unexpectedly formidable of the 2016 Democratic Party in the face of opposition from its organisational leadership. Yet because Sanders had served as a mayor and congressional backbencher for many years before suddenly becoming a national political sensation, he—like Corbyn—would still be a considered the consummate insider according to the strict insider/outsider definitions proposed by both Kenney (1998: 62) or Barr (2009: 32), despite both Corbyn and Sanders’ obvious alienation from, and antagonistic relationships with, the centre-left establishments in their respective countries. Similar things have occurred on the political right in parliamentary systems: Silvio Berlusconi, for instance, founded his Forza Italia personal vehicle party just months before being winning the 1994 parliamentary elections in Italy that made him prime minister for the first time.

populist mobilisational strategies. For this reason, while comparative investigations of the institutional determinants of the rise of outsiders exemplified by the work of Carreras (2014, 2015, 2017) and Kenney (1998) are at pains to point out they are dealing with the more readily-operationalisable concept of 'outsider', in practice they are in effect examining the institutional determinants of the rise of populists, on account of the very high correlation between outsider status and populist politics. It is to this literature that I now turn in order to explain how my investigation of the Indonesian case can contribute new insights into the institutional determinants of the likelihood of the emergence of populism and the forms it takes if and when it does emerge.

Populism and institutions

Categorising Joko Widodo as a populist necessarily brings my study of his leadership in Indonesia into dialogue with the global literature on the links between populist rule and democratic quality. Populism has been squarely implicated in the global crisis of liberal democracy not only in Asia (Croissant and Haynes 2021) but around the world (Kyle and Mounk 2018, Kyle and Gultchin 2018). Given this, identifying the 'risk factors' for the rise of populism has been of urgent concern to comparativists. The literature has settled upon two broad areas of consensus. Firstly, that populism fares better in contexts where ties between voters and traditional parties have degraded, leaving voters available for recruitment by populists (Kenny 2017); by the same token, the prevalence of stable patronage or identity-based linkages between parties and voters serves to limit the constituency for populism (Self and Hicken 2018). Secondly, that the causal relationship between these structural conditions and the actual viability of populist politics is intermediated by several key institutional variables.

At a broad level these institutional variables include the overall institutional framework: that is to say, presidentialism or parliamentarism. Indeed, the vulnerability of multiparty presidentialism to challenges from anti-system populists who undermine liberal norms once in office has long been seen as a potentially fatal weakness of this system of government, as populist outsiders captured the presidencies of major Latin American democracies in the aftermath of the 'third wave' democratisation in the region (Linz 1990; Mainwaring 1993; O'Donnell 1994; Shugart & Mainwaring 1997: 32). Even if in the years since multiparty presidentialism itself has proven more durable than the 'perils of presidentialism' thesis predicted (Pereira & Melo 2012), the particular vulnerability of presidential systems to executive takeover by a populist leader is attested to by the historical record since, with populist parties and leaders only occasionally leading governments in the parliamentary systems that predominate in Europe, compared with the experience of Latin America's presidential systems (Kyle and Gultchin 2018: 37–41; see also Carreras 2014, 2015, 2017). The stereotypical populist threat to democracy comes when a political outsider is elected as head of government on an anti-establishment

platform, falls into conflict with old elites and the institutions they control, and moves to erode horizontal checks on presidential power buoyed by the support of the ‘people’ in whose name they claim to govern (Levitsky & Loxton 2013).

Because institutional crises were most reliably triggered in cases where executive power has been captured by a populist *outsider* (Carreras 2014), an pressing question has been to identify which conditions allow populists to rise to power from outside party-based political establishments and to govern in opposition to them. Scholarship has focused on the role played by the strength and social embeddedness of parties, and the institutionalisation of party systems, as buffers against the rise of populist candidates and parties (Urbinati 2019, Hicken and Self 2018). Hicken (2020: 38) concludes that there is good evidence that ‘populists are less likely to emerge and be successful in countries where parties are strong, while weak party organisations and unattached electorates provide an open door for populists.’ Of course, party weakness can itself be an effect of certain combinations of institutional, economic and historical variables: in a major comparative study with ample relevance to the Indonesian case, Kenny (2017) highlights the particular importance of decentralisation in weakening the coherence of the patronage-based party machines that are the dominant party type across the developing world. The resulting weakening of voters’ adherence to parties creates the most important ‘raw material’ for populism: a large pool of voters who aren’t committed to political parties ideologically, or otherwise incorporated into party-based patronage machines.

The role of electoral system design in allowing this ‘raw material’ for populism to translate into actual populist electoral success has received surprisingly little attention. The work of Carreras (2014, 2015, 2017) is a noteworthy exception, in that it highlights that even when the structural correlates or proximate causes of populism are present, ‘the rise of outsiders is not automatic and that it is mediated by a series of institutional factors that can prevent or facilitate this phenomenon’ (2015: 1470). His study of Latin American presidential systems finds that non-concurrent legislative and presidential elections, the presence of runoff provisions, and compulsory voting all have positive effects on the vote shares of outsider candidates.² Carreras’ work is notable in that it acknowledges that oft-identified structural factors and/or proximate causes for populist rise such as ‘policy failures and the legitimacy crisis of existing parties are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the rise of political outsiders’, who in fact

² While Carreras eschews the use of the term ‘populist’, his definition of populism covers candidates and parties that would be categorised as populist under the most prevalent definitions in the literature on Latin American populism. For reasons which I have outlined in my introduction, it is important not to conflate the concepts of populist and outsider, following the advice of Barr (2009). Nevertheless, while a populist insider is theoretically possible, it is empirically rare; in practice, outsiders are populists because outsiders must enact populist political strategies in order to subvert and defeat the political vehicles of incumbent oligarchs.

'participate in presidential elections only when there are limited barriers for entry and when the possibility of success (however defined) exists' (ibid.: 1469).

Existing institutionalist accounts of the links between presidentialism and populism have drawn almost entirely on cases in Latin America. On account of this fact, this literature has displayed the implicit assumption that electoral systems that pose low formal barriers to entry to individuals' ability to contest presidential elections. Indeed, throughout Latin America, outsider candidates have had the opportunity to either build a party 'on the fly' in time for a presidential election, or to gain the nomination of a minor or dormant party to similarly act as a nominating vehicle for a presidential campaign. In Brazil's 1989 presidential election, the regional governor Fernando Collor de Mello won an upset victory after mounting a populist campaign on the ticket of a small right-wing party cobbled together quickly for the purpose of nominating him (Weyland 1993: 3–13). In Peru, Alberto Fujimori likewise captured the presidency in the 1990 presidential election with a shell party, *Cambio 90*, established for the purpose. After his election in 1990, the party was dissolved and a new one founded for his 1995 re-election campaign. So stunning was Fujimori's populist, poorly organised campaign that the copycat attempts by other elites was to lay waste to the Peruvian party system over the course of his government (Levitsky & Cameron 2003: 2). The near-paradigmatic example of populist autocracy, Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, founded his MVR party in July 1997—having boycotted regional elections in 1993 and 1995—and contested the 1998 presidential elections with its nomination despite the party having no legislative representation at any level of government at the time of the election. Ecuador's Rafael Corréa, who exemplified a 'technocratic populism' that weakened the systemic role of parties and parliament (de la Torre 2013), similarly came to power on the nomination of a thinly-organised personal vehicle party, PAIS, founded just in time for the 2006 presidential elections that swept him to power. More recently, Jair Bolsonaro has been elected to Brazil's presidency having been nominated by a right-wing microparty that, at the time of his election victory in 2018, only held two seats in Brazil's 513-seat Congress.³

Put simply, the pathways to the presidency I have just outlined have been made possible because the structural correlates of populism—foremost among them the chronic weaknesses of political parties—have coincided with electoral rules that make it relatively straightforward for those with the greatest incentive and opportunity to exploit populist strategies to gain access to the presidential ballot. Carreras (2015: 1469) is correct to view the 'barriers to entry' inherent in a particular electoral system as a key institutional variable in allowing for the rise of populists and outsiders. Yet the 'barriers' Carreras alludes to are not legal barriers as such:

³ In Asia, this pattern has been repeated: in the Philippines, a presidential democracy with notoriously feeble parties, Rodrigo Duterte was to follow in the footsteps of previous populists like Joseph Estrada and campaign for the presidency on the back of the nomination of a tiny regionally based party which controlled only one legislative seat at the time of his nomination for the 2016 presidential election.

in his understanding, 'barriers' are the *presence* of electoral system features associated with a lower likelihood of a populist-outsider challenge succeeding if and when it emerges. In Indonesia, by contrast, such barriers exist in a much more literal sense in the form of the restrictions on party registration and presidential ballot access. The structural correlates of outsider populism, in short, sit alongside unusually high barriers to entry to the outsiders who are most likely to rely on populist strategies. That the Indonesian electoral system effectively forecloses the opportunity for populists to come to power unattached to major incumbent parties has extensive implications for the form their populism takes when in power. As I will detail throughout this thesis, I believe that the constrained populism Joko Widodo exemplifies is an outgrowth of the electoral system he had to work within on his rise to power, and the imperatives that system created for cooperation with non-populist political forces to which his rise was in no small part a rebuke.

Notwithstanding the constrained nature of his populism, Widodo nonetheless retains a fair amount of the outsider character that was so central to his initial appeal to Indonesian voters. As president he has kept himself at arm's length from parties; indeed, he has put down shallow roots in the political system altogether, remaining content not to control a party of his own and dispensing with any organised supporter base. An overriding focus on maintaining public support has been a common thread of his presidency, in the knowledge that in the negotiations required to maintain the support of key oligarchic actors, popular approval was one of his key sources of power and influence. Moreover, a populist political logic has guided his strategic decision making in diverse areas of policy, from how he has instrumentalised his economic policy and the social welfare system for political ends, to his calculated use of repression to demobilise potential sources of organised opposition to his rule. Indonesia's institutions did not prevent the rise of a populist outsider to the presidency, but they have been greatly important in allowing political parties to attenuate the challenge that the entrance of a populist to the presidency posed to their systemic strength and the norms of coalitional presidentialism through which that systemic strength is expressed—hence 'constrained populism'.

The comparative lesson that emerges from the Indonesian case study is that the existing institutionalist account of why populism emerges, and what forms it takes when it does emerge, is incomplete without considering the nuances of what party 'strength' (and, corollary to that, 'weakness') means with respect to the chances of populists. Such 'strength' cannot be understood only in terms of the typical measures of party or party system institutionalisation, including parties' organisational density and longevity, their rootedness in society, and their ideological coherence (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). Instead, we must also consider the systemic role electoral systems give parties and party leaders as gatekeepers to executive office, in particular in the presidential systems that are self-evidently more vulnerable to outsiders being swept to office on the back of populist campaigns. The Indonesian situation, I argue, illustrates this point. Indonesian parties are simultaneously weak *and* strong: as Mietzner

(2020: 206) writes, 'Indonesian parties remain in a *constitutionally strong* [emphasis added] position...[t]hese constitutional strengths, and the social rootedness of some parties, have somewhat mitigated the factors that are driving the weakening of Indonesian parties'. Parties are organisationally hollowed-out or inchoate and largely disembedded from society. At the same time, the gatekeeping function given to parties by the electoral system affords them an artificial systemic strength at the apex of the political system that has been sufficient to foreclose the possibility of an anti-system challenge from a populist party or candidate. The result has been Widodo's constrained populism: he remains an outsider to the party elite and lacks a foothold in the party system in the form of a personal vehicle party, but is nonetheless accommodative of the status and interests of the party leaders without whom he would not have been able to access the presidential ballot in the first place.

Oligarchy, populism and 'material power resources' in Indonesia

Apart from highlighting some of nuances of the institutional influences on populism as they are expressed in the comparative literature, my thesis also shows how the growing prominence of populism in Indonesia's politics—heralded most prominently, but not solely, by Widodo's rise—challenges some of the assumptions of the structuralist critiques of the post-Soeharto democratisation process. Since the fall of the New Order, 'one of the main challenges for students of Indonesian politics...has been to identify broad patterns in the accumulation and exercise of power' (Buehler 2012a: 161) in a democratic political landscape dramatically more complex than the authoritarian regime it replaced. The definition of populism I have described above must unavoidably come into contact with the 'oligarchy debate' that has been the most important macro-divide in the scholarship on Indonesian politics after 1998 (see contributions in Ford & Pepinsky 2013). Put simply, scholars have disagreed about the extent to which formal institutional reform has meaningfully redistributed political power downwards into civil society and ordinary citizens, as opposed to merely creating more internally competitive forms of oligarchic rule at the national and local levels. Structuralist scholars have answered this challenge by describing how a 'reconstituted oligarchy' comprising economic, state and party elites with their roots in the New Order came to dominate the new democratic institutions formed in the wake of Soeharto's demise (Robison and Hadiz 2004, Hadiz and Robison 2013); or have argued that in the absence of an authoritarian state capable of disciplining capital, the central political dynamic of post-Soeharto Indonesia has been the ultra-rich instrumentalising political institutions to further their economic interests (Winters 2013). A pluralist school of scholarship, meanwhile, has focused on the ways in which formal democratisation has created a more plural distribution of power, with an empirical focus on voter-politician linkages, the role of civil society, and organised labour (see Aspinall 2013a for an extensive review of this literature). Scholars working from institutional perspectives have

critiqued structuralist accounts by exploring how many of the defects of Indonesia's democracy have institutional roots—for example, the nexus between corruption and party financing regulations (e.g. Mietzner 2015a), or how patterns of elite power sharing grew out of the specific uncertainties and contingencies of the democratic transition (Slater 2004, 2013).

The post-Widodo prominence of populism in Indonesia has been incorporated somewhat awkwardly into structuralist accounts of the post-New Order democracy. The structuralist literature had long been preoccupied with explaining why the highest levels of politics, including the presidency, seemed impermeable to those outside the politico-business establishment that had its roots in the New Order. In the view of Winters (2013: 11–33), oligarchs were able to monopolise the presidency because they were the only people with the resources required to take the two plausible paths to it: one was to fund the creation of a personal vehicle party that could fulfil the requirements to compete in a presidential campaign; the other was to pay off one or more other parties to support one's bid for president. The only viable path for the rise of alternative presidential candidates, in Winters' view, was through an unlikely alliance of civil society actors to nominate an outsider as an independent (Winters 2012). As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter One, however, the facts of Widodo's rise disproved this hypothesis: not only was his rise to overwhelming national popularity very inexpensive by Indonesian standards, it occurred in defiance of the preferences of some of the oligarchs who had purportedly engineered that rise.

Other structuralist authors have nevertheless recognised the viability of populism developing against an oligarchic backdrop. Hadiz and Robison (2017: 490–491) see Widodo as an expression of populism coming from the opposite end of Indonesia's Islamic–nationalist political expression, writing that his election as president

raised the possibility of a new era of politics in Indonesia where individual politicians can emerge from outside the ranks of its long-entrenched state and party machines and whose authority may rest in direct appeals to the 'common people'.

Hadiz and Robison, however, offer only vague explanations of how and why Widodo outmanoeuvred oligarchic rivals to win the presidency from outside the national political establishment, only to be 'co-opted and domesticated' (Hadiz and Robison 2017: 489). In the absence of an account of why Widodo was able to outmanoeuvre rival oligarchs to gain the presidency, yet not able to govern as one, their analysis risks both overstate the immutability of oligarchic rule and simplifying what is often a complex negotiation of interests between oligarchs whose power is rooted in their control of financial resources and bureaucratic authority (or both), and the outsiders whose power is derived from a charismatic appeal to millions of ordinary voters. Of course, no observer of Indonesian politics could dispute that the problems of oligarchy, corruption and other legacies of authoritarianism weigh heavily on the quality of Indonesian democracy: they did before Widodo, they still do seven years into his presidency, and if

anything, these problems are getting worse, not better. Nevertheless, I am with Slater (2014: 294) in considering oligarchy as a constant, not a variable—and I am therefore interested in those institutional factors which make Indonesia's democratic deficits distinctive among the other democracies to which it can be fairly compared. As I have sketched at the beginning of this chapter, I seek to use the Indonesian case to show that the barriers to entry that inhere in a particular country's electoral system are consequential both for the viability of populism but also in shaping the form it takes when it does emerge.

The aims and layout of this thesis

My thesis proceeds to explore different elements of Joko Widodo's presidency across six chapters, which together illustrate how Indonesia's institutional framework produced the constrained populism that has characterised his presidency. Chapter One will explore how Widodo achieved his early political successes at the subnational level, then parlayed that success into national popularity through the use of 'telepopulist' tactics. Key to his political successes as mayor of the small Central Java city of Surakarta (also known as Solo) and his brief governorship of the Jakarta Special Capital Region (DKI Jakarta) was his shrewd understanding of the power of social policy in cultivating a mass constituency independently of any affiliation with existing clientelist networks—and indeed, in subverting the grassroots influence of those same networks. I place Widodo within the tradition of 'local populism' that had sprung up in Indonesia's regions after the introduction of direct elections for local heads of government (*pilkada*) in 2004. He was one of a number of local leaders elected in direct *pilkada* who used the expansion of social welfare to reinforce the populist bond between himself and his electorate, building a linkage which transcended clientelist politics and the organisations—be they parties or other social organisations—who directed it.

Widodo's use of social policy as a tool of populist constituency building was effective, but not necessarily unique. If he had stayed in local politics, he might have just been one of many figures who made up for their relative alienation from patronage machines by delivering voters more and better services. What elevated him among contemporary local populists, however, was his shrewdly taking advantage of avenues to build a populist linkage with a *national* supporter base by attracting coverage from the Jakarta-based broadcast media. I will explain how he took advantage of the interest of Jakarta-based elites in recruiting him to run for Governor of Jakarta in 2012. The central argument of this chapter is that Widodo, in a fashion typical of contemporary populists, has strategically taken advantage of free media coverage available to him as a public official in order to build a national profile—and thus potential electoral constituency. Crucially, he was able to build a widespread national electoral base without the imprimatur of a national party or the funds of himself or an oligarch. Despite his

attempts to act as the 'accidental' candidate, his national fame was the product of a deliberate strategy aimed at giving him leverage over the potential gatekeepers to the presidency.

In Chapter Two, I describe in more detail how Widodo sought to turn the electoral power he had rapidly accumulated throughout 2012 and 2013 into a nomination for the presidency. If he confronted the institutional set-up that prevailed in many other presidential democracies, he would have been able to quickly enlist a small party to act as a vehicle for a presidential nomination, run for president as an independent, or register his own party for the sole purpose of running for president. These options were denied to him by Indonesia's party registration and presidential nomination rules: instead, Widodo would have to win the support of incumbent political parties in order to turn his on-paper electoral dominance into an actual candidacy. He therefore embraced a completely new political persona as the loyal party functionary in order to reassure leaders of his PDI-P party that he would not threaten their prestige or interests as president. This entailed making compromises on key elements of campaign strategy, sacrificing his autonomy over how he could appear in public and what he could say, and even up to who he could choose as his vice-presidential candidate. The pattern of compromises that he established with party leaders while seeking his candidacy would set a template for the early part of his presidency, once party leaders realised how they could use their gatekeeper status as leverage in negotiations with an outsider who was not always confident of the strength of his bargaining position.

Still, some of the hallmarks of the populist political linkage survived Widodo's efforts to gain the nomination and throughout the closely fought 2014 presidential election. In Chapter Three I illustrate how he reached out to enthusiastic but loosely organised volunteer, or *relawan* networks, to canvass for votes on his behalf, while doing most of his campaigning through the media. Widodo supported the efforts of the *relawan* for two reasons: first, because they had essentially organised themselves to support his candidacy and because of that he had no doubts as to their loyalties; second, because he had comparatively little faith in parties' mobilisational abilities. The biggest parties in his nominating coalition, PDI-P and PKB, would turn out to be unreliable partners in terms of how hard grassroots party branches worked to get out the vote for him. During an unexpectedly competitive presidential campaign, the *relawan* earned Widodo's goodwill because they behaved as a populist organisation ought to, according to the model posed by Mouzelis (1985). These organisations' legitimacy in the eyes of the electorate was derived entirely by their association with their figurehead; as such, their agents were not able to 'transfer' their mobilisational activity to benefit another candidate, nor campaign in ways that their charismatic figurehead did not approve of. Yet after the election Widodo sought other forms of political ballast, with a conflict with party elites of the leadership of the national police force leading him to seek security *within* the party-based oligarchy, rather than from it. As a consequence, he denied the *relawan* the access and influence that he had led them to believe they would get after proving their loyalty during the election.

Chapter Four will address the aftermath of Widodo's victory in 2014, and how his populism was immediately confronted with the logic of informal power structures dominated by oligarchs. It will focus on the period of his having to appoint a cabinet, make key personnel decisions and pass a national budget in 2014 and 2015. It will discuss the progeny of some major decisions that alienated much of his progressive support base and show how despite his having ambitions in the immediate aftermath of his election in 2014 to deploy populist tactics in confronting the political opposition in parliament, he eventually fell back on the tried and tested methods of intra-elite deal making once the pressure from party leaders on key political appointments overwhelmed him. He chose to make accommodation with party elites, rather than challenge them—establishing a pattern of compromise with parties over their key political and policy prerogatives, as the price for being able to shore up his populist connection with his electoral base through his policy agenda.

Chapter Five will analyse Widodo's policy approaches, viewed through the prism of 'populist policy', a term often used in discussions of Indonesian politics and political economy but one that is rarely defined or theorised. I propose an understanding of populist policy derived from the material-organisational concept of populism outlined above. Specifically, I understand populist policy as those policies that reinforce the populist political linkage. In practice, this means economic and welfare policies that are concerned with positioning the populist leader as a sort of *uber*-patron, minimising the discretion of bureaucratic or political intermediaries in the distribution of benefits to the grassroots. I analyse Widodo's welfare and infrastructure policies using this framework, describing how their implementation has been shaped by his desire to rationalise the lines of political accountability—and thus the flow of political credit—that inhere in their implementation. I explore the one major exception to this pattern, in the form of Widodo's channelling of patronage to (and through) the major Islamic organisation Nadhlatul Ulama in an effort to shore up his religious bona fides ahead of the 2019 presidential election. I also analyse his sudden shift to liberal economic solutions to Indonesia's development problems embraced at the outset of his second term, explaining how they are compatible with the logic of populist politics.

In Chapter Six I explore the Widodo administration's illiberal approach to opponents and critics. The quality of Indonesian democracy has long been beset by chronic problems of corruption, abuse of power, and various legacies of authoritarianisms that run particularly deep in security sector institutions and the judicial system. Yet Widodo has enacted a pattern of targeted legal harassment and repression of opponents and critics in a way that none of his democratic predecessors did. His administration has used authoritarian-era laws to exploit internal divisions in opposition parties and support pro-government factions within them, and threatened the pro-opposition oligarch with trumped-up criminal charges to induce him to throw his support behind the government. Leaders of organised civil society opposition to the

government have been stigmatised as extremists and targeted with similarly concocted legal cases aimed at deterring them from organising against the government.

Despite these illiberal actions sometimes being justified on national security grounds, or the need to protect Indonesia's pluralist and/or moderate Islamic traditions from the rising influence of hard-line Islamism, it is generally the judgement of scholars that the 'authoritarian turn' (Power 2018) has less to do with an ideology than pragmatic political calculations. In Chapter Six I show how these calculations reflect a *populist* political logic: Widodo has had the overriding political goal of co-opting, intimidating and punishing individuals who that have the capacity to undermine his standing in the electorate. Widodo's illiberalism has been instrumental, and rarely gratuitous. There has been one exception to the pattern of repression I have just characterised, however: the most dramatic rollback of civil liberties that the government has made was in order to ban a stridently anti-government yet relatively small organisation in Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia. This banning was done primarily to satisfy a separate political goal: consolidating the support of Nahdlatul Ulama. Just as Widodo departed from his standard policy approach to deliver patronage through NU's organs, so did he indulge in an instance of symbolic repression to bind Indonesia's largest Islamic organisation closer to his government.

My conclusion will bring together all the analytical strands of these six chapters, returning to the theoretical questions about the nature and causes of populism, how the case of Joko Widodo speaks to these questions, and what it means for our understanding of the sources and operations of political power in post-authoritarian Indonesia. In my conclusion I will look forward to consider a) what the longer-term outlook is for the viability of populist politics in Indonesia, and b) what the systemic impacts of the Widodo-era 'authoritarian turn' could be for Indonesia's democracy. I argue that the structural socio-political correlates of populism are only growing more entrenched. Parties are growing more disembedded from society, with Indonesians' rates of party identification continuing to fall to very low levels. Parties continue to experience a process of hollowing out of their grassroots structures as decentralisation entrenches the role of localised and personalised patronage networks as the key units of political organisation, and the key arbiters of patronage, at the local level. Parties are growing less internally democratic as oligarchs capture parties to use them as bases for the own personal ambitions. At the same time, the scope for new parties to enter national politics and gain support through new forms of political campaigning is limited and decreasing. Incumbent parties have engineered electoral rules to make it more difficult for new entrants to gain access to the ballot in national legislative elections and presidential contests. As a result, a growing number of voters feel unrepresented by the party system on offer and will turn to populist alternatives—who will in turn confront the institutional framework that prevents their campaigning and governing on anti-party, anti-establishment agendas.

For these reasons it seems safe to expect the constituency for populism will only grow into the future, making up the 'raw material' for the rise of future populist challengers. Yet at the same time, the same electoral rules that forced Joko Widodo into accommodation with incumbent parties will affect any future attempts by leaders from outside the party-based national oligarchy to use populist strategies to win the presidency. Indonesia's electoral rules are in constant state of flux as lawmakers seek to use efforts to fine-tune the design of the system to ensure their own short-term electoral advantage. One element of the electoral system that seems set to stay in place, however, is the increasingly controversial presidential threshold (PT), whereby in order to qualify for the presidential ballot prospective candidates must gain the support of a party or coalition of parties that won 20% of votes or 25% of seats at the preceding legislative elections. Party leaders are aware of the poor record of parties in generating viable presidential candidates from their own ranks, so will fight to preserve the PT as the key mechanism that guarantees their indispensability as gatekeepers to the presidency: as the strategic opportunity for outsiders only increases, parties' incentive to strengthen their monopoly over presidential nominations—thus reinforcing their continuing centrality in the system of coalitional presidentialism—only grows stronger. The default scenario, therefore, is that the socio-political realities on the ground and the institutional framework governing national politics will continue to exist in tension: promoting demand for outsider candidates, allowing them to come to prominence through populist campaigning, and yet forcing them to honour and safeguard the interests of a political oligarchy that remains deeply embedded in the political parties.

My conclusion also discusses what I believe my examination of the Indonesian case has to offer the comparative literature on the institutional determinants of populism. Given the all too obvious role that populism is playing in the global democratic regression, scholars have taken up the challenge of identifying which institutions have a role to play in limiting the appeal of populist challenges or at least limiting their electoral viability. I believe the Indonesian case complicates the assumption that strong parties have to play a pivotal role in limiting the space for populist challenges, and in particular anti-establishment ones. Indonesian parties are in some senses weak, and this certainly plays a role in the growing prominence of populist forms of mobilisation in the country. Yet they are 'strong' where it counts for the ambitions of populists who seek the presidency: at the apex of the political system, thanks to the gatekeeping role the electoral system gives to a set of incumbent parties—whose incumbency is further protected from populist entrants by onerous party registration rules. These barriers to entry serve to make the anti-establishment elements of a populist candidacy unviable, and protect the oligarchic status quo. Thus the comparative lesson is that it is not enough to merely look at the structural political conditions, or even the large-scale institutional framework (e.g. parliamentarism vs presidentialism). More specific features of electoral rules and the barriers to entry that they put in the way of populists are a critical variable in allowing the electoral

viability of populism, but also in constraining its ability to disrupt established patterns of oligarchic rule.

A note on research methods

The picture I paint of the Widodo presidency in this thesis draws heavily on interviews with politicians, civil society figures, campaign workers and state officials. These interviews were conducted during several periods of time spent in Indonesia between 2014 and 2019, including from a 14-month stretch of formal field work to about a dozen shorter trips in which I combined my research with other work commitments in Indonesia. I applied no rigid protocol for selecting and interviewing my sources other than seeking out the people who, by virtue of their official position or reputed influence, I thought could shed light on the political and policy questions I was seeking to investigate in my thesis. I took handwritten notes of my conversations with my sources as they took place, typing up those notes as soon as possible afterwards and storing the files on an external hard drive that only I have access to. I did not offer my sources anonymity as a matter of course, but many nonetheless indicated that they would only be able to speak frankly on the condition that their comments, if quoted, would not be attributed to them by name.

Interviews were far from the only source of data I drew upon, with Indonesia's diverse and critical online media being a particularly important resource while I was in Australia, or in circumstances where I was looking for information for which an interview would be unnecessary or inappropriate. My footnotes will attest to how much I—like other foreign researchers—benefit from the work Indonesian journalists do to uncover the back stories behind what are often highly opaque political and policy processes. Many of the media sources cited here are in Bahasa Indonesia; all translations of quoted Bahasa Indonesia material are my own.

CHAPTER ONE *Joko Widodo as Indonesian ‘telepopulist’*

During his two and a half terms as mayor of the Central Java city of Surakarta between 2005 and 2012, Joko Widodo was considered a noteworthy case of reformist local leadership. He promoted a relatively pro-poor, socially inclusive urban development agenda while reducing corruption and making the bureaucracy more responsive to citizens’ and businesses’ needs (Majeed 2012, Bunnell et al 2013). His stature as a reformer, and his own political ambitions, grew to the point that he successfully solicited his party’s nomination to challenge an entrenched political machine in Indonesia’s capital of Jakarta in the 2012 gubernatorial election there. During his short tenure as governor of Indonesia’s capital city, Widodo became the most competitive potential candidate for the 2014 presidential election. This occurred to the surprise and frustration of many of the oligarchs who had supported his political ambitions to that point, and in defiance of many scholars’ assumptions about how presidential power was gained in post-Soeharto Indonesia. In contrast to the post-*reformasi* presidential candidates who came before him—all of whom had their political roots in the New Order elite—‘Jokowi’ emerged on the national stage as a relative ‘man from nowhere’.⁴

Indeed, as Bland (2020: 12) noted, ‘[t]here are few global leaders who have risen from obscurity as rapidly as Jokowi. In just nine years, he went from small-town businessman to president of the world’s fourth most populous nation.’ It was in fact more like two years—a startlingly rapid ascent to electoral dominance, and from a position of almost unimaginable marginality to the national political establishment by Indonesian standards. In this chapter I show how Joko Widodo’s startlingly rapid emergence as Indonesia’s most popular politician between 2011 and 2014 can be attributed to his adept application of *populist* mobilisational strategies—specifically, a ‘telepopulism’ reminiscent of the rise of the Latin American neopopulists of the 1990s, in which the broadcast media played a critical role as an instrument of forging a broad and enduring basis of national electoral support without the benefit of extensive political organisation.

Widodo’s pre-presidential political career has already been the focus of scholarly study. The most comprehensive scholarly treatment of his early political activity has been provided by

⁴ This was the memorable label given to Peru’s populist president Alberto Fujimori by the *Economist* magazine (Conaghan 2006: 16)

Masudi (2017), whose doctoral research explores how Widodo gained 'legitimacy' through slowly accumulating public support over the course of his tenure as mayor in Surakarta (known colloquially as Solo). The interplay between Widodo's local political strategies, his national political ambitions, and his emergence as a national political figure are outside the scope of Masudi's study, however, which limits itself to situating Widodo's mayorship firmly within the debate about the effect that decentralisation and the new institutional frameworks in the regions had in generating new and more responsive varieties of political leadership. Other authors have touched on Widodo's pre-presidential career as part of more wide-ranging studies of his political career and the politics of the 'Jokowi' years. Mietzner (2015) makes brief mention of how Widodo's 'pragmatic and technocratic populism...took shape in Solo' (ibid.: 26). Hadiz and Robison have noted that his rise was facilitated by a structural shift in political power towards the regions under decentralisation, seeing him as 'a beneficiary of the very system of chaotic and decentralised electoral democracy that has defined Indonesian politics since the fall of Soeharto' (Hadiz and Robison 2014). Finally, in response to what he sees as a mistaken tendency of analysts to juxtapose Widodo's reformist local leadership with the conservatism of his presidency, Bland (2020) writes of being 'struck' by 'how little [President Widodo] has changed from his days in Solo' (ibid. 30). Indeed, the picture that emerges from Bland's 'political biography' (ibid. 8) is of a man who remains in many ways a small-town mayor (2020: 42, 65), preoccupied with the pragmatic questions of program delivery, and ignorant of the philosophical or ideological questions tied up in matters of national policy.

If Widodo's presidency has resembled his mayorship writ large, it raises the question of *what* the common political threads were that allowed him to a) rise from the margins of national politics to the presidency, and b) become an enduringly popular and powerful president despite the radically different political and policy challenges he faces now compared to during his local career. Decentralisation greatly expanded the pool of potential presidential candidates for Indonesians beyond the standard national-level elites. As only one of a number of local executives who used their new administrative and fiscal powers to build localised populist leaderships, Widodo's rise cannot be explained by his local political successes alone. Many local leaders who were celebrated by the media and civil society for their reformist local policies never built a nationalised popular constituency in the way he was able to do in the later years of his mayoral tenure. What made him unique among his local-populist peers was that he was unusually adept at taking advantage of the opportunities Indonesia's media environment offered him to build a national constituency.

This chapter therefore offers a retrospective interpretation of how Widodo transcended his local-populist origins to pioneer the use of 'telepopulism' at the national level. In doing so this chapter fulfils two analytical functions, both of which are important starting points for my thesis' broader arguments about the institutional influences on the viability of populism and the forms that it takes in the Indonesian context. First, my emphasis on Widodo's 'telepopulist'

rise complicates some key parts of the structuralist critique of that process. Writing around the time that Widodo was becoming a nationally prominent figure, Winters (2012) argued explicitly that the pathway to the presidency was through buying control of an existing party, establishing a new one, buying massive media coverage, or combinations thereof. The imperative to retrospectively fit Widodo's rise into his structuralist analytical frame would lead Winters (2013: 23–35) to argue that the big political break that came in the form of his candidacy for Jakarta's governorship in 2012 was primarily the result of oligarchic brokering and financial sponsorship. These things were unquestionably ingredients in Widodo's success; as Bland (2020: 55) observes '[t]he tycoons; party bosses, religious leaders, and generals have brought him the money, political connections, and endorsements he has needed to capitalise on his connection to ordinary voters.' But account provided by Winters writes out of the frame the much more complex and fluid picture that emerged from Widodo's use of popular opinion in his negotiations, and at certain points conflicts, with other elites. I would argue that if anything his rise shows that viability of strategies to accumulate political power in Indonesia in the relative absence of oligarchic resources being mobilised in support of a particular individual. Not only did he make it to the top of the polls for the 2014 presidency without concerning himself with party matters—what was remarkable is how little spending was involved in making him the most electable candidate for the 2014 elections.

Second, this chapter substantiates my categorisation of Widodo as a political outsider, guided by the definition proposed by Samuels and Shugart (2010) that grades politicians' insider/outsider status based on '*the nature and extent of a prospective [party] agent's links to a central party organization [emphasis in original]*' (67). As part of this logic, Samuels and Shugart de-emphasise the role of subnational service in signalling 'insider' status—elected office under party affiliation at the local level is not, they say, necessarily indicative of reliability to party institutions in the same extent as being a party official at the centre or representing a party in the legislature (p75). As I will detail in this chapter, Widodo clearly deserves the title of outsider. Despite being nominally affiliated with the secular-nationalist PDI-P party since his entry into politics in 2005, he has consistently maintained an arms-length and highly transactional relationship with its leadership, who have benefited electorally from their association with him as much as he has from their support for his candidacies for executive office. He has never taken on a senior leadership role in PDI-P nor sought to build up a power base within it. Indeed, as the next chapter will show, he was forced to play up his status as a PDI-P member only to reassure party elites that he was not hostile to its interests.

This chapter proceeds in two sections that address two distinct periods of Widodo's pre-presidential career in chronological order. In the first section, I discuss the period between 2005 until roughly the end of 2011, during which he served as mayor in Solo. Widodo entered politics from outside the local PDI-P party organisation he came to be affiliated with, and as mayor he built up a large grassroots support base through expanding and universalising

access to the social safety net provided by the municipal government. In this regard his mayorship was a notably successful, but by no means unique, example of a 'local populist' dynamic in which local political entrepreneurs sought to make up for their relative alienation from local political machines by using state channels to distribute benefits to the grassroots. In the chapter's second section, I discuss the period between late 2011 and the end of 2013, during which Widodo shifted his sights to building up a constituency first in the capital city of Jakarta as a candidate for the city's governorship in 2012, then across the entire country as a prospective presidential candidate throughout 2013 and into early 2014. Limited to being able to direct state benefits only in his local jurisdiction of Jakarta, Widodo used broadcast and online media as a conduit for building relationships with a nationalised support. In doing so, I argue, he had brought Indonesian political scene a type of 'telepopulism' pioneered by the Latin American neopopulists of the 1990s, in which leaders used the broadcast and electronic media to build connections with a nationalised constituency in the absence of party or organised civil society support. His ability to use populist tactics to build a national constituency and transcend his origins in local politics distinguishes him from the other 'local populist' political regimes of which his mayorship in Solo was a part.

Decentralisation and the rise of 'local populism'

Indonesia's political system was transformed not only by the democratisation at the national level that took place in 1998–1999, but also by the wholesale devolution of administrative and fiscal powers to Indonesian provinces and municipalities—comprising both *kota* (cities) and *kabupaten* (regencies)—that occurred alongside it.⁵ As the formal and informal institutions stabilised at the national level, so did democracy flourish at the local level, particularly after the introduction of direct elections for local executive leaders beginning in 2004. Scholarly debates about the nature and quality of regional democracy developed along similar themes to those regarding the relevance of oligarchy at the national level. At issue was the question of whether the institutional liberalisation—in the form of free elections, civil liberties, and the lifting of central controls over policy design and implementation—would allow for policies and political leadership more attuned to local needs and conditions in a context of greater, and more meaningful, participation from formerly marginalised political interests and social groups and the civil society organisations that represented them. Nevertheless, there was a consensus that the newly competitive subnational political environments appeared to have entailed a rearrangement, rather than the regeneration, of local political elites; indeed, if anything the capture of newly autonomous local institutions by formerly subservient business and bureaucratic

⁵ The key legislation in this process Laws 22 and 25 of 1999, which together delivered what was dubbed the 'big bang' of decentralisation reforms.

agents of the New Order was even more pronounced at the local level than in the corridors of power in Jakarta (Buehler 2013, Hadiz 2008, see also contributions in Schulte-Nordholt and van Klinken 2007 and Erb and Sulistyanto 2009).

A notable feature of the new local politics was that competition was largely between individuals and the political networks aligned with them, rather than between parties (Aspinall and Mas'udi 2017: 417–20, Buehler and Tan 2007). Law 32 of 2004, which governed the new direct local elections, had established a nominating threshold: candidates would have to gain the support of parties that had 15% of seats or 15% of the popular vote in a particular local government area's most recent legislative election. A 2007 Constitutional Court decision found that the 2004 legislation's additional prohibition on independent candidacies was unconstitutional; in response, an updated 2008 law allowed for local independent candidacies but made registering one logistically onerous: prospective independent candidates would have to compile pledges of support between 3 and 6.5 and per cent of the enrolled voters in a particular jurisdiction (depending on its total population) in order to gain access to the ballot; this threshold was legislated upwards in 2015 to 6.5–10% of enrolled voters.⁶ Such a pathway obviated the need to secure the backing of parties, yet nevertheless involved building or recruiting a dense network of canvassers to gain the required amount of signatures—'a logistical nightmare for regions with large populations' (Dinarto & Ng 2020: 271). Understandably, 'access' to voters who can sign in support of an independent candidacy came to be offered as a service to candidates by so-called KTP brokers. Far from becoming a flourishing of competitive outsider candidacies; as Dinarto and Ng's analysis has demonstrated, 'political insiders and local notables have been the biggest beneficiaries of independent candidacy, which has become an alternative route for existing political players to compete in democratic elections. As a result, many of the profiles of independents are indistinguishable from party candidates' (ibid.: 268).

Despite the preponderance of bureaucratic, ex-military and business elites in the new crop of local political candidates, a minority of the new local leaders would gain fame among civil society and international donors by promoting transparency and pro-poor policy programs. A new area of research opened up that was focused on questioning whether these exceptions to the rule were simply matters of good luck, or whether they reflected the confluence of certain social or political conditions that could be engendered elsewhere by policy interventions directed from the centre (World Bank 2006). It seemed clear that 'leadership' was critical in deciding policy and governance outcomes (Liddle 2013), but beyond that, what substantive political strategies and linkages were conducive to the exercise of such reformist leadership, if at all?

⁶ The relevant legislation in this case is Law 12/2008 on Regional Government and Law 8/2015 on Regional Government.

The answer lay in the new dynamics of intra-elite competition engendered by decentralisation. Just as the 'big bang' of decentralisation in 1999 had caused a vertical fracturing of lines of political and administrative authority, the democratisation of local politics had fractured local elites horizontally, putting them in competition with each other for control of local party branches, legislatures, and executives. A major shift came in 2004, when the introduction of direct elections for local executives (known as *pemilihan kepala daerah* or *pilkada*) positioned the voters as key arbiters of these intra-elite contests. With parties organisationally weak, discredited, and financially depleted, nominations were sold to aspirants from the business world, the bureaucracy or the military who went on to campaign and govern with only nominal affiliation with a political party. Once in office, they could use state structures to dispense patronage to the grassroots. The strengthening of the administrative and financial powers of local executives 'opened up the institutional possibility for each local leader to exert strong leadership' (Okamoto 2009: 161). Since 'after the introduction of direct elections...candidates needed to build a wide base of support', there was strong incentive for many leaders to enact a form of 'electoral populism' whereby 'contestants for political office offer redistributive policies and other concessions to their lower class constituents' (Aspinall 2013: 103).

Despite the obvious shortcomings of decentralisation, the reforms made intense intra-elite competition a fact of political life at the local level. These new dynamics were to be a central driver behind the emergence of 'reformist' leadership in many parts of Indonesia as political aspirants at a financial or organisational disadvantage found that they could gain an edge over their elite rivals with direct appeals to the masses. In his comparative analysis of neighbouring local government areas in North Sumatra, Tans (2012: xii) highlighted how mobilisation-based strategies allowed political figures with comparatively poor access to local patronage networks to compete with entrenched machines—both during election campaigns, and as a method of securing authority once in office. Tans contrasted what he called 'mobilizing coalitions', which are 'oriented vertically downward' to 'cater to popular pressures', with 'political mafias' that 'horizontally encompass local elites' and centralised 'party machines' which are 'oriented vertically upward'. Different contestants for local political dominance may combine each of these strategies, but '[t]o the extent that electoral competition compels mafias and machines to construct mobilizing coalitions, to provide public goods and to appeal to mass audiences, the potential exists for the emergence of a new kind of politics more closely resembling electoral pluralism than money politics.'

In a similar vein was Rosser and Wilson's (2013) comparison of the neighbouring Jembrana and Tabanan regencies in Bali, the former of which was home to one of the more celebrated examples of reformist leadership in the early years of decentralisation. As Rosser and Wilson demonstrated, despite identical institutional structures (including a shared dominance of the secular-nationalist PDI-P party) and similar socioeconomic and demographic profiles, the two regions diverged dramatically when it came to their embrace of pro-poor social policy.

Tabanan had made little meaningful progress towards universalising health insurance despite a substantial economic base, whereas Jembrana had become a model local government area after its embrace of a generous medical insurance scheme. What played a decisive role, in Rosser and Wilson's analysis, was not merely 'leadership' per se, but the specific structure of the linkages and political coalitions that undergirded the local executive leader's administration. The *bupati* (regent) in Jembrana, for instance, was an academic relatively isolated from the established clientelist political machines (the foot soldiers of which were drawn in part from Bali's notorious gangs) in his regency. He chose an electoral strategy that appealed through policy means to the atomised masses of voters that benefited from his health scheme, reinforcing a loyalty that subverted their traditional enmeshment in patronage machines. Next door in Tabanan, however, the local regime remained closely linked to voters by those same machine structures and thus had no overriding incentive to construct new electoral coalitions through putting political and economic capital behind more inclusive social policies. Okamoto (2009) has likewise highlighted the examples of former regional leaders Fadel Muhammad in Gorontalo and Basuki Tjajaha Purnama in East Belitung. Both Fadel and Basuki, despite being wealthy businessmen, were nevertheless outsiders to the dominant political machines in the regions whose elections they sought to contest: Fadel, because he had spent most of his business career away from his home province, and Basuki because he was from Indonesia's ethnic Chinese minority and was automatically at a distance from the party and religious establishment in his own region. Both men nevertheless were able to win election as outsiders and gain high levels of popularity in office because of their expansion of healthcare, education subsidies and infrastructure programs that put benefits straight into the hands of voters.

Thus was the landscape of local politics that existed in Indonesia when Joko Widodo entered politics during the initial wave of direct local elections in 2005. On paper, parties remained the dominant channel for candidates to contest executive office. In practice, however, party branches were threadbare, and sold off their nominations to figures who maintained the wealth, cultural influence or deep clientelist networks that were the real currency of local politics. Parties played a minor role in campaigning, with personalised 'success teams' charged with getting out the vote for their affiliated candidate and typically relying on patronage-based mobilisation. Once in office, a local executive had extensive powers over the bureaucracy and policy design, with parties playing a minimal role as day-to-day arbiters of state patronage. In this institutional and political context, there was scope for a local executive head to become a highly dominant figure in their local jurisdiction by bypassing the influence of entrenched patronage networks to communicate with the voters directly, and to use state channels to direct patronage to the grassroots. As I will now move to discuss, it was precisely this strategy that became the basis of Widodo's political dominance in the Central Java city of Solo during his mayorship between 2005 and 2012.

Had he never become a national political figure, Joko Widodo would still be remembered as a local populist *par excellence*. As mayor of Solo and governor of Jakarta he fit the template of local leaders who capitalised on mass popularity to become dominant within a local political landscape. Widodo's personal background has loomed large in media accounts of his political career, such that it has almost become clichéd to describe his origins as a child born in a 'riverside slum' in the Central Java city of Surakarta. A popular hagiographic account of his life and career was subtitled 'the spirit of the Kali Anyar riverbank' (Ambarita 2012); indeed, '[h]is [ghost-written] autobiography reads at times like a paean to the struggles and dignity of poverty' (Bland 2020: 17) As Widodo remarked in 2014, 'I never forgot where I came from; when I was young, I identified with the small people, I was one of them, and now it is time to do something for them.' (Mietzner 2015b: 25). That his family was more prosperous than his account would allow for was indicated by his receiving a relatively good education: he graduated from the premier state high school in Surakarta and attended the prestigious Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta where he studied forestry. After a short stint working for a state-owned forestry company in Aceh after graduation, Widodo returned to Solo and founded his own furniture factory. He was acquainted with at least one national-level oligarchic figure, having formed a joint venture in furniture manufacturing from 2005 with Luhut Pandjaitan, a former New Order general, businessman and Golkar party politician, who would go on to be an important political fixer for Widodo during and after his ascent to the presidency.

Widodo entered politics in 2005 as the city was facing the lingering aftereffects of the financial and political crises of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Solo was impacted by severe communal unrest amid Indonesia's 1997–1998 economic and political crisis and had seen periodic rioting, much of it directed against the ethnic Chinese community, in the years afterwards. The city became notorious internationally after the 2002 Bali bombings as the home base of the jihadist cleric Abu Bakar al-Ba'asyir. Widodo's predecessor as mayor, Slamet, had emerged from within the local PDI-P machine but had fallen out with party leaders during his tenure. Alienated from his former party colleagues, '[Slamet's] political legitimacy relied heavily on his personal performance as mayor, which unfortunately was not positive' (Masudi 2017: 108). Slamet had failed to deliver on promises of reform, 'alienating the local press, civil society, voters and the parties as he failed to enact pro-poor policies while doing favours for private business interests' (Masudi 2017: 108). The door was open for a challenger to unseat the unpopular incumbent once the city would get its turn at directly electing its mayor for the first time in 2005.

Despite his prominence within the local business community, Widodo had minimal engagement with party politics before he joined the race to become Solo's first directly elected mayor.

Because independent candidacies were not permitted at the time, he would have to secure party support in order to contest the mayorship. Solo was firmly within the ethnic Javanese heartland of PDI-P, the secular nationalist party led by the former president Megawati Soekarnoputri. PDI-P had won 35.9% of votes in local legislature at the national legislative elections in 2004. Since laws governing regional elections mandated that candidates for local executive office gain the nomination of parties that had at least 15% of votes or seats won in the previous legislative election in a particular jurisdiction, PDI-P was in a position to unilaterally nominate a candidate of its own. There was certainly some natural ideological and social affinity between Widodo and PDI-P, given his personal origins from within the lower to lower-middle class, secular/heterodox Christian social milieu that was the core of the PDI-P support base. Even still, Widodo did not automatically make his way to PDI-P, and did in fact explore the option of putting together a party coalition with other parties such as the former New Order regime party Golkar and even the Islamist party PKS (Mas'udi 2017: 130–140), with whose local leadership he had maintained a friendly relationship with even during his days as a businessman (confidential interview with PKS parliamentarian from Central Java, Jakarta, May 2019).

A confluence of interests would bring PDI-P and Widodo together in the lead up to the city's first direct election in 2005. After falling into conflict with the incumbent Slamet, whom it had backed in the indirect election that took place in the city legislature (DPRD) in 2000, PDI-P was determined to nominate a candidate from within its own organisation in the 2005 *pilkada*. It turned to the local party branch chairman F.X. Hadi Rudyatmo. Hadi was a well-liked and dedicated local party operator, but as a Roman Catholic there were doubts about his acceptability to the electorate in a city where a streak of volatile Islamic conservatism had long been a party of the local political landscape. The party would propose a deal to Widodo: in exchange for its support, Hadi would be nominated as his deputy. Asked by a researcher years later about why he chose to align with PDI-P at the outset of his political career, Widodo would admit that it was primarily because '[it] was the strongest party in Solo' (Mietzner 2015b: 26). Thus began a tradition of his being teamed with a capable deputy with deeper bureaucratic and business ties but who, comfortably for Widodo, presented less of an electoral threat because of their minority ethnic or religious status.

Building political dominance in Solo

Widodo and Hadi entered office in 2005 having won by a plurality of 36% of the vote—above the 30% threshold at which a runoff would not be required—in a three-cornered race with candidates backed by the other major parties. The new mayor would have work to do in order to build off this starting point to consolidate his electoral dominance. From the early period of this term Widodo displayed a keen understanding of the power of spectacle and symbolism

in promoting himself as a down to earth leader who was capable of cutting through bureaucracy in order to solve different communities' problems. One initiative that became emblematic of style of leadership was the relocation of hundreds of informal food hawkers (*pedagang kaki lima* or PKL) from public parks to subsidised market facilities. The typical Indonesian municipal government response to this problem was one of forcible and often violent eviction from public spaces with no compensation for loss of property or livelihoods; by contrast, Widodo famously 'negotiated' the relocation of street vendors by holding a series of meetings with them at which he served them food and discussed the need to reclaim the parkland they were using to conduct business.

It was a disarming tactic: by portraying the government's policy of relocating the vendors as the result a direct dialogue between the mayor and the affected parties, Widodo had essentially served the concrete interests of the middle-class constituents who wanted their green space back—all while being celebrated for his humane treatment of the lower-class vendors. In a characteristic political sleight of hand, 'Jokowi nurtured a strong image as guardian of the PKL, despite the fact that the relocation plan was not fully in the[ir] interests' (Masudi 2017: 177). Moreover, the dialogue over street trader relocation had the additional function of building Widodo's image as a leader who could sweep away bureaucratic and organisational impediments to getting things done. In a similar pro-small enterprise vein, he restricted the growth of supermarkets and convenience store chains in order to protect traditional wet markets, which also benefited from city-funded renovations. Negotiations about the relocation and renovation of these markets, too, were marked by direct meetings with vendors, which notably did not include both of the main vendors' associations as representatives or interlocutors; once again, the mayor made a display of personally hosting dialogues with the grassroots stakeholders without any intermediation from bureaucrats or vested interests in civil society.

An arguably much more important factor in Widodo's success, though, was his expansion of the social safety net the city provided its residents. He took office in Solo at a time when central government transfers to local government were booming, a flow-on effect of fiscal reforms at the centre as well as the global resources boom that was propping up the central government's financial position. Over the course of his first term from 2005 to 2010, annual 'balancing funds' or *dana perimbangan* transfers from the national government to the Solo treasury more than doubled in nominal terms, growing from Rp288.6 billion in 2006 to Rp614.1 billion in 2010 (Badan Perencanaan Daerah Pemerintah Kota Surakarta 2006: 203; Badan Perencanaan Daerah Pemerintah Kota Surakarta 2011: 245). At the same time as fiscal transfers from the central government were growing, the national parliament was also strengthening the powers of local government executives. Under the 2004 laws that had introduced the direct local executive elections, local executives were no longer liable to being dismissed by a local parliament in the event that their annual 'accountability report' to the body was rejected; the last remaining site

of leverage councillors had over an executive was the threat of blocking a budget. There was also no local cabinet, with the city's departments being run largely by a bureaucracy over which the local government head had in practice a large amount of influence.

Widodo was to make the most of the fiscal and administrative powers at his disposal to significantly expand the quality and accessibility of the welfare programs offered by the city government. In 2007 the city government agreed to pass a bylaw (*peraturan daerah* or *perda*) that reduced the monthly fee for participants in the health insurance program provided by the city to only Rp1,000 per year;⁷ a subsequent mayoral decree (*peraturan wali kota* or *perwali*) would stratify participants into two glasses: the 'gold' participants were those recognised by the city government as poor, and would get greater benefits, while 'silver' members were all other participants who enrolled in the program and would receive more limited coverage. The innovation was that while some poor residents, civil servants, military members and so forth could access the nationally administered health care plans, this new scheme was universally available to all residents of Solo who fulfilled the criteria and paid token insurance dues. As his re-election campaign approached in 2010, Widodo launched a major expansion of the scheme, but this time he would bypass the city legislature altogether and issue a mayoral decree to do so. As Masudi (2017: 183) observed,

[t]he fact that the scheme was finally regulated in the mayor's decision (Perwali), not in a city regulation (Perda), which required approval from DPRD, indicated that Jokowi tended to identify PKMS as a political product of the mayor. And during the launching of PKMS, Jokowi personally distributed the membership card to communities. The image of PKMS was therefore clear: it was an exclusive product of Jokowi.

As one advisor to Widodo in Solo put it, 'the important thing for Jokowi was that welfare went directly to the people without too much bureaucracy in the way' (interview with Eko Sulisty, Bali, 27 August 2014)—hence the overriding focus on a shift towards more universal access to health care insurance schemes. The power of the political formula he relied on was proven in the city's 2010 election, when Widodo was re-elected with 90.1% of the vote.

Assessing Widodo's record in Solo

In the aftermath of his landslide re-election in 2010, Widodo was quickly becoming 'a good governance icon' (Hamid, 2014, p. 89) to Jakarta-based NGOs and donors. His leadership in Solo had attracted the interest of international development experts who used the city as an example of technocratic innovation facilitated by decentralisation (Majeed 2012). Indeed, the links that Widodo was forging with international donors, civil society—and, as his political

⁷ City of Surakarta Regional Regulation (*Peraturah Daerah*) 8/2007.

ambitions increased, the national media—were an integral part of both his development and marketing strategy for Solo, but also for increasing his own national political profile. Bunnell et al (2018: 1070) have noted how the widespread circulation of imagery of Widodo's successes

conferred prestige and legitimacy upon Jokowi/Solo as a 'safe bet' for nationally or internationally funded initiatives...The ability to woo national and international funding institutions and agencies in this way became a key component of Jokowi's local development strategy in Solo. The projects that ensued and their circulation as success stories, in turn, helped to launch Jokowi's [national] political career[.]

At a time of much disillusionment with the decentralisation and widespread suspicion of corporate interests in politics, Widodo's self-described 'people's economy' philosophy certainly struck a chord with civil society and middle-class voters. When the liberal national news magazine TEMPO anointed him as one of its 'star' performers of regional government in 2008 (TEMPO 2008), its focus was on Solo's protection of and support for small and traditional industries over property developers and retail chains. Such a program, of course, appealed to the concerns of progressive middle class civil society as much as it benefited the interests of informal and small business. This is not to paint Widodo as a radical departure from the political mainstream, however: though he undoubtedly brought a much more humane approach to his dealings with poor and marginal communities, and allowed NGOs a greater say in policymaking, Masudi concludes that Widodo never 'sidelined elite interests or sought to alter elite domination in Solo. Instead, his policies and style of leadership largely maintained the status quo more effectively and, in part, more equitably'. Indeed, 'Jokowi may even have preserved and strengthened elite interests through the introduction of social programs and effective handling of urban informality.' (Masudi 2017: 155-156).

Nevertheless, in Widodo's successful seven years as mayor we can see the development of a political and policy template that he would attempt, with inconsistent degrees of success, at the national level over the course of his presidency. As I touched on above, authors have retrospectively noticed 'how little [Jokowi] has changed from his days in Solo' (Bland 2020: 30, see also 42, 65). As Mietzner wrote, it was during his years in Solo that Widodo's 'pragmatic and technocratic populism...took shape' (2015: 26). The affinities between his local and national political modus operandi, however, go beyond simply an approach to social welfare policy or a talent for building a down-to-earth problem-solving image—they extend to the nature of his relationship with political parties. Like many other local non-party figures who entered formal politics as a relative outsider to the established political machines, Widodo's political success in his district hinged upon his ability to use the levers of the local state to reach downwards and outwards directly to voters to build a constituency through the provision of public goods distributed on a more or less universal basis.

One central feature of Widodo's career in local government is that despite his success as a representative of PDI-P, he never displayed much interest in taking up a leadership role within it, nor building up a support base within its cadre base. Whereas his deputy Hadi Rudyatmo was the chairman of the Solo city branch of PDI-P throughout Widodo's mayorship, Widodo himself was never appointed to a position within that branch, even in the wake of his overwhelming re-election in 2010. That year he was appointed to a single term on the board of the Central Java provincial party branch, but he was not known to be active in using his position to develop the party's policies and organisation, nor did he ever advertise his appointment to that position even while he turned into PDI-P's most popular local politicians, and began to seek higher office, after 2010. Indeed, the position on the provincial party board was the highest position Widodo would ever be appointed to in PDI-P throughout the course of his career. Instead, Widodo relied upon his deputy Hadi to engage in outreach to not only PDI-P but political parties, while the mayor was busy acting as a figurehead for the administration and conducting direct communication and negotiation with voters (Pratikno and Lay 2013, Maheed 2012: 5). Widodo's reluctance to involve himself in party affairs was one part of a broader lack of interest in organisational matters: he never took over a leadership position in any prominent local civic or religious organisation, nor did he attempt to encourage the development of an institutionalised support organisation until after he emerged as a potential presidential candidate beginning in 2013. Widodo understood as well as any other of the local populists that the local state was an effective way to deliver goods to a popular support base—the party was there simply to act as a vehicle for the populist's personal ambitions in a mutually expedient exchange of political support.

'Telepopulism' from Jakarta, 2011–2014

Whereas Widodo's successes at the local level were part a broader pattern of local populism, his election as the governor of Jakarta in 2012 represented a genuine landmark in post-New Order politics. The Jakarta governorship is Indonesia's most senior directly elected office after the presidency and vice-presidency, and the victory of Widodo and his running mate, the former local leader and legislator Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, was a breakthrough for two reasons in particular. First was that both men were outsiders to the city's politics, and Basuki, who had his political origins as a former district head on island of Belitung, was a member of Indonesia's economically important but politically marginalised Chinese minority. Second, their election represented a victory for two politicians with strong anti-corruption credentials and the respect of progressive civil society, at the expense of an incumbent governor whose government epitomised the patronage-based machine politics that had become the norm at the local level after decentralisation. The 2012 election naturally prompted scholars and civil society alike to speculate whether local politics could be a site of political regeneration and incubation

of new reform momentum (McRae 2013). Suaedy (2014) has seen the 2012 Widodo–Basuki gubernatorial campaign as a breakthrough moment for what he calls ‘partisan civil society’, noting the prominence of CSOs and self-starting volunteers in making up for the pair’s deficit in intra-party influence and patronage resources. Their politics and policies after their election have been studied by Aspinall and Savarini (2017), who have cast Widodo’s leadership in Jakarta as a rare successful example of where contracts between representatives of the urban poor and politicians have born fruit, investigating how his approach to slum renovation and reordering was conditioned by the commitments he made during the 2012 campaign.

Widodo’s campaign for the governorship in Jakarta and his governorship have already been examined as a case of populism by Hamid (2014: 102), who argues that his bid for the governorship represented the breakthrough for a politics in which ‘leaders place themselves symbolically outside the political realm by claiming that they are not politicians, or are at least are not like other politicians’. Widodo’s successful self-portrayal as a radically different kind of politician was undoubtedly part of his building a populist linkage with an electorate fed up with politics as normal. But Hamid’s analysis falls short of apprehending the significance of Widodo’s gubernatorial campaign as a bridge between his localised populism and its nationalisation—a critical part of understanding his path to the presidency. Mietzner (2015) notes that Widodo had ‘applied his tested Solo formula to Jakarta’, but deals only briefly with this period in his account of the ‘technocratic populism’ that marked his rise to power and the early period of his first presidential term.

There is therefore scope for an analysis of Widodo’s 2012 gubernatorial campaign and his tenure as governor of Jakarta that emphasises just how instrumental both were as steppingstones between the local populism in Solo I have described in the previous section, and his acquisition of a national populist electoral constituency between 2011 and 2013. Widodo’s outsider campaign for the governorship was inherently newsworthy, ensuring that the moment he was in the race he became a media sensation, with his dominance of media coverage and his unique everyman charisma giving him a critical edge over the incumbent’s political machine. After his upset victory he would enter office as an outsider to the city’s bureaucracy and patronage networks, and with minority support in the local legislature. Widodo moved quickly to use the levers of the state to secure his own constituency in Jakarta, using his decree powers to expand the provision of health coverage for the city’s residents. This was all done under the spotlight of the Jakarta-based broadcast media, which sent imagery of Widodo inaugurating infrastructure projects, expanding the local welfare state and staring down a recalcitrant city legislature into the living rooms and workplaces of millions of disparate Indonesian voters—all without Widodo or his party backers spending any money on promoting his image.

This process of constructing first a Jakarta-centric and thereafter a nationalised populist linkage marks Widodo as an Indonesian pioneer of ‘telepopulism’—a strategy in which the

broadcast media is used as conduit for building the charismatic linkage between a populist leader and a diffuse, heterogeneous popular constituency. ‘Telepopulism’ was a term originally used in passing by Schneider (1991: 324) in reference to the politics of former Brazilian president Fernando Collor. It was further conceptualised by Boas (2005) in his study of the effect of media consumption on the political choices of Latin Americans. The ‘tele’ prefix obviously evokes the particular significance of television in this process, but also speaks to the fact that it is engaged in from afar—without the activation, or even the existence, of organised institutions to promote the leaders’ candidacy. Indeed, what shines through when looking back at Widodo’s gubernatorial candidacy and his short governorship was how *few* financial and organisational resources were involved in making him the frontrunner for the 2014 presidential election—a reality which invalidated some key assumptions of structuralist scholars about the indispensability of cash and patronage in building electoral competitiveness in post-New Order Indonesia.

The paths to a gubernatorial nomination

After Widodo’s fame in his home province of Central Java grew after his landslide re-election in Solo in 2010, speculation mounted that he would attempt to challenge the sitting governor, the PDI-P affiliated former army officer Bibit Waluyo, for the governorship in the province’s 2013 gubernatorial election. Widodo had won an earlier public relations victory at the governor’s expense when he vocally opposed the provincial government’s plans to destroy a colonial-era building in Solo to make way for a private investor’s shopping mall. Widodo was able to win that victory on two fronts: first, for defending the city’s historic architecture and public space against the predations of out-of-town private interests, and secondly by contrasting his own leadership style with the governor. After Bibit derided Widodo for being ‘stupid’, the mayor turned the other cheek, memorably telling journalists that ‘yes, I’m indeed still stupid—I’ve still so much to learn from so many’ (Raditya 2019). The episode became a media frenzy not only for the substance of the issue, but for Widodo’s perfectly self-effacing response to the governor’s anger. It was an early example of his taking tactical advantage of conflicts with other elites to gain free media coverage and portray himself as a humble representative of the people standing up to entrenched politico-business interests.

The fame Widodo was starting to build, thanks in part to this conflict with the provincial government, would position him to seek for a more valuable political prize than the Central Java governorship. A gubernatorial election was also due for the capital of city of Jakarta, which was governed as a province with special autonomy, in 2012. Political parties, PDI-P included, were considering ending their support of the incumbent governor and trying their chances with a challenger. Widodo’s growing ambitions dovetailed with the agenda of some elements of progressive civil society to support a candidate capable of defeating the incumbent

governor Fauzi Bowo. Widodo had pre-existing relationships with civil society figures and had gained the attention of activists eager to run a reformist candidate in Jakarta in 2012. At a seminar in Central Java in 2011 hosted by the Jakarta-based NGO Praxis, Widodo had made a presentation that showed off his successes in Solo. One organiser recalled that ‘he seemed to possess a populist sentiment...he was a guy who could make things happen’ (interview with Hilmar Farid, 6 July 2015).

No matter the level of enthusiasm from civil society, however, the easiest path to the gubernatorial nomination for Widodo ran through political parties. Under the prevailing 2008 Law on Regional Government a candidate had to secure the backing of a party or coalition of parties that had won 15% of seats or 15% of the popular vote in the most recent legislative election in the jurisdiction they wanted to contest the leadership of. The law allowed for individuals to mount an independent candidacy—however, they had to compile lists of supporters’ identity cards and their signatures, an enormous logistical exercise that would have implied the mobilisation of extensive networks of either supporters or mercenary vote-brokers at enormous cost and time, resources which Widodo did not have and was not interested in acquiring. The Jakarta governorship is the most senior political position in Indonesia to which an independent candidate can theoretically be elected; national laws bar independent candidates from presidential elections. Ironically, however, the independent path to the governorship was most easily attained by non-populist candidates with either deep roots in civil society and/or patronage networks that reached to the grassroots, or who were willing to leave themselves indebted politically or financially to a group of mercenary ‘ID card brokers’ who could be tasked with amassing the signatures and identity-card details of the more than 500,000 voters the rules required in order for the electoral commission (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, KPU) to approve an independent candidacy.

With the independent route not being a realistic option, Widodo’s priority in the lead up to the election in late 2011 and early 2012 was proving his electoral potential to the party or parties that were looking to support a challenge to the incumbent governorship of Jakarta. Widodo was not spoilt for choice in this respect: Fauzi had sewn up the support of most of the parties represented in Jakarta’s legislature. That left Widodo’s own PDI-P as the default choice. PDI-P’s Jakarta leadership was divided, with some strongly supporting taking the *mahar* (literally ‘dowry’; an illicit cash donation in exchange for a party’s nomination) from incumbent governor Fauzi Bowo to endorse his candidacy, as the party had done in the previous gubernatorial election in 2007. Others were in favour of nominating the Jakarta branch chair, Boy Sadikin, who had had a falling out with Fauzi over a combination of political and business matters. Other local PDI-P figures preferred the idea of bringing in one of the party’s more dynamic parliamentary figures or regional leaders, even from outside the capital, to challenge Fauzi.

As would be the case when Widodo later sought a presidential nomination, the opinion of party patron, former president Megawati Soekarnoputri, would be critical. Lacking the means or motivation to buy the nomination from PDI-P's Jakarta branch, Widodo had to prove that the advantages to the party outweighed the risk of alienating the governor further by backing an outsider. An important factor in encouraging Megawati and the PDI-P national elite to back Widodo was the enthusiasm of the Gerindra party, which was headed by the former Soeharto-era general and presidential aspirant Prabowo Subianto. Gerindra was eager to be seen to be aligned with reformist politics ahead of the presidential elections in 2014. Widodo had met with the financier of Prabowo Subianto's Gerindra party, Prabowo's brother Hashim Djojohadikusumo, in Solo in 2011 and explored the possibility of running in Jakarta in 2012. Prabowo was seeking to put momentum behind his prospective run for the presidency in 2014 and felt it advantageous to align himself with a younger and reformist local leader like Widodo.

The first step was attracting the attention of the Jakarta-based media, and once again Widodo acted with supreme opportunism in drawing the Jakarta-based media's attention to him. He threw the support of the Solo government behind an initiative by a local technical school in Solo to build a 'national car'. The Esemka, as the vehicle was known, was a commercial non-starter, being an unmarketable combination of car parts assembled by trainee automotive engineers. But the national news media seized on the car project as an example of young Indonesian entrepreneurial talent competing with foreign imports. Widodo purchased several examples of the vehicles for use by the Solo city government. News media seeking to bandwagon on the craze descended on the city, as did senior political and state officials to pay tribute to the project. They offered fulsome praise of the initiative as an example of a grassroots response to Indonesia's supposed overdependence on imported products. The Esemka project was not serious industry policy, but as a publicity stunt it was tremendously effective. Widodo had consulted in advance with Jakarta-based political consultants on how he could increase his name recognition in the capital through use of free media opportunities, and polling showed that the stunt had proven effective in boosting both his name recognition and likeability ratings in polls conducted in Jakarta (interview with Hasan Nasbi Batupahat, 27 July 2014). Thanks to the Esemka media frenzy, he was now a credible contender for the governorship: a poll taken in January 2012, six months out from the first round of the gubernatorial election set for July that year, showed Widodo had gained the support of 17.3% of Jakartans, compared with 24% who said they would give their votes to the incumbent (Afifah 2012).

Beating the Jakarta machine

Widodo would eventually be nominated for the governorship by PDI-P and Gerindra, with his running mate being the reformist ethnic Chinese Christian former legislator and local

politician Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, with whom he would quickly form a lasting personal rapport. Widodo and Basuki—who was colloquially known by his Hakka nickname ‘Ahok’—were outsiders to Jakarta city politics, and both began the race as underdogs. Their primary party coalition partner, PDI-P, was only the third-largest party in the city’s legislature, having won 11 seats in the 106-member chamber; the biggest factions were President Yudhoyono’s Partai Demokrat with 32 seats and the Islamist PKS with 18. Gerindra, which had won 6 seats in Jakarta at its debut election in 2009, was a well-disciplined but organisationally shallow party whose overriding focus was promoting the candidacy of Prabowo Subianto for the 2014 presidential election.

Widodo and Basuki had a formidable party and bureaucratic machine as their adversary in Jakarta. Incumbent governor Fauzi Bowo exemplified the type of New Order-era politico-bureaucrat who had become dominant in local politics after democratisation. A German-educated city planner, Fauzi had risen through the capital’s bureaucracy to become the capital’s chief bureaucrat before his recruitment as the deputy elected to a governor elected indirectly by the city council in controversial circumstances in 2002. In 2007, Fauzi stood for the governorship in his own right, winning narrowly in a context in which he was able to pose as the defender of religious pluralism in a fight with a PKS-backed former police general. Despite a thin record of accomplishments as governor and middling approval ratings, Fauzi was still assumed to be the favourite for re-election in 2012. This was largely on account of the immense financial resources that he could draw upon and his ability to enlist a network of clients within the city bureaucracy as a campaign apparatus, thanks to his background as a senior civil servant. Another advantage was the governor’s status as a member of the local Betawi ethnic group; the influence of Betawi ethnic organisations over poor voters, and Fauzi’s intimate links with them, were widely acknowledged. Moreover, Fauzi would face a splintered opposition, with five candidates joining the race to unseat him.⁸

With the incumbent having these organisational and financial advantages, Widodo and Basuki’s strategy to chip away at his dominance in the polls would draw heavily on a strategy of dominating the mainstream media coverage of the race, supplemented at the grassroots by the activation of extra-party volunteer networks. The contest to dominate the airwaves began on the very day they officially registered their candidacy, when the pair rode to the electoral commission’s headquarters in a Metro Mini, a decrepit bus that was the symbol of the city’s dysfunctional public transport system. They wore chequered shirts that an aide to Widodo had bought from a nearby market—something different from the traditional attire of most

⁸ Golkar nominated the governor of South Sumatra Alex Noerdin as its candidate, while then president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s PD nominated Fauzi’s estranged deputy governor Prijanto. The two independent candidates were Faisal Basri, an economist who attracted some support from mostly affluent liberal voters, especially those in the NGO sector, and H. Supandji, a retired military officer engaged in a vanity candidacy.

candidates. The typical campaign event from the two was to conduct what Widodo called a *blusukan*, appropriating a Javanese term for his practice of making impromptu walking tours of a low-income neighbourhood at which he would sit down with community members and ask about their needs—all, of course, with a trail of dozens of journalists in tow. Indeed, Widodo would later admit that the *blusukan* strategy was in large part a way of generating media coverage. As he told Tapsell (2015: 41–42),

‘I learned in Solo how to manage the media. We make a differentiation. We go the problem locations. We go to the poor people, to the riverbank, for example, and this is sexy for the media [...] if I stay in the office every day do you think they will cover me?’

The personal appeal of Widodo had wider beneficial effects even for those who did not personally get involved in the campaign: the novelty appeal engendered by his *merakyat* persona made it impossible for even Fauzi-aligned media outlets to ignore him. National news bulletins were heavily focused on the Jakarta race, given the importance of Jakarta consumers to the Indonesian broadcast media, and the *blusukan* strategy employed by Widodo guaranteed that he was the focus of news coverage not only in Jakarta but throughout the country.

While the campaign busied itself providing novel imagery to the media, the 2012 race also saw the introduction of novel patterns of grassroots campaigning. Extra-party volunteers, known as *relawan*, organised into teams and operated with little coordination with party structures (Suaedy 2014). *Relawan* canvassed for Widodo with little coordination with political parties; indeed, the level of party involvement in the grassroots campaign would be patchy at best. As put by one *relawan* organiser PDI-P was ‘cooperative at the grassroots, but at the elite it was a different matter.’ Gerindra, meanwhile, a top-heavy organisation with negligible grassroots reach, played a more prominent role in funding and organising television adverts and made-for-television stunts and online promotional content. On the ground, the party was ‘nearly invisible’ (interview with Hilmar Farid, 6 July 2015). Against expectations, Widodo and Basuki won the first round of the election on a plurality of 42.6%; since the law governing elections in Jakarta mandated a runoff in the event that no one candidate received 50% of the vote in the first round, Widodo and Fauzi would contest a runoff in September 2012. Immediately, all parties apart from PDI-P and Gerindra threw their support behind Fauzi, uniting against the challengers in the second round. The race also took a turn towards identity politics, with pro-Fauzi elements seeking to anathemise Widodo’s Chinese and Christian running mate in the eyes of Muslim voters. Ultimately, the Fauzi campaign’s attempts to drive down support for Widodo through fanning sectarian tensions fell short. In a runoff election in September 2012, Widodo won with 53% of the vote.

Was the 2012 Jakarta election a new breakthrough for reformist populism in Indonesia, or a demonstration of the enduring power of oligarchic factions to engineer political outcomes to their advantage? On the one hand, Widodo's 2012 victory in Jakarta was a remarkable achievement for an outsider campaign against a much better-financed and organised incumbent coalition, and was all the more noteworthy in the Indonesian context for having being energised by a network of idealistic, non-party volunteers at the grassroots who gave up their own time and resources to campaign for Widodo and Basuki. Nevertheless, the support of party leaders was a necessary factor in Widodo being able to stand in Jakarta in the first place, and the fixed financial costs in terms of the cost of buying television advertisements and training and compensating the thousands of *saksi* (scrutineers) who were organised by parties to watch over the counting of votes on election day to guard against fraud. In the case of Widodo and Basuki's campaign in Jakarta, it would be PDI-P that would get the two most of the way to attaining the 15% nomination threshold required to run in the first place, and Gerindra and its benefactors that provided the biggest financial donations. The centrality of these elite factions in forming a base of oligarchic support for Widodo in Jakarta in 2012 would prompt Winters (2013: 23) to argue that his rise in fact 'provides a useful illustration of the role oligarchic intervention plays in the democratic choices available to Indonesians'. A central issue was money: '[o]nly oligarchs had the power resources to convert Jokowi's potential as a candidate into a reality' (24), such that '[e]ven if he did come to enjoy grassroots support, he did not arrive at the gubernatorial contest as a consequence of grassroots initiatives or politics' (25).

Such a narrative is not false, but it is simplistic. As I have shown so far in this chapter, Widodo had already established himself as a competitive candidate for the governorship in Jakarta by early 2012 thanks to his own opportunism in securing free media coverage of his activities as mayor of Solo. In fact, what is remarkable was how little money was spent in order to cement Widodo as a credible contender in the Jakarta capital, despite his being a rank outsider to the city's politics. A PDI-P official who worked a senior role in the 2012 Jakarta campaign noted with some amusement that it was the first time that a candidate had been run by a political party without paying a '*mahar*' (dowry) to a party, referring to the practice of a candidate making a donation to a party branch in exchange for its support for his candidacy (confidential interview, Jakarta, January 2014). Once the campaign in Jakarta got underway, the effect of an oligarchic sponsorship bought the campaign the ability to buy advertising time. But the effects of this in raising Widodo profile were probably marginal compared to the amount of free media the candidate gained through his shrewd cultivation of media coverage through his *blusukan*-based campaigning strategy. Gerindra's principal financier, Hashim Djojohadikusumo, had donated approximately US\$5 million to the campaign that was meant to be used primarily for television advertising; other donors contributed through other channels to bring the total cost of the campaign to around US\$10 million, according to a senior PDI-P

official with knowledge of the campaign's finances (confidential interview, Jakarta, January 2014). This was large by the standards of Indonesian subnational campaigns—yet paled in comparison to the resources available to the incumbent. The advertisements that Hashim's money helped produce for broadcast during the 2012 campaign, too, were as much about promoting Prabowo as the notional candidate in Jakarta; typically, they were narrated by Prabowo and showed the party's leader campaigning alongside Widodo.

A more accurate assessment would be that oligarchic support accompanied but did not cause Widodo's emergence as a viable challenger to Fauzi Bowo. Indeed, it would soon become clear that insofar as oligarchs had been instrumental in establishing Widodo as a national political figure, they had only helped to set in motion a political dynamic that was now out of their control. Virtually from the moment he became the governor of Jakarta, Widodo was already more popular nationally than the oligarchs who, in Winters' account, had concocted his candidacy from nothing with a view to strengthening their own political positions ahead of the 2014 presidential election. That he rose to this position so quickly is impossible to explain without reference to the populist political tactics that I have detailed above, and which have also been analysed by authors such as Hamid (2014), Suaedy (2014) and Tapsell (2015). I seek to extend these other authors' analyses by situating Widodo's populist path to the governorship of Jakarta as part of a longer process of his adapting populist political tactics from the local level to the national in ways that were very disruptive to the elite power balance ahead of the 2014 elections.

Rewarding the Jakarta grassroots with policy

After his election Widodo needed to move quickly to establish his authority within Jakarta's unruly politics. As had been his practice in Solo, and would be his practice again as president, he would use the expansion of state welfare as an efficient way of connecting with grassroots voters. Fauzi's government had left Widodo and Basuki a legacy of a cumbersome, under-resourced and relatively unpopular system of subsidised health insurance for poor residents, and the two men identified the problems of the incumbent's system as a way of gaining support among poor voters, promising to expand and simplify the system. Widodo himself had campaigned in 2012 with imitation 'Kartu Jakarta Sehat' cards (Healthy Jakarta Cards), explaining how he would introduce a system of easily accessible health insurance along the lines of what he established in Solo. Upon being elected, he made good on this promise, signing in his first weeks in office a gubernatorial decree that mandated that all residents of Jakarta were to be provided service free of charge at all public hospitals and clinic; service providers would bill the provincial health department for the costs of treating these patients.⁹ The universality

⁹ Jakarta Special Capital Region Gubernatorial Regulation (*Peraturan Gubernur*) 187/2012

of such a scheme—no requirement apart from legal Jakarta residency was mentioned in the decree—made the idea of having the cards themselves technically redundant. But Widodo rightly grasped the political significance of the scheme in emphasising in the mind of the voters the source of this new benevolence; as a close advisor to Widodo at the time put it, ‘those cards are like a KTA [*Kartu Tanda Anggota*/party membership cards] for Jokowi’s base—with it we could really give them something tangible’ (interview with Eko Sulisty, Jakarta, 9 January 2015).

In that spirit, a critical part of the program was Widodo’s in-person marketing of the scheme in the low-income neighbourhoods that the new governor had as a key political target. Widodo spent inordinate amounts of time outside his office conducting impromptu visits in person to low-income communities, ostensibly to receive feedback on service delivery and to communicate new initiatives to the grassroots. He regularly at these visits distributed in person the new healthcare cards to residents. These *blusukan*, as the visits were known, became institutionalised as a critical part of the governor’s media and political strategy in Jakarta. He routinely invited foreign journalists and diplomats along with him to these stops to spruik them as his method of gaining feedback on the quality of services and how he was performing as governor. As an aide remarked, ‘the polls were always a second opinion for him. The most meaningful measure of his popularity was what he saw when he was on the *blusukan*’ (interview with Eko Sulisty, Bali, 27 September 2014). But the feedback mechanism they provided was also distantly second to the private opinion polling, much of it paid for by sympathetic businessmen, which Widodo was regularly commissioning to gauge both his personal popularity and that of his signature health and cash transfer programs.

The popularity generated by this centralisation of patronage and, in the eyes of the voters, its personalisation in the figure of Widodo, served the governor well in the tension with the city legislature that followed the introduction of his new welfare programs. The city legislature, the DPRD, was dominated by parties that were aligned with Fauzi in the 2012 gubernatorial election. Prominent councillors promptly objected to the legal basis of the November 2012 decree underpinning the KJS system, noting that it conflicted with legislation passed by the administration that made free health care only available to certifiably poor residents; the new universal and free system established by Widodo’s gubernatorial decree was in this view not legal (JPNN 2012).

Yet the protests of the legislature—which included a threat to impeach the governor if the financial and legal flaws in the KJS system were not fixed—were to no avail; the party factions, smarting from the ascent of the outsider governor who maintained a personally aloof posture vis a vis legislators, had misread the public mood. Widodo himself dared the legislature to impeach him, saying in a speech at the time ‘if I’m made to resign [over the KJS], I’m happy. If I’m impeached because I made this [KJS] card, I’m very happy...but until now they [the

legislature] are not brave enough. I'm waiting; there's nothing.' (Taufiqurrohman 2013) The 2013 budget was passed several months late with a large increase in the health budget to cover the health insurance program that Widodo had already set in motion with his post-election decree (Belarminus 2013). As a staffer of Gerindra party recalled, while he was governor 'anybody who opposes him will be painted as the bad guy by the media' (interview with Noudhy Valdryno, DPP Gerindra, March 2014). Widodo himself would later boast to a supporter organisation about his confidence in the legally precarious implementation of his health care system, recalling how 'I gave all these KJS card to the people, but the assembly said it wasn't willing. I gave them out anyway!' (author notes from PENA 98 Congress, Bali, 27 September 2014). As Widodo prepared to become president in 2014, the advisor would identify this episode as being a template for how he imagined his relationship with the national parliament would be: 'though it looked like the KJS wouldn't get through the DPRD, it happened because if they didn't the people would be angry...it was proof of how Jokowi could manage a city without a strong political base apart from public opinion' (author notes of Eko Sulistyio comments to *relawan* post-election debrief, Jakarta, 14 August 2014).

Becoming a national media phenomenon

With the expansion of welfare programs supporting Widodo's popularity among the capital's residents, the carefully crafted media spectacles that characterised his governorship were generating broader fame and popularity across the country. With the national television broadcasters—which are highly dependent for their advertising revenue on the Jakarta market—covering his daily activities, his was on the way to near-universal name recognition around Indonesia. In October 2012, just weeks after Widodo was inaugurated as governor, a private poll commissioned by a candidate in the North Sumatra gubernatorial election showed that Widodo was the most popular potential presidential candidate in that province (interview with Hasan Nasbi Batupahat, Jakarta, 28 August 2014). Widodo, of course, had never campaigned in North Sumatra, and had certainly not set up any political infrastructure or had any proxies campaigning for him there. His surprise electoral cachet in Indonesia's outer islands, which would be replicated in other private polls conducted as part of the wave of regional elections in late 2012, could only be accounted for by the saturation media coverage given to his gubernatorial election later that year. Speculation about Widodo's viability as a presidential candidate began to mount in political and media circles, and polling organisations soon began to include his name in published polling about voters' intentions for the 2014 race. Polls between 2011 and 2012 all showed either Megawati Soekarnoputri or Prabowo Subianto as the leading candidate; from January 2013 onwards, however, Widodo would be the frontrunner in all published surveys until the presidential election (Mietzner 2015b: 29).

What were the factors that allowed Widodo to take the ‘telepopulist’ path from the margins of national politics to the top of the presidential polls, and do so quickly—at the expense of far more established political figures? The first was an unpretentious and self-effacing personal style which his elite peers—former generals, business tycoons, and members of political dynasties—could not hope to plausibly adopt. As governor in Jakarta, Widodo maintained the unpretentious and self-effacing personal style that he had made his trademark in Solo, traveling with comparatively small motorcades and entourages and dressing and speaking casually in public. He made ostentatious displays of his own middle-class normality, flying economy class when he visited his hometown of Solo and eating at cheap restaurants in view of the media. As McRae (2013: 292) wrote in ‘the first time in a long time that [Indonesian] people have seen themselves reflected in a politician’.

The *merakyat*—or ‘of the people’—persona Widodo cultivated was in and of itself endearing to voters, but was also instrumental in attracting media attention whenever it was on display. The middle-class normalcy of the capital city’s governor had such novelty value that instances of its display became news stories that rocketed to the top of TV news bulletins and online news websites’ ‘most-read’ lists. The *merakyat* persona, therefore, was the fuel of Widodo’s telepopulist strategy in Indonesia in a similar way that it was for the Latin American neopopulists of decades past. As Boas observed of that group of politicians,

By speaking in the vernacular, dressing casually, espousing an affinity for popular styles of music or sports, and engaging in showy, spectacle-filled campaigns that emphasize their charismatic qualities, neopopulist candidates make the large masses of poor voters more likely to identify with and support them (Boas 2005: 31)

A second accompanying factor that helped Widodo advertise his ordinariness was that unlike his most prominent rivals in the lead-up to the 2014 election, he was a directly elected leader rather than a private citizen. Megawati, Prabowo and Bakrie were party chairs; the members of the Yudhoyono political camp were likewise at most only party officials or at best cabinet ministers in security roles. The opportunities for them to generate media attention through the performance of public duties were much more limited than was the case with the governor of Indonesia’s capital city. When his opponents campaigned in their capacity as party leaders, it wasn’t exciting to media consumers and the editors who sought to shape news coverage to viewer desires. Widodo, however, could campaign relentlessly under the guise of the inherently newsworthy business of governing Indonesia’s largest city—his policy innovations in Jakarta, his conflicts with party officials, and his displays of his down-to-earth management style were necessary parts of his job.

By not acknowledging the importance of these abovementioned factors, structuralist accounts of the importance of the mass media in linking elites with voters overstate the importance of financial resources in gaining media exposure. Writing in 2013—by which time when Widodo

had already become the most popular politician in Indonesia, and the leading candidate for the 2014 presidential election—Winters (2013: 33) still maintained that ‘serious presidential contenders for the 2014 elections (and major local elections) must buy media access, which in some cases has meant buying television and radio stations and newspapers outright.’ Yet as I have demonstrated above in the account of Widodo’s rise to national prominence between 2011 and 2013, while oligarchic sponsorship was an enabling factor in progressing his career, his fame and popularity were fundamentally built on the dominance of news media coverage that was not bought. Rather, as Tapsell (2015) demonstrates in his study of how media organisations both created and responded to the ‘Jokowi phenomenon’, the imperative to cover Widodo was driven by insatiable public demand for stories about him. The success of his tel-e populism serves to substantiate Kenny’s observation that populism is at its core a ‘relatively *low cost* means of connecting with masses of voters’ (Kenny 2019: 19)—both in terms of financial resources, and in terms of the burden of party or organisation-building.

There was without a doubt a clear material aspect to ‘Jokowimania’, but not in the way that typical structuralist accounts of Indonesian politics might expect. The careers of media managers, and the financial performance of media proprietors, were determined by their ability to maximise ratings and therefore advertising revenue in an intensely competitive media landscape. Coverage of Widodo’s activities as governor of Jakarta ‘generated superb ratings...journalists sought him for news, rather than him seeking out media owners for favorable coverage’ (Tapsell 2015: 41). The mutually beneficial symbiosis of Widodo’s political ambition and the commercial interests of media companies mirrored the relationship between Widodo and political parties: they needed him as much as the reverse. Whether it was oligarchic-owned media outlets or oligarch-controlled political parties, Widodo’s relationships with the institutional instruments of oligarchic power on his rise to national prominence between 2011 and 2013 were undoubtedly transactional—yet such transactions were, at this stage at least, occurring on terms that were often more favourable to Widodo’s political interests than those of his oligarchic rivals.

Conclusion

As Mayor of Solo Joko Widodo harnessed the opportunity to amass intense popularity among grassroots voters and then use that as a power resource against other elites, using the new money and legal powers made available to him by decentralisation. In this regard Widodo was atypical, but not unique. He was part of a widespread, though far from ubiquitous, trend of political entrepreneurs in the regions who sought to erode the dominance of entrenched patronage machines through similar ‘local populist’ means (Rosser and Wilson 2013; see also Tans 2012, Aspinall and Warburton 2013, Aspinall 2013a). He entered office as a figure allied to but nevertheless detached from the established clientelist networks of the city, and was

largely unknown among the electorate. He consolidated a personal following through the strategic use of the local state's welfare apparatus, directed at poor voters, to the extent that he achieved electoral dominance. In Jakarta, where his alienation from the local political establishment was even more pronounced, the imperative to quickly consolidate a base of loyal support within the electorate was even more immediate. Correspondingly, his rapid reform and expansion of welfare programs was had the effect of dramatically limiting the scope for brokerage in the distribution of state benefits.

What made him unique among his subnational populist peers, however, was how he was able to use local office as a platform to then replicate these strategies at higher levels of government, leveraging his popularity to win the governorship of Jakarta. The final and most important phase was expanding the target of populist strategies from the local to the national over the course of 2013. Reinforcing a populist linkage with a popular constituency through policy means was not an option available to him—his ability to direct material resources to people was limited to Jakarta's provincial borders. To build a national constituency ahead of the 2014 presidential race, 'telepopulism' became central to Widodo's strategy. Without a personalist party apparatus, support organisation, or any state organs promoting his candidacy, millions of Indonesians were introduced to 'Jokowi' through broadcast and online media and television and of these a substantial proportion decided they wanted him to be their next president.

Placing the effects of Widodo's populist strategy as the central factor in his elevation from local politics to national popularity clashes with some of the analytical conclusion of structuralist accounts of that rise. Given the myriad disappointments of the Widodo presidency, there is a natural allure to revisionist analyses that highlight the role of oligarchic sponsorship in constructing a nominating coalition for him in the 2012 gubernatorial election in Jakarta (Winters 2013), or analyse how Widodo's populism was 'co-opted' by oligarchs who 'bandwagoned' behind him once he had become a national sensation (Fukuoka and Djani 2018: 206). Fukuoka and Djani echo the observations of Winters in emphasising that 'Jokowi's arrival in Jakarta was largely top-down in nature' (210) and 'not the result of a grassroots initiative' (211). Widodo's rise was unquestionably driven from the top—yet accounts that come close to portraying it as engineered by oligarchs a) unduly minimise the role that the shrewd exercise of his own strategic agency played in his political success, and b) exaggerate how instrumental party support was to his being elected governor beyond giving him a nominating platform.

As the narrative provided in this chapter shows, Widodo was able to build a national constituency thanks to the charismatic bond he was able to form with a national constituency via the free coverage he was given by the broadcast and electronic media, who had a commercial interest in providing their consumers with coverage of him. Far from demonstrating how instrumental money and oligarchic deal-making are to determining political outcomes in Indonesia, Widodo's rise in fact demonstrated the viability of 'telepopulism' as a cheap way to

build an electoral constituency. That obviates the need for party or organisation-building, or for the activation or recruitment of vertically-integrated patronage machines, *as well as* subverting the control of non-populist oligarchs over political outcomes—it is, in other words, neither the product of grassroots organising nor oligarchic engineering. Against the expectations of many scholars, the Indonesian political landscape does offer the opportunity for candidates outside the national oligarchy, and with tenuous ties to political parties, to rise to national prominence without the need for expending mass sums of money nor putting in the significant work required to build up a partisan organisation to support their political ambitions.

Widodo's 'telepopulism' and its success was both a cause and consequence of his status as an outsider to the party elite. As discussed in my introduction, to the extent that the outsider/insider distinction has been theorised for the purposes of comparative research, it has largely been defined in terms of a particular politician's affiliation, or lack of affiliation, with a mainstream political party, or the length of time they have spent in politics. Carreras has variously defined political 'neophytes' as those who have spent less than three years in politics (2017); Kenney defines 'politicians who have become politically prominent from outside of the national party system', whereas insiders are those who 'rise to political prominence from within the party system' (1998: 59); Barr (2009: 33) defines 'outsider' as a politician 'who gains political prominence not through or in association with an established, competitive party, but as a political independent or in association with new or newly competitive parties'. By any of these definitions, by the time Joko Widodo was a national figure he was no longer an outsider, having both maintained an affiliation with PDI-P since the beginning of his political career in 2005 and holding elected office under that nominal affiliation for seven years before being elected governor of Jakarta in 2005. There is therefore one perspective that would hold that, despite Widodo's effective use of populist political tactics, he had too much experience operating as a politician—and while affiliated with a mainstream party—to count as an outsider to the national political elite.

Such a perspective would be a simplistic take on the ambiguities of party affiliation implies in the Indonesian context, and as a result mischaracterises how Widodo drew upon his association with parties to advance his political career. As has been extensively documented by the scholarship on local politics in Indonesia (e.g. Mietzner 2010, Choi 2009, Buehler and Tan 2007), at the subnational level the advent of direct elections for local government heads had transformed the local system from 'one in which the parties were perceived to have a stranglehold on politics into one in which, at least in the regions, they were significantly weakened, reduced to service providers for local powerholders' (2007: 65). Widodo represented a landmark in Indonesian politics in that not only does he represent a breakthrough for *populist* political tactics in making a local politician a presidential candidate, but also in that he did so while maintaining the arms-length and transactional relationship with political parties that is

typical of subnational politics. As the narrative provided in this chapter has shown, he rose to prominence in spite, as much as because, of his status as a PDI-P cadre: despite becoming one of his party's most electorally successful and reported-on local executives, he never took on a role as a party administrator nor sought to put down any roots within the party organisation, and never advertised his party affiliation on the campaign trail. As Widodo quickly emerged as a leading potential candidate for the presidency in the approaching 2014 election, these relationships with his party would remain transactional but no longer arms-length: with the prospect of placing a party agent in the presidency at stake, PDI-P would make the most of its position as the most eligible nominating vehicle for Widodo to force him to assume a political identity in which his status as a party member was much more prominent.

CHAPTER TWO *Breaking the 'party blockade'*

Whatever disagreements exist between scholars about what populism is, there is a broad agreement that it is at least partially a consequence of the decay of mainstream political parties and party systems in which they were dominant. Levitsky and Cameron (2003: 4) hypothesised that '[w]hen parties are strong...politicians must work through them in order to obtain higher office and...must cooperate with them in order to remain there', and that for this reason '[p]arties play an important role in...limiting the space available to political outsiders'—outsider, of course, being the kind of politician most likely to rely on populist political strategies. Subsequent scholarship has likewise emphasised the role played by the strength and social embeddedness of parties, and the corresponding institutionalisation of party systems, as buffers against the rise of populist candidates and parties (Self & Hicken 2018); as Hicken (2020: 38) summarises it, the evidence is strong that 'populists are less likely to emerge and be successful in countries where parties are strong, while weak party organisations and unattached electorates provide an open door for populists.' More confirmation of the critical role that strongly bureaucratised patronage parties play in limiting the size of a potential populist constituency is provided by Kenny (2017), who has shown how the constituency for populism expands when the coherence of party-based patronage systems deteriorates as a result of decentralisation within a polity.

As we have seen in Chapter One's account of Joko Widodo's 'telepopulist' rise to national prominence between 2011 and 2013, Indonesian parties are not 'strong' enough to foreclose the opportunities for outsiders to use populist strategies to connect with those 'unattached' electorates. Indeed, in the terms in which party 'strength' and 'weakness' are usually discussed, Indonesian parties are 'weak' in other important respects: not only do they do a poor job of executing their core democratic functions of interest aggregation, policy formulation and the incubation of executive talent, they are typically either internally fragmented, oligarchic, or dynastic, and are decreasingly embedded in society (Mietzner 2013, 2020; Tomsa 2008; Johnson Tan 2012a, 2012b). But in spite of these background realities, one area in which Indonesian parties are 'strong' is in their role as gatekeepers to the presidency. In response to constitutional amendments in 2002 that mandated the direct election of presidents, parties legislated electoral rules that established a nexus between the presidency and party support. Indonesia's electoral and political party laws have been subject to extensive modification since the first presidential elections in 2004, but a nonetheless constant feature of them has been provisions that limit the scope for individuals to gain access to the presidential ballot on the back of

a nomination from a new or specially created personal vehicle party—in effect forcing these individuals into coalitions with incumbent non-populist parties. These outcomes are achieved by two key mechanisms: first, onerous restrictions on the establishment of new parties; second, a ‘presidential threshold’ that requires that only parties or coalitions of parties with a sufficient share of legislative votes or seats can nominate candidates. Party leaders use these mechanisms to deal themselves into alliances with presidential candidates, in which the inclusion of parties in a president’s cabinet in exchange for support of a presidential candidacy is a key feature.

Despite their having erected exceptionally high barriers to the ability of outsiders to unilaterally nominate themselves for president, Indonesian party leaders still confront dilemmas of candidate selection that are generic to all presidential systems. As Samuels and Shugart have theorised (2010: 63), parties face a principle–agent problem when selecting candidates for executive office, especially in presidential systems. Parties want to see the election of heads of government who can act as dependable agents of the party’s leaders and its organisational interests. But ‘the qualities that make a potential candidate useful for the party’s collective goals may conflict with the qualities that suggest a candidate will reliably pursue those goals’—specifically, ‘the skills most useful for winning a presidential election include proven vote-drawing ability and an appealing, suprapartisan public image. These skills may only weakly correlate with the skills that make one a faithful executor of the party’s will’. Consequently, ‘the best potential agent from a party’s organizational point of view may be incapable of satisfying the party from an electoral point of view, while the candidate most likely to win an election might be a less-faithful party agent’ (64). Parties therefore face a dilemma: take a chance on a party apparatchik who may be at an electoral disadvantage to non-party figures, or take a chance on an outsider who might have a better chance at winning, but who might also see political advantage in defying the party’s policy or personnel preferences after they win office.

Indonesian parties have faced this dilemma acutely since the introduction of direct presidential elections in 2004. The victory of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, a former army general who campaigned with the support of a small personal vehicle party, Partai Demokrat, shattered the conviction of many political elites that the activation of party machineries would be key to getting out the vote for the party officials who competed in direct presidential elections (Aspinall 2005: 141–143). Since then, the electoral record of party insiders in presidential politics has been poor, with the most popular candidates now emerging from outside party organisations. Alongside this collapse in the prestige of parties there has been proliferation of opportunities for non-party figures to build a popular constituency through non-party channels. Such opportunities are more readily available to the kinds of politicians who operate at a greater political distance—both literal and figurative—from party leaderships. Decentralisation has been a key ingredient in creating these conditions: as I have explored in Chapter One,

subnational politicians have relatively more opportunities to generate favourable media coverage from their official activities compared with the typical party insiders who are more dominant in the legislature, party bureaucracies, or cabinets.

Indeed, as we have seen in the previous chapter, by 2013 these two structural trends—growth in the public’s latent demand for non-party candidates, and the rise of a new class of local populists like Joko Widodo—together provided the background conditions for Widodo to seek a presidential nomination. In this chapter, I show how these dynamics played out in the process of his seeking and obtaining a nomination from his party, PDI-P, to contest Indonesia’s 2014 presidential election. The chapter proceeds in two parts. First, I discuss the period between 2013 and early 2014 during which Widodo made subtle but sustained efforts at demonstrating his electoral appeal to PDI-P, lobbying chairwoman Megawati Soekarnoputri to select him as the party’s candidate in 2014. As part of this process, Widodo had to demonstrate his reliability as a party agent to PDI-P elites around Megawati, many of whom suspected and resented the breakthrough of a figure whom they saw as an upstart outsider—and whom they feared might upset the hierarchy of power relations inside the party. Widodo would pivot from wearing his party identity lightly towards embracing a new persona as a faithful party servant. In the second section of this chapter, I discuss how this process of reassuring PDI-P of his party bona fides came at a great cost to Widodo once the 2014 presidential election campaign got started. Having been forced to make ostentatious displays of his fealty to the party organisation in order to get his nomination, Widodo now had to stand for election having been labelled by his opponents and hostile media outlets as a ‘puppet’ of Megawati and PDI-P. A concluding section closes with some reflections on how the case study speaks to the comparative questions with which I frame this chapter’s analysis.

An outsider-proof presidency?

That Joko Widodo’s path to power in 2014 would pass through incumbent political parties testified to the success of a years-long process of institutional engineering that had as its goal to bind Indonesian presidents in alliances with party leaders. This process had begun in the immediate aftermath of the resignation of Soeharto and the transition to democracy in 1998. With legislative powers still lying in the hands of the lame-duck parliament elected in the New Order’s final staged-managed polls in 1997, a team of largely US-educated technocrats spearheaded the drafting of legislation that liberalised party registration rules, establish a new closed-list PR electoral system, and delegated substantial political powers to local governments. With the post-1998 polity still operating under the same constitution that underpinned the New Order, Indonesia initially retained the indirectly elected presidency that between 1971 and 1997 had seen Soeharto ritually reinstalled by the MPR (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat), a joint sitting of the two houses of parliament. Under the 1945 constitution the MPR

remained the country's paramount political institution—a sort of 'supralegislature'—(Horowitz 2013: 112), to which even the president remained answerable. The MPR had the authority to amend the constitution and could effectively dismiss a president via a vote of no confidence by rejecting his or her annual 'accountability' speech to the assembly.

Unlike in the Soeharto years—in which three officially recognised parties engaged in highly controlled forms of electoral competition—in the first post-New Order elections in 1999 this quasi-parliamentary system would operate in a context of genuinely free and democratic competition between parties. For these reasons, the 1999 legislative elections were seen as a de facto contest to see who, if anybody, would take over the presidency from Golkar's B.J. Habibie (who, as Soeharto's final vice-president, had taken over the presidency upon the latter's resignation). The opportunity to play a role in appointing a new president in the first MPR session after the 1999 elections incentivised the proliferation of political parties. Partly for this reason, the team of technocrats who designed the new system were concerned with limiting the size of the party system that would emerge at the 1999 polls, with memories of Indonesia's chaotic period of parliamentary democracy in the 1950s still very much in the minds of its intelligentsia and political elites (Ambardi 2008: 94–96; Crouch 2010: 47–48). Mechanisms to put a brake on the fragmentation of the party system were twofold: first, the 1999 Law on Political Parties established a system of 'party verification' under which parties needed to demonstrate to the electoral commission that they maintained a minimum number of party branches across a given number of subnational jurisdictions in order to be eligible to contest national elections; second, the 1999 Law on Elections established a parliamentary threshold of 2% of the popular vote for a party to be assigned seats in the new parliament—enough, it was thought, to prevent the parliament being crammed with so-called *guram* or 'flea'-sized parties.

These measures still did not prevent a total of 48 parties qualifying to contest the 1999 legislative polls, and 21 passing the parliamentary threshold to win seats in the DPR (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, the main house of parliament). The parties that emerged as dominant forces of the post-Soeharto politics, though, generally had their roots in the New Order. For PDI-P, which had become a home for secular-nationalist opposition to the New Order under the leadership of Megawati Soekarnoputri, the 1999 polls represented an electoral high-water mark, with the party winning 33% of the popular vote. In a telling sign of the continuing relevance of the New Order's legacies in the new regime, the former Soeharto vehicle Golkar had come in a close second with 21%, with a variety of moderate Islamic parties such as PAN, PKB, PPP and PK (later relaunched as PKS) accompanying them to form the core of post-Soeharto party system. Having emerged as the leader of the largest party as expected, Megawati was widely considered (not least by herself) as the frontrunner to be appointed by the MPR in its late 1999 session. But Megawati was outmanoeuvred in the lead up to the 1999 session, which instead installed the PKB party leader, the Islamic cleric Abdurrahman Wahid, as the new president; Megawati was only able to secure the vice-presidency.

The Wahid presidency would be the test of the new institutional framework established by the transition-period reformers—and in the view of the political elite, this test exposed the system as unworkable. Despite his status as a respected liberal Islamic intellectual, and his intense charismatic bond with grassroots NU religious communities, Wahid proved to be an erratic and incompetent president, and he steadily alienated the key partners of his elite coalition in the year and a half that he spent in office. In the course of securing the presidency at the 1999 MPR session, Wahid had promised (and subsequently granted) cabinet seats to nearly all major parties in the legislature, including PDI-P, establishing a tradition of building oversized governing coalitions to prop up a president's elite power base (Slater 2004, 2017; Ambardi 2008). When Wahid reshuffled his cabinet in 2000 with a view to boosting the representation of his own party members and personal allies, it ignited a conflict between Wahid and the other parties whose cabinet representation he had diluted. After months of gradually alienating party leaders, and beset by corruption scandals, Wahid resorted to issuing an emergency decree to dissolve the parliament, but the DPR moved to impeach Wahid before it came into effect. Wahid was impeached on 23 July 2001 and Megawati assumed the presidency she had complacently assumed was hers after PDI-P won the legislative elections in 1999.

The instability and collapse of Wahid's presidency gave renewed impetus to institutional reforms. In the months after his impeachment, parties came to an agreement on constitutional amendments that shifted Indonesia away from the quasi-parliamentary features of the system inherited from the New Order. In the context of the fragmented party system that had emerged in 1999—despite the efforts of institutional designers to limit the number of parliamentary factions—Indonesia faced the prospect of recurrent crises if and when a president, who lacked an electoral mandate of their own, comes into conflict with the legislature that elected them. Amendments to the constitution made in two rounds of constitutional amendments, in November 2001 and August 2002, effected a 'fundamental change in the institutions of Indonesia' (Ellis 2007: 28) with a view to shifting Indonesia towards a more conventional presidential system marked by a directly elected presidency and the separation of powers.

The precise design of the system of direct presidential elections was the object of intense contestation between different party players—all of whom had a short-term political stake in the rules under which the first election, scheduled for 2004, would be held. The position of the newly installed president Megawati and her party PDI-P would of course be a critical factor in whichever method of direct election was adopted. Many pragmatists in PDI-P 'thought that they were robbed of the fruits of the victory [in 1999]' (Ambardi 2008: 224) and saw in a direct election the opportunity to cement Megawati's authority in her second term. At the same time, many organicist ideologues in the party were ideologically predisposed to a system of election through the MPR, and initially Megawati herself openly doubted whether the country was 'ready' for a direct presidential election in 2004, proposing that it instead be delayed until 2009 (Crouch 2010: 59). While PDI-P had come to support the MPR's 2001 amendments to the

constitution that mandated direct elections, the party reversed course to call for the repeal of the relevant constitutional amendment in the 2002 MPR session. Once pragmatists in PDI-P had convinced Megawati that direct elections in the context of a strengthened presidency offered an opportunity for her to strengthen her political position beyond 2004, she finally came to support the idea once again (Crouch 2010: 52–53). ‘In a long-overdue recognition of self-interest’ (Horowitz, 2013: 120–121) she rather clearly envisioned herself as the incumbent ahead of the first direct presidential elections in 2004.

The 2002 constitutional amendment had merely mandated that the president and vice president be ‘elected directly in a single ticket directly by the people’ (Article 6Ai) and that such tickets were to be ‘nominated by parties or coalitions of parties that are election participants in advance of elections’ (Article 6Aii). Critical details about the eligibility of parties to nominate candidates would have to be specified in legislation. Indeed, a key object of contestation in the process of negotiating what would become the 2004 Law on the Election of the President and Vice President was the precise mechanism by which parties and/or party coalitions would be able to nominate presidential candidates. Because legislative elections in 2004 were to precede the presidential poll by three months, there was the opportunity for the laws to limit the number of candidates by using the legislative results as the basis of a presidential nomination threshold, under which only parties or coalitions of parties that had won a certain number of votes and seats were eligible to nominate candidates for the presidential elections. The stringency of the threshold was the subject of disagreement between parties. Initially PDI-P and Golkar, the largest parties, wanted a high threshold of 20% which would have naturally positioned them as the anchors of any nominating coalitions likely to emerge in 2004; other party factions were opposed to such a blatant attempt to limit their opportunity to nominate their own candidates. Ultimately, a compromise was worked out by which the threshold would remain relatively low at 5% of votes or seats for 2004 while being raised to 15% beginning in 2009 (Crouch 2010: 66). This latter figure would be raised significantly ahead of Yudhoyono’s re-election campaign to the 20% of assigned DPR seats or 25% of the popular vote formula that remains a part of electoral laws passed since. (An overview of the evolution of Indonesia’s barriers to entry to new parties and presidential candidates is presented below in Table 1.)

At the same time that the 2003 Law on the Election of the President and Vice President sought to limit the number of presidential candidates to those who received the backing of incumbent parties, an accompanying 2003 law governing legislative elections dramatically tightened the conditions under which parties could contest national legislative polls. Whereas in 1999 parties had to have branches in at least half of provinces and in at least half of municipalities within those provinces to be eligible to access the legislative ballot, for the 2004 elections that figure was raised two-thirds of provinces and two-thirds of municipalities in updated laws passed ahead of the 2009 legislative elections, and again to 100% of provinces at 75% of municipalities within those provinces in another revised electoral law passed ahead of the 2014

polls. These registration restrictions would also have the effect of limiting the number of political parties able to nominate presidential candidates as well: because the constitution mandated that parties that eligible for participation in national elections (*peserta pemilu*) were the only ones who could nominate presidential candidates, insofar as the heightened legislative ballot access limitations would push smaller parties off the legislative ballot, then it would also serve to limit the number of parties able to nominate presidential candidates, whether unilaterally or as part of a larger nominating coalition.

Table 1: Evolution of Indonesia's electoral barriers to entry, 1999–2017

Law	Key provisions
1999 Law on Elections (3/1999)	<p>—Gives the Electoral Commission (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, KPU) the power to assess whether political parties meet the criteria to participate in general elections (Article 10b)</p> <p>—Article 39(1): parties need to have branches in 50% of all provinces and 50% of all municipalities within those provinces in order to participate in elections</p>
1999 Law on Political Parties (2/1999)	<p>—New parties must have at least 50 registered members (Article 2[1]) and must register with the Justice Ministry (Article 4)</p>
2002 Law on Political Parties (31/2002)	<p>—Tightened the requirements for registration of political parties. Whereas the requirement for maintaining branches was under the 1999 laws only a condition of participation in elections, to merely be registered parties now had to maintain branches in 50% of provinces, 50% of municipalities within those provinces, and 50% of the subdistricts (<i>kecamatan</i>) within those municipalities (Article 2[3])</p>
2003 Law on Legislative Elections (12/2003)	<p>—Increases requirements for participation in elections. Parties would have to maintain branches in two-thirds of provinces, two-thirds of municipalities within those provinces; these branches would also be subject to minimum membership requirements (Article 7[1])</p> <p>—Political parties that had contested the 1999 elections but won less than 2% of national legislative votes or less than 3% of votes in provincial and municipal legislatures in at least half of provinces and in half of municipalities were prohibited from</p>

contesting the next (2004) elections unless they merged with other parties (Article 143[1])

2003 Law on Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections (23/2003)	<p>—Defined parties that were eligible to nominate presidential candidates as those parties eligible to contest legislative elections as defined by Law 12/2003 (Article 1[4])</p> <p>—Established the presidential nomination threshold: for the first direct presidential elections in 2004, this figure was set a 3% of DPR seats won or 5% of the national vote in the preceding legislative election (Article 101)</p> <p>—In subsequent elections presidential candidates needed the support of a party or coalition of parties that had won 15% of DPR seats or 20% of the national popular vote in the preceding legislative election (Article 5[4])</p>
2008 Law on Political Parties	<p>—Increased the requirements for registration of a political party from the 2002 Law on Political Parties: now required to maintain branches in 60% of provinces, 50% of municipalities therein, 25% of subdistricts (<i>kecamatan</i>) therein</p>
2008 Law on Legislative Elections (10/2008)	<p>—Raises the bar for qualifying to contest national elections from the criteria in Law 12/2003: parties need to maintain branches in two-thirds of provinces, two-thirds of municipalities therein; also have to demonstrate minimum membership in each branch (Article 8[1]); the KPU is tasked with verifying this status (Article 9)</p>
2008 Law on Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections (42/2008)	<p>—Similar to Law 23/2003, only parties that qualify as <i>peserta pemilu</i> per laws governing legislative elections are eligible to nominate presidential candidates (Article 1[2])</p> <p>—Raises the presidential nomination threshold: presidential candidates needed the support of parties that won 20% of DPR seats or 25% of the popular vote at the preceding legislative election (Article 9)</p>
2012 Law on Legislative Elections (8/2012)	<p>—Raises the requirements for eligibility for parties to contest national elections further: will have to demonstrate that they maintain branches in all provinces, in 75% of municipalities within those provinces, and 50% of subdistricts (<i>kecamatan</i>) within those municipalities (Article 8[2])</p>

2017 Law on Elections (7/2017)	<p>—Replaces the 2008 Law on Presidential elections and 2012 Law on Legislative Elections in a single piece of legislation along with other electoral administration laws</p> <p>—Maintains the 100% / 75% / 50% requirements for a party contest national elections as in Law 8/2012 (Article 173[2])</p> <p>—Maintains the presidential nomination threshold of 20% of DPR seats / 25% of popular vote in the preceding legislative election established in Law 42/2008 (Article 222); since per a 2013 constitutional court decision presidential and legislative elections from 2019 onwards would be held on the same day, this was interpreted as meaning the ‘preceding legislative election’ was the one held 5 years earlier, i.e. the 2019 presidential threshold was based on the 2014 legislative election results</p>
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Source: author’s compilation based on text of legislation quoted

In sum, the suite of laws governing the electoral system in the post-Wahid presidential system served two key functions: limiting the ability of new parties to gain access to the national ballot through the party ‘verification’ requirements; limiting the ability of small parties to win seats in parliament through a heightened parliamentary threshold; and enforcing the nexus between directly elected presidents and incumbent party elites through the presidential nomination thresholds. The rules initially had mixed success in limiting the number of parties, however. Half as many parties qualified to access the legislative ballot as in 1999 (down to 24 from 48), while only 16 passed the threshold to be assigned seats in the DPR after the elections in April 2004. The number of *peserta pemilu* would increase slightly in 2009 to 34, before dropping to 15 in 2014 and rising again to 20 in 2019. Ironically, as Sherlock (2009: 13) highlights, the presidential nomination threshold contained in the electoral system legislation to some extent counteracted political party laws’ goal of discouraging the proliferation of parties. The nomination threshold in fact gave oligarchs an incentive to form new parties to form the basis of a nomination coalition for themselves, or at the very least to give them a foothold in the party system so they can take advantage of the pre-nomination marketplace for quid pro quo deals between parties and prospective candidates that the threshold had created. Over the coming years ‘presidentialist’ party type that came to sit alongside the traditional ‘*aliran*’ or identity- and ideology-based parties that had their roots in the New Order or were founded in the aftermath of the transition to democracy, with Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s Democrat Party, Prabowo Subianto’s Gerindra, and Wiranto’s Hanura all gaining representation in the DPR between 2004 and 2019.

In 2004, however, the presidentialist party was a novelty, with Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono pioneering the use of a newly assembled political vehicle—Partai Demokrat (PD)—for his presidential ambitions. Yudhoyono's victory in 2004 against rivals backed by seemingly much more formidable party machines would represent a watershed moment in how Indonesian politicians and scholars conceived of the bases of electoral competitiveness in the new era of direct elections. Specifically, the election greatly weakened the credibility of the idea that party machineries could get out the vote for a particular presidential ticket. Megawati, an incumbent president, was backed in the second round of the 2004 election by a party coalition that included the country's biggest and most well-organised political parties, among them PDI-P, Golkar and PKB. But the reality that the party apparatchiks behind Megawati were slow to appreciate was that 'the advent of direct presidential elections in the age of television made possible a new style of politics, in which it was possible to appeal directly to voters via the media, bypassing party machines' (Aspinall 2005: 142).

Yudhoyono, meanwhile, understood the new dynamics well, and drew heavily on the advice of a team of pollsters and marketing experts who painstakingly crafted an image of 'SBY' as a technocratic reformer who, with his background as an army general, was best placed to cut through political bickering to deepen political reforms and hasten Indonesia's post-Asian Financial Crisis economic recovery. The strategy worked: despite PD only winning 7.5% of the legislative vote in the April 2004 legislative elections, Yudhoyono would go on to beat the incumbent Megawati in a landslide in the second round of the election with 60.6% of the vote. Party figures who supported the Megawati candidacy expressed shock (Mietzner 2013: 148) at her formidable campaign apparatus defeated by a candidate backed by a party that held virtually no sway over regional executives or legislatures. Scholars were to conclude that the direct elections had revealed that 'Indonesian political parties no longer appear to have deep psychological roots in the electorate' (Mujani and Liddle 2010: 41). Not for the first time, nor the last, efforts by incumbent parties to engineer institutions to preserve their systemic role of parties as gatekeepers to the presidency were in conflict with the socio-political realities of Indonesia.

Direct elections and oligarchy

Amid the challenges the established party machines and their leaders faced in the direct-elections era, scholars were equivocal in their assessments of whether the new system would give extra-oligarchic political actors more opportunities to seize political power in their own right, or to at least influence how such power was exercised. Writing from an institutionalist perspective, Slater (2004) was a prominent sceptic, having retrospectively interpreted the Wahid and Megawati presidencies as the genesis of a 'party cartel' in which parties colluded to share in the spoils of access to state power at the expense of representation or articulating opposition

to a presidential administration. While ‘the introduction for direct presidential elections as a means of reimposing some semblance of vertical accountability on the increasingly rarefied political elite’ (85), the monopoly of parties over presidential nomination, and the continuation of the collusive favour-trading that marked negotiations over presidential nominations, meant that the ‘vertical accountability’ benefits of direct elections were muted. Structuralist scholars put particular emphasis on the enormous cost of running for president in drawing candidates into symbiotic relationships with donors, or restricting entry to those already wealthy. In Winters’ view, there were two roads to the presidency: either to fund the creation of a personal vehicle party that could fulfil the requirements to compete in a presidential campaign, or pay off one or more other parties to support one’s bid for president (2013: 27). Either way, a politician must themselves control the resources of an oligarch, or attract the sponsorship of oligarchs to purchase party support. These realities acted as a significant barrier to alternative candidates emerging to penetrate what Slater had earlier dubbed the ‘party blockade’ (2004: 85) of the presidency. In Winters’ view the only viable path for non-oligarchic presidential candidates was through an alliance of reformist forced outside the party system who would band together to consolidate their support behind a ‘civil society’ candidate in the hope of building their national popularity and thus attracting party support (Winters 2012).

The first two presidential contests lent some vindication to these critical appraisals of the democratising effects of direct elections. What was clear was that direct elections had failed to meaningfully broaden the choices of Indonesians at the ballot box by opening up avenues for participation by outsiders to the Jakarta-based political establishment. Even despite the relatively fresh approach to electoral politics Yudhoyono offered, the 2004 and 2009 elections did not feature a single presidential or vice-presidential candidate who was not already prominent in party politics, the military, or business during the New Order. Nevertheless, one trend has stood out: politicians with a background as party officials have had a poor track record of success in presidential contests. To be sure, party leaders have won the presidency or come very close to it: Yudhoyono had won in 2004 having been nominated by the personal vehicle party he chaired, and the former general Prabowo Subianto has been a competitive presidential candidate, coming within several points of winning the presidency at the 2014 and 2019 elections. Yet these men’s relationships with their parties were of a different character to many of their opponents’. It would be mistaken to see their political appeal as extending from their control of a party machinery—instead, their parties were and are an extension of their presidential ambitions and their personal brands. In summary, with parties held in low esteem by the electorate, yet with electoral and party rules serving to maintain parties’ ‘blockade’ of presidential nominations, Indonesian parties face the dilemma described by Samuels and Shugart (2010): they can choose between nominating loyal party cadre who likely has little electoral appeal, or risking that a more popular candidate from outside the party might not be a loyal agent of its interests. When Joko Widodo sought to turn the fame and popularity he had

generated in local politics into a presidential candidacy in 2014, however, he would find that the system also presented dilemmas to outsiders: while there was electoral advantage in being seen to be aloof from party politics, the system required that outsiders form formal alliances with parties in which support for an outsider's candidacy was gained in exchange for promises of future patronage and influence over a presidential administration.

Joko Widodo and the 'party blockade', 2013–2014

As we have seen in Chapter One, by the middle of 2013 then Jakarta governor Joko Widodo was already the most popular politician in Indonesia and was leading the polls for the upcoming presidential election. Participating in the 2014 polls would require securing the support of a party, but the barriers to entry inherent in the Indonesian electoral system precluded the possibility of Widodo unilaterally nominating himself via a party established or commandeered for that purpose. The most basic issue was that the deadline for having a new party approved to appear on the 2014 legislative ballot had already passed: in January 2013 the electoral commission (KPU) had concluded its process of 'verification' to certify that parties operated the required number of branches to be eligible to contest elections. It had approved ten parties that passed that process as *peserta pemilu* (general election participants). This had important practical ramifications for candidates: by law, only these *peserta pemilu* that had fulfilled the stringent criteria for legislative ballot access could also nominate presidential candidates.

Channelling his presidential ambitions through an incumbent party was therefore Widodo's only option. Two other personalist parties, Gerindra and Hanura, were committed to their own leaders' presidential ambitions (Prabowo and Wiranto respectively); so was Golkar under the leadership of the billionaire tycoon and former cabinet minister Aburizal Bakrie. The Islamic parties PKS, PAN and PPP were an awkward fit for Widodo, with many of their members ideologically predisposed against aligning with an *abangan* (heterodox Javanese) Muslim like Widodo, who maintained Javanist Islamic practices and whose wife and daughter did not cover their hair with the Islamic *hijab* (headscarf). NasDem—a new party founded in 2010 by the Golkar-linked media tycoon Surya Paloh—had been an early supporter of Widodo, yet it was contesting a national election for the first time and was not assured of passing the parliamentary threshold that would see it gain representation in parliament. Given the looming challenge of meeting the presidential nomination threshold, it was in Widodo's interest to anchor his candidacy in an electorally viable party.

For these reasons, seeking the nomination from PDI-P represented for Widodo the path of least resistance, despite the fact that its elite culture was inhospitable to populist upstarts from the margins of the party organisation. At the time, PDI-P was the third largest party in the national legislature, having received 14% of votes at the 2009 election. PDI-P's party's

chairwoman, former president Megawati, was 67 years old and was slowly but steadily coming to terms with her own electoral obsolescence; as a PDI-P official and Soekarno family confidante put it in January 2014, 'her time is up and she knows it' (confidential interview, Jakarta). The party faced a looming problem of succession, with a central question being whether to continue the dynastic leadership of the Sukarno family by letting one of her children inherit the leadership, or to seek out alternative sources of leadership regeneration. The party's internal democratic processes had atrophied, with Megawati coming to monopolise decision-making power in the party since expelling opponents of the dynastic route in 2005. One member of PDI-P's national board observed sardonically that 'within this party, we observe guided democracy'—a reference to the period of dictatorship between 1959 and 1965 under Megawati's father and independent leader Soekarno (confidential interview, Jakarta, May 2019). Megawati's presidential ambitions had faded somewhat, though not entirely, and there was constant speculation about whether Megawati would make a late about-face to once again seek the presidency in 2014. Widodo was not without rivals for the nomination in the event that Megawati did not anoint herself as the party's candidate. Megawati's daughter Puan Maharani saw herself as her mother's natural successor and disliked Widodo, but she had no electoral appeal. Still, she controlled a powerful anti-Widodo faction within the party.

Many PDI-P elites shared Puan's hostility to the idea of nominating Widodo, fearing that the effort they had put into gaining Megawati's goodwill and patronage might be wasted if he emerged as an influential figure within the party. On the other hand, party officials more removed from the imperative to gain the patronage of Megawati—such as many regional branch chiefs and the parliamentary members—were generally more enthusiastic about a Widodo candidacy. Whereas the head office elite had little to gain personally from his ascendance, it was increasingly clear to the branch bosses and parliamentary hopefuls that a Widodo candidacy under PDI-P's banner could deliver a significant coat-tails effect for the party in the April 2014 legislative election. In short, PDI-P faced the classic dilemma of a political party unable to generate electable executive candidates from within its organisation yet wary of deputising a potentially unreliable outsider to represent it in the executive. Moreover, in the perception of PDI-P's top officials the prospect of expanding the party's electoral base by nominating a popular outsider like Widodo carried the risk that that outsider may come to build his own power base within the party at their expense.

Courting Megawati

From Widodo's perspective the process of gaining PDI-P's support likewise presented dilemmas. Despite its pretensions of being the champion of Indonesia's *wong cilik* or 'common man', PDI-P was as elitist and pervaded by corruption as other Indonesian parties. For a politician who had cultivated an image of relative autonomy from parties—an image with some truth

behind it—Widodo now risked appearing beholden to PDI-P and Megawati. Any hope of having the lobbying process conducted out of sight of the public was fanciful given the temperament Widodo was dealing with in Megawati—rather, he was forced to act the sycophant in full view of the national media. Widodo and Megawati were by nature very different individuals, from very different backgrounds. He was a middle-class businessperson from the regions; she was a daughter of Indonesia’s founding president, Soekarno, and lived an opulent life under the aura of her late father’s personality cult. As a member of Widodo’s inner circle at the time put it, ‘the feudal spirit in this party [PDI-P] is strong...the problem with people like Megawati and Puan [Maharani] is that they’ve never felt what it is like to experience ordinary people’s problems. Jokowi has.’ (Confidential interview, Bali, September 2014). Nevertheless, part of the path to the PDI-P nomination included Widodo treating Megawati as the stateswoman she perceived herself to be. Megawati was increasingly invited to official events in Jakarta as the guest of the governor, and Widodo himself showed an enthusiasm for participating in PDI-P party events and paying homage to the party’s rituals of veneration of Soekarno and his historical legacy—which he had so far shown little interest in previously. The imagery of the chequered shirt and down-to-earth body language that had become visual metaphors for his everyman appeal were undermined by pervasive press imagery of him holding chairs for Megawati and bowing deeply to her, and awkwardly wearing the red uniforms of PDI-P affiliate organisations at party functions.¹⁰ The awkwardness and incongruity of these events with his pre-2013 image was not lost on either media commentators or many social media users, and cartoons portraying him as a puppet of Megawati soon began to be shared widely on the internet.

Polls nevertheless showed Widodo consolidating his popularity to such an extent that the extent that PDI-P elites, in spite of their distaste for him, were yielding to cold calculations of the party’s electoral prospects if it nominated the popular governor. An important moment was a September 2013 national meeting held by PDI-P in Jakarta, which brought together the national party leadership and those of the party’s branches around the country. The meeting was held for the ostensible purpose of strategising for the next year’s national elections, yet it was clear that the most important item on the agenda was to figure out what to do about the Widodo issue. Regional party officials were by this stage confident enough to openly voice their support for his candidacy at party forums, some of them making acclamations from the floor at the September 2013 meeting to declare him the party’s candidate (Akuntono 2013). The polling results that were behind their enthusiasm were also germane to the thinking of the national elites. Contemporary opinion polls suggested that PDI-P would double its legislative vote if Widodo were to be its candidate (Ihsanuddin 2013). The number was significant,

¹⁰ Widodo’s courtship of Megawati reached its absurd peak when he spent Mother’s Day in 2013 in the company of Megawati, instead of his own mother.

because if it was achieved, PDI-P would be in a position to nominate Widodo and its own choice of running mate without entering into a nominating coalition with any other party—a tantalising prospect for a PDI-P, which now seemed on the path to a potentially spectacular comeback after a decade out of government.

With Widodo's popularity serially demonstrated by opinion polls showing that he was consolidating a lead over his presumptive opponent, Gerindra party leader Prabowo Subianto, in late 2014 Megawati began a formal process within the party of vetting him for the party's nomination, appointing a so-called 'team of eleven' academics close to the party to assess his suitability for running under the PDI-P banner and the likely benefits for the party. It recommended that Widodo be nominated—though Megawati, still equivocal about her own presidential ambitions and being lobbied by Widodo opponents in the party, still held off on formally nominating him until just days before the 2014 legislative elections. The timing of the announcement was far from ideal: it took place on 24 March, and national legislative elections were scheduled for 9 April. The party's ambivalence about Widodo, even long after it became clear what an electoral asset he was, almost certainly compromised the extent of the coat-tails effect: a poll taken in the midst of the legislative campaign, for instance, revealed that almost a third of voters were not even aware that he had been named as the PDI-P candidate (Gammon 2014b).

The 2014 legislative campaign

The immediate consequence of Widodo getting PDI-P's nomination for president in March 2014 was that he was obliged to campaign on behalf the party in the April legislative elections. The legislative campaign was at once his opportunity to openly campaign for the presidency—yet it was also when the drawbacks to the bargain he had made in order to get the party's nomination would become clear. Widodo was deployed to try to generate a coattails effect for PDI-P, but in doing so the party had put him in an awkward position. It wanted to put its stamp on him publicly to encourage his fans to vote for PDI-P candidates, but with many party leaders wary to the point of paranoia about the possible longer-term personalisation of the party around him, they also wanted to ensure that its presidential candidate did not speak on its behalf. The campaign that resulted saw many voters exposed for the first time to the image of 'Jokowi' as a loyal party man, while the party's presumptive presidential nominee was unable to use the national legislative campaign as a platform to being laying out a vision of the kind of presidency he wanted to pursue.

The continuing ambivalence about Widodo within PDI-P's national-level elite was on display even in the high-stakes legislative campaign, with his selection as the presidential candidate appearing to have had limited effect in uniting the party's top officials behind him. In partial compensation for being passed over for the nomination to which she thought she was entitled,

Megawati's daughter Puan Maharani was given a high-profile role as chairwoman of the committee that planned and executed the party's legislative campaign. Puan and her allies resented the idea, pushed by the party's advertising firm, that Widodo be the face of the party's national advertising campaigns. The governor did not appear in PDI-P's television campaign until the last days of the race, after Puan had initially vetoed a proposal to include his image in the advertisements in favour of featuring herself reading the party's slogans at the conclusion of each advert (confidential interview with an advertising industry figure, Jakarta, March 2014). By contrast, the incentives faced by regional branch leaders led them to be far more proactive in seeking to maximise the coat-tails effect from Widodo's nomination. Key areas targeted by local branches were plastered with banners that simply read 'PDI-P WINS, JOKOWI IS PRESIDENT!' (author's observations in Jakarta, Central and East Java, March–April 2014). In even far-flung parts of the archipelago, branches were expecting a coattails effect that would allow the party to make inroads into areas where localised party machines centred around local strongmen had established themselves at the expense of PDI-P (Warburton 2014).

The scramble on the part of local branches to secure a visit from Widodo, juxtaposed as it was with a national campaign strategy coordinated by officials with tense personal relationships with him, resulted in a legislative campaign whose poor management was obvious for all to see. Widodo travelled with his own team of personal advisors who coordinated poorly with the PDI-P head office. Combined with the candidate's notoriously impulsive personality this led to a trail of no-shows at PDI-P rallies across Indonesia and, at in many cases, surprise appearances at locations not ready to host him and his entourage. Often, his schedule was influenced by the personal electoral interests of the PDI-P MPs or officials who happened to be travelling with him on that day. Widodo worked himself to the brink of exhaustion making appearances to largely loyal PDI-P crowds or tiny audiences of key swing constituencies like Islamic boarding school residents and clerics. All the while, the dysfunctional campaign schedule meant that Widodo frequently missed out on the free media coverage that might have been earned by a better-planned campaign, as journalists were left hours behind the candidate on crammed rural highways with little information about Widodo's whereabouts.

The strictures of campaigning on behalf of a party—in a sense, paying the first instalment on the debt that PDI-P thought its nominee now owed them—helped aid a narrative that Widodo had sold out to party interests. An important factor was that he was not officially a presidential candidate at the time of the 2014 legislative campaign; only once the parliamentary polls are held would parties be able to officially nominate their presidential tickets with the electoral commission. Widodo therefore knew that he was in a sense still under scrutiny by the party and not completely assured of being on the presidential ballot. He made little effort to put his personal stamp on the legislative campaign, instead following the party's orders by flying around Indonesia making banal appeals to bussed-in crowds at PDI-P rallies to maximise the

party vote. The rhetoric was devoid of programmatic or ideological substance and, more confronting, largely indistinguishable from that of any other party official—worryingly for a politician whose brand depended largely on his novelty value (Gammon 2014b). Indeed, the party was anxious to ensure that he did not take a maverick turn and use the legislative polls as a platform to further establish his personalist connection with the national electorate. When asked why Widodo was not making any programmatic statements or promises on behalf of himself or the party, a senior PDI-P official stated bluntly that ‘we forbade him to talk about programs...it’s not his role to do that’ (interview with Ahmad Basarah, Deputy Secretary-General, Malang, 31 March 2014). Yet PDI-P’s confidence about the coat-tails effect that the media had dubbed the ‘Jokowi effect’ was revealed as complacent when the votes were cast. Puan Maharani herself created one of the most memorable images of the campaign when she was photographed by the press drawing the figure 27.09% in chalk in her mother’s driveway—a reference to the national popular vote share the party had targeted based on internal polling. On election night, though, it appeared that PDI-P would win under 20% of the national vote, far short of the figure that Puan and the leadership had expected and indeed short of the figure close to 40 per cent that some polls had led optimists within the party to believe (Power 2014).

The shifts in Widodo’s political persona, and his relationship with political parties, involved in gaining the presidential nomination through PDI-P were manifold. First, he had to overtly pose as a loyal PDI-P cadre to gain the confidence of the PDI-P national elite, who were suspicious of his reliability as an agent of its interests. Having gained the nomination without outward acrimony between him and the party’s elite, he was obligated to campaign on its behalf in the April 2014 legislative polls. In fulfilling that obligation, he was positioned even more overtly as a party agent, travelling around Indonesia on orders from the party to merely encourage Indonesians to vote for it, but not use the legislative campaign as a platform to project a vision for why he wanted to be president and promote his own political identity independent of the party. Indeed, the party’s vision of Widodo’s new role was revealed by Megawati’s own comment just days before the legislative polls when she introduced the governor as a *petugas partai* or ‘party servant’ whom she had ‘ordered’ to run for president (Wismabrata 2014)—a deliberate belittling of his stature. So far Widodo had only faced one element of the barriers to entry inherent in Indonesia’s electoral system: namely, the inability to form a small personal vehicle party in 2013 to contest the upcoming elections. As we have seen, this left PDI-P as the default option as the party with which Widodo would anchor his presidential campaign in 2015. The need to secure channel his aspirations through a long-established non-personalist party demanded his transformation in his political persona from the fresh-faced outsider to *petugas partai*, not only style but in substance as well. He was yet to face the other significant element of the barriers to entry, however: the requirement to put together a coalition of parties with the required 20% of votes or 25% seats in the legislative elections that had just taken place. In the weeks ahead, the set of compromises with party power—rooted in the institutions

which secure it—would see Widodo further trade away both the appearance and, to a non-trivial extent, the substance of his outsider populism.

Making the 'Jokowi' coalition

Having been forced to channel his presidential ambitions through an incumbent party, Widodo faced a further set of compromises with parties in the wake of the April 2014 legislative elections. With PDI-P having fallen just short of winning the 20% of the popular vote required for it to unilaterally nominate a presidential and vice-presidential ticket, he was required to secure the backing of additional parties in order to be able to formally register his candidacy for president with the KPU and appear on the ballot in the presidential election scheduled for that July. Historically, such coalition talks have been marked by an absence of any pretence on the part of the key actors that the negotiations—*dagang sapi* (cattle trading) in Indonesian parlance—are anything but transactional. Much of the Indonesian commentariat, as well as the public at large, considers the talks as a sordid spectacle, perceiving them as site of corrupt deals and the illegitimate exercise of party influence over potential (or actual) presidents. Knowing full well that the average Indonesian thought that coalition negotiations were a way for parties to dictate terms to a presidential candidate, Widodo had remained steadfast that he would not be bound to the usual quid pro quo deals. To the public, he always emphasised that he wanted to construct a '*koalisi tanpa syarat*' or a 'coalition without conditions'. Even as parties were signing on to support for his candidacy, Widodo said that 'there is a new way, a new paradigm—that [coalitions are made] without *bagi-bagi* (handing out) the cake, without sharing out [cabinet] seats, without handing out ministries' (Berita Satu 2014). When asked by journalists whether the coalition would 'burden' him during his leadership, he responded that 'if there are those who don't agree with [my policies], it's no big deal. If they want to leave the coalition, that's fine...we want to strengthen the presidential system, that's the main thing' (Kuwado 2014).

To some extent Widodo did avoid being enmeshed in explicit quid pro quo deals with parties in exchange for their support. But he was not totally in control of the process of putting together his own nominating coalition, nor choosing his running mate. Media reports in the weeks after the legislative elections made it clear that Megawati was the central figure in constructing Widodo's coalition. Indeed, PDI-P officials, hedging against the possibility of a disappointing legislative result, had taken the lead in sounding out potential coalition partners in the weeks leading up to the legislative polls. After the election, Surya Paloh's NasDem, the NU-linked traditionalist Islamic party PKB and Hanura, the personal vehicle of Prabowo's former army rival, Wiranto, would fall into line behind Widodo (a fifth party, PKPI, had failed to pass the parliamentary threshold in April but signed on to his nomination as well). Despite participating in an ostensibly no-strings-attached coalition deal, these parties had reason to

feel that they had secured an advantageous position for themselves. With Widodo then holding a roughly 20 percentage point lead over Prabowo as Indonesians' preferred president according to polls (Indikator Politik Indonesia 2014), they were willing to forego explicit pre-election deals with their presidential candidate in exchange for the prospect of negotiating cabinet seats and other patronage after the elections.

Indeed, their concern with not having their influence diluted dovetailed with Widodo's resistance to outright transactions, and his discomfort with a bigger than necessary coalition, to limit the further expansion of the party coalition beyond PDI-P, PKB, NasDem and Hanura. Hatta Rajasa, the chairman of the moderate Islamic PAN party, was turned away after he insisted upon being a vice-presidential candidate in return for delivering his support. An offer of support from the chair of Golkar, Aburizal Bakrie, came with similarly expansive demands: initially Bakrie sought the vice presidency for himself, before changing his bid to a prime ministership and seven cabinet seats (Hidayat et al 2014). As Widodo told journalists, Golkar had an unacceptable expectation of 'power sharing' (he used the English term) in a future administration (Kuwado 2014b). Having overplayed his hand, Bakrie's offer of support was rebuffed, and Bakrie instead joined Hatta and PAN in giving Golkar's official support to Prabowo, although a dissenting faction in Golkar would go on to support Widodo in the presidential election (Mietzner 2015b: 49–50). While his dominance in the polls might have occasioned a bandwagoning of parties to support his candidacy, Widodo's resistance to the political bartering alienated some potential party allies.

Prabowo Subianto, Widodo's presumptive opponent, had no such compunctions about explicit quid pro quo deals with parties. After Aburizal Bakrie had brought his offer of Golkar's support to Prabowo after being rebuffed by the Widodo camp, Prabowo had agreed to giving Golkar seven cabinet seats in exchange for its nomination; Bakrie, meanwhile, would help by reimbursing Prabowo for Rp1.7 trillion (A\$170 million) of Gerindra's legislative campaign costs (Hidayat et al 2014). The Islamist party PKS, not likely to join a coalition headed PDI-P—its ideological polar opposite within the Indonesian party system—defaulted to supporting Prabowo, and the conservative Islamic PPP and PBB were also folded into the Prabowo coalition. President Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat, unable to secure a vice-presidential nomination for Yudhoyono's son Agus, did not formally nominate a presidential candidate but its de facto support for Prabowo would nonetheless become clear over the course of the campaign. In spite of Prabowo's status as the underdog for the presidential election, his readiness to cut explicit power sharing deals with parties saw him gain the support of a majority of political parties representing just over 60% of votes cast in the 2014 legislative elections. Images soon started to circulate on the internet that showed the rival coalitions as two cartoon figures: a skinny figure representing the 'Jokowi' coalition, and a fat one representing Prabowo's.

Widodo's counterintuitively small set of coalition partners, though, had led him to compromise on one of the key strategic choices he had to make as part of his presidential run: the selection of his running mate. While his coalition partners were happy to forego pre-election promises of post-election patronage, they were almost unanimous in encouraging Widodo to choose the tycoon and Golkar politician Jusuf Kalla, who had served as Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's vice president between 2004 and 2009, for this role. Allowed his own choice, Widodo would not have chosen Kalla: his own preferences were known to lean towards his deputy governor in Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, or the chairman of the anti-corruption commission (KPK) Abraham Samad. Both of these two men would have broken the mould for vice-presidential candidates as much as Widodo did for the presidency, and both were unsurprisingly vetoed by Megawati and the other party leaders, who saw in Kalla a like-minded oligarchic powerbroker who was conveniently too old (Kalla was 72 in 2014) to use the vice-presidency as a springboard to the presidency. Kalla had tried and failed to do precisely that in 2009, losing in a landslide to incumbent president Yudhoyono. Kalla was as much an emblem of the fusion of money and political power in Indonesia as any. A blunt-talking ethnic Bugis from Eastern Indonesia who had gained a fortune during the New Order, Kalla was of a different personal and political character to Widodo. There was a pragmatic case from the parties' perspective to having Widodo be accompanied by Kalla, who maintained personal popularity in the electorally important provinces of Sulawesi, as a native Eastern Indonesian, as well as being a potential bridge to pro-Widodo factions in Golkar after the election. Kalla and Widodo, however, had little personal rapport. When Kalla was finally announced as the running mate on the day the two appeared at the electoral commission to formally register their candidacy, Widodo could barely disguise his despondency at the running mate his party coalition had foisted upon him.

With the 'Jokowi-JK' ticket formally registered at the electoral commission in May 2014, Joko Widodo officially became the first genuine outsider to the national-level oligarchy to successfully overcome the barriers to entry into a presidential race that Indonesian elites had established in the wake of the 2002 constitutional amendments. As we have seen, getting Widodo on the ballot involved an interplay between the power he had as an unprecedentedly popular outsider with nationwide, cross-party appeal, and the powers of party leaders that flowed from the gatekeeping role afforded to them by the electoral system. Just as was the case in his nomination for the governorship of Jakarta in 2012 described in Chapter One, Widodo needed parties to advance his personal ambitions, but parties—bereft of appealing candidates from their own ranks—needed *him* to assure their own chances of having one of their own allies installed at top of the executive. On balance, however, we can see that Widodo was forced to give away more than his coalition partners: they agreed to not bind Widodo in explicit deals for representation in cabinet or on policy questions but nevertheless knew that they could

exert influence on him by demanding payback for their nominations once the election was concluded.

Widodo, however, was forced to make compromises he would almost certainly have not countenanced had the electoral system not forced him into them. The first, born of his inability to found or gain control of a party for himself, was the integrity of his image as a non-party politician. Whereas throughout his rise through the ranks of local politics he was able to push his mutually expedient alliance with PDI-P into the background, with so much more at stake for PDI-P in the outcome of a national election, the party now expected him to rebrand himself as a loyal cadre who would defer to it and its leader's preferences in the event he became president. The second compromise, born of the requirement to extend his nominating coalition beyond just PDI-P in order to meet the presidential nomination threshold, was to allow parties to start dictating important strategic decisions, most notably in the selection of Widodo's running mate in which his own preferred names were vetoed. As we have seen so far, the Indonesian electoral system may have given parties significant power over prospective presidents at the apex of the political system. But the presidential election campaign that got underway between May and July 2014, would reemphasise how the fragmentation and localisation of post-New Order politics had hollowed out parties at the grassroots, and undermined their effectiveness as agents of national-level political interests in national elections.

The presidential election in 2014

The 2014 presidential campaign would be painted as a referendum on the future of Indonesia's post-New Order democracy—not primarily because of the more democratic style of leadership Joko Widodo appeared to promise, but because of his opponent's status as an avatar of neo-authoritarian reaction. Until Widodo's emergence as the notional frontrunner for the presidency throughout 2013, the most likely successor to Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was widely assumed to be Prabowo Subianto, a former special forces general from a prominent political family who had entered the innermost circle of the New Order regime via marriage to Soeharto's daughter Titiek. In the final months of the New Order, Prabowo had gained a reputation as a diehard defender of his father-in-law's rule even as the dictator's authority eroded amid the political and economic crises of 1997–98 (Schwartz 1999: 335–337). After being found responsible for the abduction and disappearances of anti-regime activists in the dying days of the Soeharto government, Prabowo was forced out of the military and went into exile abroad together with his brother, the businessman Hashim Djojohadikusumo. The fortune they amassed through investments in energy projects in Central Asia and elsewhere funded a political comeback by Prabowo, who, after a failed attempt to take control of Golkar in its 2004 convention, founded Gerindra (Gerakan Indonesia Raya, or Great Indonesia Movement Party) party as his personal vehicle. Gerindra won 4.4% the vote in its debut national elections in

2009, and Prabowo ran as Megawati's vice-presidential candidate in the presidential elections that same year, overshadowing her to an extent that he emerged from that election as one of the most viable successors to Yudhoyono (Aspinall 2009). Prabowo cut a distinctive figure as a participant in the democracy whose emergence he had once attempted to prevent. Prabowo shared with then-president Yudhoyono an understanding of the importance of a compelling personal brand in the era of direct presidential elections, and the role of pollsters and marketing consultants in helping him build it. But the persona Prabowo developed was based on the idea of him as a radical nationalist alternative to the liberal technocracy of the Yudhoyono presidency. Prabowo and Gerindra's message combined appeals to nostalgia for the political and socioeconomic order of the Suharto years with a portrayal of Prabowo as a strong leader who would combat the corrupt, self-serving establishment that was supposedly selling out the interests of ordinary Indonesians to foreign powers.

For these reasons Prabowo came to exemplify how populist campaigns could become the vehicle for challenges to the democratic status quo that were channelled through the electoral democracy itself. Aspinall (2015: 2) argued that Prabowo exemplified an 'oligarchic populism' in which 'although he condemned the political elite, he had quintessentially elite origins himself, and had risen to a position of political prominence through the very oligarchic power relations he critiqued' (Aspinall 2015: 2). The hypocrisy inherent in Prabowo's political messaging does not of course disqualify him from being categorised as populist—indeed, as Hadiz and Robison (2014) observe, his populism was an innovative strategy in the intra-oligarchic contest for power that Prabowo was engaged in with other factions of the oligarchy. As they noted in the aftermath of the 2014 election,

[Prabowo's] appeal to populist sentiment of both nationalist and Islamic varieties and his rhetoric about empowering the poor, including vague promises to distribute new land to peasants was calculated to build a large base of popular support to counter opponents within the oligarchy itself. This is a populist option adopted by many leaders elsewhere, including Thailand's Thaksin, to outflank opposition from competing elites.

What earned Prabowo's political agenda notoriety, however, was the criticism—sometimes oblique, sometimes direct—of Indonesia's post-New Order political culture that it included. Prabowo's narrative that liberal economic and cultural influences from abroad were holding Indonesia back, and that strong leadership was needed to restore Indonesia's national greatness, harked back to the organicist nationalism of the post-independence era. Gerindra's founding manifesto, for instance, stated 'the political system, which has directed towards liberal democracy since the *reformasi* era, has to be corrected' (Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya 2008: 11). Even the party's name was curiously reminiscent of the colonial-era Parindra, a party led by the organicist intellectual Soepomo, who was himself deeply influenced by European corporatist political philosophy (Santoso 2009, Bourchier 2015: 27–24). Prabowo's embrace of what one journalist called 'dictator-chic' (Bland 2013) shocked foreign observers and

Indonesian progressives, especially after the launch of Gerindra's 2014 election campaign, which featured him riding in a jeep and inspecting huge rows of uniformed paramilitary officers. An aide to Prabowo admitted that the party took direct inspiration from things like the 'Chairman Mao and the Germans in creating these sorts of spectacles for the public...it makes him look like a real leader' (confidential interview at Gerindra party headquarters, March 2014).

Certainly, Prabowo was not the only figure in the post-Soeharto political landscape who bemoaned the supposed excesses of political liberalisation. But his anti-system rhetoric was uniquely forthright in its condemnation of the corruption of the political elite and in its invocation of the need for strong personalistic leadership in the name of the *rakyat* (people). Prabowo embodied a unique combination of ideological hostility towards the liberal elements of Indonesian democracy with formidable electoral appeal; as such, he became the byword for the threat of a populist authoritarian reaction against the democratic order. Indeed, progressives were galvanised in their support of Joko Widodo during in the late stages of the 2014 presidential campaign when Prabowo, perhaps emboldened by a late surge in his polling numbers, voiced disdain for the concept of direct elections in Indonesia, remarking that direct elections were a bad habit akin to smoking, and that Indonesia must embrace a less 'western' political system (Aspinall and Mietzner 2014: 6). Prabowo's overt consideration of altering some of the institutional foundations of Indonesian democracy was important in framing the election in the eyes of many observers as a referendum on the democratic system itself.

Prabowo the machine populist

Despite somewhat implausibly casting himself as an outsider, and his attempts at building a nationalised electoral constituency through populist means, Prabowo faced the same formal and informal institutional limits on his behaviour as Joko Widodo did—and in many ways, the gap between Prabowo's anti-establishment appeals and the conduct of his campaign for the presidency was even greater than was the case with Widodo. As discussed above, Widodo sought to keep his nominating coalition to a minimum of parties after the April 2014 legislative elections, rejecting explicit quid pro quo deals with them in order to gain their support. Prabowo, meanwhile, established a nominating coalition that encompassed the majority of political parties, including all but one member of then president Yudhoyono's governing coalition. In addition to the support of a majority of the parties (and significantly, those like Golkar and PAN, which were closely connected to the business community), Prabowo also enjoyed the backing of Hary Tanoesoedibjo, an ethnic Chinese tycoon who owned Indonesia's largest broadcast media group, augmenting the support of the major media outlets owned by Prabowo-allied Golkar chairman Aburizal Bakrie. Said Aqil Siroj, the chairman of the country's largest Islamic mass organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama, endorsed Prabowo, while more

conservative and hard-line elements of Islamic civil society were virtually unanimous in their support of Prabowo and Hatta, unsurprisingly given that Widodo's party support was rooted in the secular-nationalist ideological tradition epitomised by PDI-P. The chairman of Indonesia's largest and most active trade union, Said Iqbal, campaigned vocally for Prabowo, reportedly on the back of a promise that he would be made labour minister under a Prabowo administration (Caraway and Ford 2014). Finally, as the campaign wore on, Prabowo would also increasingly enjoy the support of President Yudhoyono and the political and state networks that were aligned with him.

In sum, the major bastions of machine politics, including the incumbent president, were aligned behind Prabowo. Widodo by contrast enjoyed the support of three parties—one of which had been out of government for a decade and whose leadership remained ambivalent about their candidate (PDI-P), one of which had only just entered parliament (NasDem), and only one of which had been a part of the Yudhoyono coalition (PKB). Widodo would benefit from the enthusiasm of the *relawan* volunteers who campaigned for him at the grassroots, and progressive civil society was largely behind him on the basis of optimism about the kind of president he would be, or fear of what a Prabowo presidency might represent for them and their causes. Therefore, despite the framing of the 2014 elections as a clash of two populist campaigns differentiated on the basis of ideology and leadership styles, there was a clear difference in the substance of the two candidates' approaches in terms of the political resources they could draw upon. Prabowo elevated the recruitment of intermediary institutions—parties, trade unions, religious organisations, and sympathetic media outlets—that linked him with voters as one of the core parts of his campaign. Faced with an undeniable financial and organisational deficit compared to Prabowo, Widodo would rely more on the pull of his charismatic populist connection to gain the support of undecided or disengaged voters who would be the target of intense canvassing by Prabowo-aligned political and civil society networks.

The differences were palpable to observers on the ground at the time. In East Java, the local branches of pro-Prabowo party branches had ample cash resources available for them to distribute to religious leaders, who in turn spread the message that the Prabowo-Hatta ticket was the pro-Islam option in the race (Aspinall & Mietzner 2015: 13). Similar patterns were noticed by researchers working in Eastern Indonesia (Berger & Warburton 2014) and in Lampung province on Sumatra (Berenschot 2014). Importantly, greater flows of money allowed local party branches to cultivate the neighbourhood-level bureaucrats, many of whom were seen openly campaigning for Prabowo-Hatta too (Berger & Warburton 2014). Yet as the 2014 campaign progressed throughout May and June of that year, it became clear that despite Prabowo's increasingly strident rhetoric establishment-led money politics, his campaign had invested heavily in the mobilisation of local-level patronage networks—particularly Islamic-based ones—as a method of marshalling support from low-income voters.

By contrast, the Widodo campaign was poorly organised and under-resourced. As a private sector political consultant who had worked on the campaign said, ‘there was no commander. Everybody had their own ideas of how things should be run and how the candidate should act. The result was messy—I’d call it the least organised presidential campaign ever’ (confidential interview, Jakarta, August 2014). There was a particularly notable lack of mobilisation on the part of PDI-P, the member of Widodo’s party coalition with the deepest and most widespread branch networks throughout Indonesia. With the nomination of Widodo having had modest coat-tails effect for PDI-P’s legislative campaign, and the prospect of inclusion in a hypothetical Prabowo cabinet always present, the party’s officials did not face overwhelming incentives to expend resources and energy on the presidential election. As one PDI-P-affiliated provincial governor explained, the party’s mobilisation was ‘nearly non-existent’ because ‘those [cadre] who won [in the April legislative polls] are focused on earning their capital back, and those who lost are out of money and out of energy’ (confidential interview, provincial capital, June 2014). It did not help that party officials at the grassroots could clearly see that of their organisational superiors remained ambivalent about Widodo. The fraught relationship between Widodo and Puan Maharani’s loyalists within PDI-P was at the root of many of the campaign’s dysfunctions, chief among which was a lack of funds. PDI-P had been given a large tranche of donations by Indonesia’s business elite to support the Widodo campaign. Megawati, however, had handed custody of the funds to Puan, who for unclear—and, to Widodo’s allies, suspicious—reasons delayed the disbursement of funds to regional branches until the final weeks of the campaign (Mietzner 2015b: 42).

In some instances, the strength of Prabowo’s grassroots campaign was met with interventions by influential and trusted patrons with deep networks in particular religious communities. A dirty tricks campaign positing that Widodo was a Chinese, Christian, Singaporean, or a communist (or combinations thereof) had been spread through anonymous leaflets through Islamic networks with the support of political fixers connected to Prabowo. Nadhatul Ulama networks loyal to pro-Widodo figures such as Jusuf Kalla, and NU-linked politicians like Khofifah Indah Parawansa and Hasyim Muzadi, together with the East Java-based businessman Dahlan Iskan, responded by distributing their own campaign materials that played up Widodo’s Islamic credentials. Campaign materials spruiked his frequent trips to Mecca and support for mosque activities while he was mayor in Solo. At the same time, they engaged in sectarian slights of their own, highlighting that much of the Djojohadikusumo family was Christian (author’s notes of campaign materials circulating in East Java, June 2014). But as was clear on the ground, they were up against formidable organisation on the other side. Widodo did not help matters by drawing attention to the rumours in his campaign stops. Deeply insulted by aspersions on his and his family’s religious identity, he would indignantly list out the allegations made against him in the anonymous leaflets flooding rural Java then explain

that they were all lies—as good a tactic as any to keep media and voter minds on the race and religion-based smear campaign (Gammon and Tapsell, 2014).

Opinion polls emphasised how the effects of a disorganised campaign and Prabowo's comparative discipline had weighed upon Widodo's campaign. Polls taken immediately after the April legislative elections had Widodo leading Prabowo by double digit margins (Gammon 2014c). Each successive tranche of published polling, however, indicated that Widodo's support was dropping as Prabowo gained both the votes of Widodo supporters on the margins as well as absorbing large numbers of undecided electors. By mid-June, a sense of crisis had begun to engulf the campaign. Widodo met senior party officials, pollsters, and fundraisers in Jakarta to seek ways to arrest the decline in his campaign's fortunes after polls had shown Prabowo finally entering into a statistical dead heat with him (Confidential interview with a member of DPP PDI-P, Jakarta, January 2016). The role of individuals from outside the party hierarchy but close to Widodo would be key to rebuilding momentum. With the role of Puan Maharani under a cloud as rumours of her financial sabotage of the campaign circulated in Jakarta, elite business figures friendly to Widodo stepped in to find sources of campaign cash. Jusuf Kalla and his business associates did their part, largely through the membership of the influential private employers' association APINDO (confidential interview with PDI-P staffer, Jakarta, 6 January 2016). Widodo's business partner, Luhut Pandjaitan, similarly played a central role in coordinating fundraising and distribution of resources to grassroots campaigners. Joining Luhut, Rini Soemarno, a business executive and close friend of Megawati who served her as a minister, became a key fixer for Widodo as well. Rini's extensive networks in the corporate world were instrumental in her being able to raise money, and her facility in this regard put some PDI-P figures offside. One senior anti-Puan, pro-Widodo party official recounted how when he went to the candidate for approval of a plan to raise campaign cash from provincial businessmen, Widodo came back with the response that 'he had "already got it" ...Rini had gone around in Singapore raising money from the [Indonesian] conglomerates' (Confidential interview with a member of the PDI-P national board, Jakarta, 10 January 2016).

In summary, accounts of the 2014 election that framed it as a clash of rival varieties of populism, distinguished largely by the content of their appeals, miss some nuances in how the two campaigns differed. The differences in the two candidates' populist appeals were, to some authors, between the promise of a return to 'state-managed corporatist institutions and nationalist ideals' and a second promoted by Widodo that 'was more rooted in market ideas and middle class interests' (Hadiz and Robison 2017: 499); or in terms of the 'pragmatic and technocratic populism-lite' versus Prabowo's 'powerfully unleashed ultra-populism' (Mietzner 2015b: 38). But while both campaigns necessarily combined populist tactics as well as the activation of traditional machine politics in order to get out the vote, both campaigns were not equally reliant on populist campaign methods. Prabowo, despite his significant organisational and financial advantages over Widodo, nevertheless began the race as the underdog. He relied

more heavily on the methods of machine politics, driven by the political parties and the civic and religious organisations that had endorsed his campaign. Widodo, by contrast, began the race with a significant lead in the polls yet had a financial and organisational deficit relative to Prabowo. Accordingly, he came to rely less on party networks and more on the power of his charismatic appeal to voters, mediated through the press and, as will be analysed in detail in Chapter Three, on the *relawan* volunteer networks organised outside of parties. The irony was that Prabowo's campaign, though more stereotypically populist on the surface, relied more on non-populist machine-based methods on the part of intermediary organisations he had recruited into his campaign.

Conclusion

The way a president governs is inevitably 'shaped by the processes that bring them to power' (Siavelis & Morgenstein 2008: 36). As we have seen in this chapter, the institutional framework that Joko Widodo had to work within as he gained national prominence would have a substantial influence on the sort of president he would become. Having built a nationalised constituency off the back of the 'telepopulist' strategy described in Chapter One, he was a plausible candidate for the presidency by mid-2013. Indonesia's electoral laws precluded the ability for Widodo to quickly register a personal vehicle party, or to commandeer a small existing party, in order to have such a party unilaterally nominate him for the presidency. For this reason, he would have no choice but to anchor his presidential campaign in the nomination of an incumbent party. Other electorally viable parties were either ideologically hostile or committed to their own leaders' ambitions, but Widodo's own PDI-P was open to considering an outsider candidate who could bring it back into government after a decade on the sidelines of politics. Accordingly, Widodo focused on PDI-P as the default option from which to seek a vehicle for the presidential election. It quickly became clear, however, that he would need to make ever more overt displays of loyalty to the party in order to reassure its leadership that he would be a reliable agent of its interests. At the same time, those party leaders realised that they needed him in order to expand their influence within the political system, with opinion polls showing that nominating a popular outsider like Widodo would generate a significant coat-tails effect in the 2014 legislative elections.

The process of Widodo negotiating his nomination from his party was illustrative of the dilemmas inherent in parties' selection of its executive candidates described by Samuels and Shugart (2010). They saw in this process an inherent principal-agent problem, in which the party hopes to deputise a loyal servant of its interests as the head of the executive—for the purposes of the discussion here, the presidency. But in a political era in which voters' ties to parties have frayed, and where claims to non-party origins have cachet for presidential candidates, parties are often forced to hand their nominations to outsiders as the price of

maximising the likelihood of capturing the executive. Therefore, 'the best potential agent from a party's organizational point of view may be incapable of satisfying the party from an electoral point of view, while the candidate most likely to win an election might be a less-faithful party agent' (2010: 68). The situation within PDI-P in 2013–2014 perfectly illustrates this principal–agent dilemma, as the party's leadership equivocated on the question of nominating Megawati or one of her children to continue dynastic leadership, or to take a risk by nominating a much more popular but nevertheless potentially unreliable outsider in Widodo. But the process by which this principal–agent problem is resolved in the Indonesian context gains a distinctive character thanks to the barriers to entry to outsiders and new parties that were erected as part of establishing the framework of direct presidential elections between 2002 and 2008 (see Table 1 above). Parties are able to exert a substantial degree of leverage over outsider candidates because of the systemic role afforded to them as gatekeepers to the presidency. In many presidential democracies, parties face the reality that outsiders are empowered to sidestep parties' recruitment process altogether by establishing a personal vehicle party for the purpose of unilaterally nominating themselves for the presidency. Indonesia's institutional environment is clearly not conducive to such a strategy. Founding a new party is made administratively and financially onerous by the requirement to maintain an ever-increasing number of branches across the nation's hundreds of local government areas.

To be sure, personal vehicle parties to have successfully qualified to contest national elections in support of the personal ambitions of wealthy politico-business figures (NasDem, Gerindra, Perindo) or by former senior state officials with close ties to private benefactors (Partai Demokrat and Hanura). But the raising of the presidential nomination threshold in the 2008 electoral law also all but foreclosed the possibility of such a new entrant unilaterally nominating its own leader as its candidate: in 2004 a relatively low presidential threshold allowed Partai Demokrat (PD) to nominate Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and PD went on to clear the new 20% of seats / 25% of votes threshold in 2009 once Yudhoyono was already the incumbent president. The system, in short, imposes significant party-building obligations on the leaders of presidentialist parties, and forces even the most popular of them into accommodation with the non-personalist parties who have proven chronically incapable of generating appealing executive candidates from their own ranks. Indeed, not since Yudhoyono's breakthrough in the 2004 presidential elections has a non-incumbent figure successfully achieved a presidential candidacy on the back of their own personalist party. They have either been forced to enter into coalitions with non-personalist parties (such as Prabowo with his party coalition in 2014 and 2019) or accept the vice-presidential nomination (such as Prabowo in 2009, when he was Megawati's running mate, or Hanura leader Wiranto, who was incumbent Vice-President and Golkar chairman Jusuf Kalla's running mate in 2009).

These dynamics of presidential candidate recruitment and pre-election coalition-building creates dilemmas for the outsider candidate as well. Though they may rise to popularity because

of their reputation for independence from party interests and their origins from outside the party system, the path to executive power necessarily runs through a coalition of incumbent oligarchic parties. Accordingly, in the course of his securing the support of his party and its coalition partners, Widodo was forced to adopt the persona of the loyal party cadre that he had painstakingly avoided throughout his career up until that point, making overt displays of loyalty to Megawati and invoking the party's Soekarnoist ideological tropes in a way he never had before. The process of melding his political identity with that of the party culminated in his being publicly branded a *petugas partai* (party functionary) by Megawati on the campaign trail in 2014, a label which would come to haunt him when illustrations of Widodo as a puppet whose strings were held by Megawati formed part of a damaging grassroots propaganda campaign targeted at undecided voters by the Prabowo campaign (Tyson and Purnomo 2017: 124; 127–129) that undoubtedly cost him votes among undecided voters.

The political landscape in the aftermath of the 2014 election was therefore a challenging one. Widodo had won by only a small margin; moreover, in the months after the election there was not the usual scramble towards reconciliation and inclusion in the governing coalition on the part of Prabowo's coalition partners, who still held a parliamentary majority and initially appeared committed to an oppositional stance towards the new government. Finally, the hard-fought presidential election campaign had not brought Widodo and his party together—indeed, it had exposed and to some extent aggravating deep tensions and suspicions between the PDI-P elite and their outsider presidential candidate. Amid these challenges, however, Widodo would have a ready set of allies in the networks of volunteers—known by their Indonesian term *relawan*—who had been instrumental in creating an atmosphere of grassroots enthusiasm for Widodo during his seeking a presidential nomination, and who had been a ubiquitous grassroots presence during the election campaign. Some *relawan* had been led to expect that their influence would be elevated in the incoming government as he sought to strengthen loyal allies in the face of hostility from the opposition and pressure from his own coalition. As the next chapter will show, however, overwhelmed by the perceived threat of his presidency coming apart and lacking confidence in his ability to mobilise public opinion against the oligarchic factions that sought to control him, Widodo's relationship with his supporter networks was to become one element of his pre-presidential populism that faded once he accommodated himself to the norms of Indonesian coalitional presidentialism.

CHAPTER THREE *Cutting the relawan loose*

The previous chapters have shown how the gatekeeping role to the presidency afforded political parties by Indonesia's electoral system drew Joko Widodo into alliances with party elites, despite a key part of his populist appeal being his independence from the corruption and elitism of party politics. Parties, however, were only one part of the organisational apparatus that aligned behind Widodo on his rise to national prominence and throughout his presidential candidacy: he benefited from the support of loosely and largely informally-organised—yet also loyal and widespread—networks of *relawan*, or non-party volunteers. Many of these groups began appearing when he was talked about as a presidential candidate in late 2013, and would emerge to play an important role in Widodo's 2014 campaign. *Relawan* leaders expected that they would have a substantial role in mobilising grassroots support for the new president, or even having a share in key political appointments—not least because they were encouraged to expect as much from Widodo himself. Indeed, the rise of these *relawan* prompted discussion in Indonesian progressive circles and among foreign academics alike about the possibility of non-party mobilisational forces to act as vehicles for reformist political candidates and causes (Pontoh 2014, Heryanto 2014, Sefsani and Ziegenhain 2015). Yet after the election they were sidelined by the newly installed President Widodo, who kept them away from the innermost circles of decision-making and never used them as an instrument for influencing public opinion, or for generating real or perceived grassroots support for the new president and opposition to his adversaries. Widodo began his presidency with a core of organised supporters who were personally loyal to him, who were ready to become the basis of a political party that might have anchored his 2019 re-election campaign, who were adept at contriving favourable media coverage for themselves and their candidate, and who were in many cases hostile to the party forces Widodo knew would be a constant drag on his political autonomy.

Why did Widodo let his most loyal supporter networks fall by the wayside after the 2014 elections? This larger question has been surprisingly marginal in existing scholarly studies of the *relawan* movements. Some studies have focused on whether, or how, the *relawan* phenomenon represents a positive development for the quality of Indonesian democracy. Sefsani and Ziegenhain (2015) offer a sympathetic account of the *relawan* that sees the volunteer movement as 'active citizens who do not belong to any specific party, but are politically active, promoting a certain person who they believe is best for society as a whole' (p19). They interpreted the emergence of the volunteer networks as a 'positive sign for the future of democracy in Indonesia'

(31), while concluding that ‘it now seems clear that [he] listened to the advice of his supporter groups during the election campaign, but has chosen not to follow it as President’ (32). They note the importance of party pressure in shaping Widodo’s behaviour but argue that it ‘fails to explain why he seems to have neglected the cooperation that existed with civil-society organizations since assuming his presidency’ (32). By contrast, Hurriyah (2019) offers a more sceptical take both on the sources of *relawan* mobilisation and their implications for democracy, writing that the ‘volunteer groups that supported Jokowi were not a solid entity, that is, these groups were loosely organized, allied, involved many elements, and were considerably fragmented. The only factor that unified civil society (and volunteer groups) during the 2014 presidential election was Prabowo’s candidacy.’ Moreover, in response to the idea that *relawan* alliances with Widodo could be an avenue for progressive civil society groups to infiltrate policy-making processes in government, she asks sceptically whether ‘volunteers [can] function as civil society if they do not distance themselves from the government’ (256).

Tomsa and Setijadi (2018) cast the *relawan* as ‘electoral movements’ that ‘not only complement but often take over important functions that are conventionally regarded as the domain of political parties’ (558). They explicitly link the emergence of the pro-Widodo *relawan* movements to two longer term structural trends: the chronic decline of political party prestige and the growing prevalence of ‘populist’ forms of campaigning (562). Structural preconditions such as the ‘personalization of electoral politics and anti-party sentiment among the voting population may have created an enabling environment for new electoral movements’ exemplified by the *relawan*, but it was the unique reformist charisma Widodo offered that aroused the latent potential for the self-organisation of personalist political movements in 2014. Since the introduction of direct executive elections in the regions in 2004 it had become commonplace for candidates to base their campaigns on extra-party *tim sukses* (literally ‘success teams’) made up of brokers recruited, often on an ad hoc basis, into the candidate’s camp ahead of the elections. The difference, however, was that since Widodo ‘embodied a deeply rooted public desire for a just and honest politician’ (580), the nucleus of his *tim sukses* was some of the most reformist elements of Indonesian civil society—among them NGOs, activists, and liberal Islamic figures. As such the *relawan* ‘epitomized a growing public discontent with the trajectory of the country’s prevailing democratic regime’ (575) representing in no small part a more benign evolution of the *tim sukses* pattern so often seen in local politics.

Tomsa and Setijadi’s study is important in that it goes beyond assessing whether the *relawan* were a potential force for progressive political and social change. Rather, they analyse their character and causes, casting them as an alternate form of political organisation to the *tim sukses*, yet one which nonetheless springs from some common structural factors like the weakness of parties as mobilisational machines and the personalisation of politics. Yet there is space for extending this analysis in two important ways: first, by more systematically analysing the *relawan* phenomenon as part of a broader populist political project Widodo was engaged in on

his rise to the presidency, and how the *relawan* fit in in the global landscape of populist leaders and their organisations; second, by explaining how and why they failed to have the role in his presidency that many would have hoped they would have. The analytical messages that emerge out of this chapter's analysis of the rise and fading away of Widodo's *relawan* between 2013 and 2015 are twofold. First, I analyse the *relawan* as a case of populist organisation following the logic of Mouzelis (1985). Second, I analyse the shifting relationship between Widodo and his volunteers not only as an outgrowth of the logic of populist organisations Mouzelis describes, but also of the functions that they play in supporting a populist in their struggles to assert their dominance over elite adversaries as theorised by comparativists (especially Roberts 2006). I argue that President Widodo, having quickly signalled his accommodative stance vis a vis the key factions of the oligarchy, felt that organisation was not only redundant, but potentially provocative to the parties whose support he felt he needed in order to deliver the policies that would ensure his popular legitimacy and safeguard his chances of renomination at the 2019 presidential elections.

This chapter proceeds in three parts. A first section contains a summary of the theories of populist organisations and how they differ from their clientelist counterparts, before explaining how and why I categorise the *relawan* as a populist organisation. I provide a narrative of the *relawan's* formation and how they provided the impression, if not the reality, of a widespread grassroots enthusiasm for Widodo's nomination as a presidential candidate as the then governor of Jakarta sought the support of PDI-P in 2013 and early 2014. The second section describes the *relawan's* activities during the 2014 presidential campaign and how they emerged as an important source of grassroots campaigning for Widodo as his party largely failed to mobilise in support of him during the election campaign. It was during this period that Widodo led the *relawan* leadership to believe that they would be included in his administration. In the third and fourth sections, I move to show how these promises never came to fruition: despite the *relawan* moving quickly to consolidate their organisations, in anticipation that they would be used as an organisational counterweight to Widodo's party coalition, they were almost entirely sidelined from the cabinet and senior government positions once he was inaugurated. Since the *relawan's* entire political project was based on their support of 'Jokowi', and their popular legitimacy dependent on their association with his charismatic appeal, they were not in a position to criticise the president after he sidelined them. In a concluding section, I tie together these strands of analysis to show how the *relawan* were a quintessentially populist political organisation: neither organically emerging from the grassroots nor a top-down patronage machine, they were instead a loosely organised and personalist movement whose relevance ebbed and flowed depending on the whims of the charismatic figurehead they were formed to serve.

The *relawan* and populist organisation

Writing about the first iterations of pro-‘Jokowi’ *relawan* that formed to aid his candidacy for the governorship of Jakarta in 2012, Suaedy (2014: 114) identified the *relawan* as a ‘partisan social movement’ (2014), not animated primarily by clientelist links with elite figures but rather by loyalty to one charismatic outsider politician. The non-clientelist nature of their organisation and voter mobilisation was, this analysis, their distinguishing feature. This was an important distinction to make, as the non-party, personalised campaign apparatuses that are now the norm in local executive elections and legislative polls are deeply clientelist; these so-called *tim sukses* or ‘success teams’ are best conceived of as vertically-integrated brokerage machines that are constructed ad hoc around election times from disparate patronage networks centred around local notables, state officials and cultural figures (see contributions in Aspinall and Sukmajati 2016, Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). It was clear that the *relawan* represented something different: motivated by loyalty to Widodo and what he seemed to promise in terms of policy, rather than the quid pro quo patronage deals that saw non-party structures recruited into local campaigns.

I would add to this the observation that this dependence a charismatic figurehead made them a quintessentially *populist* organisation. As Mouzelis noted, ‘[w]hether in the form of distinct organizations like parties, or in the more diffuse form of movements occurring as either part of or separate from non-populist organizations, populism always involves a specific type of political mobilization of the masses that, although vertical, is quite different from the clientelist one’, characterised by the ‘downgrading of organizational intermediaries and of a direct rapport between a populist leader and his followers’ (1985: 334–335). As Mouzelis further observes,

[e]ven in cases of populist movements with strong grass-roots organizations, in so far as the rank and file’s allegiance is centred on the person of the leader, local and intermediary cadres are left without a structural basis for establishing some degree of political autonomy vis-à-vis that leader: most of their power and legitimation is derived more or less directly from his personal charisma. (1985: 335)

Because of this a populist organisation is the inherently disempowered one, whose relevance as a political actor rises and falls in line with its leaders’ whims. A local broker in a typical clientelist political machine may be able to defect from one political patron to another, perhaps taking the votes they are able to influence with them. An agent of a populist organisation or movement, however, is able to serve only one ultimate patron: the populist leader themselves, since the organisation and its agents derive whatever legitimacy and influence they have from their association with a charismatic figurehead. As such, ‘the fundamental difference between clientelist and populist organizations [is that] cadres within the clientelist structure of authority have an autonomy that does not exist in populism’ (1985: 339). Still, despite this in-built

authority they have over their organised followers, it is not a given that a populist leader will promote the coalescence of their most committed supporters into any institutionalised party or association. 'Populist figures', writes Roberts (2007: 6), 'mobilize their followers from the top-down in a variety of civic and political spheres, but they may or may not create organizational intermediaries to facilitate, institutionalize, or control such mobilization.' Indeed, one of the most important strategic decisions a populist leader has to make is whether, as well as how, to organise and institutionalise the popular support base they have cultivated.

What determines whether it is worth the effort and the risks of institutionalising a supporter base in a political party or some other kind of civic organisation? As Roberts (2007a: 7) proposes, 'mass organization tends to be a function of political conflict: the greater the challenge posed by a populist figure to elite groups, and the more threatening the elite counterreaction, the more extensive popular organization is likely to be', with a populist party or institutionalised supporter organisation potentially acting as ballast for the leader in his or her struggles with elite opposition to their political designs. As Roberts concludes,

[t]he depth of sociopolitical organization by populist leaders is contingent on the level and character of the political conflicts triggered by their social reforms. Mass organization is first and foremost a political instrument for mobilizing the weight of numbers against elite actors who derive political power from their strategic economic or institutional location. Where populist leaders pose little threat to these elites...they may well derive sustenance from elite power structures and eschew organization building strategies. Under such conditions, grass-roots organization is required neither for electoral contestation nor for the construction of an institutional counterweight to the *poderes fácticos* [de facto power structures]. (2007b: 144)

These twin models of the nature of the populist organisation, and the reasons why it emerges, frame the analysis of Joko Widodo's volunteer networks that I present here. As I explain, the relationship between Widodo and his volunteer networks rose and fell in line with his strategic objectives. When he needed to create the impression of grassroots enthusiasm for his candidacy during the period in which he was seeking a presidential nomination, he quietly encouraged their activities. During the 2014 election campaign, when it became clear how parties were not consistently getting out the vote on his behalf, the *relawan* gained access to Widodo by posing as a reliable source of on-the-ground voter canvassing. When he was elected, however, he quickly pivoted to seeking political 'sustenance' from within the party-based oligarchy itself, and consequently left the *relawan* to drift to the political sidelines. All the while, the *relawan* continued to display the hallmarks of the populist organisation type described by Mouzelis: completely at the whim of their charismatic figurehead, they were in no position to protest let alone defect to another political patron or embrace neutrality in response to his failure to keep his promises to them in terms of their inclusion in government, nor of his failure to prosecute the reformist agenda which many of the organisations had hoped he would.

The word *relawan* (literally 'volunteer') became part of the lexicon of journalistic and academic accounts of Indonesian politics during Widodo's 2012 campaign for governor of Jakarta. While he was exploring the possibility of running for provincial office during 2011, Widodo had been taking opportunities to increase his profile among Jakarta-based civil society networks. Already known in many development circles for his leadership in Solo, 'the first time he gave us a presentation [on his urban policies] we just fell in love with him', said one NGO activist who would eventually organise votes for Widodo among a poor Betawi community in 2012 (interview with Sinnal Blegur, Seknas Jokowi, Jakarta, May 2014). The leftist historian and former student activist Hilmar Farid met Widodo in 2012, when speculation about the then Solo mayor making a run in Jakarta was intense. Pledges were made about volunteers supporting his candidacy in the event that he would run, and civil society leaders quickly planned for contingencies in the event that he did so. Ahead of Widodo's declaration of his Jakarta gubernatorial candidacy, these civil society figures founded RPJB (*Relawan Penggerak Jakarta Baru*, Volunteer Movers for a New Jakarta) as an umbrella for their activities in supporting his campaign. Augmenting the efforts of civil society elites was the participation of organisers based in traditional political communities, many of them former PDI-P activists, as well as middle class entrepreneurs focusing their efforts on the so-called 'cyber war' on social media. POSPERA (*Posko Perjuangan Rakyat*, People's Struggle Command Post), an association of former anti-Soeharto activists with links to PDI-P, moved to target voters in poorer communities. Private entrepreneurs founded Jasmev (Jakarta Social Media Volunteers) to generate pro-Widodo messages on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Tapsell 2015: 38–41).

It is of course common in Indonesian local elections for political party machineries to play a marginal role in campaigning, taking the candidate's cash donations in exchange for their nomination and leaving the grassroots organising work to the extra-partisan personal networks of the candidate. Elements of this pattern were apparent at the 2012 Widodo gubernatorial campaign, where senior officials of PDI-P's Jakarta division remained at campaign headquarters gossiping about elite politics, counting cash, and briefing the media. The bulk of Widodo's television advertising was underwritten by Gerindra, thanks to its benefactor Hashim Djojohadikusumo, but that party's networks were rarely in view at the grassroots. The main *relawan* organisation, RPJB, for instance, claimed to have not received material support from PDI-P, instead being given money through a close advisor of Widodo's, who said it was the candidate's, but 'we can't really know where it came from' (confidential interview with the head of a *relawan* organisation, Jakarta, July 2016). Most *relawan* rank and file themselves expressed disdain for political party elites, either expressing the view that party elites

had betrayed the ideological basis of their parties for power and money. Widodo, however, was often spoken about in near-messianic terms by some volunteers, though others were certainly realistic about the possibility of his being able to achieve substantial reforms.

In the second half of 2013, as Widodo's booming popularity fuelled speculation about a presidential run, the *relawan* networks built for the Jakarta campaign were joined by new groups seeking to give momentum to the governor's presidential ambitions. Long before he had publicly expressed any desire to compete in the 2014 national elections, new organisations began to lobby PDI-P officials and steer public opinion in favour of granting the party's 2014 presidential nomination to Widodo. In mid-2013, the organisation Barisan Relawan Jokowi Presiden (Bara JP; Jokowi for President Volunteers' Front) was established in Jakarta. Its leadership was an assembly of former journalists, activists, professionals and businessmen, and various small-time political activists, of whom most were at least ideologically aligned with PDI-P, some formally as members. Similarly, networks of activists with ties to civil society (some who had been involved in RPJB) and pro-Widodo former PDI-P officials came together to found Seknas Jokowi, which featured as its head a former PDI-P staffer. Later in 2013, an organisation called PDI-P Pro Jokowi (Projo)—an association of PDI-P rank and file and sympathisers supportive of the governor's candidacy—was declared. These along with pre-existing RPJB, Pospers and others got to work cultivating attention and creating a narrative of grassroots enthusiasm for a Widodo candidacy. Around Indonesia, local chapters held 'declaration' events for local branch of Projo, Bara JP, Seknas or other umbrella organisations with an emphasis on generating both local and national media coverage.

A key part of this strategy was the pretence that there was no coordination or direct sponsorship between the then-governor and the organisations agitating for his nomination as PDI's presidential candidate: it has to look as though there was an organic upswelling of public support for this. The delicate process of negotiating the presidential nomination out of PDI-P required that Widodo also keep his own supporters at arm's length—another compromise to his autonomy of political action which Indonesia's institutional framework forced this populist outsider to make. 'We couldn't be seen to be taking orders from Jokowi because then Jokowi would be accused of starting a *tim sukses* [campaign apparatus], and that would cause problems with him within the party', one leader of one of the most active pro-Widodo organisations recalled (interview with Sihol Manullang, Chair of Bara JP, Jakarta, August 2014). Widodo was anxious not to be seen directly communicating with these organisations. 'Jokowi couldn't look ambitious, that's a risky thing in Javanese culture', said one *relawan* organiser with longstanding ties to the Soekarno family (interview with Muhammad Yamin, Chair of Seknas Jokowi, Jakarta, August 2014), noting that Widodo was acutely aware that he needed to reassure Megawati that he was not trying to usurp her role as the most influential figure within PDI-P.

These efforts to generate momentum behind a Widodo candidacy nevertheless occurred with the governor's knowledge and tacit approval. As local *relawan* branches sprung up in various cities across Indonesia, close advisors to Widodo were dispatched to travel around Indonesia to 'see who these people are, and just quietly pass on messages of thanks and support on behalf of Jokowi' (interview with Dono Prasetyo, General Secretary of Seknas Jokowi, Jakarta August 2014). As pro-Widodo and pro-Megawati factions within PDI-P lobbied internally for their positions, pro-Widodo factions reached out to *relawan* directly, seeing them as a useful symbol of the grassroots enthusiasm that the party would be foolish to ignore. At the September 2013 national meeting of the party, a group of Widodo supporters under the banner of Bara JP were admitted entrance to the meeting venue, chanting slogans in support of the governor. Outright criticism of the Soekarno family, Megawati and the PDI-P old guard was seldom heard from the *relawan* in public; however, it was clearly implicit in their calls for generation renewal and for a 'people's president' in 2014—an allusion to the stranglehold former president Megawati and her loyalists held on the party and nominating process. In private, many were scathing of the PDI-P elite and the Soekarno family. Many of the *relawan* organisers were themselves disaffected PDI-P supporters who saw 'Jokowimania' as an opportunity to refresh the party, and to be a champion of the secular-nationalist political tradition—a tradition which Megawati's death or retreat from public life threatened to leave leaderless.

The tensions between the *relawan* and party elites they saw as inhibiting a regeneration of nationalist politics meant that the former were primed to feel vindicated by PDI-P's disappointing showing in the April 2014 legislative election, and by its lacklustre support of Widodo during the subsequent presidential campaign. Eyewitnesses to the campaign drew attention to the relative prominence of the *relawan* in building grassroots support for Widodo. Based upon his observations of campaigning in Sumatra, Berenschot (2014) noticed the glaring absence of PDI-P efforts to get out the vote for Widodo, and that '[w]hat campaign activities there were in Lampung were driven by volunteer organizations like Bara JP, Projo and Seknas Jokowi.' Indeed, the subpar performance of the nominating parties in the legislative campaign only lent vindication to many *relawan* leader's position that they, not PDI-P, were the true source of Widodo's organisational strength: 'in the *pileg* [legislative polls] it was already clear to us that PDI-P was half hearted in its support for Jokowi...he should've been declared and marketed far in advance, they'd have gotten far better than 19 per cent [of the national vote]' (interview with Dono Prasteyo, Seknas Jokowi, August 2014). At a bustling volunteer *posko* (coordination post) in Malang, East Java, a Bara JP organiser expressed his bemusement to this author and local journalists at seeing the half-hearted support of the parties on the ground for their candidate: 'The parties are doing nothing! This is all Jokowi has', gesturing to piles of posters and leaflets ready to be distributed by *relawan*. 'We've never asked for money from parties, and never received it...the voters we engage with are "allergic" to political parties. To use the name of a party would be a liability in this election' (interview with *relawan* canvasser,

Malang, June 2014). Others were more sanguine; as one Jakarta-based *relawan* coordinator remarked, 'we could work with PDI-P structures at the grassroots, they were supportive. But like in Jakarta [in 2012], the elites were a different case' (interview with Hilmar Farid, Jakarta, July 2016).

By the last several weeks of the campaign, a shared panic among *relawan* and party elites around Widodo about the resurgence of the Prabowo campaign led to a pooling of resources to stage large-scale symbolic displays of public enthusiasm for the candidate. Crisis meetings which brought together campaign donors, party sponsors and other strategists were called in Jakarta. Around the same time, the candidate scheduled meetings with representatives of the *relawan* groups. Widodo, flanked by his campaign's pollsters, presented the dire results of the newest internal opinion polling in a day of back-to-back meetings with the *relawan*. According to one of the participants at the meeting, the candidate warned that he was in danger of letting the election slip away from him. 'I only had one piece of advice for him; I said: *Pak Jokowi*, you can't depend on the parties' (interview with Sukma Widyanti, Seknas Jokowi, November 2014). This would lead to some awkward alliances between *relawan* and the oligarchic figures whose influence over Widodo they saw themselves trying to compete with. One of the iconic set pieces of the 2014 came in the form of a large rock concert-cum-campaign rally in the last days of the campaign, hosted at Jakarta's largest sports stadium. Bit by bit, *relawan* with connections to the private sector solicited donations to supplement the money provided by oligarchic financiers, such as Luhut Pandjaitan and Rini Soemarno, while organisations such as Projo and Bara JP with grassroots organisations bussed in tens of thousands of sympathisers. Tens of thousands more, however, were middle class voters who arrived of their own accord to see the performances by some of Indonesia's most famous music stars who performed for free. The event was a made-for-television set piece that was unavoidable for even pro-Prabowo networks, which broadcasted the event live nationwide, and provided a much-needed morale boost for many of Widodo's most fervent supporters in the last days of the campaign.

The 2014 election campaign and its immediate aftermath marked the high point for the intensity and frequency of contact between Widodo and the *relawan* groups, and it was at this point that hopes among *relawan* leaders that they would be an integral part of the incoming administration began to cement. Shaken by the bruising campaign and the lacklustre performance of political parties in mobilising support for him, Widodo began to raise the *relawan* leaders' expectations of access and influence in the incoming administration. On election day, immediately after voting, he paid visits to the headquarters of *relawan* organisations to thank their leaders before proceeding to watch the count with Megawati at her home. The day after his victory was officially certified, he made an appearance before a crowd of a thousand or so cheering supporters at a park in central Jakarta. On stage with him were *relawan* leaders: as television networks broadcast the event nationwide, the activist and *relawan* organiser Hilmar Farid stood in front of the president-elect to read aloud a *maklumat rakyat*—'a people's

declaration’—that called for the empowerment of marginalised citizens, the settling of past human rights abuses, clean and transparent government, and other assorted progressive policy goals. Officials from Widodo’s nominating parties were notably absent—and he did not thank his own PDI-P or other parties in his first victory speech (author’s notes of victory celebration at the Proclamation Monument, Jakarta, 24 July 2014).

Yet the post-election euphoria actually marked the beginning of the fading away of this mobilisational momentum. In the immediate aftermath of the July election, and for some time during the transition period between then and the inauguration in October, it appeared that Widodo was hedging his bets with regards to the *relawan*, encouraging them to stay active in possible preparation for a rough relationship to come with oligarchic actors located within the parties and state institutions. For a while, then, it appeared that in his organisation-building strategy Widodo was set to exemplify the dynamics described by Roberts (2006)—namely that the tendency of populist leaders to institutionalise their supporter bases once in office was a function of the scale of political conflict their leadership provoked with oligarchic power structures. But this momentum towards institutionalising the *relawan* plateaued and quickly faded as Widodo got closer to inauguration, and dropped away almost entirely once he capitulated to the pressure brought to bear on him by party leaders over key political decisions intensified after he became president. Initially, however, spectre of conflict with entrenched elites led him to encourage the institutionalisation of his supporter base into organisations that could potentially become the basis of political vehicle for himself going forward—it is this chapter in Widodo’s relationship with his *relawan* that I now address in the next section.

After the election: consolidation and alienation

From the moment the election was over, there was disagreement within the *relawan* community itself about their proper role going forward. For many of the more progressive civil society figures who joined in with *relawan*, the priority of defeating Prabowo—rather than electing Widodo per se—left them with diminished enthusiasm about participating in a government they knew they would have to share with deeply unappealing party, military, and business elites. Most, however, saw an opportunity to displace, or at least share a seat at the table, with conservative insiders. One PKB politician friendly with the *relawan* who said that ‘if progressive thinkers like us don’t stay amongst Jokowi, the *orba-orba* [New Order figures] will be only ones left around him’ (interview with Maman Imanulhaq, Jakarta, February 2016). Many rationalised continued engagement with Widodo despite the presence of perceived adversaries like Rini, Luhut, and their allies: ‘How can we stand by silent when there are people like Rini and Luhut around him? We have no choice to criticise Jokowi because of the presence of problematic people in the team’ (Muhammad Yamin, Jakarta August 2014).

Despite these anxieties among his more progressive supporters, Widodo continued to raise the *relawan*'s expectations about influence and access. A few days after the Eid holiday in 2014, he called fourteen of the leaders of the biggest *relawan* organisations to meet him at his home in Solo. According to an attendee, he asked the *relawan* to 'consolidate', said he wanted routine meetings with them even 'at the palace, if need be', further promising that *relawan* would be represented on the transition team that was being formed (confidential interview, September 2014). Signs arrived quickly, however, that political insiders who had aligned themselves with Widodo were not going to accept the *relawan* as equals. Shortly after the election, the president-elect established a 'transition house' that was supposed to translate the vague promises that he was made to make in the campaign into a coherent program for government. But Widodo appointed Rini Soemarno and senior party officials to head the transition team, leaving *relawan* baffled and angry. *Relawan* organisers gained meetings with the transition leaders and demanded that representatives from their ranks be included in the working groups on policy questions, to little effect. A delegation of them went to city hall in Jakarta to meet Widodo, and complained that they hadn't been brought into the transition staff. Upon the president-elect's orders the *relawan* representatives were duly appointed to the transition team, where the relationship between the *relawan* and the party insiders was tense, sometimes breaking out into argument.¹¹

The *relawan* organisations also moved to fulfil Widodo's vague request for them to 'consolidate' their networks. In the weeks and months after the election, some of the major organisations took concrete steps towards formalising their networks into legally recognised mass organisations (or *ormas*), and held national conferences that brought together previously quite disparate local organisers. 'We must become an *ormas* so our political strength is more tangible', said one organiser (interview with Muhammad Yamin, Jakarta, August 2014). More importantly, achieving legal status was seen by many *relawan* as an important legal step in case the call came from Widodo to form a political party. Indeed, interviews with the leaders of the *relawan* organisations that became registered NGOs all expressed an eagerness to form a political party on Widodo's behalf if the order came. No such order ever came, yet he and his advisors were still leading the *relawan* to believe that they would have a role in propping up his government in the face of elite opposition. At the inaugural Bara JP congress, a close Widodo advisor from Solo days presented a paper on 'learning from the experience of Modi and Obama' in allying extra-party volunteers with social media campaigning, explicitly

¹¹ To give a flavour of the atmosphere, according to one attendee of an August 2014 meeting at the transition team offices, then president-elect Jokowi met with *relawan* accompanied by Rini Soemarno, who sat beside him. Roy Simanjuntak, a former anti-Soeharto activist and a *relawan* organiser, said directly to him: 'don't you know that right amongst you, you've got the mafia migas? [oil and gas mafia]', pointing to Rini, in reference to her family's alleged involvement in Indonesia's corrupt oil importation cartel. After Jokowi left the room, a row broke out between Rini and the *relawan*. (Confidential interview with a member of transition team, Jakarta, September 2014).

framed as an effort to build up the *relawan* as a counterweight to the political elite. As he said, 'we have less than 40% [of seats] in parliament, we're going to experience a lot of political pressure and challenges...they [the pro-Prabowo coalition] will try to block everything we do and take advantage of every political opportunity. But allied with social media, the *relawan* can be a great power' (author's notes of address by Eko Sulistyono, Jakarta, August 2014). True to this spirit, Widodo still expressed enthusiasm for volunteer mobilisation on his behalf. Speaking at the congress, he said: 'if I say: 5,000 *relawan* must gather at the National Monument or at the Senayan Stadium, you have to be ready!' (author's notes of speech to Bara JP, Jakarta, August 2014).

Yet despite Widodo's occasionally gung-ho rhetoric, the *relawan*'s enthusiasm for high-profile public mobilisations exceeded that of their candidate, even at times of celebration. On the eve of the election there was a meeting among *relawan* leaders about holding a snap victory demonstration in order to claim victory before the Prabowo side could. But the order came down from Widodo on election day that there was to be no mobilisation of supporters (interview with Andi Saiful Haq, Jakarta, August 2014). The *relawan* obeyed, and street celebrations in Jakarta remained small, sporadic, and undirected by Widodo supporter organisations. Another abortive attempt at mass mobilisation came shortly before the formal inauguration of the new president in late October 2014. In the tensions that had been maintained throughout the campaign only increased after voting, when the Prabowo camp sought to delegitimise Widodo's victory with claims of systematic fraud in his favour. For weeks after the voting, Prabowo and his surrogates propagated claims of massive fraud and foreign interference, launching a Constitutional Court bid to have the election results in several provinces thrown out. The claims had little merit and were widely seen as an irresponsible effort to destabilise and delegitimise the incoming president (Della-Giacoma and Junaidi, 2014). At the time, Jakarta was ablaze with rumour of Prabowo's attempt to gain, by illicit means, a numerical advantage in recounts or building the momentum for other constitutional or extra-constitutional attempts to prevent Widodo from coming to power.

While the Prabowo camp eventually gave up, the rumours persisted that the pro-Prabowo parties in parliament would try to disrupt or block Widodo's inauguration in the coming October; such rumours were pervasive among many *relawan* organisers. They took the opportunity to plan a massive demonstration and possible occupation of the parliament building to 'safeguard' Widodo's inauguration in October. Early that month, meetings were held in Jakarta among representatives of *relawan* organisations to plan for what they saw as the threat of a Prabowo-engineered disruption of the inauguration. But at the same time, party officials were planning, with Widodo's support, a non-confrontative 'celebration' of the inauguration. The president-elect once again told the *relawan* to desist from mobilising crowds in support of him, instead endorsing the suite of activities planned out by party officials and sympathetic celebrities (multiple interviews with *relawan*, Jakarta, September 2014).

Noticing how Widodo had left the *relawan* to drift without much direction, political parties were free to make overtures to their leaders, with the obvious intent of trying to co-opt their organisational apparatus. One party that took the opportunity to do so was the media tycoon Surya Paloh's NasDem, which had supported Widodo since his run for governor in 2012 and had been unusual among his nominating parties in providing funds for campaign materials to be distributed through *relawan* networks.¹² At a major 'thanking the *relawan*' event attended by the president-elected (but hosted by NasDem and broadcast on its affiliated Metro TV station), party chairman Surya Paloh presented certificates to the *relawan* leaders on stage himself. Though framed as a simple thank you celebration, that event at Kemayoran was 'highly political'; as one *relawan* said at the time, 'we realise that Surya Paloh wants to claim the *relawan* for himself, for his own purposes', adding that 'at the same time we realise we need a relationship with someone who can deal directly with Jokowi' (interview with Andi Saiful Haq, August 2014)—a telling reflection on the emergent post-election sources of influence on the president. One of Widodo's most trusted advisors observed that 'NasDem has that opportunity [to woo the *relawan*] because PDI-P hasn't been open to them, it remains closed off to outsiders...' (confidential interview with a member of presidential staff, September 2014). Perhaps more accurately, though, the fact that political parties saw opportunities to attempt to integrate *relawan* networks into their organisation was a reflection of Widodo's allowing his organised supporter base to drift away from him, creating opportunities for political parties to co-opt and sponsor *relawan* activities.

Volunteers and the new president in crisis

A major measure of the new president's commitment to a new style of governing—indeed, to a progressive policy agenda of any kind—would be his key personnel decisions. The first of these came in appointment of a cabinet. Throughout the transition period there had been rumours, some indulged in by senior *relawan*, of ministers being appointed from their own ranks with those from political parties and other patronage appointments. But when Widodo eventually announced his first cabinet in November 2014, no *relawan* organisers or indeed any progressive civil society figures were to be found in it. The outcome of Widodo's capitulation to political party and oligarchical pressures (assessed in detail in Chapter Four) was a cabinet that conformed to the standard assembly of patronage appointments with some technocrats in key economic and foreign policy portfolios (Aspinall 2014). The *relawan* turned their attention to gaining positions of influence in the Presidential Staff Office (Kantor Staf Presiden or

¹² The leader of the party's youth wing, Martin Manurung, acted as a fundraising pooler and provider of campaign materials such as leaflets and posters to be distributed by volunteers. Many *relawan* themselves were ambivalent about the relationship with a party; Bara JP, one large organisation, refused to participate in the coordination efforts led by NasDem officials.

KSP), a new political and policy coordination body which Widodo had established shortly after being sworn in.

The *relawan* made their expectations clear, sending a letter explicitly asking for Budi Arie Setiadi, the chair of Projo, and the Seknas Jokowi organiser Hilmar Farid to be appointed to the KSP (confidential interview, Jakarta, November 2014). ‘That’, said one of them, ‘was our last shot’ at getting a *relawan* presence at the centre of power (interview with Hilmar Farid, Jakarta, July 2016). To add insult to injury, as far as the *relawan* were concerned, Widodo appointed Luhut Pandjaitan as the new chief of the KSP. A deputy position was given over to a long serving aide with close links to *relawan*, yet this clearly was far from the expectations of *relawan* who had widely assumed that some of their leaders would have gained cabinet-level appointments. Eventually, *relawan* leaders had to make do with being appointed to sinecures on the boards of state-owned enterprises (Irfani 2021); while these patronage appointments were financially lucrative for the individuals who benefited from them and their organisations, they carried little policy influence and prompted cynicism from outside about the volunteers’ incorporation into typical patterns of post-election patronage distribution.

Despite this disappointment, the controversy over another appointment of an establishment figure to a senior government post would expose the *relawan*’s unwillingness (or, in their eyes, the inability) to campaign against a policy decision of their president. In late January 2015, a letter nominating Budi Gunawan, Megawati Soekarnoputri’s former presidential adjutant, as the new head of the national police force was leaked to the press. Budi became notorious in Indonesia in 2008 after being exposed as the owner of massive unexplained wealth. He headed a powerful anti-reform faction within the national police force that was bitterly opposed to Indonesia’s anti-corruption body, the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, KPK). Budi’s nomination was greeted with outrage from civil society and anticorruption campaigners. The KPK responded by immediately naming Budi a suspect in a corruption case—effectively daring the president to either withdraw the nomination or risk appointing a national police chief who was liable to be prosecuted for misconduct.

The decision to name Budi a suspect triggered an institutional crisis just months into Widodo’s presidency, pitting civil society against the president, dividing the *relawan*, and exposing the president’s weakness in the face of pressure from the political party establishment, which united behind the politically connected Budi. The *relawan* were to some extent divided by the nomination, being almost universally more sympathetic to the KPK than PDI-P. Yet while privately dismayed about Widodo’s capitulation to pressure from party bosses to nominate Budi to head the police force, in front of the media the *relawan* ran a defensive line. In a press conference the leaders of the key *relawan* groups reiterated their support for the president—avoiding journalists’ invitations to directly criticise him—and announced a new ‘Joint Secretariat of Participation’ that would bind the *relawan* groups closer together lest Widodo ‘not be left

alone' in facing party pressures (author's notes of media conference, Jakarta, 29 January 2015). In doing so, they were sending a strong signal that they would not follow independent civil society groups in openly questioning and challenging Widodo's policy decisions. Many *relawan* were well aware that their main selling point to Widodo was their unquestioning loyalty—something the president was certainly not getting from an increasingly demanding and aggressive party coalition led by PDI-P. As Mouzelis (1985) would have us expect, their organisations were relevant only insofar as they were conduits for promoting and mobilising under the sponsorship of Widodo, and they were hardly in a position to abandon him to transfer their organisational energies and any grassroots networks of influence they had built up to another candidate. As one put it in the immediate aftermath of the election: 'If we break up, we'll lose access to Jokowi' (confidential interview, Jakarta, July 2014). Indeed, at the very time when Widodo's standing among progressives and civil society was plummeting in the wake of the Budi Gunawan crisis, *relawan* leaders were still holding out hope that Widodo, having been shocked by the bullying of PDI-P and other parties, would turn to them to form a party vehicle to underpin his presidency. The idea may have been fanciful, yet in interviews taken around the time Widodo's relationship with parties was at its nadir in early 2015, many *relawan* leaders openly expressed their hope and readiness to pull the trigger on forming a 'Jokowi party' if and when the order came from above.

Conclusion

Interviewed in early 2016, one volunteer coordinator who was instrumental in directing the online campaign for Joko Widodo in both 2014 and 2012 spoke with bitterness about what had happened since:

Jokowi never consolidated his supporters. He said to them not to break up but what does that mean? What should the *relawan* do? He has to take care of his *anak buah* [protégées], give them a role. They're waiting for him to do something...He makes all sorts of promises here and there then forgets about it and it comes to nothing (confidential interview with former *relawan* organiser, Jakarta, January 2016).

Speaking around the same period, even a long-serving personal aide to Widodo despaired that 'without an organisation, Jokowi's legacy will disappear' (interview with a deputy chief of presidential staff, Jakarta, January 2016). Their president had nonetheless made his own cost-benefit analysis of the utility of institutionalising his supporter base as an instrument of popular mobilisation, and a potential future political party. The outcome of that calculation was the decision that appeasing the demands of incumbent parties for control over state patronage, and the ability to influence the president's personnel and policy decisions, was a more effective way of safeguarding his leadership than by destabilising his relationships with oligarchic factions by mobilising a personalist civil society (and potentially party) movement in

the *relawan*. This dynamic was in evidence during the dramatic first year of Widodo's presidency, during which he capitulated to the demands of parties on the composition of his first cabinet and the leadership of the national police force, all the while allowing the *relawan* to drift into irrelevance.

In explaining why Widodo did so, I have leant heavily on the role that institutional factors in limiting the scope of his strategic political options. Specifically with regards to his ability to organise a personal political vehicle once he had been elected president, regulations stemming from legislation governing party registration and elections meant that in the event that Widodo decided to task one of the *relawan* mass organisations (*ormas*) to convert itself into a personal vehicle party, it would have to have begun that process very early in Widodo's first term in order to have time to meet the electoral commission (KPU)'s December 2017 deadline for verifying that it met the administrative requirements for participation in the approaching national elections in 2019. In other words, instead of spending the time securing his political authority and policy agenda *within* the bounds of elite power-sharing, he would instead have been busy directing political capital, financial resources and his own attention to a building a political vehicle—something that would have been a grave provocation to his existing party coalition partners.

In addition to this institutional backdrop there was Widodo's career-long lack of personal interest in the hard work of organisation-building. Some *relawan* leaders understood well the implications of Widodo's origins within the regional business elite—not civil society, or party organisations—for his enthusiasm for organisational matters. As the activist and historian Hilmar Farid put it,

Jokowi's problem is that he's actually a very middle-class politician. He is enamoured of the media, he understands and values it, social media especially. He has a strong populist sentiment and appeal, but he doesn't understand what it takes to organise and mobilise people actively. All he knows is that when he shows up there are five thousand people there, but he doesn't understand what it takes to organise them (interview, July 2016).

This lack of personal concern for the practical work of mobilisation and organisation-building has not been lost on structuralist scholars, whose analyses of Widodo's early presidency have argued that a key reason for his failure to effectively assert his autonomy over incumbent oligarchs was his failure to institutionalise his supporter base in the mould of populists such as Chavez, Fujimori, Lula and Thaksin (Hadiz and Robison 2017: 495). Yet there is no reason to draw from the literature on populism the lesson that poorly institutionalised populist political movements cannot establish enduring populist governments: witness the case of Fujimori, whose populist authoritarian leadership of Peru was accomplished with remarkably threadbare partisan structures beneath him. Fujimori assembled personalistic supporter networks into formal party structures at election times, only to dissolve them and exclude their leaders

from participation in government during his presidential terms, instead forming a government of disparate allies from among existing state and party power bases (Levitsky & Cameron 2003). This pattern was directly connected to Fujimori's skilful co-optation of and accommodation with these established elites. Since the president was able to gain 'political sustenance' from oligarchic and security sector elites because of his liberal economic policies and hard-line tactics against domestic security threats, 'there was little incentive [for Fujimori] to organize popular constituencies to contest de facto power structures' (Roberts 2006: 140).

Joko Widodo's shifting relationship with his own supporter base was likewise symptomatic of shifts in his relationships with his own party's elites and the oligarchic establishment more broadly. While he was seeking a presidential nomination, Widodo quietly encouraged their efforts to create—indeed, to amplify—the impression of grassroots enthusiasm for his candidacy to strengthen his bargaining power with party elites. During the 2014 presidential campaign, *relawan* leaders were able to regularly contact their candidate directly, and he took the time to both meet their leaders, be seen in public expressing gratitude to their followers, and led them to believe that they would have a role in his government after the election. Such contact, and indeed material support, intensified as his need for mobilisation of voters increased amid panic about bad polling numbers in the last weeks of the election. But after Widodo became president, the extra-party networks were quickly sidelined. As he grew more accommodating of the interests of party and state elites, the frequency and substantive-ness of communication between the president, his inner circle, and the *relawan* leaders dwindled. The volunteer groups were left to organise, fundraise, and advocate largely undirected from Widodo, some of their organisers growing disillusioned or remaining directionless in the absence of a deliberate effort to sponsor and cultivate their activities from the presidential palace. The *relawan* were eventually sidelined, just as Roberts' (2006: 6) analysis would have us expect, because he instead sought 'political sustenance' from accommodations with elite factions, making the institutionalisation of an extra-partisan political machine redundant, and perhaps politically disadvantageous, from the president's point of view.

CHAPTER FOUR *A populism for parties?*

In the aftermath of his victory in the 2014 presidential election, Joko Widodo was to confront the challenge faced by every populist who succeeds in gaining executive power: namely, that of dealing with the established political parties whom he or she may have campaigned against—or indeed with—while seeking office. When populists are also outsiders—that is, they rise to power from a position of marginality to established political party organisations (Samuels and Shugart 2010: 63)—they may enter office relatively alienated from incumbent oligarchies, and often with the public’s expectation that they will govern in opposition to that oligarchy. As Houle and Kenny note, ‘[w]hile the outsider orientation of a populist in power is necessarily moderated from that of a populist campaigner, to varying degrees, populists in power continue to project an image of struggle against the status quo’ (2018: 259). Even in polities where political parties are relatively weak, parties can still be important vehicles for the interests of status quo political forces in legislatures and within elite coalitions, and play at least some part in linking elites with voters and/or as arbiters of patronage distribution. As such, parties are precisely the sort of institution that populist politics—with its emphasis on disintermediation and personalisation of the voter–leader linkage—seeks to subvert. Accordingly, a major concern of research on populism has been the effect that the rise of populist candidates has on the relationship between the consolidation or weakening of parties and party systems (Roberts 2003, Seawright 2012), and the strategies populist leaders use to subvert or supplant parties with alternative forms of political organisation in order to reinforce their rule (Roberts 2006, Crabtree 2010, Collier and Levitsky and Cameron 2003).

An outsider-populist president’s impulse towards confrontation with the political establishment can lead to illiberal behaviour in office—the concern of scholars like O’Donnell (1994) and Mainwaring (1993); indeed, the pathways to capturing executive office that presidential systems offered to anti-party or anti-system outsiders and movements was a key element in the ‘perils of presidentialism’ thesis (Linz 1990), which emerged in response to destabilising outsider-populist presidencies in Brazil (Collor) and Peru (Fujimori) in the 1990s. Multiparty presidential democracies have in aggregate proven much more durable than the ‘perils of presidentialism’ thesis predicted in the 1990s (Chaisty et al. 2018); nevertheless, stable patterns of coalitional presidentialism do remain vulnerable to challenges by populist outsiders. The historical record since has demonstrated that presidential systems remain particularly conducive to the rise of outsiders (Kyle and Gultchin 2018: 37–41, Carreras 2014, 2015, 2017). This is true of Southeast Asia itself where, as Bünthe and Thompson (2018: 257) note, ‘presidential

systems have faced grave challenges...largely from outsider elites who challenge the cartelisation of politics by status quo powerholders’.

In Indonesia, robust norms of cross-party power sharing were a well-established element of the country’s own system of coalitional presidentialism by the time Joko Widodo became a national figure. The collusion and favour-trading that sustained presidential coalitions made Indonesian democracy, in the eyes of some scholars, ‘structurally vulnerable to ...populist strongmen and their anti-system appeals’ (Slater 2014: 292). While those particular fears of an anti-system challenger were embodied primarily in Prabowo Subianto, in 2014 it was Widodo who had explicitly campaigned on promises to break with these prevailing patterns of coalition-building. Despite his increasing symbolic affiliation with PDI-P and his other nominating parties—and the expectation that their support would be rewarded with appointments and influence in the incoming administration—there remained cautious optimism that Widodo’s outsider origins and his track record in local government would open up the possibility for a reformist presidency. Slater (2004, 2013, 2014) argued that a critical flaw in the post-New Order democracy was an accountability deficit born of the practice of presidents establishing oversized governing coalitions, in which both the nominal winners and losers of presidential elections were included in a collusive power-sharing arrangement. On account of this practice, Indonesia was beset by an ‘accountability trap’ in which voters could not vote parties out of power, and presidents were not checked horizontally by opposition parties. Viewed from this perspective, it was encouraging that Widodo had formed a minimalist coalition of parties to support his presidential nomination, and had steadfastly refused to make pre-election commitments to them about access to cabinet seats and other patronage opportunities in exchange for their support. Writing just ahead of the 2014 presidential election, Slater had predicted that ‘a genuine outsider presidency would in all likelihood completely dismantle rather than contingently disrupt the institutional arrangement that lies at the heart of Indonesia’s accountability deficit: its cartelized party system’ (Slater 2014: 313). Thus ‘prospects for a presidency that avoids both the Scylla of cartelization and the Charybdis of unconstrained populism’ appeared ‘rather bright’ (op. cit.) if Widodo were to become president.

What eventuated instead, once Widodo’s pre-election alliance of convenience with party leaders made the transition into a governing party coalition, was a *constrained* populism that came to characterise his presidency. Widodo came to office as, in Muhtadi’s description (2015: 357), a ‘triple outsider’, in that ‘he was supported by a government coalition that did not have a parliamentary majority; he was a marginal figure in his own party, with less party authority than previous presidents such as Yudhoyono, Megawati, and Abdurrahman Wahid; and he was very much a newcomer to the national stage’. But Widodo’s relationship with political parties has not been marked by confrontation with the power of political parties, but by accommodation with and even reinforcement of it. Once he entered office, he made little effort to institutionalise his own base of loyalists into a party vehicle or to take control and

personalise power within one of Indonesia's existing parties. Instead, Widodo sought the support of established political party elites. At the same time, accommodation is not the entire story of Widodo's relationships with party power. Once the president felt secure in his elite coalition by mid-2015, he gained the confidence to begin coercing support from wavering or opposition parties. Widodo has refined practices of coalitional presidentialism within the constraints it places upon his authority, rather than make any serious attempt at changing the way presidents and parties cooperate.

Joko Widodo is therefore a noteworthy case of a populist outsider president who, notwithstanding his reliance on populist strategies to *gain* power, has accepted significant constraints on his ability to build confrontation with established party-based oligarchies into a populist presidency. Indeed, during his time as president Widodo has perpetuated the position of political parties in building an elite coalition—refining, rather than challenging, existing practices of coalitional presidentialism. In this chapter I build on the previous chapters' analysis of the formative role Indonesia's electoral rules have had on Widodo's strategic political choices, making the case here that his constrained populism was an outcome of the alliances he was forced to make in order to secure his party coalition in 2014. Latin American and Philippine electoral systems allow for the emergence of anti-party outsider candidates with minimal party backing—and with incumbent parties being redundant in their rise to the presidency, they have subsequently been emboldened to campaign against political establishments and incumbent parties once in office. Indonesia's electoral system places significant barriers to entry on candidates, populist or not, who emerge from outside the national party system. Institutions alone were not the only explanations for why Widodo's populist connection with the electorate, and his alienation from parties, was not accompanied by an anti-party politics during his presidency. Widodo's responses to the imperatives created by the institutional framework around him were shaped by contingency, his personal character and his personal relationships with key political actors, the quality of information and advice he was basing his decision-making on. Nevertheless, I argue, these barriers to entry were critical in creating the background conditions for his rapid accommodation to the norms of elite power sharing after the election, dissipating the style and substance of Widodo's anti-party, anti-establishment appeal in 2013–2014.

This chapter proceeds in three sections. A first section outlines the comparative landscape of populist outsiders, their parties, and how the easier pathways to presidential nominations in other presidential systems relative to Indonesia has opened up strategic space for populist presidents to include anti-party and anti-establishment appeals as part of their campaigning and governing strategies. I then move in a second section to describe several key areas of Joko Widodo's relationships with parties in the early period of his presidency, during which the broad terms of his relationships with his coalition partners were set. I address in order: the pressure he faced to appoint party-linked candidates to his first cabinet in late 2014; the

political crisis triggered by his acquiescence to party pressure to appoint a national police chief accused of corruption by Indonesia's anti-graft agency; and how the tensions between Widodo and PDI-P prompted him to dilute its dominance of his party coalition by co-opting opposition parties into the government. In a concluding section I summarise the analysis contained in the chapter and relates it back to my broader arguments about how Indonesia's electoral rules structure the relationship between presidents and party elites.

How Indonesia's parties tamed an outsider

Populists and their parties

The rise of a populist outsider can have a range of consequences for president-party relationships, and for party systems more broadly. At the most dramatic end, a populist challenge that emerges in the context of a party system collapse can substantially sideline any systemically important role for political parties. In Peru in the 1990s, Alberto Fujimori's success on the back of an 'instant' party vehicle in the 1990 presidential election led to the:

...full-scale decomposition of the party system and its replacement with an atomized, candidate-centered system ... Peruvian politicians drew two lessons from [Fujimori's] success: that public opinion would not reward the defense of formal democratic institutions; and that parties were not necessary for (and might impede) career advancement. (Levitsky and Cameron 2003: 3)

Wary of party-building, or even cooperation with existing parties, Fujimori sought alliances with security sector and business elites to reinforce his presidency (Cohaghan 2006: 252–256). More recently, Ecuador's populist president Rafael Corréa, who denounced the traditional forms of coalitional presidentialism during his campaigns, spearheaded the approval of a new constitution that greatly increased presidential powers vis a vis parliament (Conaghan 2016).

In Brazil, two outsider populists have come into conflict with the realities of power-sharing amid a fragmented party system. Fernando Collor de Mello, elected on a shell party in the 1990 presidential elections, 'worked both to undercut major existing centres of power and undermine a whole host of intermediary organizations' as president (Weyland 1993: 11). He 'refused to play by Brazil's traditional rules of coalition presidentialism and patronage politics', with his popularity allowing making him 'initially quite successful in forcing legislation through Congress without entering the give-and-take tradition of Brazilian politics' (Panizza 2000: 188). Yet once the economic reform programs he rammed through the congress caused significant economic and social dislocation, which badly impacted his polling numbers, Collor saw himself forced into accommodation with parties and congress. Eventually, '[l]acking a strong party of his own and having to confront the welter of parties of low organizational strength and program orientation which were represented in Congress, Collor resorted to a

time-honored method often used by his presidential predecessors: i.e., the distribution of patronage.’ (Weyland 1993: 9–10). The corruption scandals that emerged from Collor’s frenzy to buy off party factions in the legislature would eventually force him to resign under threat of impeachment. While Collor failed in his attempt to govern with disregard for the imperatives of Brazil’s coalitional presidentialism, in recent years such a strategy has been committed to more forcefully by Jair Bolsonaro. Bolsonaro, a former army officer, has followed through on a promise to dispense with the practice of giving political parties the prerogative of claiming many cabinet seats, instead appointing an executive made up largely of military men and right-wing civil society figures. Worries persist that Bolsonaro ‘may be tempted to find illiberal paths around routine institutional obstacles’ (Hunter & Power 2019: 79).

In the Philippines, chronically weak parties and an institutionally strong presidency have also meant that parties pose little barrier to populists getting on the ballot. The weakness of congressional factions is evidenced by the widespread practice of party-hopping: for instance, while Rodrigo Duterte’s PDP-Laban party won only 10 seats in the 296-seat congress in the 2016 elections, over the following 18 months hundreds of legislators would join his parliamentary supermajority, either by switching outright to PDP-Laban or staying in their parties but pledging support for the administration (Cook 2018: 268–270). This tradition was certainly not a new phenomenon; it is a longstanding practice of Philippine legislators to join a new presidents’ legislative coalition in order to guarantee access to state funds and pork barrel projects for their electoral districts. The informal institutions governing legislative-executive relations in the Philippines politics, then, present few barriers to the exercise of political power by a populist president. Instead, Duterte’s efforts at neutering mechanisms of horizontal accountability through coercion and repression have been largely aimed at the remaining pockets of opposition to his rule in the media and civil society (Thompson 2021: 133–134).

It is clear, then, that the frustrations of trying to govern in a system where parties traditionally have significant influence over the exercise of presidential power can and do give rise to attacks on the part of populist leaders on parties and the institutions they control. There is ample evidence that populist rule is associated with the erosion of checks and balances and the strengthening of executive power (Houle & Kenny 2018: 256–287). Regardless of the particular form a populist supporter organisation takes, ‘the top-down nature of populist movements...makes such politicians more likely to evade judicial and legislative constraints on their authority...Populist leaders typically have limited restraints within their own movements and seek to deploy the legitimacy of majority support against the countervailing legitimacy of republican constraints’ (Ibid.: 262). In short, alienated from traditional parties and yet lacking any solid organisational apparatus of their own, populists are prone to embrace the coercion of independent institutions, harass the opposition, gain sustenance from the military and security forces, or to resort to outright corruption and patronage to achieve their policy goals. Yet as I will now discuss, the political alliances with parties that Joko Widodo—Indonesia’s

outsider-populist president—was forced into on his rise to the presidency set up parties to subsequently demand, and receive, extensive concessions in terms of their ability to influence the character of his administration, effectively writing out of his post-election populism any party-weakening agenda.

Indonesia's 'soft' anti-party politics

As discussed in Chapter Two, Widodo promoted himself in 2014 as a candidate who would resist the influence of political parties as president. This was in line with the habit he had formed throughout his sub-national career of emphasising that he did not do special favours for the political parties that supported him. During the 2014 presidential election, he promised that he would not be held hostage by his party coalition, and would form the smallest coalition necessary to gain nomination. He promised to 'build a working cabinet, not a political cabinet' merely built upon 'handing out seats [*bagi-bagi kursi*]' while expressing nonchalance at the prospect of governing with a coalition that only represented a minority in the parliament, telling the media that 'we need to have the bravery to [reject an oversized coalition]...if not, it'll be like this forever, handing out cabinet seats. [But] if I am backed up by the media and the people, I'm not scared' (Kuwado 2014c). Throughout the 2014 presidential election campaign he had told voters that he would not be 'held to ransom' by coalition partners, and that he'd form a minimalist coalition, and that it would be a 'no strings attached' coalition (Waluyo 2014).

Certainly, the rhetoric Widodo used on his rise to the presidency was not 'anti-party' per se. But in the Indonesian context it was clear that he was promising a decisive break with the horse-trading that marked the country's tradition of coalitional presidentialism and pursue a strategy more based more on weaponising the power of public opinion in forcing his policy preferences on party elites—in line with the tactics he had made use of as a regional politician. Though he notionally was supported by a party coalition that included some of Indonesia's best-institutionalised parties, Widodo came to office with a weak basis of support within the system. His nominating party coalition had only won 207 of the 560 seats in the national legislature (DPR) at the 2014 elections. Moreover, the president had little internal influence within the individual member parties of his coalition, including his own PDI-P, in which he had never served as an official. Widodo's response to his somewhat tenuous alliance with party power was a vague expectation that he would resort to appeals to public opinion—even seeking to mobilise public opinion against his adversaries—in the upcoming battles with party elites. In a September 2014 interview, Widodo would tell a foreign researcher that the public should expect him to use the powers at his disposal to stare down party demands and appoint the personnel and enact the policies of his choice (personal communication with Marcus Mietzner, Australian National University, September 2014). To the *relawan* volunteer networks, he had

declared that popular mobilisation might be part of his toolbox in confronting parliamentary opposition to his initiatives (see Chapter Three).

The institutional context in Indonesia would provide a challenging context for such a strategy to work. On the one hand, the conditions for governing ‘against’ parties would seem to be ripe: Indonesian voters claim low levels of identification with political parties, and the low esteem in which parties are generally held. Yet as has been detailed in Chapter Two, the institutional framework Widodo was operating in made the support of parties—whether his own, or those of his oligarchic allies—an indispensable ingredient in his being able to run for re-election to a second term. The need to satisfy the party leaders of his party-friendly *bona fides* would be fundamental in setting the terms of his relationships with the political elite over the course of his first term: just as the electoral barriers to entry saw Widodo enter into political alliances he would likely have otherwise shied away from *before* he was president, so would these barriers also guide the course of his political strategy once he did become president. Of course, abandoning PDI-P and forming a personal party of his own in anticipation of the 2019 elections may have been an option. But as we have seen in Chapter Three, Widodo never gave the order to the *relawan* organisations loyal to him to transform themselves formally into a political party.

Why was Widodo so reluctant to found or commandeer a party to act as his personal vehicle? Firstly, a party vehicle for re-election in 2019 would have to begin early in his first term due to the enormous bureaucratic burden of getting a newly-formed party ‘verified’ by Indonesia’s electoral commission in order to qualify to contest national elections. This process began almost two years before voting day: as mentioned in Chapter Two, the timetables had a material impact in terms of limiting Widodo’s ability to create a personal vehicle party, not least because the deadline for having a party verified to contest the 2014 elections closed in January 2013, when he was still only just emerging as a viable candidate for the presidency. This would also be a factor in the lead up to his re-election in 2019. The Ministry of Law and Human Rights opened registrations for new political parties in May 2016; in September 2017 the KPU (Komisi Pemilihan Umum, Elections Commission) set out the timetable for the 2019 legislative and presidential elections. In this timetable, parties would have to undergo the process of ‘verifying’ that they met the requirements to participate in a national election beginning in December 2017, with the list of parties qualifying to appear on the legislative ballot being finalised in February 2018.¹³ These timelines were such that starting the process of establishing his own party would have been one of the first major strategic political moves of Widodo’s presidency. At a time when he was facing pressure not only from his own party coalition and the Prabowo opposition, such a grave provocation of PDI-P would have been highly destabilising.

¹³ KPU Regulation 7/2017

Not only would such a move have been fraught with political risk, but its short-term rewards would also have been negligible. Because legislators in Indonesia are effectively barred from changing their party affiliation during the course of their terms, he would not be able to entice legislators elected under the banner of incumbent parties to join a hypothetical 'Jokowi' party after the election, in emulation of the common practice in the Philippines whereby legislators 'bandwagon' to join the president's party coalition (Kasuya 2009).

Widodo could still have made an attempt at taking over an existing party, commandeering it for use as a base for himself in the party system. A potential target of such an attempt would have been PDI-P, if he was able to somehow harness enough enthusiasm among regional branch leaders to position himself as a successor to Megawati, or to take over the party outright. In the early period of Widodo's presidency, rumours abounded about his possible intentions with regard to his party; in some PDI-P circles there was considerable paranoia about the new president's plans. But at his first post-election opportunity to make a show of strength within PDI-P, Widodo declined to make any attempt at signalling his interest in taking control of the party. Indeed, he and his team went to lengths to quash any speculation about his ambitions with regards to party leadership. On the eve of the party's National Working Meeting (*rakernas*) in Semarang in September 2014, there were rumours that provincial branches sympathetic to him were going to make an attempt at nominating him for the party's chairmanship. Widodo, according to a close advisor, heard about these rumours and moved quickly to shut down the move to nominate him. To the surprise of the party, he appeared before the delegates himself the next day and proposed that the party pre-commit to reappointing Megawati as chair in the upcoming 2015 party congress—foreclosing the possibility that the *rakernas* and intervening party meetings could be a platform for a challenge to Megawati's domination of the party (confidential interview with member of presidential staff, Jakarta, January 2015). In the immediate aftermath, party powerbrokers were ecstatic, with one senior subnational official saying with a grin that 'this kills all the talk about Jokowi wanting to take over PDI-P' (interview with Prasetyo Edi Marsudi, Chair of Jakarta PDI-P branch, Semarang, September 2014).

Widodo's doubts about the strength of his own bargaining position, combined with the general atmosphere of uncertainty that surrounded his relationship with his coalition amid a still-vocal opposition bloc in parliament, meant that he was taking the rational course of action as he saw it: not making any radical departures from the status quo, confident that the popularity he would enjoy in a post-election honeymoon would carry him through conflicts with party elites to come. But as the president and the Indonesian public would learn when the time came to appoint Widodo's first cabinet, party leaders were more than willing to browbeat the president into populating key executive positions with their loyalists.

The parties demand payback

Widodo's post-victory commitment to not allowing parties to determine the agenda of his government would face its first test in the selection of personnel for key administration roles, and it was in the appointment of a cabinet where Widodo's reversal on his promises to break with the practice of *bagi-bagi kursi*—distributing cabinet seats to parties—would be most stark. While there is no constitutional requirement for presidents to appoint cabinet members from political parties, in effect there has long been the requirement for presidents to apportion some of their cabinet to political party patronage appointments. Early reports reflected a sense of confidence on Widodo's part, with his team informing the media that the early drafts of his cabinet were heavily weighted towards academics and technocrats with fewer spots for party officials (Widiarsi et al 2014). One particular mechanism by which the president-elect and his team sought to minimise the worst of the parties' requests was by mandating that all potential cabinet appointees have their personal finances vetted by two official watchdog agencies, the KPK (Corruption Eradication Commission) and PPATK (Financial Transactions Analysis and Reporting Centre), a tactic to prevent the appointment of problematic political party figures. In doing so, Widodo had set a clear line in the sand in terms of his unwillingness to be dictated to by party oligarchs on cabinet appointments.

Initially, Widodo showed signs of sticking to such a commitment. He and Vice President-elect Jusuf Kalla received the reports back from the KPK and PPATK on the eve of their inauguration. The advice of the two agencies was that key figures within the president's political coalition—including his campaign fixer Rini Soemarno, PKB party chairman Muhaimin Iskandar and the Megawati-linked police general Budi Gunawan—were vulnerable to investigation and prosecution for corruption (Hidayat et al, 2014). On this basis, Widodo felt confident enough to schedule the announcement of a cabinet the week after he was sworn in as president. At Jakarta's container port on 27 October, journalists gathered at a site where television lighting and a stage were set up; it was universally assumed, though not announced, that Widodo would appear to announce his new cabinet. But the event was aborted in farcical fashion. *Tempo* magazine, based on conversations with figures close to Widodo, would report that the president phoned Vice President Kalla while in the car to the port. Kalla expressed surprise, saying that negotiations with parties had not been resolved and that it would be premature to announce the cabinet. When word got to Megawati that a cabinet announcement was imminent, she immediately summoned the president to her house, to which Widodo hurried along with Kalla—but they arrived after she had gone to bed and did not receive them. The next day in a meeting she repeated a threat to withdraw support for Widodo's government if he dared to appoint cabinet ministers from PDIP's agreed portion without her approval. Widodo was poised to appoint Maruarar Sirait, an articulate young PDI-P figure who had been a major supporter of his within the party, to cabinet; Megawati, who disliked Maruarar and saw

Widodo's appointment of him as an affront to her, threatened to withdraw PDI-P from the governing coalition if the president went ahead with his choice (Sugiharto et al 2014).

Megawati's intervention and its aftermath represented a critical moment in undermining Widodo's confidence in his ability to ignore the dictates of the party elites around him. Before long, he would announce a cabinet which contained few of his personal allies, and overwhelmingly populated by the patronage appointments of party elites—including some candidates whom the KPK and PPATK had warned Widodo and Kalla off appointing due to their potential exposure to corruption investigations. Eventually, the cabinet that Widodo announced in early November would disappoint both reformers and the media, with observers noting how conventional it looked, even representing a step backwards in terms of quality compared with the Yudhoyono years (Aspinall 2014b). A further blow to public perceptions of Widodo's determination to appoint a cabinet on merit, rather than party affiliation, was his appointment later that year of an attorney-general aligned to Surya Paloh, the chairman of the Nasdem party. Widodo had not come to office having cultivated an extensive clique of allies and trusted advisors whom he could call upon to serve in the executive; he was a politician relatively bereft of what is referred to in Indonesia as *anak buah* (protégées) even after several years in the national spotlight. Many of the ostensibly 'independent' or 'professional' cabinet ministers were in fact the patronage appointments of party oligarchs; in many cases these individuals were not personally loyal to the president. The final symbol of Widodo's appointing a cabinet not personally loyal to him was when his new home minister, the former PDI-P General Secretary Tjahjo Kumolo, told the press after his swearing in at the palace that he had to 'go and see the boss'—a reference not to the president, but to Megawati (Detiknews 2014).

The Budi Gunawan–KPK crisis

The 2014 cabinet announcement would be followed by the eruption of an institutional crisis triggered by Widodo's capitulation to party lobbying on another key official appointment. As the end of 2014 approached, Widodo had to make a decision on a replacement for the national police chief. Political parties—in his own coalition and the opposition alike—had united around the figure of Budi Gunawan, a long serving police general with a controversial reputation. Budi had served as Megawati's adjutant during her presidency, and the two were known to be personally close. To the public, Budi was best known as the subject of media reporting that revealed that he had been one of a group of senior police officers who were found to have suspiciously large bank balances, having received regular cash payments from businesspeople and other police officers. When a letter nominating Budi as the sole candidate leaked to the media in late January 2015, the news came as a great shock to Widodo's supporters in civil society. Joining them in their outrage was the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, KPK). Upon Budi's nomination, the Commission

immediately named him a suspect in a historic corruption case, effectively charging him with a crime as he was being prepared to become Indonesia's most senior law enforcement official. The naming of Budi as a suspect, and the police force's response to the KPK's move, would trigger an institutional crisis that would lead to the KPK's independence and credibility being enduringly damaged, the police force under the control of the most anti-reformist elements within it, and Widodo's anticorruption credibility irreparably harmed. Indeed, in light of the new president's uncertain handling of the police-KPK crisis throughout early 2015, it was not uncommon to hear seasoned observers of Indonesian politics take seriously the idea of him being impeached or forced out of office early in his term.

A strike back against the KPK from supporters of Budi within the police force soon began, with detectives making a high-profile arrest of Bambang Widjajanto, a KPK commissioner and highly respected civil society figure. This was followed by the indictment of the KPK's chairman Abraham Samad on charges of falsifying documents, and the resurrection of questionable homicide charges against a KPK investigator, Novel Baswedan. The commission was threatened with paralysis in the event that it could not achieve the quorum of commissioners needed to make prosecutions. Civil society quickly united in support of the KPK, demonstrating against the police and making high profile shows of support for the Commission in public events and the media. Widodo's response to the uproar did nothing to reassure reformists that he was committed to defending the Commission against attacks by the police force. He appeared seriously shaken when addressing the nation from the Bogor palace, reading a short statement that offered only platitudinous remarks about the case. He asked the KPK and the police force to avoid 'political friction' (Waluyo 2015).¹⁴ In the absence of any signal from the president that their attacks on the KPK were not to take place, the police continued with their criminalisation of the anticorruption body's officials.

A major source of Widodo's reticence to defend the KPK was the fact that political parties had quickly and solidly united behind the police force and its attacks on the commission. Budi Gunawan's nomination still had not been formally rescinded by the palace, despite his status as a corruption suspect, and the parliamentary factions and the party bosses around the president only increased their determination to have him nominated as the new police chief. Senior party figures from both the opposition and the government's coalition begun to unite in openly threatening Widodo, saying that he should allow the inauguration of Budi as police chief or face grave political consequences. Some powerful PDI-P figures even floated the idea of impeaching him when the controversy over Budi's nomination was at its peak (Saputri 2015). Eventually, however, Widodo settled upon a political compromise that gave some

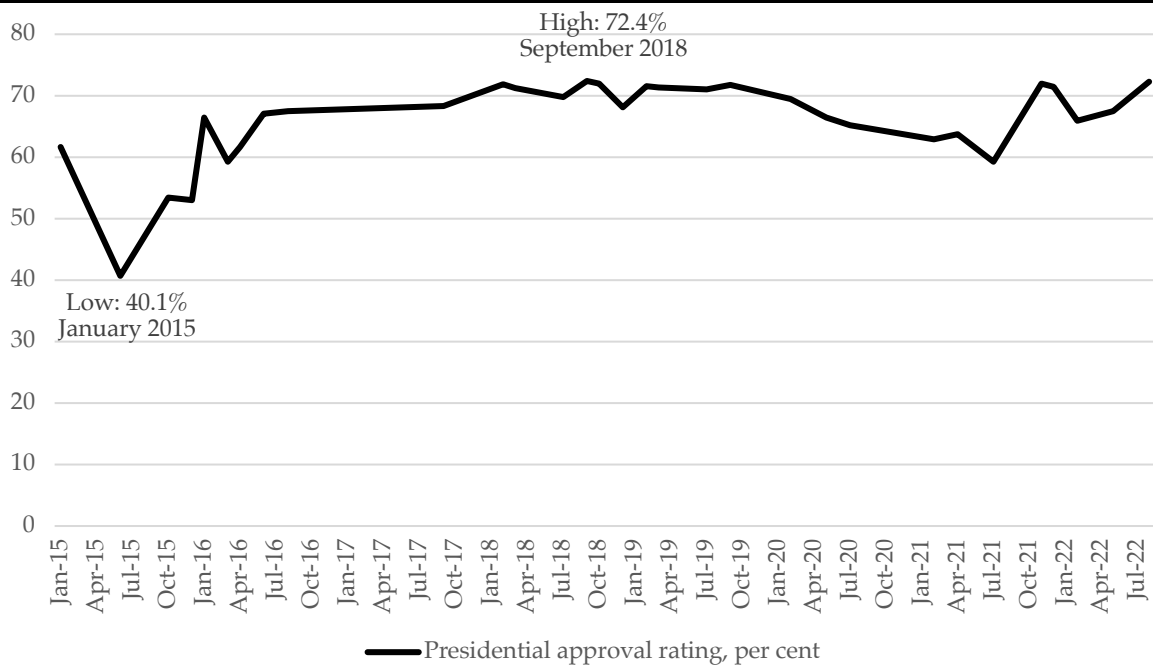
¹⁴ Widodo reportedly reacted with anger to the KPK's naming Budi a suspect, with a staffer reporting that they had 'never seen him so angry' at not being consulted or warned about the KPK's move; the president reportedly fumed that '[KPK chairman Abraham] Samad is my *bawahan* [underling]!' (confidential interview, Jakarta, March 2015).

measure of satisfaction to the aggrieved elements of the oligarchy and civil society. Budi's nomination was withdrawn and his nomination was given to Badrodin Haiti, another official who was named in a 2006 media investigation into unexplained wealth among senior officers. The KPK officials who were the subject of revenge prosecutions from the police force were to be left alone.

Behind Widodo's ability to engineer this compromise solution were the conspicuous efforts he made to reach out to opposition leaders. One critical event that paved the way for a resolution to the crisis was a high-profile meeting he engineered with Prabowo Subianto at the presidential palace. The meeting was clearly a signal to Widodo's own coalition, intended to let them know that the president could dilute their influence over him by reconciling with the opposition and broadening his elite coalition if necessary. The meeting was a sign of things to come, in that it signalled that despite Widodo's overall susceptibility to the demands of parties, he was nevertheless learning that he had the ability to play off coalition partners against each other, making public reminders that they were not indispensable in a context where there were opposition parties that would gladly displace recalcitrant coalition partners in the governing coalition if given the right compensation.

Nevertheless, Widodo's blunder in nominating Budi Gunawan in the first place still represents an emblematic case of how lobbying from party bosses, combined with threats, was able to play on his early anxiety about the possibility of impeachment. His obvious weakness in the face of pressure from parties fed a vicious cycle whereby he not only ceded authority to party bosses, but damaged the public popularity that was his only realistic tool in pushing back against party pressure. Polling numbers from Indonesia's most respected survey agencies all showed that Widodo's approval ratings declined sharply in the first half of 2015, in the aftermath of the Police–KPK crisis (Muhtadi 2015: 362, see also Table 2). Widodo was trapped: the very accommodations that he was making in order to placate the party cartel served to diminish the very power resource which he might have relied upon to push back against it. Unfortunately for those who hoped for reform, Widodo took the lesson from the Polri–KPK crisis that the stability born of good relations with political parties was an important source of public approval, and that he would not be rewarded for 'rocking the boat' by angering parties by pushing institutional reform.

Table 2: Presidential approval ratings, 2015–2022



Source: Lembaga Survei Indonesia, Indikator Indonesia

PDI-P's expansive expectations

Despite the concessions to the party leaders Widodo had made by the first year of his presidency, PDI-P was distinctive in the extent to which it was unsatisfied with its role inside the government. As the largest party within the governing coalition, and the one with which the president was ostensibly aligned, PDI-P felt free to adopt the most expansive claims on post-election patronage in exchange for its nomination of Widodo. After ten years in opposition during the Yudhoyono presidency, the party had been denied the usual access to the executive that comes with participation in a governing coalition—and, accompanying that, the control over patronage and financial resources that comes with such executive access. Widodo was still resented by many of the party's elites because of the perceived potential for his popularity to upset the internal power dynamics in the party, and he would soon become the target of accusations of ingratitude and disloyalty from the party when its inflated expectations of its influence over the president were not realised.

The lingering bitterness that remained in the aftermath of the KPK–Polri affair, and the cancellation of Budi's nomination for police chief, would explode into the open at the five-yearly PDI-P national congress, which took place in Bali in mid-2015, not long after the crisis had slipped from the headlines. The ostensible purpose of the event was to elect the party's new national executive and decide on the broad outlines of its work plan for the next five years. In practice, the congress would be a ritualised display of the party elite remonstrating with the

president for his perceived neglect of their interests. Calculated efforts to humiliate Widodo began with refusing permission to the president to speak at the event, despite a direct request from the palace to make time in the program for the president (Sunudyantoro et al, 2015). Widodo would arrive at the congress venue as a guest of the party, greeted by shouts of ‘traitor!’ by some party cadre in attendance (author’s notes of the congress, Bali, April 2015). What occurred next was more visible to the media: Megawati made a speech in which she made thinly veiled references to ‘stowaways’ and ‘backstabbers’ in the government, a clear reference to the Widodo allies Rini Soemarno and Luhut Pandjaitan, whom many in PDI-P felt were exercising a profound influence on Widodo decision-making at the expense of the party.

More revealing of the party’s deeper anxieties, however, were Megawati’s comments on what she called *deparpolisasi*, or ‘de-partyisation’:

A number of dynamics in the implementation of direct presidential and vice-presidential elections have left a lot of homework. Direct elections have brought consequences for the recruitment of campaign teams, volunteers, and diverse interest groups, together with the mobilisation of resources [...]

Another piece of homework is how to establish mechanisms for working between the government and its supporting political parties. This is important, recalling that the relationship between the two is the intent and principle of democracy itself.

The constitutional basis is clear: Law Number 42 of 2008 on the Election of the President and Vice President mandates that the president and vice president are nominated by parties or coalitions of political parties. That’s the constitutional mechanism we know. It’s the law of democracy that establishes that the president and vice president as a matter of course follow the line of party policy...

To say that parties are merely an ornament of democracy, and only scaffolding (*alat tunggangan*) for political power, is to belittle the meaning of the party collectivity that originates from the people. This phenomenon is clear to see, when at the same time we see the emergence of the departyisation (*deparpolisasi*) movement. Anti-party sentiment is shouted ever more loudly in the thronging towards political liberalisation.

I’m convinced that the process of departyisation doesn’t occur of its own accord. There is therein a symbiosis of anti-party power and the power of capital, which stands in opposition to [our] *Berdikari* [national self-sufficiency] movement. They are opportunists. They don’t want to work hard to build parties...(Hutasoit 2015)

Megawati was voicing frustration with not only the specific grievance she had about the role that figures like Luhut and Rini were playing as counsellors and fixers for Widodo—she was invoking the extreme ambivalence the party had about the presidential system which she had helped set up a decade and a half earlier. The term ‘departyisation’ had been become

commonplace in the vocabulary of PDI-P officials, who were unhappy with the level of representation the party was getting at the highest reaches of the Widodo administration and the attention being given to its interests by the bureaucracy.

Party functionaries from the regions were likewise angry with what they saw as the failure of the administration to take care of its interests. There remained considerable frustration with what they perceived as the lack of symbolic respect and practical patronage it was receiving from the president. Some of this related to the way in which Widodo's social programs were seen to not be positioning parties, and particularly PDI-P, as benefactors to their electoral bases. At a 2016 PDI-P national meeting, a senior member of PDI-P's national executive recounted that in a recent meeting with the president:

I told him: *Pak Jokowi*, when you go to open a clinic, don't just open it. Tell the people that this is the good work of PDI-P. When you bring boats for fishermen, tell them that this is the good work of PDI-P. We don't ask for money, we just want recognition, some political benefit for us' (confidential interview, Jakarta, January 2016).

The view of one district branch head was typical of the views of the assembled party officials; as he asked rhetorically on the sidelines of the 2015 party congress, 'what have we gotten? Asked my friends from the regions. And I don't have an answer for that because it's true, we've gotten nothing...' (interview with a PDI-P branch head, Bali, April 2015).

What explained the depth of frustration within PDI-P towards Widodo? Part of the story was the president's own habit of leading political stakeholders to expect too much of him, then finding ways to evade fully delivering on promises of influence or patronage when the political ground shifted in his favour. (The *relawan* volunteer networks, analysed in Chapter Three, were notable casualties of this political habit.) As one aide to a PDI-P national board member complained, 'Jokowi always makes promises but his words are meaningless. He tells the [PDI-P national board] that they'll meet every three months and so on but he forgets about it and it comes to nothing' (interview with PDI-P parliamentary staff, Jakarta, January 2016). Ultimately, however, there was simply a divergence of political interests that was inherent to the bargain struck between Widodo and PDI-P ahead of the 2014 presidential elections. As discussed in Chapter Two, Samuels and Shugart (2010: 63) have proposed that bureaucratic parties like PDI-P face a major dilemma in selecting candidates for executive office. While they have an interest in inserting a loyal party functionary as a head of government, the party organisation may perform poorly in generating candidates with popular appeal. Electoral incentives might therefore favour of the party nominating a popular outsider, but in doing so the party faces a principal-agent problem: controlling that outsider once they are elected to executive office may be challenging insofar as it is in *their* political interests to act against the party's interests, or even to appear to.

Well aware of this dilemma, PDI-P sought to put its stamp on Widodo by forcing him to adopt the image of a loyal *petugas partai* or 'party functionary' as the price of his nomination. Yet he remained in substance an outsider to the party, having invested heavily in ingratiating himself with Megawati while making little effort to build a clientele or base of influence within the organisation more broadly. At the root of the conflict between Widodo and PDI-P was the party's misunderstanding of the way the new populist president saw his relationship with party power. In PDI-P's eyes, the president's appeal to its base was down to his status as an avatar for the party and its values—in their eyes the party had made the president, not the other way around. PDI-P saw itself as indispensable to the president, and correspondingly as a rightful claimant to be treated as the senior partner in the governing coalition. Senior figures raised the spectre of his government collapsing in the event that PDI-P decided to withdraw support for him. As a senior PDI-P official recounted, 'I told the president: you have to do the right thing by your party or things could be politically difficult. Difficult to govern, that is, if things aren't right between you and the party. And that also includes the possibility of your not being president again' (interview with a PDI-P national board member, Jakarta, January 2016).

But Widodo observed the relationship from the perspective of a populist: PDI-P may have been 'first among equals' among the set of elite actors he needed in order to pass legislation and secure a nomination for re-election in 2019, but it was in his eyes more of a vehicle of convenience for his presidency more than the intermediary between him and his electoral base. Once he was president the reality that his roots within the party remained shallow became obvious. PDI-P had resolved the dilemma of candidate selection in favour of nominating Widodo, but was unsatisfied that it was being repaid with a level of tractability on the president's part that was commensurate to what it saw as the patronage it had bestowed on him in the form of a presidential nomination. The party had made it clear that it would not be satisfied with placing cadre in strategic cabinet appointments, and appointing close allies of Megawati like Budi Gunawan to key state positions, as Widodo had duly attempted to do. It wanted to dictate to Widodo the terms on which he took political and policy counsel from non-party figures, and wanted him to help it put its stamp on the burgeoning welfare plans that the national bureaucracy was rolling over the course of his first term. That Widodo was steadfast in resisting some of the demands of the party, however, was clear and was behind some of the frustrations that burst out into the open at the 2015 congress in Bali. Over the rest of his first term and beyond, Widodo would resist PDI-P pressure on key matters to him, keeping figures like Rini Soemarno and Luhut Pandjaitan as critical members of his policy and political team as their utility as implementers of his policy agenda became clear to him.

That Widodo was emboldened to draw a line in terms of PDI-P influence over him was thanks in no small part to his decision, amid the turbulence of his first year, to enlarge his party coalition, diluting the ability of PDI-P or any single member of his party coalition to unilaterally

exert undue influence on him. As I will analyse in more detail in Chapter Six, this involved exploiting internal splits within opposition parties between pro and anti-government factions, with agents of the president intervening in the internal affairs of parties to support the pro-government factions within Golkar, PPP and PD at a level unprecedented in the post-New Order era. This was accompanied by more standard methods of coalition-building, including extending incentives for opposition parties to join the coalition in exchange for inclusion in the cabinet at future points; such tactics were instrumental in bringing the pro-Prabowo PAN party into government and, in the aftermath of the 2019 elections, Prabowo's Gerindra party itself (Gammon 2019). Indeed, despite his stated confidence before the election that he could govern without a legislative majority as long as he had the press and the public onside, Widodo would make little systematic attempt during his first year to mobilise public opinion in his favour as a counterweight to the parties' power, and remained preoccupied with safeguarding the support of key powerbrokers within the political elite.

Conclusion

The nuances of Joko Widodo's relationship with political party power mark him as a noteworthy case among populist presidents. On the one hand, he has not sought to institutionalise a personal loyalist base in any way to counterbalance the influence of political parties, or to capture control of an existing political party. This in itself is not inconsistent with the experience of populists elsewhere; populist presidencies have been accompanied by a variety of organisational strategies on the part of the populist leader. Alberto Fujimori famously dissolved and sidelined the quasi-party he concocted for the 1990 presidential elections in order to stack an administration with allies from the business world and the security services; at the same time, he governed in opposition to parties. Other populists, notably the Peronist president Carlos Menem in Argentina, have come to power as 'maverick populists' using a mainstream party as a vehicle of convenience for electoral purposes, but have unlike Widodo subsequently taken control of and personalised power within their parties during a populist presidency (Weyland 1999). But despite the wide variation in the forms of organisational forms populist leaders have used in order to support their rule, and their varying propensity to found parties or other supporter organisations, what has been a common feature of populist presidencies is their direct confrontation with political party interests.

What makes Widodo distinctive has been his dual strategy of remaining personally alienated from organisation-building or holding office in a party—in other words, the preservation of his outsider status—while not making efforts to systematically weaken the role of political parties and their leaders in elite governing coalitions. Widodo's ambitions to govern as a reforming populist, as he previously had led interviewers and his own *relawan* supporters to believe, crumbled as soon as he was confronted with the reality of what party lobbying looked

like. His anxiety about the possibility of impeachment proceedings, and being disendorsed by his coalition in the effort for re-election, prompted a deference to parties which matched that of previous presidents who 'surrendered their true constitutional authority to fend off threats they believe they could face, rather than those they actually confronted' (Mietzner 2018b). One PDI-P regional official explained Widodo's failure to stand up to parties with the Indonesian proverb that '*angin lebih kencang di atas*'—'the wind is stronger [the] higher up [you are]' (interview with PDI-P branch secretary, Jakarta, January 2016).

Somewhat paradoxically, too, Widodo's incentives to sideline parties were also lessened by the fact that the strength of parties at the elite level was not matched by the extent of their roots within society. Widodo was well aware of the grassroots weakness of political parties as he was of their strength at the elite level, having learnt of the unreliability of political parties as mobilisational machines voters in his subnational political career; the lacklustre performance of political parties in the 2014 presidential election was also self-evident. Unlike in post-APRA Peru, or in Venezuela after the rise of Chavez, or in Brazil after the PT, Widodo did not have a mission of having to undermine the residual role parties had as representative vehicles for mass constituencies and organised interest groups. This is for the simple reason that with some limited exceptions, political parties in Indonesia do not fulfil these functions. With such low levels of party ID in the electorate, party leaders have such a weak hold over the opinions of grassroots voters that Widodo could maintain popularity regardless of a particular party leadership's endorsement of him. In other words, it may be the *weakness*, as much as the strength, of Indonesian political parties that renders the benefits of undermining them, as far as a populist is concerned, unclear. Meanwhile, the strategic position the electoral system gives parties in determining whether a politician—populist or non-populist, insider or outsider—can be certain of his or her ability to run for the presidency in the first place, as well as to seek re-election, gives parties an ample role in limiting the strategic political choices a president is able to make.

Finally, the systemic strength of parties is not primarily born of their ability to mobilise popular opinion or support for or against a political candidate or a policy proposal, but arises more artificially out of the gatekeeping role they play in presidential nominations. Party strength is not rooted in parties' enmeshment with Indonesian society, nor even that they exist to articulate the interests of the oligarchic actors that sustain them—it is, as I argue here, institutional more than structural. Regardless of its sources, however, the acquiescence of parties to a president's policy proposals, and the legislative processes that realise them, is an important factor in a populist president being able to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the electorate by rewarding voters' support with state patronage. As I will move to analyse in the next chapter, Widodo's consolidation of an elite coalition was not pursued for its own sake, but rather as a means to an end—namely, the ability of him to pursue what I characterise as a populist policy agenda.

CHAPTER FIVE *'Jokowinomics' and populist policy design*

The previous chapters have shown how, by roughly mid-way through his first term as president, Joko Widodo had established a pattern of tense but nonetheless cooperative relations with the parties of his governing coalition, having constrained his populist ambitions in order to respect the prerogatives of parties with regards to accessing patronage and, in some areas, influencing policy decisions. The prize of the stability produced by Joko Widodo's adaptation to these norms of oligarchic power sharing was his ability to define and preserve space to pursue a distinctive economic policy agenda that has been dubbed 'Jokowinomics' (Guild and Chen 2019) throughout the remainder of his first term, as well as beyond his re-election as president in 2019. The key features of his policy approach have been an emphasis on building infrastructure to raise Indonesia's economic productivity, and a corresponding strengthening of state-owned companies as vehicles for delivering that infrastructure vision. In doing so, Widodo has strengthened the role of the state in key sectors of the Indonesian economy. Alongside this he has expanded the government-financed health care and social security programs established by his predecessors, in a way that emphasises the president's image as benefactor to ordinary citizens. In the aftermath of Widodo's re-election to the presidency in 2019, however, the statist-nationalist elements have been augmented by a new program of deregulating labour protections and streamlining business regulations in the name of boosting private investment and formal-sector job growth, a move which has led some to identify a 'neoliberal turn' (Mietzner 2021) in his approach to economic development.

The challenge of offering a comprehensive account of economic policymaking in the 'Jokowi' years has lain in identifying which single set of political or political economy factors have driven the government to embrace policy responses to development problems that are liberal or statist, internationalist or protectionist, depending on the situation. The most important interpretation of the Widodo-era policy environment has been Warburton's analysis of the 'new developmentalism' (2016, 2018) that has permeated the economic elements of the president's approach to governing. The overall picture is that Jokowinomics has been 'nominally pro-poor in its policy agenda' and reflective of 'a renewed commitment to a statist-nationalist ideology' that has also marked the politics of the Widodo government in non-economic arenas (Warburton 2016: 306; see also Aspinall 2016). In short, the 'new developmentalism' represents the

reinvigoration of a state-led development agenda that harks back to the Soeharto era, involving a central role for the state in subordinating social priorities and political reform to the task of rapid economic modernisation. From this imagining of the state's role in economic development flow the practices that have marked Widodo-era policymaking: the privileging of the state-owned enterprise (SOE) sector in rolling out a major infrastructure drive, and the corresponding expansion of pro-poor social programs aimed at increasing the productivity of Indonesia's workforce. The apparent eclecticism of Jokowiomics has been remarked by observers like Bland (2020: 69), who writes that Widodo appears 'just as indifferent to economic theory as he is to political theory'. Lacking 'a lucid vision of how he wants to remake the economy, Jokowi has struggled to overcome a fundamental contradiction' between widespread suspicion of liberal capitalism and the practical need for integration with global markets 'that has held back Indonesia since independence'.

In this chapter I analyse the 'new developmentalism' not only an outgrowth of the rehabilitated developmentalist ideology Warburton describes, but also as an outgrowth of the populist structure of Widodo's relationship with the Indonesian public and his elite peers: it is, I argue, an example of *populist policy*. It is important to justify my usage of this term at the outset, given that I argue in my Introduction that populism ought not to be understood as a particular approach to policy questions. It is useful at the outset to emphasise what populist policy is not. I am with Hadiz and Robison in rejecting the idea, popular among liberal economists and commentators, that 'populist economics is the opposite of technocratic—and thus "rational"—economic policy-making' (Hadiz and Robison 2017: 490). In colloquial and journalistic usage, 'populist' has become a term to describe policies that violate the technocratic orthodoxy of the day but which are nonetheless popular with a populist's political base—from lavish welfare spending to 'tough-on-crime' policing. The point is not that these kinds of policies are not hallmarks of populist governments; it is merely that it is not the combination of electoral expediency and technocratic imperfection per se that makes them 'populist.' I instead suggest here that policies are 'populist' insofar as it is instrumental to reinforcing the direct, unmediated leader-mass linkage that is the essential goal of populist mobilisation, per the definition of Weyland (2001: 14) I use throughout this thesis. A populist policy agenda, I argue, is a response to the predicament born of populist political leaders' typically lacking control over institutionalised party- or civil society-based mechanisms for distributing patronage to an electoral base; accordingly, populists are relatively dependent on state structures to direct patronage in ways that reinforces the leader's image as a benefactor to the grassroots.

This chapter develops its analysis of Jokowiomics and populist policy in five parts. First, I flesh out the definition of populist policy I have sketched above, with reference both to comparative cases as well as trends in social policy in Indonesia after the introduction of direct elections for the president and local executives. Second, I explore how Joko Widodo's attitude towards social welfare policy both in his local government career as well as during his

presidency reflects an understanding of the power of state patronage as a method of reinforcing a populist connection with the grassroots. Third, I analyse the growth of state capitalism under Widodo through the lens of populist policy, showing how the growth and the rationalisation of political influences over Indonesia's state-owned enterprises sector has served populist political ends under his presidency, following a template he set while governor of Jakarta. Fourth, I introduce one of the major areas of qualification of my argument about the populist character of Widodo's policy agenda, by analysing how his concern over his popularity among traditionalist Islamic communities led Widodo to channel patronage through Nahdlatul Ulama, placing Indonesia's largest Islamic organisation as an intermediary patron to its grassroots religious communities. Finally, in the fifth section I analyse Widodo's turn towards neoliberal solutions to economic development challenges after his re-election in 2019, arguing that they are, somewhat counterintuitively, consistent with the logic of populist politics. A concluding section draws together the strands of analysis offered in the individual sections and summarises my arguments about the symbiosis between populist political goals and the 'new developmentalism'.

Populism and policy

According to some conceptual frameworks, populism *is* policy. Dornbusch and Edwards (1992: 9) made a classic contribution in this regard in their framework for the analysis of 'economic populism', which they describe as 'an approach to *economics* that emphasizes growth and income redistribution and deemphasizes the risks of inflation and deficit finance, external constraints, and the reaction of economic agents to aggressive nonmarket policies'. The empirical basis of their conceptualisations of populism as an economic program allied with a particular type of political organisation were, however, rooted in the experience of the 'classical populist' governments of the early and mid-20th century, where cross-class, charismatic modes of political mobilisation cohered with the statist and expansionary approach to economic policy they describe. But when populism re-emerged in the region as 'neopopulism' after the 1980s, scholars were quick to notice that it came wedded to a liberalising economic plan that attacked the political economies erected by populist leaders and their authoritarian successors. Recurrent instances of presidents coming to power on the back of populist political strategies then enacting neoliberal economic adjustment programs led to the conceptual disaggregation of the political and programmatic elements of populism, and a corresponding re-emphasis in concepts towards populism as a *political* strategy not necessarily wedded to any one economic ideology. Indeed, Weyland (1996, 2003) saw the neoliberal reform programs as being closely linked to populist political strategies: because reform programs destabilise concentrated political economies, coalitions, and patronage structures, leaders seek to offset the tensions with affected groups by generating direct, unmediated support from atomised

masses of voters who may be sympathetic to policies which disrupt old patterns of patronage.¹⁵

Despite the conceptual advance made by the neopopulism literature in disaggregating populist politics from a particular economic or ideological agenda, whether a particular policy program can be considered distinctively ‘populist’, and on what basis it can be considered as such, remains under-theorised. As a prelude to my analysis of the Widodo-era policy agenda I will offer here a framework for understanding what populist policy is and why it arises. At the most abstract level, we can see populist policy as policies which emerge in response to a predicament of distributional politics arising from the structure of the populist political linkage itself. As Kenny (2018: 21) has argued, whereas ‘supporters of bureaucratic parties remain loyal even as policies and performance vary...support for populists remains contingent on performance (or at least on *perceptions* of performance) unless [such support] can be institutionalized’. That is to say, one advantage clientelist political organisations have over their populist rivals is that the former are more likely to have well-developed systems of particularistic patronage distribution that can maintain support for the party and/or government through tough economic times. With populists tending to have much thinner organisational links between themselves and their electoral support base, they are more dependent for their popular support upon voters’ sense of their own economic wellbeing, arising from aggregate economic trends. But the risk of building the organisational apparatus required to regulate clientelist politics is that it involves empowering grassroots agents—who may over time use any discretion over the distribution of patronage to build a clientele of their own (Mouzelis 1985). For this reason, it is commonplace for populist leaders to keep their ties with a supporter base loose and uninstitutionalised (see the discussion in Chapter Three).

Thus, lacking the organisational apparatus to direct the highly particularistic provision of patronage to the grassroots, and highly dependent for their legitimacy on macroeconomic trends, populists in government face the challenge of delivering material goods to a supporter base in a context where they control few of the party or civil society-based conduits for the distribution of particularistic patronage. For this reason, it is unsurprising that populist leaders in government have leant heavily on state structures as mechanisms to reward their electoral bases and elicit the loyalty of new sections of the electorate. As Kenny (2017: 33) has observed, populist leaders

typically attempt to establish new forms of particularistic distribution that are funded from central resources flowing directly from the leadership to the people, *unmediated* by formal or informal institutional means. Populist leaders in power thus often look to create new

¹⁵ The relationship between populism and neoliberalism will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter in the context of my analysis of Joko Widodo’s championing of the Omnibus Law on Job Creation in the wake of his re-election to a second presidential term in 2019.

centralized spending schemes...in which resources are perceived to flow directly to the people.

We can expand on Kenny's observations to sketch the key components of what a populist policy program may be. The basic fact is that once a politician has been elected to office on the back of a populist political strategy, he or she faces the challenge of substantiating what has so far been an imagined populist linkage through the provision of material goods. From this starting point we can understand 'populist policy' as policies which are instrumental to the construction and reinforcement of the direct, unmediated, personalistic linkage between a populist leader and his followers. Such policies need not be fiscally wasteful, substantially redistributive, nor otherwise heterodox according to prevailing technocratic standards in order to be populist. Rather, the programs must fulfil certain political functions. First, they must emphasize the control of patronage at the centre, and/or in the hands of the populist leader and/or their agents. Second, there must be in those policies an emphasis on bypassing political intermediaries—that is, an obvious preoccupation in their design and implementation with not allowing political intermediaries (brokers, parties, and the like) to use the distribution of those programs in order to build up or reward their own clientele.

The task of using economic and welfare policy to reinforce the populist linkage is easier said than done. As discussed at the beginning of Chapter Three, populists typically (but not always) come to office without a well-institutionalised party or supporter organisation. If they are involved in party-building, parties remain poorly institutionalised and stacked with opportunist brokers and/or amateurs; given this, political parties are unusually ill-equipped to reliably act as brokers to state resources for a populist and his or her supporter base. Many populist leaders, therefore, may find themselves in a Catch-22 situation: elected in no small part in reaction to the breakdown of coherent patronage systems, they now face the challenge of delivering material goods to a supporter base in a context where they control few of the conduits for particularistic patronage to be distributed, if these even exist.

As mentioned above, state structures—rather than parties or supporter organisations—have most typically been used as the conduit for delivery of material benefits to populist leaders' supporter bases. Under Alberto Fujimori in Peru, control of the country's flagship anti-poverty program FONCODES was centralised in a newly established Ministry of the Presidency after the 1990 election. As Fujimori's 'shock therapy' neoliberal economic policies won him the support of the business elite and international donors, Fujimori moved to shore up the support of his low-income base by instrumentalising FONCODES as a way to deliver material benefits to lower-class communities (Schady 2000). Projects were tagged with Ministry of the Presidency logos, on billboards that were conveniently painted in Fujimori's party colours (Cohaghan 2016: 80). More recently in Latin America, in Ecuador under Rafael Correa's leadership spending on welfare payments more than doubled as a percentage of GDP (Ray and Kozameh 2012:

12), with schemes designed so that ‘these social programs [had] the effect of making beneficiaries feel personally obliged to Correa’ (de la Torre 2013: 40). In Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra positioned himself as the *über*-patron to his rural electoral base, travelling around the country to inaugurate development projects and promote his welfare schemes, pointedly telling voters that old patterns of patronage and influence were being swept away and that they could depend on the prime minister to take care of their interests. The effect was to erode the influence of the regionally-based ‘godfathers’ who had been the main arbiters of patronage distribution in the regions; the Thaksin government’s universalised welfare programs deliberately wrote out a role for these local patrons to centre Thaksin and his party as voters’ benefactor (Pasuk and Baker 2009: 196, 188–189). Accounts of grassroots politics in Thailand’s pro-Thaksin heartland emphasise how effective the connection with Thaksin was in reducing the influence of both local political bosses and the progressive NGOs that had positioned themselves as intermediaries between rural communities and vote-seeking Bangkok elites; the welfare programs championed by Thaksin and Thai Rak Thai were instrumental in winning over voters’ loyalties (Somchai 2007).

In summary, ‘populist’ policy—giving a substantive form to that populist linkage between the voters and the leader—has been a feature in important cases of populism, and instrumental to the disintermediating political strategies of populists. It is important to emphasise that this definition is agnostic with regards to the ideological justifications for such populist policies, or even their distributive impacts. Despite the widespread influence of the idea that that populist policy is near-synonymous with redistribution (e.g. Dornbusch and Edwards 1991, Mendoza and Jaminola 2020), there is no reason to presuppose that populist policies should be redistributive, even if in practice they often might be. Evidence from Latin America suggests that despite the radical economic ambitions of many of the region’s populists, analysis of trends in post-tax inequality rates suggest that ‘populist governments, even on the left, [did] not redistribute more than non-populist democracies’ between 1982 and 2012 (Houle and Kenny 2018: 279–280); indeed, even after the investments in social safety net made during the Widodo years, Indonesia’s spending on social welfare as a proportion of its GDP is lower than the equivalent numbers for Thailand or the average in Latin America (McCarthy and Sumarto 2018: 224). Nevertheless, as I will now turn to analyse, the growth and integration of Indonesia’s social security system has gone hand in hand with the strategic use of social policy for electoral ends, no more so than during Joko Widodo’s term in office.

Populism and Indonesia’s nascent welfare state

By the time Widodo became a national political figure, democratisation and decentralisation had given rise to a patronage system that was fundamentally different from the vertically-integrated one that had been the bedrock of the New Order. When local legislatures elected in

the first democratic elections in 1999 assembled to appoint new local executive heads, 'parties found it difficult to convince their legislators to support nominees endorsed by the central party leadership; instead, the majority of parliamentarians voted for whoever offered them the most money, leading to the election of local government heads with no or weak ties to parties or to the assemblies dominated by those parties' (Buehler 2010: 270). As such, party leaderships in Jakarta did not gain the influence over local politics that they had hoped for, with the local party factions' support of cashed-up opportunists facilitating 'the rapid rise to prominence of local powerbrokers previously limited in access to and control over state power' (Sidel 2004: 67) and, correspondingly, the ample patronage resources controlled by local bureaucracies. The introduction of direct elections for local executive heads (*Pilkada*) further weakened the bonds between national party leaderships and local power, offering yet more avenues for the ability of well-resourced non-party figures to buy the support of parties to stand for elections (Johnson Tan 2012a, 2012b).

Post-decentralisation, the distribution of patronage at the local level was now done with local—rather than national—political goals in mind. Indeed, the incentive for local elites to exert their influence and to expend patronage resources for the sake of national-level contests was diminishing. The first direct presidential elections in 2004 were a watershed in terms of alerting national elites to the unreliability of local-level politicians to act as brokers for electoral support. The reality laid bare by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's victory, on the nomination of what was then a new personal vehicle party, was that the ability to win national office was increasingly decoupled from having a well-developed party infrastructure. As Aspinal observed after the 2004 presidential poll, local power brokers 'had no reason to invest their own resources in a battle for office in far-off Jakarta...local operators in party machines lacked incentives to expend their own resources for the sake of their leaders' national ambitions, and even the best oiled of such machines lacked the resources and reach necessary to deliver enough votes to capture national executive office' (2005: 146–147). Hence the consistency with which 'party leaders have complained that cadres are so focused on their success in the particularized legislative polls that they neglect their role in the more centralized presidential ballot' (Mietzner 2013: 148).

Having built an election-winning strategy in 2004 that was attuned to the weak nexus between national power and local patronage distribution, Yudhoyono was also to pioneer the use of the central government's policy apparatus to electoral ends to reach beyond localised patronage networks to bring material benefits directly to voters. In 2009, Yudhoyono was re-elected with a large majority in no small part because of public appreciation for direct cash payments he made as compensation for a petrol price rise a year earlier. Between mid-2008 and the election in April 2009, his government:

...spent approximately US\$2 billion on compensation payments for increased fuel prices, schooling allowances and micro-credit programs. As a result, Yudhoyono's popularity skyrocketed from 25 per cent in June 2008 to 50.3 per cent in February 2009, and PD's support surged to 24.3 per cent in the same time-frame. (Mietzner 2009: 4)

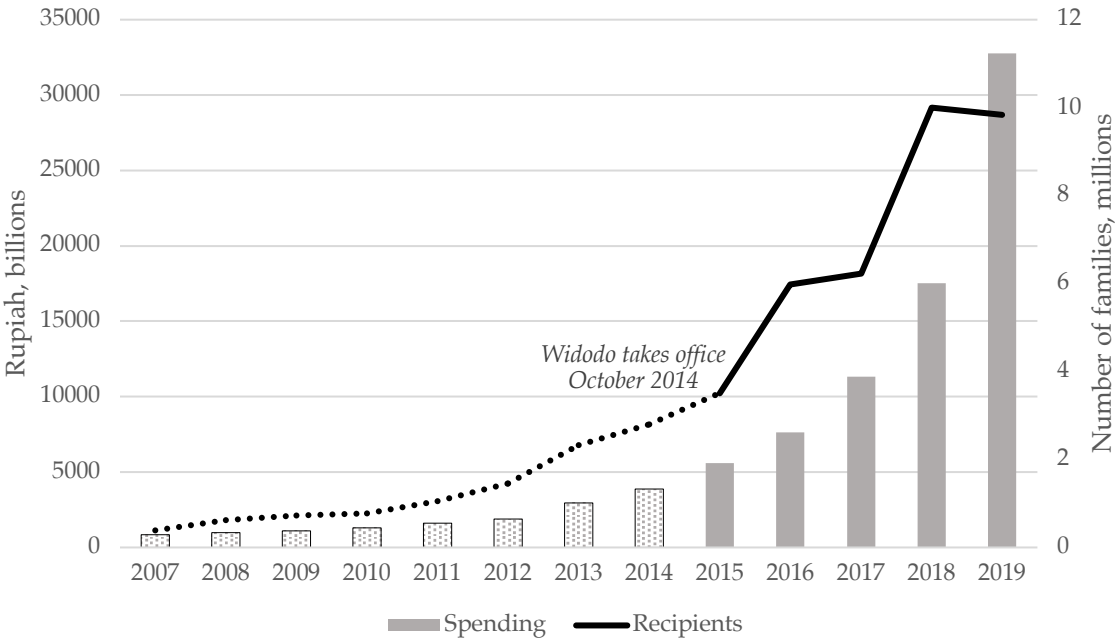
The political utility of these initiatives was demonstrated vividly not only in the opinion polls mentioned above, but also on election day in 2009, when Yudhoyono was re-elected in the first round of the race with 60.8% of the vote.

Yudhoyono's use of cash transfer programs for electoral ends was noteworthy in the context of the politics of social policy in Indonesia during his presidency. Legislation passed with the support of the Megawati administration just before the 2004 elections had mandated the establishment of a nationally financed *Sistem Jaminan Sosial Nasional* (National Social Insurance System) that would a) unify the patchwork of local schemes set up by local governments in the aftermath of decentralisation and b) merge and expand the multiple social security and pension funds that operated by the national government. But the actual rollout of legislation that would allow such an integrated national safety net to be set up was delayed throughout the Yudhoyono presidency. Yudhoyono was wary of the expense of supporting new national welfare schemes, but also viewed the program as a political legacy of the Megawati presidency and did not feel personally invested in its success (Pisani et al 2017: 272). Yet he understood the potential electoral pull of making healthcare more accessible and affordable for poor Indonesians, as local officials who had established their own health insurance systems campaigned on this achievement in the inaugural round of direct local elections in 2004. In due course, Yudhoyono's health minister issued a ministerial decree that gave the central government-owned health insurance provider a 'pilot program' to reimburse poor Indonesians for the costs of accessing locally-administered healthcare facilities, in a program known as JPK-GAKIN.

As Pisani et al (2017: 271) assess, the central government's efforts to secure a role for itself in providing health coverage to the poor 'struck at the very core of the power relationships that were newly emerging since decentralisation began'. As detailed in Chapter One, locally administered schemes which provided free or subsidised health care became a key plank of a 'local populism' (Aspinall and Warburton 2013; see also the discussion in Chapter One). In the wake of the ministerial decree establishing the JPK-GAKIN scheme, 'some local politicians resented seeing a programme that was considered an important electoral asset in district polls hijacked by the national government' (ibid.: 272); one local government challenged the constitutionality of the decree in the Constitutional Court. It failed, and JPK-GAKIN continued to represent the government's half-hearted implementation of the spirit of the 2004 social security law until 2013, when a coalition of trade unions and civil society organisations obtained a court ruling that found that the Yudhoyono administration was violating the law by not establishing the new national health care and social security system that the 2004 legislation had mandated.

Only in late 2013, not long before Yudhoyono’s term was up, would the administrative and fiscal infrastructure for national health and social security systems be established in the form of legislation establishing two national government bodies: BPJS Kesehatan, which would administer the a new health financing scheme named JKN (Jaringan Kesehatan Nasional, National Health Network), and BPJS Ketenagakerjaan, which would merge and expand existing publicly-operated workers’ compensation and pension programs. The realisation of the long-planned JKN system through the establishment of BPJS Kesehatan was arguably the bigger

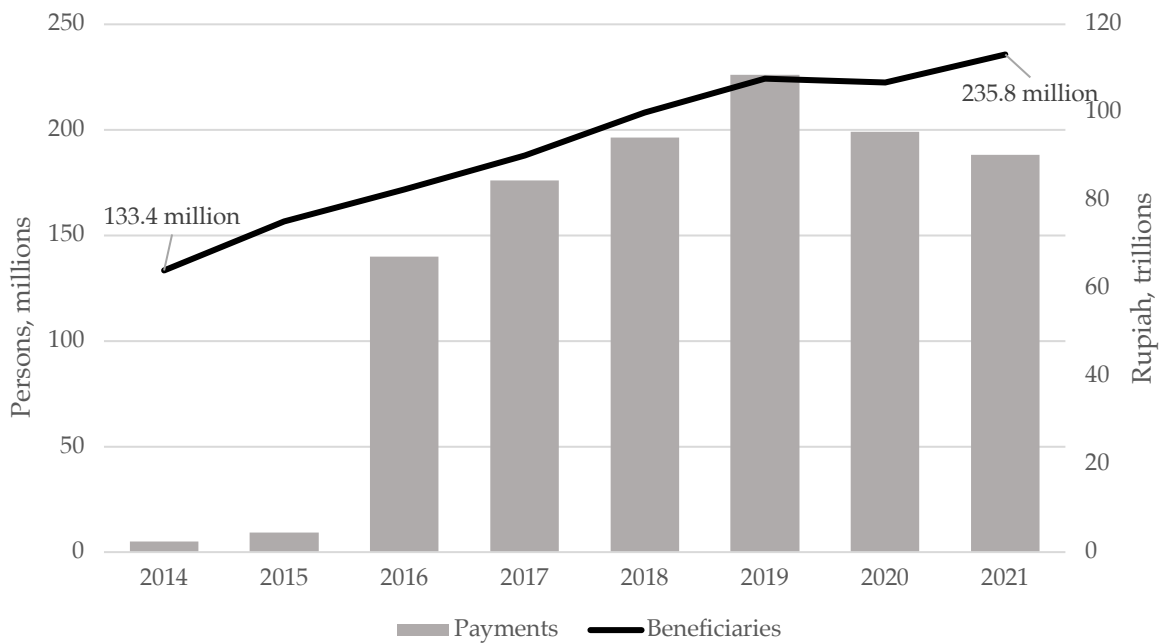
Table 3: Expansion of PKH conditional cash transfer program



Source: adapted from Ministry of Social Affairs (2021: 8)

landmark within Indonesia’s social policy landscape. BPJS Kesehatan would operate a national single-payer scheme that would compensate privately and publicly operated health care providers for services delivered to JKN participants (see Table 4 below). Participants, for their part, would either pay small monthly premia directly or as a deduction from their paycheque; poor citizens, meanwhile, would have their premia paid on their behalf out of the state budget in a program known as Penerima Bantuan Iuran (PBI, or Instalment Assistance Recipients). Aside from the enhanced access to affordable health care the scheme notionally offered, JKN formally positioned the national government as the primary provider of health care financing for Indonesians. As one prominent provincial governor said, after JKN was brought into operation via the establishment of BPJS, ‘if any local candidate who campaigns on the promise of a health insurance program, it means they’re lying’ (interview with Ganjar Pranowo, Bali, 8 April 2015).

Table 4: Growth in Indonesia's JKN universal health care program



Source: compiled from BPJS Kesehatan annual financial reports

Yudhoyono would also lay the groundwork for a large expansion in the provision of conditional cash transfers to low-income Indonesians, one that would have deeper institutional roots than the unconditional BLT payments rolled out ahead of his 2009 re-election campaign. The Program Keluarga Harapan (Family Hope Program, PKH) would gradually cement itself as an important part of Indonesia's suite of anti-poverty programs after its launch in 2007. Yet as Table 3 illustrates, the PKH program truly hit its stride in the aftermath of Joko Widodo's election. The number of families receiving PKH benefits almost quadrupled in nominal terms during Widodo's first term in office, with spending from the state budget rising more than sixfold in nominal terms over the same period, reaching Rp33 trillion (A\$3.3 billion) in 2019. While the PKH program continues to be affected by issues surrounding fairly and accurately targeting its benefits to households that best fit its criteria for inclusion, in a context where poverty databases are incomplete (McCarthy and Sumarto 2018), it has nonetheless been a noteworthy part of the Yudhoyono-era infrastructure of social welfare whose potential for delivering benefits to grassroots voters was only maximised under the leadership of Yudhoyono's successor.

In sum, innovations in healthcare financing and social security policy made during the Yudhoyono years would, by the end of his administration, effectively turn health care financing from a local to a national policy responsibility and cement the central government as the

main benefactor of Indonesians' access to affordable health care (Table 4). Correspondingly, it made it viable for national candidates to campaign on promises of expanding the accessibility and coverage of health insurance. And while Yudhoyono had dragged his feet on implementing a comprehensive, nationally financed and administered health and social insurance scheme as mandated by the outgoing Megawati government in 2004, it was precisely this new reality that was to be one of the most important legacies he left for his populist successor. With the BPJS bodies beginning administration of the health and social security regimes on 1 January 2014, the timing was fortuitous for Joko Widodo. With the rollout of the scheme proving slow, and the media's attention turning quickly towards the imminent national legislative and presidential elections, Widodo was well-placed to use his presidential campaign to replicate his successful use of health care policy to gain support from a mass electorate at the local level.

Joko Widodo's innovations in social policy

Widodo's attitudes towards welfare policy were formed through his experience in local government, and through the political utility he found in expanding access to health and cash transfer programs in Solo and Jakarta. As detailed in Chapter One, as Mayor of Solo he had made extensive use of regulatory powers available to him to expand the availability of health and education subsidies. When he was elected as Governor of Jakarta in 2012, Widodo moved quickly to universalise Jakartans' eligibility for a subsidised health care program that his predecessor had implemented. Instead of applicants to the free health insurance program having to get neighbourhood-level state officials to 'certify' to the city's health department that they were poor and thus eligible beneficiaries, Jakartans would receive a Kartu Jakarta Sehat (KJS, Jakarta Health Card) that would automatically grant them access to free health insurance covered by the city budget. In doing so, Widodo was shaping the city's health care policy in a quintessentially populist direction, cutting out the brokerage role that grassroots state officials were hitherto able to play in 'helping' poor residents access the scheme.

Welfare promises were a major focus of Widodo's campaign for the presidency in 2014 (though overshadowed to a great extent by a smear campaign, described in Chapter Two, that painted Widodo as a Christian and ethnic Chinese). His premier policy pledge was the promise to provide Indonesians a Kartu Indonesia Sehat (KIS, Healthy Indonesia Card) and Kartu Indonesia Pintar (KIP, Smart Indonesia Card) purportedly entitling them to free health care and subsidies for educational expenses. In the latter stages of the 2014 presidential campaign Widodo would travel around to campaign stops and hand out mock-ups of the KIS and KIP cards to voters. He promised in vague terms that he would provide no-strings-attached free healthcare and cash transfers to parents of school pupils. Journalists and commentators were puzzled as to whether there was a difference between the KIS-KIP programs and the BPJS-administered JKN health insurance and social security programs that the Yudhoyono

government had launched in late 2013, whether Widodo intended to overhaul the system. Despite it quickly becoming clear that Widodo had little idea of how the KIS and KIP programs related to the new JKN system and to existing cash transfer schemes, the vague promise of more accessible and affordable health and education for poorer Indonesians was an important plank of a campaign platform that was otherwise thin on concrete policy promises.

Adapting the headline health care card promise onto the JKN program, and vice versa, was a chaotic process. When Widodo officially launched the KIS program just weeks after being inaugurated, it was still unclear whether or how it replicated or extended JKN's provision of free health insurance for poor citizens; both the legal basis for the initiative, as well as its sources of financing, were unclear to health policy experts (Maftuchan 2015). Government officials were unable to clearly explain the finer details of the program's design, while opposition politicians warned the government of the risks of launching new programs that neither been funded in the state budget nor enshrined in regulations (Hukum Online 2014). It was not until February 2016 that the *Kartu Indonesia Sehat* was given legal basis in a presidential regulation that finally made it clear that KIS was, as many suspected, merely a rebranding of the JKN system.¹⁶ In the interim, while experts and bureaucrats in Jakarta scrambled how to integrate the idea of new membership cards into the existing legal and administrative framework of JKN, the president travelled around Indonesia attending choreographed events at which he would hand out the cards to grateful citizens. The function of the cards 'was merely ceremonial', according to a member of the DJSN (Dewan Jaminan Sosial Nasional, an oversight body that reported to the president; confidential interview, Jakarta, January 2015). Indeed, it had emerged that in the absence of any funds in the state budget liable to be used for the manufacture and distribution, the government initially used state-owned enterprises' 'corporate social responsibility' funds—an early example of the recruitment of the SOE sector in delivering programs without legislative oversight or obstruction from the intractable state bureaucracy (Liputan6 2014).

The legal and financial chicanery that marked the rollout of the scheme spoke to how important Widodo felt it to have, 'quick wins', as one expert member of his transition staff described it. '[KIS] was one thing that Jokowi definitely wanted to highlight...he was trying to recreate *Kartu Jakarta Sehat* on a national scale.' (Interview with Dinna Prapto Rahardja, Jakarta, January 2015). Widodo had no exposure to national-level social policymaking; his experiences in making social policy were limited to his time in local government where voters' access to programs could be expanded at the stroke of a regulatory pen through his decree powers—as he did when expanding health insurance and educational subsidies for families in Solo and Jakarta (see Chapter One). Yet while he may have had little regard for the legal

¹⁶ Presidential Regulation 19/2016.

and financial details of the nascent national healthcare scheme, he appreciated its political function. One of Widodo's close advisors at the time spoke frankly about the simple logic behind Widodo's putting a personal brand on the JKN scheme by way of the new cards. As initiatives that had been built out under the Megawati and Yudhoyono governments, 'BPJS and JKN, these things can't be politically capitalised on. But a KIS card'—taking his own KIS card from his wallet—'that's like a membership card for our supporters; it's something tangible from us they can hold on to' (interview with Eko Sulisty, deputy head of presidential staff, Jakarta, January 2015). A key goal was that the voters were conditioned to associate the JKN system with the KIS cards being handed out by Widodo and therefore give him—not the bureaucracy, nor Yudhoyono—credit for its implementation. The important thing, this same advisor said, is that it goes 'directly to the people, and doesn't involve too much bureaucracy, similar to the KJS...and we'll come under a lot of pressure from the [opposition] to make sure that regional governments have a role in administering the money that flows through the system' (author's notes of post-election briefing by Eko Sulisty to volunteers, Bali, September 2014).

Indeed, local authorities were often left in the dark as to what the policy significance of the distribution of cards was: as the member of the DJSN reflected, 'we [from DJSN] travelled around the country, all the [provincial] governors were confused about what was happening' (interview in confidence, Jakarta, January 2015). They were joined in their puzzlement by party officials, particularly of PDI-P. Having clearly perceived that Widodo was seeking to deliver tangible benefits to his low-income electoral base, the fact that he was allowing his own palace-based advisors, and in some cases his *relawan* volunteer networks, to determine the timing and location of the field visits at which the cards were distributed was a source of resentment on PDI-P's part. As one head of a PDI-P district branch, a former strong supporter of Widodo, noted 'Jokowi's KIS and KIP programs—why weren't they given to our cadre first? Why are we just giving them out to everybody? We're the party that won, it should be us that gets it. That's just normal!' (interview with PDI-P branch head, Bali, April 2015).

Despite the chaos that surrounded the rebranding of the JKN—now known as JKN-KIS—it had its intended political effect: a poll taken to mark the first 100 days of Widodo's presidency showed that 72% of the public knew of the program, and of these 82% said it would make a meaningful difference to the lives of ordinary Indonesians—this despite the poll also showing that only 8% of voters had used services under the program (Lembaga Survei Indonesia 2015). After being formalised and refined through a series of presidential regulations beginning in 2016, and funded through the state budget, JKN-KIS would prove to be one of the mainstays of Indonesia's Widodo-era welfare policy. By the end of 2020 the scheme had succeeded in enrolling 222 million Indonesians, or 82% of the national population as enumerated in the census conducted that same year (BPJS Kesehatan 2021). Of these, 49% had their premia paid out of the central state budget (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia 2021: 90) as part

of the *Penerima Bantuan Iuran (PBI)* program. The financial sustainability of the system has come under intense scrutiny, with *BPJS Kesehatan* continuously paying out more in benefits than it takes in from participants' premia payments (Yumna et al 2020). There have been high rates of non-payment of premia on the part of non-wage-earning enrollees who are too well off to have their premia paid by the state, and ineligible to have an employer pay them, and non-enrolment of informal sector workers is a recurrent problem (Dartanto et al 2019).

The financial challenges to the *JKN–KIS* system were behind a rare display of emotion from the president. In October 2018 Widodo remonstrated with senior *BPJS* and Health Ministry officials about the fund's financial troubles at a public forum (Kompas TV 2018), complaining in full view of the media about his being called upon repeatedly to devote state budget funds to fixing its shortfalls. Yet the power to fix a major source of the problem lay in the president's hands, in the form of his power to set the rate of the monthly premia paid by *JKN–KIS* participants. Experts warned that keeping the rate of premia paid by independent enrollees and employers unsustainably low (Siregar 2019)—but, as outgoing vice president Yusuf Kalla admitted ahead of the 2019 elections, the government was wary of making greater demands on participants by mandating higher contributions (Florentin 2019). After Widodo won re-election in 2019, premia were raised significantly to but still remain low even by developing-world standards: the lowest rate for instance, is merely Rp42,000 (A\$4.20) a month, which experts say is far below the level required to sustain the quality of service beneficiaries receive from the system (Sidik 2019).

The overall picture that emerges from Widodo handling of health care policy both during his presidency as well as his local government career is that he has always seen it as an instrument of building political support as opposed to an integral part of his vision for Indonesia's economic development. He has used the paraphernalia of health care—especially health insurance membership cards—as important methods of promoting himself as the pioneer of expanded access to services, even if the actual substance of the system underpinning the *Kartu Indonesia Sehat* scheme was inherited almost wholly from his predecessors. The technicalities of health care policy design and health care financing have been delegated to technocrats, and the president has expressed exasperation when he has been forced to confront head-on the contradictions between a political strategy based upon making health care more affordable for his electoral base, and the financial requirements of making the system fit for purpose. Once the initial wave of publicity of the *KIS* scheme saw the new national health insurance identified in the public mind with the new president, Widodo pivoted his personal attention towards other areas of 'hard' economic policy—especially his effort to significantly strengthen Indonesia's stock of critical economic infrastructure, which entailed a significant disruption to the balance of state and private sector capital in key sections of Indonesia's economy.

The parallel state: BUMN

An important economic legacy Joko Widodo will leave Indonesia's economic policy landscape will be the renaissance of state capital. A raw measure of the growth of state capitalism under Widodo comes in the overall size of what are known as the Badan Usaha Milik Negara (BUMN, state-owned companies): Indonesia's Ministry of Finance reported that total BUMN assets reached approximately US\$583 billion by the end of 2020 (Cantika 2021), an increase of approximately US\$208 billion since 2015. BUMN assets are now equal to more than half of Indonesia's annual GDP (World Bank 2022). More pertinent to the question of populist policymaking, however, are the purposes to which the financial and organisational resources of the BUMN have been put throughout the Widodo era, and the enmeshment of their activities with the president's political and policy goals. How important the BUMN have been in delivering key planks of Widodo's economic agenda, particular with regards to infrastructure projects, has been well-documented (Kim and Sumner 2021, Kim 2021, Kurlanznick 2016: 115–136). What I wish to emphasise in this section is how the reliance on the SOE sector to deliver functions of government that would normally be enacted by the bureaucracy is informed by and instrumental to Widodo's political goals: specifically, rationalising and centralising the lines of political influence over the use of SOE resources.

Widodo's recruitment of state-owned firms to deliver core parts of his policy agenda began in earnest when he was governor of Jakarta between 2012 and 2014. Upon coming to office he faced political pressure to deal with accumulated problems of infrastructure, transport, and social services that had been handled poorly by the city's bureaucracy up to that point. Widodo worked with his then-deputy Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (or 'Ahok') to enhance the role of the Badan Usaha Milik Daerah (BUMD), the companies owned by the provincial government, to take over the most politically prominent functions of the bureaucracy. In the two budgets which he oversaw as governor, Widodo injected billions of dollars in new investment into the balance sheets of the city government firms, with

both Jokowi and [his successor] Ahok manag[ing] the BUMD as they did the bureaucracy. They recruited directors from among the best managers through open recruitment and closely monitored their performance. As soon as these directors failed to achieve targets, the governor would replace them with other professional managers. (Widoyoko 2017)

One main benefit of a reliance on the BUMD was the ability to appoint managers not from the ranks of the civil service but from the private sector; these managers would be directly responsible to the governor for their performance. The city's underfunded and poorly managed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network, TransJakarta, was converted from a unit of the provincial transport department into a BUMD in its own right, allowing the head of a large private bus firm to be appointed as its new CEO; the same processes followed across many BUMD business units.

Widodo's financial and administrative empowerment of Jakarta's BUMD sector relative to the bureaucracy fits awkwardly into key categories of economic ideology. The corporatisation of some key aspects of public service delivery and the application of private sector-style management practices with the BUMD on the one hand strikes as neoliberal. Yet the pro-BUMD reforms were in service of a substantial expansion of the quantity and quality of the public services for the city's citizens; moreover, the championing of state capital was to impact the interests of private business just as it did the bureaucracy. The strengthening of the city's government-owned bus service involved taking over routes from private operators who had long maintained close relationships with the city bureaucracy. In the construction sector, for instance, a whole class of small private contractors was written out of major infrastructure contracts by a new policy of so-called 'consolidated tenders' that made it easier for state-owned companies to win contracts. Overall, the growth of the city-owned businesses under Widodo was to displace in many areas the role for rent-seekers from the private sector who had profited off providing services to the city government, which often entailed highly corrupt relationships between private contractors, the bureaucracy, and the politicians who oversaw them.

While the ideological underpinnings of Widodo's enhancing of Jakarta's SOEs were ambiguous, his motivations for prioritising the BUMD and the political effects of his doing so were clear. Widodo was, like his deputy Basuki, an outsider to the city's government. They had no longstanding links to the dense web of bureaucrats, contractors and their clients who played a huge role in the design and administration of development programs in Jakarta, and did not see the need to familiarise themselves with the existing machinery. Delivering signature projects through state-owned companies, over whose management the governor had more extensive influence relative to the bureaucracy, was both necessary given Widodo's outsider status as well as being instrumental to his populist political goals as outlined in Chapter One. As such, we can see in Widodo and Basuki use of the BUMD in Jakarta the template for refashioning local political economies in a populist mould, enhancing their oversight of key development programs with an overriding focus on delivering better services to voters and minimising the ability of politically autonomous actors within the bureaucracy to exert influence over policy design.

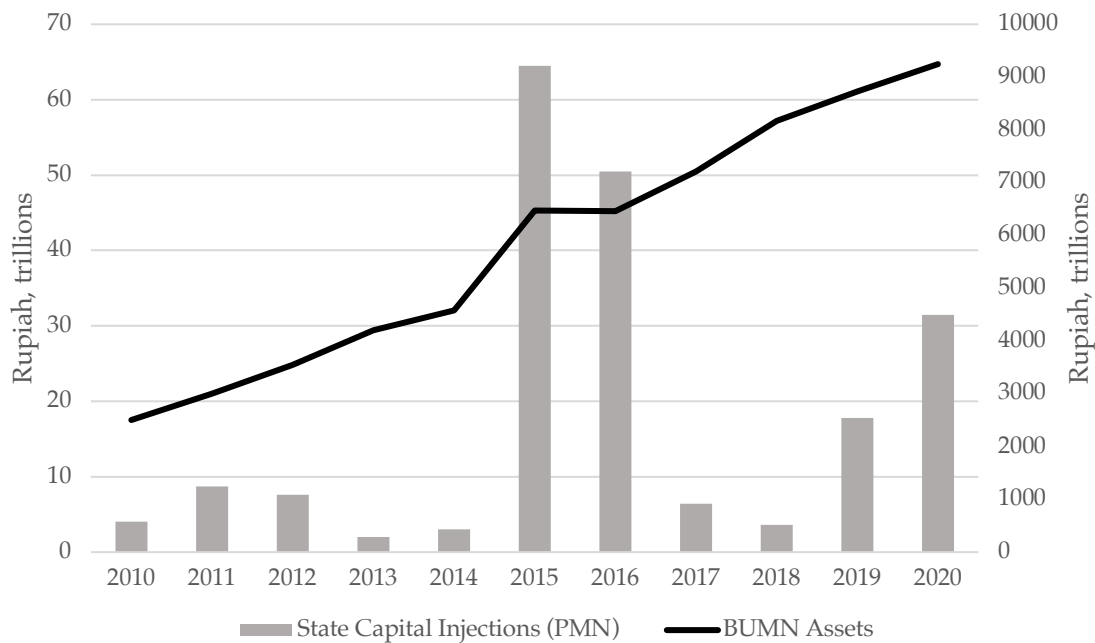
The BUMN in the 'new developmentalism'

As president, Widodo would take inspiration from his own time as governor in turning the state-owned enterprises into the vehicles of choice for delivering some of his signature policy items—especially his obsession with modernising Indonesia's infrastructure. As discussed in the previous chapter, during the 2014 elections and the subsequent transition between presidential administrations, Widodo had become close to Rini Soemarno, a former Megawati-era cabinet minister and business executive. Rini was to be a key agent of Widodo's economic

policy as his minister for state-owned enterprises during his first term, and a lightning rod for hostility for those in the business and political elite whose interests were disturbed by the growth and strengthening of the SOE sector. She had been a long-time friend of Megawati Soekarnoputri and became close to Widodo thanks to this shared connection; amid the 2014 election and after it, however, Megawati came to believe that Rini had come to exert too much influence over Widodo and was losing out to her in the competition for influence over the president's policy decisions. Having fallen out with Megawati, Rini would be powerful so long as she was able to serve as a loyal agent of and problem-solver for the president, who appreciated her performance in strengthening the BUMN sector so much that throughout his first term he would protect her from political attacks from PDI-P and its allies in parliament. Political protection flowed one way, and dutiful execution of the president's development agenda using the levers of Indonesian state capitalism flowed in the other.

Rini's first achievement was to secure major injections of public funds into key state-owned enterprises so that they could use this new cash as an asset against which to increase their debt, accessing leverage that the bureaucracy could not because of strict budget constraints and a constitutional cap on government borrowing. BUMN spending, moreover, would not be subject to the same sorts of rules around procurement and budgeting to which government ministries were subject: in short, the BUMN had the advantages of greater flexibility in how they financed and executed the president's pet projects, greater executive government oversight and influence over their management, and less scrutiny from the parliament—and therefore much clearer lines of political loyalty—between BUMN managers and government. At the time, the appropriations required to support the cash injections required the approval of a parliament which was not under the government's control. Widodo entered the presidency with only 37% of parliamentary seats represented by his nominating coalition, and the pro-Prabowo Subianto opposition parties—who quickly understood how important Rini's plan to energise the SOE sector was to the new president—were not going to give the government an easy win. Philosophical differences over policy did not play much of a role in their objections: the then Golkar chairman Aburizal Bakrie reportedly lobbied the president to have the Ministry of Law and Human Rights certify his leadership of the party, which had been left in legal limbo since 2009; Golkar's subsequent support for the BUMN cash injections was interpreted widely as the consequence of the government's recognition of the legality of his chairmanship. To be sure the parties after all had an interest in getting some version of a budget passed. For this reason, said one then-senior official in a then-opposition party, the opposition parties were ready to do a deal when the government 'came to the DPR and said "Okay Gerindra, what do you want"; "okay Golkar, what do you want", and so on. The weakness of Indonesian parties is always their finances. How do they solve this? By playing around with state budgets.' (Interview in confidence with a senior parliamentarian from the Prabowo coalition, Jakarta, February 2016).

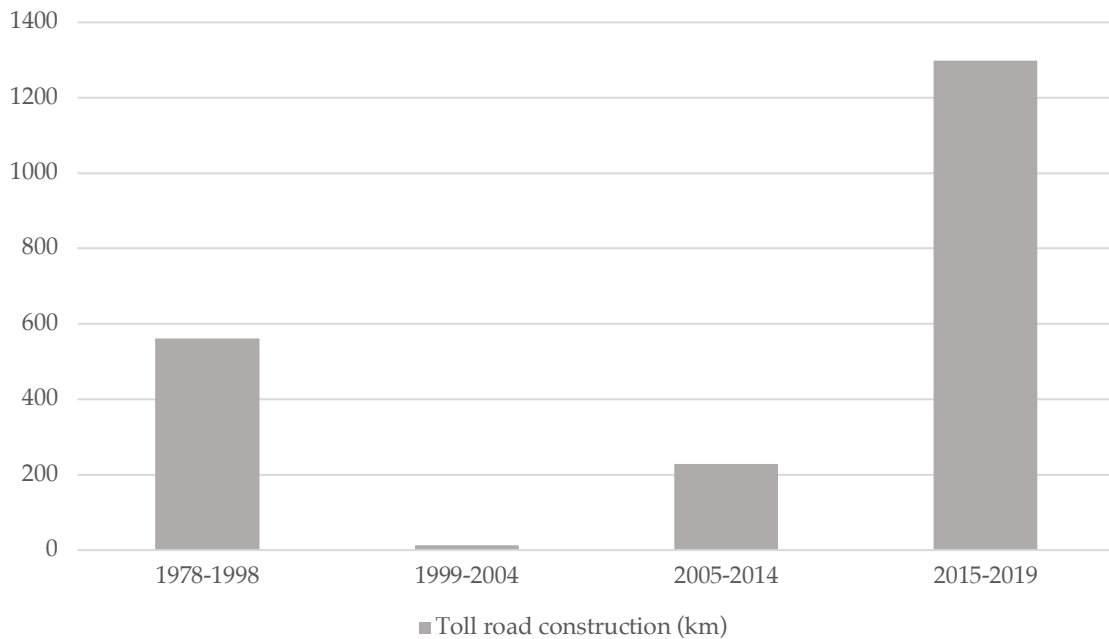
Table 5: Indonesia's expanding state-owned enterprises (BUMN)



Source: Central Statistics Body (BPS) data on SOE assets, Ministry of Finance budget papers

. Beginning with major step-ups in state investment in the BUMN in the 2015 and 2016 budgets, by the end of the first term of the Widodo administration in 2019, Rini would have succeeded in securing Rp165 trillion (US\$11.5 billion) in cash injections from the state budget into the SOE sector (Suwiknyo 2020). The state electricity utility PLN, for instance, was designated as the vehicle for Widodo's ambitious plans to boost Indonesia's electricity generation capacity by 35,000 megawatts, while the state-owned construction firms were given expansive mandates to construct highways, ports, dams, roads and other critical economic infrastructure the state bureaucracy and private-public partnerships had failed to deliver over the decade of the Yudhoyono years. During the Yudhoyono presidency the Indonesian government had maintained a rhetorical commitment to creating the conditions for large-scale private investment, even from overseas firms, in infrastructure. But poorly designed regulations and weak rule of law combined to create an inhospitable investment climate for private investors in large-scale infrastructure projects and as a result private investment in infrastructure lagged far behind the levels required to help Indonesia close its infrastructure deficit relative to competitor economies (see Davidson 2015, Kim 2021). One of Widodo's favoured metrics to illustrate his success in remediating the infrastructure deficit left to him by his predecessor was toll road construction, which skyrocketed during his first term of government (see Table 6); late into his second term, the president would still highlight this achievement as symbolising his ability to

Table 6: Toll road construction in Indonesia, 1978–2019



Source: Ministry of Public Works and Housing data

break through political and bureaucratic barriers to ease commerce in Indonesia (Ruehl and Leahy 2022).

Alongside the financial boost to the BUMN came an institutional reshuffling that—while certainly aimed at boosting the borrowing capacity of firms—also had the effects of a) minimising the ability of the DPR and auditors to scrutinise BUMN, and b) centralising political control of the sector in the hands of the minister and, by extension, the president. Rini began to put renewed political capital into an uncompleted Yudhoyono-era policy of designating particular BUMN within an industry to become a holding corporation for others in the same sector. After ownership of their shares was transferred to the designating holding company, these companies would become *anak usaha* (subsidiaries) of the parent. One of the stated goals of the so-called *holdingisasi* ('holdingisation') of the BUMN sector was to expand the assets of the holding corporations, allowing them in turn to borrow against the increased value of the assets they owned (Kim 2018). The governance and political implications of *holdingisasi* are noteworthy: BUMN has a specific meaning under Indonesian law as a company owned in part or in whole by the state directly.¹⁷ By transferring ownership of many large BUMN from itself to the designating holding companies, legally, the ministry was transforming their status from BUMN to subsidiaries thereof. Some of the structures of the new holding companies seemed

¹⁷ Article 1, Law 17/2003 on State Owned Enterprises

illogical: the state-owned brokerage firm Danareksa was designated as the new holding company for BUMN in the financial and banking sector, despite being a tiny fraction of the size of some of its prospective subsidiaries, which included some of Indonesia's biggest banks. Likewise, in the mining sector the small aluminium-smelting firm Inalum would take over the Ministry's ownership of much larger mining companies, including eventually the globally significant Freeport copper mine when its American owner was forced to sell a majority stake to the Indonesian state in 2018.

Despite—indeed, because of—the quirks of its design *holdingisasi* was convenient to the political interests of the Widodo government. That some of Indonesia's biggest state-owned companies would become subsidiaries of smaller BUMN stablemates, and technically losing their legal status as state-owned enterprises, would have significant governance implications. At the time when Rini was first pushing the holding company concept, members of the DPR's Komisi VI were concerned that their ability to oversee state-owned companies would be curtailed once they were reborn as subsidiaries of key holding companies. The holding companies would in effect shield their subsidiaries—some of Indonesia's biggest companies, public or private—from the scrutiny from the DPR, as members of the legislature readily complained to the media (Sukmana 2016). The concerns of lawmakers were of course self-interested; the BUMN had long bought cooperation from the DPR in the form of financial and political favours in exchange for the politicians' not politicising or otherwise seeking to interfere with their business activities.¹⁸ In the political conditions at the time, early in the presidency when Widodo had yet to consolidate his party coalition and his relationship with PDI-P was especially strained (not least due to his relationship with Rini), his plans for the BUMN sector generated controversy and opposition from the Prabowo coalition and from PDI-P. Party factions and their leaders understood that to oppose Rini was to interfere with one of Widodo's key agents and the policy agenda she was prosecuting on behalf of the president; as such, fights over SOE policy became a central part of parties both from the opposition and within the government to try to exercise leverage over the president. 'Fairly or not, everything Rini does will be interpreted as part of her preparing Jokowi's political vehicle for 2019', observed a senior member of the Prabowo coalition at a time when tensions were at their peak (interview with Ahmad Hafisz Tohir, head of DPR Commission VI, Jakarta, February 2016). As a mark of their displeasure with Widodo's key economic minister, the DPR's Commission VI, responsible for oversight of SOEs, refused to have Rini attend its committee hearings in what its members described as a 'boycott' (ibid.)

¹⁸ For instance, ahead of a committee hearing with senior executives of a major BUMN, members of the committee had prepared a spreadsheet 'requesting' earmarks for their districts from the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) budget; according to one staff member of a Komisi VI member, the agreement between this BUMN and the committee was that each member would have an allocation of Rp5 billion to play with. Confidential interview, Jakarta, February 2016.

Yet it was telling of how important a policy priority the BUMN agenda was for President Widodo that he stood firmly behind Rini amid the DPR and party leaders' attacks on her. After the DPR signalled its opposition to the *holdingisasi* plan and had temporarily obstructed the state capital injections in 2014–15, Widodo issued a government regulation in 2016 that allowed for the transfer of the government's shares in BUMN to be transferred to holding companies without going through the state budget process—effectively shielding the holding corporation plan from parliamentary oversight. The move did nothing to improve relations between Rini and the DPR; whose members would continue to refuse to meet with Rini formally for the rest of her tenure as minister and support a subsequent (unsuccessful) effort by civil society organisations to challenge the legality of the regulation. These NGOs had argued that by allowing for the SOE minister to transform some state-owned firms into subsidiaries of others, and do so without approval from the legislature, would allow for the parent company to subsequently partially or wholly privatise them with greater ease and reduce the ability of the parliament and state auditors to oversee their management. The court found otherwise (Saptura 2017), and thanks to the 2016 regulation the Widodo administration has been legally permitted to set in motion the restructuring of the large and growing SOE sector with reduced oversight from the DPR and the state auditor, the Badan Pemeriksaan Keuangan (BPK) (Songyanan 2018, Lisnawati 2019). As Kim (2018: 325) has observed, 'adding another layer to the SOE ownership structure [through the formation of holding companies] will make monitoring even more difficult for stakeholders'—but this was undoubtedly one of the points of the exercise as far as Widodo and his SOE ministers are concerned.

Despite the initial opposition from party factions that sought to maximise their ability to oversee and influence the SOEs, *holdingisasi* has continued under the supervision of Widodo's second-term SOE minister Erick Thohir, a private sector oligarch who chaired the president's 2019 re-election campaign. While Erick has been credited with upgrading the financial management of state enterprises (Ellis 2020, Maulia 2020), the role of the SOEs as instruments of development policy has remained as strong as ever. Indeed, the political flavour of personnel appointments in the SOE sector has become even more prominent in the wake of the 2019 election, with the appointment of members of the *relawan* volunteer movement, pro-Widodo civil society figures, and former government officials being appointed by Erick to the boards of key state-owned enterprises (Asia Sentinel 2020, Maulia 2021). SOEs may be being directed back to a focus on commercial viability under the leadership of Erick, yet it is clear that the president is still attracted to their utility as enablers of policy delivery that are more politically responsive than the bureaucracy and less open to oversight and influence from legislators who would seek to divert the patronage resources contained within the SOE sector for their own localised political ends.

Joko Widodo came to the presidency with the intent of boosting the productivity of Indonesia's economy, but with few concrete ideas about how to do so apart from building lots of infrastructure. The recruitment of the SOE sector as a vehicle for delivering megaprojects flowed from this infrastructure ambition. During his tenure in local government Widodo had acquired an instinctive scepticism about the ability of Indonesian bureaucracies to deliver projects reliably and understood the limited ability of the Indonesian state budget to underwrite significant new infrastructure investments. In Rini Soemarno he had also found a capable and loyal agent: alienated from Megawati Soekarnoputri, via whom she had initially entered Widodo's orbit, Rini's power was dependent on her maintaining the president's confidence and hence such political protection as he could provide. As a pragmatic adaptation to the technical, fiscal and political constraints he faced, Widodo's SOE drive has thus appeared—like so much of his approach to economic policy—at turns neoliberal and statist. State enterprises have been under increased pressure to clean up their balance sheets and operate more efficiently; at the same time, they have been recapitalised by the state with a view to taking on non-commercial infrastructure projects which the private sector would not be incentivised to invest in.

Viewed in relief to this model of populist policy, there are grounds to interpret Widodo's turbocharging the financial and project-delivery capacity of state-owned enterprises as populist in character. His expanding the mandate for the SOE sector, while restructuring its ownership patterns, have had the effect of concentrating of lines of political accountability upwards to the SOE ministry—and, by extension, the president. To the extent that Widodo had ambitions for his own political legacy, it was as the 'infrastructure president', culminating in his second-term pledge to construct a new capital city for Indonesia in East Kalimantan (Maulia 2019). In the first two years of this presidency, whether he was delivering a speech for a political party, religious organisation, or business conference, Widodo would speak from a template accompanied by a slideshow prepared by his State Secretariat—in audience-appropriate colours: red for a PDI-P conference, or green for Nahdlatul Ulama's—that spruiked the progress on highway, ports, or electrification projects. The repetition of this infrastructure 'show and tell' regardless of the context was sometimes a source of bemusement to the president's audiences, and became a point of comedy among journalists and diplomats in Jakarta. Yet it spoke to just how much stock Widodo put in the idea of new infrastructure as a way of not only supporting the growth and modernisation of the Indonesian economy, but providing voters with tangible results of populist leadership in areas of policy his predecessors—party politicians beset by bureaucracy and special interests—had failed.

Bringing back intermediaries: Nahdlatul Ulama and the ‘Umat economy’

Any analysis of the populist character of the ‘new developmentalism’ must also address the ways in which Joko Widodo not only departed from the model of populist policy I have sketched here, but indeed how he guided policy in the opposite direction, reinforcing the role of non-populist intermediaries as arbiters of patronage distribution. Widodo was to learn that there were limits to the ability of his populist welfare and infrastructure programs in generating popular support when his former deputy governor in Jakarta, the ethnic Chinese Christian Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, was defeated in the gubernatorial election in the capital in 2017 after a blasphemy scandal saw a mass mobilisation of Islamic civil society against his candidacy (Fealy 2016). The 2017 election and the targeting of Basuki on racial and religious grounds was immediately recognised as a watershed for the mainstreaming of Islamic identity politics in Indonesia (Hadiz 2018); more immediately for the Widodo government, it was a reminder of the potential for their weakness among conservative Islamic voters—who had been an important part of Prabowo’s electoral coalition in 2014—to be a latent source of opposition to their programs and even to Widodo’s chances of re-election in 2019 (Mietzner and Muhtadi 2018, *Power* 2018: 313–314).

In the wake of the 2017 Jakarta election, Widodo moved to neutralise criticisms that his economic program had been too focused on the creation of new sources of growth and investment at the expense of addressing problems of poverty and inequality. In doing so he was also responding to the subtext of many of those criticisms: namely, that his administration favoured the interests of the disproportionately Chinese-Indonesian, non-Muslim business class at the expense of the majority Muslim population (Setijadi 2020: 206; Warburton and Gammon 2017). Accordingly, the focus that Widodo put in the second half of his first term on anti-poverty and anti-inequality programs was often explicitly linked to the economic uplift of Muslim communities. More importantly for the analysis of populist policy being undertaken here, the new focus would involve channelling patronage to conservative Muslim communities through some of Indonesia’s largest Muslim organisations—reinforcing their role as intermediaries between, and at turns brokers for, the support of grassroots voters that is the antithesis of populist politics.

The rhetorical shift towards economic equity and inclusion was sometimes explicitly dressed up in a rhetoric of ensuring the uplift of Muslims specifically. In April 2017, just months after the defeat of Basuki, Widodo officially launched the Indonesia Ulama Council (MUI)’s ‘Umat Economy’ initiative. It represented the beginning of Widodo’s new habit of making references to the importance of supporting Muslim entrepreneurship and spreading economic gains more evenly that would be sustained until the 2019 presidential election campaign and beyond, even mentioning the ‘Umat economy’ slogan in his speech accepting his party coalition’s nomination for re-election in August 2018. In embracing this rhetoric Widodo was making a

subtle yet nevertheless unmistakable appeal to the longstanding resentment of many middle-class Muslims about the supposed domination of Indonesia's economy by the country's small ethnic Chinese minority. Widodo's vice president during his first term, Jusuf Kalla, was known to give voice to such sentiments with unusual candour, stating in the immediate wake of the 2017 Jakarta election that it was a major challenge for Indonesia's political future that 'the rich and the poor are of different religions' while 'a large portion of those who are rich are non-Muslim' (PWMU.co 2017) Later that year the vice president similarly remarked that 'if there are a hundred successful businessmen, only one or two of them are from the Islamic *umat*. If there are a hundred poor people, however, almost all of them are Muslims' (author's notes of remarks at Nahdlatul Ulama national congress, Mataram, November 2017). The unmistakable subtext of Muslim leaders' references to support for Muslim-owned *UMKM* (*usaha mikro, kecil dan menengah*; micro, small and medium-sized enterprises), and the need for big business to 'partner' with such firms, was that the Chinese business elite owed it to Muslims to share economic opportunities.

When Widodo was searching for a way to reassure Muslim voters of his goodwill towards them, and his concern with their economic uplift, he would turn to the most ideologically friendly and electorally important organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). In this first two years of his presidency Widodo sought to dilute the influence of individual members of his party coalition, especially PDI-P and Nasdem, by enticing or coercing new parties into his government. Part of this strategy of ensuring stability and room for manoeuvre included forging closer relationships with the security services and big religious organisations, who function in Indonesia's system of coalitional presidential system almost as parties themselves (Mietzner 2018b). Widodo would continue to move closer to NU, endorsing its campaign of pushing back against the rising influence of Islamism in society, but a watershed in terms of the Widodo–NU relationship came after the 2016–17 mass demonstrations and the defeat of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama in Jakarta. Concerned that the Prabowo campaign and Islamist civil society organisations could do to him exactly what they had done to Basuki, Widodo went looking for support from institutionalised Islam in the most obvious place: NU. The provision of material support to NU would commence in earnest, with the view that with NU elites on side, goodwill towards the president would trickle down to its millions of supporters (Nuraniyah 2020: 88–96, Fealy 2019, Fachrudin 2019).

NU itself fully understood well just how well placed it was to benefit from Widodo's need to get it more fully on board with his leadership. At its national conference held on the island of Lombok in November 2017, leaders and delegates talked enthusiastically about what role their organisation could play in the economic uplift of the Islamic—and, as the subtext would imply, their own traditionalist Islamic—grassroots. And just like the political parties on which Widodo became dependent had demanded of him patronage, so was NU to make it clear that it expected to be able to steer policy towards its agenda in exchange for unequivocally backing

the Widodo administration in 2019. As one NU intellectual put it, 'NU is Jokowi's *tempat sandaran* [a place to lean on]' and if the president 'goes to NU head office, don't come empty-handed' (Ahmad Suaedy remarks to NU Conference, November 2017). The NU leadership was clear about what it expected from the government; its chairman Said Aqil Siroj (who had endorsed Prabowo in 2014) listed the organisation's expectations to senior government officials—including the vice-president—in attendance at the congress. These ranged from redistribution of government assets to more funding for NU-backed schools, including a new Ministry of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) with, he emphasised to applause, 'genuine funding' (author notes of remarks at NU Conference in Mataram, Lombok, November 2017).

NU would soon become the channel for development programs administered by its bureaucracy or with the assistance of the government's. In the immediate aftermath of the Jakarta election, in May 2017, NU's national leadership would sign a memorandum of understanding with several ministries that stipulated that the government provide Rp1.5 trillion in subsidised loans to small and micro enterprises that year; a portion of this loan program would be administered by NU's Economics Department and distributed via its networks of *pesantren* on a 'pilot' basis (Maulana 2017). The relationship between NU and Finance Minister Sri Mulyani, who was deputised by the president to devise a suite of development programs to be channelled through NU, soon soured. NU had much higher expectations of its control over a microcredit scheme, demanding both uneconomical rates of interest for recipients and a greater proportion of the microcredit funds to be subject to its own organs' 'monitoring and evaluation', as its own statement put it (Saubani 2017). Nevertheless, Rp211 billion (A\$21 million) in microcredit funds were eventually channelled to cooperatives controlled by NU in the 2017 state budget. It was a harbinger of patronage to come: later in 2017 the agriculture ministry announced an Rp200 billion (\$20 million) package of cooperation programs with PBNU, which included it distributing agricultural inputs to farmers in electorally important provinces (Kementrian Pertanian Republik Indonesia 2017).

NU's ability to distribute patronage was further boosted by a separate microcredit scheme headed by Indonesia's Financial Services Authority (Otoritas Jasa Keuangan, OJK). So-called *wakaf* Micro Banks (*wakaf* being an Arabic-derived term for a religious institution's endowment) would be established in *pesantren* and used to channel small loans to eligible recipients in the area. The political message President Widodo was seeking to send through them was delivered loud and clear—not least in March 2018 when he launched the Bank Wakaf Mikro at the *pesantren* of Ma'ruf Amin, the then spiritual head of NU and his future presidential running mate. In front of the assembled crowd and national and international media, Widodo expressed his hopes that 'Bank Wakaf Mikro' could be established in all *pesantren* across Indonesia, and that the extension of cheap microcredit could allow *pesantren* to improve the material conditions of the Muslim *umat* in their communities (Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2018). What was more intriguing, however, was the presence at the program's launch of

Tahir, a Chinese-Indonesian billionaire whom officials described as the 'donor' who underwrote this particular Islamic micro-bank. Details of the arrangement were vague, but according to the OJK the cost of establishing each individual branch was Rp8 billion; Tahir's donation in the case of Al-Nawawi was hoped to stimulate further donations (Stefanie 2018). The political symbolism was unmistakable. Far from hiding his association with the Chinese billionaire, Widodo wanted to provide a symbol to Muslim voters that he was engineering a redistribution of wealth from Chinese capitalists to the Islamic grassroots. Indeed, the OJK's own promotional materials for the scheme identified 'donors' as the key financiers of the scheme, 'especially businesspeople and/or large businesses that care about social empowerment for the poor and alleviation [of poverty]' (Otoritas Jasa Keuangan 2018).

In trying to tailor a message about inequality that was attuned to such perceptions, it might seem that Widodo was appropriating, for populist political ends, a stereotypically populist narrative about the exploitation of a virtuous 'people' by a particular out-group. Yet in practice, his way of mitigating the risk of being seen as not doing enough to ensure the economic uplift of the Muslim community involved some decidedly non-populist approaches. Specifically, Widodo would channel state patronage into the hands of Islamic civil society organisations that he had come to see as gatekeepers to the votes of electorally important parts of the Muslim community. Far from seeking to 'reach through' these organisational intermediaries directly to voters, along the logic of the populist linkage, Widodo has moved to acknowledge and even reinforce the role of religious leaders as intermediaries between a leader and voters.

The 2020 Omnibus Bill: rewarding private business

After Widodo's re-election to a second term in 2019, the 'new developmentalism' would be augmented by a new effort to liberalise Indonesia's foreign investment and labour laws. Indonesia's byzantine regulatory system was long seen as a major drag on Indonesian companies' ability to expand their investments; indeed, it was a common talking point among politicians and business that the sheer complexity of regulations and opacity of regulatory processes facilitated corruption. It was often impractical to understand and obey the overlapping and frequently contradictory regulations that decentralisation had allowed national, provincial and local governments to issue independently of one another on various matters that impacted upon local investment climates (Butt and Parsons 2009, Oktaviani and Irawan 2009, OECD 2016). Moreover, regulatory complexity and the legal ambiguities (and corruption) that it created were often blamed for Indonesia's poor performance in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), with the country missing out on integration into global supply chains even as its Southeast Asian neighbours benefited from a shift in some types of manufacturing away from China prompted by rising costs of production in mainland China and opportunities for

participation in global production chains arising from new free trade deals such as RCEP and CPTPP (World Bank 2019, Patunru and Surianta 2020).

Widodo's response to these challenges would come in the form of a law that simultaneously amended key pieces of national legislation that governed multiple areas relating to labour protection, environmental regulation and foreign investment, and gave ministers regulatory authority to amend or cancel many types of subnational regulations and bylaws. The Job Creation Law (Undang-Undang Cipta Kerja, or 'UU Ciptaker') would amount to the most significant liberalisation of Indonesia's business environment since at least the beginning of the Yudhoyono presidency. It amended 49 existing pieces of legislation governing areas including labour laws, business licencing, foreign investment, and environmental regulations. The omnibus law marked a 'deep-cutting neo-liberal reform agenda' (Mietzner 2021: 113), one which Widodo was emboldened to take in a post-election landscape marked by a respectable margin of re-election, the co-optation of erstwhile elite adversaries into his government, and the demobilisation of major sources of opposition within civil society (Savirani 2020, Gammon 2019; also see Chapter Six).

Widodo's post-election rush to enact a policy wish-list of private capital—after championing a statist economic policy that was perceived (and described) as a repudiation of neoliberal economics (Warburton 2016, Kim 2021)—puts him in the company of numerous other populist leaders who enacted economic liberalisation programs without a credible popular mandate to do so. One of the noteworthy elements of the Latin American experiments with neoliberal 'shock therapy' economic reform in the 1980s and 1990s was that it was enacted largely by presidents who were not elected on the promise of liberalising the economy. Stokes has analysed this pattern as a practice of 'mandate violation' whereby leaders pursue policies that are 'not approved ex ante by popular mandate' (2001: 2). Politicians breaking campaign promises is a universal feature of democratic politics, yet what appears distinctive about the populist mode of 'mandate violation' is the brazenness with which it often occurs—arguably an outgrowth of the top-down, personalistic linkage that populists maintain with their electoral support base. The tenuous relationships of populist leaders to organised interest groups whether in the form of parties or civil society organisations has corresponded in many cases with tenuous attachments to the programmatic content of their election campaigns. This was the case with Widodo: the omnibus bill, despite being pushed through the parliament not long after his re-election, did not feature in his 2019 election campaign—indeed, the first mention of the president's ambition to overhaul laws inhibiting private sector investment in Indonesia was made in his inaugural speech after being sworn in for his second term in October 2019. The Law on Job Creation would be passed just months later, under the cover of the coronavirus pandemic crisis.

The first time Widodo flagged plans to use omnibus legislation to resolve various issues with Indonesia's investment climate was in his inaugural speech after being sworn in for his second term in October 2019. There was no mention during the 2019 presidential campaign that a major package of economic reforms would be part of Widodo's second-term policy agenda, and if such a thing had been canvassed during the campaign it would almost certainly have become a major target of criticism by the Prabowo camp, which had sought to deepen its links with organised labour during Widodo's first term. Indeed, while Widodo's rhetoric and practice on economic affairs during his first term was a mix of piecemeal liberalisation and protectionism, overall the 'new developmentalism'—marked as it was by the strengthening of state capital described above, as well as movements towards protectionism in some key sectors—was perceived as an alternative to the liberal path to economic modernisation that western institutions and experts typically prescribed.

The omnibus bill was destined to become politically contentious because it enacted liberalisation in areas where trade unions and civil society had invested a lot of lobbying and organising. A major casualty of its provisions was Indonesia's 2003 Labour Law, which was a major achievement of the labour movement in the early years of the democratic transition. A 2006 effort by the Yudhoyono administration to weaken the labour law's extensive regulations of formal sector workers' pay and conditions had failed in the face of opposition from trade unions and their allies across civil society (Manning and Roesad 2007). Among the most politically fraught of the omnibus bill's provisions were amendments to the 2003 law that weakened protections of pay and conditions for formal-sector workers. The bill, for instance, reduced the amount of severance pay to which workers were entitled upon dismissal, and expanded the ability of employers to engage in 'outsourcing' or labour hire, a practice long criticised by unions for insulating the de facto employers from accountability for labour abuses. It also amended the method for setting minimum wages, stipulating that they be pegged more closely to local, rather than national, economic conditions and that many smaller firms would be granted exemptions from paying the full official minimum wage. These came alongside further deregulation of employment contracts, unlawful dismissal provisions, and other sundry worker protections. Aside from these pro-employer reforms to labour laws, the omnibus law also loosened legal requirements surrounding business licencing and weakened environmental regulations substantially. The bill naturally enjoyed the support of Indonesia's business establishment, represented through associations such as KADIN, the chamber of commerce, and APINDO, the employers' association, along with foreign chambers of commerce and the World Bank. When it was being drafted in late 2019 and early 2020, representatives of these two key business associations were represented on the ad hoc task force the administration had established to write the bill and were intimately involved in negotiations with parliamentarians over its contents (Sulistiyowati 2020).

Unions spearheaded protests against the bill in March 2020, with tens of thousands of workers involved in street demonstrations and joining nationwide strikes, in spite of a ban on mass gatherings in force at the time designed to limit the spread of coronavirus. As will be discussed in Chapter Six, the administration had by this point become accustomed to the intimidation and demobilisation of organised sources of opposition to it, and the protests against the bill were a site of such tactics. Thousands of students who had joined protests against the law were arrested, with some student leaders being 'visited' by police and intelligence officials and discouraged from organising protests (Ernis 2020). The government's rhetorical response, which tried to insinuate that the anti-Omnibus movement was being 'manipulated' by unnamed political *dalang* (puppetmasters), harked back to New Order-era tactics to discredit opposition to it as coming from Communist or otherwise illicit political forces (Aspinall 2020).

Populism and neoliberalism

What populist political logic lies behind the 'neoliberal turn' (Mietzner 2021) undertaken by Widodo at the outset of his second presidential term, and what populist political ends does it serve? Indeed, what contradictions exist between an agenda of limiting the scope for workers to bargain for better rights and conditions, of which the 2020 Law on Job Creation is a part, and populist politics? In posing these questions the Indonesian case interfaces with the arguments of scholars of the 'neopopulism' of 1990s Latin America that not only are populist politics and neoliberal economics mutually compatible but can in fact be intimately intertwined. To be sure, the concurrence of populist rule and neoliberal reform can be borne of a shift in a politician's constituency once elections are concluded. As Weyland (2003: 1011) observes, '[p]opulism is useful for garnering votes and winning the election but, after the election, the mass populace has little political influence, whereas domestic and foreign business sectors and the international financial institutions have decisive clout'. According to this view, the 'bait and switch' performed by so many populists, which Stokes theorises as 'mandate violation' (2001), is simply a 'structural necessity' (Weyland 2003: 1011) faced by all politicians. Nevertheless, Weyland (2003 :1098–1099) argues that there is still a distinctive instrumental affinity between populism and neoliberalism:

Neopopulists and neoliberals also coincide considerably in their relationship to major sociopolitical actors. They maintain distance from trade unions, professional associations and even many organised business groups, which personalistic plebiscitarian leaders see as fetters on their autonomy and power and which neoliberal experts condemn as rent-seeking 'special interests' who seek to interfere with the market. By contrast, neopopulist leaders appeal for support especially to the largely unorganised informal sector and the rural poor, and neoliberal reformers and the international financial institutions benefit these sectors

with targeted social emergency and anti-poverty programmes. Neopopulist leaders eagerly use these new benefit schemes to strengthen their mass support. (2003: 1098–1099)

For this reason, neoliberal technocrats have serially found it expedient 'to ally with neopopulist leaders, who seek to boost their own autonomy and power and who thus wield the influence required for promoting the change that neoliberal experts and the international financial institutions seek.' In turn, 'neopopulist leaders can use market reform to give their own power hunger a rational, modern justification.' (Weyland 2003: 1098). The most vivid illustration of this dynamic again comes in the case of Alberto Fujimori. Having stabilised the macroeconomy and restored investor and creditor confidence through his 'shock therapy' adjustment program, and his political authority secured by an overwhelmingly popular 'autocoup', Fujimori was able through the extensive program of state patronage targeted at the Fujimori electoral base to perpetuate an 'executive philanthropy bankrolled by a liberal state...a technocratic populism centred on the [president], financed by the spoils of economic liberalism' (Kay 1996: 56–58). With reference to Fujimori as well as his contemporary, the Argentinian populist leader Carlos Menem, Weyland (2003: 1106) also highlights the significance of opinion polling in providing transparency about how economic reforms impact voters' subjective perceptions of their economic position, 'systematically extend[ing] the range of citizens who have (statistical) voice and influence beyond those working- and lower-middle class sectors who were the core constituencies of classical populism'. Polling potentially reveals a silent majority of voters who acquiesce to neoliberal reforms so long as their perceived economic wellbeing is buoyed by aggregate economic trends.

As Weyland's (1996, 2003) argument would suggest, the structure of Joko Widodo's relationships with the 'major sociopolitical actors' shaped the form of his neoliberal turn and the process by which it was enacted. Widodo's attitude towards trade unions and their leadership over the course of his political career has been ambivalent. When he was governor of Jakarta between 2012 and 2014 he had to opportunities to use his discretion to set the minimum wage in the capital. In late 2012 he set the following year's minimum wage at Rp2.2 million (A\$154) a month—a nearly 44% increase—followed by a nearly 11% rise the following year (Muhammad 2021). Despite going into the 2014 elections with a record of having approved wage increases, the institutional leadership of Indonesia's trade union movement did not uniformly throw its weight behind Widodo, with some of the most prominent and politically effective union leaders being vocally supportive of the Prabowo campaign. Foremost among them was Said Iqbal, the leader of the KSPI, Indonesia's most politically active trade union confederation, who was rumoured to be in line for an appointment as labour minister in a Prabowo cabinet and who claimed that Prabowo had been more explicit in offering pro-labour policy concessions compared with the Widodo camp (Caraway and Ford 2014). Members of Said's metalworkers' union were prominent at Gerindra's and Prabowo's massive pre-election rallies, with Said hosting Prabowo at the union's May Day commemoration event in 2014 (Lane

2014). Union support for Widodo, meanwhile, was more muted when it did occur: two other major union confederations endorsed him, but were not as prominent in Widodo campaign activities as the pro-Prabowo factions were.

Once he became president, Widodo's policy decisions on key matters of concern to the unions were much more in line with the needs of employers. In an about-face from the approach he took as Governor of Jakarta, he signed a presidential regulation in 2015 that abolished the tripartite process that had brought unions, government and employers together to negotiate minimum wages. The ability of regional leaders to regulate minimum wages within their jurisdictions—a power Widodo had used to his own political advantage in Jakarta—was also abolished in favour of a new system in which regional minimum wages were calculated based on growth and inflation rates. The new system provided greater certainty to business but clearly hampered the ability for unions to use their local political influence, especially at election times, to exert favourable minimum wage concessions from the directly-elected local government heads (Caraway, Ford and Nguyen 2019). The ability for unions to strike and protest on work sites was also curtailed by a separate regulation that designated key industrial zones as 'vital national objects' liable to be policed by military personnel. Overall, concludes Ford (2019), the record of the Widodo government even before the passage of the 2020 omnibus bill was that it '[taken] the most repressive approach to organised labour the country had seen since the fall of Soeharto'.

Widodo's relationship likely reflects his understanding that organised labour qua organised labour actually has weak mobilisational power within Indonesian society, notwithstanding the ability of unions to engage in attention-grabbing acts of street activism. The number of formally employed workers as a proportion of the electorate remains low—in 2019, around three quarters of Indonesia's labour market were either in the informal sector or not covered by an employment contract (World Bank 2021: 19). Trade union membership was estimated at just 2.7% of the workforce in 2019, with the proportion of 'organised workers from trade unions with tripartite recognition declined drastically by 20% from 2007 to 2019' (DTDA and Mondiaal 2020: ii). While trade unions have certainly made shrewd use of the institutional avenues available to them to increase their role in setting minimum wages and influencing industrial relations policy at the local level (Caraway, Ford and Nguyen 2019; Nurlinah et al 2021), they clearly represent a small and declining electoral constituency at the national level.

Instead, insofar as 'Jokowinomics' has had continuing appeal to poor and lower-middle class Indonesians, whatever their occupation or employment status, it has been because of the aggregate trends in employment, growth and poverty rates that it has coincided with. Towards the end of Widodo's first term Manning and Roesad concluded from their examination of trends in the Indonesian labour market that his government 'can be judged to have had a number of successes in regard to labour markets and employment. Employment has held up

and wages have improved, despite slower growth than in the decade before he came to power' (2018: 181). The growth in formal sector employment and steady increases in real incomes have coincided with the expansion of healthcare and retirement benefits to workers in the informal sector via the JKN/BPJS system outlined above. While the system faces serious questions about its financial sustainability given half-hearted fiscal commitment by government and high rates of premium non-payment among participants (Prastiyani 2019), overall the average Indonesian voter is more likely to be formally employed, and has expanded access to state-supported health and social security benefits than at the beginning of the Widodo presidency, notwithstanding the government's efforts to slow the pace of wage growth and erode the workplace entitlements of the minority of the workforce that enjoys the protection of an employment contract.

Recalling Weyland's (2003) observations about the importance of opinion polling in helping populist leaders calibrate the extent of their economic reforms, it is pertinent that polling has revealed a silent majority of voters who accepted the government's stance that the law was a necessary part of expanding the formal labour market and increasing business activity. A nationwide poll in July 2020 found that only 26% of voters knew what the Omnibus Bill was—of those who had heard of it, fully 52% approved of it, with most agreeing that it would create jobs and make doing business easier (Saiful Mujani Research & Consulting 2020). Certainly, the socioeconomic conditions that prevailed during its deliberation—which coincided with the initial wave of the coronavirus pandemic—were exceptional. Widodo could nevertheless be confident that his government's narrative that the Omnibus law was an overdue shake-up of Indonesia's business environment, made all the more urgent by the economic shock brought on by the pandemic, had taken root among the minority of the electorate who were aware of the law and its general contents.

The 'neoliberal turn' Widodo took after the 2019 election therefore conforms to many of the patterns seen in the wave of neoliberal reform overseen by the Latin American populists of the 1990s. Firstly, it was enabled by the leadership of a leader whose electoral support was concentrated among lower-income voters, particularly in the informal sector, who did not form part of the basis of the organised labour movement nor depended upon its activism to support their income and work conditions. Second, it was enacted without an explicit electoral mandate, reminiscent of the 'bait and switch' engaged in by the Latin American comparative cases. Thirdly, it achieved the widespread post facto assent of voters, either because of the perceptions of crisis conditions or because the average voter felt they stood to gain from the extra economic growth engendered by microeconomic reform. The Indonesian case further demonstrates that neoliberal economic reform cannot simply be juxtaposed with 'populist' politics. Indeed, some of the socioeconomic and socio-political conditions that aid the emergence of populist politics—such as weak forms of class-based mobilisation (especially weak organised labour), and a large informal and micro-enterprise sector—can also produce an

electoral constituency for neoliberalism, if it can be convinced of benefits of neoliberal reforms in terms of greater opportunities for formal employment and lighter tax regulatory burdens for small and micro-enterprises. This may especially be true in the context of an expanding welfare state, as was applicable in the Indonesian case, as well as other key comparative cases of populism internationally.

Conclusion

The main analytical goals of this chapter have been to extend the analysis of authors such as Warburton (2016) and Kim (2021) to show that the reinvigorated state capitalism Joko Widodo has overseen, and the neo-developmental ideology it is tied to, do not merely reflect Widodo's pragmatic adaptations to the inability of liberal economic policies to deliver the kind of rapid industrialisation that he wants for Indonesia. Rather, they are also informed by and instrumental to a *populist* political strategy. The design and delivery of the various aspects of Widodo's welfare, infrastructure and microeconomic reform policies has conformed broadly to the key features of 'populist policy' that I have sketched out in the introduction to this chapter. First, populist policy emphasises the position of the populist leader as the uber-patron to the grassroots, limiting the opportunity for other political actors to take credit for benefits delivered. Second, we can expect populist policy delivery to have an emphasis on bypassing political intermediaries—that is, there will be a preoccupation with not allowing political intermediaries (brokers, parties, and the like) to use the populist leader's signature programs in order to build up or reward their own clientele.

Widodo worked within the limitations of existing legal structures to put his personal stamp on the rollout of the nascent national health insurance and cash transfer programs, seeking to consolidate his popularity among low-income voters along similar lines as he did in Solo in Jakarta. His leeway for expanding or redesigning the system was limited by the fact that he was dealing with a pre-existing legislative and administrative framework that had been erected by his predecessor. Because of this, he was unable to make eligibility for the scheme's programs universal at the stroke of a pen as he did in Jakarta; instead, the benefits of free health insurance and cash transfers would be enjoyed by citizens whose eligibility had been approved by grassroots state officials. Nevertheless, Widodo seized the opportunity to derive as much political advantage out of welfare programs as he could without engaging in legislative fights with what was then a hostile parliament. He moved quickly to reappropriate the new social protection scheme for his own political goals by engaging in a much more concerted effort to associate himself in the public's eye with the expansion of the national social welfare programs in the early years of his term. Whereas in the welfare space Widodo ultimately only adapted an existing program to rebrand it as a personal initiative, when it came to his infrastructure and industrialisation agenda he brought substantive innovations. Efforts to enhance

state-owned firms' performance and responsiveness to president's agenda would entail a restructuring of the sector that would reduce the ability of politicians in parliament to exert influence over the firms' management. Widodo and his powerful SOE ministers Rini Soemarno and Erick Thohir were not opposed to the politicisation of state-owned firms' operations—but, as we would expect from the logic of populist policy I have outlined above, they wanted to make sure that the sector was responsive to the president's political goals above all others.

Widodo's confidence in this political formula was to be shaken when his former ally Basuki Tjahaja Purnama was ejected from the Jakarta governorship in early 2017 amid popular outrage over his perceived blasphemy against the Qur'an. Widodo and his inner circle were intensely anxious about the possibility of his achievements in welfare and infrastructure to be overshadowed ahead of his 2019 re-election campaign by divisive cultural issues. As his opponents pushed identity politics to the front and centre of national politics amid the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2016–17, Widodo began directing patronage to key parts of the Muslim electorate whose support the president was uncertain of, and allowed religious organisations to share the political credit for the delivery of that patronage. Religious leadership, in short, was the most difficult class of intermediary influencers for a populist political strategy to subvert in a deeply religious society. Accordingly, in the second half of his first term the president sought to win over the support of the most ideologically friendly segments of the Islamic establishment. This was done not only by symbolic displays of sympathy for Indonesia's traditionalist Muslim religious community, but also with concrete forms of material assistance that positioned not only Widodo as the benefactor of traditionalist Muslim communities but allowed their leaderships to share credit for the distribution of patronage. It may have been popular, but it was not especially populist. The '*umat* economy' had as its goal not using state channels to reach *past* community leaders to deliver patronage directly to the grassroots, but rather to reach *through* them, gaining the goodwill of religious brokers and, by extension, the religious voters over which they had influence.

In the wake of his re-election, a rebalancing of Widodo's policy focus towards the needs of private enterprise has taken place. This has come primarily in the form of the passage of the omnibus Law on Job Creation in 2020 and the reorientation of the BUMN to a more commercial focus under a new minister for state-owned enterprise, Erick Thohir, who is himself drawn from the private sector. The '*neoliberal turn*', as it has been dubbed (Mietzner 2021), should not be interpreted as a turn away from the logic of populist policymaking that I have used as an analytical frame for this chapter. Indeed, the shift towards neoliberal approaches to hastening economic growth was one of the more quintessential elements of the '*Jokowinomics*' agenda that I have outlined in this chapter. Whereas facing a tight re-election campaign Widodo could not afford to alienate the parts of the workforce that would be materially disadvantaged by the omnibus law's reductions of worker entitlements, even if the pool of workers represented by trade unions was small overall. Hence Widodo's use of the so-called '*bait-*

and-switch' strategy that marked the neopopulist-led wave of neoliberal reform in Latin America in the 1990s. Emboldened by his election victory, and confident that his political strategy could now treat organised labour as a sectional interest, with the support of party elites and the business community Widodo rammed through a program of labour and business deregulation which, though it certainly alienated trade unions and progressive civil society, received the post-facto acceptance of most Indonesian voters.

Above all the politics of 'Jokowinomics' substantiates Kenny's observation that insofar as populist politicians have pursued a distinctive pattern of distributional politics, is it because they are relatively more reliant on voters' subjective perceptions of their economic wellbeing compared to non-populists. Whereas 'supporters of bureaucratic parties remain loyal even as policies and performance vary...support for populists remains contingent on performance (or at least on *perceptions* of performance) unless [such support] can be institutionalized' (2019: 21). Populist politicians, in short, face more acute short-term pressure to perform, unable to fall back on having a well-institutionalised party machine to regulate the particularistic distribution of patronage to paper over the grassroots effects of unfavourable aggregate economic trends. For precisely this reason, then, Joko Widodo's policy agenda has been marked not only with consolidating presidential influence over the distribution of state resources, but also with ramping up the speed with which welfare and infrastructure programs are realised.

CHAPTER SIX *Populism and Indonesia's authoritarian turn*

Joko Widodo's ability to realise the policy agenda described in Chapter Five was an outcome of his steady accumulation of political authority, achieved through maintaining the goodwill of the electorate while appeasing parties by guaranteeing their access to state resources. But some of the stability and authority Widodo achieved over his first presidential term was a result of a concerted effort to weaken and demobilise sources of opposition to his government and its policies. So normalised were such attempts at weakening political opposition that by the time Widodo's first presidential term came to a close, there was a growing consensus among scholars that Indonesia was experiencing a marked deterioration in the quality of its democracy (see contributions in Power and Warburton 2020). This democratic regression is in part the fruit of chronic shortcomings in human rights protections, persistent corruption and weak rule of law, as well as the deep legacies of authoritarian governance within parts of the state, especially the security sector. All of these problems were present when Widodo took office in 2014—indeed, by the late Yudhoyono period it was clear that Indonesia's democracy was stagnating in the face of these unaddressed challenges (see contributions in Aspinall et al. 2015). Yet Widodo's own actions have introduced new sources of democratic backsliding, contributing to a growing sense of alarm about the weakening of core democratic norms and practices that had been painstakingly institutionalised under his predecessors, despite the obvious structural problems with which they coexisted.

The norms that have come under renewed pressure in the Widodo years have primarily related to a) the legitimacy of political opposition, and b) the autonomy of political parties and civil society organisations from interference and coercion from the executive. Beginning in the early years of the Widodo presidency, the president and his agents have employed a range of illiberal practices to coerce cooperation from political opponents within the political elite, and to restrict civil society opponents' ability to mobilise popular constituencies in opposition to the government. This has ranged from using coercive methods to bring opposition parties and oligarchs into the pro-government coalition, such as interfering in the internal affairs of parties and using the law enforcement apparatus to intimidate oligarchs into supporting the government. Some anti-Widodo elements of civil society, meanwhile, have been on the receiving end of outright repression—ranging from legal harassment and government attempts at smearing them as ideologically extremist, to criminalisation of peaceful political opposition. In sum, if Indonesia has shifted from democratic stagnation to democratic regression since 2014, it is in no small part due to the Widodo government's approaches to its political adversaries.

What does populism have to do with this pattern of co-optation, coercion and repression of actual or potential political opponents? The extent to which illiberal ideologies and behaviours are essential properties of populist politics are a subject of dispute among scholars. To some working from an ideational definition, populism is virtually synonymous with an illiberal or majoritarian conceptualisation of democracy, and the illiberal practices populists enact flow from this ideational basis (Pappas 2019). To comparativists grounded in a material conception of populism, populists' embrace of illiberal political tactics is more instrumental, occurring as and when it is needed to safeguard or reinforce the direct, unmediated political linkage that is foundational to populism. This is primarily because '[p]opulist politicians', as Houle and Kenny argue (2018: 280), 'face strong incentives to demobilize their political opponents' to acquire a monopoly on the use of mass mobilisation as a resource in intra-elite power struggles—hence their undermining the autonomy and authority of political parties, their politicisation of ostensibly independent state institutions, and their attacks on the press and civil society. Regardless of these conceptual disagreements, though, it is empirically well-attested that populist rule is associated with the erosion of the quality of democracy. Evidence from Latin America shows that populist rule, on average, serves to lower countries' quality-of-democracy scores (Huber and Schimpf 2016) and is particularly associated with the erosion of checks on executive power (Houle and Kenny 2018) and the erosion of press freedom and freedom of expression (Kenny 2019). Studies drawing on global databases have similarly found that populist rule is correlated with backsliding in civil liberties and checks and balances (Kyle & Mounk 2018).

In this chapter I describe the patterns of coercion and repression the Widodo administration has taken, analysing it with reference to the logic of populist political strategies as I have with other aspects of Widodo's presidency in previous chapters. I argue that the 'executive illiberalism' (Mietzner 2019b) that the administration has enacted represents a pragmatic, targeted, and calibrated effort to control or repress the ability of those elements of civil society and the political elite that have the ability to influence voters' perceptions of the government in a negative direction. The intensity of efforts to co-opt, coerce and repress political opponents has increased in proportion to these actors' ability to influence voters—not for the stridency of their criticism of the Widodo government and its policies per se. Meanwhile, some of the stereotypical targets of populist leaders' illiberal practices, such as liberal civil society and critical mainstream media outlets, have not been subjected to systematic repression. Repression has instead been targeted at those individuals and groups who are best placed to negatively influence voters' sentiments towards the president. Even where ideology has been the ostensible basis for repression, pragmatic political goals are still evident in which groups are undermined by the state. There is, nevertheless, an important qualification. Just as in the case of the 'Jokowinomics' policies outlined in the previous chapter, some of his illiberalism has been done in large part to consolidate the support of non-populist intermediary organisations whom

Widodo sees as important elements of his elite coalition. Specifically, this has meant allowing the organs of the state to be recruited in traditionalist Islamic organisations' mission of cementing themselves as arbiters of official religious policy. In exchange, Widodo has sought to win the support of their elites and in turn the support of the popular constituencies they have influence over.

This chapter highlights several key case studies of this pattern of 'executive illiberalism' and illustrates how the government has experimented with co-optation, coercion and repression to neutralise threats to the president's standing among the public. First, it addresses how Widodo bent the norms of Indonesian coalitional presidentialism to interfere with the internal affairs of political parties, supporting the factions in those parties who supported the government, and in doing so paving the way for the expansion of his party coalition in the early parts of his first term. Second, it discusses the selective criminal prosecutions of government critics on the Islamist–nationalist right to silence or otherwise neutralise key spokespeople and organisers of activism against his presidency in the aftermath of the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2016–17. Third, it moves to the more wide-ranging efforts to delegitimise Islamist politics by sidelining and repressing Islamists in public life, and to supplant their influence with that of militant secular-nationalist and traditionalist Islamic forces in Widodo's late first term and early second term. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how Widodo-era patterns of illiberalism fits imperfectly with the typical populist path to autocratisation that has been seen in other presidential democracies during their periods of populist rule.

Coercing elites, demobilising civil society

Golkar and PPP

Joko Widodo began his first term with a party coalition holding just 37% of the seats in the DPR. As was discussed in Chapter Four, while he initially expressed confidence that he could govern with a parliamentary minority, buoyed by the support of the public and the press, the conflict between the president and his own party partners led to his enlarging his governing coalition. Expanding his party coalition—embracing the 'fat coalition' tradition of coalitional presidentialism which he had disdained during his election campaign—would be the key to diluting the power of individual parties over him. The first target was the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP), a conservative Islamic party that had its roots in the stage-managed party system of the Soeharto era. PPP had endorsed Prabowo Subianto in the 2014 election and remained under the chairmanship of Suryadharma Ali, a former religious affairs minister who was indicted for corruption by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) during the 2014 election campaign. Even before the election, factions within PPP had opposed Suryadharma's decision to nominate Prabowo; after Widodo's victory, the

conditions were ripe for an inter-party stoush about whether to join the incoming government or stay in opposition.

A pro-Widodo faction of PPP held a congress in October 2014, just days before the new president's inauguration, at which the pro-Widodo official Romahurmuzy was installed as the party's new chairman. After Widodo's inauguration the newly appointed justice minister, the PDI-P politician Yasonna Laoly, moved to formally recognise Romahurmuzy's national executive board as legitimate; a rival party meeting by a pro-Prabowo faction, meanwhile, was denied recognition by the law minister Yasonna oversaw. Suryadharma Ali's pro-Prabowo faction disputed the legality of the intra-party coup led by Romahurmuzy, and the two rival factions fought a court battle over who had the legal right to the chairmanship of the party. With the pro-Prabowo faction worn down by government pressure, a regular party congress in January 2016 elected Romyhurmuzy the new chairman and the party was soon folded into the government coalition (Mietzner 2016: 221-223).

The use of the law minister's power to ratify the leadership of the pro-government faction within PPP in 2014 would be repeated in a similar intra-party conflict within Golkar. A party with deep links to the business community, Golkar was the former political vehicle of the Soeharto dictatorship and had been a linchpin of the presidential coalitions of Widodo's predecessors.¹⁹ Between late 2014 and early 2016, a contest between two Golkar factions—one pro-Widodo, one in favour of taking a leading role in a Prabowo-led opposition coalition—unfolded that would determine the party's role in a new presidential administration. This post-election fight for the chairmanship of Golkar would involve a degree of government interference in the internal affairs of an opposition party that was without precedent in post-Soeharto politics. The chairman of Golkar at the time of the 2014 election, Aburizal Bakrie, had joined the Prabowo coalition after Widodo refused to negotiate explicit quid pro quo deals for post-election patronage in exchange for Golkar's support. After the election, Bakrie had been a steadfast ally of Prabowo in his efforts to question the validity of the election outcome and the Prabowo coalition's post-election effort to abolish direct elections for subnational executive heads (*pilkada*). In September 2014, in the lame duck session of the DPR elected at the previous election in 2009, the *Koalisi Merah Putih* (KMP, red and white coalition) was able to win a DPR vote 226–135 on a piece of legislation that abolished local elections in August 2014; president Yudhoyono's Democrat Party, then the largest faction, had abstained from the vote, effectively

¹⁹ In the period since the transition to democracy in 1998, Golkar had only once been in opposition, during a short period early in the Yudhoyono administration after the party's leadership had misjudged the political winds in 2004 and backed Megawati Soekarnoputri's unsuccessful re-election campaign. Yudhoyono's vice-president Jusuf Kalla, a Golkar member, had gone against the party line to join Yudhoyono's presidential ticket and after the election began to agitate within the party for Akbar's ouster, and to bring the party back into government. Kalla succeeded in winning the chairmanship in a toughly-contested and bribery-soaked party congress, and Golkar was quickly brought into the governing Yudhoyono coalition under Kalla's leadership (Tomsa 2008: 58–61).

allowing the bill to pass in what was widely interpreted as a show of strength in the part of the pro-Prabowo forces (Lamb 2014). Outgoing president Yudhoyono was stung by public outrage over the move and issued an emergency decree, subsequently ratified by the DPR, that effectively annulled the initial vote. Despite the eventual failure of the move to abolish *pilkada* during the transition period, for some time after election it appeared possible that Prabowo's Gerindra and Bakrie's Golkar could be the anchors of an opposition bloc that was more enduring and coherent than Indonesia had seen in post-New Order politics, and which would seek to stymie Widodo's policy agenda at every turn (Neary 2014). Peeling away Golkar from the opposition column would therefore be two important political goals for the new president: further isolating Prabowo, as well as diluting the influence of PDI-P within the government coalition after the relationship between the president and his party had grown fraught amid the Budi Gunawan crisis (see discussion of this episode in Chapter Three, Chapter Four).

In November 2014 Bakrie held a Golkar congress in Bali at which he attempted to purge pro-Widodo officials from the party. In response the pro-government faction, under the leadership of the businessman and long-time Golkar apparatchik Agung Laksono, held its own congress in Jakarta that nominated Agung as chairman and decried the Bali congress as illegal. With the party mired in conflict between pro- and anti-government factions, agents of the Widodo administration moved to put the thumb on the scale for Agung's camp. Senior government figures with a background in Golkar, notably Luhut Pandjaitan, egged on the anti-Bakrie rebels in the party, and pressure was put upon Bakrie business interests with government figures warning him that his troubled business empire would suffer unfriendly treatment from government regulators if he persisted in his oppositional stance (Mietzner 2016: 218–19). Eventually, the intra-Golkar conflict was ended when the extravagantly corrupt—and therefore, from the government's perspective, easily-manipulated—Golkar MP Setya Novanto was installed in a congress in Bali in 2016 that was marked by lobbying from Widodo government figures for delegates to back Setya.

With the government having signalled its willingness to take any opportunity to exploit intra-party splits in the opposition to its own advantage, President Widodo would eventually come to enjoy the support of almost every member of the pro-Prabowo coalition as his first term progressed, going to the 2019 election with the support of parties representing just over 60% of DPR seats—down from the peak size of Widodo's coalition of 69% after PAN left to once again support Prabowo as the elections approached—almost a perfect reverse of the relative sizes of the two coalitions in the 2014 elections. After the 2019 election, even Prabowo's Gerindra party itself would be brought into government after Prabowo was offered the defence ministry as well as two other cabinet posts for his party allies (Gammon 2019). One holdout, however, was former president Yudhoyono's Demokrat party, which joined the Islamist PKS in remaining in opposition after Widodo's re-election. After the 2019 polls it would join PPP and Golkar to become the target of an opportunistic takeover bid from a pro-government

coalition, when Widodo's serving chief of staff, the former army general Moeldoko, replaced incumbent chairman Agus Yudhoyono, the former president's son, at an extraordinary general meeting with the support of an aggrieved faction of party officials. Moeldoko's attempt to take control of the party was so legally questionable that even Widodo's law minister Yasonna Laoly could not formally recognise his leadership; until the time of writing the matter is still being litigated in the courts, with the potential still present for the former president's party to come under the control of the incumbent's chief of staff (Vasandani and Hodge 2021).

Bringing PPP and Golkar into the government fold, and the inconclusive attempt to do the same to Partai Demokrat, would involve bending some important norms of intra-elite relations that had been established in the post-Soeharto democracy. The key weapon of the administration in turning intra-party disputes within opposition parties to its own political advantage lay in the ability for the law ministry to issue a *surat keputusan* (SK, decision letter) formally recognising a particular leadership board as the legal representatives of the party. The sanctity of parties' autonomy from other factions of the oligarchy, and especially from the state, was one of the unwritten rules of the political elite after decades of the Soeharto regime's efforts to undermine non-government parties and major religious organisations from within. After his faith in being able to obviate the need for a parliamentary majority by governing through populist means evaporated, Widodo 'cemented his authority in a multi-party environment by using interventionist methods' that not only 'lay outside the conventional tool box of coalitional presidentialism in democracies' (Mietzner 2016: 227), but outside the established norms of political fair play for Indonesian presidents.

It is important to emphasise that the strategic goal of coercing opposition parties into the government coalition was not to expand the *electoral* coalition Widodo enjoyed, nor to vertically deepen his control over subnational politics. As has been discussed extensively in earlier chapters, Indonesian party organisations have a weak role to play in shifting electoral realities on the ground in national political contests, and in directing policy and patronage decisions at subnational levels. Rather, the goal in shifting party leaderships to the pro-government column was to remove sources of *horizontal* checks on Widodo's power at the apex of the political system: by bringing PPP and Golkar into his coalition, the government now enjoyed majority support in the DPR for the first time. As outlined in Chapter Five, Widodo had enacted key parts of his welfare and infrastructure agenda with a view to limiting the ability of the DPR to influence the form of his policies, by relying on his decree powers under existing legislation to administer his signature health care schemes and restructure the SOE sector to lessen legislative oversight of its spending. From 2016, a parliamentary majority meant that the legislative and fiscal processes that undergirded Widodo's 'new developmentalis[t]' (Warburton 2016) schemes could continue without substantial obstruction, with party leaders having been recompensed for their acquiescence to his agenda with the opportunities for illicit party fundraising that came with inclusion of their proxies in Widodo's ministry.

Whereas the coercion of parties into the governing coalition was largely about foreclosing the potential for Widodo to be subject to horizontal checks on his authority, an equally important ingredient in the democratic regression his government has overseen has been the repression of opposition emanating upwards from Islamic civil society. As has been outlined in Chapter One, one of the key factors in Widodo's success as governor of Jakarta from 2012 to 2014 was his highly effective partnership with Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, who was recruited via Gerindra as his running mate for the 2012 race and served as his deputy from 2012 to 2014, effectively becoming the city's de facto governor as Widodo campaigned for the presidency throughout early 2014. After Widodo became president in October 2014, Basuki (colloquially known as Ahok) automatically succeeded him as governor. From the beginning, Basuki's abrasive personality and the prejudice he faced as a non-Muslim Chinese politician raised uncertainty about the prospects of his winning his own electoral mandate in Jakarta at the 2017 gubernatorial election. In 2014 Basuki fell out with Gerindra, with which he was nominally affiliated at the time, when he opposed it and its allies' efforts to abolish local *Pilkada* elections in the wake of the 2014 presidential polls. Basuki resigned from Gerindra amid much acrimony with the party's local branch, and would govern without any party affiliation during his short tenure as governor.

Basuki began the battle to win the 2017 election facing not only racial and religious prejudice, but also the animosity of powerful elites whose interests were affected by his crackdowns on corruption and his continuation of Widodo's policies of expanding the role the city government's state-owned firms played in delivering services and infrastructure (Widoyoko 2017). Basuki nevertheless remained competitive despite these electoral handicaps because he had used the city's growing revenue base to expand and improve the health care and education programs he was able to offer voters. But his heavy-handed approach to slum clearances and continuing controversy over policies that benefited property developers would generate pockets of intense animosity towards him—not only in the lower-class communities affected by slum clearances, but also among progressive civil society groups who were opposed on environmental and governance grounds to many of his development policies (Wilson 2016, 2017). The simmering discontent and mistrust in many parts of the Jakarta electorate exploded when in October 2016 a video emerged of Basuki making a complaint about how Islamic leaders 'used' the Quran to 'fool' Muslim voters into not voting for a non-Muslim. Public policy choices, then, were not to be the basis on which the election was decided; rather, it would become an acrimonious fight that Basuki's opponents turned into a referendum on the idea of having a blasphemer, or even a non-Muslim candidate at all, as an elected leader of a Muslim-majority community (Osman and Waikar 2018). The lead up to the 2017 election, held in two

rounds in February and April 2017, was marked by the biggest public demonstrations ever seen in post-Soeharto Indonesia. In November and December 2016, up to a million protesters assembled at Independence Square in Jakarta to demand that authorities prosecute the governor for blasphemy. On the second demonstration—which came to be known as ‘212’ because it was held on 2 December, 2016—Widodo left the gates of the palace and walked the short distance to the stage where he addressed the crowd, effectively legitimising their cause. The president’s first tactic, after the large demonstrations in November 2016, was to attempt to buy time by appeasing the crowd by tacitly endorsing the prosecution of Basuki on blasphemy charges; the following month, the chief of police announced that they were opening a blasphemy investigation into the governor. From this point on, Widodo displayed little hope or interest in having Basuki re-elected and made no formal endorsement out of a fear that the taint of being ‘anti-Islam’ would further transfer from his political ally to him. Yet despite his failure to confront the rhetoric of the new Islamic populism head-on during the Jakarta poll, Widodo would soon reveal his determination to undermine the ability of a newly galvanised ‘212’ movement to organise against him as the 2019 presidential elections approached. After Basuki lost the election in the April 2017 runoff, he was put on trial for blasphemy and sentenced to five years in prison. The election was immediately recognised as a watershed moment for politics in the Widodo years, in both how it demonstrated the mobilisational capacity of a new ‘Islamic populism’ done by Islamist civil society, but also in how it entrenched Islamic identity politics in the political mainstream more broadly (Fealy 2016).

More pertinent to this chapter’s analysis, however, was the fact that the 2017 Jakarta election also marked a watershed in terms of the Widodo government’s approach to dealing with its opponents in civil society. When the scale of the late 2016 protests took the political elite by surprise, the president and his allies rightly judged that the approaching election was a proxy contest that pitted the administration against a newly reinvigorated Islamist movement and their oligarchic allies-of-convenience, who sought to use the election as a chance to destabilise Widodo’s government by replacing Basuki with one of their own allies as Indonesia’s most prominent subnational politician. Former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono had supported the gubernatorial candidacy of his son Agus, who initially was seen as the most likely challenger to Basuki until his campaign revealed a lack of charisma and expertise; Agus was eliminated in the first round of voting in February 2017, leaving academic-turned-politician Anies Baswedan as the standard-bearer for the anti-‘Ahok’—and, by extension, the anti-‘Jokowi’—political forces. Anies Baswedan had joined the race after being sacked from Widodo’s cabinet in mid-2016. He ran for the governorship in Jakarta with the support of Prabowo’s Gerindra party as well as the mainstream Islamist party PKS; that there was an element of retribution in Anies’ decision to run in Jakarta, as well as in Prabowo’s decision to back his candidacy, was obvious. Anies ran a campaign which leant heavily on subliminal appeals to anti-Christian and anti-Chinese sentiment, and eventually prevailed in an April

2017 runoff with Basuki with 53% of the vote. Analysis of the results of the election did indeed show worrying signs for Widodo and his strategists. In spite of the Jakarta public being satisfied overall with Basuki's job performance, the most common reason they cited in exit polls for their voting against him was 'religion' (Warburton and Gammon 2017). Some analysis argued that there were warning signs for Widodo in the importance of those voters who were satisfied with Basuki but voted against him anyway (Mietzner and Muhtadi 2017). The implication was that despite Widodo's resilient job approval ratings, voters would nevertheless feel comfortable in voting against him if they could be convinced that he was not sufficiently representing the interests of Islam or Muslims.

Repressing Islamic populism

Widodo's response to the shock of the 2016 anti-'Ahok' protest movement, and the fear that his own government could become the victim of a similar mobilisation in the 2019 election campaign, had two major elements. The first was the effort to secure the loyalty of the mainstream Islamic organisations, and in particular that of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), from whom he had remained somewhat distant during the first two years of his presidency as he concentrated on inducing the support of party leaders. The effort to win the unequivocal support of the NU leadership ahead of 2019 was itself comprised of efforts to position NU organs as conduits of patronage to the grassroots (discussed in Chapter Five), as well as to enlist state institutions in NU's ongoing efforts to marginalise those it deemed as religious 'extremists' from positions of influence within government and public life more generally. While this effort to win over NU in response to the Jakarta election was taking place, Widodo's allies in the security and law enforcement sector intensified efforts at using the criminal justice system as an instrument of harassment and coercion towards government opponents on a scale that had not been seen since the New Order.

Such efforts kicked off on the very day of the biggest of the anti-Ahok demonstrations, on 2 December 2016. First among these were a group of eleven activists who were named as suspects on 'subversion' charges on the day of the rally. Some of those targeted by this wave of arrests were vocally anti-Widodo nationalists, including Megawati Soekarnoputri's estranged sister Rachmawati, the writer and former anti-Soeharto activist Ratna Sarumpaet, and former anti-Soeharto activist Sri Bintang Pamungkas. While all of them were strident critics of the government, and often drew on demagogic anti-Chinese and anti-foreigner tropes as Islamists, these figures were not themselves formidable political operators able to fund and organise massive demonstrations. The more credible anti-government figures who became the targets of arrests on 2 December were people such as the former military general and close Prabowo ally Kivlan Zen, and Muhammad al-Kathath, the former head of the Indonesian chapter of the transnational Islamist organisation Hizbut Tahrir and the then-chair of the Islamic

Community Forum (Forum Umat Islam or FUI), another hard-line association. The ostensible pretext for these eleven figures being named suspects was their supposed involvement in a plot to hijack the 212 protest movement and redirect its energies to try and topple the Widodo administration. What was remarkable was that all nine were arrested on charges of *makar*, or subversion of the state—a charge commonly used to criminalise dissent during the New Order, and typically only applied in the post-Soeharto era against bona fide expressions of separatist or anti-state sentiment in regions such as Papua and South Maluku (Berger 2015). The idea that these individuals and their groups represented an existential threat to the authority of the Indonesian state was absurd, but the arrests of the nine anti-government activists and the eventual prosecution of two of them nevertheless had its intended effect of signalling that while Basuki may be fair game for the Islamists, any attempt to expand the target of the demonstrations from the governor to the president would be met with retribution from the authorities.

That the December 2016 arrest of activists were meant to primarily have a symbolic, as well as deterrent, effect was most evident in who was *not* targeted by the authorities: namely, Rizieq Shihab, the leader of the Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam or FPI). Rizieq had skilfully used his organisation's leading role in the campaign against Ahok to position himself as the de facto leader of an inchoate yet nevertheless increasingly visible populist Islamist movement that opposed the Widodo government (Hikam 2016). Short of Prabowo himself, there was no other anti-Widodo leader who combined charisma and mobilisational wherewithal as Rizieq did; accordingly, many interpreted the strike against the 11 activists on the morning of the 212 rally as being meant in no small part to send a warning to Rizieq and his allies in Islamist civil society.

The inclusion of a female organiser named Firza Husen among the 11 arrested activists, however, would set the scene for Rizieq's own targeting after he persisted in his anti-government activism. Throughout the early months of 2017, Rizieq and FPI remained undeterred by the government's warning shots against the 212 movement in the form of the *makar* charges, continuing to agitate for Basuki's prosecution for blasphemy and making scathing criticism of the Widodo government's supposed subservience to Chinese and non-Muslim interests at the expense of Muslims. In May 2017, material surfaced on the internet that appeared to show the contents of a sexually explicit WhatsApp conversation between Rizieq and Firza. When she was released after being arrested for subversion in December 2016, Firza's smartphone had been confiscated by police as evidence, raising suspicions in the Rizieq camp that she was deliberately targeted in order to gather compromising information on the FPI leader, and that the explicit messages were deliberately leaked by the police to humiliate Rizieq and form the basis of an obscenity case against him (confidential interview with an associate of Rizieq Shihab, Jakarta, May 2019). The police duly began an investigation into Rizieq on charges of obscenity relating to the explicit texts, one of several disparate criminal cases brought against

Rizieq and many of his Islamist allies in the first half of 2017. Rizieq, for instance, was also hit with cases ranging from fraud to insulting the state ideology of Pancasila. Instead of waiting in Indonesia to be imprisoned, Rizieq fled to Saudi Arabia with his family on the pretext of going on the *Umroh* (minor hajj) and remained there until 2020—putting him out of commission for the duration of the 2019 elections, as was surely the Widodo government's goal.

The pattern of targeted investigations into Islamic leaders would be a double-edged sword politically, angering some conservative religious figures and conservative Muslim constituencies. Soon it was a standard part of Islamist discourse to raise worries about a pattern of '*kriminalisasi ulama*', or criminalisation of *ulama*. Even within Widodo's notional supporter base, this issue had resonance. It gave substance, in their eyes, to the idea that the president was secretly sympathetic to the long-destroyed but still-feared Indonesian communist party, which was known for its implacable hostility to traditional Islamic leaderships. A senior MP from the NU-linked PKB party was concerned ahead of the 2019 elections that 'for a lot of *santri* [devout] communities in my electorate, it [the prosecution of *ulama*] reminds them of the PKI's methods' (interview in confidence with a member of PKB's national executive board, Jakarta, December 2017). While such pro-Widodo figures voiced such concerns quietly within the government, the government's opponents were hardly as circumspect. The outspoken Prabowo ally, the Gerindra MP Fadli Zon, regularly condemned the government for its criminalisation of *ulama* (Lubabah 2017), and PKS and Gerindra introduced a bill to parliament known as the UU Perlindungan Ulama (Ulama Protection Act) which would have given religious leaders certain immunities from criminal prosecution (CNN Indonesia 2019).

Far from easing off on its intimidation of FPI and other Islamist organisations after Widodo's re-election in 2019, the government stepped up efforts to weaken their ability to mobilise popular opposition to the government. The government had fired a warning shot against FPI in the immediate aftermath of the election that year when it emerged that FPI's registration at the home affairs ministry had expired. Whether FPI was ipso facto an illegal organisation was legally ambiguous, but Widodo's home affairs minister, the former PDI-P general secretary Tjahjo Kumolo, made it clear that FPI would not have its registration renewed automatically in the event that it applied for an extension (Setiawan 2019). With Rizieq Shihab still in self-imposed exile in Saudi Arabia to avoid prosecution on obscenity charges, the government saw the status quo as an acceptable outcome: FPI effectively leaderless, and with its legal status unclear. This unsteady truce was broken in 2020 when, after his obscenity case was finally dropped, Rizieq returned to Indonesia amid the coronavirus pandemic in mid-2020 to a crowd of 50,000 supporters at Jakarta airport. A further estimated 10,000 people attended Rizieq's daughter's wedding a few days later, including Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan, who had remained in political alignment with the Islamists. Shocked by the resilience of Rizieq's charisma among his supporter base, and confident that it had public opinion on its side in punishing a flagrant violation of social distancing rules, the government moved to investigate

Rizieq for holding gatherings in violation of lockdown rules in force at the time. Amid this investigation into Rizieq, police conducting surveillance on his entourage were involved in a firefight in which six FPI members were shot dead in circumstances that Indonesia's official human rights body said bore the signs of extrajudicial killings (Komnas HAM Republik Indonesia 2021). FPI was finally declared an illegal organisation on New Year's Eve in 2020 under controversial mass organisations laws (Nuraniyah 2021).

Targeting the 212 movement's oligarchic sponsor: the Hary Tanoë case

As Kenny (2019) has demonstrated, media freedoms are often the targets of populist administrations, with populist regimes from Trump, Duterte and Bolsonaro making an antagonistic relationship with the press a key part of their political modus operandi. In Widodo-era Indonesia, the illiberal tactics used to influence how the government is reported on by the media have been more subtle (Tapsell 2020)—yet one important misuse of state power to coerce the cooperation of a pro-opposition oligarch had the ancillary benefit of changing the coverage of Indonesia's largest media company in a much more pro-government direction. The target in question was Hary Tanoesoedibjo, the owner of the MNC group, whose television networks claimed a nearly 39% market share at the beginning of 2017 (MNC Media, 2017). Despite a personal background that made him unelectable—ethnic Chinese, Christian, and a billionaire who made his fortune as a business partner of Soeharto children—Hary had shown grandiose political ambitions for himself. He had formed into alliances with a rotation of Muslim political figures to whom he played financial benefactor and cheerleader through his media outlets, in the hopes of being nominated for the presidency or vice-presidency. In 2014 Hary had played this role for former New Order general Wiranto's Hanura party, with the party announcing Hary as Wiranto's notional running-mate, but he switched his allegiance to Prabowo Subianto after Wiranto put Hanura's support behind the Widodo-Kalla ticket in 2014.

Hary's media outlets were important actors in spreading misinformation after the 2014 election that purported that Prabowo had been the true winner, only to become the victim of fraud on the part of the Widodo camp. In the years after the election Hary would turn out to be a steadfast supporter of Prabowo and became associated with numerous anti-government political movements, as he tried to build a constituency for the new personal vehicle party, Perindo, which he founded in early 2015. Hary's newspapers were consistently hostile to Widodo and gave outside space to the views of critics aligned with the Prabowo coalition. In the 2017 Jakarta election, Hary would be a prominent supporter Anies Baswedan's campaign, and he made high profile meetings with Islamic leaders who were leading the massive anti-'Ahok' protest movement that emerged in late 2016. Hary's readiness to support anti-government political movements, and to orchestrate favourable media coverage for the opposition via his media conglomerate, made him an unusually outspoken opponent of the government among

the national business elite. As such, he was a prime target for political retribution, which came in the form of a legal case that he faced in the aftermath of the 2016–2017 demonstrations in Jakarta. In 2017, it emerged that Hary had been named a suspect in a case of threatening an official of the attorney-general's department. It was alleged that he had sent a threatening text message to a prosecutor who was investigating one of his companies on a tax compliance issue. On this pretext, Hary was investigated by the attorney-general's department, which was at the time headed by Muhammad Prasetyo, the former NasDem politician aligned with Surya Paloh. Paloh, for this part, was not only a key oligarchic ally of the president, but somebody with whom Hary had fallen out some years beforehand while the two were involved in establishing Paloh's NasDem political party. It was remarkable that an oligarch of Hary Tanoë's stature would be the subject of a politically motivated criminal investigation, and the threat of imprisonment for the alleged offence had the desired effect in terms of shifting Hary's political behaviour. He quickly announced that his party Perindo was endorsing the president for a second term, and Hary personally made a public statement that Widodo was the best person to lead the country for the next term of government. The tone of his newspapers' coverage of the administration changed rapidly, too; Sindo news and the MNC television networks were noticeably more supportive of Widodo and the government's agenda after Perindo swung its support behind the government (Aspinall and Mietzner 2019: 303–304).

Pragmatic, instrumental repression

Viewing these case studies in totality, it becomes clear that President Widodo has shown a readiness to target those who seek to undermine the one power resource he has in his fights with other parts of his own elite coalition: his popularity. Rizieq Shihab and FPI were not as ideologically hostile to the Widodo government nor as alienated from mainstream Islamic movements as some of its 212 allies were, for instance. Yet their mobilisational wherewithal and their deep roots in society, particularly among low-income, conservative-traditionalist Islamic communities that were key to Widodo's re-election, made them a unique political hazard to the president if allowed to mobilise against him unfettered. As in the case of FPI, it was Hary Tanoesoedibjo's willingness to use his media outlets to give succour to the anti-'Ahok' and anti-'Jokowi' movements that made him a prime candidate for coercion into the government fold. The government was not seeking to neutralise an electoral threat in Hary himself: the tycoon was not a significant figure in the opinion polls, despite his political ambitions, nor was his Perindo party destined to gain a foothold in the legislature at its debut election in 2019.²⁰ Instead, the intention was clearly to coerce Hary into desisting from supporting anti-Widodo campaigns via his financial donations and his control of Indonesia's biggest media

²⁰ In 2014, Perindo had duly followed through on Hary's post-legal case pledge to support President Widodo, but did not win enough votes to reach the 4% threshold for being assigned seats in parliament.

outlet. With the 2019 elections approaching and the potential for MNC to act as a megaphone for the Prabowo campaign, removing one potential roadblock between Widodo's messages and the electoral grassroots was of key political importance.

Ideological warfare: HTI and symbolic repression

The logic of highly pragmatic repression I have sketched above, however, does an imperfect job of explaining the Widodo government's repression of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), the local branch of the transnational Islamic movement that agitates for the re-establishment of a caliphate. HTI was a member of the coalition of civil society organisations that had joined together to organise the massive demonstrations in Jakarta in 2016–17 and remained a committed member of the '212' coalition after the fall of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama. Hizbut Tahrir had been active in Indonesia since the 1990s and had developed a sizeable support base within the urban middle class and among conservative students in many universities. The group's ideological hostility to democracy meant that it did not participate in elections or consider the possibility of forming a political party, but it was a registered and recognised mass organisation (or *ormas*) and was active in advocating for a transnational caliphate. Yet HTI's social base remained relatively small and its ideological appeal marginal. Its repression therefore had less to do with neutralising its capacity to influence and mobilise popular constituencies against Widodo, and more to do with the president's efforts to consolidate the bonds between him and secular-nationalist and traditionalist elites.

From mid-2017 Widodo's administration decided that HTI was the ideal target for a symbolic crackdown on radical Islamist activism. On 8 June 2017, Widodo's top law and security minister Wiranto announced that the government intended to revoke the recognition of HTI as a legal organisation. But the declaration had no legal effect: apart from signalling that the government considered the organisation politically beyond the pale, it did not expose HTI's members to any criminal prosecution. Under the 2013 Law on Mass Organisations that was then in force, the government had to apply a graduated series of sanctions on an organisation before finally being able to deregister it with a court's approval. Recognising the government's initially weak legal hand, HTI remained defiant. Its leaders played the victim, reminding the public that it was a legally registered organisation that engaged in peaceful *dakwah* (Islamic preaching and outreach) and political activism. Widodo, however, faced political pressure from within his own political coalition to strike a blow against one of the best-organised and most visible vehicles for transnational Islamism. Particularly vocal in support of doing so was NU, which had long resented and feared HTI and like Salafist organisations as ideological and theological foes. NU leaders had been lobbying Widodo to take action against the group, the president proved himself ready to legislate away fundamental protections on freedom of association in order to do it.

In June 2017 Widodo signed an emergency decree (known as a *perppu*) that would amend the provisions of the 2013 Law on Mass Organisations to allow the Ministry of Law and Human Rights to unilaterally revoke the registration of any legally recognised organisation. Under the *perppu*, not only did the government need no approval of a court to disband an organisation with a ministerial decision, for the first time the decree applied criminal penalties for association with a proscribed organisation. The *perppu* was sweeping in its removal of safeguards against the arbitrary proscription of organisations which the relevant minister deemed as opponents of the state ideology of Pancasila. This potentially posed long-term threats to the ability of leftists, supporters of Papuan autonomy, and international NGOs working in politically sensitive areas to legally engage in activism in Indonesia (Hamid and Gammon 2017). Though the DPR had the right to disallow the *perppu* when it expired three months after its issuance, it instead approved its provisions as permanent amendments to the 2013 *ormas* law. The Widodo government was therefore able to assign itself immense powers to proscribe non-violent organisations and criminalise their members by making the post-facto validation of its decree a referendum on HTI rather than the substantive issues of democratic quality at stake.

It helped the government's cause that HTI's theological positions were extreme and puritan, and that its rejection of the Indonesian constitution made it anathema to a broad swathe of the nationalist elite. No party that was not seeking to gain the sympathy of aggrieved conservative Islamic voters ahead of the 2019 elections had anything to gain by obstructing the proscription of such a small and politically toxic organisation. Only Gerindra and PKS stood opposed to the *perppu* becoming permanent law when the question came before the DPR in September 2017. When Widodo issued the decree under which HTI was banned, NU chairman Said Aqil Siroj informed the media of the issuance of the decree at NU headquarters before the official announcement had been made by the president (Stefanie 2017). That Said had the inside scoop on the decree spoke to the fact that Widodo's strike against HTI was intimately connected with his post-Jakarta election anxiety about the need to safeguard his relationship with NU as the 2019 election approached. As was discussed in Chapter Five, Widodo moved to boost the patronage he provided to NU after he felt he needed extra support from moderate Islamic voters after the shock of the 2017 gubernatorial election in Jakarta. Enlisting the state in NU's agenda of marginalising its theological adversaries and entrenching itself as the preeminent force in Indonesian Islam was similarly a part of Widodo's effort to incorporate NU as an integral part of his elite coalition; as Mietzner and Muhtadi (2020: 65–66) have stressed, '[i]n banning HTI, the state removed a disruptive and increasingly influential NU opponent—while at the same time using NU's support for the ban as political cover against accusations that it simply wanted to eliminate a group of anti-government dissidents.'

Thus the 2017 mass organisations decree, and the resulting new law, was unquestionably a landmark step backwards for the legal protections of democratic freedoms in Indonesia, notwithstanding that its provisions were drafted with a view to banning a group that was itself

ideologically opposed to democracy. Yet the response from much of civil society reflected a renewed tension between the goals of progressive civil society that lay in the background of the steady normalisation of repression under Widodo. Whereas advocacy for democracy and socioreligious pluralism generally went hand-in-hand in post-Soeharto Indonesia, concerns about limiting the rising influence of Islamist groups came to override many religious pluralists' and secularists' commitments to freedom of speech and association. Against this backdrop, the conditions were ripe for civil society to be 'wedged' on the basis of the tension between defending liberal democratic rights and protecting minorities and secular or heterodox Muslims from Islamist intolerance. As a result of the renewed salience of Indonesia's Islamist-pluralist ideological divide after the fall of 'Ahok', some elements of civil society—who under different circumstances may have voiced outrage at the assault on democratic freedoms the *perppu ormas* represented—were either supportive or silent in response (Mietzner 2018a).

The government initially held off on giving FPI the same treatment that it meted out to HTI. The latter organisation could be abruptly declared illegal in part because it was small and relatively friendless; banning FPI, meanwhile, could potentially have resulted in a backlash among the conservative traditionalist voters whom Widodo had a chance to keep in his electoral coalition in 2019 if he ran as the de facto candidate of NU. FPI had comparatively more theological affinity with NU, being at its heart an ultraconservative expression of the traditionalist Sunni Islam that NU also represented; HTI's transitional Salafism, by contrast, was ideologically anathema to both. When asked in the aftermath of the HTI ban about the inconsistency between banning HTI for extremism while leaving FPI operating legally, one of NU's most senior clerics explained that 'ultimately, they [FPI] are still *aswaja* like us', in a reference to the theological tradition that underpins NU's religious practice (interview with Hasib Wahab Chasbulloh, Mataram, November 2017). That same cleric would later be among those who warned that if Prabowo won the 2019 election, Indonesia would be 'replaced with a caliphate' (Kabarjatim 2018). NU recognised the difference between different expressions of hard-line Islam among the 212 movement and targeted its own ire accordingly—and seeking to pander to NU, so did Widodo target the state's repressive apparatus accordingly.

Yet as I have discussed above, in the post-2019 election environment, in which the electoral risks of banning FPI no longer figured in the government's calculations, the proscription of FPI would become a part of a broader effort to marginalise Islamism within the state and society (Fealy 2020; Nuraniyah 2020; IPAC 2018, 2019a, 2019b). It was not FPI's radicalism per se that saw it become a target, but rather that it had become so willing to mobilise crowds and public opinion against Widodo. FPI had to a greater extent than other Islamist organisations proven to be a tenacious opponent of his government with a proven record of being able to mobilise large crowds and attract media attention. With virtually every major political figure in Indonesia having been brought into the government coalition after the 2019 elections, including Prabowo and his running mate in 2019, the businessman Sandiaga Uno, Rizieq Shihab

was by default the figurehead of the Indonesian opposition, perhaps rivalled only by Anies Baswedan as the most senior political figure not overtly aligned with the incumbent government. Once Rizieq had been forced into exile by the trumped-up obscenity charges made against him, a weakened FPI settled into a tense *détente* with the government in which it was encouraged by the government to stay out of politics. When this truce was smashed with Rizieq's return to Indonesia amid the coronavirus crisis in 2020, the government intensified its crackdown on FPI until it was effectively neutralised as an actor capable of mobilising conservative traditionalist Muslim religious voters against Widodo and his political allies.

Conclusion

What overall role has populism played in the 'authoritarian turn' (Power 2018) Joko Widodo has enacted? Given that 'Jokowi' was seen as a breakthrough for populist politics when he came to office in 2014, it is tempting to view the democratic regression he has since overseen as being a part of the global story of populism's undermining democratic norms.²¹ Yet while Widodo has indisputably overseen a substantive decline in the quality of Indonesian democracy, the country has not taken a distinctively *populist* path of autocratisation. Populism has to be sure played a role, in that much of the Widodo government's illiberal actions have been directed at demobilising the Islamist populist movement that was the most significant source of organised opposition to his government in the lead up to his 2019 re-election campaign. But with Widodo's populism rendered establishment-friendly by its encounter with the realities of Indonesia's political system, the democratic regression he has led has departed from the standard playbook of populist leaders. His erosion of civil liberties and normalisation of targeted repression has been enacted in concert with a strikingly broad coalition of oligarchic actors, and in a way that protects and even reinforces their role in the political system, rather than trying to achieve their marginalisation or subordination to the plebiscitarian authority of a populist leader. As Slater argues:

[Jokowi] is not an electoral authoritarian gaining a stranglehold on national power for himself and his ruling party by restricting his electoral opponents. This is an increasingly illiberal democrat, backed by the legitimacy of an emphatic double-electoral mandate, using the full force of the state apparatus against society at large when it challenges and speaks out against the political designs he shares with the broad swathe of Indonesia's political elite. (2020: 57)

Nothing about Widodo's behaviour in office would lead us to contradict this assessment. Regressive laws have been enacted or proposed with the support, tacit or explicit, of Widodo's party allies. These include a controversial bill to revise to Indonesia's criminal code (Kitab

²¹ While they do not address the Indonesian case in any detail, Kyle & Mounk (2018) categorised Jokowi as a populist leader for the purposes of their large-N quantitative study of the links between populist rule and democratic regression.

Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana, KUHP) in 2019, which included among its provisions a tightening of criminal defamation laws that would have expanded the scope for authorities to criminalise criticism of officials and government policies, and an effective ban on extramarital sex (Human Rights Watch 2019). The KUHP revisions were paused at a late stage of deliberation after domestic and international outcry over their provisions, but had hitherto proceeded through the parliament with broad support across both government and opposition parties. Likewise, a number of the illiberal responses to perceived Islamist enemies of the administration have been enacted at the urging of such organisations' theological and organisational rivals, most notably NU. Widodo issuance of the problematic 2017 *ormas* decree was done at the urging of NU, and Widodo had every incentive to join in the crackdown on HTI and other organisations because of his desire to position NU as an ally in mobilising the votes of traditionalist Muslims in Java for the 2019 election (Nuraniyah 2020). In short, what we see in the Widodo presidency is not the populist going to war with the establishment, but rather him enlisting the rest of the oligarchy in a repressive agenda aimed at curbing the influence of a hostile populist movement rooted in Islamist civil society.²²

The systemic effects of this pattern of repression come into greater focus when we understand it in light of Widodo's overall approach to securing his political authority. As we have seen in previous chapters, Widodo's populist political strategy was very effective in making him a viable presidential candidate in 2013-14. But the unavoidable realities of Indonesia's electoral system constrained his populism in terms of its challenge to party power, from the point at which he embarked on a presidential candidacy. Electoral rules forced him into accommodation with the norms of coalitional presidentialism established by his predecessors. As such, he has been distinctive among presidents who rose to power as populist outsiders in how much he has not undermined the role of political parties. This is illustrated in his approach to repression: while he has introduced new coercive methods of coalition expansion to Indonesia's traditions of coalitional presidentialism he has not sought to fundamentally change those traditions. In his repression of civil society opponents, he has had the support of the party elite whose institutional roles were so important in constraining his populism with regards to the challenged it posed to their political prerogatives. Those party elites' commitment to democratic norms can readily be suspended so long as they themselves are exempted from the repression meted out to groups located outside the oligarchy. What this situation means for the outlook for Indonesian democracy as the political elite looks to the post-Widodo era is potentially troubling, and it is to this longer-term outlook that I now turn to in my concluding chapter.

²² To put it differently, Indonesia is *not* experiencing the pattern of 'careening' between oligarchic and plebiscitarian forms of democracy born of a cycle of struggle between populists and oligarchies that Slater (2013) has diagnosed as a frequent cause of democratic regression and collapse.

CONCLUSION *Indonesian populism beyond 'Jokowi'*

Beginning from a position of relative marginality to Indonesia's national political oligarchy, Joko Widodo rose to national fame and popularity using quintessentially populist political strategies. His popularity represented in part Indonesian voters' repudiation of the politics of Indonesia's deeply corrupt and elitist political parties. But the distinctively high barriers to entry to contesting the presidency that inhere in Indonesia's electoral system of government forced Widodo to channel his presidential ambitions through precisely those parties. Having been bound from the start of his presidential candidacy into formalised alliances with oligarch-controlled parties over which he had no direct control, during his presidency 'Jokowi' has worked *with* the them, and perpetuated the institutional frameworks that gave them their systemic role, rather than working *against* them. He has exemplified a moderate, technocratic and party-friendly populism whose party-weakening potential has been constrained by the institutional frameworks—and especially, the electoral rules—that created imperatives for allying with incumbent non-populist parties and the oligarchic figures who control them. Insofar as Widodo has subverted party power as president, he has sought to disarm parties by inducing cooperation, rather than systematically downgrading their role through repression, or reengineering institutions to permanently remove horizontal checks on presidential power. Accordingly, Widodo's 'authoritarian turn' is being enacted in concert with a broad swathe of established oligarchic actors in a way that preserves, rather than undermines, their systemic importance. Instead, his administration has largely directed repression *downwards* in an effort to demobilise sources of organised opposition within civil society.

These strategies have succeeded in making Widodo arguably the most powerful Indonesian president since Soeharto—a situation that seemed almost unthinkable during the early period of his presidency, during which the terms of his relationships with the differing factions of Indonesia's political oligarchy were set. Not even the coronavirus pandemic and the socio-economic disruption it has caused has permanently undermined Widodo's popularity or interrupted his accumulation of political authority. Indeed, his political position as Indonesia emerges from the worst of the pandemic has only further enhanced his political standing: in her analysis of how the Widodo administration has used the atmosphere of crisis to push through unpopular policies and further delegitimise opposition, Setijadi (2021: 316) concludes that the pandemic 'has given Jokowi the opportunity to further consolidate power...[he] has not only survived the pandemic crisis but has consolidated his position as Indonesia's central political actor'.

At the time of writing, however, the spectre of Widodo's exit from the presidency looms. Presidential and legislative elections scheduled for February 2024 will see the election of a successor, and the nature of the successor administration will be the ultimate test of what kind of politics has been entrenched throughout the Widodo era. Instead of recapitulating the arguments made in previous chapters, this conclusion will speculate on what the evidence suggests about the ongoing viability of populism in Indonesia, and how populist political dynamics are set to interact and be shaped by an institutional framework that continues to embody parties' desire to defend their role as gatekeepers to the presidency. I first outline briefly the reasons to expect that the populist path to national electoral competitiveness taken by Joko Widodo can and will be repeated by other political outsiders; secondly, I go into more detail about the evolution of the institutional framework that these politicians will face. In particular I focus on the increasing criticism of an important ingredient in the electoral system barriers to entry in Indonesia: the presidential nomination threshold, which is the subject of growing challenge from civil society and some elite factions. Nevertheless, efforts to lower or abolish the presidential threshold in the DPR or via the courts appear to have poor prospects given the commitment from the Widodo administration's key party supporters to retain the current threshold, and a judiciary that has held that the constitution gives legislators broad remit to define the conditions of ballot access. I conclude with remarks on what these tensions—between the growing constituency for outsider imply for the longer-term health of Indonesian democracy as the Widodo presidency draws to a close.

The future of Indonesian populism

It is plausible, indeed likely, that populism will remain an endemic part of Indonesian politics as long as its electoral democracy survives. The critical precondition for the emergence of populism, as identified by Kenny (2017), is the existence of a large pool of voters disaffected with the political status quo and who maintain weak attachments to political parties. In Indonesia, chronic pathologies of parties and the design flaws of electoral system they work within will sustain the existence of such a pool of voters available for recruitment into populist electoral coalitions. The problems begin at the level of the party system itself, with Mietzner (2020: 206) highlighting that it has 'become less representative, with many voters shifting to the [politico-ideological] margins but the existing party system allowing the entry only of new parties that are ideologically centrist and controlled by wealthy financiers.' The expense involved in maintaining an ever-increasing number of party branches, as required by electoral laws (see Table 1 in Chapter One), has ensured that only the personal vehicle parties of oligarchs have proven capable of breaking through as new entrants in national elections. Since 2004, no new identity or social movement-based party has been able to enter the DPR. Even the character of these personal vehicle parties has changed: whereas once they may have been founded with the

ambition of a particular oligarch to run for the presidency, they now exist largely as a way for their founders to keep a foothold in the system, influencing legislative processes and joining presidential nominating coalitions in exchange for representation in cabinet.

These personal vehicle parties have without exception emulated former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat model: they present themselves to the electorate as ideological 'catch-all' parties and are at ease with outsourcing the work of campaigning to opportunists who engage in localised patronage distribution under the party brand to win votes at legislative elections. The result is that a growing share of the Indonesian electorate is alienated from a party system marked by ideological moderation and cross-party collusion in pursuit of access to patronage resources. Leftists, liberals, and ideological Islamists alike are being left without compelling party options at election time. Mietzner (2020) argues that the growth of populist mobilisation on the part of Islamist civil society—best exemplified by the '212' movement which emerged from the campaign against former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama—is a sign of disengagement from electoral politics and the embrace of alternative forms of political participation and mobilisation at the ideological poles.²³

Against this backdrop, the entrenched dominance of the broadcast media as the primary source of Indonesians' political information will pave the way for non-party figures to follow in Joko Widodo's footsteps to become viable presidential candidates. As I have explored at length in Chapter One and Chapter Two, Widodo found that having control of a party or other organisational apparatus was basically superfluous to achieving his goal of becoming the leading presidential candidate throughout 2012 and 2013. The sheer quantity of positive media coverage he generated in his 2012 Jakarta gubernatorial race and the governorship of the capital was sufficient to build a strong base of electability (Tapsell 2015). Widodo replicated the path to national electoral competitiveness that Boas (2005) termed 'telepopulism' in his study of the Latin American neopopulists. Widodo's ability to gain national popularity owed much to the practice he gained enacting reforms based around a populist political strategy at the local level, and the continued ability for local politics to generate telegenic and popular local leaders with national political ambitions looks set to continue.

At the same time, the barriers to entry that have given parties a critical role as gatekeepers to the presidential ballot look set to endure as an integral part of the institutional framework within which populist outsiders must work. These barriers to entry—and in particular the presidential nomination threshold—have been the subject of consistent, and ultimately unfruitful, political challenges. As Butt (2015: 226) observes, 'dozens of applicants with presidential aspirations but no or insufficient party support have challenged the constitutionality of

²³ This fact is not lost on some party officials. As one PKS member of the DPR remarked after the 2019 election, 'I'm worried about this rising Islamic middle class. If we [PKS] can't be a home for them, who knows where they might end up?' Interview with Sukamta, Jakarta, May 2019.

electoral laws requiring that presidential candidates be nominated by a party or coalition', ultimately to little real-world effect in terms of broadening the avenues for presidential aspirants to access the presidential ballot. The Constitutional Court, which has since 2003 been empowered to review Indonesian legislation against the constitution, has 'has, in many decisions, emphasised that [the Indonesian constitution] gives lawmakers considerable scope to establish any of a variety of electoral systems' (ibid: 150). Efforts on the part of applicants to have relevant articles of the Indonesian constitution²⁴ reinterpreted in such a way as to allow for independent candidacies have found little favour with the court, and there seems little legal leeway left for the advent of independent presidential candidacies.²⁵

Challenges to constitutionality of the presidential nomination threshold, but not of the party monopoly over nominations per se, have had similarly little impact. The first suit of this kind to be given a proper hearing by the court came in 2008, in the wake of the 2008 electoral law's raising the presidential threshold (PT) to its current level ahead of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's 2009 re-election campaign.²⁶ The court heard but granted none of the relief sought by the applicants in that case, a former military officer with political ambitions, Saurip Kardi, and an assortment of small political parties, who claimed the PT denied them their constitutional rights to run for election. A majority of the court argued that in addition to the constitution having granted political parties the sole right to nominate presidential candidates as part of the 2002 amendments that introduced direct presidential elections (Article 6A[2]), that those same set of amendments had empowered the legislature to legislate the conditions under which parties may exercise that constitutional prerogative (Article 6A[5])—or, in the parlance of the court, that the scale of the PT was 'open legal policy'. The 2009 proceeded with the 20% of votes / 25% of seats formula established by the 2008 electoral legislation.²⁷

An oblique strike on the PT would come in a 2013 challenge to the 2008 electoral law, which was mounted by a coalition of civil society figures led by the academic Effendi Gazali, under a new bench of Constitutional Court justices. In the 2013 suit the applicants thought they had found another means of eradicating the PT: they argued that the three-month interval between legislative and presidential elections applied in 2004 and 2009—the interval during which presidential coalitions were negotiated, based on legislative vote results—were unconstitutional based on a strict understanding of the constitution's definition of a 'general election'. A majority of justices agreed, and in January 2014 ordered that from 2019 presidential and

²⁴ Article 6A of the constitution states simply that that the president and vice president be 'elected directly in a single ticket directly by the people' (Article 6Ai) and that such tickets were to be 'nominated by parties or coalitions of parties that are election participants in advance of elections' (Article 6Aii).

²⁵ Barring, of course, an amendment to the constitution—an extremely unlikely development, given that party factions from the DPR would dominate the MPR session, a joint sitting of the DPR and the Regional Representatives Council (DPD), that would have to enact such an amendment.

²⁶ Constitutional Court decision 52-52-59/PUU-VI/2008.

²⁷ Please refer to Table 1 in Chapter Two which details the evolution of the electoral system barriers to entry in Indonesia between 1999 and 2017.

legislative elections would be held simultaneously (preparations for that year's elections were deemed to be too well advanced to introduce concurrent polls immediately). A subsequent suit from the former cabinet minister and PBB party leader Yusril Ihza Mahendra, attempting to force simultaneous elections beginning in 2014, failed, and thus the 2014 elections proceeded with legislative elections in April 2014 and the presidential election in July.

A common-sense reading of the court's January 2014 decision on simultaneous elections would be that it spelt the end of the presidential nomination threshold; parties that qualify to contest national elections may still have the sole right to nominate presidential candidates, but the fact that legislative votes were cast on the same day as votes for the presidency meant that any provision for a PT based on legislative votes was defunct. But the Widodo administration and its allies in the legislature eventually responded to that decision with a new unified elections law that replaced the two separate streams of legislation that had until then governed legislative and presidential elections. The drawn-out drafting process of what would become the landmark 2017 Law on Elections was marked by barely disguised attempts by political parties to shape the system to their advantage ahead of the 2019 elections. Widodo's consolidation of an expansive elite coalition gave him the confidence to make an intervention into the renegotiation of Indonesia's electoral institutions in order to preserve—rather than erode—the role parties played in controlling the terms of non-party candidates' participation in presidential elections. In deliberations in parliament from late 2016 to mid-2017, a divide opened up between parties on the question of whether the threshold could or should be applied. The government's official position was to retain the level of the threshold enshrined in the 2008 presidential elections law. Speaking after a cabinet meeting at which the government's position on the 2017 bill was discussed, Widodo declared that 'if [the threshold] is zero per cent, then one nominating party wins, just imagine how it would be in the DPR. We [i.e. his own government] were at 38 per cent before [sic], and wow! This is the political process that the public has to understand' (Fazli 2017).

Widodo had rhetorically embraced the self-interested justification for the PT mounted by the parties that supported it: namely, that presidential candidates must enjoy the support of a broad coalition of parties in the name of ensuring harmonious executive–legislative relations. With the key members of the Widodo coalition—PDI-P and Golkar—staunchly in favour of retaining the PT, the threshold identical to that contained in the 2008 law was retained: Article 222 of the 2017 Law on Elections mandated that presidential tickets are to be nominated by parties or coalitions of parties that won 20% of votes or 25% of seats 'at the previous election'—although to remain strictly in line with the 2014 Constitutional Court decision, this was to mean the legislative elections held five years previously. As Butt (2019) has identified, one of the ostensible rationales for the PT is that since 'must work with the presidential pair that are eventually elected, they [should] get to nominate their preferred pair.' But '[t]his rationale falls away if the legislature that nominates a president is not the same legislature that then has to

work with that president' (Butt 2019). This apparent absurdity was highlighted in a Constitutional Court challenge to Article 222 of the 2017 elections law led by several small political parties. A majority of the court nevertheless held that the DPR was within its rights to define a 'previous election' as the one held to elect the *previous* parliament.²⁸

Regardless of the questionable rationale for the post-2017 application of the PT, Widodo's stance on the 2017 law was emblematic of the process of accommodation he had made to the norms of Indonesian coalitional presidentialism in his first term, and also spoke to the reality that his incentives with regard to institutional engineering were different as an incumbent than if he were seeking the presidency from outside. The effect the barriers to entry had in limiting the pathways for potential presidential candidates was a potential strategic tool available to an incumbent, as they limited the potential number of challengers to his re-election. Indeed, in Widodo's 2019 campaign for re-election he once again faced off against Prabowo Subianto in an election marked by deepening polarisation on issues of religious identity (Fosati 2019). In the aftermath of this contest a new rationale for moving away from the PT has emerged. Many in civil society and the commentariat now argue that a more diverse selection of presidential candidates would lessen the trend towards two-horse electoral competition that many Indonesians feel has contributed to polarisation in society (Ghaliya 2020, Sihaloho 2021). The logic of the argument is of course questionable: so long as the Indonesian constitution mandates a second-round runoff in the event no candidate wins an outright majority in the first round of an election, Indonesians are destined to experience two-candidate presidential elections and any of the polarising effects that they may have.

Yet the anti-polarisation critique is only one part of a broadening and intensifying critique of the PT from civil society, some political parties, and even some senior state officials in the wake of the 2019 elections. The current chair of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), Firlil Bahri, suggested to a DPR committee in December 2021 that the PT raised corruption risks, given that the incentive to offer cash in exchange for a party's presidential nomination could bind candidates into corrupt relationships with donors (Suparman 2021). La Nyala Mutatulli, the chair of the Regional Representatives Council (DPD, the largely powerless second chamber of parliament), has argued that the PT at its current level risks 'creating puppet presidential candidates' (Aditya 2021). PPP, still a member of the governing coalition, has called for the zeroing-out of the threshold, joining the opposition parties PD and PAN; the spokesman for PD has echoed the civil society critique, saying that 'the people should be given more alternative presidential candidates of extraordinary quality. Not just being forced to choose between the two tickets offered to them by oligarchic groups' (Rahardjo & Isdiansyah 2022). Even the pro-Widodo Islamic party PKB, whose chairman Muhaimin Iskandar has long

²⁸ Constitutional Court Decision Number 49/PUU-XVI/2018.

advertised his presidential ambitions, has proposed a compromise option that it put forward during the deliberations on the 2017 election law: maintaining the PT but lowering it to 5% or 10% of legislative votes (Pratama 2021).

Amid this growing criticism, Article 222 of the 2017 Law on Elections that enshrines the PT once again became the subject of simultaneous Constitutional Court challenges as the 2024 elections drew nearer. As has been typical of the court challenges to the PT, the applicants' arguments have covered the technicalities of what the constitution empowers the DPR to legislate, to arguing the negative effects of the PT on the quality of democracy. The most politically prominent applicant, the ultranationalist former military commander Gatot Nurmantyo, told the court when introducing his case that 'the presidential threshold is an evil conspiracy from the power oligarchy to hijack what is decreed by the constitution'.²⁹ Other applicants, including academics and civil society groups, have argued as well that the threshold, because it serves to artificially limit the number of presidential candidates on the ballot, conflicts with the rights to vote and to stand for office guaranteed to citizens by the Indonesian constitution (Hamdi 2021). This case was dismissed in February 2022, and the 2024 presidential elections look set to continue with the PT being a key factor in determining the slate of competitors to succeed Joko Widodo.

Looking ahead to 2024

With the Constitutional Court having consistently found that the DPR is empowered by the 2002 constitutional amendments to set a PT at a level it sees fit, it is doubtful whether the judicial route will deliver civil society, small parties and presidential hopefuls the reform they seek. With the cornerstone parties of the Widodo coalition staunchly in favour of maintaining the mechanism, the legislative route to an electoral system that would allow the more diverse set of candidates seems improbable. Amid a debate over whether the presidential threshold should be reconsidered the 2017 Election Law, leaders of PDI-P have been at the forefront of defending the presidential threshold. Hasto Kristyanto, the party's general secretary, compared the threshold to an 'entrance exam' for a 'renowned university' (Hutabarat 2022); another senior PDI-P official and legislator has argued for increasing the threshold to 30% to ensure even stronger links between the presidency and parliamentary support (Saputra 2021).

The result is that at a time when the PT is more controversial than ever, its utility as a mechanism for maximising the power of party officials to set the terms of electoral contestation is also growing more apparent. At the time of writing, the most popular candidates for the presidency in 2024 are Ganjar Pranowo, the two-term PDI-P governor of Central Java, Prabowo Subianto, and Anies Baswedan, who completes his first term as Governor of Jakarta in October 2022 (Indikator Politik Indonesia 2022). In a situation with striking similarity to Joko Widodo's

²⁹ Transcript of Constitutional Court hearing on case number 70/PUU-XIX/2021, 11 January 2022.

ascent, Ganjar has emerged as the notional frontrunner, yet a falling out with party chairwoman Megawati and her daughter Puan Maharani has left him without her support, and it is not clear at the time of writing whether he will receive the PDI-P nomination (McBeth 2022). Yet Ganjar's popularity, even after a very public conflict with PDI-P elites over the party's presidential nomination in mid-2021 (Hutton 2021), has remained solid, suggesting the potential for an expedient defection to a party willing to anchor his presidential run. But with Golkar and Gerindra seemingly determined to nominate their chairs for the presidency and, failing that, amenable to coalition deals with PDI-P that exclude him, Ganjar may have limited options for forming a big enough party coalition in the event that he breaks from his own party. Indeed, Ganjar is not alone in this predicament: Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan—not only an outsider to the parties but also to the Widodo coalition itself—may well be blocked from a coalition in the event that he is left bereft of party support, despite high electability relative to party leaders who would determine the composition of the presidential tickets.

In its opposition to reform of the presidential nominations system PDI-P has a staunch ally in Golkar, the second-largest party (Mikrefin 2021) as well as Prabowo's Gerindra (Akbar 2022). With both Golkar chairman Airlangga Hartarto and PDI-P's Puan Maharani seemingly determined to gain their party's presidential nominations, they have a powerful incentive to limit the avenues for more popular outsiders like Ganjar and Anies to construct a nominating coalition. With both Puan and Airlangga's electability ratings in the low single digits, their hopes for winning the presidency in the event they are able to gain nominations rest entirely on the exclusion of other more popular candidates from the ballot. Gerindra, which would be anchor a third presidential candidacy from Prabowo Subianto, likewise has an interest in limiting the competition from new, younger entrants from outside the national elite whose popularity, according to current polls, eclipses his.

It seems plausible therefore that a precedent may be broken in the lead up to the 2024 presidential election. The PT undoubtedly still shapes the relationship between parties and their candidates, with parties begrudgingly accepting the need to piggy-back on the popularity of popular outsiders to gain access to the presidency by proxy, and candidates having to negotiate away some autonomy over personnel and policy decisions in exchange for party support. Notwithstanding these compromises, throughout Indonesia's history of direct presidential elections one constant has been that the most popular candidate among the voters has always gotten a nomination and won the election: Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in 2004 and 2009, and Joko Widodo in 2014 and 2019. In the study of Widodo's rise to the presidency I have provided in this thesis, we have seen how the presidential threshold forced Widodo to channel his presidential ambitions through PDI-P and its partner parties, binding him into what the party perceived as an effective power-sharing arrangement. In the case of Ganjar Pranowo, and perhaps Anies Baswedan as well, the PT may become the means by which a popular outsider may not just be domesticated, but blocked from contesting the presidency entirely, despite being the

voters' preference. In many other multiparty presidential systems, it would be unthinkable that a popular and ambitious candidate could be blocked from contesting, even in the event that he or she could gain the nomination of a small party, because of a legislative requirement to build a broad coalition of incumbent parties *before* an election as a condition of appearing on the ballot. As much as Indonesia's barriers to entry to outsider candidates have served to shape the character of Widodo presidency, so they might determine whether another regional politician similarly using 'telepopulist' methods of building a national base of voter support is able to follow in his footsteps.

Indonesia in the global populist landscape

It is clear that a division of labour is emerging in Indonesian politics between the politicians who lead parties and the politicians who get elected to executive office. There are exceptions in the case of politicians who have the resources to found personal vehicle parties of their own—such as former president Yudhoyono, and his would-be successor Prabowo Subianto—but overall, the fundamental dynamic in Indonesian politics is that parties are not generating the types of candidates whom voters want to elect. Voters, meanwhile, look away from parties and towards outsiders—who, by necessity, rely on populist appeals to the grassroots, largely mediated through the broadcast and electronic media. Yet because of the barriers to entry that inhere in the Indonesian electoral system, these outsiders need to channel their political aspirations through parties controlled by non-populist elites. Those elites have a powerful interest in securing guarantees from a prospective president that the parties' key organisational interests—in gaining control over the state's patronage resources, and influencing key personnel and policy decisions—will be respected during their time in office. For the reasons I have touched on above, there will be ample room for political outsiders to use populist political tactics to connect to the diverse ideological and social communities that are looking for personalist alternatives from outside the party system. Yet the institutional barriers to populist candidacies and populist governance are high and have only been reinforced during the Widodo presidency. Over the short term, the tensions between the structural factors that are expanding the popular constituency for outsider populism, and the institutional factors designed to constrain the potential for populist presidents to challenge the power of political parties, are only likely to grow more acute.

The Indonesian case illustrates the need for more nuance in the argument that 'strong' political parties and/or party systems are a critical bulwark against the corrosive effects of populism on party power in presidential systems. The central comparative message of my case study of Joko Widodo's populism is that the barriers to entry have constrained the anti-party potential of Indonesian populism. Because of the distinctive electoral system features summarised above, Indonesia fits somewhat awkwardly into the existing institutionalist accounts of why

and how populism emerges in presidential systems, and what effects it brings when in power. The evidence is clear that party weakness is a key precondition for the rise of populism, and that party strength is a bulwark against the rise of populism (Self and Hicken 2018, Kenny 2017). To what extent does this apply in Indonesia? The real-world weakness of Indonesian political parties is well-attested to, which aids the rise of non-party populist figures like Widodo. Yet this weakness is significantly counteracted by the artificial systemic strength afforded parties by the gatekeeping role they play to those outsiders. Indonesia's experience therefore suggests that the 'strength' of parties as buffers against populism is determined not only by parties' social embeddedness, their control of patronage, or their monopoly over the incubation of political talent. I strongly agree with Carreras (2014, 2015, 2017) that the institutional determinants of populist success, and especially electoral systems, ought to be a key focus of comparative research into the causes and consequences of populist rules. I would add that the barriers to entry that inhere in a particular electoral system—in short, how easy it is for a candidate to get his or her name on the presidential ballot—are a basic variable effecting the viability not of populism per se, but of the ability of populist outsiders to run without the imprimatur of incumbent parties and without being locked into formal alliances with them. Further theorising the idea of barriers to entry in presidential systems, and investigating their effects on the character and viability of populism within such systems, should therefore be an important part of the comparative agenda for populism studies going forward.

Nevertheless, as the scheduled end of Widodo's presidency draws near, he faces a predicament frequently faced by populist leaders: namely, that the personalisation of their power, and the ephemerality of that power, are two sides of the same populist coin. Reflecting on the challenges Ecuador's populist former president Rafael Correa faced in installing a friendly successor, de la Torre (2018) observed that '[p]opulist presidents are often giants with feet of clay. At the same time that they seem to have a firm grip of power, their personalist style of rule means that without their leadership, their movements and political projects can disintegrate.' Much of this predicament springs from the tendency of populists to leave their political movements thinly institutionalised. As I have detailed in Chapter Three, Widodo opted to forego the opportunity to use the *relawan* volunteer networks that had formed to support his candidacy for the presidency in 2014 as the nucleus of a personal vehicle party. Despite the widespread speculation early in his presidency about the possibilities of his seeking to build up his influence within PDI-P—perhaps even threatening the Soekarno clan's long-term hold on the party—Widodo made remarkably little effort to build a power base within the party organisation. Instead, as described in Chapter Four, rather than bringing PDI-P under his personal influence, he diluted its leverage over him by incorporating an ever-broader array of elite factions into his elite coalition (Gammon 2019, Mietzner 2018b).

Despite entering the presidency as an outsider to the national oligarchy, Widodo has not subsequently put down sturdy roots in the political system, achieving his political goals instead

by maintaining ad hoc and mutually expedient alliances with the small group of fixers, financiers and enforcers that surround him. Therefore, while there is extensive agreement among scholars that Indonesia is experiencing a serious democratic regression under Widodo (Power and Warburton 2020), the longer-term systemic effects of his populism, and the illiberal tactics that are an adjunct to it are unclear. Are the abuses of power, political polarisation, and weakening of democratic norms a temporary phenomenon? Does Widodo represent a temporary flirtation with more openly illiberal forms of governance, the excesses of which may be corrected by a successor who campaigns on a platform of restoring democratic quality? Or are we seeing the slow but steady drift towards Indonesia becoming of some kind of electoral authoritarian regime, based around the factions of the oligarchy that currently prop up the Widodo administration? Whichever of these scenarios comes to pass, it remains unclear whether, or to what extent, Widodo would remain personally powerful within the government that replaces his own, given that he lacks both a large personal fortune and control of a political party.

What is beyond question is that Indonesia's traditions of collusive oligarchic governance are alive and well, notwithstanding the ability of an outsider like Widodo to chart a path to the presidency using the strategic toolkit of populism. Just as Indonesia's democratisation was a product of elite cooperation, its autocratisation into some form of non-democratic regime will most likely be the product of a wholesale shift in the elite consensus that currently undergirds its low-quality democracy. What is unlikely, though, is an authoritarian reversal being precipitated by a single leader and his efforts to amass power in the face of opposition from established oligarchy. Party elites have successfully engineered institutions to safeguard their role as the key channels through which politicians' presidential ambitions must be channelled. In doing so they have fortified the political system against the spectre of 'delegative democracy' at the hands of a populist leader who takes a hostile stance towards parties and the institutions they control, even while leaving ample room for presidents to shape policy agendas with a view to reinforcing a populist bond with their electoral bases (see Chapter Five) and to demobilise opponents in civil society (see Chapter Six). Indeed, as is clear from observation of Joko Widodo's presidency, Indonesia's institutional structures have not precluded a process of autocratisation on the part of a populist leader who erodes democratic norms and institutions while preserving the prerogatives of oligarchs and their parties. Those concerned about the future health of Indonesian democracy should take no comfort in the knowledge that the country appears not taking the populist path to autocratisation. The fact that the current democratic regression implicates such a broad array of incumbent actors will likely make it all the deeper and more enduring, no matter who succeeds Widodo as president in 2024.

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