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Title:

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Date:

2022-11-25

Citation:

Setiawan, K. M. P. (2022). Vulnerable but Resilient: Indonesia in an Age of Democratic Decline. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 58 (3), pp.273-295. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2022.2139168>.

Persistent Link:

<https://hdl.handle.net/11343/339410>

## Indonesian Politics in 2022

### VULNERABLE BUT RESILIENT: INDONESIA IN AN AGE OF DEMOCRATIC DECLINE

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Recent years have seen a consensus emerging that Indonesian democracy is in regression. Nonetheless, there continue to be developments that point towards Indonesia's democratic resilience. This article examines key events of the past year that support resilience, including the passing of the landmark Law on Sexual Violence, the rejection of rumoured plans to extend President Joko Widodo's term in office and a moderation of polarisation. At the same time, Indonesian democracy remains vulnerable, illustrated by legal developments that undermine executive accountability, ongoing militarisation in Papua, as well as persistent pressure in areas of freedom of expression and minority rights. The article will conclude with an examination of Jokowi's efforts to secure his presidential legacy, particularly through infrastructure development and foreign policy. The article identifies two sources for democratic resilience—public opinion and elite support—and argues that while democratic decline continues, the process of regression is more uneven than commonly emphasised in assessments of Indonesian politics.

Keywords: *Indonesia, democratic resilience, democratic regression, gender, polarisation, militarisation*  
JEL classifications: D73, D78, H54, F50, F53, K38, K40

#### INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, observers of Indonesian politics have raised the alarm about the quality of Indonesia's democracy. This alarm began with the stagnation of democratic reform during Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's second term (Aspinall, Mietzner and Tomsa 2015, 2). Hopes for the strengthening of democracy following the election of Joko Widodo ('Jokowi') in 2014 quickly dissipated as observers noted a distinct 'illiberal turn' (Diprose, McRae and Hadiz 2019, 693). It comes as no surprise then, that as Jokowi commenced his second term in office in 2019, scholars started to speak of democratic regression (Power and Warburton 2020), or 'a substantial decline in the democratic quality of political institution processes' (Croissant and Haynes 2021, 2).

Indonesia's democratic regression is not unique and is part of broader global trends. Across the world, democracy has waned from 2006 onwards: fewer countries are transitioning to democracy, more are experiencing declining levels of freedoms and democracies that were already illiberal have witnessed further breakdowns. Alarmingly, the world has 'recently entered a more ominous phase of democratic recessions' (Diamond 2022, 169). A quick glance at the Southeast Asian region confirms this assessment: only Timor Leste has stabilised its democracy in recent years, while Singapore, Cambodia, Brunei, Vietnam and Laos have all been under the same regime for decades, with no realistic prospects for change. In Malaysia, opposition parties won the general election in 2018 for the first time since independence, but the government collapsed less than two years later. And, although elections were held in Thailand in 2019, the alliance between the monarchy and military retains a stranglehold on power. In Myanmar, where the military once again seized power in 2021, effectively ending all hopes of democratisation, the situation is even more dire. Moreover, in recent years, there has been a shift towards authoritarianism in the Philippines under the Rodrigo Duterte presidency, which is likely to be entrenched further following the mid-2022 election of Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr, the son of late Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos (1965–86), as that country's president.

In comparison to the downward trajectory of democracy in the Southeast Asian region, Indonesia is showing more signs of democratic resilience, which can be defined as 'persistence of democratic institutions and practices' (Boese et al. 2021, 887). Indeed, despite the various manifestations of democratic regression in Indonesia—including populism, heightened polarisation, and a general narrowing of space for civil liberties and individual freedoms—the country continues to rank highly among Southeast Asian states in leading international indexes of democracy (Setiawan and Tomsa 2022, 214). This year, Freedom House gave Indonesia the same score as 2021, labelling the country

‘partly free’ (Freedom House 2022), suggesting it does not believe there has been further regression. Moreover, Indonesia’s ranking in the Economist Intelligence Unit’s (EIU) Democracy Index climbed 12 places to 52: one of the biggest improvements globally (EIU 2022).

While democratic resilience is best fostered by preventing regression altogether (Boese et al. 2021, 886), Indonesia’s scores in these indexes suggest that even in contexts of democratic regression, there are developments or events that prevent further decline, or strengthen democratic norms, institutions and practices. Indeed, as Lührmann (2021, 1017) argues, even when so-called ‘anti-pluralists’, or actors lacking ‘commitment to key democratic processes, institutions and norms’, gain the upper hand, they do not have unlimited freedom to erode democracy. In fact, at every stage of democratic regression,<sup>1</sup> there ‘is also an entry point for enhancing democratic resilience’ (Lührmann 2021, 1030). Democratic resilience is fostered through so-called ‘institutions of accountability’ (Croissant and Haynes 2021, 10) that operate on vertical (e.g. free and fair elections, the exercise of political rights), horizontal (including judicial and legislative oversight) and diagonal (i.e. civil society and the media) levels. These accountability mechanisms play out in different ways. They may provide support for pro-democracy activists, deter the government from weakening the democratic institutions designed to constrain them, or motivate political elites to support democratic norms and practices. When, through these mechanisms, further democratic backsliding is avoided, this is referred to as ‘breakdown resilience’ (Boese et al. 2021, 886).

Indeed, despite Indonesia’s trajectory of democratic regression, there have always been forces that have sought to challenge further decline. In 2019, for example, thousands of students across Indonesia took to the streets to protest a wide range of issues, including legal changes that weakened the popular Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and proposed changes to the Criminal Code (KUHP). In response to the protests—the largest student and civil society protests since the fall of the New Order—the government initially put the proposed amendments to the KUHP on hold and Jokowi said he would consider using his powers to reverse the changes to the Law on the KPK (Setiawan and Tomsa 2022, 114). Although the changes to the KPK law were never revoked, the government’s sensitivity to these protests suggests accountability mechanisms—in this case operating at the societal level—can still have significant influence, and they warrant attention.

This article proceeds in four parts. First, I discuss indicators of democratic resilience in Indonesia over the past year: the landmark Law on Sexual Violence, the rejection of rumoured plans to extend Jokowi’s term in office, as well as a moderation of political polarisation. The second part of the article examines the vulnerabilities of democracy, as illustrated by legal developments that undermine accountability, ongoing militarisation of Papua and the controversial creation of new provinces in the region, as well as pressures on human rights, especially freedom of expression and minority rights. Third, the paper considers Jokowi’s efforts to secure his presidential legacy, manifested in the development of the new capital, Nusantara, while also taking a more assertive stance in foreign policy through Indonesia’s presidency of the G20. I conclude by arguing that while Indonesia’s democratic decline continues, the process is more uneven than commonly emphasised in assessments of Indonesian politics. Instead, by focusing on how democratic regression is being challenged, it is possible to identify sources of democratic resilience while also being mindful about the serious and ongoing vulnerabilities to further erosion.

## DEMOCRATIC RESILIENCE

Through three case studies, the following section traces how, over the past year, political elites and civil society actors have contributed to democratic resilience. The case studies show that when the interests of societal groups and political elites converge, gains can be made. These improvements have led to important legal reforms that support human rights protections; the conservation of democratic norms;

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<sup>1</sup> Lührmann (2021) identifies three stages to democratic breakdown: structural and contextual challenges (including and economic or financial crisis and increased polarisation), the rise of anti-pluralists to power and the dismantling of democratic institutions.

and public debate of, as well as distancing from, democratic deficits. At the same time, the discussion of these developments below shows that political elites' support is not necessarily the result of a genuine attachment to democratic norms and practices but, in many cases, is informed by political expediency.

### **Pushing for Gender Equality, against Islamism**

The April 2022 passage of the Law on Sexual Violence<sup>2</sup> was the result of successful long-term civil society advocacy, public pressure and elite support. This was a hard-fought win that Indonesian human and women's rights activists had been working towards for well over a decade. The law provides women with basic human rights protections by criminalising nine forms of sexual violence that are not covered by existing laws, and, importantly, establishes a victim-centred approach to the handling of sexual violence cases (Prawesti and Mann 2022).

The passage of the law was even more significant considering the strong opposition from conservative groups and political parties. The Islamist Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), for example, alleged that because the Bill did not criminalise sex outside marriage, it would somehow promote sexual promiscuity and so-called deviant sexual behaviour. As a result, there were significant delays to the discussion of the Bill. Nationalist and pluralist parties feared Islamist backlash and were unwilling to openly support the proposed legislation, leading to the Bill being removed from the list of legislative priorities in July 2020, only to be discussed again the following year (Setiawan and Tomsa 2022, 147).

However, in the second half of 2021, momentum for the proposed legislation shifted, as senior government officials took up the issue of sexual violence following rising reports of sexual violence at university campuses. Minister of Education Nadiem Makarim unequivocally stated that sexual violence constituted a 'critical emergency' (*gawat darurat*) and issued a Ministerial Regulation on the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence in Higher Education, which specifies 21 forms of sexual violence.<sup>3</sup> The regulation was met with fierce criticism from Islamist groups and parties, who rejected the new policy with the same arguments they used against the Bill on sexual violence, and lodged a challenge at the Supreme Court, which was rejected. Other ministers also lent their support to the regulation: notably, Minister for Religious Affairs Yaquut Cholil Qoumas (former leader of Ansor, the youth wing of the Islamic mass organisation Nahdlatul Ulama [NU]), openly endorsed the policy and issued a circular to express support for the regulation in religious institutions.<sup>4</sup>

Jokowi, too, eventually spoke out on the issue, urging the legislature to pass the Bill. In a live-streamed statement he said that 'the protection of victims of sexual violence should be our common concern, especially concerning sexual violence against women, which should be urgently addressed' (Lai and Janti 2022). Jokowi's statement was in part related to several high-profile cases of abuse at Islamic educational institutions. There was public outrage during the trial of Herry Wirawan, a boarding school (*pesantren*) owner who had raped 13 female students, all minors, and impregnated eight. His sentence was increased from life imprisonment to the death penalty on appeal, just days before the Law on Sexual Violence was passed (*Reuters* 2022). In another case, this time involving the son of a religious leader (*kyai*) in Jombang, it became apparent that the police had been notified of sexual abuse since 2017 but had struggled to arrest the man as he was protected by members of the *pesantren* (Ulya 2022). It was in the context of growing public anger over these cases of sexual abuse that the People's Representative Council (DPR) passed the law and, in the end, with overwhelming support from most political parties: only the PKS did not vote in favour.

The enactment of the Law on Sexual Violence shows that civil society advocacy can still be successful in achieving progressive legislative change. That is, diagonal institutions of accountability are still acting to support democratic resilience, especially when the issue receives significant support

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<sup>2</sup> Law 12/2002 on the Crime of Sexual Violence.

<sup>3</sup> Ministerial Regulation 3/2022.

<sup>4</sup> In mid-2022, the Ministry for Religious Affairs announced that it was in the process of preparing its own regulation on sexual violence in religious education institutions.

from the broader public and political elites. The backing of political elites suggests that there is some level of support for gender equality. At the same time, however, the Law on Sexual Violence was also politically expedient, playing into the interests of the government to push back on Islamism. The education minister's regulation and the strong support it received from other senior government officials—especially the minister for religious affairs—reflects their willingness to publicly take strong stances against Islamism, which has become particularly pronounced in Jokowi's second presidential term. The push back against Islamism has also been characterised by the monitoring of civil servants, teachers and business executives, which has led to discrimination against many Islamists based on their religious or political views, although they have not broken any laws or committed crimes. The Law on Sexual Violence thus provided political elites with an opportunity to highlight their struggle with Islamism. However, rather than violating human rights in the process, as had happened previously (Fealy 2020, 312), in this case important human rights reforms were secured.

### **No Postponement of Elections, No Third Term for Jokowi**

No sooner than Jokowi's election to the presidency for a second term was completed, there began to circulate rumours of a third term, and a postponement of the 2024 elections. Publicly, Jokowi was ambiguous in his response to these suggestions: while he claimed that he did not agree with the idea and said he was not interested in a third term, he also said that the matter was out of his hands, as it would require a change to the Constitution. In doing so, Jokowi suggested tacit support for a constitutional amendment and, indeed, throughout 2021, proponents—most notably powerful Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment Luhut Pandjaitan—lobbied the People's Consultative Assembly to make such a change, even if this would be quite difficult to achieve (Lindsey 2022).

The debate on the postponement of the 2024 elections, and an extension of Jokowi's term, intensified when the Electoral Commission announced the date for the next elections: 14 February 2024. Representatives of parties in favour of postponement—including Golkar, the National Awakening Party (PKB) and the National Mandate Party (PAN)—argued that a delay would enhance political stability to support economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Party representatives claimed that postponement was also backed by various segments of the population, including businesspeople and farmers, and argued that Jokowi's high approval ratings were evidence of broad societal support for an extension (*CNN Indonesia* 2022a).

The support of these parties, however, cannot be separated from patronage politics. The alliance between Jokowi and Golkar, to which Luhut Pandjaitan belongs, is strong. Luhut has reaped the rewards of being a Jokowi loyalist, both in terms of political influence and wealth accumulation through different companies with which he is affiliated (Aulia 2022). Meanwhile, PKB's support cannot be separated from the benefits that the affiliated Nahdlatul Ulama received as a result of Jokowi's efforts to build alliances with Islamic organisations throughout his presidency (Nuraniyah 2020). PAN is a relative newcomer, having only joined the ruling coalition in August 2021, and backing Jokowi would therefore enhance its standing. Indeed, PAN chief, Zulkifli Hasan, who was vocal in his support for Jokowi, was promoted to minister of trade in June 2022 (Dzulfaroh 2022).

Opponents of postponement—including the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), Gerindra, PKS and the Democrat Party (PD)—argued publicly that delaying the elections and extending Jokowi's term was not in line with the democratic reforms made after the end of the Suharto regime (1966–98). Both PKS and PD are opposition parties, so their rejection of the proposal was not surprising. PDI-P and Gerindra are important components of the governing coalition but their chairpersons, Megawati Soekarnoputri and Prabowo Subianto, both have their own ambitions for the 2024 presidential race. Megawati wants her daughter, Puan Maharani, who is the current speaker of the DPR, to run, while Gerindra has already nominated Prabowo as its candidate. Interestingly, neither Megawati nor Prabowo spoke out on the matter, although other party figures did so: for example, PDI-P general secretary Hasto Kristiyanto on many occasions spoke out firmly against postponement and is widely considered to represent the views of Megawati.

Nonetheless, Jokowi and his supporters persisted. In March 2022, reports emerged that Luhut had convened meetings with party leaders to discuss postponement and asked Zulkifli Hasan to make an announcement in support (Firmansyah 2022; Pratiwi 2022). Jokowi commented that the discussions on postponement were a legitimate part of democratic debate, and billboards with the hashtag #2024SetiaBersamaJokowi, or '2024 loyal to Jokowi', appeared in various Indonesian cities. Spurring on the debate on postponement, Luhut made the suspect claim that 'big data' suggested 110 million Indonesians (approximately 40% of the total population) supported the idea (Detik.com 2022a).

Luhut's claims, however, were quickly and easily disputed: public opinion surveys showed that up to 70% of respondents rejected postponement. Moreover, surveys also established that the idea of a presidential term extension was widely rejected across demographic and political affiliation bases, illustrating that there were significant differences of opinion between the political elites pursuing a postponement and their electoral bases. One survey even showed that respondents who followed the discussion in the media were more likely to reject postponement (Muhtadi 2022). Data therefore showed there was limited public support for postponement, despite Luhut's claims.

Reflecting societal disapproval of postponement, in early April 2022, students began organising street protests. Jokowi, keen to avoid conflict and unrest, then called on his ministers to stop commenting on delaying the elections and a possible extension of his term (Detik.com 2022b). However, the protests continued, and students announced plans for a major demonstration in Jakarta. A day before the planned demonstration, on 10 April 2022, Jokowi finally convened a meeting at Bogor Palace, firmly stating that elections would go ahead as planned (Presiden Republik Indonesia 2022), bringing the discussions on the third term to an end. Meanwhile, Luhut met with students and denied he had ever advocated for postponement of the elections (Halim 2022).

To some extent, the rejection of a postponement of elections and a third, or extended, term for Jokowi, illustrates the ongoing salience of the Reformasi narrative, including the introduction of limits on presidential terms as one of the key post-1998 constitutional reforms (Tomsa 2018). Political elites opposing the idea certainly drew on democratic/Reformasi discourse, even if their reasons for rejecting postponement were entangled with other—and often personal—ambitions. But Jokowi's abandonment of the idea had little to do with his own adherence to constitutional reforms. Rather, it was because he was aware that the public largely rejected the idea and the protests that emerged targeted him directly. This was likely to have a significant impact on Jokowi's popularity—which he is keen to maintain as he seeks to secure his presidential legacy, especially now that his term is definitely coming to an end.

### **Moderation of Political Polarisation**

Although political polarisation was largely absent during the first decade after the fall of the New Order, this changed from 2014 onwards. Polarisation has seen the revitalisation of existing cleavages in Indonesian politics along religious lines and is widely considered to have weakened democratic norms (Warburton 2020). Jokowi, too, has responded to the heightened polarisation. Following the 2019 elections, he included his political rival Prabowo Subianto in his cabinet as minister for defence to ease tensions. Nonetheless, polarisation has remained and has contributed to an increasingly illiberal democratic environment (Nuraniyah 2020, 83).

Over the past year, political actors have spoken out against polarisation and engaged in 'counter-polarisation' (Fealy, White and Muhtadi 2022), manifested primarily through the establishment of political coalitions between Islamic and secular-pluralist parties. The United Indonesia Alliance (Koalisi Indonesia Bersatu, KIB), formed in May 2022, saw the 'pluralist' Golkar party team up with Islamic parties PAN and PPP (United Development Party) (Kamil 2022). A month later, the Great Indonesia Awakening Alliance (Kebangkitan Indonesia Raya) was formed by 'nationalist' Gerindra and Islamic party PKB (Aditya 2022).

Representatives of these two coalitions have openly distanced themselves from polarisation, calling for campaigns focused on candidates' respective merits and track records, instead of identity politics. They have also called for more candidates: PPP deputy Arsul Sani, for example, said ideally there would be at least three presidential candidates, and more coalitions of religious and nationalist

parties (CNN Indonesia 2022b). PAN general secretary Eddy Soeparno also expressed a desire for a more plural political environment, adding that KIB was open to other parties joining its coalition, the only prerequisite being that parties would not engage in identity politics (Farisa 2022). Gerindra's daily chair Sufmi Dasco Ahmad, who is also deputy speaker of the DPR, said his party would 'take the middle road so there is no polarisation' (Media Indonesia 2022). These sentiments have been widely shared by currently unaligned parties; for example, PD's chairperson Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono has called for a halt to identity politics or strategies that could further divide the electorate (Rahayu, Martiar and Sulistyono 2022).

By openly debating, and more importantly, rejecting polarisation, political actors have shown a commitment to pluralism, contributing to democratic resilience. At the same time, however, it is necessary to be critical of the depth of this commitment. In past years, political polarisation has moderated because political opponents have been absorbed into government, and because Islamism has been suppressed, including through the screening of civil servants, teachers and business executives. This may have halted further polarisation but it has also broadened understandings of 'radicalism' to include anyone considered intolerant or unpatriotic (Nuraniyah 2020, 95).

Moreover, this moderation of polarisation may only be temporary. The political coalitions serve a political purpose: parties must have at least 20% of seats in the DPR or received 25% of total votes in the last election to be able to nominate a presidential candidate. As a result, only PDI-P, which holds 22.3% of seats in the DPR, can nominate a candidate on its own, whereas other parties must build alliances with each other. As such, statements rejecting polarisation may have more to do with projecting a desirable political image rather than with genuine attempts to ease divisions. Similarly, there are no guarantees that statements made now—well over a year before the next presidential elections and before presidential pairings have been formally announced—will avoid polarisation. Polarisation can appear again: despite the suppression of Islamism, the ideas that underpin this continue to resonate with significant segments of the population (Setiawan and Tomsa 2022, 97).

Polarisation may also emerge depending on how the 2024 presidential contest evolves. Surveys conducted between September 2021 and June 2022 by various institutions identify at least three main presidential contenders: Prabowo Subianto, Governor of Central Java Ganjar Pranowo and Governor of Jakarta Anies Baswedan. Outside possibilities include Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Sandiaga Uno, Agus Yudhoyono and Governor of West Java Ridwan Kamil, as well as Puan Maharani. Potential for polarisation seems most likely if the election comes down to a race between Ganjar and Anies. Jokowi has previously hinted that he will support Ganjar (Suhenda 2022), who he feels will secure his legacy and importantly continue the development of the new capital. It is highly likely that staunch Jokowi supporters will flow to Ganjar, while Islamist support is likely to go to Anies (Saputra 2021). While in his term as governor of Jakarta, Anies has reached out to minority groups to boost his popularity, outside of Jakarta, Anies remains a contentious figure for minorities, which Ganjar will use to his advantage—should the election be contested between them. The moderation of polarisation may thus only be a reprieve.

The three case studies discussed above show that in the past year, further democratic backsliding has been avoided. The development of new, and persistence of existing, democratic norms and practices are examples of breakdown resilience. These case studies also illustrate that democratic resilience is primarily fostered through diagonal institutions of accountability, specifically through public opinion and civil society advocacy. It is this societal force that led to the enactment of the Law on Sexual Violence, while it also played a role in thwarting attempts to extend Jokowi's time in power. But democratic resilience is also supported by segments of the Indonesian political elite and, thus, horizontal institutions of accountability—as seen in elite support for the Law on Sexual Violence, rejection of the postponement of the 2024 elections and calls for an end to polarisation. Together, diagonal and horizontal institutions of accountability have therefore provided support for pro-democratic forces at political and societal levels, while also placing pressure on Indonesia's 'anti-pluralists' to the extent that they have been forced to abandon their plans to dismantle democratic reforms. At the same time, however, democratic resilience clearly has its limitations: political elites'

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support for resilience is closely tied to their own urgencies and interests, including the repression of Islamism and their ambitions for higher office. These limitations thus also underline how quickly resilience could evaporate when these conditions are not present, illustrating the fragility of resilience.

## DEMOCRACY'S VULNERABILITIES

Alongside these signs of democratic resilience, regression continues. The following section considers some of the vulnerabilities of Indonesian democracy, starting with the threats posed to democratic governance because of legal reforms that enable an illiberal agenda. The section then moves to a discussion of pressing human rights concerns, which are particularly pronounced in Papua, while ongoing issues in the fields of freedom of expression and minority rights continue to pose a challenge for the development of democracy in more liberal directions.

### Legal Reforms, Illiberal Aims

In late 2021, Indonesia's Constitutional Court ruled that the 2020 so-called Omnibus Law was 'conditionally unconstitutional'<sup>5</sup> and ordered the government to issue a law on how to draft omnibus laws and for the Omnibus Law to be revised to allow for more meaningful public participation (Pardede and Fachri 2022). The court's decision contributed to Indonesia's more positive assessment in democracy indexes like the EIU, as it was considered an indicator of judicial independence. Nonetheless, a closer look at the decision suggests it is not quite the strong marker of democratic resilience that some claim. While the court occasionally will rule that provisions are 'conditionally unconstitutional', in this case, the court took the unusual step of finding that the law was procedurally flawed but providing the government and legislature with a two-year timeframe to rectify the issues. Civil society representatives and legal scholars have described the court's decision as one of compromise (Ramadhan 2021) and illustrative of the fact that judges are willing to take the government's interests into account when they review controversial legislation.

In June 2022, the legislature passed revisions to the Law on Law-Making,<sup>6</sup> which seemed designed to justify the flawed law-making process that led to the passage of the Omnibus Law on Job Creation. The revisions explicitly recognise omnibus laws as a form of law-making, and also possibly limit public participation in the legislative drafting process, stating that community members that can provide input into proposed legislation are 'individuals or groups that are directly affected by and/or have a material interest'.<sup>7</sup> Worse still, the revised law allows for laws to be 'corrected' after they have already been passed if there are 'technical writing errors',<sup>8</sup> thereby undermining legal certainty.

Legal scholars have noted that these revisions do nothing to address some of the deficient processes that have become common in recent years—namely, the passage of legislation with minimal public participation in a very short timeframe and without significant opposition in the legislature.<sup>9</sup> These developments were enabled by Jokowi's extensive coalition building. Following the inclusion of PAN into the ruling coalition in August 2021, parties backing the government now hold more than 80% of seats in the DPR: only two parties (PD and PKS) remain in opposition. This situation has not only undermined meaningful opposition in the DPR but also greatly diminished the accountability of politicians to voters.

The Law on Law-Making—and recent legal developments in general—have thus undermined accountability, contributing to the removal, or limiting, of checks on executive power. This has been

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<sup>5</sup> Constitutional Court decision 91/PUU-XVIII/2020.

<sup>6</sup> Law 13/2022, is, in turn, a revision of Law 11/2011 on law-making. The law had previously been amended in 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Article 96(3). Under the earlier version of the law, the definition was broader, stating that 'individuals or groups with an interest in the substance' of proposed legislation could provide input (Article 96(3), Law 12/2011).

<sup>8</sup> Articles 72 and 73.

<sup>9</sup> These include, for instance, laws discussed in this article: the subdivision of Papua and the establishment of Indonesia's new capital, Nusantara. Other laws that fall into this category are the 2019 revisions to the law on the KPK and, of course, the 2020 Omnibus Law on Job Creation.

described as ‘autocratic legalism’ (Scheppelle 2018), which refers to a situation where democratically elected leaders use their mandate to pursue legal reforms that support an illiberal agenda. It also gives these reforms a veneer of legality, not dissimilar from legal development under the New Order.

### Securitisation and Militarisation in Papua

Jokowi has followed in the footsteps of his predecessors in taking a prosperity and development-based approach to Papua, which is combined with a security approach that has seen the continuing expansion of the military presence in Papua. Specifically, there has been an increase in Raider Infantry Battalions, an elite infantry unit that is specifically tasked with anti-guerrilla and jungle warfare operations. It has been estimated that more than 10,000 soldiers from these battalions have been deployed to Papua between January 2019 and December 2021 (IPAC 2022). Although, in late 2021, General Andika Perkasa, the new head of the Armed Forces (TNI) promised a ‘humanistic approach’ to Papua (Adyatama 2021), he was responsible for the increase in troops in his prior position as army chief of staff (IPAC 2022). Soon after he was appointed, he also announced plans to establish an additional eight military district commands in the region. With each command consisting of 700–900 personnel, the increase would mean an additional 6,400 military officers in Papua (Lazarus 2022). In addition to increased military presence, Andika also announced plans for more recruitment of Papuans as community guidance officers (Babinsa), largely considered the ‘eyes and ears’ of the military at the village level (IPAC 2022), thereby increasing surveillance of local communities.

In July 2021, Indonesian special autonomy (Otsus) legislation for Papua and West Papua was extended for a further 20 years, allowing for additional funds for the development of the provinces. While the government claimed that the extension of Otsus would ensure affirmative action for indigenous Papuans, there were concerns that these revisions were designed to allow for the further division of Papua in more administrative areas. Indeed, in June 2022, this materialised as the legislature—reflecting earlier legal trends, and with limited public participation and ignoring the concerns of indigenous Papuans—approved three new laws that establish three new provinces. Papuans and human rights activists have expressed concerns that the subdivisions will increase migration and environmental destruction, allow for further domination of the economy and bureaucracy by migrants, and intensify military presence (Dale 2019), thus enhancing the potential for conflict in an already volatile region.

Nonetheless, the government claimed it had the support of the Papuan people, arguing that the subdivision had in fact been proposed by 61 Papuans who met with Jokowi following the anti-racism protests in 2019 (BBC News Indonesia 2020). Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security Mahfud MD even claimed that a survey by the president’s office showed that 82% of Papuans supported the plans, although this survey was never made public (Nugraheny 2022a). Somewhat surprisingly, and in contrast to public protests about the establishment of the new provinces, Papuan political elites came out in support of the subdivision. On 10 June, all 29 district heads from Papua Province issued a statement expressing their support (Primadhyta 2022). An important supporter of the government’s plans is Governor of Papua Lukas Enembe, who had earlier rejected such plans, but has stated that the subdivision would contribute to development and the welfare of the people (CNN Indonesia 2022c).<sup>10</sup> Papuan elites are willing to support the subdivision, as it is expected to give them access to new leadership positions and greater control over resources (IPAC 2022).

Throughout his presidency, and despite ongoing militarisation, Jokowi has called for justice to be upheld in the region. To the surprise of many, in April 2022 the Attorney General’s Office named a member of the armed forces as a suspect in the 2014 Paniai killings (Aqil 2022). While human rights activists are sceptical about the process, four ad hoc judges have been appointed in what is the first case to be heard in Indonesia’s Human Rights Courts since 2004. In August, police arrested six soldiers suspected in the killing and mutilation of four indigenous Papuans (Newton 2022). These

<sup>10</sup> At the time that this article was finalised, Lukas Enembe was summoned by the KPK in a major corruption case.

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BBC News Indonesia. 2020a. 'Papua: Pemerintah akan Membuat Pemekaran Menjadi Lima Wilayah, Kata Menkopolkukam Mahfud MD' [Papua: Government will subdivide into 5 regions, says coordinating Minister Mahfud MD]. 11 September 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-54118366>

BBC News Indonesia. 2022b. 'Perda Penyimpangan Seksual Kota Bogor: Kelompok Gender Minoritas Merasa Terancam "akan ada legitimasi persekusi"' [Regional regulation on sexual deviance in Bogor: Gender minority groups feel threatened 'legitimation of persecution']. 26 March 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-60886391>

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developments suggest that some concessions are being made, but they fail to address the structural causes of, and are unlikely to resolve, the conflict in Papua. That Jokowi remains uneasy in dealing with the region was clear in that, during a visit to Papua in August 2022, he brought along over 3,000 soldiers and police officers for security (Pebrianto 2022). This increased attention to justice also seems to be designed to placate community anger over the subdivisions.

### Ongoing Pressure on Freedom of Expression

Under the Jokowi presidency, there has been a marked increase in the use of the 2008 Law on Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE Law) to curb expression (see figure 1). In one of the most concerning developments over the past year, in September 2021, Luhut Pandjaitan reported prominent human rights activists Haris Azhar and Fatia Maulidiyanti for defamation under the ITE Law. Luhut's complaint related to comments made by Haris and Fatia in a video, where they discussed a report on military operations in Papua and alleged that these were to protect business interests, rather than to improve security. The report also claimed that mining companies benefit from this security presence, including a company affiliated with Luhut (Bratajaya and Aulia 2022).

FIGURE 1 Cases Reported under the ITE Law, 2014–21  
[please insert figure 1]

Source: Based on Amnesty International Indonesia (2021).

Reports under the ITE Law are not empty threats, with cases proceeding to the courts for a wide range of 'offences' and leading to convictions in 96.8% of cases (ICJR 2021). In response to public concerns about the ITE Law, the government promised it would consider revising the law. In December 2021, Mahfud MD announced that a revised draft was sent to the DPR, although by mid-2022 the legislature had not yet commenced deliberating the Bill.

Freedom of expression is not only curtailed through legal mechanisms. In August 2021, local authorities simply proceeded to paint over murals that criticised the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Authorities argued that the murals—some of which depicted Jokowi with his eyes covered by a face mask, or with the internet error message '404: Not Found'—insulted the president as a 'state symbol' and justified the removal in the context of preserving public order. Presidential Chief of Staff Moeldoko referenced so-called 'eastern culture' (*budaya ketimuran*) in which 'the president is our parent, who we must respect' (Farisa 2021), adding that the authorities were merely 'educating' the artists. Although none of the artists were charged with a crime, in some cases the police forced them to apologise.

The use of the ITE Law shows that legal mechanisms are being used to curb expression, while the mural controversies show that the authorities certainly do not rely on formal instruments alone to do so. A wide range of individuals are being targeted as a result—activists, journalists, researchers, artists and 'ordinary' citizens—and on a scale that is unprecedented in the Reformasi era. This not only leads to an encroachment on fundamental freedoms but also to self-censorship, which seems to be becoming an increasing reality for Indonesians: one survey suggested that 62.9% of Indonesians are now afraid of expressing their opinions (Alfarizi 2022).

### Shrinking Space for Sexual Minorities

While there was widespread public support for the Law on Sexual Violence, prejudice against sexual minorities remains widespread in Indonesia and continues to be a key indicator of democratic decline. Regional bylaws (Perda) continue to be used as a tool to oppress sexual minorities: in December 2021, the municipality of Bogor passed a regulation<sup>11</sup> that identifies LGBT people as 'deviant'. Seemingly aware of the criticism he would face, Mayor of Bogor Bima Arya suggested that the government was initially opposed to the regulation because it went 'too far into the private sphere' (*BBC News Indonesia*

<sup>11</sup> Regional Regulation 10/2021.

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*BBC News Indonesia*. 2020a. 'Papua: Pemerintah akan Membuat Pemekaran Menjadi Lima Wilayah, Kata Menkopolkam Mahfud MD' [Papua: Government will subdivide into 5 regions, says coordinating Minister Mahfud MD]. 11 September 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-54118366>

*BBC News Indonesia*. 2022b. 'Perda Penyimpangan Seksual Kota Bogor: Kelompok Gender Minoritas Merasa Terancam "akan ada legitimasi persekusi"' [Regional regulation on sexual deviance in Bogor: Gender minority groups feel threatened 'legitimation of persecution']. 26 March 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-60886391>

2022), but ultimately allowed it to go ahead.

Calls for the criminalisation of LGBT people as part of planned revisions to Indonesia's Criminal Code intensified after celebrity Deddy Corbuzier published a podcast in which he interviewed Indonesian social media star Ragil Mahadika and his foreign husband, who are married and based in Germany. In response to the uproar, Corbuzier deleted the podcast, but this did not end public criticism. Mahfud MD initially responded by stating that 'this is a democracy. The state cannot prohibit Deddy Corbuzier from having LGBT [people] on his podcast' (Damarjati 2022), and stressed that while same-sex marriage was not legal in Indonesia, this did not mean same-sex relationships or LGBT people were criminalised. Nonetheless, this attracted such criticism that Mahfud then took to Twitter and said that he had been advocating for the criminalisation of LGBT since 2017, calling for LGBT people and extramarital sex to be made offences in the revised Criminal Code (Mahfud MD on Twitter, 12 May 2022).

Public space for LGBT people and events is limited, as illustrated by the cancellation of events planned to mark the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) following complaints from societal groups (Irham 2022). In a horrific case that sent shockwaves around the world, a Peruvian transgender man and prominent activist died in police custody in Bali in August 2022. Rodrigo Ventocilla and his spouse had been arrested upon arrival in Denpasar on drugs-related charges. His family have alleged that Ventocilla's lawyers were denied access to him, while the police also demanded US\$200,000 to free Ventocilla and his spouse (Herszenhorn 2022). Political, religious and societal conservatism mean that Indonesia is not a safe place for sexual minorities.

## LEGACY BUILDING

With a third term now off the table, legacy building has become a pressing matter for Jokowi. This goal has been particularly noticeable in, first, his continuing emphasis on infrastructure development, illustrated by the building of Indonesia's new capital, Nusantara. Second, the past year saw Jokowi's increased engagement with foreign policy, contrasting with his previous disinterest in the matter. Both these focus areas are representative of the developmentalist approach (Warburton 2019) that has characterised Jokowi's presidency.

### New Capital, Old Problems

As Jokowi commenced his second term, he became even more focused on new projects to secure his legacy as a builder of Indonesia (Fealy 2020). The development of a new capital city, first announced in April 2019, is intended to be his masterpiece. Moving the capital reflects Jokowi's desire to bring government closer to the geographic centre of Indonesia, while government representatives have justified the move as a means of avoiding the persistent problems of pollution, traffic congestion and natural disasters in Jakarta. The formal transfer of the capital is expected to occur in 2024, coinciding with the end of the Jokowi presidency, while the completion of the capital is expected to take another 20 years.<sup>12</sup> This timeframe also means that, for the realisation of the capital, Jokowi will be dependent on future political leaders.

In January 2022, the DPR passed the Law on the National Capital.<sup>13</sup> This law, reflecting earlier discussed trends, was passed in less than 42 days, with minimal public consultation. This led to several challenges of the law at the Constitutional Court, which were all rejected. The law provides for the establishment of the so-called Nusantara Capital City Authority, responsible for overseeing the construction of, and relocation to, the new capital, as well as management of regional governance in the new city. In March 2022, Jokowi appointed two professionals to lead the authority: Bambang Susantono, a senior official from the Asian Development Bank with expertise in sustainable development and climate change as the authority's chief; and Dhony Rahajoe, a former senior director with property developer Sinar Mas Land, as deputy (Rahadiana 2022).

<sup>12</sup> The master plan for the development of the National Capital includes five phases, running through to 2045.

<sup>13</sup> Law 3/2022 on the National Capital.

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The appointments reflect Jokowi's belief in technocratic solutions, glossing over the many political challenges related to the development of Nusantara. For instance, elements of the armed forces oppose the new capital, as it brings it much closer to the contested South China Sea (McBeth 2022). Civil society organisations have raised concerns over how the project will impact on the environment and rights of indigenous communities (Hariandja 2022), while the project is also set to play into the hands of powerful oligarchic and business interests: for instance, Prabowo's brother Hashim Djojohadikusumo, who owns businesses in the area, will reportedly provide water and timber supplies (Hikam 2022), while land in the area has also been linked with political elites and their families. In addition, the government faces a major challenge bringing the civil service on board: nearly 95% of public servants reject the move (*Jawa Pos* 2019). The government has responded to this resistance with a combination of threats and incentives. The late Tjahjo Kumolo, minister for administrative and bureaucratic reform who died suddenly in July 2022, had previously announced that refusal to relocate would lead to sanctions, including dismissal (Febryan 2022). Those who agreed to move, meanwhile, were promised free relocation of family members, transport and car rental for a month, and free accommodation for the duration of their posting in Nusantara (Bahfein 2022).

The project also faces significant funding challenges. Of the total estimated cost (US\$32.5 billion), the government will fund less than 20% from the state budget, with the remainder to be covered by external investors. However, various foreign investors have withdrawn from the project over concerns on investment returns, while few details have been made available regarding existing pledges (McBeth 2022). Given the lack of transparency, it is unsurprising that there are doubts about the viability of the project: according to a June 2022 survey among researchers, academics, professionals, businesspeople, journalists, bureaucrats and lawmakers, almost 60% believed that the project would not materialise (*Jakarta Post* 2022). Nonetheless, Jokowi has insisted that the plan will go ahead, noting that the Law on the National Capital was supported by 93% of the DPR. In another sign of his illiberal tendencies, he publicly warned the military and police not to criticise the planned move in WhatsApp groups (Nugraheny 2022b), making a veiled reference to the ITE Law.

### **Foreign Policy, National Interests**

Throughout his presidency, Jokowi has showed little interest in foreign policy. Instead, he has preferred to focus on domestic economic policy and infrastructure development. However, this shifted as Indonesia assumed presidency of the G20 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine affected the Indonesian economy.

Indonesia assumed the presidency of the G20 on 1 December 2021, with the G20 Heads of State and Governments Summit to be held in Bali in November 2022. The importance of the occasion was not lost on Jokowi, who considers the presidency both an important recognition of Indonesia's position on the world stage and an opportunity to advance Indonesia's interests:

We must take advantage from this strategic position the best we can, because truly we are equal to developed countries. How can we boost, how can we take advantage of this position for our national interests? There is nothing else than our national interests ... I also would like, we all would like, that our citizens are respected, valued by other citizens no matter where our Indonesian citizens are ... I do not want this inferior mentality, this *inlander* mentality, this colonised mentality that is still entrenched in the mentality of our nation. (Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia 2021)

Indeed, Indonesia's G20 presidency is widely expected to generate significant international investment in the nation (Shofa 2021). This directly plays into Jokowi's focus on economic development but will also be crucial for the development of Nusantara, especially after Jokowi leaves office. Thus, Jokowi's emphasis on the G20 presidency is much more reflective of an increasingly nationalist and protectionist foreign policy stance focused on generating tangible benefits for Indonesia, particularly in areas of trade and investment, than it is related to any affinity with taking on a global leadership role.

Indonesia's presidency of the G20 has become even more important following Russia's attack on Ukraine in late February 2022. Indonesia's initial response to the war was widely considered inadequate. Jokowi did not condemn the invasion, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued an official statement that described the attacks as unacceptable but did not mention Russia by name (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia 2022). At the international level, Indonesia voted in support of a UN

General Assembly resolution condemning the attack, but later chose to abstain from the vote to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council, attracting widespread international criticism.

Nonetheless, Jokowi appeared keen to present himself on the world stage as a bridge builder, even a mediator, between the two warring nations. He continued to reach out to both Russia and Ukraine, defying international pressure to disinvite Russian leader Vladimir Putin from the G20, while also extending an invitation to President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky. In June 2022, Jokowi surprised many when he visited both Zelensky and Putin, the first Asian leader to do so since the beginning of the war. However, Jokowi's visit to Zelensky and Putin had more to do with Indonesia's interests: Indonesia is one of the largest global importers of Ukrainian wheat and thus Jokowi was keen to secure the opening of blocked ports. Jokowi was perhaps overambitious in his mission: while ports were reopened in July 2022, the deal was brokered by Turkey, not Indonesia.

Jokowi's balancing act is, to some extent, a reflection of general attitudes among Indonesians, who mostly support the Russian invasion (Dharmaputra 2022). However, on both political and economic levels, Indonesia's stance has much to do with its own interests. Indonesia's reluctance to impose sanctions on Russia stems in part from a new oil refinery being built on the north coast of Java by state oil company Pertamina and Russian energy giant Rosneft, which is also involved in a new gas discovery in the North Natuna Sea (Murphy 2022). On the economic front, Russia's invasion of Ukraine disrupted global supply chains, which, combined with global inflation, led to dramatic price increases of household staples in Indonesia, such as cooking oil and instant noodles. This affected large segments of the population, including the poor and small traders—Indonesia's ordinary people (*wong cilik*) who Jokowi claims to represent. After a ban on palm oil exports did not bring prices down, Jokowi's approval ratings dropped to 58.1% in May, the lowest they have been in six years (Muhtadi and Lau 2022). In September 2022, fuel prices increased by about 30% after the government reduced energy subsidies, causing protests across the country (*Aljazeera* 2022), and likely putting another dent in the president's approval ratings.

Dwindling popularity can pose a threat to the legacy that Jokowi wants to create: a president who built a new capital city, developed the economy and looked after ordinary people. To realise this legacy, Jokowi will need the backing of other political parties who are keen to be associated with a popular president. Popularity is thus key to Jokowi's personal ambitions, and concerns that his legacy may be at risk led Jokowi to present himself as a statesman. These new efforts at global statesmanship are therefore not as much about resolving a global crisis as they are about domestic considerations and personal ambitions, consistent with Jokowi's approach throughout his presidency.

## CONCLUSIONS

Democracy is in decline across the globe, and Indonesia is no exception to this development: in the past year, democratic regression has continued. Nonetheless, alongside these processes are signs of democratic resilience, and Indonesia has managed—in some areas—to avoid further backsliding. The manifestation of breakdown resilience illustrates that democratic regression is a much more uneven process than often assumed in assessments of Indonesian democracy.

Over the past year, Indonesia has passed a major human rights reform and made significant steps towards gender equality in the form of the Law on Sexual Violence, illustrating converging interests at societal and political levels. In addition, the rejection of efforts to extend Jokowi's time in power, and political elites' public pleas for a moderation of political polarisation are developments that support democratic resilience. These developments point at two sources for democratic resilience in Indonesia: first, from diagonal institutions of accountability, as manifested by public opinion and civil society advocacy; and second, from horizontal institutions of accountability as Indonesian political elites have shown continuing commitment to democratic institutions and practices.

At the same time, democratic resilience is fragile and is not necessarily underpinned by an attachment to democratic norms. Elite support for resilience is entangled with political interests and ambitions. As argued in this article, the enactment of the Law on Sexual Violence cannot be separated from the government's suppression of Islamism. Similarly, the rejection of the postponement of the

2024 elections had little to do with a genuine attachment to Indonesia's constitutional reforms. Rather, it was informed by these elites' own interests, as democratic processes allow them to pursue their own ambitions. By the same token, moderation of political polarisation may contribute to resilience for the time being, but it is the result of the accommodation and repression of legitimate political opposition and may re-emerge as the 2024 presidential contest gets closer.

While these qualifications demonstrate the frailty of democratic resilience, there are other worrying indications of Indonesian democracy's vulnerability to further regression, as illustrated by illiberal legal reforms and ongoing pressures on, and abuses of, human rights. Meanwhile, the development of Indonesia's new capital Nusantara and Jokowi's more active stance in foreign policy reflect his personal ambitions in legacy building, and the ongoing prioritisation of infrastructure and economic development. Taken together, Indonesia's democracy endures, but the deepening of democratic quality towards a more liberal democracy remains an uphill battle.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for the generous feedback and support I received from Ed Aspinall, Eve Warburton, Dirk Tomsa and Marcus Mietzner ahead of the 2022 ANU Indonesia Update Conference and throughout the process of writing this article. Special thanks also go to Tim Mann for his expert research assistance.

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