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Competing populisms in post-authoritarian Indonesia

Vedi R Hadiz
University of Melbourne, Australia

Richard Robison
Murdoch University, Australia

Abstract
Populist politics have become more prominent in Indonesia. On the one hand, this is indicated by the presidential elections of 2014, when two rival candidates brandished somewhat different nationalist populist ideas. On the other hand, historically rooted secular nationalist and Islamic-oriented forms of populism have become entangled within elite conflicts. The context is discontent about perceived systemic injustices unaddressed in nearly two decades of decentralised democracy after a prior three decades of centralised authoritarian rule. In the absence of liberal and Leftist challenges to the entrenched oligarchy, politics is becoming characterised by competition between different populisms. But rather than being transformative, these populisms are harnessed to the maintenance of oligarchic domination.

Keywords
Populism, Indonesia, oligarchy, secular nationalism, Islamic populism

Introduction

Populism has become an increasingly significant political phenomenon in Southeast Asia, including in Indonesia, its largest economy and the world's third largest democracy after India and the USA. As elsewhere, it is related to a broadening sense of distrust in established political and social institutions across society and feelings of alienation caused by growing disparities in wealth and power.[1] Evolving populisms in Southeast Asia are thus closely linked to deepening engagement with the global market economy and with the reordering of social and political life on the basis of neoliberal principles.

Our arguments are as follows: given the historical absence of strong traditions of liberal politics and the decimation of the Left during the Cold War, political conflict in Indonesia is becoming

Corresponding author:
Vedi Hadiz, Asia Institute, University of Melbourne, 158/761 Swanston Street, Parkville, Victoria 3010, Australia.
Email: vedi.hadiz@unimelb.edu.au

increasingly characterised by confrontations between varieties of populism. But the rise of populism does not mean the end of oligarchic domination over politics as identified by Robison and Hadiz (2004) and Winters (2013). On the contrary, populist rhetoric and ideas have become part of struggles for power within oligarchy itself and are vehicles for the entry of new players into its ranks. These arguments have important implications for Indonesia and beyond: although populist demands may affect the specific workings of oligarchic politics, there is no inevitable contradiction between oligarchy and populism as the latter is incorporated into strategies for maintaining oligarchic ascendancy through democratic competition.

In our case study, we are primarily interested in populism's engagement with a democratising environment although in relation to its earlier political and social roots. We are acutely aware that while populist rhetoric and mobilisations have become part of the political armoury of powerful coalitions and interests within Indonesia's democracy, it is simultaneously limited by these interests and by the institutions in which power is embedded. This is particularly so because the political parties and their associated ad-hoc coalitions that have become the primary building blocks of post-authoritarian power are less the product of common policy platforms than mechanisms to control the levers of the state and to access and distribute concrete resources.

The necessity of operating in this setting limits prospects that Indonesian populism will result in political projects that fundamentally redress disparities in wealth and power or recast political institutions. The problem of whether populism threatens oligarchy or is being harnessed to serve its interests in Indonesia, or to enable wider access into its ranks, is significant for understanding populist politics more generally. It brings into focus whether populism is actually transformative or a force to be co-opted and domesticated.

For these reasons, we do not normatively posit an inherently progressive or retrogressive role for populist politics – its impact will largely depend on the alliances and interests underpinning it within a given context. In the Indonesian case, populism is being appropriated by entrenched oligarchic interests rather than harnessed to projects that challenge them.

The approach: Structural political economy

As discussed in the Introduction to this volume, approaches to the study of populism can be placed in several categories. First, there is the 'discursive' approach, which understands populism as a mode of articulating diverse political demands within a common political project (Laclau, 2005: 86). Here, populism finds 'equivalence' in varied sources of dissatisfaction with the existing social order through deployment of a common language of the oppressed. The result is to homogenise an otherwise heterogeneous 'people' against their elite oppressors. Another approach is the 'ideational', which emphasises the ideas and rhetoric especially of populist movement leaders. Within this approach, the key feature of populism is the conception of politics as conflict between the masses, where moral virtue is to be found, and elites who are bereft of it (Mudde, 2004). A third approach is the 'organisational', which focuses on the vehicles and strategies of populist movements, as well as the circumvention of established institutions of representation (Mouzelis, 1985) by more direct forms of political participation.

Our structural political economy approach derives from the final category mentioned. At its core is examination of the (shifting) social bases of populist politics and associated conflicts over power and resources within specific historical contexts. Here populism is understood as an expression of cross-class politics, within which particular interests may dominate, yet which claims to articulate a collective will. It follows that different types of populism can emerge, for example, from collisions between rural petty bourgeois interests and modern market capitalism or those that involve dispossessed urban populations (Hadiz and Robison, 2012). These can lay claim to

representing a notionally homogeneous 'people', while embodying contradictory social interests. To an extent, our approach borrows from Oxhorn's (1998: 223) argument that 'populism represents an asymmetrical multi-class coalition' in Latin America.

This approach does not contradict the view that populism involves what might be called a 'suspension of difference', wherein a homogeneous 'people' are confronted with 'elites' or even 'foreign' enemies. But it does provide a specific way to understand how these opposing forces are constructed, not only discursively or ideationally, but also by linking them to contests over power and tangible resources. We thus interrogate the underlying materiality of identity politics, which ultimately determines who gets 'included' in and 'excluded' from definitions of 'the people'. This is important where social interests have become increasingly complex and where the suspension of difference among an internally varied 'people' requires effective organisational vehicles nurturing support from within diverse social bases.

Structural political economy allows us to avoid juxtaposing 'irrational' populist politics against 'rational' political liberalism, where the latter prevents a descent into demagoguery (Urbinati, 2014). Neither do we propose that populist economics is the opposite of technocratic – and thus 'rational' – economic policy-making. Beneath the surface of such binaries, we suggest, lie the assumptions of classical modernisation theory, within which populism was associated with the struggles of economically backward societies to achieve or resist rational modernity (Stewart, 1969). Instead, we see the burgeoning and mainstreaming of populism across the world as indicative of crises within contemporary market economics and liberal democratic politics.

Structural political economy is therefore differentiated as both a theoretical and methodological tradition from the behaviourist approaches embedded in pluralist or rational choice/public choice political science and from the methodological individualism of statistical correlations, game theoretic analysis and attitudinal surveys. And it is different to both new institutional economics and historical institutionalism, which see institutions as the pathways within which political behaviour is determined.

In developing our arguments, we are not focused on the motives of voters or politicians in themselves or in determining the capacity of institutions. Instead we examine what populist politicians do and how this changes or sustains the ascendancy of oligarchy. The analysis deals not only with the phenomena of 'populism from above' but also with Islamic/religious and secular/nationalist populisms from below. These are now being deployed to transcend growing heterogeneity of social interests in ways that elicit responses from dominant power coalitions.

Indonesian populism

Much of the literature on populist politics has focused on Latin America and Europe (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008; Conniff, 1999; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012). Still the emergence of populism in Southeast Asia has been discussed with regard to Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand (Hewison, this volume; Phongpaichit and Baker, 2009) and Joseph Estrada in the Philippines (Rocamora, 2009). By contrast, as Aspinall (2015), notes, populist politics in Indonesia was ignored until recently. This was largely because New Order rule under Soeharto (1966–1998) had maintained a sturdy technocratic façade along with a highly centralised and rigid brand of authoritarianism.

However, the Indonesian case is now relevant for several reasons.

The election of Joko Widodo (known as Jokowi) in 2014 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'. At the same time, his emergence also suggested that existing modes of rule through

money politics and patronage-based parties may now be ineffective instruments for controlling or mobilising a populace disappointed with governments unable to govern effectively or to provide even the most basic of services and infrastructure (see Fukuoka and Djani, 2016). Finally, the contest between Jokowi and his opponent, Prabowo Subianto, represented the possibility of two different future pathways for Indonesia. One looked back to state-managed corporatist institutions and nationalist ideals and a second was more rooted in market ideas and middle class interests. Outside these are different forms of Islamic-based populisms that hark back to a rural past or to a future where society and politics is embedded within religious identity and institutions.

But Indonesia is not unique. Some of the conflicts between varieties of populism in Indonesia are reminiscent of those in the Middle East between secular nationalist populisms (e.g. Nasserism, Kemalism and Ba'athism) and those associated with Islamic politics (Hadiz, 2016). Moreover, the phenomenon of competing populisms is not confined to the developing world. In Europe, for example, we see left wing as well as right wing populisms challenging established liberal, conservative and social democratic forces (e.g. Chryssogelos, this volume), thus transforming the balance of power and mainstream political discourses in the process.

The political context: From the corporate state to market authoritarianism and democracy

Indonesian populism comes with a long history, stretching back to millenarian uprisings in colonial times. Unlike in Latin America, it has been shaped within a system of highly centralised, pervasive and bureaucratic state power laid down during the era of Dutch colonial rule. This tradition was developed by Indonesia's first president, Soekarno, on the basis of organic ideas about the relationship between state and society. In this guise, it became the guiding principle for 'Guided Economy' and 'Guided Democracy', which privileged a powerful bureaucracy and strong presidency (Feith, 1963).

It became difficult subsequently to construct autonomous bases of power outside the state with its extensive security apparatus and vast corps of public officials and state-funded front groups. Organisations were invariably co-opted or bullied out of existence, while ordinary citizens found themselves swept up by an array of compulsory state-sponsored organisations that enshrined the authority of a lumbering apparatus of state power (Bourchier, 2015: 166–176).

But it was Soekarno's masterly use of populist appeals from above that allowed him to co-opt different and often hostile political forces and interests, however reluctantly, into an all-embracing concept of national unity. He used claims of a generic Indonesian identity based on idealised traditional values to deny the legitimacy of contending ideas and political opposition and to reject the institutions of representation and electoral contests (Soekarno, 1970). Populism became a tool for mobilising mass support and neutralising opponents where he possessed no base of party power and faced the simmering resentment of a powerful military and a rising Communist Party (PKI) waiting in the wings.

Although Soekarno was overthrown in 1966, many of the core ideas and institutions he had introduced were continued; reshaped to serve new interests as Indonesia entered the world of oligarchy and global capitalism under its new President, Soeharto.

Nevertheless, there were important differences. The military was now an integral part of Soeharto's New Order and its coercive power sustained the regime, especially in its early years. At the same time, the elimination of the PKI removed at a stroke a most important enemy and meant that secular opponents now had to seek political vehicles outside leftist politics. Although Islamic and some secular and nationalist political organisations survived Soeharto's harsh authoritarian

rule and were to take turns as the channels for social justice and egalitarian aspirations, they did so only at the margins (Bourchier and Hadiz, 2003: 118–158). With the elimination of the left, Islamic political organisations were now the main threat to the New Order's strategy of politically demobilising civil society.

At the same time, the regime now enjoyed closer political and economic ties to Western governments and global financial and banking institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This reflected similar changes elsewhere. In Egypt, for example, the transitions from Nasser to Sadat and then to Mubarak also saw a statist form of capitalism give way to growing incursions by global markets (Farah, 2009).

One of the key results of this was the rise of a capitalist oligarchy epitomised in the growing economic and corporate power of leading political families, not least the Soehartos themselves. The state came increasingly to serve oligarchic interests that now spanned both the business world and that of public office despite the complaints of technocrats, the World Bank and small bands of liberal intellectuals. The co-option of the Indonesian capitalist class within such a system of political control was made easy because of the dominance of politically dependent ethnic Chinese tycoons who had become firmly integrated in business relationships with powerful political families (Robison and Hadiz, 2004: 71–101).

But the New Order had to change the way it legitimised its authority and preserved the vast system of rents and patronage that had penetrated all layers of society from Jakarta down to the regions by the 1980s. Not ruling through coercive power alone, the regime made claims to being above politics, concerned with the technocratic management of development in the common interest. Whether this claim could be described as a form of technocratic populism or as a totalitarian agenda dressed as populism, it meant that 'politics' was confined within an apparatus of state-orchestrated elections, state-sponsored political parties and a tame parliament. Outside these, citizens were scooped into mass-based organisations that were effectively the cheerleaders of the state.

By the late 1990s, however, all this seemed to unravel as the Indonesian economy was consumed by the Asian economic crisis, with its currency in free-fall, most of its banks insolvent and its corporate sector sunk in debt. This was quickly followed in 1998 with the fall of Soeharto himself and the unravelling of authoritarian rule. Constitutional reforms established far-reaching democratic reforms and a decentralisation of political authority and its institutions. At the same time, the Indonesian government was required by the IMF and foreign governments to undertake extensive neoliberal reforms that dismantled much of state control over economic life (Robison and Rosser, 1998).

It might have seemed that oligarchy now faced an existential threat. After all, market reforms and the shift to democracy could have meant the rise of reformist political parties and new pressures for social justice and economic equality. Yet, as previously argued, the same powerful politico-bureaucratic and business forces that had defined the New Order quickly expropriated Indonesia's new democracy (Robison and Hadiz, 2004).

However, the transition of oligarchy into the post-Soeharto era was not a simple matter. By the end of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Presidency (2004–2014), widespread disappointment with successive governments had combined with deeper concerns as growth slowed and wealth was concentrated in fewer hands while government expenditures on infrastructure, health and education stagnated or declined (Damuri and Day, 2015: 19–22). The disappointment was heightened because Yudhoyono had himself built his campaigns for president on an anti-corruption platform. Within the new democratic framework, public disquiet with decaying infrastructure, inefficient government and corrupt officials could not be so easily ignored.

The door was thus open to politicians who brought promises of renewal and plans to strip away the gridlock of self-serving interests that hindered policies that could benefit ordinary people. These were the appeals made by both Jokowi and Prabowo Subianto. Nevertheless, populist politics, with its distributive and sometimes xenophobic agendas and its mobilisation of the simmering resentment towards wealthy elites also brought potential threats to oligarchy, not only in terms of populist policies but in a potential shift to new ways of doing politics through direct connection with mass sentiment that might bypass the old elite networks.

Significantly, both the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*, PDI-P) and Golkar, political parties that had dominated early post-authoritarian politics, found themselves unable to compete with Yudhoyono's upstart Democratic Party in the Presidential elections of 1994 and 1999 or with the rising stars of Jokowi and Prabowo in more recent times. It was no surprise they began to seek ways of harnessing these new populist politicians.

Secular nationalist populisms

Compared to their Islamic counterparts, secular nationalist forms of populism have been more important influences over Indonesia's formal political institutions. These were forms of populism that, in the long term, did not contemplate fundamental changes to the relationship between political elites and the broader masses, let alone rearranging modes of distributing wealth.

Both Jokowi and Prabowo offered new ideas about how existing systems of state power and oligarchy might be reorganised within populist garb. One was to concentrate oligarchic power within a more centralised authoritarian state while the other involved broadening its reach to a wider social and political constituency.

Guided populism versus distributive populism

Jokowi and Prabowo both laid claims to being political outsiders, though for different reasons. They made direct appeals to the 'people' using the rhetoric of nationalism and social justice and by criticising the selfishness of established politicians (Aspinall, 2015: 18). Prabowo was quick to identify himself as one with the common people, declaring: "…Brothers, our struggle is right! We struggle for justice, we struggle for an Indonesia which is respected… Beware all of you who are used to stealing the Indonesian people's money …" (Gammon, 2014).

Both made strong appeals to nationalist and anti-foreign sentiment. Jokowi had himself argued that 'national sovereignty' was under threat when Indonesia commits to 'international agreements' that serve multinational corporations and their backers. He also lamented that past governments were not able to use Indonesia's natural resources for the good of the people, relied too much on foreign debt and that they failed to address issues of social inequality (Jokowi-Jusuf Kalla, 2014: 1).

That Prabowo would claim a populist mandate may be surprising at first glance. He does, after all, come from within the very heart of oligarchy and had been a general under Soeharto with a considerable reputation for autocratic behaviour. His brother, Hashim Djojohadikusumo, is one of Indonesia's leading business tycoons with interests that span mining and resources, energy and agriculture and cement. Once married into the Soeharto family, Prabowo himself has extensive business interests, especially in mining and resources (Aspinall, 2015: 9–11).

However, Prabowo fits within a long tradition of populist politics driven by wealthy individuals. In one way, he might be seen in the mould of Thailand's Thaksin Shinawatra, a businessman who forged a seemingly unlikely alliance with the rural poor (Hewison, 2005). In fact, Prabowo's election platform borrowed from Thaksin's policy of providing direct financial support to Thai villages, stating the intention of allocating a portion of the national budget for direct grants to

meet village-level needs (Prabowo-Hatta, 2014). Still, the centrepiece of Prabowo's populism was the idea that strong leaders can best secure the 'common good' by overriding the indecision that comes with liberal democracy and unconstrained markets. He called for a return to nationalist and corporatist ideals from Indonesia's Soekarnoist past (Aspinall, 2015: 14–21), challenging the suitability of 'Western models' of democracy to Asian cultures in ways reminiscent of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew.

Jokowi represents something quite different. He comes from the world of small and medium business, hailing from the provincial city of Solo, Central Java, rather than from the ranks of Jakarta's political and business elites or Indonesia's corps of state officials. Given his relatively modest background, he is illustrative of local elites that benefitted from Indonesia's decentralised democracy (Okamoto, 2009). He distinguishes himself, however, by claiming to be a leader who can fix the practical problems that confront ordinary people.

Many of these claims are based on his performance in local office. As mayor of Solo (2005–2012), prior to becoming governor of Jakarta (2012–2014), Jokowi had built a reputation for breaking through the atrophy of administration. His trademark has been his modest demeanour, dialogues with ordinary citizens and unannounced forays into the community. In a situation where there is growing social inequality, Jokowi has introduced some distributive public policies, especially by increasing access to health and education for the poor (Damuri and Day, 2015: 18–22).

Nevertheless, Jokowi has been careful to steer away from directly attacking the oligarchy. This presents a problem, however, for no matter how popular Jokowi's reforms might be, their enforcement requires authority within governmental institutions, political parties and parliament. His task to date remains to translate personal popularity into institutional power. Luckily for him, almost two-thirds of Indonesians polled in 2016 were satisfied with his performance as president (Detiknews, 2016).

Interestingly, Prabowo had the opposite problem. He already possessed considerable power within the state apparatus and a strong social base when he launched his failed presidential bid, not only within the inner reaches of the oligarchy but also among urban higher income professionals (see Mietzner, 2015: 44, 45). But Prabowo's populism revealed an agenda to consolidate the interests of one faction of the oligarchy (Aspinall, 2015), thereby threatening oligarchs outside his circle and that vast sea of business interests that flourished under the more disorganised politics following the fall of Soeharto. These might expect to ride the populist tide more securely with Jokowi.

Jokowi in power

Without a powerful political and party base of his own, Jokowi's fragile political authority and electoral appeal is largely contingent upon his ability to deliver promised reforms and effective government, including in public health and education services and in urban renewal and tackling corruption. This was never going to be an easy matter given the important structural and institutional obstacles he faced, including a budget where disbursals to departments and to the regions swallowed up 60–70% of outlays while fuel subsidies consumed another 15–20%. He achieved initial success by making extensive cuts to fuel subsidies in his 2015 budget and enabling increased funding for social spending and issuing cards that gave poor Indonesians access to health care. He was able also to direct more funding to infrastructure, including by allocating large sums for investment in public works, housing, transport and agriculture (Damuri and Day, 2015: 19–22).

Yet, the task of achieving the necessary increases in tax revenues, initially projected to rise to 15.5% of gross domestic product, was daunting. This was especially so where oil and resources payments, expected to meet 23% of budget income, seem set for a long-term structural decline. He

also faced a bureaucracy more accustomed to using its position to amass power and wealth than implementing public projects. Jokowi has himself expressed frustration with the slow progress of implementing programs (*Tempo*, 13 August 2015).

Jokowi's problem is ultimately political. While he has enjoyed success in mobilising popular support through grassroots volunteers and the use of social media, these could never substitute for a coherent political party or even an organised labour movement. These are potentially the mechanisms through which elections can be won and truculent parliaments brought to heel. Most successful populist leaders, from Lula and Chávez to Thaksin and Fujimori, had quickly constructed such organised political bases.

Although Jokowi entered a marriage of convenience with the PDI–P, the resultant alliance has not helped to implement his policy agenda. His first months of power were characterised by interminable battles with the party's resentful grandees over the distribution of largesse, mainly in key appointments of cabinet ministers and public officials, especially within the police (Fukuoka and Djani, 2016).

It might have been thought that the PDI-P would have been an ideal vehicle for Jokowi. Its selective utilisation of Soekarnoist symbolism and imagery and its defence of reformist agendas in the late Soeharto years had enabled it to become the favoured party of the huge underclasses in Indonesia's booming cities and increasingly of the resentful elements of the growing, but often quite precarious, middle class unable to break into the upper ranks of power and wealth.

But under the leadership of Soekarno's daughter, Megawati Soekarnoputri, the PDI-P was to progressively ensconce itself as a party of the oligarchy, bringing into its ranks a range of former Golkar apparatchiks, military officers, business entrepreneurs and gangsters. Like the other major parties, it was a vehicle for accumulating and distributing power and resources and lacked evident policy direction or ideological claims. Not surprisingly, the party hardly reflected any shift in the weight of power towards reformist or redistributive agendas.

In the end, Jokowi has maintained power by taking allies where he can find them and presiding over cabinets that are revolving collections of favourites from various parties. As earlier technocratic appointments disappear, they have been replaced by political, business and military figures drawn from the heart of the old political hierarchy, including controversial former generals like Ryamizard Ryacudu and most recently, Wiranto. And no less than any other key politician, Jokowi has drawn into his political network an assortment of leading business figures, giving him access to financial support in elections and sympathetic media coverage (Baker, 2016; Fukuoka and Djani, 2016; Muhtadi, 2015).

In some cases Jokowi has backed away from popular programs. The ongoing struggle surrounding the Indonesia Anti-Corruption Commission (KPK) is a critical illustration of this. This is an institution that poses a deep threat to powerful private interests and to the armies of politicians, officials, fixers and intermediaries that depend on corruption. Yet, despite widespread support for the KPK, Jokowi has been lukewarm in his efforts to protect it and its officials from ongoing efforts by politicians and parliament to dismantle its substantial powers of investigation and prosecution. The KPK continues to be harassed by a corrupt police force and has been subjected to personal attacks on its officials, including from within the hierarchy of the PDI-P (see Fukuoka and Djani, 2016).

In other cases, Jokowi's agendas proved mainly to benefit entrenched political and business interests. His broadly nationalist economic policies have included recapitalising state enterprises and giving them access to subsidised natural gas, diesel fuel and electricity as well as extending their authority over the allocation of strategic rents, resources, contracts and monopolies. He has continued policies aimed at protecting and subsidising domestic industries and maintaining negative investment lists, including in agriculture, mining and resource processing. These are policies demanded by domestic producers in the traded goods sector now facing the cold winds of a

declining commodities export sector and falling global investment (Busch, 2015; Patunru and Rahardja, 2015). They also enhance the power of ministers and officials in the state-owned sector and open lucrative opportunities for private investors and rentiers. As Warburton (2015) points out, the scramble for contracts, licenses and partnerships, especially following the introduction of new Mining Laws in 2009, has created a ‘feeding frenzy’ among business interests.

All this might be explained in terms of the necessity of political survival. Yet, it also seems to call into question claims that Jokowi’s is a populism that is distributive in nature or technocratic (Mietzner, 2015). What it does reflect is the ideology of the regional, small town bourgeoisie; socially conservative, interested in solving local problems but ultimately, as Baker (2016: 5) has argued, with a, “ …ruling ideology that is avowedly developmentalist, made up of an ideological mash up of neoliberalism, economic nationalism and social engineering … “

Islamic populisms

The so-called Arab Spring showed that an appeal to the masses that substitutes the notion of a peripheralised *ummah* (community of believers) for the notion of downtrodden ‘common people’ could be just as effective in some Muslim-majority societies (Hadiz, 2016). This was especially so in Egypt and Tunisia, where formerly underground Islamic movements successfully mobilised varied support bases to win electoral contests.

While Islamic populism had been traditionally based on petty commodity producers and traders, it has broadened its social bases of support in many cases. In Turkey, the AKP (Justice and Development Party) embodies an Islamic populist social alliance that won power over the state and includes large sections of the urban middle class and poor as well as the so-called ‘Anatolian’ bourgeoisie (Yavuz, 2006). Though the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s short period in power was to be calamitous, it too had developed similar social support bases, enabling civil society domination for decades before the Arab Spring. In Indonesia, however, Islamic populism has never come close to winning state power or dominating civil society. In fact, its social agents are divided between those that – like the AKP – have embraced democratic politics as well as the market economy, and those that operate outside the formal institutions of power, effectively unable to compete within them (Hadiz, 2016).

While the origins of Islamic populism in Indonesia lie in the late colonial period, representing petty commodity producers and traders squeezed by the influx of ethnic Chinese business competitors, by the 1980s it had found support in sections of the urban middle class, now larger and more educated, who saw their social advancement impeded by the status quo. Substantial support bases would be established too within the ever-growing *lumpenproletariat* inhabiting the vast slums of Indonesia’s cities and peri-urban formations. Crucially missing, however, is a large Islamic bourgeoisie, owing to the fact that the New Order had ensured the continued dominance of the ethnic-Chinese component of the capital-owning class.

Also, throughout the long New Order, there was nothing that resembled the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or AKP in Turkey, which were able to lay claim on representing the *ummah* as a whole, notwithstanding its growing internal differentiation. The PPP (United National Development Party), established by government fiat in 1973 to represent ‘Islam’ in electoral competition, always suffered from issues of legitimacy. The large social organisations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, were quietist and accommodationist, with their structures incorporated into New Order networks of patronage. What was mainly left were the disarrayed remnants of Darul Islam, a movement that had waged rural guerrilla warfare against the nationalist state before the New Order and sought an Islamic state. Today, some of these have adopted Salafist positions that further validate their distance from secular politics.

Tensions between political Islam and the state occurred, however, throughout the 1970s and 1980s (see Feillard and Madinier, 2010). These were reflected in state repression and resulted in bloodbaths like in the North Jakarta port enclave of Tanjung Priok in 1984, when soldiers shot at demonstrators angered by the alleged defilement of a mosque by soldiers (Raillon, 1994). They were reflected too in the rejection by a number of Muslim organisations of legislation that installed the state ideology, called Pancasila, as one to which all organisations must adhere. Many mainstream Islamic organisations – like the HMI (Islamic Students Association) – eventually relented, however, because continued opposition to Pancasila meant being locked out of the New Order's system of patronage. Significantly, those who had no substantive place anyway within the system, including Darul Islamists, continued to resent state ideology's subordination of religion. Still excluded from meaningful political roles, their successors continue to express contempt for the legitimacy of the secular nationalist state (Hadiz, 2016: 135–136).

Many of these dissenters were to be organised within underground groups primarily inhabited by recruits from newly urbanised middle class students. Some had already become entangled in the murky organisation called Komando Jihad, which allegedly perpetrated political murders, bombings, armed robberies and attacks on government institutions. In the following decade, infused with even newer recruits made available by rural dislocations and precarious urban existence, a section of the movement mutated into the Jemaah Islamiyah, a terrorist organisation responsible for the Bali Bombings (ICG, 2002).

In any case, the Indonesian political landscape in the early post-New Order period had come to feature militias espousing Islamic symbolism and terminology and nominally striving for the Islamisation of the polity. Many were involved in communal conflict in parts of Eastern Indonesia and included fighters under the aegis of Jemaah Islamiyah, though others, like the infamous Laskar Jihad, were also involved. These uniformly call for the unity of an *ummah* portrayed as marginalised by the secular national state.

Otherwise consigned to relative marginality, some militias have indirectly become part of the rough and tumble of electoral competition. Much like older secular militias like the Pemuda Pancasila, with memberships that frequently intersect with the shadowy world of organised crime (Wilson, 2015), they provide a specific service of intimidation and mobilisation in feverish jostling for control over government institutions and resources, especially at the local level.

But a different scenario could have been imagined with the establishment of the Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI) in 1990, which had raised expectations for change in the interest of the *ummah* (Hefner, 1993). Adi Sasono, a non-governmental organization activist and later Minister of Cooperatives, for example, attempted to utilise the organisation as a springboard to power for those who could self-identify with it. There was a structural problem, however, that prevented ICMI from developing into a vehicle to launch a challenge for the levers of state power. Being a creation of the regime, it absorbed selectively, thus excluding an array of groups, including most that identified with Darul Islamism. Importantly, no big bourgeoisie had emerged out of ICMI to feed into the *ummah*, and moreover, no attempt to organise the poor was made because it would have contravened the New Order's principle of mass political demobilisation.

Though ICMI lost its lustre with the demise of the New Order, its activists, along with those of the Muhammidiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, were to be found in a range of political parties after 1998. However, the most successful of the Islamic parties would be the PKS (Justice and Prosperity Party), which grew out of a semi-clandestine movement that had been established in university campuses by a Darul Islamist offshoot. Originally influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, it came to be attracted to the Turkish AKP's model of advancing a notionally homogeneous *ummah* through democratic politics and pro-market policies. Thus, the PKS has set aside the aim of establishing an

Islamic state – following the AKP example – while promoting itself as a party of integrity and good governance (Bubalo et al., 2008).

Crucially, the social alliance it held together could not include an Islamic big bourgeoisie either. Such a situation has affected the prospects for a more successful PKS-led Islamic populism, confining its social bases and limiting the material resources available to contest power. In part, this is reflected in the party's stalled progress by the 2014 general elections (Power, 2015). Moreover, PKS has not made significant inroads with the poor of Indonesia's increasingly inhospitable urban formations because its charitable activities pale in significance to those undertaken by Egyptian or Turkish counterparts.

The net result is that Islamic populism in Indonesia has continued to falter within and outside of the state. Although appeals to a unified *ummah* provide a ready-made cultural resource to mobilise support against elites identified as secular, ethnic Chinese, or foreign, organisational incoherence continues to be lacking. Nevertheless, as secular nationalist populism becomes more overtly absorbed into the mechanics of oligarchy and money politics, and in the absence of Leftist politics, the Islamic populist tendency continues to channel social justice aspirations. This is so even if parties like the PKS have been embroiled in corruption scandals like their nationalist rivals. In more fundamental terms, however, it is doubtful that Islamic populism is a transforming force within Indonesian politics. There appears to be ample opportunity for it to align with oligarchy while mobilising popular support on the basis of an *ummah*-based political identity.

The limits to populism

Populist politics has had a more limited impact on Indonesia than in places like Latin America even if Indonesia has been subject to similar social and economic upheavals. In both places, rapidly created urban populations struggle to find work and access to public services and to survive in dysfunctional cities while small businesses and the lower middle class are thrown into conflict with new patterns of work and commerce. There is also resentment of an unresponsive state and recognition that wealth and power are being concentrated in the hands of an oligarchic few.

A key factor is the way that authoritarian regimes had imposed their authority. In Latin America, even repressive regimes had enabled the existence of organisations external to its apparatus, able to make demands upon power and resources (Grigera, this volume). Most important have been labour and peasant movements. Indeed, many despots made alliances with these, most notably, Argentina's Juan Perón (Weyland, 2002: 63–64, 112–113).

In Indonesia, a different kind of authoritarian rule prevailed. Here civil society was severely disorganised and co-opted within the all-encompassing apparatus of the state and corporatist ideologies that denied legitimacy to contending agendas and organisations. Workers, peasants and middle class professionals were all embedded in organisations that served the state as its functionaries. To some extent, Indonesia resembled past European models of authoritarian state corporatism rather than Latin American models of syndicalist populism. It is no surprise, then, that aspiring populist politicians might look around in vain for vehicles that might serve as a pivot for political organisation.

All around the world, those who have used populist appeal to pursue tangible changes have possessed the key ingredient of control over mass organisations outside the existing political framework. Lula in Brazil, for example, had bases in the union movement, while Fujimori in Peru had initially used a front organisation, Cambio 90, to mobilise grassroots support. Like Chávez in Venezuela, he consolidated authority by carrying out a constitutional coup against established interests. Chávez also centralised power in his hands by nationalising much of the economy, including the critical oil sector.

In Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra came to power with support from elements within the Thai bourgeoisie threatened by the IMF reform agenda following the Asian economic crisis. But he quickly built a political party, Thai Rak Thai, locating its base within a rural poor constituency (Hewison, this volume). In Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan launched his political career within the Islamic-oriented Welfare Party. As leader of the AKP, he has built alliances with the urban poor and provincial bourgeoisie, the latter on the basis of radical market agendas. In some cases, notably that of Fujimori and Erdoğan, neoliberal market reform was a weapon in the assault on existing moneyed oligarchy.

Unlike these cases, Jokowi in Indonesia has been forced into a politics based on direct consultations and communication without a substantive dismantling of the existing system. His attempts to escape from this trap by seeking alliances within the ranks of entrenched political parties have proven to be a zero sum game. Ongoing failure to deliver reforms combined with highly publicised involvement in old regime politics have led to a startling decline in his public approval ratings (Muhtadi, 2015: 23, 24).

This is a fragile way of linking state power to popular sentiment. Nevertheless, while this format may not undermine the state it does have a diluting effect on established authority, leading potentially to more disorganised forms of state authority and disaggregated forms of money politics.

The purveyors of Islamic populism in Indonesia are also constrained, but for different reasons. Their main problem is the legacy of almost continuous peripheralisation. Before the advent of New Order rule, their political forefathers had crucially failed to gain a strong foothold on the nascent post-colonial state after having been marginalised under colonialism. Today Islamic populism has been drawn into the mainstream of conflict over power and resources, resulting in permutations towards either acceptance of the profane world of money politics or consignment to the sphere of political violence.

That the big bourgeoisie remains mainly ethnic Chinese has important implications for Islamic populism, for it would be unlikely to feature in alliances expressed in Islamic identity. The main contrast here is with Turkey, where the Anatolian bourgeoisie became a central part of the broad alliance, led by the AKP on the basis of Islamic identity, mobilised against Kemalism's control over the state and the economy (Yavuz, 2006).

This all indicates that populism is being absorbed into the inexorable logic of the state machine and its connected system of oligarchy and corruption. On the other hand, there is a real sense that the political parties and state apparatus cannot simply go on in the same way as the population feels the weight of economic and social dislocation more heavily and where the resentment of being left behind is increasingly powerful. These are factors that both demand the attention of politicians and present them with a political resource.

Even as populism becomes yet another vehicle for elite-centred agendas, its influence is not so easily contained. The logical conclusion of Prabowo's programme, for example, would have been the sort of nationalist and corporatist regimes that emerged in early twentieth century Europe. There is also a contradiction involved in that as much as Islamic populism continues to be mainstreamed into democratic life, many exponents of the idea of a repressed *ummah* remain outside of Indonesia's formal democratic institutions.

In the struggle to define what sort of populism may be drafted into the Indonesian political equation, Jokowi therefore has important competitors. While he has widespread support among the poor and small business communities in regional towns and cities, he has no apparatus to establish hegemony over them. They are also inclined, for instance, to the sort of identity politics espoused by Islamic populists often involving suspicion of foreign interests and of Chinese capitalists considered external to the *ummah*. Indeed, Jokowi's appeals have had to compete with Islamic forces,

including in his hometown of Solo, where turf wars between militias help shape the local political landscape (Hadiz, 2016: 134–135).

In spite of these ambiguities, the continuing absence of strongly liberal-reformist, social democratic or Leftist streams virtually guarantees populism's continuing relevance in Indonesia. We are already seeing collisions between competing forms of populist politics – rather than their confrontations with some sort of pre-packaged modern rationality, whether or not intertwined with liberal political traditions. What is important are the class alliances that will shape its dominant forms in times to come. But Indonesian developments mirror those taking place globally. As liberal traditions are undermined in Europe and elsewhere, and established political institutions fail to cope with growing public distrust, political discourses and agendas are also becoming increasingly shaped by populist alternatives.

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Note

1. Indonesia went through a period of growth in inequality between 1990 and 2012 that has led to the greatest level recorded in its history. This occurred during a time span that coincided with the late authoritarian period as well as democratisation. CEDS-USAID (2013: 4) suggests, for example, that the Gini coefficient grew from 0.33 in 1990 to 0.41 during these two decades. Winters (2013: 1) suggests that 'the average net worth' of Indonesia's forty richest people is 'over 630,000 times the country's GDP [gross domestic product] per capita'. He points out that although they constitute a miniscule part of the population, their combined assets equal 10 per cent of GDP'.

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Author biographies

Vedi R Hadiz is Professor of Asian Studies, University of Melbourne. His most recent book is *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press, 2016). He is co-author of *Reorganising Power in Indonesia: The Politics of Oligarchy in an Age of Markets* (RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

Richard Robison is Emeritus Professor, Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University. He is best known for his book, *Indonesia: The Rise of Capital* (Allen and Unwin, 1986). He is co-author of *Reorganising Power in Indonesia: The Politics of Oligarchy in an Age of Markets* (RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).