
OLIGARCHIC POPULISM: PRABOWO SUBIANTO'S CHALLENGE TO INDONESIAN DEMOCRACY

Edward Aspinall¹

In 2014, Indonesia faced its most severe threat of authoritarian regression since the transition to democratic rule began in 1998. Prabowo Subianto, a general with a fiercely reactionary record under the Suharto regime, and with a party platform that implied rolling back key democratic reforms, came within 6.3 percentage points of winning the July 9 presidential election. In this essay I examine Prabowo Subianto's background and the nature of his political appeal, explore how he came so close to winning the presidency, and analyze the implications of his campaign for Indonesian democracy. Prabowo represented a classically authoritarian-populist challenge of a sort that is common in democratic regimes characterized by pervasive patronage politics, weak institutions, and highly decentralized governance. Though familiar tropes of Indonesian political conservatism were part of his appeal, they were not central to it. Instead, Prabowo's critique of current political arrangements drew on two major sources. First, he invoked nationalism, describing Indonesia's poor economic conditions as a product of the country's exploitation by foreign powers. Second, he condemned the corruption of political elites and the environment of deceit and money

Edward Aspinall is a professor in the department of political and social change, Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, Australian National University.

¹ My thanks to Fajran Zain and Thomas Power for research assistance that contributed to this article; to Marcus Mietzner for his many insights through the course of the research; and to the *Indonesia* reviewers. The Australian Research Council provided funding for the research upon which this article is based through projects FT120100742 and DP140103114.

politics fostered by many politicians, presenting himself as an anti-political outsider who could provide the strong leadership Indonesia needed.

When viewed comparatively, we can immediately categorize Prabowo as a populist politician of a sort found in many countries. In contemporary usage, populism is frequently defined in political terms (rather than as a particular class, or economic or ideological formation, as was once popular). Hence, in Weyland's formulation, populism is a "political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers."² Such a strategy tends to be associated with particular ideological markers: the leader typically claims to embody personally the interests, preferences, and attitudes of the mass of the common folk, and condemns the existing political establishment and institutions as self-serving and hostile to popular interests. In addition, the populist leader claims to represent "people who feel excluded or marginalized from national political life" and promises "to rescue them from crises, threats, and enemies."³ As shall be demonstrated in this article, Prabowo fitted such criteria precisely. Indeed, were there a standard textbook on populism, Prabowo might have been a faithful student, and it is possible he consciously borrowed from leaders such as Thailand's Thaksin Shinawatra and Venezuela's Hugo Chavez—figures whom Prabowo has publicly stated he admires. At the same time, as we shall see, Prabowo's populism drew on the deep wellsprings of Indonesian history.

Prabowo, however, exemplified a particular *oligarchic* populism: although he condemned the political elite, he had quintessentially elite origins himself, and had risen to a position of political prominence through the very oligarchic power relations he critiqued. This combination seems counterintuitive, given that populists typically discursively attack the oligarchs. Indeed, as Carlos de la Torre puts it, "The peculiarity of populist discourse is to frame politics as an antagonistic confrontation between the people and the oligarchy."⁴ As we shall see, Prabowo adopted this framing. Yet, if we think of oligarchs, following Winters, merely as "actors who command and control massive concentrations of material resources," then it is not surprising that populists are often drawn from the oligarchy.⁵ Precisely because they run personalist tilts at political power, populists frequently have to rely on their own financial resources, at least initially, to fund their campaigns. Thus, populist politicians often have backgrounds of fabulous personal wealth: think, for example, of Thailand's Thaksin

² Kurt Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics," *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 1 (October 2001): 14. For similar political definitions of populism, see, for example: Steven Levitsky and Kenneth M. Roberts, "Latin America's 'Left Turn': A Framework for analysis," in *The resurgence of the Latin American left*, ed. Steven Levitsky and Kenneth M. Roberts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); and Kenneth M. Roberts, "Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America: The Peruvian Case," *World Politics* 48 (1995): 82–116.

³ Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept," 14. See also Roberts, "Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism."

⁴ Carlos de la Torre, "The Resurgence of Radical Populism in Latin America," *Constellations* 14, no. 3 (2007): 391.

⁵ Jeffrey A. Winters, *Oligarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6.

Shinawatra, who has been described as a “pluto-populist.”⁶ As we shall see, Prabowo fits the bill in this regard.

Even if we adopt a more demanding definition of oligarchs as a dominant class arising from an informal fusion of state and economic power (as might be derived from work on Indonesia by Robison and Hadiz⁷), Prabowo may still be characterized as an oligarchic populist. He was a leading product of the Suharto regime’s ability to transform members of leading bureaucratic families into apex capitalists. Equally significant, his presidential campaign was organized using a pattern of cash-driven informal networking of a sort that has facilitated oligarchic dominance in Indonesia’s post-Suharto polity. The political forces Prabowo mobilized behind his presidential bid were largely organized through clientelist linkages of a sort typical of mainstream political organization, while a key to his political success was an ability to draw on vast economic resources, ultimately traceable back to the privileges he and his family enjoyed both during and after the Suharto era. Moreover, there was a close connection between the nature of his political appeal and critique on the one hand, and the foundation of his family wealth on the other. In particular, his nationalist posturing on economic policy reflected the interests of a sector of Indonesian capital reliant on natural resource extraction and rent seeking, in which he was a significant player. His form of populism was one that articulated the interests of an extractive economic elite in a boom period of commodity demand.

The rise of an authoritarian populist challenger like Prabowo was almost overdetermined in contemporary Indonesia. Populism, as observers of this phenomenon elsewhere have long noted, typically arises when part of the population feels disillusioned and disenfranchised from established political institutions, especially in conditions of widespread patronage politics and corruption.⁸ It is particularly likely in patronage democracies in which decentralization of political and economic authority disrupts lines of political control between the center and grassroots, upsetting both policy delivery and central political control over the regions—conditions very much present in Indonesia.⁹ Moreover, a widespread—though diffuse—mood of nostalgia for the certainties of the New Order has long been present in Indonesia, lending further weight to Prabowo’s appeal. At the same time, although Indonesia has long since recovered from the worst impacts of the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98, many of the social conditions that underpin populism elsewhere also obtain in Indonesia: though poverty has been declining, about half of the population reside precariously in the near-poor category, living on less than two dollars a day. As elsewhere, Indonesia’s

⁶ Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, “Pluto-Populism in Thailand: Business Remaking Politics,” unpublished paper available at pioneer.netserv.chula.ac.th/~ppasuk/plutopopulism.pdf, accessed March 2, 2015.

⁷ Robison and Hadiz argue, for example, that in post-Suharto Indonesia, “access to and control of public office and state authority continues to be the key determinant of how private wealth and social power is accumulated and distributed.” See: Vedi R. Hadiz and Richard Robison, “The Political Economy of Oligarchy and the Reorganization of Power in Indonesia,” in *Beyond Oligarchy: Wealth, Power and Contemporary Indonesian Politics*, ed. Michele Ford and Thomas B. Pepinsky (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2014), 35.

⁸ See, for example, Kenneth M. Roberts, “Social Correlates of Party System Demise and Populist Resurgence in Venezuela,” *Latin American Politics and Society* 45, no. 3 (2003): 35–57.

⁹ Paul D. Kenny, *The Patronage Network: Broker Power, Populism, and Democracy in India* (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2013).

economic growth of recent years has been accompanied by growing income inequality.¹⁰ Finally, during the decade leading to Prabowo's bid, Indonesia was ruled by a president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who was strongly criticized as a *peragu*, a vacillator, unable to take decisive action on pressing issues. Yudhoyono thus constituted the perfect foil for Prabowo's promise of strong leadership.

Moreover, while the contemporary setting was propitious for a populist challenge, it should be stressed also that populism has deep historical roots in Indonesia, which Prabowo drew upon in fashioning his appeal. The most obvious—and deliberately forged—connection was with the ideological and oratory style of Sukarno. Populism, along with nationalism, was the ideological centerpiece of the Guided Democracy (1957–65) regime, when Sukarno attempted to hold together the conflicting political forces of that period by promoting belief in “a spiritual union between himself and the *Rakyat* [People],” where the People were “the entire mass of Indonesians, the mystical embodiment of all the nation.”¹¹ Populist themes later recurred in episodes of opposition to the New Order regime, including the Islamic challenge mounted by the *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan* (Unity Development Party) between roughly the late 1970s and late 1980s, and even more obviously in the 1990s during an upsurge of public support for Sukarno's daughter, Megawati Soekarnoputri, who was seen by many supporters as embodying the *Rakyat's* desire for social and political change, even while she did little to articulate those desires explicitly.¹² In the post-Suharto period, meanwhile, invocations of “the people,” condemnations of elite corruption, propagation of economic nationalism, and rhetorical hostility to capitalism and neoliberalism have all become the basic stuff of mainstream politics, even if the politicians espousing such themes often lack conviction and charisma when delivering their messages. As we shall see, Prabowo went much further than most elite politicians in reworking such themes and delivering them with passion; it is important to stress that in doing so he was delivering a historically resonant message.

The remainder of this article analyzes Prabowo's political rise through five main sections. The first two set the scene. The first section introduces his ascent to the heights of power in the New Order regime, and his subsequent fall into political disgrace, touching also on what we know about his personality. The second section sketches the broad arc of his attempted political resurrection in post-Suharto Indonesia. As we shall see, after returning from a period of self-imposed exile, Prabowo spent some time attempting to secure control over existing political vehicles before forming his own party in 2008 and then eventually mobilizing several parties representing a majority of voters behind his presidential bid in 2014. This section also analyzes Prabowo's business interests and sources of financial power, locating one crucial condition for his tilt at the presidency in the reconstitution of Indonesia's

¹⁰ See, for example, Riyana Miranti, Yogi Vidyattama, Erick Hansnata, Rebecca Cassells, and Alan Duncan, “Trends in Poverty and Inequality in Decentralising Indonesia,” *OECD Social, Employment, and Migration Working Papers*, No. 148, OECD Publishing, 2013.

¹¹ Ruth McVey, “Nationalism, Islam, and Marxism: The Management of Ideological Conflict in Indonesia,” in Soekarno, *Nationalism, Islam, and Marxism* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1970), 5–6.

¹² For an interpretation of the PPP mobilization as populist, see John T. Sidel, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 56–66. For a similar interpretation of Megawati's challenge to the late New Order, see Edward Aspinall, *Opposing Suharto: Compromise, Resistance, and Regime Change in Indonesia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 145–76.

oligarchy that occurred after the 1997–98 financial collapse. The third section describes Prabowo’s ideological appeal in three parts: his nationalist vision, his critique of the political establishment and promotion of himself as its antithesis, and the authoritarian elements of his vision. A fourth section examines in greater detail his 2014 presidential campaign and the nature of the political support he mobilized, illustrating the clientelist and oligarchic foundations of Prabowo’s strategy and arguing that, although his campaign was presented discursively as a challenge by an outsider, it was, in fact, mounted from deep within the fabric of Indonesia’s established ruling elite. It should be stressed, however, that the focus of this article is not the details of campaign organization or chronology, but, rather, the deeper historical background and political sources of Prabowo’s candidacy.¹³ Finally, a fifth section spells out the implications of Prabowo’s challenge to Indonesian democracy, suggesting that it highlights not so much democracy’s vulnerability to outsider challenges as the fragility of insider commitments to democratic institutions and procedures.

Prabowo’s Rise and Fall

Prabowo takes pride in being an “outsider” and “maverick.”¹⁴ For Robert Barr, a political outsider “is someone who gains political prominence not through or in association with an established, competitive party, but as a political independent or in association with new or newly competitive parties.”¹⁵ In such narrowly political terms, Prabowo fits the bill as an outsider, because although he initially tried to enter politics through established political avenues, he eventually opted to establish a new, personalist party. In other regards, however, Prabowo was the ultimate *insider* representation of Indonesia’s power elite: the scion of a wealthy family, formerly one of Indonesia’s most senior army officers, one of the country’s richest men, and the former son-in-law of President Suharto. Ultimately, however, he was able plausibly to claim outsider status given his fate in the immediate post-Suharto period, after he became, in 1998–99, one of the country’s most disgraced political leaders. His subsequent trajectory tracks the afterlife of Suharto’s New Order in *Reformasi*-era Indonesia.

As he has emphasized in many campaign speeches, writings, and other promotional material, Prabowo came from a prominent political family. With a Javanese *priyayi* aristocratic background, including having ancestors who played a role in the so-called “Java War” against the Dutch (1825–30), Prabowo’s grandfather, Margono Djojohadikoesoemo, was the founder of Bank Indonesia. His father, Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, was one of Indonesia’s greatest economists, trained in the Sorbonne and the Netherlands. An important PSI (Partai Sosialis Indonesia, Indonesian Socialist Party) leader, he was a cabinet minister three times during the 1950s, before fleeing a corruption investigation in 1957 and joining with the regional army rebels then based

¹³ For one excellent account of the campaign, see Marcus Mietzner, *Reinventing Asian Populism: Jokowi’s Rise, Democracy, and Political Contestation in Indonesia* (Honolulu: East West Center, 2015).

¹⁴ Maria A Ressa, “Indonesia Elections: Prabowo and the Divine Revelation,” *Al Jazeera*, July 16, 2014, <http://m.aljazeera.com/story/20147151443497572>, accessed March 2, 2015.

¹⁵ Robert R. Barr, “Populists, Outsiders, and Anti-establishment Politics,” *Party Politics* 15, no. 1 (2009): 33.

in Sumatra.¹⁶ Sumitro subsequently went into exile with his family, and was a major fundraiser for the PRRI (Pemerintahan Revolusioner Republik Indonesia, Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia) rebellion, promoting the movement to sympathetic governments. This period of exile meant that Prabowo spent his formative years (he was born in 1952) in exile in Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Britain, and Switzerland. Sumitro returned to Indonesia after the collapse of the Sukarno government, and then served two more periods in Suharto's cabinet, as minister of trade and then minister of research, between 1968 and 1978.

Prabowo returned with his father to Indonesia at the dawn of the New Order, as a young man, more comfortable speaking English than Indonesian, yet with powerful ambitions. Prabowo joined the National Military Academy in Magelang in 1970, graduating in 1974 after a year's delay caused by disciplinary action for being absent from the academy without leave. He spent his subsequent military career entirely within the army's elite units, the Special Forces Command (Komando Pasukan Khusus, Kopassus) and the Army Strategic Reserve Command (Komando Cadangan Strategis Angkatan Darat, Kostrad). He gained considerable experience in intelligence and counterinsurgency operations, including in East Timor, where circumstantial evidence suggests his involvement in massacres of civilians in the early 1980s, as well as various other black operations.¹⁷ He was also in command of troops responsible for abuses against civilians in Aceh.¹⁸ After he married President Suharto's youngest daughter, Siti Hediati Hariyadi, more commonly known as Titiek, in 1983, his career accelerated. (According to some military associates, he increasingly acted outside the chain of command from this time; for example, he frequently traveled to East Timor without reporting to the local regional commander.)¹⁹ In 1995, Prabowo became commander of Kopassus and, expanding his influence over the regime's intelligence apparatus, was increasingly seen as the rising star within the army, attracting both camp followers and rivals. As the Suharto government teetered on the brink of the precipice in March 1998, he was appointed commander of Kostrad, the very position Suharto had used in 1965 to seize power during that year's political crisis. It was not surprising, therefore, that Prabowo would seek to take advantage of the position to advance himself when Suharto's regime was beset by crisis in 1998.

In the first five months of that year, as urban rioting and street demonstrations escalated, Prabowo emerged as the leader of a palace guard of generals most willing to use coercion to defend the regime or to position themselves to benefit from its demise. Prabowo cultivated links with Islamist groups and helped fan anti-Chinese sentiment

¹⁶ Audrey R. Kahin and George McT. Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia* (New York: New Press, 1995), 70–71. An excellent account of the Djojohadikusumo family in past and present Indonesian politics can be found in Jenna Purdey, "Narratives to Power: The Case of the Djojohadikusumo Family Dynasty over Four Generations," paper presented to the Political Dynasty in Southeast Asia workshop, Flinders University, Adelaide, November 16, 2013.

¹⁷ See: Gerry van Klinken, "Prabowo and Human Rights," *Inside Indonesia* 116 (April–June 2014), <http://www.insideindonesia.org/prabowo-and-human-rights>, accessed March 2, 2015; and Made Supriatma, "Prabowo Subianto Di Mata Seorang Gubernur Daerah Pendudukan," *Indoprogres*, July 1, 2014, <http://indoprogres.com/2014/07/prabowo-subianto-di-mata-seorang-gubernur-daerah-pendudukan/>, accessed March 2, 2015.

¹⁸ Geoffrey Robinson, "Rawan Is as Rawan Does: The Origins of Disorder in New Order Aceh," *Indonesia* 66 (October 1998): 140–41.

¹⁹ "Saya Mengeset Penyeragaman Prabowo," *Tempo*, July 6, 2014: 51.

in the lead-up to the riots.²⁰ It is widely believed that Prabowo was behind the Trisakti shootings of May 12, 1998, and that he played a role in masterminding or at least facilitating the subsequent street rioting in Jakarta, although no conclusive evidence has been presented to support those claims.²¹ Where there was incontrovertible evidence, however, was in the kidnapping of twenty-three anti-government activists, thirteen of whom remain missing and are presumed dead, by a Tim Mawar (Rose Team) established by Prabowo. In 1999 a military court tried and punished eleven Kopassus officers and soldiers for the kidnappings; their military careers, however, were not subsequently harmed.²²

Once Suharto resigned and was replaced by B. J. Habibie on May 21, 1998, Prabowo immediately tried to strengthen his and his faction's position, but overplayed his hand. In Habibie's account, hours after Habibie's inauguration, Prabowo personally confronted him and tried to gain promotions for Prabowo supporters within the military. The next morning, Habibie received reports that Kostrad troops from outside the city were moving toward Jakarta and that troops were gathering at his residence and the presidential palace, all without the knowledge of Armed Forces Commander General Wiranto.²³ Habibie immediately ordered that Prabowo be removed from his post as Kostrad commander, triggering another visit from Prabowo and another personal confrontation. Prabowo told Habibie his dismissal was an insult to both Prabowo's family and Suharto's family and appealed "in the name of my father, Prof. Soemitro Djojohadikusumo, and my father-in-law, President Soeharto" to be reinstated.²⁴ Habibie did not relent, and two months later Prabowo was tried by a military honor council and expelled from the military for his role in the aforementioned kidnappings and other acts of indiscipline, including security operations performed outside the chain of command in Aceh, Papua, and East Timor, and for traveling overseas without permission.²⁵

It must have been humiliating for Prabowo to find himself in this position. From being a top politico-military player, his star plummeted and he was, by late 1998, one of the most reviled figures in the country. Arguably, only Suharto and some of his children were held in lower regard by the public. In this context, Prabowo decided to leave Indonesia and lived for several years in Jordan, where he was reported to be close to King Abdullah II and where he represented the business interests of his

²⁰ John T. Sidel, "Macet Total: Logics of Circulation and Accumulation in the Demise of Indonesia's New Order," *Indonesia* 66 (October 1998): 182.

²¹ Prabowo himself has a version of events that sheets the blame home on his great rival, then Armed Forces Commander Wiranto; see Jose Manuel Tesoro, "The Scapegoat?" *Asiaweek*, March 3, 2000.

²² Made Supriatma, "Melacak Tim Mawar," *Indoprogres*, May 27, 2014, <http://indoprogress.com/2014/05/melacak-tim-mawar/>, accessed March 2, 2015.

²³ See: Marcus Mietzner, *Military Politics, Islam, and the State in Indonesia: From Turbulent Transition to Democratic Consolidation* (Singapore: Institutes of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 134–35; Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, *Detik-Detik yang Menentukan: Jalan Panjang Indonesia Menuju Demokrasi* (Jakarta: THC Mandiri, 2006), 82–83.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

²⁵ The report of the Honor Council was leaked by former military rivals in 2014 who believed that, by showing how Prabowo had disregarded institutional control within the military, it underlined his unfitness to be president; see: "Valid, Surat Rekomendasi Pemecatan Prabowo," *Tempo*, June 10, 2014, <http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2014/06/10/078583728/Valid-Surat-Rekomendasi-Pemecatan-Prabowo>, accessed March 2, 2015.

brother, Hashim Djojohadikusumo. Prabowo pointedly ignored calls to return home when a military tribunal found the eleven Kopassus soldiers guilty in the kidnapping cases.²⁶

A strong thread that emerges from the arc of Prabowo's career so far is the powerful sense of entitlement and utter self-confidence that motivates him. Those traits are visible from his very early life and presumably derived from his unusual family background and education, and reinforced by subsequent experiences. Prabowo frequently explains that his family background and career provided him with a public-service orientation:

My brother and I, we both have aristocratic titles, but that being said, we're both very conscious of social justice. One of the things I always remember our grandfather saying—you know, there's a term in French, *noblesse oblige*—with one's status comes responsibility. And my brother feels that and so do I. You know, that's something we inherited from our grandfather and the family history.²⁷

But it is a sense of entitlement rather than service that helps explain Prabowo's long record of disregard for rules and institutions, beginning during his time at the military academy, but evident throughout his military career.

This strong sense of entitlement also helps explain the forcefulness of Prabowo's presidential ambitions, and the anger he repeatedly expressed throughout 2014 when those ambitions were frustrated.²⁸ Prabowo has told the media that he only made the decision to try to become president in 2002, though some personal associates have suggested he had expressed this ambition as a child.²⁹ In fact, Prabowo must have felt himself tantalizingly close to attaining the presidency in 1998, only to have it yanked away from him by his enemies. His recollections of this time are full of bitterness about being betrayed by Wiranto and other rivals, and he frequently describes himself as a "victim" or "fall guy" of *reformasi*. Indeed, this obsessiveness with personal betrayal and victimhood—very much apparent in his campaign speeches in 2014—is apparently at the core of his personality. Explaining his love for his animals (he is often photographed in affectionate poses with his pedigree horses), he told one journalist:

When we grow up and see human nature, there's betrayal, perfidy, lying ... But some of these animals are very basic. You give love to them, they give love back. You are loyal to them. They are loyal to you.³⁰

Presumably, this demand for strong personal loyalty is connected to another of Prabowo's personality traits, one that eventually came to be seen as an electoral liability. He reportedly has a propensity for outbursts of rage that sometimes involve

²⁶ See, for example, "Prabowo Ignores Wiranto's Call to Go Home," *Indonesian Observer*, April 16, 1999.

²⁷ Geoff Thompson, "The Farmer Wants a Country," Australian Broadcasting Corporation Foreign Correspondent Story, March 31, 2009, http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2009/indonesia_prabowo_hi.aspx, accessed March 18, 2015.

²⁸ See especially his July 25, 2014, speech, "Pesan Video Prabowo Subianto," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9pfcBCzprU>, accessed March 2, 2015.

²⁹ "Komandan Cilik di Dalkeith Road," *Tempo*, July 6, 2014: 47.

³⁰ Ben Bland, "Lunch with the FT: Prabowo Subianto," *Financial Times*, June 28, 2013, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/7024de00-de5b-11e2-b990-00144feab7de.html#ixzz3JHLtnAa6>, accessed March 2, 2015.

physical violence, with reports circulating widely of him throwing cellphones, ashtrays, and even punches when angered by his associates or underlings.³¹

Clearly, Prabowo has an unusually powerful personality; this aspect of him has fascinated and alarmed observers since the New Order years. As one unnamed Western defense attaché told a journalist back in 1998, "He's the most charismatic, enigmatic, unusual and weird guy I've ever known in my life ... He's also laudable and detestable ... Pick an adjective and it fits."³² This charismatic weirdness, as we shall see, was critical to Prabowo's approach as a presidential candidate.

Prabowo's Resurrection

By 2003, Prabowo had returned to Indonesia. His first attempt at a political career came through Partai Golkar (Golongan Karya, Functional Groups), the old political party of the Suharto regime. In April 2004, the party held a convention to select its candidate for Indonesia's first direct presidential elections later that year. Prabowo himself described his run at this post as a learning experience, and he placed last out of five candidates, with only 39 out of the 547 convention votes, a result largely attributable to the superior organizational and vote-buying power of his rivals.³³ In his speeches prior to the convention he was already emphasizing economic nationalist, anti-corruption, and rural themes that were to become central to his political posturing, even if he did not then have the vehemence he gained in later years.³⁴

Also in 2004, Prabowo began to establish links with other networks that later became important for his subsequent political campaigning. The most important was HKTI (Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia, Indonesian Harmony Association of Farmers), the old rural mass organization of Golkar, and a useful platform from which to access a rural audience and strike a posture of sympathy towards farmers. Over subsequent years he reached out to many such networks, for example, becoming the chairperson of APPSI (Asosiasi Pedagang Pasar Seluruh Indonesia, All-Indonesia Association of Market Traders) and targeting a variety of organizations, such as veterans' associations, labor unions, and organizations of village heads, which could provide him with access to a mass base.³⁵

In 2008, Prabowo took another major step, creating a political party entirely controlled by loyalists and motivated by the single goal of helping him become president. The Partai Gerindra (Gerakan Indonesia Raya, Greater Indonesia

³¹ See, for example, "PPP Tarik Dukungan, Prabowo Lempar Ponsel," *Tempo*, April 29, 2014, <http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2014/04/29/078574071/PPP-Tarik-Dukungan-Prabowo-Lempar-Ponsel>, accessed March 2, 2015. In 2014, former factional rivals from within the military described these personality flaws openly, with one, A. M. Hendropriyono (himself a man with a bad human rights record), denouncing Prabowo as a "psychopath."

³² Cindy Shiner, "Once Powerful Son-in-Law of Suharto Under Fire," *The Washington Post*, August 12, 1998, cited in Adam Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia's Search for Security* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1999), 336.

³³ See, for example, "Catatan-catatan dari Konvensi Partai Golkar," *Pelita*, April 21, 2004, <http://www.pelita.or.id/baca.php?id=25764>, accessed March 2, 2015.

³⁴ See, for example, "Prabowo: Petani Rindu Soeharto," *Jawa Pos*, August 25, 2003.

³⁵ See, for example, "Prabowo Merapat ke PAN," *Jawa Pos*, July 17, 2005, which details an attempt to take over a transportation association affiliated to PAN.

Movement) was established on an economic nationalist and populist platform, with key leadership positions filled by Prabowo's personal supporters and business associates. These included several comrades from his Kopassus days, such as General Muchdi, who had recently been tried—but acquitted—for the 2004 murder of the famous human rights activist, Munir. However, despite a strong campaign of media advertising (between October 2008 and February 2009, AC Nielsen estimated Gerindra's spending on advertising far exceeded even that of President Yudhoyono's Partai Demokrat),³⁶ Gerindra was only able to get 4.5 percent of the popular vote in the April 2009 legislative election, far short of the 20 percent it needed to nominate a presidential candidate. Though Prabowo tried to pull together a coalition that would support his presidential bid, he had to accept a vice-presidential nomination on the ticket of Megawati Soekarnoputri. Though this outcome angered Prabowo, in fact the ticket proved to be an excellent platform for promoting his public profile. Megawati and Prabowo were decisively defeated by Yudhoyono in the first round of the presidential election in July 2009, but over subsequent years Prabowo's place in national opinion polls of preferred presidential candidates never dropped far below 20 percent, considerably higher than any other likely candidate and making him the most popular politician in the country after President Yudhoyono—at least until Jokowi began to register in national polls from late 2013.

Before examining ideological aspects of Prabowo's appeal, it is important to note that Prabowo's dramatic entry onto the public political stage in 2008–09 was made possible by his massive expenditure of wealth. This was most obvious in the media campaign to promote Prabowo and Gerindra in 2008–09, with one Gerindra official estimating that it cost Prabowo's brother, Hashim Djojohadikusumo, \$US100 million.³⁷ Funding the Gerindra organization, too, was a major drain on the brothers' finances, and even Prabowo's dominance in organizations such as HKTI must have been costly, requiring at least sponsorship of participants at congresses and other events.³⁸

What were the sources of these funds? The major backer of Prabowo's political ambitions has always been his brother, Hasjim Djojohadikusumo. Already established as one of the wealthiest non-Chinese businesspeople in the country by the end of the Suharto era, in 2009 he ranked twenty-first on the *Forbes* list of the country's wealthiest individuals, with an estimated worth of US\$500 million. He was number thirty-two in 2011, with an estimated \$790 million, and dropped slightly to forty-second in 2013, with an estimated \$700 million. (Some Indonesian news sources speculated that the fall between 2011 and 2013 was a mark of the resources Hashim had been pumping into Prabowo's campaign.). His ranking rose again to number thirty-nine in 2014 (with an estimated \$825 million).³⁹ Prabowo, too, is very wealthy in his own right, living

³⁶ "Partai Desimal dan Anak Ideologi," *Tempo*, April 13, 2009.

³⁷ Dirk Tomsa, "The Eagle has Crash-landed," *Inside Indonesia* 97 (2009), <http://www.insideindonesia.org/feature-editions/the-eagle-has-crash-landed>, accessed March 2, 2105.

³⁸ See, for example, "Prabowo versus Oesman Saptadi di HKTI 2010-2015," *kompasiana.com*, July 15, 2010, <http://politik.kompasiana.com/2010/07/15/prabowo-dan-munas-tandingan-hkti-2010-194865.html>, accessed March 2, 2105.

³⁹ For these *Forbes* rankings, see the following (accessed March 2, 2015): http://www.forbes.com/lists/2009/80/indonesia-billionaires-09_Hashim-Djojohadikusumo_3HVQ.html; http://www.forbes.com/lists/2011/80/indonesia-billionaires-11_Hashim-Djojohadikusumo_3HVQ.html; and <http://www.forbes.com/profile/hashim-djojohadikusumo/>. For a piece speculating that political support had contributed to the drop, see "Topang Prabowo, Kekayaan Hashim Terus Melorot," *Tempo*, November 22, 2013,

ostentatiously on a hillside ranch outside Jakarta, owning super-expensive polo ponies, and traveling in a private jet and helicopter. His wealth has multiplied significantly over the last decade. In 2003, his net worth, as reported to the KPK (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, Corruption Eradication Commission), was—given his status and standing—an implausibly low ten billion rupiah (US\$840,000). In 2009, this figure increased by a factor of 160 to 1.6 trillion rupiah (US\$135 million), and to about 1.7 trillion (US\$143 million) in 2014.⁴⁰ These figures must, of course, be taken with a large grain of salt, but they probably point to considerable improvement of Prabowo's private fortune leading to the period when he became serious about his political ambitions. Prabowo's personal business interests—although it is unclear how closely these are intertwined with those of his brother—cover areas including coal mining, oil palm, timber, pulp and paper, fisheries, and oil trading.⁴¹

The source of the brothers' wealth—as was the case for the family members of other senior officials during the Suharto period—was in the close connection between political and economic power characteristic of the Suharto regime, and which continues to feature in Indonesian power relations. Hashim was by far the larger business player of the two brothers; his Tirtamas Group was estimated as being worth US\$7 billion toward the end of the Suharto years, and had interests including six banks, a cement factory, a petrochemical complex, a coal-fired power station, and oil palm.⁴² Many of Hashim's most important business investments were joint ventures with his sister-in-law, Titiek. As he told *Forbes* in a 2010 interview, "I had connections. I've never hidden the fact. I made use of those connections. Why wouldn't I? But I never misused the connections. I never had a monopoly."⁴³ He was—and still is—widely admired as a skilled entrepreneur, yet he was also able to leverage his connections effectively in the New Order period, for instance, facilitating the opening of the power sector to foreign investors and the privatization of state-owned telephone companies, making him "one of the most sought-after local partners for multinationals who want a presence in Indonesia."⁴⁴ At the same time, the political partnership with his brother was already established, with Hashim playing the role of financier for his brother's political ambitions and machinery. As Hashim explained to one reporter in 1993, if Prabowo "needs funds, ... as a loyal and dutiful brother, I'll provide them. He has a lot of soldiers to take care of."⁴⁵ Such interdependence of private capital and politico-

<http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2013/11/22/090531631/Topang-Prabowo-Kekayaan-Hashim-Terus-Melorot>, accessed March 2, 2015.

⁴⁰ See: "Prabowo Paling Kaya: Hartanya meningkat sekitar 160 kali lipat dalam enam tahun," *Koran Tempo*, May 19, 2009; and "Hampir 11 Tahun, Harta Kekayaan Prabowo Naik 100 Kali Lipat Lebih," *Kompas*, July 2, 2014. US dollar figures based on 1 July 1, 2014 exchange rate.

⁴¹ One source on Prabowo's business interests is A. Pambudi, *Kalau Prabowo Jadi Presiden* (Narasi: Yogyakarta, 2009), 93–100.

⁴² See: "Tirtamas Group: Active to Expand Its Business Base," *Indonesian Commercial Newsletter*, September 22, 1997; and "Indonesia's Hashim: Picking up the Pieces," *Businessweek*, March 29, 1998, <http://www.businessweek.com/stories/1998-03-29/indonesias-hashim-picking-up-the-pieces-intl-edition>, accessed March 2, 2015.

⁴³ Simon Montlake, "Homecoming," *Forbes*, January 15, 2010, <http://www.forbes.com/global/2010/0118/companies-djojohadikusumo-suharto-kazakh-exile-returns.html>, accessed March 2, 2015.

⁴⁴ "How to Build an Empire in Jakarta," *Businessweek*, October 20, 1996, <http://www.businessweek.com/stories/1996-10-20/how-to-build-an-empire-in-jakarta-intl-edition>, accessed March 2, 2015.

⁴⁵ Raphael Pura, "Hashim Emerges in Corporate Indonesia—Family and Political Connections Bolster Tough Expansionary Style," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, February 2, 1993.

military power was not incidental to New Order power structures, but was one of their defining features.

As with many Indonesian capitalists, Hashim's economic fortunes suffered badly during the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98. Among many other problems, Bank Niaga, which he had purchased on the eve of the crisis, was dragged down by debts, and by early 1999 Tirtamas was reported as having US\$1.2 billion in debts, which Hashim was dragging his feet in repaying.⁴⁶ IBRA (The Indonesian Bank Restructuring Agency) took over a large part of the debts of the group, and for years Hashim faced numerous court cases and sustained accusations of corruption and other improprieties.⁴⁷ For much of this time, Hashim stayed away from Indonesia—and when he returned briefly in 2002, he was jailed over an accusation that one of his banks had exceeded its legal lending limits.⁴⁸

A critical part of Prabowo's rise to political prominence thus lies in its timing. Like most other major Indonesian capitalists who were almost destroyed by the 1997–98 financial crisis, within less than a decade Hashim and his brother had saved their business fortunes, showing significant skill at minimizing legal repercussions and in using the state financing available through IBRA and similar agencies. Hashim resolved his conflicts with government creditors in 2005. Moreover, he gained a windfall profit from his stake in an oilfield in Kazakhstan that was purchased in 1997 for US\$77 million and sold for US\$1.6 billion in 2006.⁴⁹ The revival of Prabowo's financial fortunes occurred around the same time, and presumably was closely linked. For example, in 2004 he managed to secure a US\$180 million loan from Bank Mandiri to buy Kertas Nusantara, a pulp producer that used to be owned by Bob Hasan, the notorious Suharto-era crony.⁵⁰ By the mid-2000s, both brothers had largely cleared their debts and resolved their legal problems, and were strongly investing in the new boom areas of the Indonesian economy, notably coal, oil palm, and other rent-rich areas that were by now the major targets of politically connected businesses. A crucial condition for Prabowo's political rise was thus the restructuring and revival of oligarchic power in the wake of the financial crisis. Despite all the debt-restructuring programs, asset seizures, prosecutions, and cancellations of licenses that followed the crisis, "the interests that had underpinned the Soeharto order, including many of the figures that had been dominant then in business and politics, managed to survive and to reorganize their economic power."⁵¹ The timing of Prabowo's reinsertion into political life thus benefited from two specific factors—his brother's Kazakhstan windfall, but also the broader, post-crisis reconsolidation of the oligarchy.

⁴⁶ Dan Murphy, "Creditors at Bay," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 28, 1999: 70–71.

⁴⁷ See, for example: "Hashim Denies Semen Cibinong Missing Millions," *Jakarta Post*, August 25, 1999; and "Hashim Fires Back at IBRA over Bankruptcy Action," *Jakarta Post*, January 6, 2000.

⁴⁸ Sadanand Dhume, "Detention Is Latest Sign of Legal Push by Jakarta," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, March 15, 2002.

⁴⁹ Montlak, "Homecoming," *Forbes*.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Richard Robison and Vedi R. Hadiz, *Reorganising Power in Indonesia: The Politics of Oligarchy in an Age of Markets* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 187. For a general count of the survival of oligarchy, see *ibid.*, 187–222.

Prabowo's Challenge and Appeal

Prabowo's political program had three core components: economic nationalism, condemnation of the corruption of Indonesia's ruling elite, and an authoritarian subtext. None of these themes was unique in terms of content: plenty of other politicians have taken similar stands, although rarely with such consistency or vehemence, in the post-Suharto period. One thing that did make Prabowo remarkable, however, was the way in which he delivered these themes. Prabowo developed a grand demagogic style that marked him as different from other mainstream politicians. Favoring large public campaign rallies, he spoke in a booming voice, addressed his audience as *saudara* (brothers), and peppered his speeches with rhetorical questions and flourishes. He often reached an almost hysterical pitch, especially when asking his audience whether they wished to see Indonesia's subjugation by foreign powers, the corruption of its elite, or various other maladies continue; or when he was condemning (unnamed) traitors to the nation—people who wanted to sell the country out to foreigners, abscond with the people's money, steal the election, or spread calumny and slander against him personally. As many commentators have noted, the oratorical and visual styling of these speeches were obviously modeled on Sukarno at the height of his powers: Prabowo dressed like Sukarno, wearing a rather archaic white safari suit and a black *peci* (cap); he spoke as Sukarno did; and he even used vintage microphones like those from the mid-twentieth century.⁵² Prabowo's open-air campaign speeches typically also involved a strong element of pageantry and ceremony, including employing military-style marching bands and arriving dramatically via helicopter; and with much saluting, standing at attention, and other hyper-masculine displays, all amounting to a highly theatrical attempt to invoke the grandeur and passion of Indonesia's nationalist political tradition.⁵³

Another distinctive feature was the personalistic nature of Prabowo's approach. On the campaign trail, Prabowo's speeches were self-referential to a degree that is unusual among Indonesian politicians. He often spoke in the third person, relating his abstract points to anecdotes drawn from his personal biography, and recalling experiences or lessons from his early life or military career. Most important of all, Prabowo consistently prescribed the same solution for the manifold ills he diagnosed in contemporary Indonesia: "firm leadership" (*kepemimpinan yang tegas*)—leadership, of course, that only he could provide. He reinforced the messaging through his many social media communications. One Facebook post in December 2013, for example, featured a picture of him at his farm looking over some goats with the following message:

I believe that if a thousand goats are led by a tiger they will all end up roaring.
But if a thousand tigers are led by a goat they will all end up as goats. History

⁵² John Roosa, "Sukarno's Two Bodies," *New Mandala*, May 26, 2014, <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2014/05/26/sukarnos-two-bodies/>, accessed March 2, 2105.

⁵³ Indeed, one of the features of the campaign was its masculinist cast, evident not only in Prabowo's own performances, but also in the nature of the support he attracted. This was perhaps most famously exemplified by the Indonesian rock singer Ahmad Dani, who produced a music video with an element of neo-Nazi styling in favor of Prabowo, and who publicly stated that "manly men" (*lelaki jantan*) would vote for Prabowo and "the masculinity of those who don't vote for him has to be questioned." See "Ahmad Dhani: Lelaki Jantan Pilih Prabowo-Hatta," *Vivanews*, May 21, 2014, <http://politik.news.viva.co.id/news/read/506187-ahmad-dhani-lelaki-jantan-pilih-prabowo-hatta>, accessed March 2, 2105.

teaches us: It is the quality of its leadership that determines the rise or fall of any nation.⁵⁴

The metaphor was made even more explicit in the many billboards erected in 2014 that depicted Prabowo alongside the slogan: *Prabowo, Macan Asia* (Prabowo, Asian Tiger).

Economic Nationalism

The most prominent component of Prabowo's political program, from the time he returned to Indonesia from exile through his presidential campaign in 2014, was economic nationalism. A passage in *Kembalikan Indonesia!* [Restore Indonesia!], a book he published while beginning his attempted political revival in 2004, sums up the overarching theme:

The domination of foreign powers over the national economic interest has made the Indonesian Nation lose its independence. A nation that surrenders its sovereignty to other nations is a nation that is colonized, insulted, discriminated against. The People of Indonesia are no longer the owners of the important companies of Indonesia. Our people are considered as not having the right to be company leaders. The Indonesian Government has lost control over management. We must be satisfied with being *kacung* [slaves].⁵⁵

Elsewhere in the book, Prabowo describes Indonesians as being like "starving chickens in a rice barn."⁵⁶ He promoted such themes consistently over the subsequent decade; indeed, he frequently commented that Indonesia had become a nation of *kacung* in his 2014 stump speeches. However, the focus changed somewhat over time. Early on, much of his ire concentrated on the IMF programs pursued in Indonesia after the 1997–98 crisis—which he described as being not an "economic crisis" but an "economic war" waged against Indonesia⁵⁷—and on the burdens of Indonesia's foreign debt. Thus, in *Kembalikan Indonesia!*, Prabowo devotes much space to condemning the so-called Washington "consensus" (i.e., the neoliberal policies favored by the World Bank, IMF, etc.), including trade and financial deregulation. He blamed this consensus for the crisis, which he says was producing in Indonesia a social structure similar to that of the middle ages, eliminating "the groups which used to fill the social space between the small caste of the super-rich and the large mass who are poor or very poor."⁵⁸ By the time of the 2014 election, the Gerindra party's manifesto stated that the party "rejects forms of liberalization of trade while advancing policies of protection for domestic trade commodities." Prabowo and his party also called for revision of laws such as those on foreign investment and minerals, with a view to placing greater restrictions on foreign capital.

⁵⁴<https://www.facebook.com/PrabowoSubianto/photos/a.60019411178.82664.23383061178/10151741842926179/>, accessed December 1, 2014.

⁵⁵ Prabowo Subianto, *Kembalikan Indonesia! Haluan Baru Keluara dari Kemelut Bangsa* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan, 2004), 30–31.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁵⁷ Idham Khalid, "Ini Pidato Prabowo di Depan Agum Gumelar Cs," *Detik.com*, April 22, 2014, <http://news.detik.com/read/2014/04/22/172427/2562282/1562/ini-pidato-prabowo-di-depan-agum-gumelar-cs>, accessed March 3, 2015.

⁵⁸ Prabowo, *Kembalikan Indonesia!*, 132.

In fact, Prabowo's economic critique was wide-ranging, and included frequent condemnation of the "neoliberal," "liberal," or "capitalist" features of the Indonesian economy, and the impoverishment of the masses. He accompanied such denunciations with calls to revive Indonesia's populist economic traditions, such as the notion of the people's economy (*ekonomi kerakyatan*) or the emphasis on cooperatives once proposed by vice-president Muhammad Hatta. He certainly did not present any systematic critique of capitalism, but he did state he wanted to restore the central planning that had occurred under the New Order. (Gerindra's manifesto calls for the return of that regime's national development planning outlines every fifth year, the GBHN [*Garis Besar Haluan Negara*, Broad Outlines of State Policy]). Prabowo and his party also opposed the privatization and sale of state enterprises in general, and of strategic assets (such as the telecommunications firm Indosat) in particular.

Prabowo gave special attention to two sectors: agricultural production and natural resources. On the former, Prabowo strongly urged national self reliance in food production, pointing to the absurdity that "an agrarian nation that for hundreds of years has possessed millions of hectares of wet-rice fields must now import rice, sugar, onions, chili, cassava, meat, and milk."⁵⁹ In the 2014 presidential election, Prabowo promised to open four million hectares of new farming land for rice, bioethanol crops, and other crops, with the goal of employing twenty-four million people. He proposed various other investments in fertilizer production and the like, and also made a general promise to "guarantee the prices of foodstuffs."⁶⁰ Overall, despite his militant style, the solutions advanced were far from radical; the Gerindra Manifesto, for example, made no mention of land reform, but instead proposed "the development of agriculture with the strategy of an agribusiness approach."⁶¹

The second focus, natural resources—minerals, oil, and natural gas—became increasingly central to Prabowo's discourse as Indonesia entered its long decade of economic recovery and growth that coincided with the international commodity boom between about 2000 and 2009. The basic line here was simple, and one that has been a staple of Indonesian nationalism since the Dutch period: Indonesia was a country blessed by great natural riches that were being sucked out by foreigners. This was the staple of his appearances in the televised presidential debates in 2014, for example.⁶² Prabowo's Facebook page also featured maps of Indonesia that located major foreign investments in mining and fossil fuels, and he proposed renegotiating contracts with foreign companies and buyers that disadvantaged the country. Again, however, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the policy cohesiveness or sophistication of his economic nationalism. Rather, its point was to position Prabowo as a leader who embodied the national interest and cared for the poor. In his stump speeches he sometimes did this with fiery oratory, condemning the pernicious foreigners who were seeking to exploit and cripple Indonesia; in televised presidential debates, he tried

⁵⁹ Prabowo, *Surat untuk Sahabat*, 173.

⁶⁰ Prabowo Subianto, "Visi, Misi dan Program Bakal Pasangan Calon Presiden dan Wakil Presiden," Jakarta, May 20, 2014, 5 (pamphlet).

⁶¹ *Manifesto Perjuangan Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya*, 2013, 25, a fifty-page pamphlet available at <http://partaigerindra.or.id/uploads/Manifesto-Perjuangan-Partai-Gerindra.pdf>, accessed March 23, 2015.

⁶² See, for example, Third Debate (June 22, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWRD1u9p580>, accessed March 23, 2015.

more gentle language, saying he wished “the little people of Indonesia to be able to smile.”⁶³

Prabowo’s economic nationalism, of course, draws on widely shared public anger about the IMF restructuring program introduced in the wake of the late-1990s financial crisis (which was one reason why Gerindra attracted several former left-wing student activists as members). But the appeal of economic nationalism can also be located in the nature of Indonesia’s political economy. Economic nationalism has had consistent ideological appeal and utility in Indonesia for those officials and businesspeople whose wealth derives from capturing rents generated in protected sectors of the economy, especially natural resources.⁶⁴ Accordingly, protectionist and interventionist policies tend to strengthen during periods of high commodity production and export, while liberal and market-oriented policies are more robust in times of crisis; there is even an aphorism to describe this relationship, known as Sadli’s law, after the liberal technocrat Mohammad Sadli: “bad times may produce good economic policies, and good times frequently the reverse.”⁶⁵

It is little wonder, therefore, that economic nationalism should have been on the rise over the last decade, coinciding with Indonesia’s post-Asian-crisis recovery and a protracted boom in commodity prices and exports. Between 2004 and 2012, for example, Indonesian coal production almost quadrupled, rising from 128 million to 466 million tons, while in the same period land under oil palm cultivation more than doubled, from 4.4 million to over 10 million hectares.⁶⁶ Countless new fortunes have been made, or old ones saved and expanded, by elites able to leverage their political connections to gain favored access to licenses for mines, plantations, and other components of Indonesia’s contemporary “extractive regime.”⁶⁷ One reflection of this new scramble for wealth is a rise in “resource nationalism,” expressed in legislative changes such as a revamped mining law that mandated new divestment requirements for foreign firms in that sector.⁶⁸ Another closely linked phenomenon is reflexive hostility to “neoliberalism” expressed throughout the political elite.⁶⁹ Prabowo’s economic nationalism is merely a somewhat extreme example of a much wider phenomenon.

Moreover, Prabowo’s economic nationalism should also be viewed not only, or even primarily, as an exercise in demagoguery, but as an expression of his class position and interests. As noted above, the focus of Prabowo and his brother’s investments shifted in the post-Suharto era away from sectors such as cement

⁶³ Second presidential debate (June 15, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6B7L41aDbs> ([full] Debat Kedua Capres Jokowi–Prabowo 15 Juni 2014), at 1:26:20, accessed March 2, 2015.

⁶⁴ Richard Robison, *Indonesia: The Rise of Capital* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

⁶⁵ Hal Hill and Thee Kian Wie, “Moh. Sadli (1922–2008)—Economist, Minister, and Public Intellectual,” *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 44, no. 1 (2008): 154.

⁶⁶ Figures derived from BPS’s website, <http://www.bps.go.id>

⁶⁷ The term is borrowed from Paul K. Gellert, “Extractive Regimes: Toward a Better Understanding of Indonesian Development,” *Rural Sociology* 75, no. 1 (2010): 28–57.

⁶⁸ Eve Warburton, “In Whose Interest? Debating Resource Nationalism in Indonesia,” *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, Issue 15 (March 2014), <http://kyotoreview.org/yav/in-whose-interest-debating-resource-nationalism-in-indonesia/>, accessed March 3, 2015.

⁶⁹ Indeed, even President Yudhoyono condemned neoliberalism from time to time; see, for example, “Tidak Ada Tempat untuk Kapitalisme,” *Kompas*, July 13, 2007.

production and banking, and toward mining, oil palm, and the like. Moreover, though both have significant experience in collaborating with foreign investors,⁷⁰ and in investing overseas, they have each also benefited in the past from leveraging both formal and informal state protection at the expense of foreign competitors. For example, during the late New Order, when he was expanding his business empire, Hashim was willing to make use of a little-known restriction on foreign investment to take over forcibly a Japanese-controlled cement firm, Semen Nusantara.⁷¹ A more celebrated recent case occurred when a London-based company, Churchill, found much larger than expected reserves of coking coal in East Kutai, in Kalimantan, only to have—in a process that its director described as “asset stripping” and “manipulation”—its licenses declared forgeries by the local district head, who returned the site to its previous concessionary, Prabowo’s Nusantara Group.⁷² The district head, Isran Noor, became a major supporter of Prabowo, at one point stating that he supported Prabowo’s presidential campaign “1,000 percent.”⁷³ Likewise, even Gerindra’s emphasis on agricultural production and agribusiness accords with the economic interests of Prabowo and his brother, with both of them expanding their interests in this sector over the last decade. For example, Hashim’s company Comexindo is one investor in the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate, an over-one-million hectare project planned in Papua province.⁷⁴ The economic themes Prabowo espoused during his campaign closely tracked his family interests.

Anti-elitism

An “anti-politics” posture “is a classic populist technique, by which a leader poses as the embodiment of national unity and the public interest against the dispiriting divisiveness of partisan or particular interests.”⁷⁵ More specifically, populism is often associated with the condemnation of the corruption and self-interest of the political

⁷⁰ This collaboration, of course, has continued into the current period. Hashim in particular continues to have major international investments and to actively engage in joint ventures with foreign capital when necessary. For example, he teamed up with London Nat Rothschild in an unsuccessful attempt to wrest control of coal giant Bumi Plc from fellow Indonesian oligarch Aburizal Bakrie; see Ben Bland, “Rothschild Ally Relishes Bumi Spat,” *Financial Times*, February 19, 2013, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9abf5786-773f-11e2-9ebc-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3R0YWqYMh>, accessed February 7, 2015.

⁷¹ Mark Clifford, “Indonesia—Cementing a Deal,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 15, 1993: 82.

⁷² See: Tom Allard, “Rich Seam of Conflict over Coal Discovery,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 4, 2011, <http://www.smh.com.au/business/world-business/rich-seam-of-conflict-over-coal-discovery-20111004-115so.html#ixzz3ltzmDcBl>, accessed March 3, 2015; and Y. Tomi Aryanto and Firman Hidayat, “Mine Wars,” *Tempo*, March 4, 2012: 59–61.

⁷³ “Isran Noor Dampingi Prabowo di 2014?” *Republika Online*, October 13, 2013, <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/politik/13/10/13/mukkn3-isran-noor-dampingi-prabowo-di-2014>, accessed March 3, 2015.

⁷⁴ Longgena Ginting and Oliver Pye, *Resisting Agribusiness Development: The Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate in West Papua, Indonesia* (paper presented at the International Conference on Global Land Grabbing, Institute of Development Studies—University of Sussex, April 6–8, 2011). Separately, Hashim’s business interests have been reported as including concessions covering over three million hectares, including plantations, forest concessions, coal mines, and gas fields. See Pratama Guitarra, “Pasang surut bisnis putra sang Begawan,” *Kontan*, February 23, 2014, <http://industri.kontan.co.id/news/pasang-surut-bisnis-putra-sang-begawan>, accessed February 7, 2015.

⁷⁵ Kenneth M. Roberts, “Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Populism in Latin America: The Peruvian Case,” *World Politics* 48 (October 1995): 98.

class. Along with economic nationalism, a posture of this sort was *the* central theme of Prabowo's campaign approach. From the start of his political revival in 2004, Prabowo was already speaking of the "betrayal of the elite," condemning party corruption, and promising clean government. His rhetoric escalated as he approached the 2014 election:

We must remember, the Indonesian nation is on the threshold of becoming a joke republic. A pseudo-democracy Republic. A Republic that is controlled by a mafia, by thieves. A Republic that is controlled by an oligarchy that only thinks about how to keep looting the country's riches without thinking of the consequences for the future of the majority.⁷⁶

The tone reached fever pitch on the campaign trail in 2014, when Prabowo routinely condemned Indonesia's entire political class in blanket terms, depicting it as irredeemably corrupt and self-serving. As he told a crowd of workers at a rally on May Day 2014: "The Indonesian elite has lied for too long ... lied to the people, lied to the nation, lied to itself!"⁷⁷ Later in the same speech, he added, "All are corrupted! All are bribed! All our leaders are willing to be bought and willing to be bribed!" Depicting himself as the anti-political politician, he explained:

We cannot hope for too much from our leaders. They are clever talkers, so clever, so clever that they end up as clever liars! I went into politics because I was forced! I was forced, brothers and sisters! Politics ... God help us! Of fifteen people I meet in politics, fourteen of them are total liars ...⁷⁸

We can already see here a key—and classically populist—element of Prabowo's technique: a strong element of "Othering," in which an unspecified enemy of the People is constructed, with the Leader presented as its nemesis. Indeed, in this practice of Othering, Prabowo would often freely associate, mixing nationalist and anti-corruption themes to create a picture of a hostile cabal of foreigners, their stooges, and corruptors who not only impoverished the people but also sought to destroy the nation and were hostile to him personally. Another stump speech, this one delivered with great fervor in Medan in June 2014, is worth quoting at length because it reveals the technique in some detail:

All you who want Indonesia to remain poor, all of you who steal the people's money—I will not waver in the face of you! If you all say that the Indonesian nation can be bought, I say it cannot be bought! ... If you all want to commit fraud, brothers, I say "go ahead," and watch—watch!—what will be done by the Indonesian people! ... Beware all you foreign stooges! All you who can only slander, can only insult people, but have never defended the people, never gave thought to the people, never gave thought to the poor, who only at election time pretend to care for the people ... Do you think that the Indonesian nation is one that can be lied to continually? Brothers, our struggle is right! Our struggle is right! We struggle for justice, we struggle for an Indonesia which is respected, we struggle for an Indonesia which can stand on its own feet! ... we do not waver in

⁷⁶ Prabowo Subianto, *Surat untuk Sahabat* (Jakarta Selatan: TransMedia, 2013), 150.

⁷⁷ The speech can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UH73XrMKxUI> ("Prabowo Subianto: Orasi Politik Prabowo Subianto pada Hari Buruh 1 Mei 2014"), accessed March 3, 2015.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

the face of your trickery ... Beware all you who are used to stealing the Indonesian people's money—I don't need to name them one by one, but when the time comes, if necessary, I will name them, brothers ... beware all of you who have a vision of an Indonesia broken apart, of a poor Indonesia, we say: no! This time, NO! ... Indonesia wants to rise up, brothers ... the Indonesian people want justice, the Indonesian people want a leader who is clean, who doesn't pretend to be of the people, yet steals the people's money!⁷⁹

Obviously, the main purpose of such performances was to promote Prabowo's leadership as the solution to such ills. Accordingly, the policy proscriptions he and Gerindra offered to remedy corruption were hardly comprehensive (although Prabowo did promise to greatly increase funding for the Corruption Eradication Commission). Even so, Prabowo's condemnation of the corruption and hypocrisy of the political elite is a resonant message in contemporary Indonesia. As is well known, "money politics" has become an important foundation of the post-Suharto political order. Reports on official corruption saturate the media, and polling data repeatedly show that ordinary Indonesians view corruption as a serious problem. Campaigning to eliminate corruption, therefore, was hardly novel in post-Suharto politics. What distinguished Prabowo from mainstream politicians was simply his framing of the issue: rather than offering technical and legal remedies, like other elite politicians, he adopted a posture of blanket condemnation of the entire elite and presented himself, and strong leadership, as its antithesis. Unusual in the Indonesian context, such a posture is, of course, par for the course for populists and authoritarian politicians in many countries.⁸⁰

Authoritarianism

As I and others have argued elsewhere, a major signal of Prabowo's authoritarian intention was his consistent call for Indonesia to return to the "original text" or the "original version" of the 1945 constitution.⁸¹ Gerindra made this call from the time it was founded in 2008, and Prabowo, along with other leading party members, such as his brother, frequently reiterated this goal, making clear that they meant to return Indonesia to the literal text of the 1945 constitution, not just to its "spirit," as apologists sometimes suggested.⁸² Moreover, the Gerindra Manifesto located this proposition in a wider critique of contemporary democracy, stating that "The political system that has been heading in the direction of liberal democracy since the *reformasi* era needs to be corrected." Returning to the original text of the 1945 constitution would have meant

⁷⁹ The speech can be seen in full at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsmfZAKwDGw> ("Orasi Bapak Prabowo Subianto di Medan"), accessed March 3, 2015. The translation is a modified version taken from Liam Gammon, "Prabowo's Dog-whistling," *New Mandala*, June 12, 2014, <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2014/06/12/prabowos-dog-whistling/>, accessed March 3, 2015.

⁸⁰ Including military coup-makers; see Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1977), 87.

⁸¹ Edward Aspinall, "Indonesia on the Knife's Edge," *Inside Story*, June 17, 2014, <http://insidestory.org.au/indonesia-on-the-knifes-edge/>, accessed March 3, 2015.

⁸² See, for example, Indah Mutiara Kami, "Hashim Akui Prabowo Beda Pendapat dengan SBY Soal Kembali ke UUD 1945," *detik.com*, May 9, 2014, <http://news.detik.com/read/2014/05/09/225645/2578761/1562/hashim-akui-prabowo-beda-pendapat-dengan-sby-soal-kembali-ke-uud-1945>, accessed March 3, 2015.

doing away with constitutional revisions passed between 1999 and 2002, which mandated, among many other things, presidential term limits, direct presidential elections, and elections of legislators. The original 1945 constitution imagined an executive-focused system of government, lacking meaningful democratic constraints on presidential power, and accordingly had been well-suited to Suharto's autocratic rule.

It should be stressed that in their election campaigning, Prabowo and Gerindra did *not* highlight or greatly elaborate upon such anti-democratic aspects of their program. Nor did they mount a full-scale overt assault on the concept of democracy, or directly call for removal of its core features, such as free elections. We also did not see much obsessiveness with some of the past shibboleths of Indonesian conservatism, such as communism or threats to NKRI (Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia, Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia). Even references to the original spirit of the 1945 constitution often expressed economic—and, of course, historical—rather than authoritarian themes. Gerindra politicians frequently cited article 33, which maintains that the Indonesian economy should be structured on the “family principle” and that Indonesia's “land, waters, and natural resources” should be controlled by the state.

Indeed, throughout the 2014 campaign, when reporters or others questioned his democratic credentials or his commitment to human rights, Prabowo would insist—sometimes angrily—that he was a “democrat.” He frequently stated in this context that he had had the capacity in 1998 to mount a coup against Habibie, and the fact that he had not done so was proof of his democratic credentials. But most of his expressed support for democracy was begrudging or qualified. Often he would say that too much had been sacrificed in building the democratic system to abandon it now (when making this point he often described himself as a chief victim of *reformasi*). But then he would complain about the system, pointing to the problems of money politics and corruption already described, or saying Indonesian democracy was “too liberal,” had “gone too far,” or, as he put it at a meeting with senior retired generals, it “makes us tired.”⁸³ The most revealing comments often came in the forms of jokes or asides, such as when he told one Gerindra audience that Indonesia needed a “half-authoritarian” leader.⁸⁴

The one time in recent years that Prabowo went furthest in condemning democratic practice was when, two weeks before the presidential election, in a speech at the Taman Ismail Marzuki cultural center in Jakarta, he criticized the practice of direct elections. (Since 2004, Indonesia has held direct popular elections for the president and, since 2005, for heads of regional governments, replacing the indirect elections via the legislature that were practiced previously.) Prabowo stated that direct elections were a

⁸³ Prihandoko, “Curhat ke Senior Soal Politik, Prabowo: Ampun Saya,” *Tempo*, May 21, 2014, <http://pemilu.tempo.co/read/news/2014/05/21/269579396/Curhat-ke-Senior-Soal-Politik-Prabowo-Ampun-Saya>, accessed March 3, 2015.

⁸⁴ For an example, see the Prabowo speech, “Temui Kader Nasional Gerindra,” October 31, 2010, at 15:45, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK2M6u0ORT0> (Pidato Politik Prabowo Subianto), accessed March 3, 2015. More revealing comments came in off-the-record conversations, such as one with the US journalist Allan Nairn, in 2002, when Prabowo mused about, among other things, the need for a “benevolent dictator.” See Allan Nairn, “‘Do I have the Guts,’ Prabowo asked, ‘am I ready to be called a fascist dictator?’” June 22, 2014, <http://www.allannairn.org/2014/06/news-do-i-have-guts-prabowo-asked-am-i.html>, accessed March 3, 2015.

product of Western culture and were not “suitable” to Indonesia. He compared the practice to smoking, something that was hard to stop once somebody was hooked on the practice. He continued that Indonesia needed to come up with a new political format that removed traits that went too far in their “Western” orientation and were more in accordance with the values of the ancestors. In a follow up, he added that Indonesia needed to do away with direct elections because they were too costly and fostered corruption.⁸⁵

Although we must obviously infer anti-democratic intentions from these positions—especially given what we know about Prabowo’s personal history, his personality, and the personalistic logic of his approach—it is important to acknowledge that Prabowo did not advance an argument for authoritarian regression that was open, elaborate, or coherent. During the Suharto era, a developed ideological justification for authoritarian rule was promoted by regime functionaries. Built around the core concept of “Pancasila democracy,” this justification made certain critical claims, including that Indonesians were culturally predisposed to favoring harmony, consensus, and deliberation over the majority vote, and that Indonesia’s state was “organic” or “integralistic,” so there could be no conflict between the interests of individuals or social groups and the state itself.⁸⁶ Prabowo sometimes alluded to such ideological tropes—for example, saying that direct elections had taken Indonesia too far from “our ideology” or the “values of our ancestors”—but he rarely mentioned them explicitly, and never invoked the whole edifice in its entirety. The reasons were obvious: Prabowo was campaigning for office through a democratic election and popular support for democracy remains strong in Indonesia. On the other hand, for supporters of Suharto-era politics, the signals were clear and attractive.

Prabowo’s Support Base and Campaign

How did Prabowo organize his campaign? While some outsider populists rely on bottom-up and popular organizations to fuel their bids for power—indeed, Prabowo’s rival, Jokowi, largely relied on this pattern—this was not the case for Prabowo. When scrutinizing the organizational foundations of the political challenge that Prabowo mounted in 2014, it is important to stress that this challenge was crystallized *inside* the existing political order, viewed broadly, rather than being established outside it. Despite Prabowo’s condemnation of the corruption of the political class and of money politics, neither Prabowo’s political party, nor the coalition that supported his presidential campaign, broke with these practices. Gerindra was a clientelist party deeply entrenched in the politics of patronage, while Prabowo’s presidential campaign itself was massively funded by Hashim and other oligarchs. Meanwhile, the coalition

⁸⁵ See Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner, “Prabowo Subianto: Vote for Me, but Just the Once,” *New Mandala*, June 30, 2014, <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2014/06/30/prabowo-subianto-vote-for-me-but-just-the-once/>, accessed March 3, 2015; and “Don’t be Fooled—Prabowo (still) Wants to Get Rid of Direct Presidential Elections,” *New Mandala*, July 2, 2014, <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2014/07/02/dont-be-fooled-prabowo-still-wants-to-get-rid-of-direct-presidential-elections/>, accessed March 3, 2015.

⁸⁶ David Bourchier, “Totalitarianism and the ‘National Personality’: Recent Controversy about the Philosophical Basis of the Indonesian State,” in *Imagining Indonesia: Cultural Politics and Political Culture*, ed. Jim Schiller and Barbara Martin-Schiller (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1997), 157–85.

that ended up backing Prabowo was knitted together by transactions typical of post-Suharto electoral politics. Prabowo's political insurgency, in other words, though presented with the styling and expression of an outsider, was, in fact, a campaign mounted by insiders.

To be sure, as already explained, Prabowo used a new political party, Gerindra, as his primary vehicle. He did not hold political office after his dismissal from the military in 1998. Prabowo had initially tried to come to power by using Golkar—the quintessential patronage machine of Indonesia—but after this attempt failed he claimed he abandoned the party for reasons of principle: “Golkar is held by the businesspeople with big capital, their mentality is all about the money. I tried to hold on there for a few months, but I couldn't stand it and I left. The mentality in Golkar is money, buying and selling, buying and selling.”⁸⁷ Gerindra was certainly different from Golkar insofar as it was a new party. Also, because it was outside of President Yudhoyono's governing coalition, its representatives had less access to government revenues than did members of parties that controlled government ministries.

Viewed closely, however, Gerindra looked much like any of the catch-all and presidentialist parties that are now important in Indonesia's party system. Critically, at the regional level, many of Gerindra's mid-level leaders and candidates are party-hoppers, individuals who have previously been involved in other parties and moved to Gerindra after falling out with local or national leaders. Many frankly admitted that opportunism motivated them to join Gerindra. As one candidate in North Sumatra put it: “I joined Gerindra because I need a party and a party leader with a big name to help me compete in the legislative election.”⁸⁸ In terms of a sociological profile, there was nothing distinctive about Gerindra's membership. The party might have a few more former military men than do other parties, but is otherwise composed of the same mix of former bureaucrats, businesspeople, local grandees, former activists, and religious authorities that can be found in any nationalist party. Accordingly, Gerindra members are just as immersed in the techniques of patronage politics as members of other parties. For instance, during research on the legislative election in 2014, my colleagues and I found plenty of Gerindra candidates who were running major vote-buying efforts in their constituencies, despite Prabowo's condemnation of the practice.⁸⁹ In short, Gerindra is far from being a cadre party of ideologically motivated individuals, or even one that represents people motivated by their particular loyalty to Prabowo (although, of course, there are some such people in the party). It is a patronage party of a sort that is broadly representative of the post-Suharto party system.

Prabowo was not in any case solely dependent upon Gerindra when it came to the presidential campaign. He had three other sources of support. First, he was able to mobilize a diverse patronage network, composed partly of organizations and contacts he had been cultivating for several years, such as HKTU (the farmers' association). For example, during fieldwork conducted in one district in East Java, about two weeks before the 2014 presidential election, it was apparent that much of the ground-level campaigning for Prabowo was being done by formal and informal networks outside

⁸⁷ Khalid, “Ini Pidato Prabowo di Depan Agum Gumelar Cs.”

⁸⁸ Interview, March 31, 2014.

⁸⁹ For more on this research, see Edward Aspinall, “Parliament and Patronage,” *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 4 (October 2014): 96–110.

Gerindra, and that massive injections of funds were being used to activate these networks. Thus, one organizer for a network of *kyai* (traditionalist Islamic scholars) had two billion rupiah (about US\$200,000) available to use in this district alone (one of thirty-eight districts in East Java), with much of the money being distributed as payments to the *kyai* for attending meetings and to pay subdistrict coordinators.⁹⁰ Similar investments were being made to mobilize other networks, notably those of village heads and *santri* (religious students), with “each of these channels being structured right down to the polling booth level.”⁹¹ Another example is from the province of Aceh, where the support of the Partai Aceh—the party representing the former guerrillas of the Free Aceh Movement—went, surprisingly, to Prabowo. That backing resulted, reportedly, from a large donation he or Hashim made to the party and its leaders (rumors of the size of the donation vary from 32 to 50 billion rupiah) at the time of the provincial gubernatorial election of 2012, as well as being greased with various business deals allegedly involving investments by the brothers in the province.⁹² Accordingly, the one thing that distinguished Prabowo’s campaign from that of his rival, Joko Widodo—and which was immediately visible when visiting these campaigns on the ground—was the much greater availability of funds for Prabowo’s supporters.

Prabowo’s second source of non-Gerindra support was the coalition of political parties that he assembled to support him. A new tradition of Indonesian democracy is that in the weeks leading to the registration of “packets” of presidential and vice-presidential nominees, there are freewheeling negotiations between parties to select the individuals who will pair up as nominees, and to form party coalitions to support those candidates. This was certainly the case in 2014, when Gerindra improved greatly on its electoral performance (it gained 11.8 percent in the April legislative election, up from 4.5 percent in 2009), but still did not have enough votes to nominate Prabowo on its own. Eventually, Prabowo secured the backing of parties that represented 63 percent of the seats in the 2014–19 parliament: Golkar, Partai Demokrat, PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, Prosperous Justice Party), PAN (Partai Amanat Nasional, National Mandate Party), PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, Unity Development Party), and Gerindra itself. Despite Prabowo’s previous condemnations of the culture of deal-making among the political elite, he proved to be adept at crafting this alliance. Most of the parties that backed Prabowo did so only after failing to reach accommodation with the favorite, Jokowi, who explicitly refused to engage in “cow trading” on cabinet posts. Prabowo had no such scruples and reportedly made many offers of ministerial positions. The fact that the presidential contest was becoming a two-horse race gave Prabowo considerable bargaining power in these negotiations. He even used the promise of posts as a means to recoup some of the costs already expended on his campaign: *Tempo* reported that Prabowo’s camp offered Aburizal Bakrie, Golkar’s chairperson, the vice-presidential nomination at a price of 3 trillion rupiah (US\$250 million) and that a 60:40 cost-sharing deal was offered to Hatta Rajasa of PAN, who

⁹⁰ Confidential interview, June 28, 2014.

⁹¹ Confidential interview, June 29, 2014.

⁹² “Kecam fitnah Mualem, Menjelang Pilpres PA Pecah Kongsi,” *The Aceh Traffic*, June 6, 2014, <http://www.acehtraffic.com/2014/06/kecam-fitnah-mualem-menjelang-pilpres.html>, accessed March 3, 2015.

was ultimately selected.⁹³ Of course, the selection of these coalition partners helped to undermine the credibility of Prabowo's anti-corruption message, given that key leaders in each of the coalition parties had recently been implicated in major corruption scandals and prosecutions. To mention just one example, the PPP chairperson, Suryadharma Ali, was arraigned on corruption charges by the KPK for alleged abuses in the administration of the *haj* program a mere two days after Prabowo registered his candidacy with the General Elections Commission. The fact that many of Prabowo's new supporters were associated in the public's mind with corruption and shady business deals did not, however, prompt him to tone down his forceful denunciation of the political elite in his campaign appearances.

Finally, oligarchs provided a third source of support for Prabowo. As the race tightened, there were many informal reports that Prabowo was successfully extracting large donations of campaign funds from many of Indonesia's major capitalists, who feared for the fate of their businesses under a Prabowo presidency. While Jokowi was reluctant to even meet with such individuals, fearing that he would be bound to promises that would later burden his presidency, Prabowo apparently took every opportunity he could to squeeze donations from the ranks of Indonesia's wealthiest.⁹⁴ The extreme dysfunction of Indonesia's campaign finance regime makes it impossible to trace the actual flow of funds, but one clear indication of such oligarchic support was in the media, where Prabowo gained the support of two of Indonesia's main media tycoons (Hary Tanoesudibjo and Aburizal Bakrie—both also political players). Their television programs flagrantly campaigned in favor of Prabowo, including by colluding in the broadcast of false "quick count" results on voting day. It should be stressed that Jokowi's campaign was by no means bereft of oligarchic support—for example, the former army general, retired minister, and major mining magnate Luhut Panjaitan was an important Jokowi backer. However, there was a yawning difference of degree between the campaigns, with the bulk of Indonesia's major oligarchs falling in behind Prabowo.

In short, despite Prabowo's styling as an outsider destined to purge corruption, not only were the financial sources of his campaign strengths drawn from his heartland position in the Indonesian economic elite, but the mobilizational and coalition-building strategies he relied upon were also entirely consistent with post-Suharto traditions of patronage-driven politics and oligarchic deal-making. Nevertheless, this contradictory melange of resources proved to be powerful, and in the weeks leading to the presidential poll on July 9, Prabowo gained rapidly on Jokowi in published opinion polls. Prabowo seemed, at least for a short time, to be destined to pull ahead.⁹⁵

Prabowo's Challenge, His Failure, and Implications for Indonesian Democracy

Given the analysis presented thus far, it might seem that the puzzle of the 2014 presidential election is not that Prabowo emerged as a strong contestant, but that his challenge failed. As briefly outlined at the start of the paper, the social and political

⁹³ "Setelah Pintu Tertutup ti Teuku Umara," *Tempo*, May 25, 2014: 33–36.

⁹⁴ From confidential communications between April and July 2014 with persons who were close to, or had met with, major Indonesian capitalists during or in the lead up to the campaign period.

⁹⁵ Aspinall and Mietzner, "Indonesian Democracy's Close Call," 13–14.

conditions for a populist challenge seemed favorable. As we have just seen, Prabowo's campaign was massively funded, and backed by a coalition of parties that were supported by a large majority of the Indonesian population.

There are two main explanations for why his failure was much less of a surprise than it might appear at first sight.⁹⁶ First, Prabowo faced a formidable populist competitor—albeit one of a very different kind—in Jokowi, who was better able to arouse the sympathies of Indonesia's disenfranchised, poor, rural voters. Furthermore, Jokowi maintained a strong lead over Prabowo in opinion polls from well before the presidential election. A series of exit polls conducted on polling day indicated that despite Prabowo's attempt to target poor, rural, and uneducated voters, in fact his main support base was among the relatively privileged. Thus, according to one poll conducted by Indikator Politik Indonesia, Prabowo won the cities, but lost in the countryside; he won among the better educated, but lost among those with only an elementary or junior high school education; and he won among those with monthly incomes over 1 million rupiah, but lost among those whose incomes were lower.⁹⁷ We lack space to explain in detail how Jokowi better convinced the poor; suffice it to say that Jokowi, described by Mietzner as a "polite" populist, was greatly assisted by his relatively humble origins, a simple and unaffected personal style, and an ability to connect in a natural manner with ordinary citizens.⁹⁸ Despite Prabowo's targeting of the rural poor, it is intriguing that Prabowo's appeal was strongest among middle-class and urban voters. Anecdotal evidence suggests that his authoritative and articulate style, in keeping with traditional styles of Indonesian political leadership, was more appealing to this group than Jokowi's low-key approach and often halting verbal delivery. It is also possible that Prabowo's nationalism appealed more strongly to voters living in urban centers who are often more upwardly mobile than their rural counterparts but also more affected by the social and cultural dislocations of modern life.

Second, though social conditions were in some ways conducive to populism, Indonesia was not experiencing the sort of full-blown crisis of confidence in democratic institutions that often prefigures a successful populist-authoritarian challenge. In fact, public confidence in democracy remains high, as demonstrated by various public opinion surveys over the last decade.⁹⁹ One poll carried out not long after the presidential election indicates that a slightly higher proportion of Prabowo supporters (79 percent) compared to Joko Widodo supporters (75 percent) reportedly agreed with the proposition that democracy was "appropriate for Indonesia."¹⁰⁰ In the same poll a slightly higher proportion (27 versus 20 percent) of Prabowo supporters agreed that

⁹⁶ For greater detail, see: Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesia's 2014 Elections: How Jokowi Won and Democracy Survived," *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 4 (October 2014): 111–25; and Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesian Politics in 2014: Democracy's Close Call," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 50, no. 3 (2014): 347–69.

⁹⁷ Indikator Politik Indonesia, Hasil Exit Poll Pemilu Presiden RI 2014 Rabu, 9 Juli 2014: 21–22.

⁹⁸ For more on Jokowi's approach and appeal, see Marcus Mietzner, "How Jokowi Won"; and "Jokowi: Rise of a Polite Populist," *Inside Indonesia* 116 (April–June 2014), <http://www.insideindonesia.org/current-edition/jokowi-rise-of-a-polite-populist>, accessed March 3, 2015.

⁹⁹ Aspinall and Mietzner, "Indonesian Politics in 2014," 367–68.

¹⁰⁰ Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting, "Kinerja Demokrasi Dan Pilpres 2014 Evaluasi Pemilih Nasional Temuan Survei: 21–26 Juli 2014," Jakarta, 23, a 66-slide PowerPoint presentation.

the Suharto government had been a democracy. These findings suggest that the anti-democratic features of Prabowo's background and program were either not appreciated by many of his supporters, or not considered to be important by them. In either case, we should assume that most people who supported Prabowo were not voting for an authoritarian program, but instead chose Prabowo because they saw other things in him—notably, his authoritative style—that attracted them.

We should not conclude from this analysis, however, that there was no threat to Indonesian democracy. Numerous factors suggest that had Prabowo won, he would have taken the country in a more authoritarian direction. The evidence includes his personal record as an authoritarian military officer responsible for human-rights abuses, the explicitly authoritarian aspects of his program, his combustible personality and record of impatience with formal institutions, his emphasis on the importance of strong leadership, and his angry, even obsessive, denunciation of unnamed enemies. Such factors point toward the likelihood he would have been a president with authoritarian instincts and little patience for institutional constraints or opposition. This suspicion was reinforced during and immediately after the presidential campaign, when Prabowo demonstrated he was prepared to ride roughshod over formal democratic institutions. Among other things, he sponsored fake election-day quick counts in order to give the false impression that he had won the vote, accused the General Elections Commission of engaging in a conspiracy to steal the vote from him, and mobilized his supporters in an attempt to smash up the Constitutional Court the day it rejected his challenge to the results.¹⁰¹ Moreover, after his defeat in the presidential election, Prabowo mobilized his coalition in the parliament to pass a new law abolishing direct elections of regional government heads—easily the most serious single act of democratic regression since the transition from the Suharto era began a decade and a half ago. At the time of writing, major realignments have begun and Prabowo's coalition has begun to fracture. Similarly, major splits have begun to open in the coalition that backed Jokowi, and the reform credentials of his government are being questioned as well. It is far from certain that Prabowo will continue to try to frustrate and undermine the new government, or whether he will be in a position to mount a future bid for the presidency.

Even setting aside such near-term dynamics, there are important lessons to be drawn from the Prabowo challenge of 2014. Arguably the most important concerns the location of the sources of pressure for democratic rollback. Populists are typically described as *outsider* challengers to established party systems or elites. As we have seen, this description fits the bill in the case of Prabowo if we take a narrowly proceduralist view of what constitutes an outsider: Prabowo and his party had never been part of the governing coalition in post-Suharto Indonesia. Viewed more broadly, however, Prabowo was an establishment figure, a major oligarch whose sources of authority and influence were rooted in the enmeshment of political and economic power that characterized the New Order system and has remained a defining feature of the post-Suharto era. Moreover, his appeal was ultimately stronger among middle class urbanites than it was for the downtrodden rural masses who were his primary target. His challenge to Indonesian democracy became possible because he was able to mobilize a broad coalition of mainstream political actors, including parties holding a

¹⁰¹ Aspinall and Mietzner, "Indonesian Politics in 2014," 363–65.

majority of seats in the national legislature. Their leaders apparently considered the opportunity to gain renewed access to government office and largesse if Prabowo won to outweigh concerns that his authoritarian leadership would lead to democratic rollback.

In short, Prabowo's challenge was one located largely *inside* the established elite-run political system. Prabowo's leadership and inspiration began to crystallize a reactionary, anti-democratic coalition among political elites who up to that point had been participants in, and even defenders of, Indonesia's post-Suharto democratic order. Thus, for example, we saw parties such as PKS vote down direct elections of local leaders, even though they had been among the strongest defenders of this system previously. Politicians from parties such as PAN—one of the pioneers of *reformasi*—openly called for the abolition of direct presidential elections. And senior Golkar leaders, including Aburizal Bakrie, began to voice calls for a return to “Pancasila Democracy” in ways that mainstream politicians have rarely dared since the demise of the New Order.¹⁰² It was as if Prabowo's challenge had granted a new license to be openly anti-democratic.

To be sure, most of the politicians and others who supported Prabowo were not fanatics, being neither diehard loyalists of Prabowo the man, nor ideologically committed authoritarians. But the dynamics of 2014 suggest that many of them were not deeply committed democrats, either. Through a long period of fieldwork in the lead up to the April 2014 legislative election, I had the opportunity to interview many legislative candidates in eighteen provinces. Many of them, from virtually every party—and by no means all Prabowo supporters—voiced casually authoritarian narratives about masses who were unprepared for democracy, about democracy that had gone too far, and about the need for a strong leader who could reassert discipline and earn Indonesia respect internationally. Most were not hungering for authoritarian reversal, but neither were they enamoured of democracy's key institutions or ideas. Mietzner has previously made a similar observation, identifying a conservative ruling elite—rather than public disillusionment—as the greatest danger to Indonesian democracy. He notes that “it is difficult to precisely pinpoint or even satisfactorily describe this conservative group in the elite: its members are represented in all political parties, every state institution, and even in civil society.”¹⁰³ Indeed, members of this conservative group were by no means absent from the coalition backing Prabowo's rival, Jokowi, as indicated in October 2014 by Jokowi's appointment to his cabinet of several former security officials and others with histories of hostility to reform; and by attacks mounted against the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi) by several of Jokowi's senior ministers and other backers early in his tenure.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Rizky Ferdiansyah, “Bakrie: Pilkada Lewat DPRD Kikis Demokrasi Liberal,” *Metrotvnews.com*, September 11, 2014, <http://news.metrotvnews.com/read/2014/09/11/289960/bakrie-pilkada-lewat-dprd-kikis-demokrasi-liberal>, accessed March 3, 2015.

¹⁰³ Marcus Mietzner, “Indonesia's Democratic Stagnation: Anti-reformist Elites and Resilient Civil Society,” *Democratization* 19, no. 2 (2012): 211.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Hans Nicholas Jong, “Budi Is Inevitable: Tedjo,” *Jakarta Post*, January 18, 2015, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/01/18/budi-inevitable-tedjo.html#sthash.QTMJg54a.7RRKz1FV.dpuf>, accessed March 3, 2015.

The Prabowo challenge showed us that as well as eroding democracy slowly from within—the focus of much research on Indonesian politics to date—these elites might one day coalesce into a formidable force for more sudden and dramatic authoritarian reversal. Prabowo’s presidential bid was also a reminder of the fragility of Indonesian democracy, casting doubt on analyses arguing that Indonesian democracy is already consolidated.¹⁰⁵ This is not so much because Prabowo identified how vulnerable democracy is to an enemy from without, but because he pointed to the authoritarian impulses that remain buried within Indonesia’s major democratic institutions, slumbering perhaps, but only lightly.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, R. William Liddle and Saiful Mujani, “Indonesian Democracy from Transition to Consolidation,” in *Democracy and Islam in Indonesia*, ed. Mirjam Künkler and Alfred Stepan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 24–50.