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NEITHER COLD NOR HOT: WESTERN STATES' DEFENSIVE RESPONSE TO THE
HYBRID WARFARE THREAT

Ian Roberge & Daven Ng

FEEDING THE ALGORITHM: HOW NATIONS SHAPE AI TRAINING DATA TO
PROJECT POWER AND INFLUENCE GLOBAL NEWS NARRATIVES

Nikos Panagiotou & Ioannis Tzortzis

COUNTRIES TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AS A FORM OF ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

Jusmalia Oktaviani & Firdaus Muhamad Iqbal

CHINA'S DUAL IDENTITY AND ITS DISCOURSE TOWARD THE EU'S CARBON BORDER
ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM: A CONSTRUCTIVIST ANALYSIS (2021-2024)

Joshua Kharizestha Evangelize Syauta

JOKOWI AND XI'S ANTI CORRUPTION: COMMONALITIES AND DISTINCTIVENESS

Khairizah Fahrudin, Muhamad Iksan, and Anggi Lestari

POLICY DIFFUSION, DIGITALISATION, AND GOVERNANCE GAPS IN THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF INDONESIA'S GOLDEN VISA PROGRAMME

Gunawan Ari Nursanto, Sunarto, Pandji Sukmana, and Gatot Hery Djatmiko

**MASTER'S PROGRAMS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCE
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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|---------|
| CONTENT | i |
| EDITORIAL BOARD | ii |
| NEITHER COLD NOR HOT: WESTERN STATES' DEFENSIVE RESPONSE TO THE HYBRID WARFARE THREAT by Ian Roberge & Daven Ng | 1-36 |
| FEEDING THE ALGORITHM: HOW NATIONS SHAPE AI TRAINING DATA TO PROJECT POWER AND INFLUENCE GLOBAL NEWS NARRATIVES by Nikos Panagiotou & Ioannis Tzortzis | 37-57 |
| NEW COLONIALISM IN AN ECOLOGICAL GUISE: WASTE TRADE FROM DEVELOPED COUNTRIES TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AS A FORM OF ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM by Jusmalia Oktaviani & Firdaus Muhamad Iqbal | 58-79 |
| CHINA'S DUAL IDENTITY AND ITS DISCOURSE TOWARD THE EU'S CARBON BORDER ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM: A CONSTRUCTIVIST ANALYSIS (2021-2024) by Joshua Kharizestha Evangelize Syauta | 80-93 |
| JOKOWI AND XI'S ANTI CORRUPTION: COMMONALITIES AND DISTINCTIVENESS by Khairizah Fahrudin, Muhamad Iksan, and Anggi Lestari | 94-113 |
| POLICY DIFFUSION, DIGITALISATION, AND GOVERNANCE GAPS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INDONESIA'S GOLDEN VISA PROGRAMME by Gunawan Ari Nursanto, Sunarto, Pandji Sukmana, and Gatot Hery Djatmiko | 114-130 |

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Jokowi and Xi's Anti Corruption: Commonalities and Distinctiveness

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Our paper attempts to address two main questions. First, what anti-corruption strategies did the two presidents employ to exercise their power and maintain legitimacy, which were crucial for their presidencies: Xi Jinping from 2012 to the present, and Joko Widodo (Jokowi) from 2014 to 2024? We are particularly interested in discussing in greater depth why Xi and Jokowi adopted these strategies. Second, what is the outlook for anti-corruption measures in the near future—for Jokowi until the end of his term in 2024, and for Xi, who faces no term limit after centralizing power under his leadership? We argue that Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign primarily targeted political corruption in order to realize his "Chinese Dream" by creating a more certain and stable domestic environment, made possible after he successfully centralized power. In contrast, Jokowi's first term had to navigate a more dynamic domestic political environment. Although, at the beginning of his presidency, he was perceived as an anti-corruption politician and acted in adherence to principles of good public governance—namely transparency and accountability—Jokowi's second term saw a shift in his anti-corruption stance. His governing priorities no longer emphasized transparency and accountability but instead focused on economic development per se. This comparative study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between anti-corruption strategies, power consolidation, and political legitimacy in presidential regimes that differ significantly in their institutional characteristics.

Keywords: *Anti corruption, political corruption, comparative case of China and Indonesia*

Introduction

“Fight corruption too little and destroy the country; Fight corruption too much and destroy the party.” - Chen Yun

“Dad, I am so afraid that you have an intention to corrupt.” - Pramoedya Ananta Toer

Chen Yun, a veteran leader, and Pramoedya Ananta Toer¹, a prolific writer, shared idiosyncratic thoughts on the problematic choices that China and Indonesia must confront when curbing corruption. The former summed up the dilemma facing the People's Republic of China (PRC), primarily for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The latter was drawn from his novel entitled *Korupsi* (Corruption), published in 1954, just a few years after the Republic of Indonesia's independence.

Our article aims to describe and discuss the anti-corruption strategies adopted by the presidents of the two most populous countries: the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Indonesia—President Xi Jinping (hereafter Xi) and former President Joko Widodo (hereafter Jokowi). By "strategy," we do not necessarily mean a comprehensive policy; in a general sense, strategy refers here to concrete actions. Our paper also seeks to explain contemporary leadership in China and Indonesia. We focus our attention on political corruption rather than bureaucratic corruption. In its basic notion, corruption is the misuse of public funds for personal gain; however, this definition often focuses too narrowly on the use of public money or taxpayers' funds in a country's state budget.

Jokowi pledged the *Nawacita*—nine goals centered on "sovereignty, self-reliance, and strength through mutual cooperation." Campaign promises transformed into governmental programs showed the path that the country had to follow to improve the welfare of its people (Kuncoro, 2019). By promising and campaigning on the *Nawacita* (from Sanskrit "nawa," meaning nine, and Indonesian "cita," meaning pledge or aspiration), Jokowi won two consecutive elections in 2014 and 2019, defeating the same challenger—Prabowo Subianto—in both. Prabowo Subianto is now the eighth President

¹ Pramoedya Ananta Toer was ever jailed by Soeharto regime due to his past encounter with Lekra (an underbow of Indonesia Communist Party – *Partai Komunis Indonesia*). He was renowned for his tetralogy masterpiece of fourth novel book and was few time nominated for winning Nobel Prize for Literature, here is link from Al Jazeera: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/02/pramoedya-ananta-toer-170206053453639.html#:~:text=Pramoedya%20was%20nominated%20for%20the,his%20literary%20attachment%20to%20women.>

of Indonesia, having won the 2024 election running alongside Jokowi's son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, as his vice-presidential candidate.

His victory was interpreted as a sign that democracy had survived. One reason for this was that his challenger, Prabowo, was supported by machine politics, a divisive populist campaign laced with chauvinistic rhetoric, and substantial funding from numerous conglomerates. In contrast, Jokowi relied on grassroots volunteerism and a moderate tone centered on his campaign promises—the Nawacita. And the rest, as they say, was history: “democracy survived” (Mietzner, 2014).

Xi ascended to the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC)—the highest organ of the CCP—at the 18th Party Congress, amid significant political drama preceding the event. We draw on Dreyer's analysis (2019:135), which suggested that the fifth-generation succession appeared assured. However, unexpected events unfolded with the arrest of PRC princeling Bo Xilai, who had been regarded as well-positioned to join the PBSC and potentially rise to lead the party and government as the next PRC president. The scandal was triggered when Bo's close aide, Wang Lijun, sought refuge at the U.S. Consulate in Chengdu (Miller, 2023).

After Xi successfully consolidated power, he introduced the “Chinese Dream” in late 2012.² It encompassed a set of personal and national ideals within Chinese society. Later, the “Chinese Dream” was used by journalists, government officials, and activists to describe both the role of the individual in Chinese society and the goals of the Chinese nation. Xi can be considered a princeling, as his father, Xi Zhongxun, was a prominent communist revolutionary and veteran leader.³

Since 2012, Xi has held three key positions simultaneously: General Secretary of the CCP, President of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Chairman of the Central Military Commission (head of the People's Liberation Army, PLA). This concentration of power in his hands has been described using the phrase “triple crown” or “triple majority position,” making him an exceptionally powerful leader. This situation evolved further with the CCP establishing him as the “core” of the leadership and, in practice, “Chairman of Everything.” Ultimately, Xi consolidated his power and demanded loyalty both to himself and to the party.

² Detail of Chinese dream can be found from this link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Dream

³ Story from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xi_Zhongxun#:~:text=Xi%20Zhongxun%20died%2024%20May,Shaanxi%20Gansu%20border%20region.%22

In contrast, Jokowi began his political career as mayor of Solo, a small city in Central Java. He later served as governor of Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, for only two years before his party pushed him to run in the 2014 presidential election. He was nominated by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), though he was not originally a senior party official. Unlike Xi, who rose through the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), Jokowi was not the most powerful figure within PDI-P. This phenomenon—Jokowi’s relative lack of initial power—has been termed his “triple minority position” (Muhtadi, 2015).

To provide a general overview, we present Table 1 below, which compares China and Indonesia on selected indicators: population, Corruption Perception Index (CPI) from Transparency International, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in real percentage terms, and Ease of Doing Business (EODB) from the World Bank. The EODB is considered a key index for global investors evaluating foreign investment opportunities. As a rule of thumb, a higher Ease of Doing Business ranking indicates a regulatory environment more conducive to starting and operating a local firm. The rankings are determined by sorting aggregate scores across 10 topics, with each topic receiving equal weight.⁴

Table 1: Selected Comparison China and Indonesia

| Comparable Indicators | China | Indonesia |
|---|---|---|
| Population | 1,397,897,720 (July 2021 est.) | 275,122,131 (July 2021 est.) |
| Corruption Perception Index (CPI) Transparency International rank and score (below) | 76/180 (43/100) | 99/180 (37/100) |
| GDP - real growth rate | 6.14% (2019 est.) 6.75% (2018 est.) 6.92% (2017 est.) | 5.03% (2019 est.) 5.17% (2018 est.) 5.07% (2017 est.) |
| Rank of Ease of Doing Business (EODB) World Bank ⁵ | 31 of 190 | 73 of 190 |

Source: <https://www.indexmundi.com/factbook/compare/china.indonesia>, CPI from Transparency International and EODB from World Bank

⁴ Source: <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/rankings?region=east-asia-and-pacific>

⁵ Doing Business Report has been discontinued since 2021 by the World Bank. As a replacement, starting in 2024 the World Bank introduced a new survey called Business Ready (B-READY) to evaluate the business climate

We propose two main questions for discussion. First, what are the commonalities and differences in the anti-corruption strategies that the two presidents employed to exercise their power and maintain legitimacy during their presidencies—Xi Jinping from 2012 onward and Joko Widodo (Jokowi) from 2014 to 2024? And why did they adopt these strategies? We argue that the terms "commonalities" and "distinctiveness" are standard phrases for comparing factors across two different cases. These terms should be easily understood.

Second, what is the outlook for anti-corruption measures in the near future—for Jokowi up to the end of his term in 2024, and for Xi, who faces no term limit due to the constitutional amendment? Our argument positions the two countries and their leaders as a "most different systems" design. It culminates in the question: Why did both leaders use anti-corruption agendas to build legitimacy despite their differing political systems?

Samuel Huntington, in his classic book *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968: 64), argued that "corruption provides immediate, specific, and concrete benefits to groups which might otherwise be thoroughly alienated from society. Corruption may thus be functional to a political system in the same way that reform is." By utilizing Huntington's argument, one must consider the functionality of corruption in any political system (democracy or autocracy) as crucial, even when pursuing reform policies.

Analytical Framework

A large and growing body of literature has investigated corruption, leadership, and the impact of national leaders' policies on anti-corruption efforts. Historically, research on corruption has focused on politico-economic phenomena. For instance, the classic work by Rose-Ackerman (1978) framed corruption as a problem in political economy, applying an economic framework of agency problems or relationships and functional bribery, summarized by the phrase "quid pro quo" (meaning "something for something").

Several distinct features of bureaucratic corruption are considered petty corruption, "administrative" in style—meaning officials deal with power granted by the state, and corrupt actors behave like thieves worried about getting caught. However, political corruption's key distinct features can be considered grand corruption, with more political nuance, and it relates to bribery rather than theft.

Empirically, Jones and Olken (2005) presented findings of robust evidence that leaders matter for economic growth. Their results suggested that the effects of individual leaders are strongest in autocratic settings, where there are fewer constraints on a leader's power. They added that leaders also appear to affect policy outcomes, particularly monetary policy. Their work is important here for highlighting the enduring debate over the relative roles of individuals and deterministic forces in shaping historical outcomes.

There are two contentious schools of thought along these lines. At one extreme, Leo Tolstoy in his book *War and Peace* introduced a historical theory perhaps most dismissive of leaders, seeing so-called historic figures as mere *ex post* justifications for events wholly beyond any individual's influence (Berlin, 1978; Jones and Olken, 2005). Besides Tolstoy, Karl Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852) offered some minimal agency for leaders but argued that leaders must choose from a historically determined set of choices, meaning they have much less freedom to act than they think they do. If we follow Tolstoy and Marx's stance, leaders typically claim immodest powers, although they are in fact of little consequence (Jones and Olken, 2005: 838).

In contrast to Tolstoy and Marx, there is the absolutist extreme in which individuals are seen as the decisive influences in history—the so-called “Great Man” view. From this perspective, the evolution of history is largely determined by the idiosyncratic, causative influences of certain individuals, perhaps a very small number (Jones and Olken, 2005). Both writers later gave the example of Max Weber (1947), who saw a role for “charismatic” leadership in certain circumstances—one may describe charismatic leadership as an ideal type. Weber allowed for possibly substantial individual roles, but only in cases where the national bureaucracy or traditional social norms do not stand in the way of the individual. For Weber, individuals, historical forces, and institutions are all important, and they interact in significant ways (Jones and Olken, 2005).

Then, how do these two contentious schools of thought—on whether leaders matter or not—relate to understanding contemporary leadership in China and Indonesia? The bottom line for both leaders is their promises to the people—the “Chinese Dream” and *Nawacita*—to be delivered within specific time frames. With the issue of rampant corruption (political corruption in this case), it could somehow derail their promises along the way, making the “Chinese Dream” deliver only as a dream and *Nawacita* only as “cita” (aspiration). Moreover, there are contending views in the literatures on economics and political science: Is corruption evil, or not evil (even acceptable or good)?

Economists who study corruption argue that it reduces investment and slows growth (Seligson, 2002). Besides this argument, there is a strong consensus, based on considerable empirical evidence, that corruption has negative economic consequences. This view is reflected in international lending agencies' major efforts to reduce corruption, including conditionality on their loans and widespread initiatives to address the damage caused by corruption (Seligson, 2002).

Table 1 above presents the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) from Transparency International. However, the CPI is highly problematic in its assumption of a single dimension to corruption and its source bias toward multinational businesses, for example. There are alternative systematic measures, but not many (Manion, 2004). We tend to agree with Manion's argument and follow her view that clean government and widespread corruption are described as equilibria (Manion, 2004). By "equilibria," she means that clean government and widespread corruption are equally stable states for everyone involved. It only means that, whatever path led to these alternative outcomes, the structure of the situation—in this case, the corruption rate that defines the two equilibria—reinforces the choices that sustain them.

Manion (2004) illustrates this with a corruption payoff curve, showing how officials' incentives shift as the number of corrupt actors increases. At point A, where very few officials are corrupt, clean transactions yield higher expected returns, making corruption unattractive. As corruption becomes more widespread, expected corrupt payoffs rise and eventually exceed clean payoffs at point B — the tipping point where an official is indifferent between being corrupt or clean. Once past this threshold, corrupt behavior becomes self-reinforcing because each additional corrupt official increases the likelihood of successful rent extraction. If corruption continues to spread to point C, widespread corruption becomes a stable equilibrium.

Following this illustration, the first implication formulates reform as a problem of changing corrupt payoffs; the second, as a problem of changing expectations. A third implication is that reform (changing payoffs, expectations, or both) need not bear the entire burden of creating clean government (Manion, 2004). Enforcement strategies reduce corrupt payoffs by increasing the likelihood that corrupt officials and their accomplices in society are discovered and, when discovered, punished with severity commensurate with the corrupt act (Manion, 2004). In China and Vietnam, officials can be executed for corruption. Yet, in both countries, enforcement is uncertain.

In tackling corruption, China has recognized that crucial reforms are needed to maintain its current rate of economic growth and prevent the economy from collapsing like a house of cards. With the Twelfth Five-Year Plan, the Chinese government set out an ambitious proposal to increase domestic consumption by putting more money in the pockets of the poor. It also addressed economic restructuring and tackled pollution by conserving energy and cleaning up the environment. But corruption has the power to nullify the government's reform efforts. It hinders development in remote areas and marginalizes the poor. Often, money earmarked for environmental programs disappears without noticeable impact.

One important milestone occurred in 2018 when China established the National Supervision Commission, with the objective of integrating anti-corruption efforts. Deng (2018) examines the consolidation of China's anti-corruption framework from a dual-track system (involving both Party committees and state prosecutors) into a unified National Supervision Commission (NSC). Empirical evidence from pilot reforms in Beijing, Shanxi, and Zhejiang demonstrates that this restructuring merges prosecutorial powers into the Party's Discipline Inspection Committees, effectively creating a single enforcement agency. Deng argues that while this centralization mitigates interference from local officials, it ultimately entrenches the central Party's leading control rather than fostering independent rule of law, prioritizing internal political supervision over external checks and balances.

When Jokowi was inaugurated as president of Indonesia on October 20, 2014, the new president promised to bring a new style to Indonesian politics, generating optimism among many Indonesians that his government would enthusiastically promote reform. Expectations for reform were high. Against this popular perception of renewed faith in democracy, it took only a few months in office for the Jokowi administration to exhibit elements of democratic regression, amid rising public disappointment (Muhtadi, 2015).

Jokowi seemed to believe that Indonesia's crackdown on corruption had discouraged some local and national officials from starting new projects and had instilled fear in others that they would be accused of, or even charged with, corruption. Although he had a background as a recipient of the Bung Hatta Anti-Corruption Award, a number of agendas intersecting with good governance and anti-corruption policies were incorporated into the Nawacita. The anti-corruption commitment was at least stated in the Nawacita agenda.

Research Method

Our study employs a structured, focused comparative method to systematically examine the causal relationship between anti-corruption strategies, power consolidation, and political legitimacy in China and Indonesia, using a most different systems design logic (Seawright and Gerring, 2008). The "most different" method of case selection involves choosing two or more cases that differ significantly on specified variables—for example, the causal factor of theoretical interest (political corruption) and the outcome (regime legitimacy). This approach is described as the inverse of the "most similar" method (Seawright and Gerring, 2008).

Thus, this research adopts a qualitative comparative method, combining structured, focused comparison with the use of secondary sources—books, journals, media articles, and newspapers. The first and corresponding authors are responsible for gathering materials on Jokowi and the Indonesian case, while the second author is responsible for collecting materials on Xi Jinping and the PRC case. The most different systems design strengthens causal inference by controlling for contextual similarities at the regional and developmental levels. Anti-corruption strategies tend to become more repressive and selective when presidents face high elite fragmentation or weak rule of law.

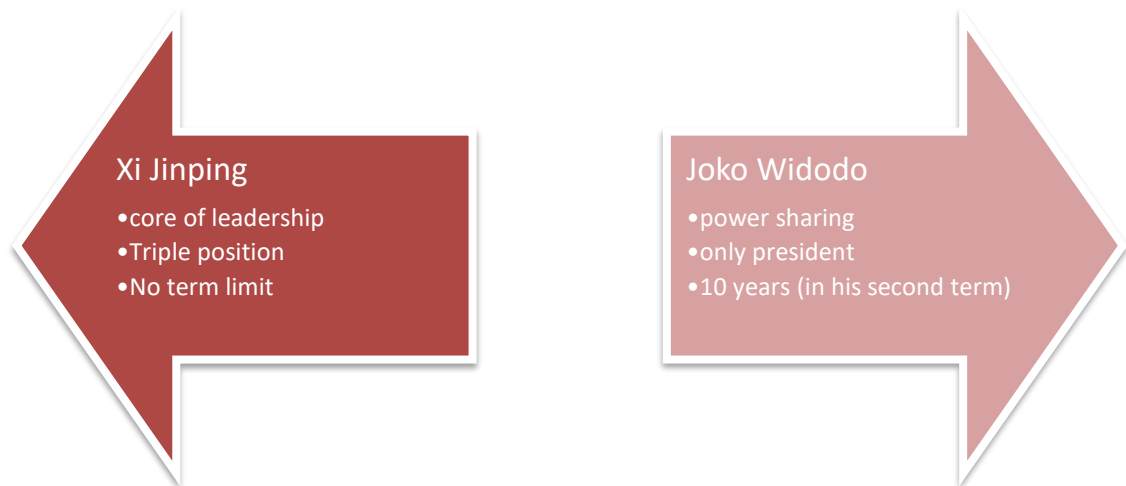
To address the research problems in this paper, we gathered secondary data from journals, books, magazines, newspapers, and blogs on China and Indonesia, with a focus on political corruption and regime legitimacy, while employing a triangulation method. Several key sources include: (1) Brown (2018), *The World According to Xi*; (2) Manion (2004), *Corruption by Design: Building Clean Government in Mainland China and Hong Kong*; (3) Dickson (2016), *The Dictator's Dilemma*; (4) Lubis (2017), *Political Corruption in Indonesia*; (5) Fariz (2019), "Jokowi Administration and Political Attacks toward the Corruption Eradication Commission in Indonesia"; and (6) Muhtadi (2015), "Jokowi's First Year: A Weak President Caught between Reform and Oligarchic Politics."

Discussion

Prior to comparing Xi Jinping's and Jokowi's anti-corruption strategies, it is relevant to briefly review the status and position of each leader within the political

environment in which they governed. Comparing the two leaders is a prerequisite for understanding the commonalities and differences between them.

Xi Jinping promised the "Chinese Dream," centralized party and state power in his hands, and launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) along with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as means to achieve that end. On the other hand, Jokowi pledged to deliver on his campaign promises—the Nawacita and Revolusi Mental—with a leadership style focused more on economic development through a New Developmentalism strategy.



Source: Authors elaboration (2025)

We contend that Xi Jinping is less constrained in addressing political challenges due to his concentration of authority—holding three central leadership positions, the removal of presidential term limits, and his designation as the “core” of the Chinese leadership. In contrast, Joko Widodo (Jokowi) faces greater institutional and political limitations, as he must engage in power-sharing, holds only the presidential office without party chairmanship, and is constitutionally restricted to a maximum tenure of ten years.

The Case of China

It is important to begin the discussion with Hu Jintao’s first address to party leaders in 2012, which included a strong directive to intensify the fight against corruption (May, 2012). The fight is crucial, yet a poor record of success gives little reason for

optimism. There are differing views on why this battle has not been won: some argue that it goes hand in hand with the benefits of an otherwise successful system; others attribute it to the legacy of extreme poverty during the Cultural Revolution; and still others believe it to be an inherent part of Chinese culture. Be that as it may, the corrosive effects of corruption on government reforms, the economy, and the reputation of the party are undeniable.

According to May (2012), corruption is skimming away resources allocated for China's urgently needed reforms. While it may not be the country's biggest problem, it seriously hinders efforts to tackle more pressing ones. Consequently, success in curbing corruption is vital not only for China but also for the rest of an increasingly China-dependent world.⁶

China's previous efforts to curb corruption have focused on toughening related penalties, even resorting to capital punishment. But this approach has proved unsuccessful. Rather, transparency and public accountability are more effective in fighting corruption. While China's authoritarian leadership has enabled fast and comprehensive reforms—which turned an impoverished state into a superpower—accountability has little place within authoritarian regimes. This is why reform in China is so difficult.

However, reforms under Xi took a totally different course. Unlike his predecessor, Xi's leadership has been political rather than administrative or economic. Whereas under Hu the country's focus was on GDP growth and achieving new economic results, Xi has worked to consolidate the role of the Party in its national mission to make the country strong and great (Brown, 2018). He has sponsored Party-led nation-building campaigns, promoted the Party line, and enforced ideology and discipline—the last of these as part of the national struggle against corruption (Brown, 2018).

Needless to say, China does not need to become a Western-style democracy; it should find ways to implement public accountability within its own system, allowing for public scrutiny and exposure of corruption where it thrives. Channels that encourage credible and accurate reporting without fear of being labeled “anti-government” must be established. China will need to implement these reforms without forgoing the very characteristics that enabled its economic development. Failure to effectively curb corruption risks widespread public dismay with the country's political leadership.

⁶ See link for detail discussion: <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/02/09/curbing-corruption-in-china/>

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Xi has cast off the shadow of factionalism and become more unified. Signs of dissent have been limited, despite the removal of many powerful figures during the anti-corruption campaign. The campaign has often been described as a power struggle—a description Xi Jinping addressed during his visit to the US in 2015 (Brown, 2018). However, Xi denied any basis for such a claim, stating that the aim was not to accrue personal power but to address political inefficiency within the Party.

The anti-corruption campaign developed into a movement that was as much about symbolism and managing public perceptions as about achieving long-term solutions to cadre misbehavior. High-profile targets like Zhou Yongkang fell from grace—the first time since 1949 that a former member of the Politburo Standing Committee had been investigated and punished in the civil courts. He was soon joined by Ling Jihua, a member of the full Politburo. The notion of felling both “tigers and flies” was important: no one was immune (Brown, 2018).

A milestone for institutional change occurred in 2018. As Deng describes, the structural integrity of the nascent National Supervision Commission (NSC) system rests upon the principle of “One Set of Staff, Two Titles” (合署办公 - hé shǔ bàn gōng). This model dictates that the NSCs are not independent, newly formed entities but are instead integrated into the existing operational framework of the Party’s Discipline Inspection Committees (DICs). The critical component of this integration involved the comprehensive absorption of state procuratorial functions related to anti-corruption. Specifically, the investigative arms of the procuratorates—including the Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Anti-Dereliction of Duty Department—were fully transferred to the NSCs. This personnel shift fundamentally embeds the state’s judicial anti-corruption personnel into the DIC structure, thereby placing formerly distinct legal enforcement mechanisms under the direct command of the Party organ and solidifying centralized Party control over anti-corruption enforcement.

Combating corruption in an autocracy seems easier than in a democratic country. In China, an explosion of corruption—cases of bribery, embezzlement, and misuse of public funds—occurred after Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms, which opened up the economy starting with four coastal special economic zones. Manion (2004) illustrates the trends in corruption cases investigated in China from 1979 to 2001, distinguishing between all cases and those involving substantial financial sums. The general trajectory shows a significant increase in the number of cases investigated over the period, although

the pattern is marked by sharp fluctuations, particularly during the 1980s. Campaign-driven spikes in investigations can be observed, such as the peaks around 1983 and 1987, which reflect the influence of anti-corruption drives rather than steady institutionalized enforcement. When excluding these campaign effects, the trend line indicates a more gradual and consistent rise in corruption cases throughout the two decades.

Notably, cases involving large sums of money—defined until 1998 as amounts above 10,000 yuan, and after 1998 as 50,000 yuan for bribery and 100,000 yuan for embezzlement of public assets—also show a steady upward trajectory, particularly from the early 1990s onward. This pattern suggests both an expansion in the scale of corruption and improvements in institutional capacity to detect and prosecute more complex, high-value cases. The sharp divergence between the trend line of all cases and big-sum cases after the mid-1990s indicates a shift in prosecutorial focus toward more severe forms of corruption, which aligns with broader economic liberalization and the growing stakes of market reforms.

Overall, the data from Manion reveal that while anti-corruption campaigns in the 1980s generated temporary surges in cases, the underlying structural trend was one of rising incidence and/or detection of corruption, particularly involving substantial financial misconduct. This underscores the dual nature of China's anti-corruption efforts: highly visible campaigns on one hand, and gradual institutionalization of enforcement capacity on the other.

In criminal corruption cases investigated in the 1980s and 1990s, embezzlement of public assets accounted for 56 percent, bribery for 28 percent, and misuse of public funds for 16 percent. Senior officials—defined as those at or above the county or division level (*xian chu*)—comprised a mere 3 percent of officials investigated in the 1990s. Criminal corruption involving big sums comprised one-third of all cases investigated from the late 1980s through the 1990s, although a change in legal definition effective in 1998 significantly reduced the number of such cases. Prior to 1998, “big sums” referred to bribery and embezzlement of public assets involving 10,000 yuan or more and misuse of public funds involving 50,000 yuan or more. These thresholds were raised to 50,000 yuan and 100,000 yuan, respectively (Manion, 2004).

Other important milestones in China's anti-corruption efforts during the Xi era include the creation of the National Security Commission in 2013. The anti-corruption approach has relied heavily on mass campaigns. After Xi Jinping became general secretary, he launched an extensive anti-corruption campaign targeting wasteful spending

on official banquets and travel, as well as bribes and gifts. The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) reported confiscating 38.7 billion yuan (approximately \$6.2 billion) between November 2012 and June 2015 (Dickson, 2016). Many high-level politicians have been caught and charged with corruption, such as Zhou Yongkang, Ling Jihua, and, in one of the most famous cases, Bo Xilai. Bo's case became a milestone illustrating how censorship in China allows government criticism but silences collective expression, as discussed in the paper by King, Pan, and Roberts (2013).

The Case of Indonesia

It is even more relevant to examine the Indonesian case against this backdrop. Attempts to explain the problems and failings of democratic reform in the post-Soeharto era tend to rely on either the oligarchy thesis, which stresses material power, or the cartelization thesis, which emphasizes political institutions. The oligarchy thesis asserts that, despite the consolidation of democracy since 1998, post-authoritarian government remains controlled by the oligarchic and predatory forces that have defined the country's politics for decades (Hadiz and Robison, 2013).

The cartel thesis, on the other hand, claims that contemporary Indonesian politics is dominated by party cartels, in which a wide spectrum of political parties collude to share the spoils of power (Slater, 2004; Ambardi, 2008). We borrow from Slater (2018) several tables below to illustrate election results from 1999–2014 and power-sharing in cabinets between President Jokowi's supporting parties and their coalitions.

Table 2: General Election result (1999-2019)

| Party | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 | 2014 | 2019 |
|----------|------|------|------|------|------|
| PDIP | 33.8 | 18.5 | 14.0 | 18.9 | 19.9 |
| Golkar | 22.5 | 21.6 | 14.5 | 14.7 | 12.1 |
| PKB | 12.6 | 10.6 | 4.9 | 9.0 | 9.7 |
| PPP | 10.7 | 8.2 | 5.3 | 6.5 | 4.5 |
| PAN | 7.1 | 6.4 | 6.0 | 7.6 | 6.7 |
| PK(S) | 1.4 | 7.3 | 7.9 | 6.8 | 8.2 |
| PD | n/a | 7.5 | 20.9 | 10.2 | 7.6 |
| Gerindra | n/a | n/a | 4.5 | 11.8 | 12.5 |
| Hanura | n/a | n/a | 3.8 | 5.3 | 1.6 |
| NasDem | n/a | n/a | n/a | 6.7 | 8.8 |

Source: Dan Slater (2018:6). Election result for 2019, from <https://pemilu2019.kpu.go.id/#/dpri/hitung-suara/>

Based on Table 2 above, no single party has achieved a majority sufficient to enable one-party rule in Indonesia's historical elections following the collapse of the Suharto regime and the first democratic election in 1999. During the democratic transition, elections in 2004 and 2009 resulted in Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono being elected and serving as president. In 2014, this pattern continued with Joko Widodo (Jokowi) as president, backed by his party, PDI-P. We present power-sharing in the cabinet as follows:

Table 3
 Power-Sharing in Jokowi's First "Working Cabinet," 2014–16

| Party | Parliament Seat Share (%) | Coordinating Ministers# | Cabinet Ministers | % of Party |
|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| | | | | Appointments |
| PDIP | 19.5 | 1 [+ President] | 4 | 25.0 |
| Golkar+ | 16.3 | 1 [+ VP] | 2 | 18.8 |
| PAN+ | 8.7 | 0 | 1 | 6.3 |
| PKB | 8.4 | 0 | 4 | 25.0 |
| PPP+ | 7.0 | 0 | 1 | 6.3 |
| NasDem | 6.4 | 0 | 2 | 12.5 |
| Hanura | 2.9 | 1 | 1 | 6.3 |
| Gerindra+ | 13.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| PD | 10.9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| PKS+ | 7.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

+ Parties that directly opposed Jokowi in the 2014 presidential election

* Vice President (VP) included in % of Party Appointments count

Coordinating Ministers are included in "Cabinet Ministers" count

Brata (2011) identified at least five factors that contributed to the failure to eradicate corruption from the New Order era through the early stages of reformasi. These five causes are closely associated with: (1) policy design factors, (2) political factors, (3) institutional factors, (4) management factors, and (5) societal factors. Among these, flaws in implementation structures and procedures are the principal cause of failure. Brata's analysis also indicated that the political systems of the two regimes—the New Order versus the democratic regime—played a role in the implementation failure of anti-corruption laws.

The president's anti-corruption legal politics are strongly influenced by the practice of presidential power in government (Fariz, 2019). Based on historical accounts, corruption eradication often "fails" because anti-corruption bodies do not dare to enter the epicenter of corruption (Jeremy Pope, 2000, in Fariz, 2019). This condition began to change with the formation of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in 2003. Various corruption cases involving previously untouchable actors could now be prosecuted. Making friends with the ruling party is no longer a guarantee of immunity from legal processes, as was common during the New Order.

It is no exaggeration, then, that former Chairman of Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), Tony Kwok (May, 2013), considers the KPK one of the three best anti-corruption institutions in Asia. The handling of cases—in terms of the level of actors involved and the amount of state financial losses—provides indisputable evidence. As a result, the KPK's existence is seen as disrupting the comfort zones of party elites, businessmen, and corrupt law enforcement officials. From the KPK's formation until 2019, at least 107 regional heads were implicated in corruption cases (Indonesia Corruption Watch, 2019, in Fariz, 2019). Not only regional heads but also, during the 2014–2019 period, **at least 23 active members of the Indonesian Parliament were ensnared in corruption cases through sting operations.** These included high-level politicians such as Setya Novanto, Rokhmin Dahuri, Alamin Nasution Hari Sabarno, Andi Mallarangeng, Jero Wacik, Siti Fadilah Supari, Bachtiar Chamsyah, Idrus Marham, and Imam Nawawi. Because Indonesia only began seriously prosecuting corruption cases relatively recently, we lack comprehensive longitudinal data comparable to that presented by Melanie Manion above.

The anti-corruption commitment is at least stated in the second and fourth priorities of Jokowi's Nawacita agenda, that the government **is not absent** in building clean, effective, democratic, and reliable governance by prioritizing efforts to restore public trust in democratic institutions through continued consolidation of democracy, including reforms to the party system, elections, and representative institutions; and realizing transparent governance by consistently advancing bureaucratic reform, improving public service quality, and opening spaces for public participation.

However, we also draw on a conceptual study that analyzes the persistent influence of vested interests in obstructing Indonesia's anti-corruption agenda, even after the democratic transition following 1998. The author contends that, although Indonesia instituted neoliberal institutional reforms—such as democratization, economic

liberalization, and the formation of the KPK—these measures failed to dismantle the deeply rooted patronage structures inherited from the New Order regime (Umam, 2021). Rather, established and emerging elites have adapted to the democratic environment by restructuring their networks to safeguard existing political and economic advantages.

The fourth priority involves system reforms and enforcement of rights free from corruption, with dignity and trustworthiness: eradicating the judicial mafia, taking firm action against corruption within the judiciary, and combating illegal logging, illegal fishing, illegal mining, banking crimes, and money laundering. But political reality tells a different story. The parties that supported Jokowi had their own agendas to influence him through cabinet arrangements, as indicated in Tables 3 and 4 above. The corruption eradication program focused only on technical problems in public sector management. Natural resource-related corruption eradication programs remained apolitical, even though corruption is fundamentally a political problem.

Conclusion

Our article highlights distinct differences between Jokowi and Xi: term limits constrained Jokowi, unlike Xi, who successfully centralized power. Jokowi faced low parliamentary support and thus attempted to build a large coalition for stability. More importantly, the new CCP leadership under Xi announced economic plans that radically challenged the interests of powerful interest groups. This was followed by an anti-corruption campaign that targeted the archetypes of reactionary interest group power—one of the most audacious gambits in the modern history of anti-corruption strategy in China. By confronting all the most powerful groups simultaneously, Xi relied on leadership unity, a technocratic economic strategy, an anti-corruption campaign as his core political weapon, and a wave of popular support.

The legitimacy of the CCP regime is not solely due to combating corruption but is tied to multiple factors, including household income, as discussed in Bruce Dickson's *The Dictator's Dilemma*. Drawing on Chen Yun's quote, the decision to combat political corruption creates a dilemma: neglecting corruption would ruin China, but punishing it harshly could ruin the Party.

In Indonesia over the past decade, we have witnessed that Jokowi's government often pursued anti-corruption policies at odds with the KPK. President Jokowi showed

minimal initiative in developing anti-corruption policies. He prioritized investment and licensing sectors, minimizing corruption issues to petty extortion while the KPK's legal mandate focuses on grand corruption. The corruption eradication ecosystem in Indonesia is strongly influenced by political factors beyond law enforcement itself—including political power dynamics, oligarchic compromises, and the president's sensitivity toward anti-corruption institutions.

Democracy in Indonesia and authoritarianism in China are often taken for granted. Xi operated in a more certain environment for using anti-corruption efforts to enhance legitimacy by tackling high-profile political corruption. In contrast, Jokowi had tremendous institutional support through the KPK but appeared to prioritize economic development over his campaign promises on anti-corruption. With regard to political corruption, both countries have taken significant steps: prosecuting “big players” in Indonesian politics and “tigers” in Chinese politics.

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