# Consolidating Power: Strategies and Tactics of Executive Aggrandizement

## The Autocratic Expansion Model in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand

**Inauguraldissertation**
zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades
Dr. rer. pol. im Fach Politikwissenschaft

vorgelegt von
**Carmen Wintergerst**

eingereicht am Institut für Politische Wissenschaft
der Fakultät für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften
der Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg

Erstgutachter: Prof. Dr. Aurel Croissant, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg
Zweitgutachter: Prof. Dr. Marco Bünte, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

Heidelberg
Im Januar 2025

Carmen Wintergerst
Fritz Frey Straße 2
69121 Heidelberg
carmen.wintergerst@yahoo.com

FIRST PRINTED 2025

**Abstract**

What happens when democratically elected leaders, entrusted with safeguarding democracy, begin to erode its very foundation? This study argues that leaders in third-wave democracies, often responding to (perceived) threats, undermine a core pillar of democracy: accountability. By weakening these mechanisms, they not only secure their grip on power but also set the stage for the gradual decline of democratic qualities.

Central to the analysis is a two-pronged framework: *institutional capture* and *social silencing*. Institutional capture encompasses the co-optation or weakening of formal democratic structures, such as the judiciary, legislature, and electoral bodies, while social silencing involves suppressing dissent and neutralizing opposition to foster a culture of compliance. Together, these strategies illustrate how formal and informal strategies interact to enable the steady consolidation of power. Focusing on Southeast Asia, the study situates these processes within unique historical and socio-political contexts. Factors such as authoritarian legacies, socio-economic cleavages, and weak institutionalization are explored as enablers of executive aggrandizement.

A key finding is the significance of *timing* and *strategy* in shaping the trajectory of aggrandizement. Leaders who combine preventive tactics, those establishing legal foundations for autocratization, with reactive tactics, those exploiting crises to justify power consolidation, achieve more enduring executive control. However, over-reliance on reactive measures risks backlash and public unrest, while preventive tactics often erode democratic norms but cannot guarantee indefinite dominance due to possible growing public discontent and the prospect of being voted out of office. A second key finding challenges the assumption that aggrandizement always reflects calculated intent, showing that it can also arise unintentionally from systemic fragilities or crisis responses. This is not to say, however, that aggrandizement, cannot, at one point or another, become a calculated and deliberate move on the part of the incumbent.

Overall, the study is also a call for action by emphasizing that countering executive aggrandizement requires collective resistance, involving both institutional actors, such as the judiciary and legislature, and extra-institutional forces, including civil society, and the media. Fostering resilient democratic institutions and a vigilant civil society are then the roots of deterring aggrandizement. Building institutional strength involves not only safeguarding legal frameworks but also nurturing a political culture that values transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. Similarly, empowering civil society and media to operate without fear of reprisal ensures that dissenting voices and alternative perspectives remain a visible and influential part of public discourse. While these efforts cannot always immediately reverse the tide of democratic decline, they lay the groundwork for long-term recovery and the restoration of democratic governance. A crucial aspect of this recovery is the ability to learn from historical patterns of aggrandizement, using these lessons to preemptively address vulnerabilities in democratic systems. Ultimately, the collective defense of democracy is not only about curbing executive overreach but also about sustaining a political environment where accountability, plurality, and citizen engagement flourish.

*“There is a stubbornness about me that never can bear to be frightened at the will of others”*
– Jane Austen

Dedicated to women in academia.

**Acknowledgments**

Writing this dissertation has been an arduous yet deeply rewarding journey, requiring patience, perseverance, and the invaluable support of many individuals and institutions. I am profoundly grateful to those who have contributed to this project in myriad ways.

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisors at the Ruprecht-Karls-University Heidelberg and the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg. To my primary supervisor, Aurel Croissant, I am deeply indebted for his unwavering mentorship that began during my master's studies and extended into these four years of doctoral research. His exceptional guidance, thoughtful feedback on chapter drafts, and intellectual rigor have been pivotal to this work. I am equally thankful to my second supervisor, Marco Bünte, whose constructive input during the final stages of this dissertation enriched its depth and coherence. I also owe a special thanks to the participants in the colloquiums led by my supervisors at both universities. Their thoughtful questions and insightful suggestions during my presentations significantly improved this research.

I am deeply appreciative of the opportunities and support provided by Heidelberg University, whose vibrant academic environment has fostered my intellectual growth. The Graduate Academy and the Heidelberg Graduate School for the Humanities and Social Sciences (HGGS) have played a particularly vital role in this journey. Through scholarships such as the *Landesgraduiertenförderung* and funding for methodological training and conference participation (*HeiDocs*), the Graduate Academy made this endeavor possible. HGGS's interdisciplinary and intercultural initiatives have also greatly enriched my academic and personal development. My gratitude also extends to the wonderful colleagues at the Institute of Political Science at Heidelberg University. I would especially like to thank Lars Lott and Nikitas Scheeder, my office neighbors, whose camaraderie, shared coffee breaks, and lively discussions added warmth to my days. Lars's advice on R programming and Nikitas's insights on quantitative methods (usually unrelated to my research but I have a curious mind) have been invaluable to my personal and academic growth. My thanks also go to Anna Hengge, a cherished friend and collaborator, for her incisive feedback and for indulging our shared love of book collecting. Despite the distance, her unwavering support at every stage of this project has meant so much to me. A special note of appreciation is owed to Julia Wießmann, whose encouragement, sharp critiques, and constant reminders to maintain a balance between work and life have been vital. Julia inspired me to embrace conference opportunities and to rigorously defend my ideas, making me a more confident scholar in the process.

Outside the "Heidelberg academia bubble", I am fortunate to have had the steadfast support of friends who have brought both solace and joy to this journey. Thank you, Manuel, Klara, Joy, and Lena, for ensuring I took much-needed breaks through hiking trips, book-shopping excursions, brunches, and countless adventures. I am especially grateful to Zeynep, Riaan, and Jung-eun, who have walked similar academic paths and offered empathetic guidance

throughout. Finally, I am grateful to my parents, whose unwavering belief in me and constant encouragement have been my anchor. Their love and support have made everything possible.

To all those who have been part of this journey, whether directly or indirectly, I owe my deepest gratitude. Thank you for helping me bring this project to fruition.

# Content

List of Figures ..... ix
List of Tables ..... x
Acronyms ..... xi
1. Introduction ..... 2
1.1. Understanding Autocratization as Dynamic Phenomenon ..... 2
1.2. Research Approach and Key Argument ..... 9
1.3. Structure of the Dissertation ..... 14
2. Theoretical Framework ..... 19
2.1. Sequencing Executive Aggrandizement ..... 22
2.2. Why Do Democratically Elected Incumbents Autocratize? ..... 26
2.3. The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM) ..... 32
2.3.1. How Do Democratically Elected Incumbents Autocratize? ..... 33
2.3.2. Tactics of Institutional Capture ..... 44
2.3.3. Tactics of Social Silencing ..... 51
2.4. Chapter Summary ..... 56
3. Methodology ..... 60
3.1. Within-Case Analysis: Process Tracing in Social Sciences ..... 61
3.2. A Maximalist Approach to Theory-Testing Process Tracing ..... 64
3.3. Case Selection in Process Tracing ..... 69
3.4. Data and Evidence in Process Tracing ..... 76
3.5. Expectations for Identifying the Causal Mechanism in the Empirical Reality ..... 83
3.6. Strengths and Weaknesses of Process Tracing ..... 87
3.7. Relevant Concepts ..... 88
4. Democratic Decline in Indonesia ..... 95
4.1. Indonesia's Post-Reformasi Era: Waning Freedoms ..... 96
4.2. Triggering Democratic Decline: The 2014 Presidential Election in Indonesia ..... 100
4.3. Democratic Decline: The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM) in Widodo's Indonesia (2014-2023) 105
4.3.1. Institutional Capture ..... 106
4.3.1.1. Patronage and Power: Oligarchic Networks in Post-Suharto Indonesia ..... 106
4.3.1.2. Partisan, Military Appointments, and the Military's Involvement in Security and Civilian Affairs ..... 113
4.3.1.3. Political Opportunism: The KPK and the Constitutional Court ..... 120
4.3.2. Social Silencing ..... 126
4.3.2.1. The Weaponization of Law: Restricting Freedoms in Post-Reformasi Indonesia ..... 126
4.3.2.2. Violence as Governance Tool: The Security Forces' Role in Stifling Political Dissent ..... 135
4.3.2.3. Censorship and Propaganda ..... 140
4.4. Chapter Summary ..... 145
5. Democratic Erosion in the Philippines ..... 149
5.1. Democratic Development in the Philippines ..... 149

5.2. Triggering Democratic Erosion: The 2016 Presidential Elections in the Philippines ..... 153
5.3. Democratic Breakdown: The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM) in Duterte's Philippines (2016-2022) ..... 157
5.3.1.1. The Scourges of Democratic Development: Political Dynasties and Patronage Politics 159
5.3.1.2. Hyper-Presidentialism in Action: The Role of Patronage and Political Loyalty in Duterte's Government 164
5.3.1.3. Jailing the Opposition ..... 170
5.3.1.4. Silencing Human Rights: Attacks on the Commission of Human Rights ..... 173
5.3.2. Social Silencing ..... 177
5.3.2.1. Securitizing Civil Society: Duterte's Tactics of Control and Suppression ..... 177
5.3.2.2. Surveillance, Suppression, and Free Speech: The Consequences of the Anti-Terror Law 181
5.3.2.3. Media Censorship and Freedom of the Press ..... 183
5.4. Chapter Summary ..... 185
6. Democratic Regression in Thailand ..... 191
6.1. The Military-Monarchy Construct: Thailand's Political Development ..... 191
6.2. Thais Love Thailand: The Rise of Thaksin Shinawatra ..... 194
6.3. The Autocratic Expansion Model in Thailand: Pathways to Democratic Breakdown and Military Takeover ..... 198
6.3.1. Institutional Capture ..... 198
6.3.1.1. From Oversight to Overreach: The Senate and House of Representatives under Thaksin Shinawatra 199
6.3.1.2. The Military, the Police, the Bureaucracy, and The Palace under Thaksin ..... 205
6.3.2. Social Silencing ..... 208
6.3.2.1. Thailand's South and the War on Drugs ..... 209
6.3.2.2. Media Censorship and Media Ownership under Thaksin ..... 212
6.4. Chapter Summary ..... 216
7. Comparative Analysis ..... 220
7.1. Intra-regional Comparison ..... 220
7.2. Cross-Case Analysis ..... 235
7.3. Comparative Findings ..... 253
8. Conclusion ..... 263
8.1. Summary of Findings ..... 263
8.2. Contributions and Limitations ..... 268
8.3. Avenues for Future Research ..... 271

Bibliography
Appendix

**List of Figures**


Figure 2.1. Episodes of Autocratization vs. Episodes of Executive Aggrandizement: Possible Scenarios. 24

Figure 2.2. Sequencing an Episode of Executive Aggrandizement. 26

Figure 2.3. The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM). 36

Figure 2.4. The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM): Institutional Capture. 42

Figure 2.5. The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM): Social Silencing. 43

Figure 3.1. Research Design: Two-Step Synthesis. 60

Figure 3.2. The three main variants of process tracing. 63

Figure 3.3. Matrix: Case Selection. 72

Figure 3.4. Changes in the Levels of Democracy in Southeast Asia, 1973-2000, and 2000-2023. 75

Figure 3.5. Two-stage evidence evaluation framework. 78

Figure 4.1. Liberal Democracy in Indonesia (1998-2023): Insights and Trends. 99

Figure 4.2. Total number of reported civilian targeting and fatalities in Indonesia by month, January 2015-December 2023. 127

Figure 4.3. Individuals prosecuted under the ITE Law under the Jokowi administration (2019-2022). 132

Figure 4.4. Media control in Indonesia, 2010-2023. 142

Figure 4.5. Press Freedom Index Indonesia, 2013-2023. 144

Figure 5.1. Liberal Democracy in the Philippines (1986-2023): Insights and Trends. 153

Figure 5.2. Post-Election Party Switching in the House of Representatives until 2016 in the Philippines. 165

Figure 5.3. Results of the Senate and House of Representatives 2019 Midterm Elections. 166

Figure 5.4. Ex-Military/Police and Family/Friends in the Duterte Administration, 2016-2022. 167

Figure 5.5. Cases investigated by the CHR by number of victims, type and crime and perpetrator. 175

Figure 5.6. Cases investigated by the CHR by perpetrator type. 175

Figure 5.7. World Press Freedom Index Philippines, 2013-2022. 184

Figure 6.1. Liberal Democracy in Thailand (1973-2007): Insights and Trends. 194

Figure 6.2. Degree of Freedom for Journalist (2002-2020) in Thailand. 212

Figure 7.1. Temporal Patterns of preventive and reactive tactics by country. 232

Figure 7.2. Changes in Liberal Democracy and Leadership Trends in Turkey (2000–2023). 237

Figure 7.3. Changes in Liberal Democracy and Leadership Trends in Brazil (1985-2023). 242

Figure 7.4. Changes in Liberal Democracy and Leadership Trends in Benin (1990-2023). 245

Figure 7.5. Changes in Liberal Democracy and Leadership Trends in Zambia (1990-2023). 248

Figure 7.6. Changes in Liberal Democracy and Leadership Trends in Bolivia (2000-2023). 251

Figure 7.7. Changes in Liberal Democracy and Leadership Trends in Sri Lanka (2000-2023). 253

**List of Tables**


Table 1.1. Dynamics of Democratic Erosion: 20th vs. 21st century. 4

Table 2.1. Relationship Between Threat Perception and Accountability Mechanisms. 31-32

Table 2.2. Tactics of Institutional Capture. 44

Table 2.3. Tactics of Social Silencing. 51

Table 2.4. Summary: Tactics of Institutional Capture and Social Silencing – Impact on Accountability Mechanisms and Effect on Democratic Qualities. 59

Table 3.1. The hypothesized causal mechanism of the Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM). 66

Table 3.2. Matrix: Evidence Typology. 80-81

Table 3.3. Theory-testing process tracing: possible evidence synergies. 82

Table 3.4. Example: Empirical manifestations and observables of the formulated causal mechanism. 86

Table 4.1. Government Composition Indonesia, 2014 and 2019. 108

Table 4.2. Strategic Positions in Jokowi's Government (2014-2023). 115-116

Table 4.3. Individuals charged under the ITE Law – Comparison of SBY and Widodo. 129

Table 4.4. Overview of key incidents of political violence in Indonesia (2014-2023). 136-137

Table 4.5. Summary of Evidence: Case Study Indonesia. 148

Table 5.1. Electoral Results of the Philippine Presidential Elections 2016. 155

Table 5.2. List of prominent jailed/criminally charged opposition members under Duterte. 172-173

Table 5.3. Summary of Evidence: Case Study Philippines. 185

Table 6.1. Electoral Results for the House of Representatives, 2001 General Elections. 195

Table 6.2. Party Defections and Co-optations under Thaksin's first term in office. 199-200

Table 6.3. Strategic appointments under Thaksin (2001-2005). 201-202

Table 6.4. Political families in the elected senate, 2000-2004. 203

Table 6.5. Ownership Structure of Thai broadcasting media, 2005. 214

Table 6.6. Summary of Evidence: Case Study Thailand. 216

Table 7.1. Intra-regional comparison of preventive and reactive tactics. 234

Table 7.2. Summary of Evidence: Intra-Regional Comparison. 235

Table 7.3. Selected Cases of Executive Aggrandizement in Third-Wave Democracies Outside Southeast Asia. 236

Table 7.4. Outcomes of Episodes of Executive Aggrandizement. 255

Table 7.5. Cross-Case Findings: Relationship between Threat Perception and Tactics. 258

Table 7.6. Summary: Cross Case Comparison of Tactics vs. Outcomes. 261

Table 8.1. Case Study Insights: How Incumbents Consolidate Power in Southeast Asia. 267

**Acronyms**

| | |
|---|---|
| ABRI | Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia)* |
| ABS-CBN | Alto Broadcasting System and Chronicle Broadcasting Network |
| AEM | Autocratic Expansion Model |
| AGO | Attorney General's Office |
| Ahok | Basuki Tjahaja Purnama |
| AHY | Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono |
| ATA | Anti-Terrorism Act |
| ATC | Anti-Terrorism Council |
| BIN | State Intelligence Agency (*Badan Intelijen Negara*) |
| CHR | Commission on Human Rights |
| CM | Causal Mechanism |
| COMELEC | Commission on Elections (*Komisyon sa Halalan)* |
| CPM | Civilian-Police-Military Taskforce 43 |
| CPO | Causal process observations |
| CPP | Communist Party of the Philippines |
| CPP-NPA-NDF | The Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army (NPA), and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) |
| CSO | Civil society organization |
| CTF | Counter-terrorism financing |
| Democratic | Democratic Party (*Phak Prachathipat*) |
| DPD | Regional Representative Council |
| DPR | People's Representative Counci |
| DPRP | Regional Representative Council of Papua **(***Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Papua)* |
| EC | Election Commission |
| EDSA | Revolution Epifanio de los Santos Avenue Revolution (People Power Revolution) |
| EJK | Extrajudicial killings |
| EMAs | Encrypted messaging apps |
| EU | European Union |
| FDI | Foreign Direct Investment |
| FPI | *Front Pembela Islam* |
| FPTP | First-Past-the-Post |
| Gerindra | Great Indonesia Moveemnt Party (*Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya)* |
| Golkar | Party of Functioncal Groups (*Partai Golongan Karya)* |
| GONGO | government-organized non-governmental organization |
| GRINGO | Government-run or initiated NGO |
| Hanura | People's Conscience Party *(Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat)* |
| HNP | Alliance for Change *(Hugpong ng Pagbabago)* |
| HTI | *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* |
| ICT | Ministry of Information and Communications Technology |
| KBL | New Society Movement (*Kilusang Bagong Lipunan)* |
| KIB | United Indonesia Coalition (*Koalisi Indonesia Bersatu*) |
| KKDAT | *Kabataan Kontra Droga at Terrorismo* |
| KKN | Korrupsi, Kollusi, Nepotism |
| KPK | Corruption Eradication Commission *(Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi)* |
| KPU | General Election Commission's |
| Lakas-CMD | Lakas–Christian Muslim Democrats |
| LGBTQIA+ | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex and asexual |
| LP | Liberal Party of the Philippines (*Partido Liberal ng Pilipinas*) |
| MCC | Millennial Challenge Corporation |
| MCOT | Mass Communication Organization of Thailand |
| MILF | Moro Islamic Liberation Front (*Jabhat Taḥrīr Moro al-ʾIslāmiyyah)* |
| MIT | East Indonesia Mujahideen (*Mujahidin Indonesia Timur)* |

| | |
|---|---|
| MK | Constitutional Court (*Makhamah Konstitusi*) |
| MMD | Movement for Multiparty Democracy |
| MP | Member of Parliament |
| MPR | People's Consultative Assembly |
| MPR-RI | People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia |
| MR5 | Ministerial Regulation 5 |
| MRP | The Papuan People's Council |
| MUI | Indonesian Ulama Council |
| Nacionalista | Nationalist Party (*Partido Nacionalista*) |
| NasDem | NasDem Party (Partai NasDem) |
| National | National Development Party (Chart Pattana Party; *Phak Chat Pattana*) |
| NBC | National Broadcasting Commission |
| NCCC | The National Counter-Corruption Commission |
| NGO | non-governmental organization |
| NPC | Nationalist People's Coalition |
| NTF-ELCAC | National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict |
| NU | *Nahdlatul Ulama* (Islamic organization) |
| NUP | National Unity Party (*Partido ng Pambansang Pagkakaisa)* |
| OPM | *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* |
| PAN | National Mandate Party (*Partai Amanat Nasional*) |
| PD | *Partai Demokrat* |
| PDAF | Priority Development Assistance Fund |
| PDI-P | PDI-P Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*) |
| PDP | Philippine Democratic Party (*Partido Demokratiko Pilipino)* |
| PDP-Laban | PDP-Laban Philippine Democratic Party-Power of the People (*Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan)* |
| PFP | Federal Party of the Philippines (*Partido Federal ng Pilipinas)* |
| PKS | Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*) |
| PNP | Philippine National Police |
| Polri | State Police Indonesia (*Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia)* |
| PP | People's Party (*Phak Prachachon)* |
| PPP | United Development Party (Partai Persatuan *Pembangunan*) |
| PRD | Public Relations Department |
| PSDC | Public Sector Development Commission |
| PT | Process Tracing |
| RoW | Regimes of the World |
| SBPAC | Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre |
| SBPPC | Southern Border Provinces Peace Building Command |
| SBY | Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono |
| SEA | Southeast Asia |
| SEC | Securities and Exchange Commission |
| Thai | Thai Nation Party (Chart Thai Party, *Phak Chat Thai)* |
| TLP | Thai Liberal Party (*Phak Seri Ruam Thai*) |
| TNI | *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* |
| TRT | Thai Rak Thai |
| TTPT | Theory-testing process tracing |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNIP | United National Independence Party |
| UNTAC | United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia |
| USAID | US Agency for International Development |
| UWSA | United Wa State Army |
| VACC | Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption |
| V-Dem | Varieties of Democracy |
| WvS | *Wetboek van Strafrecht voor Nederlandsch Indie* |

# Part I.
*Introduction*

# 1. Introduction[1]

## 1.1. Understanding Autocratization as Dynamic Phenomenon

In the aftermath of the Cold War (1945-1991), the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), and the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991), Francis Fukuyama famously argued that humanity has reached "not just… the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such" (1989, p.4). He posited that the ideological evolution of humankind had reached its zenith in "the universal adoption of Western liberal democracy as the definitive form of human governance" (ibid.; Fukuyama, 1992). Empirical evidence pointed toward the Western liberal model, which emphasizes individual rights and freedoms, becoming the global norm with the number of democratic governments in the world nearly doubling between 1974 and 1990, and with at least 30 countries adopting democratic rule (Huntington, 1991). However, by the time later transitions within the "third wave of democratization" (ibid.), such as Indonesia in 1998 or Serbia in 2000, took place, the first cracks and flaws in these so-called 'new democracies[2]' began to be outwardly perceptible.

What initially was viewed with optimism in the 1990s gave way to the reality of a new environment in which democracy faced many challenges from both internal and external forces. The (re-)emergence of regional hegemons, especially China, provided alternative models of governance that threatened the assumed universality of the Western liberal model (Cooley, 2015). In addition, a considerable number of multiparty elections have been observed to fall short of fundamental democratic standards, resulting in countries occupying a "grey zone" between democracy and autocracy (Carothers, 2002, 2007). While such 'hybrid regimes' hold regular elections, they often undermine the rule of law, the protection of rights, and political competition. The democratic process that develops is superficial and preservers (some of) its authoritarian features such as limited media freedom and an ineffective opposition. (Diamond, 2002; Levitsky and Way, 2002; Rocha Menocal et al., 2008; Schedler, 2006; Zakaria, 1997)

Since then, the prevailing pessimism regarding the state of liberal democracy has only intensified. Even though the world is currently much more democratic than at any other point in recent history (Knutsen and Skaaning, 2022; Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019), the pace of

[1] Please see Appendix 10 for an assessment on the journalistic sources used throughout this dissertation.

[2] 'New democracies' generally refer to countries that have recently transitioned from authoritarian regimes to democratic governance, while 'third wave democracies' refer to the wave of democratic transitions that began in the mid-1970s and continued through the 1990s, marking the most significant and widespread expansion of democratic governance in history. The term 'new democracies' is thus broader and more flexible than the term 'third-wave democracies' and can apply to any recent democratization, including those that occurred after the third wave or even outside its historical context. For practical reasons, I use the terms interchangeably throughout this dissertation.

democratic breakdowns has accelerated, and the number of democratic transitions has declined (Diamond, 2021). In its stead, the number of countries experiencing autocratization has risen, detrimentally affecting the expression of political and civic freedoms (Nord et al., 2024). Interestingly, and despite variation, many of the countries that started their democratic transition during the third wave have recently seen a downward trend (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019; Laebens, 2023; Nord et al., 2024). While the onset[3], nature and pace of autocratization[4] episodes remain the subject of scholarly debate[5] – often related to the specific measurement levels and benchmarks employed – extensive qualitative and quantitative evidence suggests not only a stagnation of democratic qualities in new and established democracies in the 21st century but also a shift in how and by whom those are attacked. (Diamond, 2021; Huq and Ginsburg, 2018; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018; Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019; Kendall-Taylor et al., 2019; Tomini and Wagemann, 2018; Waldner and Lust, 2018)

In contrast to the first and second wave of democratic reversals (Huntington, 1991), where most reversals were either military coups, self-coups, or foreign invasion, many third-wave democracies declined by democratically elected leaders who sought to expand their executive powers by weakening veto players and the (extra-)institutional opposition, or what Bermeo (2016) calls "executive aggrandizement." While both executive aggrandizement and coups d'état serve to consolidate power in the hands of a select few, the former gradually erodes democratic attributes such as the separation of powers, electoral integrity, judicial independence, and civil liberties through legal or semi-legal means while maintaining the outward appearance of democratic governance. In contrast, a 'classic' coup d'état is characterized by a sudden, illegal, and often violent overthrow of the incumbent government, leading to an immediate collapse of democratic institutions. Military forces frequently carry out such actions or other actors of power operating outside the regular legal framework (see

[3] While Larry Diamond (2021) has suggested that a global democratic recession set in as early as 2006 and has since persisted and deepened, others argue that the evidence for such a widespread democratic decline is less conclusive, pointing to methodological challenges in measuring democracy and its fluctuations (Boese, 2019; Treisman, 2023). While the depth and width of democratic decline thus remain contested (e.g., Levitsky and Way, 2023), there is a growing scholarly consensus that contemporary democratic norms and institutions face unprecedented challenges, particularly from within (e.g., Boese et al., 2021; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018; Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019).

[4] In this thesis, I use the terms 'autocratization', 'democratic regression', 'democratic erosion', 'democratic decline', and 'democratic backsliding' synonymously. Drawing on Cassani and Tomini (2020) and Maerz et al. (2024), I understand autocratization as an umbrella concept that covers every continuous deterioration of democratic qualities in a given regime, regardless of the starting level of its democratic characteristics. Each of these terms then expresses different aspects and phases of the process, from the erosion of democratic principles to the consolidation of autocratic power. However, they are all synonyms in as much as they all relate to the deterioration of the democratic features of regime types.

[5] See for example the initiated debate of Little and Meng (2023) and the subsequent discussion regarding the extent and measurement of democratic backsliding (e.g., Knutsen et al., 2023; Levitsky and Way, 2024; Miller, 2024; Møller and Skaaning, 2024).

Table 1.1). (e.g., Bermeo, 2016; Huq and Ginsburg, 2018; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018; Scheppele, 2018; Svolik, 2019; Waldner and Lust, 2018)

Table 1.1. Dynamics of Democratic Erosion: 20th vs. 21st century.

*Autocratization Dynamics*

| | 20th century | 21st century |
|---|---|---|
| *Primary Method* | Military coups, foreign interventions, revolutions | Executive aggrandizement, promissory coups |
| *Key Actors* | Military (elites) | Democratically elected incumbents |
| *Common Causes* | Colonial legacies, economic crisis, political instability, ideological conflicts | Dissatisfaction with democratic governments and institutions, rising populism, nationalistic sentiments |
| *Nature of Transition* | Rapid and overt | Gradual and subtle |
| *Key Method of Transition* | Force | Subversion |
| *Impact* | Political repression and social control | Weakening of the function of democratic institutions |
| *Outcomes* | Varied outcomes between stable democracies and lingering authoritarianism | Loss of public trust in institutions; rise of illiberal democracies; resistance movements |
| *Notable Examples* | Chile (1973); Argentina (1976) | Hungary (Orbán); Turkey (Erdoğan); Brazil (Bolsonaro); Bolivia (Morales) |

*Source*: The author. Based on Bermeo (2016); Huq and Ginsburg (2018); Scheppele (2018); Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018); Waldner and Lust (2018); Svolik (2019).

Understanding the core concepts, theories, and measurement methods of autocratization as well as its empirical depth is the subject of considerable scholarly debate (cf. footnote 4; also: Mechkova et al., 2017; Pelke and Croissant; 2021; Sinkkonen, 2021; Skaaning, 2020; Tomini and Wagemann, 2018). While scholars acknowledge that multiple factors contribute to democratic decline, they have yet to reach an agreement on the precise causes, consequences, and mechanisms underlying autocratization. Rather than stemming from a single source, autocratization typically results from multifaceted interactions among different factors. (Croissant and Tomini, 2024) In democracies, a central factor in the onset of backsliding is citizen dissatisfaction, particularly when democratic institutions and political leaders fail to effectively address socio-economic challenges, such as inequality, and corruption, or to meet public demands (Lührmann, 2021, p.1021; Kneuer, 2021). When citizens lose faith in the democratic process, its institutions, or its representatives, they become vulnerable to so-called "erosion agents[6]" (Kneuer, 2021), who exploit democratic discontent through populist rhetoric

[6] Based on Kneuer (2021), I define an *erosion agent* as an individual or group that, while initially democratically elected, gradually undermines the democratic system that enabled their rise to power.

and promises. Having gained electoral support, they then tend to subsequently engage in democratic backsliding, often through executive aggrandizement[7] (Bermeo, 2016; Foa, 2021; Fossati et al., 2022; Kneuer, 2021; Timoneda, 2021). While such democratic discontent can explain *why* illiberal leaders win elections, it does not necessarily explain *how* backsliding occurs and *who* or *what* is responsible. In this context, Carothers and Hartnett (2024) point to elected leaders as the main factor contributing to democratic erosion: "(B)acksliding is less a result of democracies failing to deliver than of democracies failing to constrain the predatory political ambitions and methods of certain elected leaders" (p.34).

I argue that this is especially prevalent in many third-wave democracies, where institutional checks and balances are often inherently weaker (Rose and Shin, 2001). In such contexts, democratically elected leaders frequently exploit pre-existing institutional weaknesses to consolidate executive power through "executive aggrandizement" (Bermeo, 2016) by restricting or eroding checks and balances (Bartels et al., 2023; Laebens, 2023). Although many scholars advocate for institutional reforms to counteract executive overreach and reinforce accountability through robust state capacity, others caution that institutional strength alone is insufficient to counteract democratic erosion, particularly in new democracies. (e.g., Andersen et al., 2023; Carothers and Hartnett, 2024; Coppedge et al., 2022; Gandhi, 2019; Kaufman and Haggard, 2019; Laebens and Lührmann, 2021) Andersen et al. (2023), for example, argue that strong state capacity, particularly in the form of meritocratic and impartial public administrations, is essential for sustaining democratic stability. Conversely, new democracies are susceptible to coups and elite subversion when state capacity is weak, especially with respect to civilian oversight of the military and the ability to withstand economic pressure (Haggard and Kaufman, 2016). With weak state capacity and fragile judicial and legislative institutions, attempts at reform can thus falter in the face of entrenched power structures. In addition, Kaufmann and Haggard (2019) suggest that strong party systems and civil society institutions can act as barriers to autocratic takeovers, as they complicate the legal and procedural steps required to consolidate authoritarian power. In contrast, weakened party systems offer avenues for populist leaders to exploit institutional weaknesses and undermine democratic norms (Norris and Inglehart, 2019).

Economic factors, which can both mitigate and exacerbate backsliding, hamper the establishment of long-term democratic stability. On the one hand, economic disparities and

These actors, often appearing first as reformers or champions of the people, exploit the very structures of democracy to gain and retain authority, but their true impact is typically recognized only *a posteriori* after patterns of democratic weakening have emerged. Unlike external threats, these agents operate from within, using legal frameworks and democratic processes to enact changes that, over time, dismantle the foundations of democracy. The late recognition of their role is what makes them particularly insidious as they leave institutions weakened or compromised by the time their actions are fully understood.

[7] Other forms of autocratization include promissory coups or electoral manipulation (Bermeo, 2016).

productivity gaps frequently catalyze populist mobilization, with (perceived) disadvantaged groups rallying behind leaders who promise rapid change, even at the cost of democratic principles (Timoneda, 2021). On the other hand, research has shown that economic conditions can nurture democratic stability. For example, wealthier democracies tend to exhibit greater resilience (Boix, 2003; Przeworski et al., 2000; Ulfelder and Lustik, 2007); however, the influence of income and growth levels on democratic stability is inconsistent and usually is contingent on the broader sociopolitical contexts (Treisman, 2020, 2023). For example, Boese et al. (2020) observed that high income reduces the likelihood of a country experiencing backsliding; however, it does not necessarily prevent breakdowns, while growth has had little effect. Treisman (2023), on the other hand, has shown that high income and growth lead to lower breakdown risks. These inconsistent observations suggest that 'economic resilience' alone is insufficient for safeguarding democracy, particularly when elite ambitions go unchecked. Moreover, such socio-economic conditions directly shape public expectations of democracy and the perceived performance of democratic institutions. For example, in Central and Eastern Europe public trust in government has been found to correlate with tolerance for undemocratic practices (Castaldo and Memoli, 2023). Such findings suggest that while public support for democracy is crucial, it must be rooted not only in the material prosperity that economic resilience brings but also in the perceived effectiveness of democratic governance and a strong civic culture that values democratic norms. In this context, democracies are particularly vulnerable in their formative years, when fragile institutions and high public expectations collide with the structural challenges posed by economic inequality and instability (Boese et al., 2021).

Social polarization and misinformation are increasingly recognized as destabilizing factors in democratic systems. Polarization creates deep societal divides that leaders can exploit to justify undemocratic actions (e.g., Arbatli and Rosenberg, 2020; Bartels et al., 2023; Horz, 2021; Somer et al., 2021). In particular, social media and the digital spread of misinformation exacerbate polarization, creating echo chambers that widen ideological rifts and reduce consensus on democratic norms (Bail et al., 2018; Cinelli et al., 2021). In addition, technological advances have changed political communication, reducing the importance of shared, trustworthy information that once helped people engage in informed discussions (Szostak, 2024). At the elite level, some have highlighted that politically polarized and disloyal elites weaken checks on power and enable authoritarian agendas to proceed unchallenged both in presidential and parliamentary systems (Grillo and Prato, 2023; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018; Somer et al., 2021; Tomini et al., 2023). Shifting global dynamics can also play a role in either reinforcing or undermining democratic erosion. Historically, Western democracies and international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) have promoted democratic governance as a global norm, applying diplomatic pressure and aid conditionality to discourage autocratic behavior. However, recent geopolitical realignments

have reduced the commitment of traditional pro-democracy actors, weakening these norms and creating an international environment conducive to backsliding. (Samuels, 2023) The emergence of authoritarian models, notably from China and Russia, has reshaped global governance expectations, offering alternative frameworks that bypass democratic accountability in favor of state-led development and strategic alliances (Kendall-Taylor and Shullman, 2021; Rolland, 2020; Shevtsova, 2015).

Elite-led backsliding remains the most common form of contemporary autocratization, which explains the predominance of actor-centered research in autocratization studies (Tomini et al., 2023, p.120; Carothers and Hartnett, 2024). One concern with actor-centered research, however, is that it often oversimplifies multi-causal erosion dynamics and overlooks historical, cultural, and institutional contexts and interactions among the various entities involved in autocratization (Croissant and Tomini, 2024). For example, authoritarian legacies, such as authoritarian predecessor parties or widespread clientelism, continue to play a crucial role in shaping the institutional vulnerabilities of third-wave democracies. In many of these democracies, key foundational structures such as the rule of law and a robust civil society were underdeveloped, leaving them susceptible to the continuation of authoritarian practices (Rose and Shin, 2001; Fukuyama, 2015). The persistence of these remnants creates legal and institutional loopholes that elites can exploit, contributing to democratic backsliding (Haggard and Kaufman, 2016). Such potential causal pathways have so far remained underdeveloped in the literature. This has led scholars to call for a process-oriented approach that considers causality over correlation, focused on the interactions between state and non-state actors, structural conditions, and historical legacies. (Croissant and Tomini, 2024) Research on autocratization thus needs to theorize and test potential causal mechanisms that drive regime change bringing together theories on institutional change, agency, and power dynamics rather than merely identifying potential correlations between an independent variable X and the dependent variable 'democratic decline' (Y).

My dissertation thus aims to make a theoretical contribution to the study of autocratization by shifting the focus from identifying correlational variables to examining one potential process that drives democratic decline in electoral third-wave democracies. Central to this shift are democratically elected incumbents ("erosion agents," Kneuer, 2021) that undermine accountability mechanisms to consolidate executive power. While much of the existing literature emphasizes the role of incumbents in facilitating democratic erosion, the specific causal mechanism identifying the relationship between X ('democratically elected incumbent') → Y ('democratic decline'), as argued above, often remains undertheorized and lacks empirical testing. I argue that one such possible causal mechanism is the use of two particular strategies, namely 'institutional capture' and 'social silencing,' by which erosion agents consolidate power. To trace this causal process in empirical reality, I have developed a framework that outlines

the specific tactics used in each strategy and examines how these tactics influence horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability. In democracies, accountability mechanisms, usually distinguished as horizontal (checks and balances among state institutions), vertical (citizen participation through elections), or diagonal (media and civil society oversight) accountability, serve as the primary safeguards against extensive concentration of power in the hands of the few (Laebens and Lührmann, 2021; Laebens, 2023; Kneuer, 2021; Mechkova et al., 2019). Thus, when these mechanisms are weakened, it paves the way for erosion agents to consolidate power. Understanding how accountability is systematically undermined is therefore key to explaining how autocratization unfolds in third-wave democracies, and, crucially, how the weakening of these mechanisms reduced the capacity of other (extra-)institutional actors to resist autocratization.

Thus, in addition to focusing on the actions of erosion agents, my research explores how the weakening of accountability affects *other key actors and institutions*, such as political parties, the legislative, civil society organizations (CSOs), the judiciary, the media, and citizens. When accountability mechanisms are weakened, these actors – who serve as the *guardians of democracy* – find their ability to act as a counterweight to erosion tactics constrained. For example, when judicial independence is compromised (a form of horizontal accountability), opposition parties and civil society lose a crucial institutional ally to check executive overreach. Similarly, when vertical accountability is weakened through rigged elections or restrictions on civic engagement, citizens are less able to hold their leaders accountable, effectively silencing a key form of democratic resistance. Moreover, when diagonal accountability, embodied in a free press and civil society, is restricted, the public's ability to scrutinize and resist authoritarian abuses is diminished, limiting avenues for mobilization and contestation. By examining how the erosion of these accountability mechanisms directly diminishes the resistance capabilities of these actors, my research contributes to a deeper understanding of the *strategic interactions* between erosion agents and democratic defenders. The deliberate targeting of accountability mechanisms by erosion agents is not only a method of consolidating power but also a tactic to disable potential sources of opposition. In this way, my work explores not just *how* executive aggrandizement unfolds, but also *why* it is so difficult for opposition forces to push back effectively when accountability mechanisms are systematically undermined.

The vulnerability of third-wave democracies to executive aggrandizement makes them an ideal focus for this type of research. I argue that because such regimes often display weak institutionalization, entrenched by authoritarian legacies, accountability mechanisms remain particularly fragile. By focusing on electoral third-wave democracies, this study aims to demonstrate how contextual factors, including historical legacies, socio-political cleavages, and weak institutions, interact with strategies of executive aggrandizement to undermine

accountability and, by extension, democratic resilience. In conclusion, my dissertation contributes to the existing literature by offering a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms that drive autocratization. In conclusion, my dissertation contributes to the existing literature by providing a refined understanding of one potential pathway that drives autocratization. This approach not only serves to enrich theoretical perspectives but also offers practical insights for policymakers and practitioners seeking to fortify democratic resilience in contexts characterized by fragility and political instability.

### 1.2. Research Approach and Key Argument

Following this brief discussion on the current debate in autocratization studies and the aim of this dissertation, this sub-section will summarize the research approach and key argument(s), emphasizing the critical role of accountability mechanisms and actor interactions in backsliding processes. As previously identified, autocratization is multi-causal, shaped by structural challenges, institutional dynamics, and actors that prioritize personal gain over public interest (Croissant and Tomini, 2024). Following this logic, I argue that executive aggrandizement occurs through incumbents' systematic and deliberate efforts to undermine democratic governance by weakening both the institutional and extra-institutional checks that constrain executive power. This phenomenon occurs through a blend of legal maneuvering and coercive government actions, eroding three fundamental accountability mechanisms: institutional checks and balances (horizontal accountability), voter-based responsibility (vertical accountability), and oversight by civil society and the media (diagonal accountability). Executive aggrandizement is thus not a form of institutional experimentation but a deliberate strategy to neutralize accountability actors[8]. For example, by manipulating the electoral system, sidelining civil society, and dismantling institutional vetoes, incumbents severely limit the ability of both institutional and extra-institutional opposition to challenge executives. These actions undermine democratic norms by limiting political competition and citizen participation, ultimately paving the way for an authoritarian-leaning government. This deliberate weakening of accountability structures reveals how executive aggrandizement unfolds as a calculated process, allowing incumbents to entrench themselves in power while hollowing out the foundations of democracy.

[8]Laebens (2023) focuses on horizontal and vertical accountability but fails to make some important distinctions. Vertical accountability refers mainly to electoral mechanisms and citizen oversight, while repression of civil society and media censorship fall under non-state actors, which operate differently. These tactics go beyond limiting electoral participation and require a different understanding. It follows that a proper understanding of the tactics and strategies of executive aggrandizement requires a distinction between vertical, horizontal, and diagonal accountability. Each operates in a different arena, involves different actors, and is usually targeted by different strategies. This is not to say, however, that overlap is not possible.

This study thus identifies executive aggrandizement as the primary mechanism through which autocratization unfolds, driven predominantly by elite interests (Tomini et al., 2023). Instead of focusing on the broad causes of regime change, this study narrows its scope to specific strategies and tactics incumbents utilized to initiate or accelerate autocratization. This approach examines *how* autocratization occurs rather than *why* through the Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM), a theoretical framework[9] I have established to trace one potential causal mechanism leading to democratic erosion in third-wave democracies. This model outlines how incumbents use two primary strategies, that is "institutional capture[10]" (e.g., Chesterley and Roberti, 2018; Bauer and Becker, 2020) and what I call "social silencing," to maintain power and take preventive actions and, in some instances, reactive actions against perceived or real threats. First, state institutions, such as the legislative or judiciary, and independent oversight institutions, such as anti-corruption agencies, are captured to establish control over key state institutions and minimize *political* opposition. Second, civil society (organizations) and the media are silenced to create an environment where *social* dissent is minimized, and the executive can control the popular narrative. (e.g., Corrales, 2015; Haggard and Kaufman, 2021; Keremoğlu et al., 2022; Laebens, 2023; Lührmann, 2021) Essentially, both institutional capture and social silencing target checks on the government but they do so in distinct ways. In at least minimally democratic systems, these checks are exercised through three main forms of accountability, namely horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability, that allow citizens, their representatives, and other government institutions to hold the government accountable (Laebens, 2023; Lindberg, 2013; Palumbo, 2016). I argue that within each strategy, the incumbent utilizes specific tactics designed to diminish specific accountability mechanisms. These tactics are intended to weaken the capacity of the *political* and *social* opposition to resist executive power grabs.

Ultimately, I argue that institutional capture and social silencing work together to erode democracy by weakening accountability mechanisms and mounting executive power. This then leads to the dismantling of core democratic principles such as pluralism, transparency, the rule of law, and citizen engagement. First, the executive takes control of the judiciary and the legislative body, usually leading to the concentration of power in the leader or the ruling party. Judicial independence is undermined, and laws are manipulated to serve the regime's

[9] The conceptual framework draws from several previous works on democratic decline, including Kneuer (2021), Lührmann (2021), Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018), Laebens (2023), Haggard and Kaufman (2016, 2021), and Kaufman and Haggard (2019).

[10] Institutional capture is a concept previously used in the broader autocratization literature. Chesterley and Roberti (2018), for example, refer to institutional capture as deliberate actions taken by incumbent politicians to manipulate or control state institutions in ways that enhance their likelihood of re-election, regardless of voter preferences. These actions, which are uniquely within the power of the incumbent, often undermine the integrity and independence of these institutions. Capturing institutions typically comes at a cost, reflecting the level of institutional resilience and the effort required to subvert or co-opt them. Stronger, more resilient institutions demand greater effort and resources to capture, while weaker institutions are more easily compromised.

interests. This breakdown of checks and balances allows the regime to act with impunity, weakening the rule of law and turning the legal system into a tool for the regime's survival. Second, through censorship, media control, or the arbitrary use of law against members of civil society, the regime restricts public discourse and prevents exposure to abuses of power. Independent media and CSOs are suppressed, reducing transparency and limiting citizens' ability to hold the government accountable. This curtails freedom of speech, assembly, and political participation. Thus, the erosion of accountability mechanisms directly affects opposition actors by limiting their ability to hold the government accountable. For example, the manipulation of electoral laws and restrictions on the formation of political parties reduce the opposition's chances of winning elections, while the suppression of independent media and civil society stifles dissenting voices. Moreover, by co-opting or banning opposition parties and creating legal obstacles for their operations, incumbents effectively neutralize formal channels of resistance. This not only diminishes political contestation but also marginalizes civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media, reducing their capacity to scrutinize government actions. The net result is a weakened opposition and its inability to challenge the executive's power or to effectively mobilize public support. The cumulative effect of these strategies is the systematic erosion of democratic qualities[11]. Pluralism vanishes, political debate shrinks, and elections become mere formalities. The regime centralizes power and gradually transforms democratic institutions into authoritarian mechanisms, resulting in the decline or collapse of democratic governance as without government constraints "democracies tend to remain shallow, corrupt, and incapable of guaranteeing basic civil liberties" (Schedler et al., 1999, p.2).

Thus, an underlying assumption I make is that incumbents in new democracies autocratize *intentionally* and *systematically*, driven by the need to maintain political power amidst times of heightened political uncertainty when the predictability of political outcomes is low (De Mesquita et al., 2003; Schedler, 2013). In multiparty democracies, particularly in "third wave" ones, incumbents often govern through fragile coalitions that rely on an intricate balance of different interests (e.g., Arriola, 2009, 2013; Van de Walle, 2007). While all forms of coalitions involve balancing diverse interests, the fragility of coalitions in third-wave democracies arises from a combination of weak institutions, ideological fluidity, pronounced social and or ethno-religious cleavages, governance challenges, and historical authoritarian legacies. (e.g., Haggard and Kaufman, 2021; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018; Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010; Schedler, 2001) These factors can lead to less stable alliances compared to the more resilient coalitions found in established democracies, where the political landscape is typically characterized by more predictable interactions and mechanisms for negotiation and

[11] Democratic qualities refer to the fundamental characteristics and principles that support and enhance democratic governance and the values of a democratic society. These qualities shape the functioning of democratic institutions, influence political culture, and reinforce the practices and ideals of democracy, such as participation, transparency, and equality.

compromise rather than political alliances based on personal or financial favors (Martin and Vanberg, 2020). Government accountability in new democracies then poses a significant threat to those in power. The strength of this threat depends on the functioning of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability mechanisms, key components that are essential to a healthy democracy. When these mechanisms are robust, they serve as internal checks on the incumbent and ruling coalition's power, but when weakened, they increase the risk of democratic erosion (e.g., Svolik, 2012; Lührmann, 2021). During periods of political transition, such as during and post-election leadership changes, particularly in new democracies, incumbents prioritize survival over democratic norms. This drives the strategic dismantling of accountability mechanisms that would otherwise challenge their authority. By eroding these mechanisms, incumbents gain the procedural certainty (Schedler, 2013) they need to maintain power while minimizing the risks posed by electoral competition, institutional checks, or societal dissent.

This study focuses on third-wave democracies in Southeast Asia, analyzing cases where executive aggrandizement began following the electoral victory of an "erosion agent" (Kneuer, 2021) between 2000 and 2023. The analysis is confined to countries classified as electoral democracies at the onset of an episode of executive aggrandizement according to the Regimes of the World (RoW) classification[12]. This temporal and spatial focus allows this study to examine how democratic institutions and practices erode under the weight of executive aggrandizement within specific political contexts. I argue that three key contextual factors are critical to understanding the success of autocratization: authoritarian legacies, weak institutionalization, and socio-political cleavages. Authoritarian legacies influence power dynamics and governance structures, weak institutionalization exposes the fragility of democratic accountability mechanisms, and socio-political cleavages thwart political alliances and exacerbate social cleavages. Specifically:

> *Authoritarian Legacies:* Countries with a history of authoritarian rule often experience power dynamics that favor the concentration of authority in a central figure or party (Diamond, 2011; Levitsky and Way, 2010). These legacies include established networks of patronage, repressive state apparatuses, and a lack of democratic norms, which makes it less difficult for current leaders to undermine

[12] The Regimes of the World (RoW) data is published by the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute. When comparing the most commonly used indices of democracy, including Freedom House, Varieties of Democracies, the Bertelsmann Transformation Index, and Polity V, several scholars have argued that the V-DEM is by far the most advanced and useful dataset when it comes to issues of validity and reliability. The concepts are clearly conceptualized and operationalized, indicating high conceptual validity, and the indicators and their aggregations are empirically sound, indicating high content validity. The V-Dem is also reliable. Although the source base is not available, only the data itself, the combination of expert surveys and statistical data leads to high validity and reliability, especially from a comparative perspective. (Boese, 2021; Pelke and Croissant, 2021; Vaccaro, 2021)

democratic institutions and consolidate power (Albertus, 2019; Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010; Schedler, 2001). The lack of robust democratic institutions leaves such political systems particularly vulnerable to manipulation by authoritarian-era elites who frequently retain their economic and political influence (Elkins et al., 2009; Haggard and Kaufmann, 2016). These elites can undermine democratic processes by manipulating political institutions and sustaining patron-client relationships to protect their interests (Grzymala-Busse, 2002; Loxton, 2015).

*Weak Institutionalization:* Weak institutionalization refers to the lack of strong, independent institutions in several third-wave democracies that can hold leaders accountable and enforce the rule of law (Levitsky and Way, 2010; Rose and Shin, 2001). This fragility is characterized by ineffective legislatures, compromised judiciaries, and vulnerable civil societies (Mainwaring and Bizzarro, 2019), which together weaken the checks and balances essential for a functioning democracy (Haggard and Kaufmann, 2016). Consequently, autocratic leaders can exploit these weaknesses to bypass or manipulate democratic processes, leading to an overall weakening of the quality of democracy.

*Socio-Political Cleavages*: Deep-seated ethno-religious divisions within a society can hinder national unity and promote factionalism (Kadirgamar, 2020). In multiparty democracies, political coalitions form along these lines, creating unstable alliances that prioritize group identity over broader democratic goals (Arriola, 2013; Wahman, 2013). In response, incumbents manipulate existing cleavages, frame rival groups as threats to national stability or security, justify repressive measures, and further entrench authoritarianism (Edgell et al., 2020; Merolla and Zechmeister, 2013). This strategy often deepens social cleavages, allowing politicians to exploit perceived fears and grievances while legitimizing crackdowns on dissent and opposition.

The central idea is that these factors create an environment that allows autocratization to take place. Leaders can exploit existing cleavages and institutional weaknesses to undermine democratic norms and consolidate their power. This study focuses on executive aggrandizement as a key driver of autocratization and shows how democratically elected leaders in Southeast Asia's third-wave democracies erode democracy. The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM) provides an explanation for how incumbents weaken accountability structures through two main strategies: "institutional capture" (Chesterley and Roberty, 2018; Bauer and Becker, 2020) and what I call "social silencing." These strategies reduce the opposition's ability to resist while increasing executive power. More broadly, I contribute to the autocratization literature by creating a framework for systematically analyzing incumbent

strategies of executive aggrandizement, the conditions that enable this process, and how affected entities respond. This leads to the following four research questions:

1. *How do incumbents in Southeast Asia's third-wave democracies erode accountability mechanisms to consolidate executive power?*
2. *Which specific strategies do incumbents employ to undermine horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability in Southeast Asia's third-wave democracies?*
3. *What are the consequences of these strategies for democratic governance?*
4. *How do varying socio-political or structural-institutional contexts shape the deployment of these strategies?*

To analyze how incumbents employ institutional capture and social silencing in third-wave democracies in Southeast Asia, this study employs a two-step analytical approach that combines theory-testing process tracing with a comparative part. Process tracing is the main analytical approach, as it allows the investigation of causal mechanisms in their natural setting through in-depth within-case analysis (Beach, 2016). This approach is very strong in the generation of rich, context-specific findings. Its generalizability, however, is limited by the uniqueness of each case and the specific causal mechanism under investigation. Fundamentally, there exists a trade-off in process tracing: it offers higher internal validity by providing a nuanced understanding of processes but at the expense of external validity and broader generalization (Falleti and Lynch, 2009; Gerring, 2010; Goertz and Mahoney, 2009). To enhance the external validity and generalizability of this study, a comparative component is incorporated. Initially, each case is treated as a single-case study to obtain detailed insights. The findings are then compared across these cases, enabling the identification of common patterns or differences. For a robustness check and to improve the generalizability of my findings, the theoretical framework is also briefly tested against cases of executive aggrandizement in six other third-wave democracies outside of Southeast Asia. This comparative aspect enriches my study by providing additional theoretical and empirical insights. By combining these two methods, this study strikes a balance between the in-depth examination of each case and the broader applicability of its findings. This methodological framework ensures a rigorous investigation of the AEM while accommodating both the diversity of individual cases and searching for broader trends across cases (Beach et al., 2022).

## 1.3. Structure of the Dissertation

The introductory chapter of this dissertation situated my study in its broader context, providing a clear rationale for the research and its significance. Following this introduction, this dissertation is organized into seven main chapters. In Chapter 2, I introduce the Autocratic

Expansion Model (AEM), a theoretical framework that aims to analyze the process of autocratization in third-wave democracies through executive aggrandizement. The AEM posits that incumbents in new democracies are driven by a desire to maintain power in a politically uncertain environment with unpredictable outcomes. The core argument is that incumbents consolidate power primarily through two strategies: "institutional capture" and "social silencing." These strategies are used to mitigate perceived threats, which are inextricably linked to the effectiveness of three accountability mechanisms - horizontal, vertical, and diagonal - that are essential for the proper functioning of a democracy and for preventing unchecked executive power. When accountability mechanisms are robust, they serve as internal checks on the power of the incumbent and the ruling coalition. Conversely, when these mechanisms are weakened, the risk of democratic erosion increases. I argue that incumbents first capture state institutions, such as the judiciary and the legislature, as well as independent oversight institutions such as anti-corruption agencies. This allows them to establish control over key state functions and minimize political opposition. Second, they employ tactics to silence civil society organizations and the media, thereby creating an environment in which social dissent is stifled, and the executive can control the popular narrative. In short, both institutional capture and social silencing are designed to undermine checks and balances on government power. Within each strategy, the incumbent uses specific tactics designed to undermine various accountability mechanisms. Tactics of institutional capture include the manipulation of political structures, legal and constitutional engineering, and institutional reorganization. Meanwhile, tactics of social silencing include the obstruction of civic space, authoritarian enforcement, and the promotion of state-controlled narratives. Each of these tactics aims to weaken the opposition's ability to resist executive power grabs. However, I argue it is not the individual attacks that erode democratic qualities but the cumulative effect of these tactics.

In Chapter 3, I outline the research design that underpins this study, emphasizing its qualitative approach to investigating executive aggrandizement in third-wave democracies in Southeast Asia. This research design focuses particularly on the relationship between agency, institutions, and structural conditions, specifically how incumbents systematically dismantle vertical, horizontal, and diagonal accountability mechanisms through tactics of institutional capture and social silencing. To analyze this phenomenon effectively, I employ theory-testing process tracing as a methodological approach. This method allows for a detailed and systematic examination of the underlying causal mechanisms driving democratic decline. Process tracing facilitates a detailed examination of the sequences of events that influence the unfolding of specific causal mechanisms over time. By tracing the causal pathways from initial conditions to subsequent outcomes, the research can assess the plausibility of theoretical propositions and identify factors contributing to executive aggrandizement. To enhance the external validity and generalizability of this study, a comparative component is incorporated, where the findings

of the study are compared across these cases, enabling the identification of common patterns or differences. For a robustness check and to improve the generalizability of my findings, the theoretical framework is also briefly tested against cases of executive aggrandizement in six other third-wave democracies outside of Southeast Asia.

Following the outline of my research design, Chapters 4 through 7 present a qualitative analysis of how democratically elected incumbents are linked to the erosion of democratic qualities. According to the logic of process tracing, where strong within-case inferences are the goal, I select cases where they can theoretically be present, necessitating prior case knowledge. This strategy leads to testing the theory against the cases of Indonesia under the presidency of Joko Widodo (2014-2023), the Philippines under the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte (2016-2022), and Thailand under the premiership of Thaksin Shinawatra (2001-2006). For all cases, I rely on a mix of primary and secondary sources, including academic studies, newspaper articles, government records, policy reports, and gray literature. The subsequent three chapters (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) are dedicated to in-depth case studies of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, respectively. Each chapter begins with a concise historical overview of the respective country, aiming to contextualize the rule of the "erosion agent" within its broader historical, social, and political landscape. These overviews highlight the dynamics that have shaped the current political climate and provide insight into each country's structural and institutional challenges. I then briefly outline why Widodo, Duterte, and Thaksin were elected, noting that dissatisfaction with the current democratic regime and institutions, coupled with the personality, upbringing, and rhetorical skills of the incumbents, who all managed to exploit either ethno-religious or social cleavages, were key factors. The main body of the within-case analyses then examines each of the hypothesized attributes of the Autocratic Expansion Model sequentially, assessing whether each attribute triggered the theorized processes and actions that led to the erosion of democratic norms. Chapter 7 examines and compares the three case studies to draw inferences that extend beyond the within-case analysis. Overall, the findings indicate that the AEM provides a robust framework for explaining the strategies and tactics of executive aggrandizement in Southeast Asia. Both Indonesia and Thailand exhibit a clear pattern where institutional capture precedes social silencing, while the Philippines deviates from this sequence. In the Philippines, social silencing, through the violent war on drugs, was implemented immediately after the election, alongside the consolidation of executive power through institutional capture. Additionally, an intriguing finding emerges when considering the early actions of Joko Widodo and Thaksin. Contrary to the initial argument that executive aggrandizement is always intentional from the outset, these cases suggest a more nuanced view. Structural and institutional weaknesses in third-wave democracies often contribute to how and why leaders autocratize. In some instances, leaders initially respond to the political constraints and vulnerabilities in their democracies, rather than actively seeking to dismantle democratic institutions. However, over time, these same leaders exploit the inherent structural

and institutional complexities of their systems, transforming an initially unintentional or reactive approach into a more deliberate dismantling of democratic safeguards. As a robustness check and to improve the generalizability of my findings, I also briefly test the theoretical framework against cases of executive aggrandizement in six other third-wave democracies outside of Southeast Asia.

The concluding chapter (Chapter 8) summarizes this study's main findings and reflects on the broader implications of those findings for the study of democratic erosion and the factors that contribute to its occurrence. Additionally, I account for the theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions made to the existing literature, while also discussing the study's limitations. The chapter concludes by identifying several research avenues for future academic research on executive aggrandizement.

# Part II.
## *Research Design*

## 2. Theoretical Framework

In third-wave democracies undergoing autocratization, executive aggrandizement serves as a central pathway to undermine democratic governance (Laebens, 2023; Wunsch and Blanchard, 2023). Democratically elected leaders increasingly amass authority by eroding the checks and balances that sustain democratic institutions, gradually shifting the political system toward authoritarianism and undermining norms of political freedom. At the core of this process is a long-term objective: the consolidation of executive power with minimal constraints. I argue that to achieve this goal, incumbents deploy two interrelated strategies – "institutional capture" (e.g., Chesterley and Roberty, 2018; Bauer and Becker, 2020) and what I call "social silencing." First, state institutions, such as the judiciary and the legislative, are captured to establish control over key state institutions and minimize political opposition. By undermining the independence of these institutions, incumbents create a political environment where meaningful checks on their power are diminished or neutralized. Second, "social silencing" seeks to suppress dissent within civil society and the media, ensuring that alternative narratives and opposition voices are muted from the public sphere. These strategies operate in tandem, with institutional capture typically laying the groundwork by weakening internal state checks and social silencing further consolidating control by stifling external dissent to hollow out accountability mechanisms within the state and society.

Accountability in democratic systems typically operates through three channels distinguished by the spatial direction between the actors – horizontal, vertical, and diagonal – the type of actors involved, and the mechanisms through which each type constrains government actions (Palumbo, 2016; Lindberg, 2013). This viewpoint emphasizes the responsibility of the government to be answerable to its citizens and state institutions. In addition, it serves as a 'system of enforcement', where state and non-state actors ensure that this accountability is upheld. (Barreda, 2014; Diamond, 1997; Laebens and Lührmann, 2021; Lührmann et al., 2020; Mechkova et al., 2019; Papadopoulos, 2023; Schedler et al., 1999) However, in third-wave democracies accountability mechanisms are oftentimes weaker than in established democracies, making them more vulnerable to executive overreach:

> "the most common outcomes of third-wave transitions have been breakdown and stagnation. The cases of substantial democratic deepening leading to robust liberal democracies are isolated exceptions. Not surprisingly, democratic breakdowns have been considerably more likely in countries with a less democratic starting point, worse economic performance, and a less hospitable neighborhood. Major democratic advances have been more likely in countries that started off with a higher per capita GDP and those that enjoyed stronger economic growth, as well as those with a less democratic beginning point." (Mainwaring and Bizzarro, 2019, p.112)

Horizontal accountability addresses the government's responsibility to maintain internal checks and balances among its branches. It involves state institutions, such as the judiciary,

legislature, and executive, monitoring each other's power to prevent overreach and ensure that governance remains aligned with democratic principles. Through judicial oversight, legislative scrutiny, and regulatory review, these branches enforce accountability by legally binding each other's actions and creating a self-regulating framework within the government itself. Horizontal accountability serves both as a responsibility of institutions to check one another and as a formal enforcement mechanism that sustains democratic integrity within the state. Vertical accountability refers to the responsibility of the government to answer to its citizens and the mechanisms through which the public can hold officials accountable. Citizens and political parties, as external actors, play key roles in this channel by evaluating government performance and influencing policy through elections, public opinion, and party competition. Vertical accountability enables citizens to act as enforcers by voting, advocating, and engaging in the political process, ensuring that government officials remain responsive to public needs and adhere to their mandates. Political parties further this process by representing citizens' interests and offering alternative political choices, thereby institutionalizing a mechanism of accountability that operates outside the formal structures of government. Diagonal accountability involves non-state entities, such as civil society (organizations, CSOs) and the media, which act as intermediaries between citizens and the state, increasing transparency and public scrutiny. These actors operate across both internal and external dimensions, linking the public with government oversight processes through independent monitoring and reporting on government actions. By revealing information that may otherwise remain obscured and mobilizing public opinion, CSOs and the media act as powerful enforcers, pressuring the government to uphold democratic standards and encouraging state institutions to address issues of accountability that formal channels might overlook. (e.g., Barreda, 2014; Goetz and Jenkins, 2005; Laebens and Lührmann, 2021; Lührmann et al., 2020; Mechkova et al., 2019; Mainwaring, 2003; O'Donnell, 1998; Papadopoulos, 2023; Peruzzotti and Smulowitz, 2006; Schedler et al., 1999).

I argue that institutional capture and social silencing directly target these three forms of accountability. By undermining them, incumbents remove barriers to near-unchecked executive rule. Within each strategy, the incumbent can employ different tactics of institutional capture and social silencing that target these accountability mechanisms, to varying degrees. The tactics employed within the framework of institutional capture and social silencing are flexible and responsive to the "threat perception" of the incumbent (Davenport, 1995; De Mesquita et al., 2003). This is the essence of the Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM), which I propose. According to the AEM, incumbents tailor their approach to consolidating power based on the severity and nature of the challenges they perceive to their authority. In periods of relatively low threat from opposition forces, civil society, or state institutions, incumbents favor preventive measures, adopting incremental changes that gradually weaken democratic

checks without provoking widespread resistance. For example, in a low-threat environment[13], institutional capture might manifest as the gradual appointment of loyalists to the judiciary or subtle legal reforms that reduce parliamentary oversight (e.g., Bauer and Becker, 2020; Corrales, 2015, 2020). These changes slowly erode accountability, making it more difficult for opposition forces to mobilize against the creeping consolidation of executive power. Similarly, preemptive social silencing tactics include the introduction of restrictive laws that limit media freedom or the creeping cooptation of civil society organizations (e.g., Corrales, 2015, 2020; Fröhlich and Skokova, 2020, Kövér et al., 2021).

I argue that these measures are designed to preemptively neutralize opposition by making it difficult for alternative voices to gain traction. However, when incumbents perceive higher levels of threat, such as from growing political opposition, mass protests, or increased scrutiny from civil society, their tactics shift from preventive to reactive. In these cases, institutional capture takes on a more aggressive form, such as the dismissal of judges who issue unfavorable rulings or the abrupt dissolution of independent oversight bodies. Legislative opposition can be stifled by suspending parliamentary sessions or using legal mechanisms that disproportionately target opposition parties. (e.g., Haggard and Tiede, 2024; Kosař and Šipulová, 2023; Sadurski, 2018, 2019) Reactive measures can include the sudden closure of critical media outlets, the arrest of journalists or activists, or the imposition of emergency laws that restrict public gatherings and protests, but also violent crackdowns (e.g., Carter and Carter, 2021; Chaudhry, 2022). Such measures are typically justified on the pretext of maintaining public order or national security, although their real purpose is to neutralize threats to the incumbent's power (Josua, 2024). These reactive tactics, while more overt, serve the same underlying goal as preventive measures that is to consolidate executive authority while weakening democratic accountability.

However, these reactive measures can also function as preventive measures. For example, shutting down media outlets or removing independent judges in response to a threat can deter future opposition by signaling harsh consequences for dissent. What begins as a reactive measure to neutralize an immediate challenge can thus evolve into a preventive strategy that reinforces executive power. Similarly, preventive measures can become reactive as threats intensify. Initial efforts, such as restrictive press laws or judicial appointments, escalate into

[13] In the context of low-threat environments, the prevailing authorities – be they state institutions, civil society, or opposition forces – exert minimal resistance to the incumbent's authority. In such contexts, incumbents often adopt preventive, incremental tactics to consolidate power, gradually weakening democratic checks while avoiding actions that could provoke significant resistance. These efforts are meticulously orchestrated to preserve the façade of democratic norms, thereby mitigating the likelihood of both domestic and international repercussions. Conversely, a unified opposition, mobilized civil society, or resilient state institutions that challenge the incumbent's authority mark a high-threat environment. In response, incumbents employ overt and aggressive measures, such as legal crackdowns, media censorship, or constitutional overhauls, to neutralize immediate threats. These tactics, while riskier, are employed to ensure survival in the face of substantial opposition, whether from within the state or from external actors.

aggressive measures, such as jailing journalists or dismissing judges, as opposition grows. This fluidity between preventive and reactive strategies allows incumbents to adapt and maintain control, minimizing democratic accountability. Ultimately, the AEM emphasizes how democratically elected leaders in third-wave democracies can, over time, erode the very institutions and norms that initially brought them to power in the first place. By targeting and neutralizing horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability mechanisms through institutional capture and social silencing, incumbents transform democratic systems into authoritarian(-leaning) forms of government – *to varying degrees*. The flexibility of their tactics ensures that they can adapt to unpredictable levels of (perceived) threats while consistently working toward the long-term goal of executive control.

I have therefore made two specific assumptions about the relationship between democratically elected incumbents and democratic decline that warrant further clarification. First, the AEM suggests a *temporal order of aggrandizement* in which government and fourth-branch institutions are captured first, before non-state institutions, i.e., the media and civil society, are attacked. Second, I argue that democratically elected incumbents *deliberately attack democratic institutions* through two distinct but interrelated and reciprocal strategies that depend on the incumbents' threat perception. The structure of this subchapter is in part a consequence of these assumptions. First, I will outline the logical sequence of executive aggrandizement within the broader context of autocratization episodes. Next, I will examine the conditions under which democratically elected leaders deliberately undermine democratic institutions in third-wave democracies. I will then explain the Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM) in greater detail, followed by a summary of the main argument. Throughout the chapter, I will also refer to the impact of authoritarian legacies, weak institutionalization, and socio-political cleavages on autocratization in third-wave democracies.

## 2.1. Sequencing Executive Aggrandizement

Among the many cases of autocratization in new democracies that have attracted the attention of scholars, a select few stand for the peculiar and protected means by which democratically elected leaders have methodically and gradually undermined democratic institutions, often to the detriment of other branches of government and the rights of citizens (Laebens and Lührmann, 2021, p.911). Such "executive aggrandizement" (Bermeo, 2016) or "incumbent takeover" (Svolik, 2015a) thus represents a distinct form of regime[14] change that leads to a decline in democratic standards. The basic premise is that democracies regress when there is a "weakening or disassembling of a given set of democratic institutions" (Bermeo, 2016, p. 16),

[14] A regime is a "set of formal and/or informal rules for choosing leaders and policies" (Geddes et al., 2014).

of which executive aggrandizement is a specific instance. Rather than modeling autocratization as a discrete outcome (democratic recession/regression or democratic breakdown[15]), it is thus treated as a process (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019; see also Haggard and Kaufmann, 2021; Kneuer, 2021; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). A process, in this context, refers to a set of interrelated and dynamic events and actions that unfold over a period of time and lead to a specific outcome. This involves a sequence of steps or stages through which change occurs, often characterized by identifiable patterns, a beginning, and an endpoint. The beginning and end of such autocratization episodes are typically quantified using various indices of democracy (Maerz et al., 2021; Pelke and Croissant, 2021). While such measurements can shed light on the overall trajectory of a regime in terms of democratization, autocratization, and shifts between the two, they offer only a limited understanding of the underlying processes, the different modes of autocratization, and the roles played by actors, or the structural and institutional conditions involved.

Similar to the distinction between a *regime spell* and a *leader spell* (Geddes et al., 2014), an autocratization episode can be distinguished from an episode of executive aggrandizement, with an autocratization episode potentially encompassing multiple modes of autocratization. For example, executive aggrandizement could be followed by a "promissory coup," (Kneuer, 2021) as observed in Thailand in the early 2000s. Although both strategies lead to similar outcomes – the "subversion of pre-existing constitutional arrangements, the violent suppression of political opposition, and the removal of legislative, judicial, media and civil society-driven checks and balances on the separation of powers" – they differ in their *modus operandi*[16] and their theoretical underpinnings (Fong, 2023, pp.1280-1281). Moreover, two instances of executive aggrandizement under different incumbents within a single autocratization episode might occur, particularly when one leader faces term limits and the next continues the same patterns of behavior. Transition between leaders does not necessarily stop autocratization; rather, it can reinforce or redirect it. I, therefore, argue that the onset of executive aggrandizement, unlike the onset of autocratization, is consistently triggered "at the ballot box" (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018, p.11; see Figure 2.1) with the electoral victory of an "erosion agent" (Kneuer, 2021). However, the role of such erosion agents in autocratization

[15] Democratic breakdown represents a severe disruption of democratic systems and principles, usually marked by the outright collapse of democratic institutions, the suppression of civil liberties, and the rise of more explicitly authoritarian regimes. In contrast, democratic recession or regression refers to a less extreme but still concerning decline in the quality and performance of democratic governance. In such cases, formal democratic institutions remain intact, but their effectiveness is severely undermined, and democratic norms come under persistent strain. (Kneuer, 2021; Lührmann, 2021)

[16] Executive aggrandizement refers to the weakening of "checks on executive power one by one (by) undertaking a series of institutional changes that hamper the power of opposition forces to challenge executive preferences" (Bermeo, 2016, p.10) by elected executives. Promissory coups, on the other hand, are initiated by the military and are understood as "fram(ing) the ouster of an elected government as a defense of democratic legality ad mak(ing) it a public promise to hold elections and restore democracy as soon as possible" (ibid., p. 8).

processes often only becomes apparent in hindsight (ibid.). Although their anti-pluralist tendencies are sometimes already evident during their election campaigns, they are often elected due to *antecedent conditions*[17] that generate "citizens' discontent with democratic parties and mounts", thereby setting the stage for such "anti-pluralists to rise to power in elections" (Lührmann, 2021, pp.1017-1018; see also Haggard and Kaufmann, 2021; Kneuer, 2021). This "critical juncture[18]" (Collier and Collier, 1991, p.29) provides the incumbent with the necessary tools and resources to implement his "change project[19]" (Kneuer, 2021) post-election.

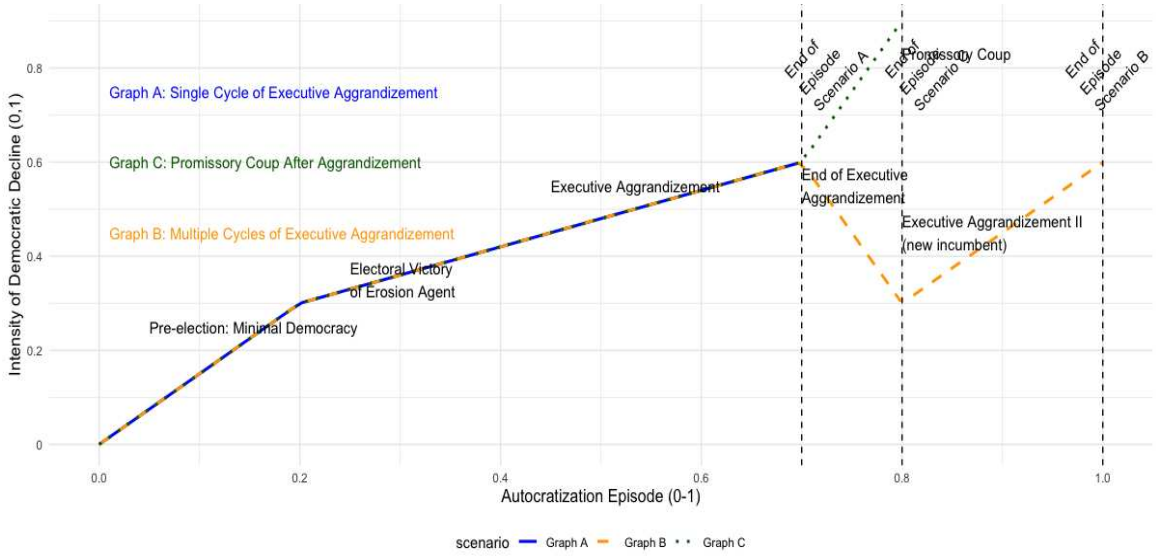


Figure 2.1. Episodes of Autocratization vs. Episodes of Executive Aggrandizement: Possible Scenarios.
*Notes*: This is a non-exhaustive example of possible scenarios to distinguish autocratization and aggrandizement episodes.
*Source*: The author.

Following the election of an "erosion agent" (Kneuer, 2021), I argue that executive aggrandizement typically follows a relatively clear pattern[20]. First, state institutions such as the judiciary, legislature, or fourth-branch institutions are captured and 're-aligned' as this reduces the most critical barriers to authoritarian rule and allows for governance without

[17] Antecedent conditions are temporary states within dynamic natural and social systems that precede and influence the onset and magnitude of a hazard and its consequences. They are distinct from preconditions, which are generally static or slowly changing and influence the inherent vulnerability of an area (Crozier et al., 2016). In the context of autocratization, antecedent conditions are the underlying factors or circumstances that precede and shape the onset and extent of autocratic processes within a given society or political system. These conditions are dynamic and include various socio-economic, political, and institutional factors that contribute to the vulnerability or receptivity of society to autocratic tendencies (Svolik, 2015b).
[18] Critical junctures are considered "a period of significant change, which typically occurs in distinct ways in different countries (or in other units of analysis)" (Collier and Collier, 1991, p.29).
[19] Drawing on Kneuer (2021), I consider a change project to be a strategic initiative led by an erosion agent that aims to drive change in the political, social, or economic order. It is characterized by a transformative vision that challenges the status quo, often presented as a necessary revolution or renewal to address perceived systemic failures. This agenda is actively promoted through pre-electoral mobilization and persuasive massaging to secure both public support and elite endorsement.
[20] However, there is still considerable debate in the literature regarding the temporal sequence of executive aggrandizement (Sato et al., 2022).

meaningful checks and balances (ibid.). For example, a captured legislature and judiciary allow for the easier implementation of tools of "autocratic legalism," for example, the use, abuse, and non-use of law (Corrales, 2015) to achieve an erosion agent's change project. This systematically undermines the autonomy and effectiveness of all branches of government. Institutional capture is followed by (extra-)legal attacks on civil society (organizations) and the media through which potential dissent is minimized, and the executive can control the popular narrative ("social silencing"). Ultimately, the executive's dominance over certain components of democracy weakens the regime's overall democratic credentials (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018).[21] This pattern suggests that executive aggrandizement is *intentional* and, at least initially, a *preemptive* process. In the empirical reality, however, sudden internal and external interests and changes that cannot be explained *a priori* can disrupt this pattern. For example, autocratization involves multiple actors, with each group having its own interests, strategies, and goals, which can lead to shifting alliances and conflicts (e.g., Stokke and Kyaw, 2024; van Lit, 2023). In addition, unique cultural, historical, and social contexts, such as ethnoreligious cleavages, can influence the trajectories of regime change, leading to non-linear developments (Mahoney, 2001; Mahoney and Snyder, 1999). The episode of executive aggrandizement culminates when the executive has successfully neutralized the (extra-)institutional checks and balances designed to limit its power, signifying a departure from previously established democratic norms, where democratic institutions are either partially or completely dismantled or function only as a democratic façade. While this suggests the end of executive aggrandizement, it does not necessarily imply the cumulation of the autocratization episode, as argued above.

Overall, the sequencing of an episode of executive aggrandizement (Figure 2.2) highlights a continuum of democratic decline under a democratically elected incumbent, with each phase expected to build on the actions and reactions of the previous one. Episodes of aggrandizement thus focus on the concentrated empowerment of the executive at the expense of other state institutions and actors within and outside formal political institutions over a given period of time (e.g., Bermeo, 2016). However, in contrast to this expectation of a linear progression, empirical reality often shows aggrandizement to be relatively volatile due to the unpredictable actions of actors, or internal and external influences. An episode of autocratization, on the other hand, can go beyond the actions of the incumbent. Unlike executive aggrandizement, which focuses specifically on the expansion of executive power under an incumbent, autocratization can occur over a longer period of time and involve different modes and actors endogenous and exogenous to the regime (e.g., Gerschewski, 2021). In some cases, episodes of executive aggrandizement coincide with episodes of autocratization. In such cases, the process

[21] The initial sequencing pattern of executive aggrandizement loosely follows previous theoretical arguments made by Kneuer (2021), Laebens (2023), and others (Haggard and Kaufmann, 2021; Lührmann, 2021).

of concentrating executive power at the expense of democratic checks and balances is not just a component of autocratization but is synonymous with it and represents the entirety of the autocratization process. This can happen when a new incumbent is elected and focuses on (re)democratizing the country, or through other measures[22].

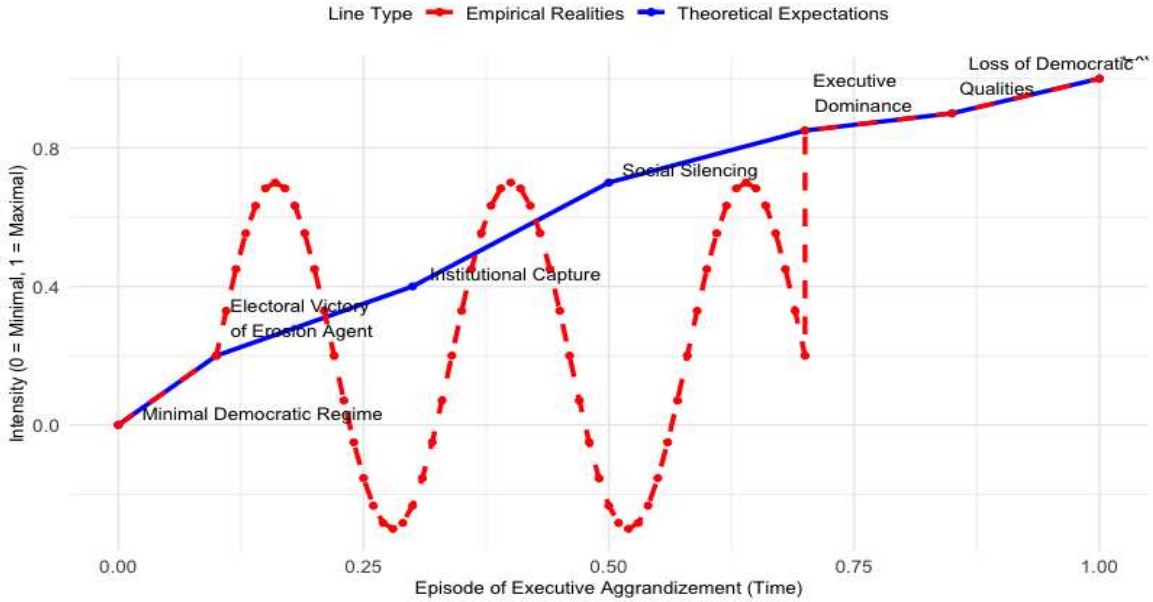


Figure 2.2. Sequencing an Episode of Executive Aggrandizement.
*Source*: The author.

## 2.2. Why Do Democratically Elected Incumbents Autocratize?

The sequencing of executive aggrandizement highlights that this process is often intentional, raising the question of *why* democratically elected leaders would undermine democratic principles to consolidate power. The argument is that structural and institutional weaknesses in third-wave democracies, such as fragile checks and balances, weak judicial systems, and ineffective accountability, create conditions in which leaders see centralizing power as necessary for political survival. Leaders often exploit these weaknesses to avoid critical opposition, ensure stability, and remain in power, especially in competitive political environments where losing office could pose personal or legal risks. Weak institutions fail to prevent executive overreach, allowing leaders to justify actions that are later revealed to be undemocratic as necessary to maintain national stability and development. Rather than being an aberration, this dynamic becomes a plausible outcome in the context of weakly institutionalized democracies, where the threat of instability and loss of power pushes leaders toward authoritarian tendencies.

This argument is based on a *historical institutionalist* view that institutions, structures, and their evolution shape political behavior and outcomes over time. Historical institutionalism emphasizes how the design and functioning of political institutions along with the constraints

[22] For an in-depth literature review on democratic resilience, see Holloway and Manwaring (2022).

or opportunities they present can lead to path-dependent processes that induce leaders to centralize power and undermine democratic norms in response to such institutional weaknesses (e.g., Steinmo, 2008; Thelen, 1999). Subsequently, I argue that the structural and institutional preconditions of incomplete third-wave consolidations (Rose and Shin, 2001) create an environment in which democratically elected incumbents perceive the centralization of power as a necessary tool for political survival. Essentially, while third-wave democracies have a mixed record in terms of successful democratic consolidation (Mainwaring and Bizzarro, 2019), their "backward" democratization (ibid.) has in numerous cases led to the formation of "gray zone" democracies, where "illiberal" and democratic characteristics have merged (Schedler, 2002; Zakaria, 1997). Rather than establishing basic democratic institutions, such as the rule of law or civil society, these democracies prioritized competitive elections (Rose and Shin, 2001). However, the establishment of formal and informal institutions prior to competitive elections is fundamental to the creation of a robust institutional framework that promotes transparency, accountability, and respect for democratic principles as it serves to strengthen a system's resilience of a system to potential challenges and setbacks (Diamond, 1999; Linz and Stepan, 1996). As a result, several third-wave democracies are characterized by structural and institutional deficiencies. These deficiencies typically manifest themselves in the form of a weak rule of law, a lack of institutionalization within the party system, deficiencies in government and governance, and a fragmented and divided civil society. (Arriola, 2009; Fukuyama, 2015; Haggard and Kaufman, 2016; Loxton, 2015; Menocal et al., 2008; Schedler, 2002; Zakaria, 1997)

In various new democracies, elements of previous authoritarian regimes persist, often referred to as "authoritarian legacies" (Albertus and Menaldo, 2018; Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010; Schedler, 2001). These democracy-constraining elements include the continuation of repressive practices, entrenched patron-client relationships, manipulation of electoral and legal processes, the concentration of power in the executive branch, the prevalence of authoritarian successor parties, and the existence of a robust security apparatus that still operates with considerable autonomy and authority, reflecting institutional and cultural remnants of authoritarian rule. They act as barriers to fully realize democratic governance by maintaining channels of influence and control that limit democratic responsiveness and accountability. For example, the persistence of patron-client networks allows incumbent leaders to reward loyalists and limit political opposition, which can hinder the development of a truly competitive political environment. Likewise, the manipulation of electoral systems and legal frameworks often creates an uneven playing field that impedes genuine democratic participation and accountability, making it more difficult to implement and sustain democratic reforms. These democracy-restrictive practices and structures contribute to a political environment in which democratic institutions remain vulnerable to manipulation and abuse by incumbents. The continued influence of a strong, often autonomous security apparatus can

further entrench executive power, while former authoritarian parties can re-emerge as influential forces, often having retained their economic and political power through patron-client relationships that redirect democratic processes to serve particularistic or oligarchic interests rather than the broader public good. (Albertus, 2019; Diamond, 2011; Elkins et al., 2009; Grzymala-Busse, 2002; Haggard and Kaufmann, 2016; Levitsky and Way, 2010; Loxton, 2015; Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010; Schedler, 2002) This can both constrain incumbents' decision-making capacities and can be used by incumbents to entrench their power, as authoritarian-era elites tend to support anti-pluralist institutions, electoral rules, and policies when they retain or regain political office (Albertus, 2019). This prevalence of patronage systems has also increased the uneven distribution of resources and opportunities, leading to long-lasting socio-economic disparities and persistent inequalities (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013; Ansell and Samuel, 2014; Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010). The persistence of such features contributes to the deepening of social and political cleavages by perpetuating inequalities and fostering distrust in democratic institutions, while the entrenchment of elite power hinders the development of inclusive governance structures (Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010; Mainwaring and Bizzarro, 2019; Schedler, 2001).

The persistence of formal and informal institutions rooted in past authoritarian regimes significantly influences executive aggrandizement in post-liberalization contexts (Mallen and García-Guadilla, 2017; Slater and Arugay, 2018). Formal institutions, such as electoral systems and government structures, often reflect power dynamics established during authoritarian rule, which favor certain groups or concentrate power in specific branches of government. This design perpetuates exclusionary patterns that limit political pluralism and creates an environment in which leaders can manipulate the system to enhance their authority. For example, when electoral systems are skewed to favor certain political actors or parties, it can reduce the checks on executive power, making it easier for leaders to consolidate their authority without facing significant opposition. (Lust-Okar, 2006; Svolik, 2012) Moreover, the legacies of authoritarianism extend beyond formal structures to informal institutions, including social norms and cultural practices that shape public attitudes toward governance (Mallen and García-Guadilla, 2017). Societal attitudes formed during authoritarian regimes can lead to lower levels of political trust and engagement, creating a population that is less likely to challenge executive overreach (Rodan, 2004; Slater, 2010; Svolik, 2012). When citizens view the government through a lens shaped by past experiences of oppression or manipulation, they are more inclined to accept or even support the centralization of power as a means of achieving stability or security. This acceptance is particularly pronounced when leaders frame their actions as necessary for national development or public order, allowing them to justify undemocratic measures without facing significant backlash (Kadirgamar, 2020). The interaction between these formal and informal institutions creates a conducive environment for executive aggrandizement. Leaders can exploit the vulnerabilities inherent in

weak institutional frameworks and societal attitudes shaped by authoritarian legacies to undermine democratic norms. As these leaders act to consolidate power, they often do so with the implicit or explicit support of a population conditioned to prioritize stability over democratic governance (Carey et al., 2022; Graham and Svolik, 2020; Wuttke et al., 2022). In this way, the historical context not only shapes the institutions in place but also molds the political landscape in which executive aggrandizement occurs, allowing leaders to navigate and manipulate the system to their advantage while eroding the foundations of democracy.

Based on these considerations, the argument follows the logic that such structural and institutional deficits of third-wave transitions have created path-dependent processes that influence the decision-making capabilities of actors, including the erosion agent. Among other things, they affect the threat perception of the incumbent. I argue that in such environments, uncertainty is heightened, leading incumbents to prioritize political survival (De Mesquita et al., 2003; Schedler, 2013). Uncertainty is understood as the ambiguity with which political actors can predict future interactions and developments (Lupu and Riedl, 2013, pp.1341-1343). In general, two types of uncertainty can be distinguished, "the institutional uncertainty that originates in either actual or potential challenges to [an incumbents'] rule and the informational uncertainty that arises from the impossibility of generating secure knowledge on these challenges" (Schedler, 2013, p.21). While democratic elections should provide procedural certainty despite substantive uncertainty in democratic systems (Przeworski, 1986), in new democracies, the structural and institutional deficiencies lead to a period of "extraordinary uncertainty" where the "relative stability and predictability of social, economic and institutional parameters" are insufficient (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986, pp. 3-4). This affects the threat perception of the incumbent. When the incumbent perceives a threat as destabilizing, repressive actions become more likely, while this likelihood decreases when the threat is perceived as less disruptive to the incumbent's tenure (Davenport, 1995). Drawing on scholarship on state repression, by repressive actions, I mean both 'high-intensity' repression, such as the violent suppression of resistance movements, and 'low-intensity' repression (Way and Levitsky, 2006). By 'low-intensity' repressions, I mean the more subtle and gradual undermining of democratic institutions through, for example, 'autocratic legalism' (Corrales, 2015, 2020).

Thus, I argue that incumbents shape their power consolidating strategies based on the severity and nature of challenges they perceive to their authority. In electoral democracies, these threats largely consist of existing accountability mechanisms that allow citizens and their representatives to hold the government accountable by either rewarding or sanctioning it (Palumbo, 2016). Put differently, these are the demands that opposition groups and other accountability actors place on incumbents. By opposition groups, I mean both political (e.g., political parties, political opposition and elites, fourth-branch institutions, and formal

institutions of checks and balances) and social (e.g., CSOs, media) opposition. Accountability is understood as the relationship between two entities, where "A is accountable to B when A is obliged to inform B about A's … actions and decisions, to justify them, and to suffer punishment in the case of eventual misconduct" (Schedler et al., 1999, p.7). Thus, accountability has two main dimensions, answerability and enforcement, which constrain political power to prevent abuse (ibid.) and is implemented through three different mechanisms by different actors, typically distinguished by the spatial orientation between the actors (Lindberg, 2013). Horizontal accountability refers to the internal mechanisms within a state's structure that provide checks and balances. These processes allow government institutions to hold each other accountable and prevent any one institution from overstepping legal boundaries or infringing on the rights and responsibilities of others. Examples of such mechanisms include the formal oversight role of parliaments in monitoring the executive, the judiciary, and various oversight and monitoring bodies (Mainwaring, 2003; O'Donnell, 1998). Vertical accountability is exercised by actors and mechanisms outside the state (Schedler et al., 1999) and refers to the relationship between the citizens and their elected representatives (Mainwaring, 2003) as well as the capacity of citizens to hold the government accountable through elections (Schedler et al., 1999). In addition to the horizontal-vertical distinction, some authors have pointed to non-electoral accountability mechanisms, commonly referred to as 'diagonal' (Pelizzo and Stapenhurst, 2013) or 'social' (Peruzzoti and Smulovitz, 2006) accountability. This type of accountability refers to the extent to which actors outside the formal political institutions, typically civil society (organizations) and the independent media, either directly or indirectly hold the government to account (Goertz and Jenkins, 2001). This can be done indirectly by providing information that strengthens the effectiveness of other accountability actors, or directly through pressure tactics such as social mobilization or media exposure (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005; Peruzzotti and Smulowitz, 2006).

Overall, in the context of weakly institutionalized third-wave democracies, incumbents often exploit the absence of robust accountability mechanisms and the enduring influence of authoritarian legacies to consolidate power. Weak formal institutions, such as the judiciary and electoral systems, fail to act as effective checks on executive power, enabling leaders to operate with greater impunity. However, this very weakness fosters broader instability, as marginalized political opponents, civil society, and independent media may escalate their resistance. In addition, the enduring presence of authoritarian legacies, such as entrenched oligarchic elites, or deeply ingrained patronage networks, can also pose significant threats to incumbents. These forces, often independent of democratic control, may challenge the authority of elected leaders if their interests are threatened, further destabilizing governance. In such contexts, leaders often perceive these groups as destabilizing threats. On the other hand, political culture shaped by past repression may foster a general mistrust among citizens, making them reluctant to engage in activism. However, when social or political grievances

arise, such as economic problems or government corruption, they can lead to increased political mobilization, threatening the stability of the incumbent government. As uncertainty increases whether due to unpredictable electoral outcomes or public sentiment leaders are more likely to perceive even minor challenges as existential threats, leading them to adopt repressive measures. In this context, accountability mechanisms, which ideally should serve as safeguards against abuse of power, are instead perceived as direct challenges to the authority of incumbents. Thus, when leaders perceive that their hold on power is fragile, they resort to repressive measures to prevent potential threats from emerging.

In sum, incumbents in weakly institutionalized democracies perceive threats as stemming from a combination of institutional fragility, the lingering effects of authoritarianism, and heightened uncertainty about their political future. This perception forces them to prioritize their political survival, often leading to repressive actions against potential challengers and the further erosion of democratic norms. In such environments, threats are not merely challenges; they are deeply intertwined with the structural vulnerabilities of the political system, driving incumbents to adopt increasingly authoritarian measures in the name of stability and governance. Based on these considerations, I argue that these incumbents tailor their approach to power consolidation based on the severity and nature of the challenges they perceive to their authority. To do so, they employ two strategies, that is "institutional capture" (e.g., Chesterley and Roberty, 2018; Bauer and Becker, 2020) and what I call "social silencing." Understanding how these two strategies are used to attack accountability measures is critical to understanding the mechanisms by which incumbents exploit institutional weaknesses and ultimately undermine democratic norms. Table 2.1 illustrates the relationship between incumbent threat perceptions and the three accountability mechanisms, presenting the types of accountabilities along with the actors involved, and the mechanisms through which they exercise accountability. It also presents incumbents' threat perceptions and strategic responses. Perceived threats arise from accountability mechanisms that incumbents, operating within weak institutions shaped by authoritarian legacies, often interpret as direct challenges to their authority. The following sub-chapter introduced the Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM), which provides further insight into how these strategies interact with structural vulnerabilities in weakly institutionalized democracies.

Table 2.1. Relationship Between Threat Perception and Accountability Mechanisms.

| | **Horizontal Accountability** | **Vertical Accountability** | **Diagonal Accountability** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Actors** | State institutions | Citizens, elected officials, political parties | Civil society organizations (CSOs), media, advocacy groups |
| **Threat Perception** | Destabilization risk from intra-institutional checks and independent oversight bodies | Threat from public mobilization, political parties, and public dissatisfaction | Risk of anti-government activism and mobilization, and critical, independent media reports |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Accountability Tool** | Oversight, legal reviews, inter-agency checks | Elections, public accountability, citizen demands | Media exposure, social mobilization |
| **Erosion Agent Strategies** | Institutional Capture | Institutional Capture/Social Silencing | Institutional Capture/Social Silencing |

*Source*: The author.

## 2.3. The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM)

The sequencing of executive aggrandizement has yielded insights into the presumed temporal order of the aggrandizement process, while a historical institutionalist perspective on democratic development in weakly institutionalized third-wave democracies has provided insights into *why* democratically elected incumbents sometimes deliberately turn to executive aggrandizement to secure political power during their term(s) in office. This raises the question of *how* democratically elected leaders autocratize during their term(s) in office. While incumbents can be motivated by many different objectives, a key goal for many is to remain in power (de Mesquita et al., 2003). While consolidated democracies have stronger, more independent institutions to check executive power, third-wave democracies often suffer from weak institutions and authoritarian legacies, making them vulnerable not only to potential abuses of power but also to inherent state fragility (Rose and Shin, 2001). I therefore argue that incumbents in third-wave democracies *deliberately* use two key strategies, that is "institutional capture" and "social silencing," to maintain power and initially take preemptive action against perceived or real threats.

As argued in Section 2.2., these threats can be distinguished by their spatial orientation and level of engagement. Horizontal threats arise from the institutional checks and balances that challenge the power of incumbents through legal and interagency oversight. Vertical threats arise from the relationship between government and the public. These threats can take the form of citizen mobilization, political opposition, or public dissatisfaction, all of which challenge incumbents. Diagonal threats emerge from external actors, including civil society organizations, the media, and advocacy groups, which exert influence through public opinion formation and social mobilization. The first strategy involves the systematic capture of state institutions. By undermining the independence of entities such as the judiciary, incumbents can minimize political opposition and establish control over key state functions, creating a political environment where meaningful checks on their power are diminished or completely neutralized. The second strategy, "social silencing," focuses on suppressing dissent within civil society and the media. By ensuring that alternative narratives and opposition voices are muted or excluded from the public sphere incumbents further weaken accountability mechanisms. Together, these strategies hollow out the foundations of democratic governance both within state institutions and in society. I argue that within each strategy, the incumbent is able to employ specific tactics of institutional capture and social silencing that target these

accountability mechanisms, with incumbents tailoring their approach to consolidating power based on the severity and nature of perceived challenges to their authority.

### *2.3.1. How Do Democratically Elected Incumbents Autocratize?*

In many third-wave democracies, democratically elected leaders employ strategies and tactics aimed at consolidating their power, often at the expense of democratic principles and institutions. The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM), illustrated in Figure 2.3, shows how structural and institutional weaknesses in these democracies foster conditions in which leaders view the centralization of power as essential to political survival. These vulnerabilities create a context characterized by heightened risks of "strategic interactions among major political actors," (Haggard and Kaufman, 2016, p.227), in which leaders prioritize personal and political interests over democratic commitments. This dynamic resembles a "classic security dilemma," in which incumbents fail to make credible commitments to uphold democratic rules or constitutional constraints. Anticipation of such behavior also influences opposition strategies, often in ways that undermine democratic governance. (ibid.)

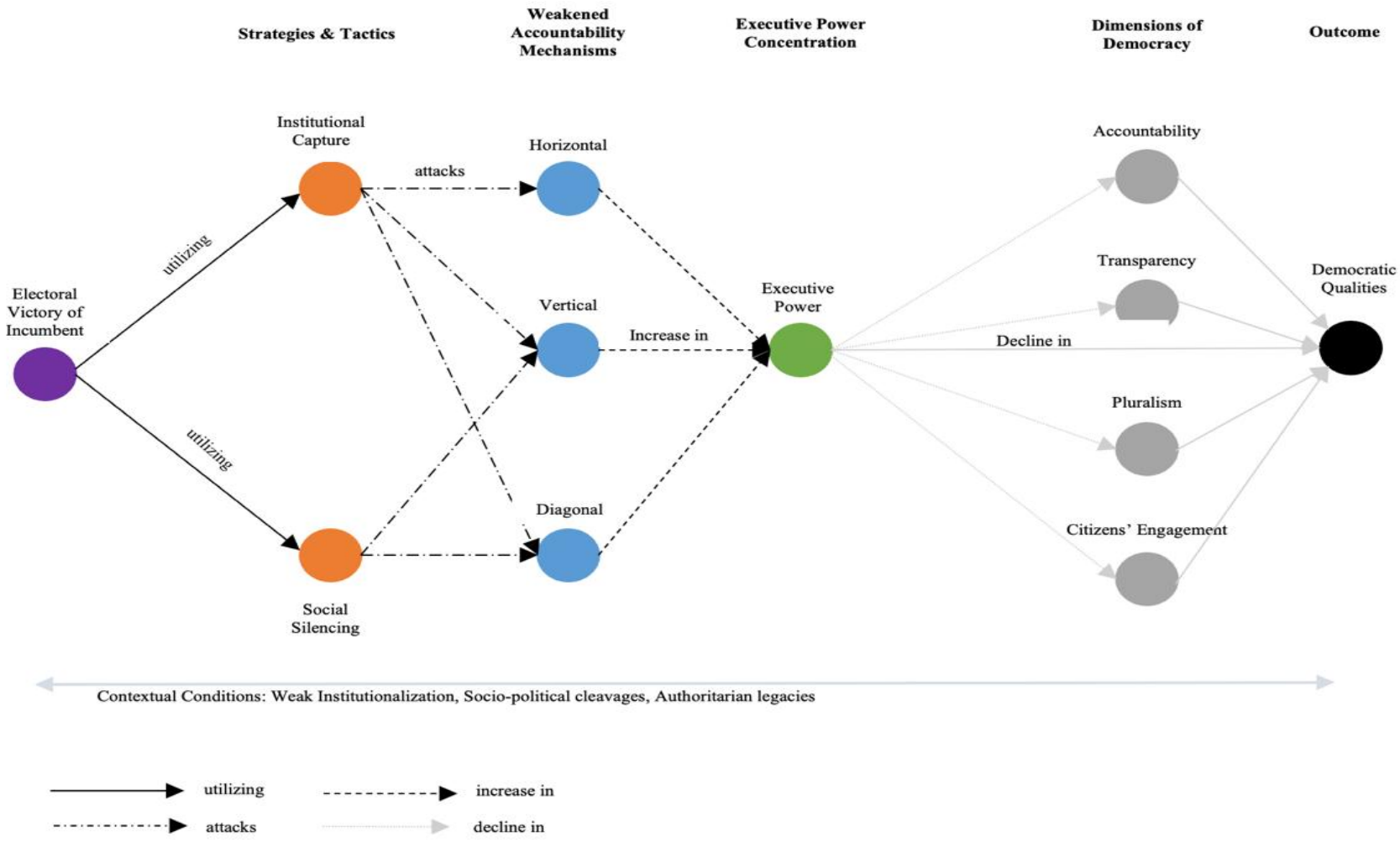


Figure 2.3. The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM).
*Source*: The author.

Following an electoral victory, incumbents in fragile democracies often adopt two mutually reinforcing strategies, institutional capture, and social silencing, to undermine accountability mechanisms and consolidate power preemptively. These horizontal, vertical, and diagonal mechanisms are intended to distribute power and safeguard democracy from authoritarian tendencies. (Arriola, 2009; Fukuyama, 2015; Haggard and Kaufman, 2016; Loxton, 2015; Menocal et al., 2008; Schedler, 2002; Zakaria, 1997) However, their inherent fragility often fails to constrain executive overreach. Instead of strengthening legitimacy in the post-election period, this vacuum creates uncertainty and exposes the regime to risks of instability (Schedler, 2002, 2013). Leaders exploit this environment to centralize authority, framing it as necessary for stability while neutralizing accountability mechanisms that could threaten their power. The vulnerabilities facilitating democratic backsliding are deeply rooted in weak institutional frameworks, fragile rule-of-law systems, and inadequate accountability mechanisms. These deficiencies not only enable but also incentivize power consolidation, as leaders perceive accountability mechanisms as existential threats – tools that can uncover corruption, impose checks on their authority, or embolden opposition forces. (Arriola, 2009; De Mesquita et al., 2003; Fukuyama, 2015; Haggard and Kaufman, 2016; Loxton, 2015; Menocal et al., 2008; Schedler, 2002; Zakaria, 1997) Consequently, incumbents adopt preventive tactics to weaken these mechanisms before they can pose a serious challenge. For instance, judicial independence is undermined by the appointment of loyalists, legislative oversight is curtailed through procedural changes, and dissent from civil society or the media is stifled by censorship or co-optation. Economic and social instability exacerbates these vulnerabilities and provides fertile ground for power consolidation. Socio-political crises or economic shocks serve as triggers, allowing incumbents to justify their actions as necessary for state stabilization or crisis management (Schedler, 2001; Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010; Mainwaring and Bizzarro, 2019). However, such justifications often mask ulterior motives focused on political survival and self-preservation (De Mesquita et al., 2003). Leaders who anticipate political retribution, whether through electoral defeat, judicial investigations, or political retaliation, actively dismantle accountability systems to shield themselves from scrutiny. Corruption and personal enrichment reinforce these motivations, as officeholders seek to render ineffective or subservient the institutions designed to check their actions. In this context, the erosion of judicial independence, the suppression of opposition voices, and the curtailment of free media create a self-reinforcing cycle in which threats to accountability are neutralized, enabling further authoritarian tendencies. This process transforms structural weaknesses into tools for justifying the concentration of power, undermining democratic principles, and making the state more vulnerable to future crises.

The interaction between structural and institutional vulnerabilities and the ambitions of power-seeking leaders fosters the erosion of accountability mechanisms. This process unfolds through deliberate, calculated strategies aimed at consolidating executive power, particularly

through two interrelated strategies: institutional capture and social silencing. Institutional capture enables leaders to manipulate or control various branches of government, thereby consolidating authority and weakening democratic checks and balances. Leaders who engage in institutional capture use several interconnected tactics to achieve their goals. A critical tactic is the *manipulation of political structures* to distort democratic processes and concentrate power. Through practices such as promiscuous power-sharing arrangements (Slater and Simmons, 2013), the formation of supermajorities (Schedler, 2010; Wahman, 2013), intra-elite coalition building (Arriola, 2009; Van de Walle, 2007), and the reconfiguration of electoral systems (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018; Przeworski, 2019), leaders create conditions that undermine opposition forces and tilt the political playing field in their favor. Such manipulations not only consolidate the ruling regime's dominance but also undermine democratic accountability by stifling pluralism and meaningful political competition. Another key tactic is *legal and constitutional engineering*, in which leaders entrench authoritarian practices under the guise of legal reform. Often described as "autocratic legalism" (Corrales, 2015; Scheppele, 2018) or "abusive constitutional borrowing" (Dixon and Landau, 2021), this tactic subverts democratic norms and weakens the rule of law. By co-opting legal frameworks and exploiting constitutional mechanisms, power-seeking leaders diminish institutional safeguards designed to hold them accountable, rendering legal challenges to their authority increasingly ineffective. The third dimension of institutional capture is *institutional reorganization*, which reconfigures the structure and personnel of key institutions to ensure control and loyalty. By "stacking" or "packing" critical oversight bodies (Bauer and Becker, 2020; Bauer et al., 2021; Freeman, 2020; Haggard and Tiede, 2024), reorganizing security forces and agencies, or restructuring local governance systems (Landau, 2013; Peters and Pierre, 2019), leaders consolidate influence over mechanisms of accountability. This undermines institutional independence, compromises oversight functions, and eliminates avenues for meaningful scrutiny or resistance. Through these interrelated strategies, institutional capture becomes a potent mechanism for executive aggrandizement. By undermining the independence and effectiveness of political, legal, and institutional frameworks, leaders effectively destabilize democratic accountability and create a self-perpetuating cycle of concentrated power and diminished oversight. I thus define institutional capture as the deliberate manipulation and restructuring of institutions by democratically elected leaders to consolidate power, undermine their independence, and weaken democratic accountability and oversight.

When leaders engage in social silencing, they intentionally suppress democratic accountability by restricting civic participation, stifling dissent, and controlling state narratives. This strategy operates through a combination of legal, coercive, and propagandistic tactics designed to marginalize opposition and consolidate power. One key aspect of social silencing is the *obstruction of civic space*, often achieved through autocratic legalism (Corrales, 2015;

Scheppele, 2018). By imposing restrictive measures such as obstructing foreign funding and implementing burdensome registration requirements, leaders impede the work of civil society organizations (CSOs) (Dupuy et al., 2016; Bakke et al., 2020; Bromley et al., 2020; Chaudhry and Heiss, 2021; Christensen and Weinstein, 2013; Glasius et al., 2020). These measures weaken pluralism and limit civic engagement, undermining the vital role of civil society as an extra-institutional check on state power. A second dimension of social silencing involves *authoritarian enforcement*, which uses intimidation, harassment, and surveillance to stifle dissent (Kosar and Sipulova, 2023; Llanos et al., 2014; Dixon and Landau, 2021). Crackdowns on protests, arbitrary arrests, and detentions further violate the rights to peaceful assembly and free speech, deter opposition, and suppress the public's ability to hold leaders accountable (Carter and Carter, 2021; Chaudhry, 2022; Mason and Krane, 1989). This coercive environment undermines the ability of citizens to organize and voice dissent, weakening the regular democratic process. Finally, social silencing relies on the *manipulation of state narratives* to shape public perceptions and restrict the flow of independent information. Through censorship, propaganda, state control of the media, and dominance over online platforms, leaders undermine media independence, which is essential for transparency and an informed citizenry. In addition, the creation of government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) serves to simulate civic engagement while reinforcing state narratives. (Fröhlich and Skokova, 2020; Kövér et al., 2021) Together these efforts distort public discourse, stifle dissenting voices, and obscure the mechanisms of state accountability. By employing these strategies, leaders effectively undermine the societal checks that are fundamental to democratic governance, consolidating power by silencing the very mechanisms that enable transparency and accountability. I, thus, define social silencing as the deliberate suppression of civic participation, dissent, and independent information by democratically elected leaders in order to stifle democratic accountability.

Institutional capture and social silencing thus contribute to the erosion of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability that together provide the checks and balances essential to safeguarding democracy. First, the erosion of horizontal accountability eliminates the ability of independent institutions such as courts, legislatures, and watchdog agencies to effectively check executive power. When these institutions are co-opted or undermined, for example through judicial stacking, legal manipulation, or the centralization of authority, they lose their independence and ability to act as a barrier against authoritarian encroachment. Without the oversight of these institutions, the executive can operate with little or no meaningful checks, leading to increased power consolidation. In the absence of strong institutional checks, the space for democratic resistance shrinks, as actors within the system, such as judges, legislators, and ombudsmen, are either incapacitated or directly aligned with the executive. The weakening of vertical accountability further reduces democratic resilience by limiting the ability of citizens to hold leaders accountable through elections. When opposition parties are

marginalized or elections are rigged, the electoral process itself becomes an empty exercise. In this scenario, the public's ability to remove corrupt or authoritarian leaders is virtually eliminated, making it extremely difficult to hold the executive accountable through democratic means. Citizens become disillusioned or disengaged from the political process, perceiving their participation as futile. This disconnect weakens the very fabric of democratic society by severely inhibiting civic engagement and political participation, both essential components of a functioning democratic system and of democratic resilience. The erosion of diagonal accountability, which relies on independent media and civil society to expose and critically scrutinize government wrongdoing, is equally devastating to democratic resilience. When restrictive laws stifle CSOs, funding cuts, and administrative hurdles, they lose the ability to mobilize citizens, challenge government policies, and provide alternative platforms for political engagement. When the independence of the media is compromised, citizens are deprived of accurate and transparent reporting on government actions, making it harder for the public to identify and respond to aggrandizement. With fewer opportunities to expose and criticize corruption or abuse of power, the government can operate with impunity. Without a free press or a robust civil society to hold leaders accountable, citizens are isolated from the reality of democratic erosion and thus less able to mobilize in defense of democratic values.

The combined impact of these weakened accountability mechanisms creates a self-reinforcing cycle that further erodes democratic resilience. Once accountability institutions are compromised, it becomes more difficult for opposition forces, civil society, and ordinary citizens to effectively resist authoritarian tendencies (Boese et al., 2020, 2021), leading to a snowball effect in which each step toward autocratization makes the system less able to recover. Even when opposition forces or civil society actors do attempt to challenge the erosion of democracy, their efforts are often too fragmented or ineffective due to the prior weakening of institutions and suppression of dissent (Lorch, 2021). Minor changes in accountability mechanisms, however, do not necessarily indicate an intention to increase executive power, as they could reflect institutional experimentation within democratic norms, instead. However, when these changes disproportionately weaken the ability of accountability actors to check the incumbent, it signals a deliberate effort to undermine the democratic system itself. (Laebens, 2023) The AEM thus maps specific strategies and tactics used by incumbents to neutralize checks on government power by attacking mechanisms of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability. By dissecting these processes, the AEM not only illustrates the sequential nature of autocratization but also provides a lens through which to analyze the incremental erosion of democratic institutions. By addressing both the covert and overt tactics of executive aggrandizement, the AEM highlights the complexity of this process. It emphasizes the calculated dismantling of democratic safeguards and portrays aggrandizement as a deliberate, systematic strategy aimed at entrenching power in the executive branch. This approach allows for the identification of recurring patterns in how incumbents neutralize opposition,

concentrate authority, and sideline independent institutions, ultimately diminishing the capacity of democracies to resist authoritarian tendencies.

The next two subsections provide a detailed theoretical exploration of the relationship between three key tactics of institutional capture, three primary tactics of social silencing, and the three accountability mechanisms (see Figures 2.4 and 2.5). This discussion will provide greater clarity on how these elements intersect, influence, and reinforce one another within the broader sociopolitical and institutional landscape. The first subsection will examine the dynamics of institutional capture, focusing on how its three core tactics function as tools to consolidate power within institutions. It will investigate how these tactics undermine transparency and integrity by distorting accountability mechanisms. In parallel, the second subsection will address the role of social silencing through its three defining tactics. This section will theorize how these practices not only stifle resistance and critique but also directly interact with institutional capture. The mutual reinforcement between these two phenomena will be examined, highlighting how social silencing complements and reinforces institutional capture by creating an environment in which accountability is diluted or dismantled altogether.

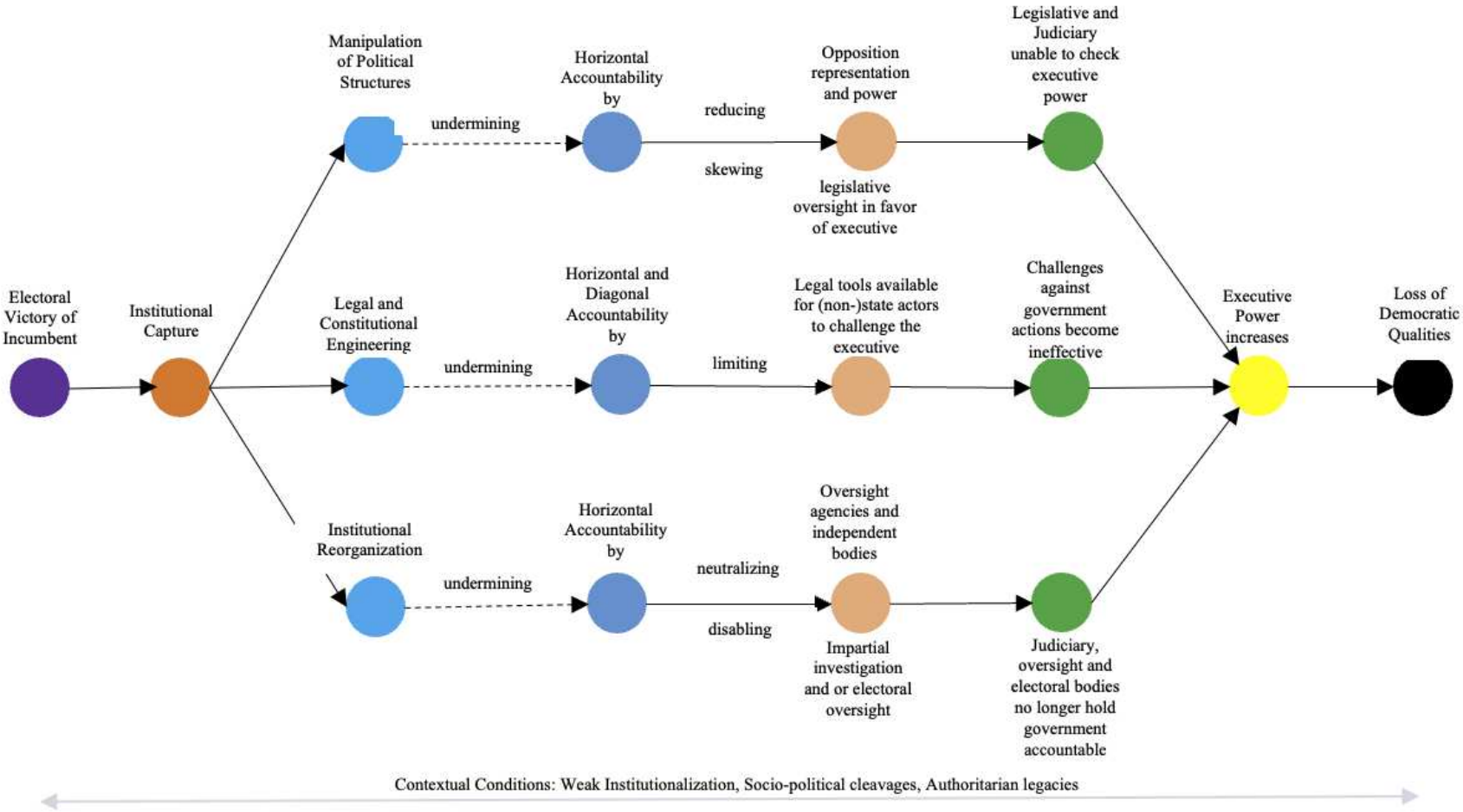


Figure 2.4. The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM): Institutional Capture.
*Source*: The author.

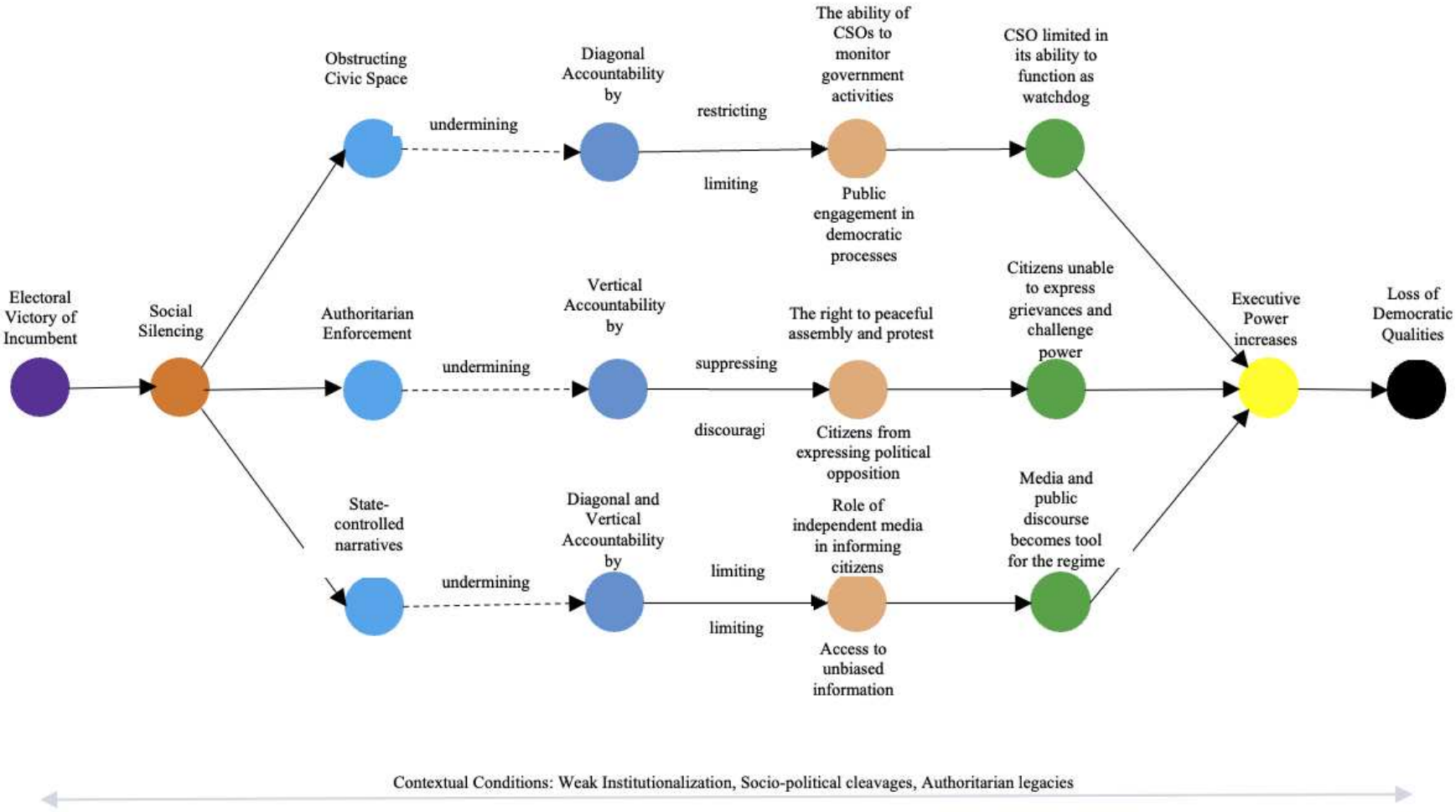


Figure 2.5. The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM): Social Silencing.
*Source*: The author.

### *2.3.2. Tactics of Institutional Capture*

Table 2.2. Tactics of Institutional Capture.

| Tactic | Description | Characteristics |
|---|---|---|
| **Manipulation of Political Structures** | Leaders manipulate political structures to consolidate power, skewing democratic processes and limiting opposition. | Promiscuous power-sharing; creation of supermajorities; intra-elite coalition-building; electoral system manipulation. |
| **Legal and Constitutional Engineering** | Leaders exploit legal frameworks to entrench authoritarianism and weaken institutional checks on power. | Autocratic legalism; abusive constitutional borrowing. |
| **Institutional Reorganization** | Restructuring of institutions to ensure control and reduce oversight. | Stacking/packing institutions with loyalists; reorganization of agencies/security forces; overhaul of local governance structures. |

*Source*: The author.

Institutional capture manifests itself through three main tactics: manipulation of political structures, legal and constitutional engineering, and institutional reorganization (Table 2.2). Collectively, the tactics allow leaders to consolidate power and reduce accountability by strategically weakening key democratic institutions. Legislative, executive, and judicial bodies are particularly affected because they have traditionally served as the primary mechanisms for monitoring and checking government actions (Mechkova et al., 2019, p.14). Thus, the weakening of those oversight bodies is typically accompanied by the "collapse (of) the separation of powers" between the branches of government as the executive gains control over the other branches (Haggard and Kaufman, 2021, p.4). In addition to these primary branches, other "fourth branch" institutions, such as anti-corruption agencies and independent oversight bodies, also become vulnerable to institutional capture. These institutions are designed to operate independently and to ensure accountability and transparency. However, precisely because they serve as a check on abuse and corruption, authoritarian-leaning leaders often perceive these institutions as a threat to their authority. As a result, incumbents co-opt or undermine these bodies, either by limiting their autonomy, stacking them with loyalists, or by starving them of the resources they need to operate effectively (Ginsburg and Huq, 2018; Ginsburg and Simpser, 2014). This undermines the independent oversight that these institutions were created to provide and further consolidates executive control at the expense of accountability.

When erosion agents assume leadership within the government, they gain access to extensive organizational and financial resources that facilitate the consolidation of power across state institutions. By controlling the executive branch, these leaders secure command over the bureaucracy, military, security apparatus, and public media, enabling them to centralize authority and stifle opposition (Haggard and Kaufman, 2021). In states with existing structural weaknesses, such leaders can further entrench their power by exploiting patronage networks that provide resources for loyalty. Through patronage, powerful figures provide material

benefits to loyal supporters, who in turn work to protect the privileges they receive and position themselves for future rewards that would otherwise be inaccessible to them (Arriola, 2009). This symbiotic exchange entrenches a culture of patronage-based governance that undermines the institutional checks and balances essential to democracy. In such environments, democratic practices are weakened because such relationships prioritize personal and partisan interests over the broader public good, creating conditions that allow authoritarian behaviors to persist and perpetuate themselves within political systems (Magaloni and Kricheli, 2010; Schedler, 2001). Ultimately, without effective checks on executive power, these systems struggle to overcome the legacy of authoritarianism embedded within their political frameworks.

Simultaneously, strong opposition will raise the cost of repression and shrink the scope for co-optation while potentially challenging autocratic behavior at the grassroots through the presentation of an attractive, electoral alternative to the incumbent government. (Donno, 2013; Roessler and Howard, 2009; LeBas, 2011; Lindberg, 2009; Schedler, 2013) This dynamic can threaten incumbents, particularly when intra- or inter-party elite conflicts arise concurrently. To mitigate such threats, leaders seek to maintain or expand their power by forming coalitions with other elites (Arriola, 2009; Van de Walle, 2007). These coalitions are often sustained by the distribution of resources and key government positions, creating structures of dependence whereby political support is exchanged for patronage. This system binds leaders to both the elites in their coalition and the communities those elites represent (ibid.). Thus, the composition of the ruling coalition is dictated according to the particular political context that it exists within. In some contexts, large inclusive coalitions work best to keep internal threats minimal, but in others, small exclusive coalitions may function better (Choi and Kim, 2018; Roberts, 2015; Roessler and Ohls, 2018). The inability to form the right coalition leads to a loss of power since leaders are unable to manage internal and external threats (De Mesquita et al., 2005). While large coalitions are vulnerable to factionalism and competition over access to state resources, smaller coalitions risk alienating elites who then form opposition parties or foment dissent (Choi and Kim, 2018; Basedau and Köllner, 2005; Bratton and Van de Walle, 1992). Disruptions to patronage flows can undermine the instrumental support elites provide to the regime, destabilizing the coalition that sustains the leader (Schedler, 2013). As incumbent legitimacy decreases among the public, incumbents become more vulnerable to ouster by rivals since the population will more readily embrace a new regime (Wright and Escribà-Folch, 2012; De Mesquita et al., 2005; Kendall-Taylor and Frantz, 2014). In countries with high levels of ethnic or religious cleavage, opposition parties can use such divisions to their advantage by forming coalitions that appeal to a wider array of ethnic or religious groups, thus expanding their electoral support and posing a greater threat to the incumbent (Arriola, 2013; Wahman, 2013).

Conversely, incumbents seek to build more ethnically or religiously inclusive coalitions to broaden their own electoral support, reduce the appeal of opposition parties organized around ethnic or religious identity, and potentially create divisions within the opposition (Arriola 2013; Wahman, 2013). Research suggests that as elections approach, leaders often prioritize winning the support of swing voters, meaning those not firmly aligned with any particular party or group while taking the support of their own ethnic or religious group for granted (Baldwin, 2014; Hassan, 2017; Wahman and Boone, 2018). The effectiveness of coalition strategies thus can depend on several factors, such as regime and opposition strength, the degree of internal unity, and the nature of external threats (Choi and Kim, 2018; Roessler, 2011; Roessler and Ohls, 2018). Changes in these conditions can thus lead to government instability, causing leaders to reassess and adjust their coalition strategies: "Unexpected events over the course of a government's life will change these conditions and make bargains that were previously "stable" no longer viable. Appointments are an explicit political strategy that presidents will use to face these unexpected challenges" (Martinez-Gallardo, 2014, p.5).

In response to perceived threats to their authority, incumbents in third-wave democracies often resort to creating broad "rainbow coalitions" through promiscuous power-sharing agreements (Slater and Simmons, 2013). These arrangements typically incorporate opposition parties into the ruling coalition (Slater, 2004, 2018), signaling a willingness to share power across political lines, irrespective of deep-seated political cleavages (Rowley and Dela Rama, 2017, p.257). However, in contrast to the principled inclusiveness associated with democratic coalition-building, this form of power-sharing is characterized by "promiscuity." Here, elected officials prioritize political expediency over consistency, disregarding traditional alignments and frequently shifting allegiances to secure power. This opportunistic approach often sacrifices the interests of core constituencies to attract additional support, resulting in a coalition without coherent ideological or constituency-based cohesion (ibid.). While such coalitions can alienate voters and increase electoral unpredictability, they can also expand the regime's support base, reduce the pool of excluded elites who might otherwise support opposition efforts, and fracture potential opposition coalitions (Ash, 2016; Schedler, 2010; Wahman, 2013). Through co-optation by expansion, incumbents thus mitigate political competition, weakening the opposition's ability to form unified counter-coalitions (ibid.). This strategy not only consolidates the regime's power to pursue its "change project" (Kneuer, 2021) but also helps maintain its legitimacy among elites and the broader public. By minimizing the size of the opposition and maximizing the ruling coalition, the government erodes a critical check on its power (Rhodes-Purdy and Madrid, 2019). This arrangement creates opportunities for further state power abuses, for example, when compliant legislatures delegate additional formal powers to the executive. Such delegations can include the authority to propose and enact constitutional amendments, grant emergency powers, and declare states of emergency,

which can be used to further entrench executive power (Haggard and Kaufman, 2021; Lührmann and Rooney, 2020).

"Parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition is an important element of checks and balances in any democracy, and the treatment of the opposition by the ruling parties is a test of how seriously they take the idea that alternation in power is a crucial criterion of democratic government" (Sadurski, 2019, p.132). A critical tactic used to neutralize meaningful opposition is the manipulation of the electoral system to favor the incumbent, thereby reshaping the power dynamics within the electorate. This manipulation includes tactics that increase the influence of loyal voter bases while reducing the weight of opposition votes. Though several electoral strategies are common to a certain degree, the point at which these practices violate the 'constitutional minimum democratic core' is often ambiguous (Przeworski, 2019). Gerrymandering[23] is a classic example of electoral manipulation; however, contemporary erosion agents have developed more subtle methods of consolidating power without committing overt electoral fraud (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018). These contemporary tactics are less conspicuous and often have delayed effects, allowing incumbents to undermine accountability without resorting to high-profile coercion. Tactics include altering seat allocation rules, adjusting surplus seat distribution, manipulating proportional representation systems, and amending electoral laws to benefit the ruling party (Negretto and Visconti, 2018; Zedelashvili, 2020). Such changes distort electoral fairness and allow incumbents to gradually consolidate power. In addition, some incumbents exclude opposition members from running for office and change the composition of the electorate to favor their party. Restricting opposition members from standing for election, whether through selective disqualification, tricky candidacy requirements, or judicial rulings, prevents viable opposition candidates from participating. Without credible opponents, the incumbent faces a minimal political challenge, which undermines meaningful competition and thus limits accountability through democratic processes. (Donno, 2013; Gandhi and Ong, 2019; Haggard and Kaufman, 2021, p.137; Scheppele, 2022). In essence, these tactics weaken accountability by limiting opposition representation, restricting voter influence, and shaping electoral outcomes to favor the incumbent without resorting to outright fraud. This erosion of fair competition impedes the democratic process by creating an environment in which elections no longer serve as an effective check on government power.

In most cases of executive overreach, the strategic prosecution of the political opposition relies on the use of legitimate laws to disqualify or harass opposition figures, cloaking autocratic

[23] By redrawing district boundaries to cluster opposition supporters in a few areas ("packing") or spread them across multiple districts ("cracking"), the incumbent can dilute the voting power of opposition groups. This ensures that even if the opposition gains significant support, it translates into fewer seats or weaker representation in the legislature, reducing its ability to challenge the ruling party. (Owen and Grofman, 1988; Friedman and Holden, 2020)

ambitions under the guise of legality. Erosion agents thus "use their democratic mandates to launch legal reforms that remove the checks on executive power, limit the challenges to their rule, and undermine the crucial accountability institutions of a democratic state. Because these autocrats push their illiberal measures with electoral backing and use constitutional or legal methods to accomplish their aims, they can hide their autocratic designs in the pluralism of legitimate legal forms" (Scheppele, 2018, pp.547-548). This approach, often referred to as "autocratic legalism[24]," consists of three main tools: the use, abuse, and non-use of law (Corrales, 2015; Scheppele, 2018). More precisely, autocratic legalism first involves the selective use of legal tools to justify actions suppressing opposition parties against the perceived threat to a ruling regime. Abuse of law then materializes through partial and inconsistent application of law in terms of the particular interests of the rulers to apply or not apply legal standards as contextually favorable. Thirdly, the non-use of law, which is particularly evident in electoral manipulations implies an environment where unequal legislations and biased regulatory bodies allow and even legitimize electoral irregularities; such an outcome consolidates the power of an authoritarian-leading incumbent through determining the levels of democratic participation, or, in other words, keeping electoral systems prone to manipulative intervention. (ibid.)

In addition, erosion agents can employ disciplinary measures to control dissent within ruling parties and amend parliamentary procedures to silence opposition voices; this way, a façade of legal order is maintained while suppressing any genuine democratic expression (Sadurski, 2018, 2019). These measures only give a veneer of legitimacy because they frame actions taken against opposition members as adherence to the rule of law. However, such "abusive legalist practices are ultimately inconsistent with the rule of law, either because on closer examination they are lacking in certain formal or procedural attributes of legality, or because they frustrate the underlying purpose of having the rule of law in the first place" (Cheung, 2018, p.4). Beyond merely silencing opposition, autocratic legalism legitimizes the government by presenting repressive actions as law-bound governance. Judicial repression serves a dual purpose, containing internal threats within ruling coalitions and solidifying executive control (Shen-Bayh, 2018). National security laws, for example, are frequently repurposed to target domestic opposition under the guise of national safety, creating a pretext of protecting the state, especially in cases involving emergency declarations (Edgell et al., 2020; Lee and Chan, 2023).

Additionally, autocratic leaders manipulate societal and political cleavages to rationalize repressive policies, often aimed at minority groups. By strategically framing repressive measures as necessary to manage social discord or protect national integrity, such regimes exploit these cleavages to consolidate power, presenting authoritarian governance as essential for societal stability (Kadirgamar, 2020). Accordingly, authoritarian-leaning incumbents have

[24] Also referred to "state lawfare" (Gloppen, 2018) and "rule by law" (Ginsburg and Moustafa, 2008).

been pushing their ideas through by systematically instrumentalizing laws and courts not to defend democracy but rather to give legitimacy to undemocratic practices, or what Moustafa (2014) calls the "judicialization of authoritarian politics." Courts in this context can yield to constitutional violations, endorse executive policies, or even become an outspoken tool in persecuting opposition members using criminal and electoral cases against them (Haggard and Tiede, 2024; Miliuvienė, 2024; van Ark and Gherbaoui, 2024). Such judicial capture allows authoritarian actors to camouflage power consolidation as adherence to legal norms, reinforcing their grip on governance under the guise of legality.

Overall, authoritarian leaders seek to ensure judicial compliance through court-packing, bribery, informal pressures, and intimidation among other strategies (Kosar and Sipulova, 2023; Llanos et al., 2014). This manipulation typically includes "abusive constitutional borrowing" (Dixon and Landau, 2021), whereby authoritarian or authoritarian-leaning regimes borrow elements from liberal democratic constitutions without adhering to their democratic intent. By adopting these principles in form but not in substance, regimes create an illusion of democratic reform while repurposing these norms to serve authoritarian ends. This "acontextual borrowing" allows leaders to present an image of constitutionalism while undermining democracy from within, as democratic norms and institutions are stripped of their foundational contexts, rendering them hollow in practice (Dixon and Landau, 2021, pp. 36–37). For instance, constitutional amendments might grant extensive protections to minority groups but without genuine enforcement mechanisms, creating a veneer of democratic progress that provides legitimacy to the executive. This manipulation allows incumbents to claim democratic credentials domestically and internationally while insulating the regime from meaningful accountability. This disjunction between the appearance of reform and the reality of repression makes observers struggle to identify the true intentions of the regime (ibid., p.18). Through formal and informal pressures, authoritarian incumbents weaken judicial independence and thereby impair the separation of powers and undermine the rule of law (Aguilar, 2023). This erosion of judicial integrity accelerates as courts actively participate in dismantling the liberal constitutional order and curtailing fundamental rights (Versteeg, 2023; Garcia-Holgado and Sánchez Urribarri, 2023). In co-opting rather than overtly repressing the judiciary, authoritarian leaders integrate the courts into their political apparatus, thereby embedding autocratic practices within the legal framework itself. This strategy sustains the regime's power through the dislocation of institutional safeguards while maintaining a façade of legality and democratic structure.

Research has shown that institutions tasked with the protection of fundamental rights and the rule of law, such as courts, are frequently targeted by authoritarian-leaning actors seeking power consolidation (Friedman, 2019; Prendergast, 2019). In their attempt to dismantle what has been referred to as "the last bulwark against autocracy" (Boese et al., 2021 p.898),

authoritarian-leaning regimes usually deprive the Constitutional Court of its powers to review certain executive actions or modify the rules and procedures that govern judicial appointments. This undermines judicial independence and impartiality, often through practices like "packing" or "stacking" courts with loyalists who align ideologically or politically with the ruling coalition (Bauer and Becker, 2020; Bauer et al., 2021; Freeman, 2020; Landau, 2013; Peters and Pierre, 2019). Judicial packing is then part of the incumbents' larger strategy of 'administrative consolidation', where existing governmental or autonomous entities are weakenend and new ones are created, transferring authority to people loyal to the incumbent. Such individuals are placed in positions that enable them to make institutional decisions consistent with the incumbent's agenda (Brinks and Blass, 2018). For example, the judicial appointment process, typically controlled by a single actor or a narrow elite, is bypassed in favor of loyalty over merit, thus making the judiciary one that can unconditionally endorse executive decisions and, therefore, reducing its judicial independence. In this way, regimes can control the judiciary without directly altering its formal powers, co-opting courts to act in ways that support executive agendas. (Brinks and Blass, 2018; Garcia Holgado and Sánchez Urribarri, 2023; Sadurski, 2018) The foregoing influence over the judiciary provides these regimes with strategic means to undermine the democratic constitutional framework of their respective nations. Courts, once the impartial arbiters, can be repurposed to take down laws standing in the way of authoritarian objectives or limiting opposition control by narrowing the scope of opposition-led legislatures (Sadurski, 2018; Dixon and Landau, 2021, pp. 94-98). Consequently, the judiciary becomes an arm of the regime, facilitating executive overreach by gradually curtailing its own authority to review governmental actions (Rinke et al., 2019).

The co-optation of other government bodies, such as public administration and law enforcement, follows similar patterns. Regimes strategically replace personnel with loyalists, restrict funding, or even limit the scope of competencies for institutions to work ineffectively while existing nominally (Bauer and Becker, 2020; Peters and Pierre, 2019). This tactic also extends to fourth-branch institutions that are designed to function independently of the executive and include bodies like electoral management boards, judicial appointment commissions, and human rights commissions. Their role in checking executive and legislative power makes them prime targets for control by authoritarian-leaning regimes (Bulmer, 2019, p.6; Khaitan, 2020, p.7, 2021) Though designed to be independent, fourth-branch institutions become typically dominated by the executives through manipulated selection processes and their restricted powers. For instance, authoritarian-leaning actors will ack them with regime loyalists by manipulating selection protocols to decrease independent oversight (Khaitan, 2020, 2021). By strategically embedding supporters within these institutions, regimes mimic the effects of judicial packing, rendering fourth-branch institutions unable to serve as impartial checks on executive power (Kovács and Scheppele, 2018). Through such maneuvers,

authoritarian regimes dismantle democratic safeguards and construct a system that, while appearing institutionalized, functions in alignment with authoritarian control.

### *2.3.3. Tactics of Social Silencing*

Table 2.3. Tactics of Social Silencing.

| Tactic | Description | Characteristics |
|---|---|---|
| **Obstructing Civic Space** | Imposing legal restrictions to hamper the activities of civil society (organizations) | Autocratic legalism; impeding foreign funding; obscuring registration requirements |
| **Authoritarian enforcement** | Suppressing dissent and political opposition | Intimidation; harassment; surveillance; (non-)violent crackdowns; arbitrary arrests and detentions |
| **State-controlled narratives** | Shaping public perception to limit access to unbiased information | Censorship and propaganda; creation of GONGOs; ownership over state media; controlling online platforms |

*Source*: The author.

While civil society has often been celebrated for its participatory functions and its capacity to challenge authoritarianism (Chandhoke, 2007), it is not inherently linked to liberal democratization outcomes (Toepler et al., 2020). Other scholars have noted that civil society actors can also function as an ally of autocratic or populist leaders, either by electing them to office in the first place, supporting incumbent-led autocratization, or reinforcing nationalist and exclusionary agendas (e.g., Christensen and Weinstein, 2013; Chaudhry, 2022; Lührmann, 2023; Sombatpoonsiri, 2020; Toepler et al., 2020). For instance, in some cases, civic organizations have been co-opted to legitimize authoritarian practices, in others, civil society has proved to be less supportive of democratic values, which testifies that civil society is not universally a democratizing force (Lewis, 2013; Roggeband and Glasius, 2020; Sombatpoonsiri, 2024; Toepler et al., 2020). This points toward a dual role of civil society as both a tool of resistance and complicity. Nevertheless, the global trend of "shrinking civic space[25]," characterized by the adoption of legal and operational constraints on civil society, is a widely recognized indicator of democratic regression remains a pressing concern because it prevents civil society's role as an independent player vis-à-vis the state and reduced spaces in which marginalized voices can contest any power abuses. (e.g., Bethke and Wolff, 2020; Dupuy et al., 2016; Glasius et al., 2020; Rakner, 2021) During executive aggrandizement, erosion agents employ three main tactics of social silencing that suppress accountability and reinforce authoritarian control, impacting civil society (organizations; CSOs), the media, and the electorate (see Table 2.3).

[25] Civic space is defined as the conditions enabling individuals and groups to exercise their civil rights freely, involving a diverse range of actors, including civil society organizations (CSOs), social movements, issue-based organizations, trade unions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), contributing to community development, advocacy, aid mobilization, political engagement, service provision, and governance accountability. (Malena, 2015, p.14; Strachwitz and Toepler, 2022)

Governments worldwide have escalated their efforts to restrict CSOs through regulatory barriers, demonizing rhetoric against parts of civil society, and extralegal measures that weaken their ability to mobilize citizens and advocate for policy reform (Ayvazyan, 2019; Bakke et al., 2020; Bromley et al., 2020; Chaudhry, 2022; Dupuy et al., 2016; Efrat and Yair, 2024; Mendelson, 2015). These are usually justified based on the imperative to protect national sovereignty and security; hence, through the façade of regulatory measures, governments rationalize 'low intensity' instead of 'high intensity' repressions (Brechenmacher, 2017; Bünte and Weiss, 2023). Through such tactics, erosion agents can marginalize civil society actors, especially NGOs, by limiting their influence on national institutions and political processes (Baker et al., 2017; Bloodgood, 2010; Heiss and Johnson, 2016; Stroup, 2012). Tactics of social silencing can generally manifest as either reactive or preemptive forms of 'low-intensity repression' (De Jaegher and Hoyer, 2018). Preemptive repression involves strategic legal changes and administrative restrictions designed to undermine the potential influence of CSOs and the media over electoral processes and state authority (Chaudhry, 2022, p.551). By labeling these restrictions as regulatory, erosion agents minimize both national backlash and international outcry, sustaining long-term repression without eliciting an immediate backlash. On the other hand, reactive repression is characterized by more overt and brutal measures, including forceful crackdowns on protests, harassment, and arbitrary arrests (Carter and Carter, 2021; Chaudhry, 2022). However, in democratic contexts, less-lethal but violent strategies can be counterproductive to launching popular backlash and risk alienating the electorate, thus decreasing the popularity and legitimacy of the incumbent (Hencken Ritter, 2014; Young, 2012). An incumbent's "decision to scale up or scale back (…) repression reflect(s) the governments' levels of electoral security. Secure governments with relatively unmovable majorities behind them feel freer to apply harsh measures. Less secure governments, those with volatile electoral support, contemplate that their hold on power might weaken should they inflict very harsh treatment on protesters; they have strong incentives to back down" (Aytaç et al., 2017, p.62).

A central characteristic of contemporary forms of executive aggrandizement is "autocratic legalism" (Corrales, 2015, 2020), by which governments limit civic freedoms through the application or alteration of laws without overt violence. This tactic includes creating or modifying laws regulating the right to protest (Goodfellow, 2014), (foreign) funding of NGOs (Bakke et al., 2020; Bromley et al., 2020; Chaudhry and Heiss, 2021; Christensen and Weinstein, 2013; Dupuy et al., 2016; Efrat and Yair, 2024; Glasius et al., 2020), and cyberspace activities (Frantz et al., 2020). Autocratic leaders also create government-organized NGOs (GONGOs), which mimic the functions of civil society but nevertheless strengthen the state's agenda and reduce the impact of independent CSOs (Fröhlich and Skokova, 2020; Kövér et al., 2021; Roggeband and Krizsán, 2021). More importantly, NGOs have been attacked specifically because they pose a threat to autocratizing regimes by challenging state control and

encouraging political participation (Bell et al., 2013; Boulding, 2014; Cheeseman and Dodsworth, 2023; Clayton et al., 2002; Da Silva and Plagis, 2023; Springman et al., 2022). This ultimately weakens critical checks on government abuses and erodes societal safeguards, with the suppression of these NGOs leading to increased authoritarian control and corruption, with human rights violations passing with less scrutiny.

The handling of dissent, particularly through suppression of protests and control over media narratives, demonstrates the tension between reactive and preventive repressive measures. Mass protests and movements challenge the credibility of incumbents by exposing public discontent and undermining electoral security, especially when protests attract international attention (Yardımcı-Geyikçi and Yavuzyilmaz, 2022, p.74). Where low-level repression does not work, governments resort to more extreme measures such as emergency legislation, arrests, and closure of the media. This attracts local and internal condemnation. (Carter and Carter, 2021; Chaudhry, 2022; Keremoğlu et al., 2022; Klein and Regan, 2018) Such repressive measures are then often framed as essential for maintaining societal order, with governments portraying such actions as protective rather than punitive (Dukalskis, 2021; Edel, 2019; Keremoğlu et al., 2022). This framing is a means to diminish public outrage and to align citizens with the government's stance. For example, justification is utilized to legitimize violent action during autocratization and to provide concessions when protests incur high economic costs, for example, through strikes or mass mobilization (Klein and Regan, 2018). Visible repressions, such as crackdowns and major legal changes, demand public justification in democratic regimes, often clothed in rule-of-law rhetoric, as seen during the declarations of states of emergency (Edgell et al., 2020; Lührmann and Rooney, 2020). This is a similar strategy to when military officials have used promises of restoring democracy as a means of legitimizing their 'promissory coups' (Bermeo, 2016). Social and political cleavages are also exploited by governments to justify high-intensity repression during autocratization, especially in those countries still battling with traditional ethnoreligious divides created by decolonization struggles (Kadirgamar, 2020). In such contexts, incumbents can divide society into "in- and out-groups", blaming suspect groups, usually either minorities or elites, for socio-political threats. The scapegoating pits the public against perceived culprits, consolidating support for the incumbent. By effectively framing out-group members as threats, rulers rally public support, with citizens expecting leaders to "lead the charge against (the) threat." (Merolla and Zechmeister, 2013, p.601)

Erosion agents also mimic the tactics used by leaders in autocracies, drawing from a playbook of strategies that undermine democratic institutions. These agents seek to control public discourse, manipulate information, and shape narratives to weaken accountability. By emulating the methods employed by authoritarian regimes such as monopolizing information, conducting propaganda, and discrediting opposing viewpoints they aim to erode civil society's

ability to advocate for common interests. For example, by framing the regime as a protector of national values, security, or economic stability, state-owned media can shape narratives that justify authoritarian measures. (Geddes and Zaller, 1989; Price, 2015; Stockmann and Gallagher, 2011) Through misinformation and selective reporting, these tactics distort public perception of political and social issues, reducing the public's capacity for informed decision-making. In contrast, competitive regimes rely on robust accountability institutions that challenge these narratives, thereby hindering the consolidation of power through in-group and out-group divisions (Guriev and Treisman, 2020).

In addition, autocratizers try to legitimize extra-legal measures through the securitization of prospective threats. Securitization is a procedure by which the traditional security mindset, defined by such elements as militarization, conflict-oriented thinking, and zero-sum logic, is extended to non-military domains due to framing these areas as existential security threats (Booth, 2007). By presenting issues as threats to state survival, securitizing actors justify the adoption of extraordinary measures under the pretext of safeguarding the state (Buzan et al., 1998, p.23). This "whatever-means-necessary" approach is rationalized by the argument that failing to neutralize the existential threat would prevent the state from fulfilling its fundamental functions (Waever, 1995; Buzan et al., 1998). Securitization thus not only legitimizes the use of force but also allows the state to adopt a wide range of extra-legal measures. This can include the passing of new laws, granting new powers to security apparatuses, or strengthening the hands of state agencies to counter the perceived threats (Floyd, 2015). Crucially, the securitization process does not require threats to be real; they need only be framed as existential by the securitizing actor to be perceived as legitimate (Waever, 1995). In autocratizing regimes, the agents driving the erosion of democratic norms often play the role of securitizing actors. These agents wield the authority and capacity to create and amplify threat narratives that are then used to justify power consolidation (Floyd, 2015). The invocation of security narratives serves a dual purpose: publicly, in view of state survival, but privately in ensuring regime survival. By portraying perceived threats as existential, the focus is effectively shifted from the public interest to the self-preservation of regimes. This is accomplished through speech acts, such as public declarations or framing of threats, along with the interaction between the securitizing actor and his or her political power, the audience, and the context in which the narrative is constructed (Balzacq, 2005, 2011). Historical and cultural contexts are therefore crucial in shaping the nature of these narratives. They distinguish between who is a friend and who is an enemy and thus set the boundaries of 'in- and out-groups'. (Guzzini, 2011) During autocratization, these kinds of distinctions are manipulated to develop new security narratives that would appeal to the masses, often playing on prior social cleavages to justify authoritarian measures. This is how securitization becomes one of the most crucial means of consolidating power, allowing regimes to position selfish acts as a necessary defense against fabricated or exaggerated threats.

On the other hand, when erosion agents "repress, they (might also) try to conceal their involvement or camouflage its purpose – for instance, by prosecuting dissidents not for their politics but on fabricated charges of tax evasion or fraud. Where the old dictators sought to rouse the public with a rhetoric of enemies and threats, many new ones mimic the language of democratic leaders. They boast of good economic performance and public service provision." (Guriev and Treisman, 2020, p.1) By presenting themselves as competent leaders focused on economic growth and stability, they create an illusion of legitimacy that reduces public resistance. However, if these governments fail to deliver on their promises, public support can decrease, where renewed accountability disproportionally affects their power base. This means that the effectiveness of various repressive strategies hinges on information control. While the 'traditional autocrat' rules primarily by fear, backed up, when necessary, by ideology, many contemporary autocrats or authoritarian-leaning leaders also control citizens' perceptions through pervasive state-controlled media and selective censorship. State-controlled media outlets are thus instrumental in disseminating regime narratives while discrediting opposition voices and downplaying regime failings. (Roberts, 2018, p.21-22) In democracies, the media usually counters governmental narratives, while in authoritarian states, independent reporting is hindered and public discourse is rigidly controlled (Guriev and Treisman, 2022). To exert more subtle control, regimes use digital censorship, ranging from selective blocking of websites to complete internet shutdowns. The latter is generally reserved as a last resort, however, because of its economic consequences (Hassanpour, 2014). Other regimes have justified information control in the name of combating "fake news" and protecting national interests through the use of digital surveillance to track and contain dissent (Michaelsen and Glasius, 2018; Helm and Nasu, 2021). Information controls are therefore not only about the reduction of access to information but also about the dissemination of content, such as state propaganda to mislead public opinion or weaken the voices of dissenters (Bradshaw and Howard, 2018; Buehler et al., 2021). Accordingly, such "digital authoritarianism[26]" becomes "a way for governments to control their citizens through technology, inverting the concept of the internet as an engine of human liberalization" (Shahbaz, 2018). In short, through the restriction of online space for open discussion and the curtailing of public access to alternative narratives, erosion agents make it hard for citizens to develop informed opinions or participate in the democratic process. Judiciary manipulation, strategic CSO suppression, securitization, and media control thus all help erosion agents solidify their power and control while leaving the veneer of legitimacy intact. This not only cuts down on civic participation but also insulates governments from accountability in such a way that it fosters a political context wherein authoritarianism can gain ground under the cloak of stability and protection.

[26] For an in-depth literature review on "digital authoritarianism," see Roberts and Oosterom (2024).

## 2.4. Chapter Summary

The core argument is that the mechanism through which institutional capture and social silencing lead to democratic decline involves the systematic weakening of accountability mechanisms crucial for a functioning democracy. This involves how leaders in instances of institutional capture would manipulate political structures and institutions through tactics such as building supermajorities and intra-elite coalitions. These methods consolidate executive power at the expense of the opposition, skewing elections and distorting decision-making processes. This manipulation weakens horizontal accountability because legislatures, judiciaries, and opposition forces lose their capacity to challenge executive actions effectively. This leads, in time, to the collapse of traditional checks and balances, which in turn cements the impunity with which the executive acts. The second tool within the process of institutional capture is legal and constitutional engineering: leaders exploit the rule of law to legitimate anti-democratic actions, for instance, extending term limits or undermining judicial independence. These actions threaten the rule of law directly by rendering judicial accountability impossible and turning courts from independent checks into instruments of regime consolidation. Subservient judiciaries weaken horizontal accountability further, emboldening the executive to act even less restrained. In many instances, institutional capture is accompanied by institutional reorganization or "stacking," where leaders fill oversight bodies, such as electoral commissions and anti-corruption agencies, with loyalists. This removes the independence and impartiality from these bodies, turning them into mere rubber stamps of the executive and reducing horizontal and diagonal accountability. The neutralization of independent watchdogs further ensures that power gets concentrated in the hands of the executive and bolsters authoritarian practices.

In the case of social silencing, the obstruction of civic space plays a crucial role. Legal and administrative restrictions are imposed by governments on CSOs, thus limiting their independence to advocate for transparency and hold the government accountable. Through restricting foreign funding, burdensome regulations, and vaguely worded laws that selectively target dissent, diagonal accountability is considerably undermined by the government. The repression of civil society reduced the space that independent groups could occupy to advance alternative views or place a check on state power and, in the process, reduced democratic pluralism and the engagement of citizens. A second major instrument of social silencing is authoritarian enforcement, whereby the leadership employs repressive measures, such as threats, harassment, arbitrary detention, and repression of demonstrations, to eliminate opposition. The result is a climate of fear that discourages public dissent and citizen political participation and weakens vertical accountability. This is so because the threat of retribution makes citizens afraid to organize protests against the government, which has a negative impact on political participation as a whole and serves as a handicap to public oversight. Beyond this,

government-controlled narratives coupled with media censorship, propaganda, and manipulation of public discourses play the starring role in repressing independent journalism and distortions of debate at large. The regime, through the control of the flow of information, undermines diagonal accountability to prevent the media from chasing down corruption or abuses of power. This erosion of transparency cripples the powers of citizens in holding leaders accountable and furthers the entrenchment of the regime in its powers.

The net effect of institutional capture and social silencing is the progressive weakening of horizontal, vertical and diagonal accountability mechanisms that create the systematic dismantling of democratic governance's underpinning principles: pluralism, transparency, the rule of law, and citizen engagement. In such contexts, as horizontal accountability weakens, the separation of powers collapses, concentrating power in the executive. Judicial independence is breached, and the courts become a means of entrenching the rule of the executive. The rule of law crumbles. The law becomes no longer a neutral institution but an institution of regime-serving law. Reduced vertical accountability strips citizens of power. Elections may or may not take place. Elections, in case they take place, have become a charade as opposition voices are silenced, and the electoral process is manipulated. The public's ability to influence government decisions through protests, free speech, or engagement with civil society diminishes. Citizens grow disengaged or too fearful to challenge the regime, leading to the collapse of meaningful democratic participation. Diagonal accountability also deteriorates as CSOs, and media are silenced or co-opted. Legal restrictions, harassment, and media control stifle dissent, curtail investigative journalism, and distort the public's access to unbiased information. Without oversight from either the media or civil society, corruption and abuse of power can go unchecked, further embedding authoritarian control. Where accountability mechanisms collapse, pluralism fades. Opposition parties, independent media, and civil society are systematically weakened or co-opted, which eliminates space for diverse political debate and fosters an environment in which dissenting voices are silenced or absorbed into the regime. Without pluralism, the regime acts with increased impunity, while democratic competition, fairness, and transparency are disregarded. Transparency is also compromised in such cases, as that regime controls the public discourses and eliminates independent scrutiny. People are denied information that would help them scrutinize government actions, which strengthens the hold of that regime. The rule of law falters, and legal institutions get manipulated to shield the regime while weakening opposition, thus solidifying authoritarian control further. It also diminishes citizen engagement, as repression and fear ultimately minimize ways of participation. Because civil society and protest movements are suppressed, the link between the state and its citizens is also severed. Disillusioned by a rigged political system and leery of state retaliation, citizens retreat from politics (altogether), in turn reinforcing the regime's supremacy.

Ultimately, these dynamics create a pathway to authoritarianism, where democratic institutions and norms are hollowed out and replaced by authoritarian mechanisms of control. Power would be centralized in the executive, while oversight institutions would be rendered ineffectual. Freedom of speech, assembly, and political participation would be diminished; elections would be symbolic; and the rule of law would be subverted. A regime now without meaningful checks and balances would grow ever more unaccountable and intolerant of opposition. The preventive and reactive strategies are used flexibly to maintain this shift. Leaders take preventive measures when the opposition is weak; they implement gradual changes that undermine democratic checks without provoking wide-scale resistance. For instance, gradual judicial appointments or subtle electoral reforms consolidate the executive's power. When the opposition is intensified, such tactics turn to reactive measures such as dismissing judges or dissolving oversight bodies. The net effect of these two is virtually the same: to consolidate executive authority and weaken democratic accountability. All these dynamics are magnified by the influence of authoritarian legacies and weak institutionalization. In countries with legacies of authoritarianism, democratic institutions can be fragile or poorly institutionalized and therefore more susceptible to manipulation. In such contexts, leaders can more easily manipulate judicial, legislative, and electoral weaknesses, while citizens lack the experience or infrastructure to mount an effective resistance against authoritarian shifts. It is on the basis of such weak foundations that accountability can be gradually undermined, with leaders consolidating power without any significant resistance, thus easing the way toward authoritarianism. The AEM demonstrates how democratically elected leaders can convert democratic regimes into various forms of authoritarianism as they gradually undermine accountability mechanisms through institutional capture and social silencing. Through a flexible mix of preventive and reactive strategies, incumbents constantly adjust to shifting levels of threat in a process that produces the erosion of democracy and the consolidation of unchecked executive power (see Table 2.4)

Table 2.4. Summary: Tactics of Institutional Capture and Social Silencing – Impact on Accountability Mechanisms and Effect on Democratic Qualities.

| Tactic | Characteristics | Impact on Accountability | Effect on Democratic Qualities |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Institutional Capture* | | | |
| Manipulation of political structures | Promiscuous power-sharing; creation of supermajorities; intra-elite coalition-building; electoral system manipulation | Marginalizes opposition voices; neutralizes legislatures and judiciaries; collapses traditional checks and balances | Undermines pluralism; destroys fair representation; weakens separation of powers |
| Legal and constitutional engineering | Autocratic legalism; abusive constitutional borrowing | Erodes rule of law; transforms courts into instruments of executive power; neutralizes horizontal accountability | Weakens separation of powers; undermines judicial impartiality |
| Institutional reorganization | Stacking/packing institutions with loyalists; reorganization of agencies/security forces; overhaul of local governance structures. | Reduces transparency; inhibits institutional independence; fosters executive dominance | Undermines transparency; weakens separation of powers |
| *Social Silencing* | | | |
| Obstruction of civic space | Autocratic legalism; obstructing foreign funding; obscuring registration requirements | Silences independent voices; undermines CSOs ability to advocate for transparency and accountability | Undermines citizen engagement; limits civic activism; reduces diversity of viewpoints |
| Authoritarian enforcement | Intimidation; harassment, surveillance; (non-)violent crackdowns: arbitrary arrests and detentions | Creates a climate of fear; discourages public dissent and political participation; weakens vertical accountability | Suppresses citizen participation; fosters apathy and disengagement; undermines the principle of participatory democracy |
| Control of public narratives | Censorship and propaganda; creation of GONGOs; ownership over state media; controlling online platforms | Suppresses independent journalism; prevents exposure of corruption/abuses; erodes transparency and public oversight | weakens freedom of speech; propagates misinformation; undermines informed public debate |

*Source*: The author.

# 3. Methodology

The research design is a qualitative research approach to study the phenomenon of executive aggrandizement in third-wave democracies in Southeast Asia, focusing on the interaction between structure and agency, particularly how incumbents dismantle vertical, horizontal, and diagonal accountability mechanisms through institutional capture and social silencing. The research undertakes a theory-testing process tracing methodology to systematically analyze the causal mechanism(s) underlying autocratization in democratic Southeast Asia. Process tracing allows for the detailed and systematic examination of the sequences of events comprising causal pathways from initial conditions to particular outcomes at any given time (Beach and Pedersen, 2013; Falleti and Mahoney, 2015). This allows the researcher to check the plausibility of theoretical propositions and identify key variables contributing to autocratization. While process tracing provides rich, context-specific insights, it is characterized by a trade-off: high internal validity in understanding specific processes comes at the expense of reduced external validity, limiting the generalizability of findings across cases (Falleti and Lynch, 2009; Gerring, 2010; Goertz and Mahoney, 2009).

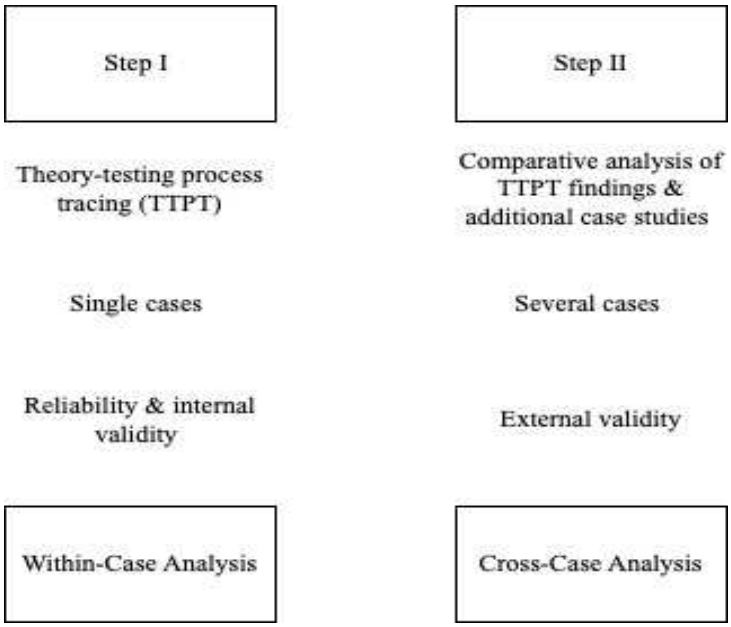


Figure 3.1. Research Design: Two-Step Synthesis.
*Source*: The author.

Given these limitations, and to increase external validity, a comparative element becomes a necessary second step in the research design. Initially, each Southeast Asian case serves as a single case study for gaining detailed insights with contextual depth. The findings from these single case studies are compared afterward, searching for patterns or differences, theoretically and empirically embedding the phenomenon of autocratization[27]. Apart from this intra-

[27] This approach is inspired by Beach et al.'s (2022) comparative process-tracing strategy.

regional comparison within Southeast Asia, the research design expands its scope by conducting a comparative analysis of executive aggrandizement in six other third-wave democracies outside the region. The second layer of comparison seeks to explore commonalities and divergences across broader contexts through an examination of cases from other regions, hence enhancing the generalizability and validity of the study's findings. This dual comparative framework enables the research to balance the depth of individual case analysis with broader applicability, offering nuanced yet systematic knowledge of executive aggrandizement and its contribution to the processes of (re-)autocratization across different democratic contexts. Thus, combining detailed case analysis with both intra- and inter-regional comparisons ensures methodological rigor and provides robust insights into the dynamics of executive aggrandizement in third-wave democracies while addressing issues of generalizability and external validity (see Figure 3.1).

## 3.1. Within-Case Analysis: Process Tracing in Social Sciences

Process tracing is a social science method used to test and analyze causal relationships in case studies or similar research designs (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, pp.1-2; Bennett and Checkel, 2015, pp.3-4), whereby causal mechanisms are understood as elaborated systems wherein specific outcomes result from multiple interacting parts (Glennan, 1996, p.52). Hence, the interest of process tracing lies in determining the connection between the dependent and independent variable(s) and understanding the causal mechanism(s) that link them (George and Bennett, 2005). Although statistical methods have been used for over a century to analyze factual contexts, process tracing remains a relatively novel method in the social sciences. Its development has been gradual, partly because inferring causality from historical events has traditionally relied on intuitive reasoning and informal analysis. The recent systematization of process tracing reflects efforts to formalize these intuitive practices into a rigorous methodological framework (Bennett and Checkel, 2015, p. 4).

George and McKeown (1985) offered one of the earliest explicit definitions of process tracing in political science, defining it as a method for within-case analysis aimed at evaluating causal processes. Building on this foundation, George expanded the process of process tracing, demonstrating its applicability not only at the individual but also at structural or macro levels (Bennett and Checkel, 2015, p.5; see also George and McKeown, 1985, p.35). In 2005, George and Andrew Bennett published the seminal work, *Case Studies and Theory Development in Social Sciences* (George and Bennett, 2005), solidifying process tracing as a key yet often underutilized method in political science (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p.2). Prominent scholars in the field regard process tracing as the primary tool for investigating causal mechanisms (ibid., pp.1-2) because it facilitates robust within-case inferences about the causal processes that produce specific outcomes. This approach enhances confidence in the validity of theorized

causal mechanisms. As such, process tracing is considered "an invaluable method that should be included in every researcher's repertoire" (George and Bennett, 2005, p.224). However, process tracing has faced criticism for its perceived "buzzword" nature (Bennett and Checkel, 2015, p.4), as it is frequently used without adequate explanation or clear practical guidance. This is partly due to the different research objectives that can be targeted with process tracing, none of which is sharply distinguished from others in the literature. George and Bennett (2005) present process tracing as a single case study method. Nonetheless, they intentionally leave its definition broad to allow for multiple analytical purposes. Since then, this idea has been further developed, for example, in Beach et al.'s (2022) effort to introduce process tracing as a comparative tool of analysis. In contrast, Gerring (2006) conceptualizes process tracing as a two-stage deductive approach, which includes the precise definition of theoretical assumptions followed by systematic empirical testing. The methodological opacity and lack of consistent differentiation among research objectives can lead to ambiguity in using process tracing (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, pp.10-11). Thus, while process tracing holds great potential as a tool for causal inference, its application requires clearer methodological guidelines to ensure rigor and transparency.

To address the issue of selectivity, this thesis adopts the framework proposed by Beach and Pedersen (2013), who conceptualize process tracing as a versatile method tailored to three distinct research objectives: *theory-testing, theory-building, and explaining-outcome*[28]. This categorization provides researchers with greater clarity amidst the methodological complexity of process tracing (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p.11). The approach emphasizes that process tracing is not a singular method but encompasses multiple strategies, whereby the specific research objective determines the choice of case selection and the timing of the research process (Beach and Pedersen, 2016; Bennett and Checkel, 2015). *Theory-testing* (and *refinement*) use a deductive approach, where theoretically postulated causal mechanisms linking X (independent variable) to Y (outcome) are tested to evaluate their functionality. In contrast, in *theory-building* an inductive approach is adopted to identify possible causal mechanisms between X and Y that can be generalized to some extent to develop a new theory. Additionally, process tracing is frequently employed to explain specific historical outcomes or events, a category termed *explaining-outcome* (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p.11, 2016; George and Bennett, 2005; see Figure 3.2). In practice, however, "most users of PT engage in a more iterated design that moves back-and-forth between theories and empirics (…), with the end product an evidenced process theory that explains how a cause (or set of causes) is linked to an outcome in a case or set of cases" (Beach, 2017, p.2).

[28] Later, Beach and Pedersen (2016) added *theory-refining* as a fourth type in their work.

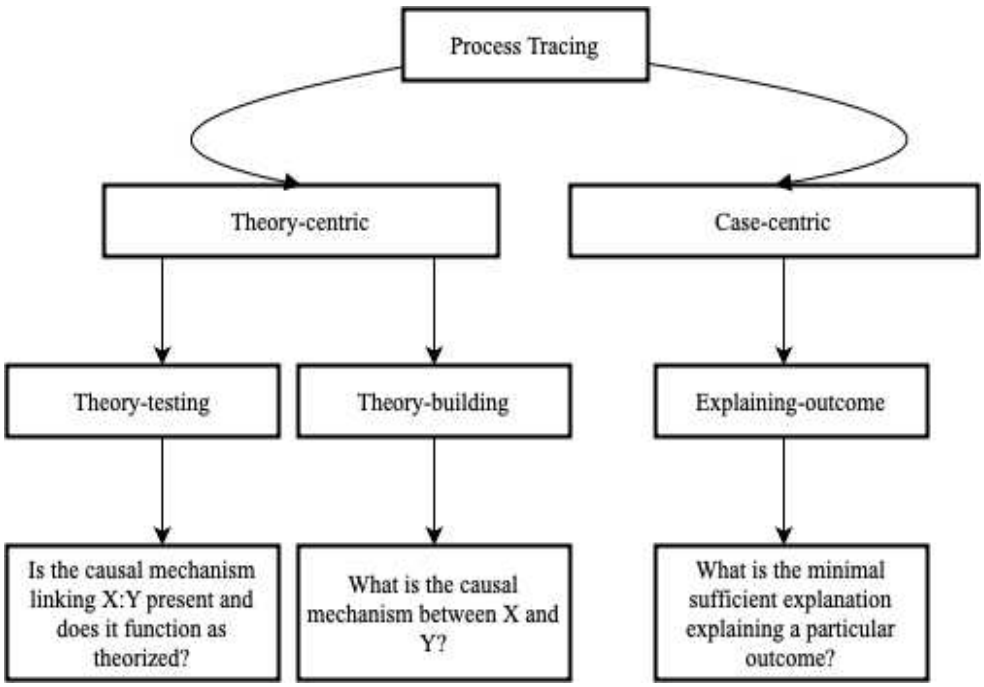


Figure 3.2. The three main variants of process tracing.
*Source*: The author. Amended from Beach and Pedersen (2013, 2016).

This bifurcation into theory-centered and case-centered process tracing reflects a fundamental divide in the ontology and epistemology of the social sciences. On the theory-centered side, both neo-positivist approaches and critical realist perspectives are represented. Theory-centered studies treat causal mechanisms as system-level factors with high generalizability. In the context of process tracing, however, these mechanisms are understood as relatively simple links where X contributes to the occurrence of Y but does not constitute the sole sufficient cause of Y. Case-centered forms of process tracing adopt a different ontological perspective. Rooted in a monistic ontology, this approach does not prioritize the creation of law-like theories or broad generalizations. Instead, it focuses on developing a toolkit to explain outcomes in specific cases (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p.12). This third type of process tracing seeks to explain individual outcomes through a "minimal sufficient explanation" by integrating both systematic and idiosyncratic explanatory factors and mechanisms while discriminating among alternative explanations. Notably, the boundaries between the three types of process tracing remain fluid (Beach and Pedersen, 2013).

The suitability of process tracing for this study lies in its compatibility with historical institutionalism, which emphasizes the importance of timing, sequencing, and path dependency in understanding institutional development and its influence on social, political, and economic behavior and change (Kittel and Kuehn, 2013, p.3; Pierson, 2000; Steinmo, 2008; Thelen, 1999). Historical institutionalism acknowledges that such complex dynamics are difficult to quantify and necessitates an empirical approach that considers "different observations at different points in time" (Goertz and Mahoney, 2012, p.89). This approach leverages both systemic and non-systemic elements to construct explanations, enabling

researchers to navigate between micro-level agency and macro-level structures and institutions, making it especially well-suited for studies grounded in historical institutionalism. Furthermore, incorporating historical events that have shaped a case's trajectory and identifying subtle changes during these critical moments provides a detailed explanation of "specific events, conjunctures, and contingencies" (ibid.). For instance, in this study, the electoral victory of an "erosion agent" (X) serves as a pivotal turning point or "critical juncture" in an autocratization process, illustrating how process tracing can uncover these transformative moments and their implications.

### 3.2. A Maximalist Approach to Theory-Testing Process Tracing

The theoretical aim of this study is to derive and refine "a theory from the existing literature and then test whether there is (empirical) evidence (to support) a hypothesized causal mechanism in (the) given case(s)"[29] linking an independent variable (cause X) to a dependent variable (effect/outcome Y). (Beach and Pedersen, 2018, p.15; see also Bennett, 2008; George and Bennett 2005, p.177; Mahoney, 2010; Rohlfing, 2012) These empirical observations provide information about context, process, or mechanism, and contribute distinctive weight to causal inference (Collier et al., 2004, p.277). The connection between the explanatory variable and the dependent variable is often described as the so-called "black box of causality" (Beach and Pedersen, 2016, pp.2, 11). Opening the 'black box' by identifying and testing hypotheses about causal mechanisms thus allows inferences to be made about whether a causal mechanism was present in a single case and whether the mechanism functioned as expected (ibid. p.15; see also Gerring, 2006; Rohlfing, 2012). While the strength of statistical analysis lies in establishing correlations at a large scale, the strength of process tracing lies in its ability to isolate connection(s) between cause(s) and outcome(s), prioritizing "concatenation, (rather than) covariation" (Waldner, 2012, p.68).

However, there is still widespread disagreement about what exactly a mechanism is, what a causal mechanism theoretically traces, and how these processes can be empirically detected (Beach, 2017). Generally accepted is the notion that mechanisms link cause and effect (Beach and Pedersen, 2019; see also Bennett and Checkel, 2015; Rohlfing, 2012). However, the exact meaning of *connect* and the ontological status of the mechanism itself remain the subject of scientific debate (Gerring, 2006; Machamer et al., 2000). In general, "mechanisms are *not* causes, but are causal processes that are *triggered* by causes and that *link* them with outcomes in a productive relationship" (Beach and Pedersen 2019, p.2; emphasis in original). Moreover, mechanisms are also not equivalent to 'intervening variables' because they themselves produce the effect within a particular setting or context (Falleti and Lynch, 2009). Treating mechanisms

[29] A case can be defined as a specific phenomenon, a discrete unit that is both spatially and temporally delimited, and which provides single or multiple observations (Brady and Collier, 2010; Gerring, 2006).

as variables adopts a counterfactual approach to causation, whereby it is assumed that the presence of a cause or mechanism leads to an "outcome(, and) its absence result(s) in the absence of the outcome", while neglecting specific causal links within a case or case(s) (Beach and Pedersen, 2019, p.33). Instead, Beach and Pedersen (2019) propose two positions on the nature of causal mechanisms suitable for empirical tracing: a *minimalist* understanding and an understanding of *mechanisms as systems*. In a minimalist approach to causal mechanisms, scholars focus on within-case evidence to examine the observable links that result from the mechanism's operation. Theoretical explanations are often abstract and lack detailed unpacking of the causal process, resulting in superficial or incomplete accounts of minimalist mechanisms. This approach provides limited insight into how they work. In contrast, a systems approach, which this thesis follows, involves unpacking and studying the fundamental elements of causal mechanisms, treating them as interconnected systems that transmit causal forces. This approach operates at a lower level of analytical abstraction and aims to capture the unfolding of actual causal processes within cases (see also Beach and Pedersen, 2013; Bunge, 1997; Glennan, 1996; Machamer et al., 2000).

Causal mechanisms operate through "change agents" that transfer energy, information, or matter to other entities, even if they cannot be directly observed (George and Bennett, 2005). These processes are situation-specific and permanently alter the characteristics of the affected entities until other causal mechanisms are triggered. To validate a causal mechanism, it is then necessary to measure subsequent changes that are temporally or spatially separated from other mechanisms (ibid. p.37). However, these mechanisms are often not directly observable as a whole and must largely be developed indirectly. Therefore, the focus is on studying their effects, which are observable, as well as identifying signs of the mechanisms in the outcome(s) they produce. Observations of states and events, for example, can be understood as empirical implications of a mechanism, especially if they occur in the expected context and order (Nullmeier, 2021, pp.194-196). Hypothetical mechanisms linking a cause to an effect are often intricate and implicit, as can be observed in the theoretical implications of this study. The theoretical claim is that the electoral victory of an erosion agent is a pathway to the loss of democratic qualities through the proposition of a specific causal mechanism. However, each step in this process has concrete implications that can be observed empirically. The goal is then to uncover these implications through empirical data that help confirm the existence of the mechanism. This approach emphasizes the importance of using evidence to study both observable and unobservable factors (Beach and Pedersen, 2016, pp.93-94). By examining the empirical traces left by entities at each stage of the process, more robust causal inferences can be drawn about the functioning of causal mechanisms in the empirical reality. In contrast, the "minimalist" approach permits only weaker inferences about causal processes, as it lacks direct evidence of the underlying mechanisms (Beach and Pedersen, 2019).

Table 3.1. The hypothesized causal mechanism of the Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM).

| | X | Part 01: Institutional Capture | Part 02: Social Silencing | Part 03: Weakening Accountability Mechanisms | Part 04: Concentration of Executive Power | Y |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Activity* | Electoral victory of 'erosion agent' | After winning the election, the erosion agent uses three overarching tactics to undermine democratic structures to capture relevant state and independent institutions based on his threat perception. | Alongside institutional capture, three overarching tactics to suppress dissent and control public discourse are implemented. | The specific tactics of institutional capture and social silencing attack *one or more* of the three distinct mechanisms (diagonal, horizontal, vertical) that would normally hold the government accountable. As a direct result either *parts or all of these* accountability mechanisms are *weakened*. | The erosion of checks and balances has led to a significant weakening of the government accountability. This reduction of political and social opposition and the increase in control over institutions has resulted in the expansion of executive power. | The expansion of executive power and the absence of effective checks and balances have led to a decline in core democratic values, including accountability, transparency, pluralism, and citizen participation. This has led to an overall decline in the democratic quality of a given democratic regime. |
| *Entity* | Erosion agent; electorate | Erosion agent; state or independent institutions. | Erosion agent; non-state actors and institutions. | Government branches; oversight bodies; non-state actors. | Erosion agent; government; weakened or complicit judiciary and legislative; loyalist cabinet. | Democratic norms and institutions; erosion agent. |
| *Supporting Factors* | Democratic discontent; campaign strategies | Electoral victory; manipulation of political structures; Legal and constitutional engineering; institutional reorganization | obstruction of civic space; authoritarian enforcement; state-controlled narratives | Legal engineering; cooptation; erosion of political pluralism | Dismantling of checks and balances; control over electoral processes; absence of *genuine* opposition | Lack of government accountability, transparency, pluralism and citizens' engagement |
| *Contextual Conditions* | Weak institutionalization: allows the erosion agent to manipulate and co-opt state and non-state institutions that lack the strength or autonomy to resist.<br>Authoritarian legacies: provide a foundation of centralized power and weak accountability structures that can be revived or perpetuated, facilitating the transition to authoritarianism.<br>Widening socio-political cleavages: provide opportunities for the erosion agent to deepen divisions, exploit identity politics, and justify repressive measures. | | | | | |

*Source*: The author. Based on Beach and Pedersen' (2016, 2019) framework.

In a systems-based understanding, each component of the mechanism is characterized by entities engaged in specific activities (Machamer et al., 2000). These entities refer to specific components, namely actors, organizations, or structures, which then executive specific actions that reflect the causal forces exerted by these entities within each part of the mechanism (Piccinini, 2017; Kaiser, 2017). In essence, these activities serve as the means through which causal powers are transmitted throughout the mechanism. Causal mechanisms then operate through entities taking action(s), where their activities have the potential to bring about (other) changes. These entities, conceptualized as agents and represented as nouns in the following 'equation,' derive their agency from the circumstances or context within which the causal mechanism operates ('contextual conditions'). The actions expected of them within a mechanism are articulated in verb form, illustrating how specific entities, under contextual influence, participate in activities that can induce changes in other entities. Applying this logic to a subset of the causal mechanism of this thesis, which links cause to effect, I find that, for example,

> The incumbent (A) *leverages* their position of authority to appoint loyalists to key positions in government and *alters* the rules to undermine independent institutions; → these compromised institutions (B), now weakened, *undermine* checks and balances that previously constrained executive power; this *dismantling* (C) reduces accountability and results in an *increase* in the executive power of the incumbent.

In this sequential relationship, represented with arrows to symbolize the transfer of causal force, A→ B → C, the initial action taken by the leader (A) sets off a chain of causality: the weakening of institutions (B), which in turn leads to a shift in power dynamics (C). This example demonstrates how entities, under contextual influences, perform actions that generate changes in other entities, ultimately producing the observed outcome (Beach and Pedersen, 2016, p.7). Such mechanisms are theorized holistically. The outcome is not merely the sum of individual actions (A, B, or C) but emerges from their interrelated roles within the system. Individual parts of the mechanism lack independent sufficiency; they work only when combined with the effects of others (cf. Chapter 2). Mechanistic explanations, therefore, cannot be reduced to simple counterfactual relationships (Beach and Pedersen, 2019).

Using process tracing, each part of the mechanism is thus treated as a necessary element of the whole (Beach and Pedersen 2013, pp.31-32). Process tracing avoids the problem of infinite regress by limiting the causal model to include only those subparts that are individually necessary and collectively sufficient for the mechanism (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p.31). For example, in the scenario described, this would mean:

> The incumbent's appointment of loyalists and rule changes (A) is *necessary* because, without it, institutions would remain independent. Weakened institutions (B) are *necessary* because, without them, checks and balances would

persist, preventing the power shift. Together, these subparts (A and B) are *sufficient* to lead to increased executive power (C).

This approach ensures that only subparts that contribute crucial causal force towards the outcome are integrated, eliminating redundancy in intermediary steps. Nonetheless, both Bennett's (2008) and Waldner's (2012)[30] definitions of causal mechanisms point toward the importance of specific contexts or conditions in shaping entities' change activities. Recognizing these conditions can be challenging as entities operate within a socio-political and historical order. Whether structural constraints or critical moments influence actions, contextual conditions, although necessary, are not sufficient. They act as constant enablers with limited or no observable force, serving as the backdrop for the mechanism's operation (Beach and Pedersen, 2016, p.89).

In the Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM), contextual conditions include authoritarian legacies, widening socio-political cleavages, and weak institutionalization of norms and institutions, which are essential for clarifying actor behavior and institutional and structural constraints, as well as for setting the contextual boundaries of the analysis. Weak institutionalization, for example, enables the erosion agent to manipulate and co-opt state and non-state bodies since these institutions inherently lack the strength or autonomy to resist, making them susceptible to manipulation. Authoritarian legacies provide a foundation of centralized power and weak accountability structures that can be revived or continued, making the transition to authoritarianism smoother. For example, historical patterns of executive dominance over other branches of government can lead to institutional habits of deference to the executive, reducing the ability of these bodies to act independently. Increasing socio-political cleavages offer opportunities for the erosion agent to deepen divisions, exploit identity politics, and justify repressive measures. For example, repressive acts are often framed as necessary to maintain stability or prevent ethnic conflict. This further weakens pluralism and checks on executive authority (cf. Chapter 2). Moreover, by integrating contextual factors into the analysis, the framework helps to define the boundaries within which the mechanism operates, thereby narrowing down the range of potential causal pathways leading to the observed outcome. This contextualization reduces the possibility of *equifinality* by providing a more precise understanding of how the mechanism interacts with the broader socio-political and historical context to produce the outcome of interest.

Process tracing, based on a deterministic view of reality, assumes that when the cause(s) is/are present and the contextual conditions are appropriate, a given outcome should occur

[30] Andrew Bennett has defined causal mechanisms as "processes through which agents with causal capacities operate in specific contexts to transfer energy, information or matter to other entities (2008, p.207). David Waldner has defined a mechanism as "an agent or entity that has the capacity to alter its environment because it possesses an invariant property that, in specific contexts, transmits either a physical force or information that influences the behavior of other agents or entities" (2012, p.18).

consistently. Although this approach does not consider outcomes to be random at their core, the ability to explain them is again bound by ongoing research and an accumulation of knowledge, considering the complexities and non-linear natures of social interactions. (Beach and Pedersen, 2019; Mahoney, 2008) Adopting ontological determinism in social science, however, makes sense for understanding causality, as it promotes a mechanistic view that helps identify the underlying processes that lead to certain outcomes (Salmon, 1998). The analytical trade-off, however, is that detailed tracing of mechanisms-as-systems is only undertaken in a small number of cases. The causal mechanisms literature emphasizes the contextual sensitivity of how mechanisms unfold in specific cases, leading to a trade-off between increased internal validity in understanding processes and reduced external validity for generalization across cases when theorizing mechanisms at lower levels of abstraction, such as in systems understanding. (Beach and Pedersen, 2019; see also: Falleti and Lynch, 2009; Gerring, 2010; Goertz and Mahoney, 2009) To enhance the internal and external validity and "to validate empirically the scope of cases to which process-level generalizations can be made" (Beach et al., 2022, p.1), this study also employs a comparative element for cross-case analysis. The inferences of the three cases will be systematically explored for similarities and differences to "mobilize knowledge[31]" (Khan and Van Wynsberghe, 2008) regarding their theoretical and empirical manifestations. To further strengthen the analysis, the study incorporates six additional cases from outside Southeast Asia. This broader comparative framework allows for the identification of patterns, variations, and generalizable findings across a wider population of cases. By moving beyond an intra-regional focus, the analytical depth and robustness of the research are strengthened. This comparative analysis thus becomes the critical tool that helps balance internal and external validity so as to ensure a nuanced understanding of processes and outcomes across multiple cases.

### 3.3. Case Selection in Process Tracing

Case selection in 'observational variance-based designs' is guided by similar assumptions to experimental research (Beach and Pedersen, 2016b, 2018). The aim is to select cases that enable the evaluation of the impact of a specific cause on the outcome while controlling for other potential influencing factors. In contrast, case selection in studies focused on mechanistic evidence operates under different principles. The purpose is "(to) build() as causally homogeneous a population as possible to enable us to infer from the studied cases to the rest of the small, bounded population of causally similar cases." (Beach and Pedersen, 2018, p.838; Russo and Williamson, 2007) Mechanism-centered approaches emphasize causal homogeneity, which supports cross-case inferences within clearly defined populations

[31] The mobilization of case knowledge occurs when researchers accumulate case knowledge, compare and contrast cases, and in doing so, produce new knowledge (Khan and Van Wynsberghe, 2008).

(Machamer, 2004; Machamer et al., 2000; Waldner, 2012). However, many case selection criteria, such as those proposed by Gerring (2007), are based on variance-based designs and frequently neglect the core assumptions underlying mechanisms-as-systems approaches (Beach and Pedersen, 2016a, b, 2018).

Ontological determinism limits the available study population to a small number of causally homogeneous cases. Following a *mechanism-centered* design, mechanisms are understood to be deterministic at the ontological level and probabilistic at the epistemological level (Beach and Pedersen 2016a, b). This leads to "viewing mechanisms as invariant, deterministic processes that will be triggered if the cause and relevant scope conditions that allow it to function are present" (Beach and Pedersen, 2018, p.846). Ontological determinism implies that only a small, limited population of causally homogeneous cases is available for study (Collier and Mahoney, 1996, pp.68-69; Goertz, 2006, p.29; Mahoney, 2007). A causally homogeneous population consists of cases in which the same cause(s) produce the same outcome through identical causal mechanism(s). When empirical evidence confirms the causal homogeneity of a population, comparative methods can be used to deduce that the mechanism(s) identified in the cases under scrutiny also function similarly in other comparable cases. However, comparative methods alone are insufficient to establish causality. Cross-case inferences must be supported by within-case mechanistic evidence to validate the causal relationships (Beach and Pedersen, 2016b, 2018).

Causal homogeneity is a key consideration when studying the mechanisms linking cause X to outcome Y. For these mechanisms to function effectively in a specific instance, certain scope conditions must be met. Importantly, causal homogeneity also suggests that the same cause can lead to the same outcome in different contexts but through distinct mechanisms, thereby raising the potential for *equifinality* at the mechanism level. Addressing this challenge involves demonstrating causal homogeneity across a population of cases by incorporating both contextual factors and scope conditions. (Beach and Pedersen, 2018; see also Falleti and Lynch, 2009; George and Bennett, 2005; Gerring, 2010) To draw cross-case inferences about mechanisms, it is crucial to define a restricted population of cases and systematically trace mechanisms across them. This approach minimizes the risk of drawing flawed conclusions from inadequate knowledge of the scope conditions or contextual factors that enable or inhibit mechanisms or from variations in the mechanisms that link the same cause to the same outcome (Beach and Pedersen, 2016a, b, 2018). Tracing mechanisms within cases rely on making asymmetric causal claims (Goertz and Mahoney, 2012; Ragin, 1987). The pronounced asymmetry inherent in mechanism-based claims stems from the application of *'difference-of-kind'* distinctions[32] when conceptualizing causality, which categorizes cases as either belonging

[32] Differences of degree are typically measured using ordinal or higher scales. However, these scales either prove causally irrelevant to the core categorical distinction defined within a concept or conflate

to the set in which a causal relationship is possible or not (Beach and Pedersen, 2018, pp.847-848).

Case selection in process tracing thus requires prior cross-case knowledge of the population involved in the theoretical relationship. To establish causal homogeneity within a set of cases, comparative methods can be used to map the population, identifying which cases belong to sets X and Y and the contextual conditions that enable the causal relationship (Beach and Pedersen, 2016b, 2018; see also Collier and Mahoney, 1996; George and Bennett, 2005, 164; Ragin, 1987; Skocpol and Somers, 1980; Tarrow, 2010). These conditions are then expected to produce the same mechanism linking X and Y within the defined population. Beach and Pedersen (2016b) propose a systematic framework for case selection rooted in such 'mechanisms-as-systems' thinking. Their framework organizes cases into four quadrants based on their membership in X and the hypothesized contextual conditions, and/or Y, resulting in distinct case types (see Figure 3.3). Quadrant I includes 'typical' cases, where the theorized relationship between X and Y, mediated by the expected mechanism, is expected to be present. Quadrant II consists of deviant cases where X and or the required contextual conditions are absent, yet Y is present. These cases are valuable for identifying additional causes of the outcome beyond X. Quadrant IV contains cases where X and the contextual conditions are present, but Y is absent. These cases help identify missing causal, contextual, or scope conditions. Lastly, Quadrant III includes cases that are analytically irrelevant for examining asymmetric causal claims. (ibid.)

The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is evidence to support the existence of the proposed causal mechanism between the electoral victory of an erosion agent (X) and the loss of democratic quality in a given country (Y). When the research objective is to make strong within-case inferences, mechanisms are traced only in cases where they can theoretically be present. Accordingly, only 'typical' cases, those that belong to sets X and Y, and meet the contextual conditions, in Quadrant I are selected (see Figure 3.3.). Beach and Pedersen (2016b) contend that typical cases are uniquely suited for testing the presence of a hypothesized causal mechanism, irrespective of whether X is theorized to be a sufficient condition. Within the set of typical cases, case selection can be guided by prior confidence in the presence of the mechanism, meaning most/least likely cases could be considered for case selection. However, because this particular case rationale combines theoretical and empirical likelihoods, the rationale of most/least likely cases is incompatible with deterministic claims (Beach and Pedersen, 2016a, b, 2018). A single case study can be sufficient for making cross-case inferences if mechanistic evidence confirms the presence of the causal mechanism.

differences of degree with differences of kind. This conflation produces a causally heterogeneous population, where varying values exhibit distinct causal properties rather than representing simple variations in the magnitude of the causal relationship (Beach and Pedersen, 2018, p.848).

Nevertheless, claims regarding a similar mechanism across cases must account for their contextual sensitivity. Transparent evidence demonstrating the causal homogeneity of other typical cases is thus essential before making such claims. Therefore, a thorough analysis of the proposed causal mechanism in multiple typical cases to establish the consistency of causal links across cases with similar scope and contextual conditions has been proposed (Beach and Pedersen, 2016a). However, while selecting a greater number of cases enhances external validity, it can reduce the depth of mechanistic evidence. Conversely, prioritizing in-depth studies of fewer cases strengthens internal validity but limits the ability to draw cross-case inferences (ibid.).

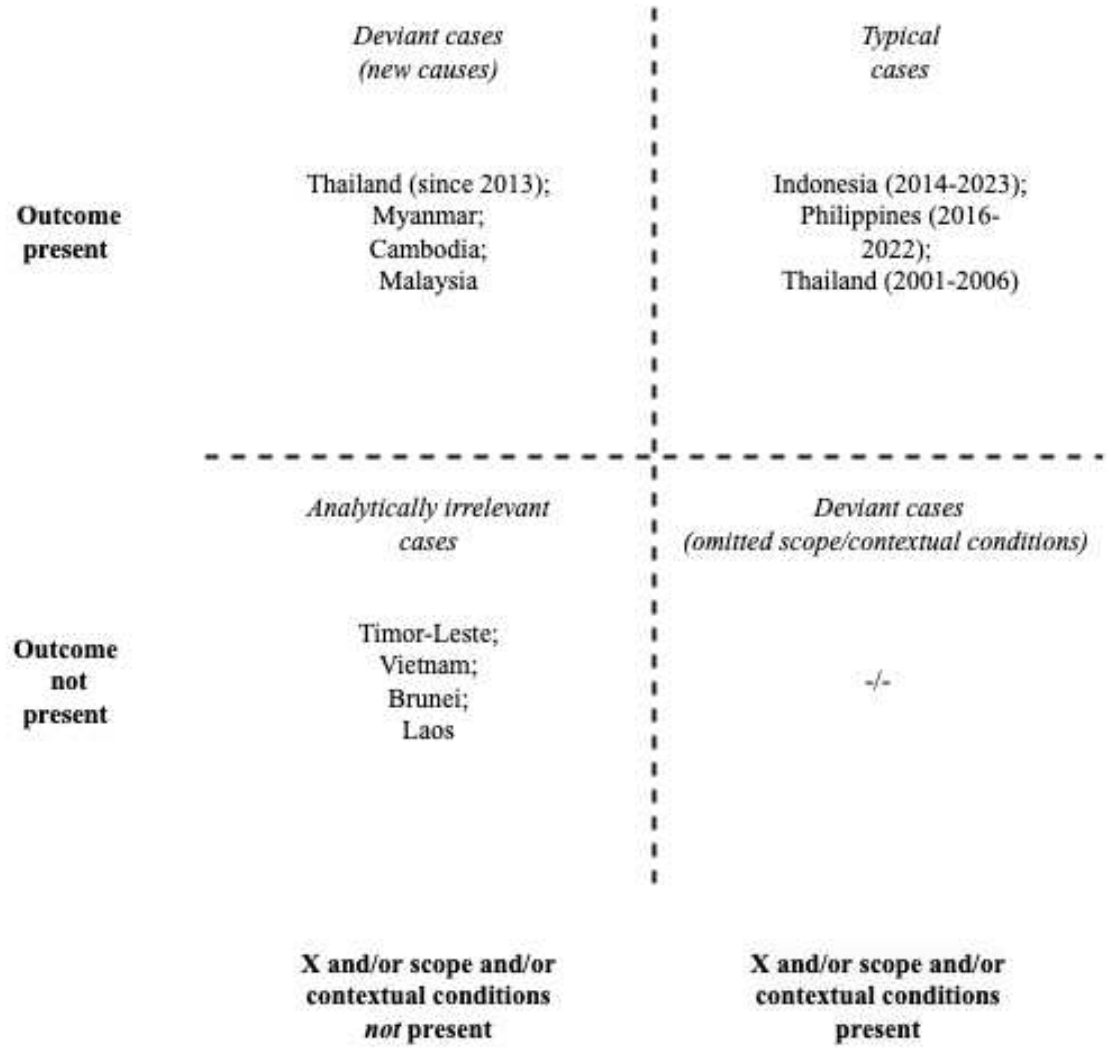


Figure 3.3. Matrix: Case Selection.
*Source*: The author. Framework based on Beach and Pedersen (2016b).

The population of cases for this study is defined to examine "third-wave democracies" (Huntington, 1991) experiencing executive aggrandizement, a specific mechanism of democratic erosion (see Chapter 2). The "third wave", beginning in 1974, marked a global surge in democratization, with numerous states transitioning from authoritarian to democratic systems of governance. By constraining the scope to this cohort, the analysis targets

democracies that emerged during the third wave and have subsequently encountered challenges to their democratic institutions through executive aggrandizement. Excluded from this framework are thus democracies predating the third wave, such as Venezuela, or those with deeply entrenched authoritarianism, such as Vietnam or Laos. These countries are incompatible with the theoretical focus, as their political trajectories do not align with state-led autocratization following democratization but rather reflect long-standing authoritarian continuity. The study further narrows its scope to electoral third wave democracies that exhibit executive aggrandizement, defined as the concentration of power by the executive branch at the expense of democratic norms, institutional checks and balances, and participation. Electoral democracies are particularly compelling for this analysis because they retain competitive elections as a core feature yet experience democratic backsliding within a framework that outwardly appears legitimate and functional. This focus highlights how leaders exploit or manipulate democratic institutions to centralize power, targeting not just electoral systems but also undermining liberal safeguards like judicial independence, media freedom, and civil society engagement even in minimally sufficient democracies. This specific form of democratic erosion differs from abrupt regime changes, such as military coups (Chile 1973; Argentina 1976), or democratic decline in liberal democracies like Hungary under Victor Orbán or South Africa under Jacob Zuma, where different dynamics of autocratization and democratic resilience operate. Melding an analysis of liberal democratic principles, like the rule of law, with electoral dimensions allows for an investigation of dual vulnerabilities that democracies confronting executive aggrandizement suffer from.

The study focuses on the period from 2000 to 2023 – a practically, theoretically, and empirically significant timeframe. This *temporal scope* is justified both by the broader global pattern of democratic stagnation which started in the early 2000s (e.g., Carothers, 2002, 2007; Diamond, 2002, 2008; Levitsky and Way, 2002) and practical considerations[33], allowing for a focused examination of how executive aggrandizement unfolded within third-wave democracies. The early 2000s marked a turning point for democratic trajectories globally. While in the beginning, right after the Cold War ended, close to a third of countries worldwide moved away from authoritarianism and toward democracy, a period of democratic stagnation and backsliding started to set in (cf. Chapter 1). This stagnation is characterized by the gradual erosion of democratic norms and institutions rather than abrupt breakdowns - a phenomenon that markedly differs from the immediate post-Cold War autocratization patterns (e.g., Bermeo, 2016; Haggard and Kaufman, 2016, 2021). By narrowing the focus to the post-2000 era, this study zeroes in on how ostensibly democratic structures have been subverted through

[33]The analysis ends in 2023 to ensure a complete and robust assessment of trends and developments over a defined period. While notable events and changes will have occurred by 2024, limiting the scope to 2023 allows for a focused and detailed examination of the data and patterns available up to that point. This approach avoids potential uncertainties and incomplete information from the most recent year, ensuring that the study's findings are well-supported and methodologically sound.

incremental processes rather than overt authoritarian takeovers. The decision to investigate cases of executive aggrandizement within third-wave democracies in this period is particularly apt. Third-wave democracies provide very fertile ground for the analysis of democratic erosion from within. In contrast to the usual forms of autocratization that tend to take the form of overt coups, executive aggrandizement reflects a far more subtle, insidious process. As elected leaders gradually centralize power, weaken institutional checks and balances, and undermine democratic norms under the guise of democratic legitimacy, the temporal focus allows for a detailed exploration of how these processes have played out in different contexts over the past two decades. It contributes to the understanding of autocratization as a long-term, structural challenge, rather than a series of isolated events, by catching the incremental nature of democratic erosion: the steady weakening of judicial independence, legislative oversight, and free media. This approach will also allow the identification of patterns and triggers specific to the contemporary era, such as the impact of digital disinformation campaigns.

For substantive purposes, the study narrows down the sample further by considering regional clustering (Ahram, 2011), focusing on Southeast Asia, where the dynamics of executive aggrandizement have been especially pronounced. While executive aggrandizement in the region is particularly visible and follows patterns similar to those observed globally (Fong, 2023), the region's specific contextual conditions create a controlled environment for observing the proposed causal mechanism. (Morgenbesser, 2020; Fong, 2023). This *spatial scope* is thus justified by the region's shared historical context of post-colonial dictatorships, including weak institutionalization of democratic norms, growing socio-political cleavages, and legacies of authoritarianism. (e.g., Carothers and O'Donohue, 2020; Chambers and Ufen, 2020; Chambers and Waitoolkiat, 2020; Morgenbesser, 2020; Slater, 2003; Ufen, 2012) This homogeneity ensures that the same causal mechanisms can be observed across different cases, enabling robust comparisons (Beach and Pedersen, 2016b, 2019). Southeast Asia includes countries that experienced democratization during the third wave and have overall remained stable (Timor-Leste), others that have since experienced democratic liberalization (Malaysia), and yet others, that have since regressed through executive-led autocratization (Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand). On the other hand, many countries have also sustained stable authoritarian rule over the previous decades (Laos, Vietnam, Singapore, Brunei, Cambodia), or have oscillated between democratic openings and authoritarian rule (Myanmar; post-2006 coup Thailand). Figure 3.4 shows the evolution of democracy in the countries of the region over the past two decades, highlighting that it is the three third-wave democracies of the region, namely Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, that have experienced significant democratic setbacks in recent years.

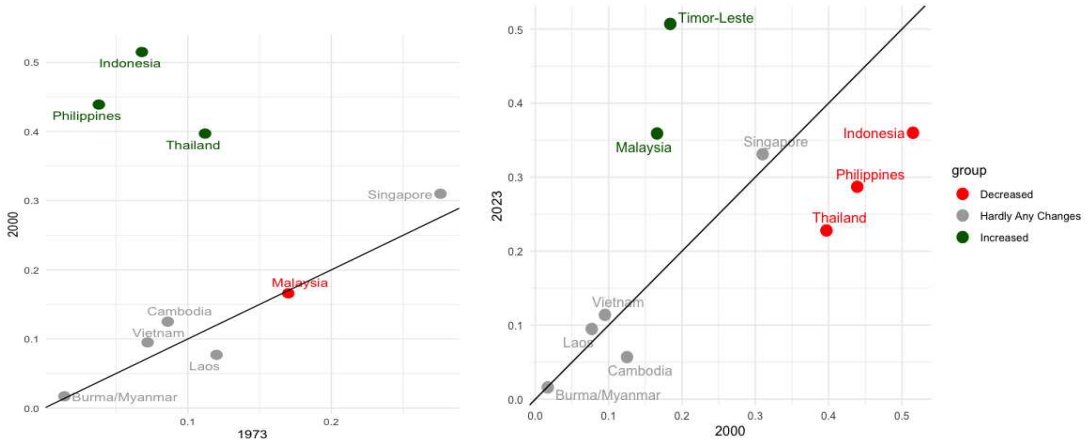


Figure 3.4. Changes in the Levels of Democracy in Southeast Asia, 1973-2000, and 2000-2023.
*Source*: The author. Based on Croissant and Tomini (2024). Data is from V-DEM (*v14*).
*Notes*: The x-axis represents a country's Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) score in either 1973 or 2000, while the y-axis represents the corresponding LDI score for 2000 or 2023. Countries above the black line have experienced an increase in their LDI score over time (1973 to 2000 or 2000 to 2023), indicating progress in liberal democratic indicators. Conversely, countries below the black line have seen their LDI scores decline, signaling a regression in these indicators. While this chart provides a broad overview of the evolution of liberal democracy over these years, it does not address the nuances or fluctuations that may have occurred over the intervening four decades, which may obscure significant short-term trends or fluctuations (based on Croissant and Tomini, 2024).

Based on these considerations, the cases under study include Indonesia under Joko Widodo (2014-2023), the Philippines under Rodrigo Duterte (2016-2022), and Thailand under Thaksin Shinawatra (2001-2006) (Figure 3.3). The selected cases show significant democratic decline through executive aggrandizement, where core democratic functions of contestation and participation have been systematically eroded while sharing contextual conditions to ensure comparability across mechanisms of democratic erosions.

1. Indonesia (Joko Widodo, 2014-2023[34]): Under Widodo's leadership, Indonesia has seen a decline in democratic norms, marked by the weakening of anti-corruption institutions. During his two terms in office (2014-2019; 2019-2024), Indonesia also saw the rise of illiberal political actors leveraging socio-political cleavages, particularly ethno-religious tensions, to consolidate power. Moreover, weak institutional safeguards allowed executive actions to erode contestation and civil liberties.
2. Philippines (Rodrigo Duterte, 2016-2022): Duterte's administration witnessed the erosion of civil liberties and media freedom, alongside the consolidation of power through extrajudicial means, notably in his "war on drugs," where he manipulated deep-seated societal cleavages, such as poverty and crime, to delegitimize opposition and centralize authority.
3. Thailand (Thaksin Shinawatra, 2001-2006): Under his government, human rights abuses and restrictions on the media ran parallel to the consolidation of executive

[34] Although Joko Widodo's term officially extends until October 2024, when his successor Prabowo Subianto will be inaugurated, this thesis excludes analysis of his final 10 months in office. This decision is driven by practical limitations, including the availability of data and time constraints, which prevent a full evaluation of this period.

power through populist rhetoric. His term in office ended with a promissory coup in 2006, followed by further military interventions in 2014.

In sum, this study employs a small-n design and focuses on three carefully selected cases of third-wave democracies in Southeast Asia: Indonesia (2014-2023), the Philippines (2016-2022), and Thailand (2001-2006). These cases exemplify executive aggrandizement, a gradual process of democratic erosion characterized by the consolidation of executive power at the expense of institutional checks, opposition participation, and democratic norms. By focusing on third-wave democracies, the study ensures consistency with its theoretical framework. The focus is also narrowed to episodes of executive aggrandizement in the period between 2000 and 2023, a period of global democratic stagnation characterized by incremental regression within ostensibly democratic regimes (Carothers, 2002; Diamond, 2008). This ensures that the analysis captures contemporary patterns of autocratization through executive-led mechanisms. The small-n approach prioritizes in-depth within-case analysis, maximizing internal validity by tracing the specific causal mechanisms that drive democratic erosion. While critics argue that small-n designs risk overgeneralization (Collier, 2011; George and Bennett, 2005), this study mitigates this concern by constraining its temporal and spatial scope, ensuring that the findings apply to countries with similar political and institutional characteristics, thereby enhancing the external validity of the conclusions drawn. Such small-n designs are particularly effective when the goal is to explore political processes and mechanisms rather than to make broad generalizations.

To control for *equifinality*, where different mechanisms could lead to the same outcome, the study carefully selected cases that share key socio-political and institutional characteristics. These include a history of authoritarianism, fragile democratic institutions, and sociopolitical cleavages that create opportunities for executive overreach. While minor variations in the mechanism of executive aggrandizement for each case will exist, they are not expected to undermine the overall causal homogeneity of the selected cases. For example, while the specific legal strategies or policy justifications might differ in each country, the underlying mechanism of consolidating executive power at the detriment of democratic institutions is expected to remain consistent. Cross-case comparisons then aid in identifying and explaining these minor differences without compromising the overarching goal of the study. By focusing on Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, this study provides both depth in its within-case analysis and breadth through cross-case comparisons.

### 3.4. Data and Evidence in Process Tracing

Process tracing serves as the empirical foundation for many case studies (Rohlfing, 2012, p.150) and "is perhaps the tool of causal inference that first comes to mind when one thinks of

qualitative methodology in political science" (Mahoney, 2010, p.123). Process tracing, however, should not be dismissed as a non-determined "n=1"-study. As a form of within-case analysis, it draws upon a diverse array of data points and benefits from the "discipline coming from a riches of relevant details" (Campbell, 1975, p.175). In practice, the challenge lies not in a lack of data but in managing its abundance and disorganized nature. The process tracing literature has introduced effective tools to address these issues, moving beyond "mechanism-based storytelling" (Hedström and Ylikoski, 2010) to provide detailed empirical analysis. These tools enable researchers to trace how mechanisms operate in individual cases using robust mechanistic evidence (Illari, 2011).

Collecting evidence using the theory-testing approach is inherently complex, as it requires analyzing all stages of the proposed causal mechanism, beginning with contextual conditions. While identifying these conditions is relatively straightforward, uncovering and examining the theoretical mechanism is far more challenging due to its multifaceted, overlapping, and non-sequential nature (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p.107). Process tracing typically employs two primary methods of evidence gathering: Bayesian logic (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, 2019) or "causal process observations" (CPOs) (Collier et al., 2010). CPOs include insights or data that provide contextual or mechanistic information (Collier et al., 2010, p.184). Although causality cannot be directly observed, analyzing processes and the temporal sequencing of data remains crucial (Grzymala-Busse, 2011). However, CPOs present a significant methodological challenge. They often blur the distinction between raw empirical observations and the actual evidence required to make causal inferences about mechanisms (Beach and Pedersen, 2019, p.13). This ambiguity makes it difficult to determine which empirical materials qualify as evidence and to assess their probative value. For instance, methodological tools like 'hoop tests' or 'smoking guns' are frequently used without clear definitions or transparent evaluation criteria, complicating the interpretation of the collective body of evidence (ibid.). To address this ambiguity, the literature on 'Bayesianism' emphasizes the importance of evaluating evidence based on its *certainty* and *uniqueness* (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, 2019; Van Evera, 1997; see also Goertz and Mahoney, 2012). Such a Bayesian approach offers a systematic framework for evidence assessment, addressing the limitations of CPO-based methods (Beach and Pedersen, 2013). In response, Beach and Pedersen (2019) propose a two-stage evidence-evaluation model grounded in Bayesian principles. This framework systematically assesses mechanistic evidence to support or refute the operation of mechanisms or their components within a given case (see Figure 3.5).

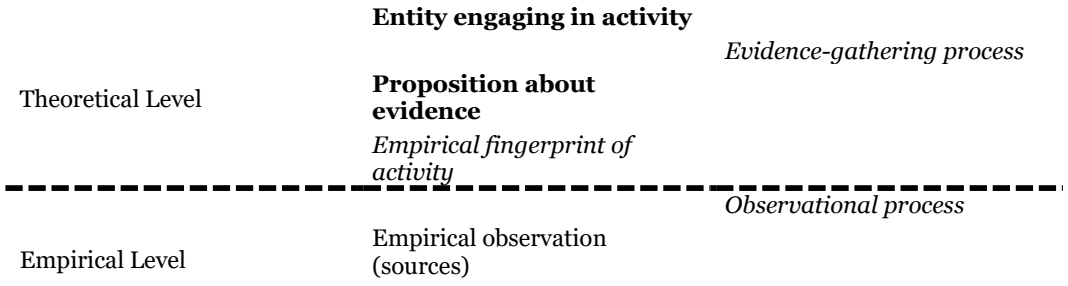


Figure 3.5. Two-stage evidence evaluation framework.
*Source*: The author. Amended from Beach and Pedersen, 2019, p.2.

Bayesian reasoning involves updating confidence in causal theories based on new evidence, whether within a single case or across a population. This makes it a robust foundation for process-tracing research, particularly when dealing with mechanistic evidence. Unlike some social science methods that focus exclusively on confirmation or falsification, Bayesian reasoning accommodates both, offering a more inclusive analytical framework. It explicitly emphasizes the dynamic relationship between empirical observations and theoretical propositions, akin to abductive analytical tools (Beach and Pedersen, 2019, p.21). While some authors have quantified Bayesian formulas (Bennett, 2015), their primary utility in process tracing lies in providing a clear conceptual framework for research. This approach, though informal and heuristic, is invaluable for systematically considering theory, evidence, and objectivity (Beach and Pedersen, 2019).

In Bayesian analysis, data collection begins with a conceptual model of how the world operates, which is then tested through evidence. The evaluation of this evidence involves assessing its strength, informativeness about a theory's validity, and reliability. Bayesian reasoning considers both confirmatory and disconfirmatory evidence, with greater inferential weight given to unexpected or surprising findings (Beach and Pedersen, 2016, 2019; Bennett, 2015). This systematic approach is particularly prominent in theory-testing process tracing, where mechanisms and their components are carefully conceptualized. Hypotheses about the empirical evidence likely to result from these mechanisms are formulated, guiding the observations-gathering process systematically. This avoids cherry-picking data to support a preferred hypothesis and instead aims to objectively test the hypothesized causal mechanism(s). It is then possible to assess whether the evidence gathered is sufficient to confirm or refute the proposition in question (Beach and Pedersen, 2019). The strength of evidence, or its probative value, shapes confidence in a causal claim based on its alignment with or contradiction of the theory. Van Evera (1997) identified two critical dimensions of evidence: *uniqueness* and *certainty* (see also Beach and Pedersen, 2013, 2016, 2019; Bennett, 2015; Bennett and Checkel, 2015). *Uniqueness* refers to the extent to which a piece of evidence

is specifically predicted by the hypothesis and not by competing theories. Highly unique evidence strongly supports the theory by demonstrating coherence with the hypothesis. However, the absence of such evidence might not be conclusive, as it could represent a rare or improbable observation. *Certainty*, on the other hand, assesses whether the absence of predicted evidence undermines the claim entirely. If expected evidence is not discovered, it suggests the hypothesis lacks coherence. Conversely, discovering unexpected evidence does not confirm the theory in isolation, as alternative explanations might account for its presence, weakening its uniqueness (Beach and Pedersen, 2019). Mechanistic evidence is broadly defined to include any material left behind by theorized causal mechanisms that helps determine whether a hypothesized relationship existed in a particular case (ibid., p.19).

Drawing on Van Evera's typology, Beach and Pedersen (2016, 2019) refine this concept by categorizing evidence into four types: *sequence, account, trace,* and *pattern evidence*. These categories represent raw data for interpretation and differ from the forms of data collected by researchers, such as interviews, speeches, historical documents, or surveys (Beach and Pedersen, 2019). Each evidence type has unique strengths and limitations in terms of uniqueness and certainty (see Table 3.2). However, the true strength of this framework lies in how these evidence types can work synergistically to overcome limitations and collectively strengthen causal inferences. First, *sequence evidence* examines the chronological and spatial order of events as predicted by a hypothesized causal mechanism. Any deviations from the expected sequence can challenge the validity of the theory. For instance, consider a part of the proposed causal mechanism about the reconfiguration of institutional settings in which legal changes targeting civil society organizations (CSOs) precede acts of repression (cf. Chapter 2). If a government first amends laws regulating CSO activities and then escalates harassment or restrictions on these groups, the sequence supports the hypothesized causal mechanism: legal changes pave the way for repressive actions. However, this evidence alone has medium uniqueness because alternative factors could also produce the observed order. Its certainty is medium to low, as further validation is needed to confirm the sequence's relevance to the causal claim. *Account evidence* relates to the substance of empirical material, encompassing a wide range of data forms. This might include meeting minutes from government officials discussing strategies for altering laws or speeches by political actors exacerbating pre-existing political or social cleavages. These accounts provide insight into the intentions and actions of key players within the causal mechanism, offering a narrative that supports or challenges the hypothesized causal mechanism. However, this evidence has medium uniqueness because it is open to multiple interpretations, and it is prone to bias, such as selective reporting. The certainty of the evidence of account is considered low because causal claims require more direct forms of evidence to assert their validity. *Trace evidence* serves as proof through its mere existence, confirming specific interactions or occurrences central to the causal mechanism. For example, documented government crackdowns, such as arrests of opposition figures or violent

suppression of protests, constitute trace evidence. This type of evidence is both highly unique because it directly supports the mechanism and offers high certainty as its mere existence strongly confirms the mechanism's operation. While trace evidence provides strong confirmation, its explanatory power increases when combined with other evidence types to contextualize and situate it within a broader causal narrative. *Pattern evidence* refers to the identification of statistical or numerical trends in empirical records to draw a conclusion of causality. For example, if there is a repeated pattern wherein legal amendments targeting civil society are followed by increases in harassment, arrests, or NGO closures, it is indicative of a systematic approach toward repression. At the same time, its uniqueness is low to medium since plausible rival explanations might account for the trends observed. Its certainty is medium because patterns alone cannot confirm causality; they merely point out associations that must be corroborated with other types of evidence. (Beach and Pedersen, pp. 19-20)

Table 3.2. Matrix: Evidence Typology.

| Form of Evidence | Description | Example | Dimension of Evidence | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Uniqueness | Certainty |
| Sequence | Refers to the chronological and spatial order of events as anticipated by a hypothesized causal mechanism. Deviations from this sequence can undermine the validity of the model. | Government introduces amendments to laws governing civil society organizations (CSOs), followed by increased harassment or restrictions on CSOs. | Medium | Medium/Low |
| Account | Relates to the substance of empirical material, encompassing various forms of data such as meeting minutes or speeches. | Analyzing meeting minutes of government officials discussing policies related to changes in laws or speeches made by the erosion agent exacerbating pre-existing political or social cleavages. | Medium | Low |
| Trace | Serves as proof through its mere existence, confirming certain interactions or occurrences. | Documented instances of government crackdowns on dissent, such as protests or arrests of opposition figures. | High | High |
| Pattern | Predicting statistical or numerical patterns in empirical records to draw conclusions of causality. | If a consistent pattern emerges where a government introduces legal amendments targeting civil society, followed by a notable increase in harassment, arrests, or NGO closures. | Low/Medium | Medium |

*Source*: The author. Framework by Beach and Pedersen (2016, 2019).
*Notes*: Uniqueness and certainty are distinguished along the dimensions high, medium, and low. 1) uniqueness: high = the evidence strongly confirms the hypothesis and exclusively corresponds to the proposed causal mechanism; medium = the evidence supports the hypothesis but could also be explained by other competing

theories; low = the evidence provides limited support for the hypothesis as it can be attributed to various factors. 2) certainty: high = the presence of this evidence strongly indicates the occurrence of the hypothesized causal mechanism; medium = the evidence provides considerable support but requires additional corroboration; low = the evidence alone is not sufficient to confirm the hypothesis and needs substantial supporting evidence.

In sum, each piece of evidence contributes uniquely to causal inference; together they are crucial to construct a valid and reliable argument (see Table 3.3). Building on Beach and Pedersen (2019), I argue that this integration increases confidence in the hypothesized causal mechanism by decreasing ambiguity and reducing the possibility of alternative explanations. Sequence evidence provides the foundation for the causal analysis since it establishes that events occur sequentially. While important, sequence evidence alone cannot establish that the observed order reflects causality and not just mere coincidence. To overcome this limitation, sequence evidence should be combined with other forms of evidence. Trace evidence, for example, provides direct confirmation of the interactions composing the mechanism and so assures the sequence represents an actual causal relation. Similarly, pattern evidence shows that the sequence is not a singular instance but part of a regular relationship across similar cases, thus supporting the broader validity of the mechanism. Account evidence provides valuable insights into actor intentions and decision-making processes. However, its interpretive nature requires corroboration to avoid ambiguity. When combined with trace evidence, account evidence can validate that the actions described occurred as stated. In addition, sequence evidence can confirm that the described actions unfolded in the predicted order, reinforcing the causal plausibility of the account. Trace evidence provides direct corroboration of the interactions posited by the mechanism and therefore direct evidence of its operation. However, the explanatory power increases if it is used in support of other evidence types. Sequence evidence proves that the interactions occurred in the expected temporal order, while pattern evidence establishes consistency in the traces across multiple cases. The possibility that such interactions are anomalous or coincidental becomes less probable when taken together. Pattern evidence identifies systematic relationships and contextualizes the mechanism within a broader framework of similar cases. However, for stronger causal significance, it benefits when combined with other evidence types. Trace evidence ensures that the patterns observed reflect the actual interactions predicted by a mechanism, while account evidence explains the motivation and intention behind the patterns. Together, these combinations enrich the understanding of how the mechanism operates.

Consider, for example, the hypothesized relationship between legal reforms and an increase in state repression that is adversely affecting CSOs. Robust testing would incorporate multiple sources of evidence to make an argument for the causal mechanism. Sequence evidence provides the temporal relationship that legal amendments are followed by increased CSO repression based on these legal changes. Account evidence provides insights into the government's intent to suppress dissent. Trace evidence documents specific actions taken to repress, for example, arrests, or closure orders on NGOs. Pattern evidence displays a consistent

„legal change followed by repression-„ relationship across cases. This synthesis ensures temporal alignment, reveals actor motivation, confirms direct interactions, and validates systematic relationships. This is to ensure a valid and reliable argument. Finally, mechanistic evidence, when organized into the categories of sequence, account, trace, and pattern types, offers a versatile framework for assessing causal claims with each type of evidence bringing distinct strengths to the analysis. Sequence evidence provides temporal plausibility, account evidence gives contextual depth, trace evidence supplies direct confirmation, and pattern evidence gives systematic validation. Together, these types of evidence overcome their individual limitations; thereby, the result strengthens explanatory power, which in turn serves as a sound basis for testing and verifying the causal mechanism in process tracing.

Table 3.3. Theory-testing process tracing: possible evidence synergies.

| Evidence Type | Primary Role | Limitations | Complementary Evidence to Address Limitations | Outcome of Synergy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sequence | Temporal alignments of events. | Cannot confirm causation; sequence might reflect coincidence or alternative explanations. | Trace evidence confirms direct interaction with mechanism; Pattern evidence demonstrates that the sequence is part of a systematic relationship (across cases). | Ensures the observed sequence reflects a valid causal mechanism, not a coincidence or anomaly. |
| Account | Actor intentions and decision-making. | Interpretative ambiguity; requires corroboration. | Trace evidence validates described actions occurred; sequence evidence confirms actions occurred in the predicted order. | Strengthens the plausibility of accounts by providing empirical confirmation and temporal consistency. |
| Trace | Directly confirms interactions predicted by the mechanism. | Limited explanatory power in isolation; could reflect anomalies. | Sequence evidence demonstrates interactions unfolded in the expected order; pattern evidence establishes consistency of traces (across similar cases). | Enriches explanatory depth and ensures traces are not anomalies. |
| Pattern | Identifies systematic relationship (across cases). | Lacks direct confirmation of mechanism interactions; requires contextual explanation. | Trace evidence ensures patterns reflect actual interactions; account evidence provides context for why patterns emerge. | Validates systematic relationships while explaining their emergence and causality. |

*Source*: The author.

This volume of data and possible observations creates, finally, a practical problem of data collection, interpretation, and assessment of evidence. Relevant information will have to be picked out from this pool by making careful assessments of mechanistic evidence. This means the placement of data in its context, evaluation of source credibility, discerning meaning, and

knowing the importance of documents or reports. It also involves evidentiary accuracy, which makes interpretive leaps concerning the validity of claims that are made concerning evidence (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, 2016, 2019; George and Bennett, 2005; Thies, 2002). This is important because selective sampling obscures broader patterns within the empirical record, and therefore, a representative assessment of observations is necessary (Kreuzer, 2016). Evidence is still likely to be subject to unreliability or even bias due to inherent doubt and subjectivity, notwithstanding rigorous efforts at verification.

This study relies on both primary sources, such as official government documents, speeches, and newspaper articles, as well as existing secondary sources. Critical events such as protests or acts of government repression are inherent in the causal mechanism being studied. In general, however, using journalistic accounts as evidence has peculiar problems since their reliability can vary so widely. The independence of sources thus becomes paramount to mitigating bias. This often requires corroboration by crosschecking multiple sources to confirm reliability, accuracy, and contextual relevance. Only after this rigorous verification process can evidence be effectively translated into explanations that support the hypothesized mechanism. The reliance on nonrandom sampling strategies, which is common in process tracing studies, raises additional concerns about bias (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p. 124). Conclusions on such evidence bear the risk of misrepresentation if the evidence does not substantially update confidence in the claims. Historical sources are also used to provide contextual insight. They must, however, be approached with caution because they tend to create historiographical bias. This is whereby researchers choose historical works that match their theoretical predispositions, which makes the findings biased (Beach and Pedersen, 2019). To address these limitations, triangulation that is, cross-referencing with independent sources, is applied to enhance the reliability of the data in question. The total value of this triangulated data then is greater than the value of the individual pieces leading to a stronger and broader basis for analysis (ibid.).

## 3.5. Expectations for Identifying the Causal Mechanism in the Empirical Reality

The theoretical argument presented in Chapter 2 is that the erosion of democratic qualities in a regime is triggered by the electoral victory of a democratically elected incumbent (usually a president or prime minister) who then implements strategies that weaken the very structures sustaining democracy. The process leading to this outcome is driven by two interrelated mechanisms: institutional capture and social silencing. The causal chain begins with the incumbent's threat perception that emanates from accountability mechanisms (horizontal, vertical, and diagonal) in an environment of uncertainty (Schedler, 2002, 2013; Svolik, 2012,

2019), which forces the incumbent to take strategic action in dismantling those mechanisms as a way of consolidating power.

The first stage of such erosion has to do with institutional capture, which is characterized by the manipulation of political structures, legal and constitutional engineering, and reorganization of state institutions. (Part 01). These are actions intended to undermine or remove checks and balances between state organs and between the state and its citizens. Empirical evidence for such actions is, for instance, expected to manifest in legislative records detailing changes in oversight bodies' structures and powers, as well as in government decrees or policies centralizing authority. The second layer of the process is social silencing, which aims to impede civic space, impose authoritarian measures, and distribute state-controlled narratives (Part 02). These tactics largely undermine the diagonal accountability mechanisms that enable independent actors to hold the government responsible. Mechanistic evidence includes reports on restrictive civic freedoms, state coercion, and data on diminished capacity to operate freely by independent media and civil society. The combined effect of institutional capture and social silencing leads to the weakening of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability mechanisms (Part 03). As these mechanisms erode, the incumbent gains the ability to consolidate executive power with minimal constraints (Part 04). This dynamic becomes observable in the form of executive actions by passing legislative or judicial checks, as well as policy changes concentrating authority within the executive branch. Furthermore, the decline in political pluralism, the marginalization of opposition parties, and the erosion of civil liberties, such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association, further reflect the consolidation that has occurred. These processes taken together culminate in the erosion of democratic qualities (Y). The empirical evidence supporting this trajectory is likely to be found in various sources, including democracy reports by the Varieties of Democracy (V-DEM) Institute, Freedom House, or similar, public opinion surveys on political freedoms and accountability, and metrics assessing judicial independence and effectiveness. This will therefore reveal, taken together, the decline of those democratic qualities that normally uphold democratic governance.

In systematically tracing this causal mechanism, the argument breaks down into four stages, flowing logically from the election of the erosion agent (X) to the erosion of democratic qualities (Y) that can be traced in the empirical reality:

1) The incumbent *captures* state institutions through political structure manipulation, legal and constitutional engineering, and institutional reorganization to damage checks and balances between state institutions and between citizens and state institutions.

2) The incumbent *initiates* social silencing through civic space obstruction, authoritarian enforcement, and state-controlled narratives to impede diagonal checks against the government.

3) The cumulative effort of capturing state institutions and social silencing *leads* to the weakening of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal accountability mechanisms.

4) This weakening of all three accountability mechanisms *allows* the incumbent to concentrate executive power in his hands with limited constraints placed on him.

In process tracing, each part of the causal mechanism is understood as a 'hypothesis' to be tested and investigates whether the predicted empirical manifestation of each part is present. Table 3.4 illustrates the causal mechanism and its observable implications. However, none of the observable manifestations alone are sufficient for claiming that the particular outcome of 'democratic decline' was caused by an erosion agent. Yet, the cumulative evidence strongly validates a conjecture (Collier, 2011, p.826). Thus, if the evidence in favor of all single pieces of the causal mechanism is found, a unique signature indicating the erosion agent utilized institutional capture and social silencing to amass executive power, leading to the erosion of democratic qualities, can be traced. By contrast, if no evidence is found, indicating the use of the proposed tactics to start or further executive aggrandizement, it is implausible that the erosion agent caused the loss of democratic qualities.

Table 3.4. Example: Empirical manifestations and observables of the formulated causal mechanism.

| | **X** | **Causal Mechanism** | | | | **Y** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Electoral Victory of Erosion Agent** | **Part 01: Institutional Capture** | **Part 02: Social Silencing** | **Part 03: Dismantling of Accountability Mechanisms** | **Part 04: Expansion of Executive Power** | **Loss of Democratic Qualities** |
| **Theoretical conjecture** | Erosion agent is elected as president or prime minister in democratic elections.<br><br>*The election of an authoritarian-leaning leader can only be known *a posteriori*. | The incumbent *captures* state institutions through the manipulation of political structures, legal and constitutional engineering, and institutional reorganization. | The incumbent *initiates* social silencing through the obstruction of civic space, authoritarian enforcement, and state-controlled narratives. | The cumulative effort of capturing state institutions and social silencing *leads* to weakening of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability mechanisms. | The weakening of all three accountability mechanisms *allows* the incumbent to concentrate executive power with undermined constraints. | The absence of reliable checks and balances and a lack of government accountability, transparency, pluralism, and citizens' engagement has *led* to the erosion of democratic qualities. |
| **Empirical manifestations** | A strong reliance on polarizing rhetoric that promises to „fix" the system. | Politicization of judicial appointments, stacking courts with loyalists, and attempts to weaken or control the independence of the judiciary. | Crackdown on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially those focused on human rights, by labeling them as foreign agents, restricting their funding, or passing restrictive laws on assembly. | Elections become increasingly uncompetitive due to unfair electoral practices, the use of state resources for campaigning, voter intimidation, or the absence of credible opposition. Erosion of media freedom limits citizens' ability to hold the government accountable. | Declaring states of emergency or using crises (e.g., terrorism, public health, economic instability) to justify the concentration of power. Executive decrees become more common and are used to bypass the legislative process. | While elections continue to occur, they are increasingly ceremonial, with real competition diminished by barriers to entry, unfair media coverage, or intimidation. |
| **Observables** | Campaign rhetoric; voter demographics. | Changes in the composition of courts (e.g., an unusual number of appointments, forced retirements of judges) that show increased loyalty to the executive. Decreased judicial review of government actions. | New laws restricting the operations of NGOs, particularly those receiving foreign funding or engaging in political activities. | Election irregularities become more frequent, e.g., voter suppression, gerrymandering, biased media coverage, or lack of viable opposition candidates. Election observation reports indicate a decline in electoral integrity. | Government pushes through amendments to extend term limits, curtail checks on executive authority, or declare states of emergency. Legislative records or government decrees show an increasing concentration of power in the executive. | Election monitoring organizations report increasing problems with election integrity, including voter intimidation, vote-rigging, media bias, or legal hurdles that block genuine opposition. Fewer political parties or candidates participate in elections. |

*Source*: The author. Based on the framework provided by Beach and Pedersen (2019).

*Notes*: Please see Appendix 1 for the detailed and complete list.

### 3.6. Strengths and Weaknesses of Process Tracing

Theory-testing process tracing is a systematic methodology that rigorously evaluates hypotheses by sequentially examining causal mechanisms. This approach enhances research robustness by aligning hypotheses with causal dimensions, allowing researchers to uncover detailed insights into the processes underpinning observed phenomena (Beach and Pedersen, 2013; George and Bennett, 2005). Process tracing not only deepens the understanding within specific theoretical and empirical contexts (Mahoney, 2001) but also facilitates cross-case analysis. By enabling comparative investigations, it contributes to both theoretical refinement and empirical validation (Beach and Pedersen, 2013). One of the most important strengths of process tracing is its ability to investigate causal mechanisms in depth, thus providing a fine-grained understanding of how and why particular events occur (ibid). By accounting for unique contextual factors, it sheds light on the idiosyncratic nature of the phenomena being studied (George and Bennett, 2005). This helps the researcher in narrowing down the exact path leading to the desired causal explanation and develops finer-grained theoretical perspectives (Mahoney, 2001). Thus, this flexibility within process tracing can easily suit a variety of contexts, keeping its analytical value intact, and thereby helping empirical research immensely.

Of course, process tracing does not remain immune to a few shortcomings. In the domain of autocratization studies, one serious deficiency lies in under-specified theory. Theoretical mechanisms are often vaguely outlined, with arguments positing that certain factors "play a role" rather than clearly delineating their impact. This lack of specificity can hinder the rigorous testing of detailed mechanisms, a central focus of process tracing methodologies (Starke, 2022). Furthermore, real-world scenarios are inherently multifarious, with multiple factors contributing to outcomes. This complexity makes clear causal pathways hard to identify, and it requires substantial qualitative data, often difficult to attain. Besides, reliance on available empirical work in making case-specific predictions can induce researcher bias in the selection and interpretation of evidence. These challenges suggest that process tracing should be treated cautiously because it does not always guarantee a foolproof explanation in every context (Beach and Pedersen, 2013; George and Bennett, 2005).

Another significant limitation concerns the generalizability of findings. Unlike quantitative research, which uses probability theory to extrapolate from samples to populations, process tracing relies on "contingent generalization." This approach situates itself between the analysis of unique cases and the pursuit of universal laws. (George and Bennett, 2005) Findings are often limited to cases with comparable conditions, such as similar historical trajectories, cultural backgrounds, or geographical settings. While this comparability has the advantage of meaningful cross-case analysis, the criteria to establish external validity remain vague. Another approach in this regard involves the "generalization through mechanisms"

framework, which considers the idea of causal mechanisms being transferable across contexts under certain conditions (Bengtsson and Hertting, 2014; Ylikoski and Zahle, 2019). That provides a conceptual approach to generalizing beyond the single case while still upholding contextual features. To address the methodological challenges of process tracing, alternative explanations can be implemented during empirical analysis to mitigate confirmation bias and other psychological effects, such as the 'base rate fallacy' (Bar-Hillel, 1980). The inclusion of alternative explanations, for example, will enhance the validity of the findings by countering misjudgments on the certainty and clarity of evidence. Comparative analyses of multiple cases also provide a broader context for evaluating evidence, allowing patterns and anomalies to be discerned more effectively. By systematically comparing cases, the rigor and validity of process tracing are strengthened, enabling more reliable inferences and a deeper understanding of causal dynamics (George and Bennett, 2005).

## 3.7. Relevant Concepts

Concept definition plays a critical role in process tracing, as it helps identify what triggers a causal mechanism and what outcomes it produces. Theories of causal mechanisms differ from traditional X → Y causal theories in that causes must be defined in terms of attributes that can trigger mechanisms, while outcomes must be conceptualized as effects produced or affected by the preceding mechanism (Beach and Pedersen, 2019). This approach thus adopts an 'essentialist' perspective on conceptualization, aiming to capture the essence of a concept as a cause or outcome (Sartori, 1984). For example, the causal mechanism linking the electoral victory of an erosion agent (X) and the loss of democratic qualities (Y) is described as a combination of institutional capture and social silencing, referred to here as the "Autocratic Expansion Model" (AEM). I define the *electoral victory of an erosion agent* as the democratic election of a political leader, party, or coalition that deliberately and or systematically undermines the institutional, procedural, and normative foundations of democracy after coming to power. This agent often employs both overt and covert strategies to weaken democratic institutions, consolidate personal or party power, and erode safeguards essential to democratic governance. The erosion agent typically gains electoral support by capitalizing on factors such as public grievances, populist rhetoric or the exploitation of pre-existing democratic weaknesses. Once in power, the erosion agent uses the legitimacy of their electoral victory as a mandate to pursue actions that gradually degrade democratic structures, often while maintaining a façade of legality or adherence to democratic processes. The *loss of democratic qualities* (or 'democratic decline,' 'decline in democratic qualities'), I understand refers to the gradual or abrupt decline in the institutional, procedural, and normative characteristics that define a functioning democracy. This includes a reduction in the quality of governance, diminished freedoms, and weakened institutional checks and balances. The

outcome manifests as the erosion of key democratic principles, including institutional safeguards, civil liberties, accountability, citizen engagement, and political competition. This democratic decline may or may not result in regime change.

To understand how autocratization processes emerge, it is essential to first define what democracy is and what it is not. A precise definition of democracy establishes a baseline against which *change* can be measured and provides criteria and benchmarks for assessing democratic governance. This baseline is essential for systematically identifying deviations and erosions that indicate autocratization. Moreover, understanding the core principles of democracy clarifies the processes and actions that undermine them, helping to identify where and how autocratization is occurring. In addition, a clear definition distinguishes democracy from other forms of government, which is vital for analyzing transitions and understanding the mechanisms that facilitate shifts within democracies, and from democratic to autocratic rule. Broadly speaking, there are two components of democracy: the *institutional* component and the *citizen* component. In minimalist definitions of democracy, elections and participation are the two defining characteristics of a democracy (Dahl, 1971). From a procedural viewpoint, democratic regimes guarantee political participation and public contestation, that is, the possibility for all citizens to choose their rulers in free and fair multiparty elections, to criticize a government or government institutions, and to compete for replacing it (ibid.). If this fundamental minimum standard, namely free and fair elections of the executive and legislative organs, is respected, the political system can be described as an 'electoral democracy.' Nevertheless, democracy remains an inherently contested concept, as there are considerable disputes over additional characteristics of democracy that extend beyond the basic interpretation that competitive elections are a necessary prerequisite for democracy (e.g., Dahl, 1971; Dunn, 2005; Held, 2006; Cartledge, 2018). This research, in addition to the minimal benchmark of democracy, analyzes liberal aspects of democracy, meaning the strength of representative institutions, such as civil society, political parties, or the rule of law, necessitating a "thick" understanding of democracy (e.g., Diamond, 1999; Marshall, 1992). Liberal democracy is characterized by the effective limitation of executive power and the protection of citizens' political and civil liberties, including the rights of minorities (Diamond, 1999). Liberal democracy is thus buttressed by government accountability, transparency, pluralism, and active citizen engagement. These principles ensure that political power is exercised responsibly, with decision-making processes open to public scrutiny, and that diverse voices, including marginalized groups, have opportunities to participate meaningfully in political discourse and governance. In contrast, autocracies are regimes where rulers gain and maintain power through undemocratic means (Geddes et al., 2014, p.317). Within autocracies, electoral autocracies hold formally inclusive and multiparty elections but restrict the ability of citizens and opposition parties to freely criticize the government and compete for power (Schedler, 2002). Closed autocracies, by contrast, do not permit the public to choose

their leaders, either legally or in practice; instead, these regimes are either led by a king (monarchy), a military (military regime/junta), or a civilian dictator (civilian-led autocracy) (Geddes et al., 2014).

Over the course of the past decade(s), an abundance of concepts and definitions of 'democratic decline' emerged. The broadest concept remains 'autocratization' (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019), which builds on a widely used fourfold regime spectrum that represents a continuum from democracy to autocracy, including liberal democracy, electoral democracy, electoral autocracy, and closed autocracy (see also Diamond, 2002; Lindberg, 2009; Lührmann et al., 2018). Based on this spectrum, autocratization is defined as a "substantial de-facto decline of core institutional requirements for electoral democracy" (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019, p. 1096). A key strength of autocratization as a concept is thus its ability to encompass the full spectrum of political regimes, from the most democratic to the most autocratic (Cassani and Tomini, 2019), encompassing democratic recession, democratic breakdown, and autocratic consolidation (see also Levitsky and Way, 2020). In contrast, concepts such as 'democratic backsliding' (Bermeo, 2016, Haggard and Kaufmann, 2016, 2021; Waldner and Lust, 2018), 'democratic recession' (Diamond, 2021), 'democratic regression' (Croissant and Haynes, 2021), 'democratic deconsolidation' (Foa and Mounk, 2016; Chull Shin, 2021), or "constitutional retrogression" (Huq and Ginsburg, 2018) focus on (specific characteristics of) democratic decline within already existing democracies, limiting its theoretical and empirical applicability. For example, Bermeo describes democratic backsliding as "the state-led debilitation or elimination of any of the political institutions that sustain an existing democracy" (Bermeo, 2016, p.5), while Huq and Ginsburg identify "constitutional retrogression" as the "decay in three basic predicates of democracy – competitive elections, liberal rights to speech and association, and the adjudicative and administrative rule of law" (Huq and Ginsburg, 2018, p.83).

Autocratization as 'umbrella' concept offers a significant analytical advantage by highlighting the procedural nature of regime transitions toward autocracy. One of the primary challenges in studying regime transitions lies in identifying the exact moment a democracy shifts into autocracy. This difficulty arises because democratic erosion often unfolds within the boundaries of existing legal and institutional norms, rendering the process less overt or dramatic. By conceptualizing these changes as part of a continuum from democracy to autocracy, autocratization recognizes that regime shifts are rarely clear-cut. It avoids the limitations of rigid dichotomies (democracy *versus* autocracy) and instead promotes the examination of nuanced, intermediary states, such as competitive authoritarianism or hybrid regimes, where democratic and autocratic features coexist. In addition, autocratization processes often follow similar trajectories but do not always culminate in full regime change (Cassani and Tomini, 2019). A regime can stabilize at an intermediate level of autocratization,

where authoritarian practices coexist with democratic structures. In some cases, autocratization can be halted or reversed through internal reforms, external pressures, or civil society resistance, allowing democratic institutions and practices to recover without a complete slide into authoritarianism (Lührmann, 2021; Tomini et al., 2023; Nord, 2024). This perspective acknowledges the inherent uncertainty of regime transitions, recognizing that autocratization is not an inevitable or unidirectional process (Schedler, 2013; Treisman, 2020).

Building on the works of Cassani and Tomini (2020) and Maerz et al. (2024), I conceptualize 'autocratization' as an umbrella term encompassing any "substantial *and sustained* decline of core institutional requirements for *liberal* democracy", regardless of the starting level of its democratic characteristics (adapted and amended from Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019, p.1096). Such a liberal understanding of democracy provides a differentiated framework for analyzing executive aggrandizement, which manifests itself not only through electoral manipulation but also through the incremental undermining of democratic institutions and freedoms. Liberal democracy extends beyond elections to encompass procedural and (extra-)institutional mechanisms that constrain executive power, such as judicial independence, a free press, and robust civil society organizations. Executive aggrandizement undermines liberal democracy by concentrating power in the executive branch and weakening institutional safeguards. Judicial independence, electoral oversight bodies, and a free press are particularly vulnerable to capture, which erodes the pluralism foundational to liberal democracy. In addition, social silencing, which includes suppressing press freedom, dissent, and opposition voices, directly curtails fundamental democratic liberties, such as free speech and the right to criticize the government. These repressive actions are better captured by a liberal understanding of democracy than by minimalist definitions focused solely on electoral procedures. The capture or neutralization of independent institutions constitutes an attack on the institutional checks and balances essential to a liberal democracy. A "thick" understanding of democracy, which incorporates the rule of law, institutional accountability, and robust checks and balances, is thus necessary to identify how institutions are co-opted or dismantled by overreaching executives. This wide-ranging perspective enables a deeper understanding of how autocratization manifests through both overt and covert means, undermining the foundations of democratic governance.

Executive aggrandizement is a subtype of autocratization, defined as the enlargement of executive power by elected leaders, particularly the chief executive, at the expense of other governmental bodies and citizens' rights. It represents a form of endogenous, state-led erosion of democratic norms and institutions (Gerschewski, 2021). This phenomenon has been observed in numerous instances, characterized by the "subversion of pre-existing constitutional arrangements, the violent suppression of political opposition, and the removal of legislative, judicial, media and civil society-driven checks and balances on the separation of

powers" (Fong, 2023, pp.1280–1281; see also Bermeo, 2016; Laebens and Lührmann, 2021, p.911). These actions result in political power becoming increasingly arbitrary and repressive, accompanied by a shrinking space for public contestation and political participation in government selection (Tomini et al., 2023, p.120). The expansion of executive power erodes institutional constraints, neutralizes political opponents, and suppresses social opposition (Bermeo, 2016; Corrales and Penfold-Becerra, 2011; Scheppele, 2018). This process systematically dismantles the institutional and normative foundations of democracy, gradually diminishing the quality and resilience of democratic governance. In this context, incumbent takeovers in democracies often maintain *de jure* multiparty elections while dismantling accountability institutions.

Accountability in democratic systems operates through three key channels – horizontal, vertical, and diagonal – each defined by the spatial relationship between actors, the type of actors involved, and the mechanisms employed to constrain government actions (Lindberg, 2013; Palumbo, 2016). At its core, accountability emphasizes the government's obligation to be answerable to both citizens and state institutions. It also functions as a "system of enforcement," where both state and non-state actors play critical roles in upholding accountability (Laebens and Lührmann, 2021; Lührmann et al., 2020; Mechkova et al., 2019; Papadopoulos, 2023; Schedler et al., 1999). Horizontal accountability refers to the internal checks and balances among the branches of government, ensuring that no single branch oversteps its authority. State institutions, such as the judiciary, legislature, and executive, monitor and constrain each other through mechanisms like judicial oversight, legislative scrutiny, and regulatory review. These measures create a legally binding, self-regulating framework within the government, sustaining democratic principles and preventing power consolidation (Laebens and Lührmann, 2021; Mechkova et al., 2019). By enforcing institutional responsibility and providing formal mechanisms for oversight, horizontal accountability plays a crucial role in preserving democratic integrity. Vertical accountability emphasizes the government's responsibility to answer directly to its citizens. This channel operates through mechanisms such as elections, public opinion, and political competition, enabling the public to evaluate government performance and influence policy. Citizens act as enforcers by voting, participating in advocacy, and engaging in the political process, holding officials accountable for their actions (Lührmann et al., 2020; Papadopoulos, 2023). Political parties also facilitate this accountability by representing public interests and offering alternatives, thereby institutionalizing an external mechanism of accountability outside formal state structures (Schedler et al., 1999). Diagonal accountability bridges the gap between state institutions and citizens by involving non-state actors as intermediaries. These actors enhance transparency and public scrutiny by monitoring government actions, reporting misconduct, and mobilizing public opinion (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005; Peruzzotti and Smulowitz, 2006). By exposing information that might otherwise remain hidden, CSOs and the media pressure

governments to maintain democratic standards and encourage state institutions to address accountability issues neglected by formal channels (Mainwaring, 2003; O'Donnell, 1998).

# Part III.
## *The Autocratic Expansion Model in Southeast Asia*

# 4. Democratic Decline in Indonesia[35]

In May 1998, Indonesia embarked on a new era of democratic reform following the resignation of President Suharto, ending over three decades of authoritarian rule. This transition, known as *reformasi*, promised sweeping political changes aimed at democratizing the country. In the years that followed, Indonesia saw the implementation of significant reforms, including the decentralization of government, free and fair elections, and the establishment of new political institutions. In addition, Indonesia made considerable strides in reforming its civil-military relations. (Mietzner, 2006; Hadiz, 2000; Lee, 2018) The "democratic system has gained credibility through the state's ability to hold local, regional, and national elections every five years" (Lee, 2018, p.222). However, in the last decade, concerns have emerged about democratic stagnation and decline, particularly under the presidency of Joko Widodo (2014 – 2024[36]). This chapter aims to answer the question of how Indonesia's democracy has declined under Widodo's leadership. I explore whether tactics of institutional capture and social silencing have contributed to the erosion of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability, the consolidation of executive power, and ultimately the erosion of democratic qualities.

I proceed in three steps. Firstly, to contextualize Indonesia's contemporary decline, section 4.1 offers an overview of the country's democratic history. I focus particularly on the political developments since Suharto's resignation in 1998 and the introduction of *reformasi*[37]. Section 4.2 analyzes the causes of Joko Widodo's electoral win in 2014. Section 4.3 consequently analyzes whether Joko Widodo used institutional capture and social silencing tactics and whether those tactics led to the erosion of accountability and the subsequent consolidation of executive power. Finally, Section 4.4 concludes with a summary of the findings. In addition, I also attend to how authoritarian legacies, weak institutionalization, and socio-political cleavages worked as drivers for democratic decline in Indonesia under Joko Widodo.

[35] For the evaluation of *empirical uniqueness and certainty*, see Appendix 3.
[36] Joko Widodo's term in office officially ended in October 2024, when Prabowo Subianto was inaugurated. However, ´this thesis excludes analysis of his final 10 months in office. This decision is driven by practical limitations, including data availability and time constraints, which prevent a full evaluation of this period.
[37] For a timeline of the major (political) events in Indonesia since *reformasi*, see Appendix 6.

### 4.1. Indonesia's Post-*Reformasi* Era: Waning Freedoms

At the end of the 1990s, against the backdrop of a devastating economic crisis[38], demands for reform, and massive student-led riots[39] (*Kerusuhan Mei 1998*) forced President Suharto's resignation on May 21, 1998, marking the end of a longtime dictatorship (1966-1998). Since then, Indonesia has been in a transitional period known as reformasi, turning the country from one of the world's most stable authoritarian regimes to one of its most vibrant multiparty democracies by introducing democratic reforms, human rights, government accountability, and advocating for an end to corruption, collusion, and nepotism (*Korrupsi, Kollusi, Nepotism,* KKN). (e.g., Crouch, 2010; Diprose et al., 2019; King, 2004; Mietzner, 2015) Between 1999 and 2002, four amendments to the 1945 Constitution were enacted[40] to institutionalize the proposed democratic reforms, including limiting presidential terms to two five-year terms, establishing a Constitutional Court, and strengthening the bicameral parliament (People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia; MPR-RI) (Eddyono, 2018). Massive decentralization reforms after decades of severe power centralization at the hands of the New Order to enhance governmental accountability and effectiveness in public service delivery by delegating authority to regional governments accompanied Indonesia's democratic reforms[41] (Matsui, 2003). The de-politicization of the military (Mietzner, 2006) the establishment of competitive elections[42], the separation of powers, and the introduction of the rule of law, have turned Indonesia into a more open political-social environment and shown increasing levels of support for democracy (Mujani et al., 2018). Moreover, a vibrant

[38] The 1997 Asian financial crisis was a period of financial turmoil that affected much of East and Southeast Asia during the late 1990s. It originated in Thailand in July 1997 and quickly spread to other countries, causing fears of a global economic collapse due to financial contagion. However, the region experienced a rapid recovery in 1998-1999, and concerns about a meltdown dissipated relatively quickly. For an in-depth analysis of the causes and drivers of the Asian financial crisis, see Haggard (2000).

[39] The May 1998 Indonesia riots were incidents of mass violence, revolutionary protests, and civil unrest in Indonesia in May 1998. The majority of the incidents occurred in the cities of Medan, Jakarta, and Surakarta, with isolated occurrences in other regions of the country. The riots were precipitated by a confluence of factors, including pervasive corruption, economic challenges such as food insecurity and widespread unemployment. The unrest ultimately resulted in the resignation of President Suharto and the dissolution of the New Order government. It was estimated that over a thousand individuals perished in the riots. As of 2010, legal proceedings regarding the riots were stalled and not completed. (Himawan et al., 2022; Utama, 2023)

[40] The amendments to the 1945 Constitution were made within four consecutive years, namely the First Amendment in 1999, the Second Amendment in 2000, the Third Amendment in 2001, and the Fourth Amendment in 2002. The objective of the amendments was to complement the fundamental principles of state governance, which had previously been susceptible to abuse of power. The aforementioned amendments resulted in the establishment of a novel blueprint for the Indonesian state administration system. Two of the fundamental principles that were adopted and reinforced in the new formulation of the 1945 Constitution were the principle of constitutional democracy, and the principle of democratic rule of law (Eddyono, 2018).

[41] Decentralization also responds to Indonesia's unique geographical context, comprising large islands and diverse ethnolinguistic conditions (Agustino et al., 2024).

[42] Between 1998 and 2024, Indonesia held six legislative elections (in 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2024) and five direct presidential and vice-presidential elections (in 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2024) that were considered democratic, along with holding hundreds of regional head elections since mid-2005.

social life emerged when New Order restrictions on the press and civil society were lifted, leading to a growth in civil society organizations (CSOs) and civic engagement (Lussier and Fish, 2012).

The first direct presidential election in 2004 was a historic milestone, with Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) emerging victorious, signaling a major step toward deepening democratic consolidation. During SBY's presidency (2004-2014), Indonesia experienced relative political stability, with a focus on consolidating democratic institutions and institutionalizing anti-corruption efforts through the Corruption Eradication Commission[43] (KPK). However, challenges such as rising religious intolerance and sectarian violence posed significant threats to democratic inclusiveness. (Aspinall et al., 2015) While democratic reforms introduced new actors into the political landscape and increased public scrutiny of the state apparatus, they were unable to fully displace the politico-business elite that had been entrenched during Suharto's rule (Hadiz and Robinson, 2004, p.12). Indeed, individuals who had been involved in the authoritarian regime led and designed Indonesia's democratic reforms, albeit from a position of having to accommodate the rising new demands of the public (Malley, 2009, p.137; Crouch, 2010, pp.7–8; Hadiz and Robinson, 2004). The armed forces, Suharto-era power brokers, and Muslim groups were the most volatile factions involved, struggling to establish their roles in a new, more democratic landscape (Dalpino, 2002; Singh, 2000). Moreover, Indonesia's decentralization efforts led to unintended consequences that persist today: "The transfer of authority from the central to the local government was done in a "big-bang" rush without much preparation and it was directed straight to the lowest level of government, districts and cities, bypassing the province (…). This ill-prepared decision created institutional problems ranging from corruption to the constant lack of capacity building at the local level" (Wiryawan and Otchia, 2022, p.2). This shift then created opportunities for local elites to gain power and control over these newly devolved resources. Combined with widespread KKN at all levels of government, this competition resulted in the entrenchment of oligarchic interests. Instead of serving the public good, many local officials prioritized their own power and wealth, reinforcing existing inequalities and marginalizing ordinary citizens. (Hadiz, 2010; Diprose and Azca, 2019, Wiryawan and Otchia, 2022)

Overall, democratic institutions in Indonesia remain of low quality (Aspinall, 2010; Aspinall et al., 2015; Horowitz, 2013), leaving room for abuses of (state) power. Political parties, for example, have remained poorly institutionalized due to several interrelated factors. The rapid transition to democracy in the wake of *reformasi* did not allow enough time for political parties to develop strong institutional foundations (Aspinall, 2005). For example, the post-Suharto era saw an explosion of political parties, many of which were formed around prominent individuals rather than clear ideologies or policy platforms (Tomsa, 2010). This has also led to

[43] The KPK was established in 2003 during Megawati's presidency (2001-2004).

limited engagement of political parties with civil society (Aspinall, 2010; Antlov and Cederroth, 2004). In addition, elected officials frequently switch parties, undermining the development of stable party structures and weakening party loyalty among the electorate (Aspinall, 2013). Besides, parties often rely on patronage networks to maintain support, which can hinder efforts to develop more formal and transparent party structures[44] (Mietzner, 2007). This fragmentation diluted efforts to build cohesive, institutionalized party structures (Ufen, 2008). In addition, the electoral system, which uses proportional representation, encourages the formation of multiple small parties, complicating efforts to build larger, more institutionalized parties, resulting in coalition governments becoming necessary. This often leads to opportunistic alliances rather than stable, long-term party institutionalization. (Sherlock, 2009; Mietzner, 2013) A contributing factor is the frequent changes in electoral and party regulations that create an unstable environment for party development. However, Indonesia suffers from weak enforcement of political and electoral laws, which allows for practices that undermine institutional development, such as vote buying and manipulation, to emerge (Tomsa and Ufen, 2013; Aspinall et al., 2017). Parties thus focus on short-term adaptations rather than long-term institutionalization (Mietzner, 2012).

Although democracy has become the dominant form of governance, the restructuring of old forces has barred Indonesian democracy from fully embracing liberal democratic norms. While during Joko Widodo's ("Jokowi") first term in office, his administration continued to focus on anti-corruption and economic reforms inter alia through infrastructure development, his second term saw an increase in tactics to consolidate executive power while diminishing checks on government. Overall, there has been a noticeable decline in safeguarding civil liberties, fewer opportunities for opposition mobilization and critical dissent, an increase in populist movements, and growing (ethno-religious) intolerance since Jokowi became president (see Figure 4.1). (Fossati and Mietzner, 2019; Hadiz, 2017; Mietzner et al., 2018; Power, 2018; Power and Warburton, 2020a; Warburton and Aspinall, 2019) As previous administrations have been unsuccessful in implementing a well-functioning institutional framework, entrenched elites and institutions have been able to persist. These long-standing structural and institutional deficiencies have had a detrimental impact on the capacity of political and social opposition to effectively address pressing policy challenges, including public health, gender equality, human rights, and environmental protection (Setiawan and Tomsa, 2022). In addition to increasing political and social polarization resulting from widening inequalities and the persistence of long-term institutional and structural problems, Indonesia's political elites have enacted laws and regulations that threaten civil liberties. Such legislation is frequently

[44] High levels of economic inequality can exacerbate clientelism, where parties rely on personal networks and material incentives to garner support rather than developing strong institutional frameworks (Hicken, 2011). Indonesia's vast geographical diversity and regional disparities contribute to a fragmented party system, with local parties and elites often dominating regional politics (Aspinall and Berenschot, 2019).

accompanied by stringent enforcement measures. (Warburton, 2020; Power and Warburton, 2020a) Researchers have noted the emergence of xenophobic populist politics, a move toward illiberal approaches in regulating civil liberties and safeguarding human rights, and the government's manipulation of state institutions to solidify its power (ibid.). While democratic stagnation already became apparent during SBY's second presidential term (Aspinall, 2010; Aspinall et al., 2015; Tomsa, 2010; see Figure 4.1), Jokowi's approach to consolidate power began with the immediate post-election period between 2014 and 2016 but intensified following the Islamist mobilization against the former Governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama ("Ahok"), and the president in 2016[45] (ibid.). Since then, Jokowi's entrenchment of power has been exacerbated (Mujani and Liddle, 2021). As a result, Indonesia's democratic consolidation process has suffered a setback, and the country has begun to de-consolidate while still maintaining its democratic status: "Indonesia is one example of a major new democracy in which authoritarian innovations have been deployed behind the façade of a widely celebrated electoral democracy" (Mietzner, 2020, p.1022).

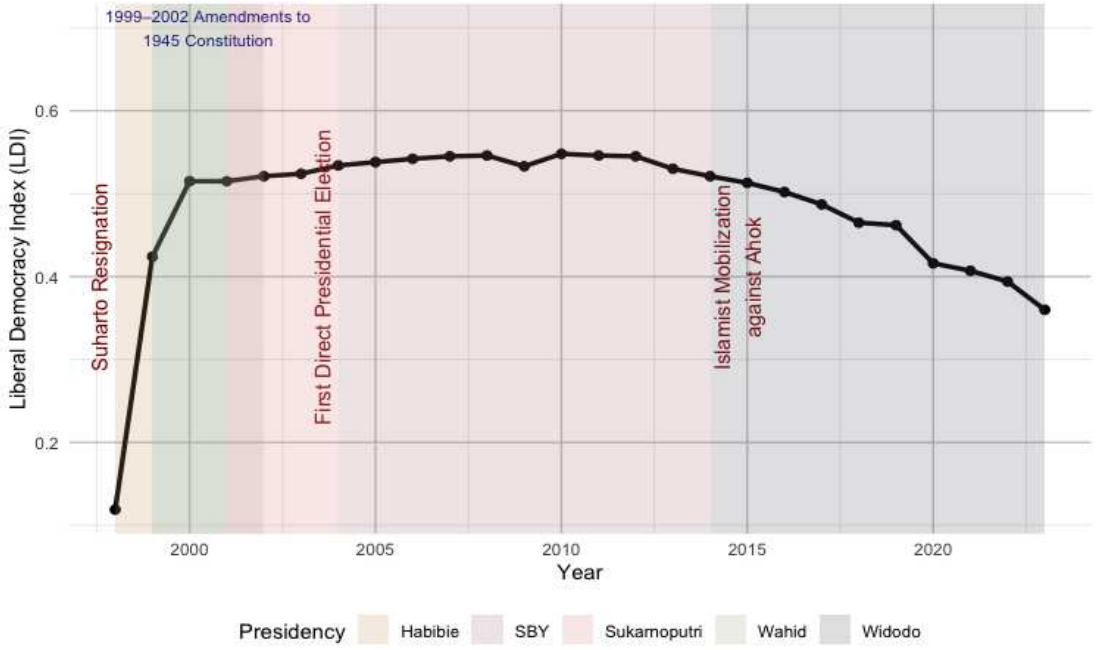


Figure 4.1. Liberal Democracy in Indonesia (1998-2023): Insights and Trends.
*Source*: The author.

The rise of executive power in Indonesia, particularly under the presidency of Joko Widodo, represents a pivotal moment in the country's political evolution. Following his electoral triumph in 2014, Jokowi's administration has pursued a multi-pronged strategy to consolidate executive authority, resulting in a discernible shift away from the democratic reforms initiated during *reformasi* (see Figure 4.1). The following section examines the specific events that have

[45] The Islamist mobilization against Basuki Tjahaja Purnama ("Ahok") in 2016 was a significant political event in Indonesia that involved large-scale protests and had wide-reaching implications for the country's politics and society. The mobilization was primarily driven by allegations of blasphemy against Ahok, who was a Christian and ethnic Chinese, in a predominantly Muslim nation.

precipitated this democratic decline, with a particular focus on Widodo's 2014 election victory and his subsequent efforts to expand executive power through institutional capture and social silencing.

## 4.2. Triggering Democratic Decline: The 2014 Presidential Election in Indonesia

The 2014 Indonesian presidential election[46] on July 9, 2014, aimed to select a successor to President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY, 2004-2014), pitting Joko Widodo ('Jokowi') from the *Democratic Party of Struggle* (PDI-P) against Prabowo Subianto ('Prabowo') from the *Great Indonesia Movement* (Gerindra). Following years of 'promiscuous power-sharing' (Slater and Simmons, 2013) under SBY and his predecessors[47], the 2014 election "*between* two populists" (Mietzner, 2015, p.xi; emphasis in original) exposed deep societal divisions, where observers framed the contest as a clash between a reform-oriented 'man of the people' (Jokowi) and a Suharto-era General with authoritarian tendencies (Prabowo) (Aspinall, 2015; Power, 2018). Narrowly winning the election with 53.15 percent of the vote, Jokowi's victory was initially perceived as a triumph for democracy (Aspinall and Mietzner, 2014; Mietzner, 2014a). Despite some initial allegations of vote fraud by Prabowo, the General Election Commission declared Jokowi the winner on July 22, 2014, paving the way for his inauguration in October of the same year and the forming of his cabinet (BBC, 2014a, b). Nevertheless, the capacity of Prabowo to amass support from nearly half the population with a populist and ultranationalist platform has illustrated the enduring fragility of Indonesia's nascent democratic norms and values, shedding light on the resilience of the nation's anti-democratic forces, which are pervasive across all levels of society and politics (Mietzner, 2014).

Joko Widodo's rise to power is intertwined with the country's authoritarian past and its efforts to consolidate democracy through *reformasi*. *Reformasi*, which sought to revise the authoritarian 1945 Constitution, resulted in a four-year constitutional amendment process that commenced in 1999 (Eddyono, 2018). This process yielded essential reforms, including the de jure implementation of the separation of powers, the removal of the military from political involvement, and the imposition of a two-term limit on presidential terms, which serves as a constitutional check against autocratic governance (Horowitz, 2013). Moreover, the implementation of democratic reforms in 1998 facilitated the formation and growth of civil

[46] Until 2014, legislative and presidential elections were held separately in Indonesia. On 9 April 2014, legislative elections were held to elect 136 members of the Regional Representative Council (DPD), 560 members of the People's Representative Council (DPR), and members of regional assemblies at the provincial and regency/municipality level. Since the 2019 General Elections, legislative, presidential, and regional assemblies have been elected on the same day. See Appendix 11.a for further information.
[47] Since President Suharto's resignation at the end of the 1990s, Indonesia has had five democratically elected presidents – B.J. Habibie (1998-1999), Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-2001), Megawati Sukarnoputri (2001-2004), SBY, (2004-2014), and Joko Widodo (2014 – 2024).

society organizations, which in turn gave rise to pressure groups advocating for democratic reforms (Fukuoka, 2013b; Lussier and Fish, 2012). *Reformasi* saw the introduction of checks and balances, and accountability mechanisms that are typical of democratic regimes, intending to constrain the executive. Since the fall of Suharto, these democratic checks and balances have, overall, served as a bulwark against the potential for democratic decline. However, ongoing challenges that precede *reformasi* continue to persist.

Historically, Suharto centralized power throughout the New Order (*Orde Baru*) by strengthening the role of the military in politics, the bureaucratization and corporatization of political and societal organizations, and the violent repression of the opposition (Aspinall and Fealy, 2010; Berger, 1997; Robinson, 1992). This was in response to the presence of a powerful military elite inherited from Sukarno's period of 'Guided Democracy[48]' (Feith, 1964; Rabasa and Haseman, 2002). Suharto intentionally accumulated patronage resources, such as state contracts, off-budget charitable foundations, and personal fortune, with the goal of co-opting (military) elites, who were then appointed to key posts in the government to mitigate elite conflict (Aspinall, 2005; Vatikiotis, 1993). The practice of placing individuals with close political ties in key bureaucratic roles has the effect of undermining the impartiality of these institutions. This has since been witnessed in a number of cases where nominations to electoral monitoring organizations or jobs connected to the election process have been viewed as politically motivated. This undermines public trust and contributes to doubts about the impartiality of the voting process (Aspinall, 2005). This practice of 'corruption, collusion, and nepotism' (*Korrupsi, Kollusi, Nepotism*, KKN) (Robertson-Snape, 1999) has persisted in Indonesian politics, perpetuating economic and social inequalities by preventing the implementation of inclusive economic policies (Znoj, 2007; Case, 1995). This dynamic has aided in the emergence of intra-party divisions (Fionna and Tomsa, 2017; Mietzner, 2008) and the persistent dominance of oligarchic elites in parliament (Fukuoka and Djani, 2016; Hadiz and Robinson, 2013; Klinken and Berenschot, 2014), limiting democratic development in the post-Suharto era.

Numerous public opinion polls have regularly shown that Indonesians strongly favor democracy. However, this support does not always extend to democratic institutions such as the government and parliament (Mauk, 2020). This can be attributed, at least in part, to the KKN's enduring legacies, which contributed to the population's democratic discontent[49] that

[48] Sukarno's Guided Democracy was an Indonesian political system that operated from 1957 to 1965. Its objective was to stabilize the country by balancing the competing political forces of the military, Islamists and communists (Lev, 2011). Sukarno wielded considerable influence under this system, subverting the function of parliamentary democracy and establishing a government reliant on his leadership and elite group consensus (Ricklefs, 2001). This strategy was designed to address Indonesia's political fragmentation and economic issues, but it ultimately resulted in heightened authoritarianism and instability (Feith, 1962).

[49] Democratic discontent is understood as widespread dissatisfaction or disillusionment with the functioning and outcomes of democratic systems (Dahlberg et al., 2014).

began to manifest during SBY's second term in office (2009-2014). Yudhoyono's particular style of leadership – compromise and stability over competition and conflict – did not lead to the far-reaching reforms necessary to dismantle the extensive influence of entrenched oligarchic networks and KKN. Instead, these informal practices were exacerbated. (Aspinall et al., 2015; Dick and Mulholland, 2016; Hadiz, 2007, 2010; Fukuoka, 2013; Klinken and Berenschot, 2014; Mietzner, 2014a, b; Winters, 2011) Yudhoyono, a former New Order general with ties to the 'old guard', was subjected to considerable criticism for his party's (*Partai Demokrat*, PD) involvement in widespread corruption scandals. Consequently, he attempted to undermine the KPK (Fealy, 2011; Mietzner, 2012, 2014; Tomsa, 2008). This resulted in a population increasingly frustrated and dissatisfied with the inner workings of Indonesia's democracy at the hands of the 'old guard' elites, reflected in the drop of approval ratings for SBY during his second term in office (Mietzner, 2014b).

Disillusioned by persisting New Order legacies and SBY's 'lame duck' presidency, Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) portrayal as a new type of leader who remained down-to-earth and close to ordinary citizens contributed significantly to his popularity (Mietzner, 2014, p.124). Jokowi distinguished himself by his likeability, pragmatism, and humble origin and lifestyle as someone with no ties to the 'old guard' military or political elites (Aspinall and Mietzner, 2014). Growing up as the son of a wood seller in Surakarta ('Solo'), Widodo demonstrated an instinct for entrepreneurship and a commitment to clean governance and grassroots initiatives such as *blusukan*[50] (Prasodjo, 2021). Jokowi's public interactions and frequent grassroots engagements resonated with the people, especially those from lower social classes and the non-Muslim population. As the first presidential candidate with no ties to the country's elites, Jokowi was the embodiment of ordinary people's desire to have 'one of their own' in government. Jokowi's image as a progressive leader was reinforced by his track record as the mayor of Solo (2005-2012) and governor of Jakarta (2012-2014). Throughout his tenure, he demonstrated decisive, transparent, and accountable leadership, focusing on health and education programs that benefit the poorer segments of society. Notably, Jokowi distanced himself from traditional party politics, countering the negative perception associated with party politicians in Indonesia. (Mietzner 2014, p.124) His past political achievements brought about significant grassroots-based support for Jokowi's presidential bid in 2014, marking a profound departure from the traditional social movements-politics relationship as previously grassroots movements seldom engaged in electoral campaigning (Sefsani and Ziegenhain, 2015).

In line with Jokowi's image as a man of the 'ordinary' people were the programmatic issues emphasized in his election campaign and his support for ethnic and religious minorities. Jokowi, for example, promised official recognition and representation of indigenous peoples

[50] *Blusukan* refers to unannounced visits to local markets and offices (Prasodjo, 2021).

in his campaign program (Sefsani and Ziegenhain, 2015). This "technocratic populist"-style (Mietzner, 2015, p.4), which promoted "inclusivism, technocratic competence, and moderation" (ibid.), awoke pervasive public anticipation that his presidency would boost the quality of the country's dysfunctional democracy by providing greater representation for marginalized groups in the political process. In contrast, Prabowo Subianto's "traditional populism" emphasized nationalism and conservatism by trying to mobilize the rural poor and members and supporters of right-wing Islam and Islamist groups (Mietzner, 2015c, pp. 4, 21). This nationalist political narrative focused on anti-foreign sentiments and a return to the authoritarian 1945 constitution. Prabowo's personal background as a former New Order military general and former son-in-law of Suharto represented a more traditional elite. (Mietzner, 2018) For others, Prabowo encompassed all the features of an illiberal leader akin to Suharto (Prasodjo, 2021). Despite Prabowo's controversial history, including allegations of serious human rights abuses, he enjoyed considerable popular support, reflected in the electoral results, and when controlling for ethno-religious and geo-political demographics[51] (Aspinall, 2015; Brooks, 2019; Mietzner, 2018; Pepinsky, 2019; Prasetyawan, 2014).

Prabowo's transformation from a discharged military figure to a political candidate manifested in a "classically authoritarian populist challenge" (Aspinall, 2015), reflecting a departure from the post-Suharto political and constitutional democratic reforms (Mietzner, 2018). Instead, what essentially boils down to a conflict between secular-political pluralism and religious-political conservatism, brought about a reemerging of historical ideological cleavages (Afrimadona, 2021). Triggered by the populist (rhetoric) style of Widodo and Prabowo (Aspinall and Mietzner, 2014), ideological sentiments were utilized to build on the one hand, the political coalition camps, and on the other hand, to frame policy issues and the respective opponent along two politico-ideological fault-lines (Mietzner, 2015d; see also Afrimadona, 2021). "The first fault line was defined by the two camps' divergent positions on the role of Islam in politics and society", while "the second fault-line (was) visible in the campaign was that between supporters of the democratic status quo and forces that wanted to either roll back reforms or demolish democracy entirely" (Mietzner, 2015d, pp.124-125). In a Muslim-majority country, Jokowi's pluralist political orientation and a coalition of pluralist parties had him at a disadvantage in such a "religiously themed campaign," which Prabowo exploited by aligning himself with conservative Islamic parties and Islamist organizations and waging a smear campaign against Jokowi (Warburton, 2020, p.27). The election results reflect the deep-rooted divide of the Indonesian population along ethno-religious fault lines, deepening in the 2019 election that pitted Jokowi once more against Prabowo. Jokowi, with his pluralist and reformist credentials, appealed broadly to diverse ethnic and religious groups, securing

[51] The ethno-religious and geo-political divide was even more pronounced in the 2017 gubernatorial elections and the 2019 General Elections (Prasetyawan, 2014; Brooks, 2019).

support in Javanese-majority areas, non-Muslim provinces, and among urban pluralists. Prabowo, while presenting himself as a nationalist strongman, capitalized less on religious identity in 2014 and more on promises of economic stability and security. By 2019, however, these divides had sharpened significantly. Prabowo's affiliation with conservative Islamic parties and organizations transformed his campaign into one deeply rooted in religious-political conservatism. His rhetoric leveraged identity politics, framing Jokowi as a threat to Islamic values and aligning himself as the defender of a more conservative Islamic identity. This allowed Prabowo to consolidate support among Muslim-majority regions, particularly outside of Java, where Islamic identity played a stronger role in shaping political preferences. Meanwhile, Jokowi's political coalition, which emphasized pluralism and secular governance, consolidated support among non-Muslim and Javanese voters but left him vulnerable to smear campaigns portraying him as insufficiently committed to Islamic values. In provinces like Aceh, a stronghold of Islamic conservatism, Jokowi's support declined sharply in both elections, reflecting the impact of these ethno-religious cleavages. In 2014, these fault lines were visible but not as stark, as economic and developmental issues played a more prominent role. Jokowi's strong performance in Muslim-majority Central and East Java and his ability to win support across a broad demographic spectrum muted the effect of identity politics. However, the groundwork for the deeper divides of 2019 was already laid, as Prabowo's nationalist-populist rhetoric hinted at the ideological contest between secular pluralism and religious conservatism. In both elections, the results demonstrate how ethno-religious cleavages, manifested in the dichotomy between Muslim and non-Muslim regions and Javanese and non-Javanese areas, shaped voter preferences. In 2014, these divides were less entrenched, but by 2019, they had become a defining feature of Indonesian electoral politics, revealing a nation increasingly polarized along lines of identity and ideology. (Pepinsky, 2019; see also Dartanto, 2018; Fossati, 2019; Aspinall and Mietzner, 2019; Widian et al., 2023)

Joko Widodo's victory, while narrow, can thus be attributed to several interconnected factors. There was widespread dissatisfaction with the functioning of democratic institutions and the continued influence of New Order elites. Despite regular elections since 2004, public trust in democratic institutions, particularly the government and parliament, was declining. This discontent stemmed from a perception that democratic reforms were not addressing deep-seated problems such as corruption, collusion, and nepotism. For many Indonesians, Prabowo encompassed all the features of Indonesia's illiberal leaders of the past with his campaign emphasizing nationalism, anti-foreign sentiments, and a return to the 1945 Constitution. Jokowi's unique appeal, on the other hand, stems from his modest background, pragmatic leadership style, and commitment to clean governance, which he demonstrated during his tenure as mayor of Solo (2005-2012) and governor of Jakarta (2012-2014). His ability to deliver tangible results at the local level boosted his credibility as a potential national leader. This resonated with voters seeking a relatable and uncorrupted leader, contributing to an

atmosphere favoring Jokowi in large parts of the country, especially among non-Muslims and the economically poorer population. Despite an increase in polarization through the utilization of rhetoric and decisive smear campaigns aimed at exacerbating historical religious-ideological cleavages, Jokowi's campaign strategy, emphasizing grassroots engagement and inclusivity, resonated with the majority of the electorate. His promise to provide greater representation for marginalized groups, such as indigenous peoples, appealed to diverse segments of society. Jokowi's candidacy thus represented a departure from the authoritarian past embodied by Prabowo, whose ties to the old regime and allegations of human rights abuses created a stark contrast to Jokowi's image as a progressive leader committed to inclusivity and moderation.

Overall, the electoral victory of Joko Widodo in 2014 signified a fundamental shift in Indonesia's political landscape. His narrow victory demonstrated a critical juncture where disillusionment with democratic institutions and the enduring influence of New Order elites and legacies converged with a strong demand for a novel form of leadership. However, Joko Widodo's two terms in office have witnessed a unique evolution in power dynamics and the consolidation of executive authority at the hands of Jokowi and his oligarchy-entrenched government. The following subchapter examines this shift through the lens of the Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM), and how tactics of institutional capture and social silencing have been utilized to consolidate executive power. Examining these tactics sheds light on how Jokowi's government has balanced democratic ideals with autocratic practices in order to expand its influence. This is particularly relevant in light of Jokowi's initial promises of inclusive and progressive governance.

## 4.3. Democratic Decline: The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM) in Widodo's Indonesia (2014-2023)

Joko Widodo and his administration, entrenched by oligarchic forces, have gone against two of the very core institutions of Indonesian democracy: its judiciary and its legislative. Within two years of assuming office, Jokowi managed to consolidate his political power by broadening his coalition and securing support from the military through a 'hands-off approach,' granting the *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (TNI) organizational autonomy and involvement in non-military domains (Mietzner, 2016b; Laksmana, 2019a, b). This consolidation of power was accompanied by a worrying trend towards populist illiberalism during his first term, with growing intolerance of dissent, the removal of reform-minded figures from his cabinet, and his political opponents being prosecuted for corruption and defamation (Power and Warburton, 2020b; Satrio, 2018). Furthermore, vital oversight institutions, such as Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), faced significant setbacks when its statute was amended, which was perceived as an effort to weaken and undermine the Commission's independence (Mulholland and Sanit, 2020). This trend has continued throughout Jokowi's second and final

term as president. A new Criminal Code has been introduced that infringes upon the rights of women, members of the LGBTQIA+[52] community, and religious minorities, as well as restricting freedoms of speech and association (HRW, 2023). In sum, through a combination of institutional capture and social silencing, Jokowi's administration has systematically dismantled accountability mechanisms. This strategy has not only facilitated the concentration of power but also accelerated the erosion of democratic norms, paving the way for a more illiberal political order. The following sections will explore how these tactics were deployed, detailing the weakening of oversight bodies, the co-optation of key institutions, and the suppression of dissent that have collectively driven Indonesia's democratic decline.

### *4.3.1. Institutional Capture*

My primary assumption is that the incumbent consolidates control over state institutions by manipulating political structures, engaging in legal and constitutional engineering, and reorganizing institutions to weaken checks and balances. This strategy predominantly targets mechanisms of horizontal and vertical accountability. Under President Widodo's administration, key institutions have seen their independence undermined, enabling the centralization of power and advancing his policy agenda. A prominent example is the weakening of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), where legislative amendments curtailed its powers and autonomy. The judiciary has also faced politicization, evident in judicial appointments and rulings influenced by political considerations. Furthermore, executive dominance over the legislature has increased, as Jokowi's coalition commands a parliamentary supermajority, stifling meaningful opposition and debate. These developments have facilitated the centralization of authority, weakening Indonesia's democratic integrity and the robustness of its democratic institutions. This section discusses how tactics of institutional capture have systematically undermined Indonesia's democratic quality. It analyzes the erosion of horizontal and vertical accountability through President Widodo's reliance on patronage networks, partisan and military appointments, and targeted institutional reforms. Furthermore, it examines how the influence of structural and institutional legacies shaped Widodo's strategic use of these institutions.

#### 4.3.1.1. Patronage and Power: Oligarchic Networks in Post-Suharto Indonesia

Political parties in democracies are essential for translating the preferences of the electorate into policies, through which government responsiveness to the people's will[53] is ensured (Dahl,

[52] LGBTQIA+ is an initial for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex and asexual. It is an umbrella term that broadly refers to all sexualities, romantic orientations, and gender identities that are not heterosexual or cisgender.

[53] However, their effectiveness is debated; some argue that parties drive governments to be more responsive (Schattschneider, 1958, p. 12), while others believe they can hinder responsiveness due to internal dynamics and competing objectives (Stokes, 1999; Hinich and Munger, 1994; Cox, 1990, 1997).

1971, p.1; Stokes, 2001; Przeworski et al., 1999). When political parties function[54] effectively, they strengthen voter satisfaction with democracy by ensuring that governance aligns with public interests. However, when parties perform poorly, this connection weakens, undermining the legitimacy of democratic governance. This is because, unlike individual politicians, political parties have longer-term perspectives and broader constituencies, enabling them to mediate between short-term, narrow interests and the broader, long-term goals of democratic representation. (Hicken, 2009, 2018) When political parties, however, are overly dependent on a ruling coalition and oligarchic interests their representative function is undermined as the interests of the few are prioritized over those of the many (e.g., Katz and Mair, 2009). In Indonesia, political parties generally remain relatively more institutionalized compared to other parties in the region (Ufen, 2012; Mietzner, 2013; Hicken and Kuhonta, 2015). However, "they still suffer from many weaknesses including (…) programmatic shallowness, pervasive corruption, elitism and lack of meaningful engagement with ordinary citizens" (Fionna and Tomsa, 2017, p.2). This 'deinstitutionalization[55]' (Yardımcı-Geyikçi and Yavuzyilmaz, 2022) has increased during Widodo's administration due to their entrenchment with oligarchic networks and the president's 'government interventionism' (Mietzner, 2016a).

At the outset of his presidential term in 2014, the opposition, the Red and White coalition[56], held the majority in the DPR (Neary, 2014). With the opposition holding a majority in the legislature, Jokowi's administration faced potential gridlock, where even minor policies or proposals could be blocked or delayed[57]. This uncertainty was increased by intra-party splits within the PDI-P and the steady rise of ethno-religious cleavages (Fukuoka and Djani, 2016; Mietzner, 2017; Aspinall and Mietzner, 2019; Pepinsky, 2019). In response, President Widodo turned the ruling coalition's 37 percent minority into a 69 percent majority between October 2014 and May 2016 by coopting the opposition parties Golkar, and PPP by "support[ing] pro-government factions in [the] two parties to help them gain the upper hand against pro-opposition forces, hence steering the parties towards support[ing] the president" (Mietzner,

[54] These functions include bringing together and representing diverse interests, reducing the costs of campaigning and public relations, improving the efficiency of legislative processes, and providing voters with a mechanism to hold governments accountable (Hicken, 2009; Rosenbluth and Shapiro, 2018).
[55] Deinstitutionalization of political parties refers to the process of deterioration in the organizational features that enhance the stability of the organization and the declining attachment of its core electorate to the party (Yardımcı-Geyikçi and Yavuzyilmaz, 2022).
[56] The Red and White Coalition was the losing coalition in the 2014 Elections, comprised of Golkar, PPP, Gerindra, PKS, and PAN.
[57] In order to consolidate their position and gain control of the new parliament, the Red and White coalition utilized their majority in the outgoing legislature to enact legislative measures. A substantial alteration to the legislative process now necessitates a vote for pivotal legislative roles instead of immediately conferring them upon the political party (PDI-P) with the majority of seats, a development that has benefited the Red and White coalition. Another controversial law passed by the outgoing parliament under SBY abolished direct elections for local leaders, favoring indirect elections by local legislatures. The Red and White coalition controls indirect elections in 31 of the 34 provinces (Neary, 2014).

2016, p.226). By 2021, two years into his second term in office[58], Jokowi had successfully coopted the majority of the opposition by including the PAN in the ruling coalition, which now held 82 percent of the seats in the DPR, creating a supermajority. Only the PD and PKS remained in the opposition (see Table 4.1). This supermajority not only gave Widodo's government greater decision-making power but also minimized elite threats by co-opting most of the opposition parties, which were ideologically rooted in nationalism or religion, into the ruling coalition. This not only made it more difficult for the small opposition to present a united front against executive overreach but also ensured Jokowi's ability to pass key legislation and to govern without significant opposition from political elites, as seen in the passage of Omnibus Law 2020[59] (Setia Negara et al., 2024), effectively insulating his administration from major political disruptions at the parliamentary level of government.

Table 4.1. Government Composition Indonesia, 2014 and 2019.

| Party | Seats 2014 Parliament | Government Position 2014 | Seats 2019 Parliament | Government Position 2019 | Change +/- 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PDI-P | 109 | Pro-government | 128 | Pro-government | 19 |
| Golkar | 91 | Opposition | 85 | Pro-government | -6 |
| Gerindra | 73 | Opposition | 78 | Opposition* | 5 |
| NasDem | 35 | Pro-government | 59 | Pro-government | 24 |
| PKB | 47 | Pro-government | 58 | Pro-government | 11 |
| Demokrat | 61 | Neutral | 54 | Opposition | -7 |
| PKS | 40 | Opposition | 50 | Opposition | 10 |
| PAN | 49 | Opposition | 44 | Opposition** | -5 |
| PPP | 39 | Opposition | 19 | Pro-government | -20 |
| Hanura | 16 | Pro-government | 0 | n/a | -16 |
| Total | 560 | | 575 | | +15 |

*Source*: The author. Amended and updated from Mietzner (2016).
*Notes*: Data from KPU (2014, 2019).
Parties that received no seats in the 2014 and 2019 elections are not represented in the table.
*Joined the ruling coalition in the 2019 cabinet.
**Joined the ruling coalition in 2021.

Joko Widodo's leadership strategy, characterized by both "government interventionism" (Mietzner, 2016) and the practice of "promiscuous power-sharing" (Slater and Simmons, 2013), highlights his unique approach to coalition building. "Promiscuous power-sharing" refers to a form of coalition-building where political parties willingly share executive power

[58] Joko Widodo was re-elected for a second term in 2019, winning 55.5 percent of the votes (BBC, 2019).
[59] The Job Creation Law ('Omnibus Law'), a flagship legislation by President Widodo, revised over 70 laws to improve investment and create jobs but faced criticism for weakening worker and environmental protections, sparking mass protests in 2020. A Constitutional Court ruling in 2021 deemed the law procedurally flawed and partially unconstitutional, requiring amendments within two years. The revised law was passed in March 2023, repealing the 2020 version (Suroyo and Sulaiman, 2022; EngageMedia, 2020; Chung, 2023).

with any significant political actor, regardless of the prevailing political cleavages in the country (Rowley and Dela Rama, 2017, p.257). Unlike the principled and durable all-inclusiveness traditionally associated with democratic processes, this approach is marked by an apparent indifference to cleavage-consistent coalitions and a readiness to shift allegiances opportunistically, often at the expense of core constituency concerns (ibid.). In Indonesia, Jokowi has employed this strategy both as a means to secure loyalty and as a mechanism for maintaining political stability. By forging alliances with diverse ethnic and religious groups, he created an image of broad-based support and legitimacy, which bolstered his governance and the decisions of his administration. This approach proved to be effective, as reflected in his widespread popular support (Muhtadi, 2023) and his re-election in 2019, where he secured victory by an 11 percent margin. Notably, Jokowi also garnered the support of political heavyweights like Golkar and the PPP – parties that had previously aligned with Prabowo's sectarian campaign in 2014 (Mietzner, 2019; cf. Table 4.1).

Such power-sharing agreements are often embedded in patronage systems[60], where loyalty to leadership is secured through long-term access to government resources, political appointments, and economic opportunities. As Brownlee (2007) explains, extending career prospects and future opportunities to political actors incentivizes their loyalty and commitment to the ruling party (p.13). By strategically distributing resources, leaders can maintain political stability, as key coalition members have a vested interest in supporting the administration. Losing access to the patronage system acts as a strong deterrent against defection. Allies benefiting from patronage are therefore less likely to oppose government policies or challenge leadership, fostering cohesion within the administration. Simultaneously, extending resources to diverse groups neutralizes potential opposition. Dissenting voices or rival factions are disinclined to resist when their own interests are served. By addressing the varied interests of these groups, leaders can build a more unified coalition capable of advancing the incumbent's agenda. (Brownlee, 2007; Geddes, 1999; Magaloni, 2008; Svolik, 2012) However, this "does not mean presidents have to share more of *their own* power or resources. It means each party in the coalition has to share more of *theirs*" (Slater, 2018, p.24, emphasis in original). This approach bolsters the incumbent's grip on power while mitigating risks of political fragmentation that could destabilize governance. In such contexts, ruling parties actively promote elite cooperation, reducing the likelihood of defection and ensuring a stable political environment.

Under Suharto's regime, the fusion of political and economic power established patronage as the primary mechanism for accessing state resources (Hadiz and Robinson, 2004). This

[60] A patronage system, also known as "spoils," is a practice whereby political actors, such as political parties, offer rewards to their supporters, friends, and relatives as an incentive to maintain their support and legitimacy. This often encompasses pork-barrel allocations, clientelism (Golden, 2003), or high-ranking appointments in politics, the military or elsewhere (Aspinall and As'Ad, 2015).

patronage system served as the foundation for elite interests and mobilized support for the authorities (Aspinall and Berenschot, 2019). Many political elites aligned themselves with the ruling party, Golkar, using it as a conduit to advance their interests through the House of Representatives (DPR) (Tomsa, 2008). *Reformasi* brought significant changes, including the adoption of a bicameral parliament[61] and the emergence of new political parties, which initially diluted the dominance of New Order elites (Asrinaldi et al., 2022). However, despite these democratic reforms, political parties became increasingly "deinstitutionalized" (Hicken, 2018; Yardımcı-Geyikçi and Yavuzyilmaz, 2022), plagued by pervasive corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN). Patronage politics and cartel-like behavior[62] persisted, with parties relying heavily on oligarchic networks[63] for financial support. This reliance perpetuated entrenched collusion between oligarchs and political elites (Slater, 2004, 2018; Mietzner, 2015).

The situation worsened following the introduction of a candidate-centered electoral system in 2009. Pragmatism and clientelism overshadowed ideology in shaping voter-party relationships and coalition-building (Aspinall, 2014; Fionna and Tomsa, 2020). Inter-party and state-party collusion became central to accessing state resources, as political parties continually sought to sustain their patronage networks. This undermined democratic representation, fostering heterogeneous and self-serving coalitions (Hargens, 2020; Slater, 2004; Ambardi, 2008). Consequently, Indonesia's political landscape evolved into what has been described as a "collusive democracy." In this system, ideological competition diminished, and cartel-like strategies enabled oligarchs to dominate decision-making, entrenching their power while limiting genuine democratic accountability (Slater and Simmons, 2013). These networks of oligarchs not only shaped political decisions but also entrenched their hegemony by weakening the *real political power* of citizens and the rule of law by increasing the oligarchy's *capital power*. (Aspinall and Berenschot, 2019; Berenschot, 2018; Bourchier and Hadiz, 2014; Mietzner, 2013, 2015a; Hadiz and Robinson, 2004; Winters, 2013, 2016)

---

[61] The DPR as one of the two elected chambers of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), the national legislature of Indonesia, enjoys considerable power compared to the upper house, the DPD. Based on the 1945 Constitution, the president does not hold the power to suspend or dissolve the DPR, while the legislature does not have full control over the President or the government, as is common in presidential systems. The DPR has three main functions, according to the Constitution, that is legislative, budgeting and oversight. This includes the drafting and passing (together with the President) bills, approving and passing the national budget, approving the transfer of state assets, and overseeing the execution of the laws, national budget, and government policies (DPR, 2024). Under the Indonesian Constitution, the powers of the DPD are limited to areas related to regional governments. The DPD can only propose and advise bills to the DPR and has no direct legislative power (Sherlock, 2007).

[62] A cartel party is a political entity that utilizes the resources of the state apparatus to maintain its position within the political system. Its modus operandi is analogous to that of a cartel, whereby the parties in question do not engage in direct competition with one another but rather collude to safeguard their collective interests and prevent the emergence of viable small-scale opposition parties. (Katz and Mair, 2018; Slater, 2004)

[63] Oligarchs formed during the expansion of market capitalism during Suharto's authoritarian rule, which paved the way for the alliance of powerful bureaucrats and big businesses to amass wealth and power over the past few decades (Sulistyo, 2002).

The Job Creation Law, widely known as the "*Omnibus Law*,[64]" stands as one of President Joko Widodo's most ambitious and controversial legislative achievements. This flagship legislation, enacted in October 2020, revised over 70 existing laws to streamline regulations, attract investment, and create jobs in Southeast Asia's largest economy. Its extensive scope covered areas such as labor rights, tax regulations, permits for mining and plantation businesses, and the establishment of Indonesia's sovereign wealth fund (Suroyo and Sulaiman, 2022). The government presented the law as a critical reform to cut bureaucratic red tape and enhance Indonesia's investment climate. However, its rapid passage, minimal public consultation, and sweeping provisions sparked significant backlash[65]. Critics, including labor unions, student groups, and environmental organizations, argued that the law severely weakened protections for workers and the environment. For instance, it simplified business licensing at the expense of environmental safeguards and diluted labor protections by easing restrictions on outsourcing and minimum wage requirements (Jazuli et al., 2022; Mahy, 2022; Arifin, 2021). The passage of the Omnibus Law highlighted the influence of oligarchic networks in Indonesia's political system. Business elites with close ties to political leaders strongly supported the legislation, seeing it as an opportunity to secure favorable regulatory conditions for their industries, particularly in infrastructure and mining – sectors historically prone to rent-seeking[66] (Kadewandana and Endrődi-Kovács, 2022; Hadiz, 1997). This alignment of interests between political elites and business leaders revealed how oligarchic networks leverage legislative processes to consolidate their power within and outside the DPR (Asrinaldi et al., 2022). Of the nine factions in the House of Representatives (DPR), six, including the ruling coalition parties PDI-P, Golkar, Gerindra, NasDem, FPKB, and PPP, approved the bill. PAN supported it with conditions, while Demokrat and PKS opposed the legislation. This majority support enabled the government to fast-track the bill's passage, demonstrating the centralization of legislative control by ruling coalitions (Arifin et al., 2022). Such practices, which prioritize expediency over consensus-building, undermine the democratic process and tempt governments to enact unlawful or procedurally flawed legislation (Hazama and Iba, 2017). Public discontent culminated in mass protests across Indonesia in October 2020, led by trade unions, student groups, and environmental advocates. Protesters criticized the government for prioritizing corporate interests over public welfare and demanded the law's

[64] Mass protests erupted in Indonesia in response to the government's decision to quietly draft the bill until it was finalized on October 5, 2020. President Joko Widodo responded to the demonstration by mobilizing the military rather than engaging in discussion, which resulted in the detention and the injuries of the protestors (BBC, 2020). The government's tactics in response to the extra-institutional mobilization are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.3.2.2).

[65] Amidst extra-institutional mobilization against these arbitrary provisions of the law (BBC, 2020; Sijabat and Paddock, 2020), this particular passage of the law was later amended (Setia Negara et al., 2024). Nonetheless, large parts of the law still benefited the oligarchy and its extensive networks.

[66] During the New Order, rent seeking was concentrated in the central government under Suharto. Due to decentralization reforms during *reformasi* where land licenses or mining permits were transferred to regional authorities, rent seeking began to center around regional governments, increasing corruption at the regional level (Kadewandana and Endrődi-Kovács, 2022; see also Hadiz, 1997).

repeal. In response, civil society groups and labor organizations filed a judicial review with the Constitutional Court. In November 2021, the Constitutional Court ruled that the law's procedural handling was flawed and that changes made after parliamentary approval were unconstitutional. The Court's ruling, which cannot be appealed, required the government and parliament to amend the legislation within two years or face its permanent invalidation. (EngageMedia, 2020; Suroyo and Sulaiman, 2022) In March 2023, the amended law was passed, repealing the original 2020 law (Chung, 2023). Despite the resilience of civil society and the Constitutional Court, by circumventing public consultation and legislative norms, the government prioritized elite interests while sidelining broader societal consensus. Such practices align with broader patterns of "collusive democracy," where ruling coalitions leverage cartel-like strategies to consolidate power, weakening ideological competition and undermining democratic representation (Slater and Simmons, 2013). The Omnibus Law also illustrates how oligarchic networks operate both within and beyond formal political structures, using state resources to entrench their influence while undermining genuine citizen participation and the rule of law. While ostensibly aimed at reform, the law's legislative process and substance reflect the deep entanglement of political and economic power in Indonesia, perpetuating a system that prioritizes elite interests over democratic accountability and equity.

The rise of oligarchic networks during Joko Widodo's administration has profoundly reshaped Indonesia's political landscape, weakening democratic processes by entrenching elite dominance over political parties and governance. The fusion of political patronage with power-sharing strategies has undermined checks and balances, allowing elites to consolidate control over policy and legislation. This dynamic is starkly illustrated by the controversial passage of the Omnibus Law. It exemplifies how patronage and elite influence have so far eclipsed public accountability in Indonesia. In democracies, political parties play a key role in aggregating voter preferences and fostering representation (Dahl, 1971; Przeworski et al., 1999). However, when these parties become co-opted by oligarchic interests, as seen in Indonesia, they primarily serve elite goals rather than the broader public good (Katz and Mair, 2009). The resulting process of party deinstitutionalization (Hicken, 2018; Yardımcı-Geyikçi and Yavuzyilmaz, 2022) prioritizes short-term elite gains over collective party objectives. This shift is driven by patronage and clientelism, weakening parties' ideological coherence and public accountability. Jokowi's coalition-building strategy, characterized by "promiscuous power-sharing," (Slater and Simmons, 2013) exemplifies such governance shaped by oligarchic interests and a system based on patronage. In such a cartelized system, political parties function largely as instruments for elite cooperation, prioritizing resource and power distribution over ideological consistency (Katz and Mair, 2009). Consequently, oligarchic dominance over legislative processes not only weakens political opposition but also fosters a "collusive democracy," weakening the legislature's representative role (Slater and Simmons, 2013).

However, Widodo inherited a political landscape deeply influenced by Suharto-era patronage systems, which persisted despite reform efforts. In such systems, even democratic leaders must navigate these entrenched norms to maintain political stability. Jokowi's formation of a "rainbow coalition" and his co-optation of opposition parties while reducing political competition reflects a pragmatic response to the realities of an oligarchic-dominated system (Mietzner, 2016). His tactics, though often linked to elite interests, represent an adaptation to Indonesia's political constraints rather than an outright intent to undermine democracy. In sum, Jokowi's actions demonstrate the challenges of governing in a system where democratic institutions coexist uneasily with entrenched oligarchic structures. While his strategies have thus reinforced elite dominance, they seem to have been shaped more by the constraints of Indonesia's political environment than by a deliberate effort to erode democratic principles.

#### 4.3.1.2. Partisan, Military Appointments, and the Military's Involvement in Security and Civilian Affairs

President Widodo has strategically filled his cabinet with loyalists, employing this tactic to maintain political stability by co-opting influential figures who might otherwise challenge his authority. While cabinet reshuffles are a standard feature in many democracies – often aimed at improving governance and ensuring accountability (Helms, 2020) – in the context of autocratization, they serve a different purpose. Such reshuffles become tools for consolidating power, weakening opposition, and centralizing authority by recalibrating political alliances to the leader's advantage. However, frequent and seemingly arbitrary reshuffles can undermine credible power-sharing arrangements with party elites, eroding trust and increasing political risks. (Kroeger, 2020) Despite these potential pitfalls, Jokowi has skillfully navigated this challenge by assembling a cabinet that not only comprises loyalists but also incorporates strategically valuable figures from the military and business sectors. This calculated approach has bolstered his grip on power, enabling him to balance competing interests while neutralizing potential threats to his leadership.

Throughout his presidency, Joko Widodo utilized strategic appointments and cabinet reshuffles to centralize power, consolidate alliances, and manage competing political and societal forces. Between 2014 and 2023, Jokowi reshuffled his cabinet thirteen – three times during his first term and ten times during his second. These reshuffles consistently prioritized individuals from three key groups: business elites connected to oligarchic networks, former military and police officials with extensive political influence, and loyalists from his coalition partners, notably the PDI-P and NasDem (see Table 4.2). This approach enabled Jokowi to maintain control over critical institutions and navigate intra-party dynamics. (Slater, 2018; Warburton, 2016) A notable trend during Jokowi's administration was the appointment of former military and police personnel to high-level government positions, reflecting a broader effort to centralize the coercive apparatus under executive control. Unlike Indonesia's civilian

administration, which underwent significant decentralization in the early 2000s, military and law enforcement institutions retained their centralized structure, making them vulnerable to political manipulation. Corruption and collusion further compounded this vulnerability, leaving key positions open to exploitation by the presidency. (Baker, 2015; Mietzner, 2023) Under previous administrations, efforts were made to depoliticize these roles. For example, President Yudhoyono often selected non-partisan figures for key positions to maintain a professional image. In contrast, Jokowi adopted a more overtly partisan approach, strategically appointing allies to powerful ministries and agencies. A prime example is the controversial 2016 appointment of Budi Gunawan, a retired police general and close ally of PDI-P leader Megawati Sukarnoputri, as head of the State Intelligence Agency (*Badan Intelijen Negara*, BIN) (Fealy, 2020; Warburton, 2016). While initially nominated for national police chief, Gunawan's eventual placement at BIN was seen as a tactical move to resolve intra-party tensions between Jokowi and the PDI-P leadership (The Jakarta Post, 2016; Muhtadi, 2015). Jokowi's strategic appointments extended to securing the loyalty of coalition partners such as NasDem and PDI-P by awarding key positions to their affiliates. For instance, NasDem member Muhammad Prasetyo became Attorney General in 2014, while Puan Maharani, daughter of Megawati, was named Minister of Human Development and Culture. These appointments reinforced Jokowi's coalition while marginalizing opposition forces. The Attorney General's Office, for example, was used to pursue corruption charges against opposition members, weakening the opposition coalition (Power, 2018). Jokowi also co-opted potential rivals, such as Gerindra's leader Prabowo Subianto, by appointing him as Minister of Defense in 2019. This move neutralized Gerindra, the cornerstone of the opposition while expanding avenues for patronage politics. Prabowo, a former New Order general with significant public support and ties to oligarchic networks, became a key figure in Jokowi's second-term strategy (Aspinall, 2015; Aspinall and Mietzner, 2019; Tambunan, 2023). Similarly, Jokowi placed trusted allies from his earlier political career in influential positions, including Hadi Tjahjanto as TNI Chief in 2017, Agus Subiyanto as TNI Chief in 2023, and Listyo Sigit Prabowo as Police Chief in 2021, leveraging his 'Solo' connection (New Mandala, 2023).

The increasing presence of private sector figures in Widodo's administration emphasizes a growing alignment between business and political interests in Indonesia. This trend is exemplified by the significant growth in assets among Indonesia's 50 wealthiest conglomerates during his presidency, even amid broader economic stagnation. Much of this wealth can be traced to companies relocating operations and forming coalitions with political figures, highlighting the deepening entanglement of business and politics (The Conversation, 2020). While only 8.11 percent of ministers in President Habibie's administration had private sector experience, this figure rose dramatically under Jokowi's leadership. By his second term (2019–2024), over 51 percent of DPR members had ties to the private sector (Warburton, 2024). One

prominent example is Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, Jokowi's Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment. Luhut, a former military general, controls substantial business interests in natural resources, power generation, and agriculture through his *Toba Sejahtra Group*, a coal-mining business. A former business partner of Jokowi, he maintains close ties with a network of ex-New Order generals and police officials who supported Jokowi's candidacy in 2014 (Greenpeace, 2021). This growing overlap between private interests and public governance signals the rise of oligarchic influence in Indonesia. The concentration of political and economic power among a small elite has led to decision-making that prioritizes corporate interests over public welfare. This dynamic was evident in the controversial passage of the Omnibus Law, which drew widespread criticism for its pro-business focus at the expense of environmental and labor protections (Asrinaldi et al., 2022). Ultimately, Jokowi's cabinet reshuffles have not only entrenched his political authority but also fostered a governance landscape increasingly dominated by oligarchic priorities.

Jokowi's second term marked an increased reliance on conservative religious forces, symbolized by his selection of Ma'ruf Amin, a prominent Islamic cleric, as his vice-presidential running mate in 2019. Ma'ruf, the former chairman of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), is considered a polarizing figure. His endorsement of the blasphemy conviction against former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama ('Ahok'), one of Jokowi's close allies, intensified ethnoreligious tensions but also neutralized criticism from conservative groups (Fealy, 2018). This alliance helped Jokowi maintain the support of *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) further solidifying his political base. Jokowi's second term witnessed a shift from broad political alliances to more personalist governance, characterized by the elevation of individuals with personal loyalty to Jokowi. His appointments, including figures from his 'Solo connection' dating back to his time as mayor (Haripin and Priamarizki, 2023), reflect an effort to build a trusted inner circle within the military, police, and key ministries. This strategy ensured elite stability against a backdrop of intra-party conflicts and his initial role as a 'political outsider' (Hadiz and Chryssogelos, 2017). Jokowi, The PDI-P's nominee for the 2014 and 2019 elections, had to make political concessions and compromises to remain in favor of the party. In 2014, for example, he appointed retired General Ryamizard Ryacudu as Minister of Defense, and in 2019, former political rival Prabowo Subianto took over Ryamizard's ministerial post (Haripin et al., 2023; Al Jazeera, 2019c). These decisions were the result power-sharing arrangement to stifle elite opposition (ibid.). In sum, Jokowi's calculated reshuffles and strategic appointments illustrate a systematic pattern of consolidating political power through control over key institutions, support of oligarchic interests, and co-optation of (former) rivals.

Table 4.2. Strategic Positions in Jokowi's Government (2014-2023).

| Name/party affiliation | Position in government under Joko Widodo | Former Military/Police Personnel | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| Muhammad Prasetyo (NasDem) | Attorney General | No | The Jakarta Post, 2014a,b,c; Arifinto, 2016 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tedjo Edhy Purdijatno (NasDem) | Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security | Yes | The Jakarta Post, 2014a,b,c; Antara News, 2014 |
| Siti Nurbaya (NasDem) | Minister of Environment and Forestry | No | The Jakarta Post, 2014a,b,c; Antara News, 2014 |
| Tjahjo Kumolo (PDI-P) | Minister of Home Affairs | No (longtime loyalist of Megawati Sukarnoputri) | The Jakarta Post, 2014a,b,c; Antara News, 2014 |
| Yasonna Laoly | Minister of Human Rights | No | The Jakarta Post, 2014a,b,c; Antara News, 2014 |
| Puan Maharani (PDI-P) | Minister of Human Development and Culture | No (daughter of Megawati Sukarnoputri) | The Jakarta Post, 2014a,b,c; Antara News, 2014 |
| Tito Karnavian | Chief of the Indonesian Police (2016), later: Minister of Home Affairs | Yes | The Straits Times (2019) |
| Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono (AHY) (PDI-P) | Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning | Yes | IDN Financials (2024) |
| Hadi Tjahjanto (PDI-P) | Coordinating Minister of Political, Legal, and Security Affairs; before: TNI Chief | Yes | IDN Financials (2024); Haripin and Priamarizki (2023) |
| Moeldoko | Presidential Chief of Staff | Yes | Haripin (2021) |
| Luhut B Pandjaitan | Minister for Maritime Affairs and Ivestment | Yes | Haripin (2021); Arifianto (2016) |
| Fachrul Razi | Religious Affairs Minister | Yes | Haripin (2021) |
| Terawan Agus Putranto | Health Minister | Yes | Haripin (2021) |
| Prabowo Subianto | Minister of Defense | Yes | Al Jazeera (2019c) |
| Ryamizard Ryacudu | Minister of Defense (2014-2019) | Yes | Kwok (2014) |
| Wiranto | Coordinating Minister of Political, Legal, and Security Affairs. | Yes | Kingsbury (2016) |
| Agus Subiyanto | TNI Chief | Yes | Haripin and Priamarizki (2023) |
| Listyo Sigit Prabowo | Police Chief | Yes | Haripin and Priamarizki (2023) |

*Source*: Compiled by the author.

In addition to strategic appointments of loyalists in key government positions, the military has (re)assumed its role in domestic security and civilian affairs under the Jokowi administration. Since the onset of reformasi, Indonesia's civil-military relations have demonstrated a tension between efforts to democratize the government and the military's enduring influence. Reforms in the late 1990s and early 2000s sought to reduce the military's political role by separating the police from the military[67], the military from the ruling Golkar party[68], abolishing

[67] The separation of the TNI and the *Polri* resulted in the TNI assuming exclusive responsibility for national defense, while the *Polri* was tasked with domestic law enforcement, a role that required it to report directly to the president (Kosandi and Wahono, 2020).

[68] During Suharto's regime, the military played three main roles: First, the military played the role of guardian of Suharto's dictatorship. Military personnel and Suharto's civilian loyalists occupied the national parliament, significantly weakening the body. Second, national defense and military organization policies were inextricably linked to supporting Suharto's regime structure. The armed

the dwifungsi doctrine, which had allowed the military to play an active role in civilian administration, and removing military representation in legislative bodies such as the DPR (Gunawan, 2017; Hafidz, 2006, p.119; Kosandi and Wahono, 2020). These changes were legally institutionalized by 2004[69] and aimed to professionalize the military and limit its authority over civilian affairs (Hafidz, 2006, Kosandi and Wahono, 2020). However, informal channels and strategic positioning have allowed the military to retain a key role in Indonesia's political and social landscape (Haripin, 2019; Kosandi and Wahono, 2020; Mujani and Liddle, 2021).

By the 2014 legislative elections, military influence began to noticeably re-emerge, as seen in the success of political parties led by retired generals, such as Gerindra and Hanura (Kosandi and Wahono, 2020). Under President Joko Widodo, this influence expanded further. Jokowi appointed retired military and police officers to key positions, relying on their support to navigate intra-elite conflicts and solidify his power base. This reliance also ensured the protection of military "corporate interests" and the expansion of roles traditionally outside its domain, including involvement in business, education, infrastructure, and other civilian activities (Laksmana, 2019a, p.69; Kurlantzick, 2023). Despite the formal prohibition on the military's involvement in politics and business following *reformasi*, the institution has continued to engage in business activities through informal channels. For instance, the military has retained ownership of ventures such as *Reka Daya Kartika*, a palm oil plantation business, reflecting the persistence of its economic interests even after reforms intended to eliminate such practices. (Angela and Kosandi, 2019) This enduring entanglement in business aligns with broader efforts by the military to maintain its influence outside formal political structures, highlighting the limited enforcement of *reformasi* goals in curbing its non-military roles. At the same time, the military's territorial command structure has remained intact and has even expanded since *reformasi*. During the New Order era, this structure was a critical tool for controlling local governments, conducting political intelligence operations, and securing military interests across Indonesia. (Kosandi and Wahono, 2020, p.233) While *reformasi* sought to dismantle the military's pervasive influence, its territorial presence has enabled the continuation of these practices in new forms, particularly in regions where military and business interests intersect. This territorial command system has further been bolstered by increased government investment in the military, with President Joko Widodo

forces accepted the dual-function doctrine (*Dwifungsi* ABRI). Third, the Suharto government paid little attention to improving defense capabilities and modernizing the national defense strategy against external threats. In particular, the government's threat assessment emphasized the low likelihood of external military aggression and instead favored an inward-looking defense policy (Gunawan, 2017).

[69] In the early 2000s, the State Defense Law (2002) and the Law on the Armed Forces of Indonesia (2004) mandated the military's complete departure from its political and business activities (Gunawan, 2017; Kosandi and Wahno, 2020).

nearly doubling the defense budget from $5.7 billion to $8.9 billion between 2014 and 2020 (Laksmana, 2019a, p.69).

Legislative changes during Jokowi's tenure reinforced these developments. The 2018 amendments to the 'Anti-Terror Law' (Law No. 5/2018) granted the military direct involvement in counterterrorism operations, a domain previously overseen by the police (Haripin et al., 2023). This amendment led to the creation of the Special Operations Command (KOOPSUSGAB) and increased the scope of military authority (Keizer and Franke, 2019; McBeth, 2019; The Jakarta Post, 2018a, b). Moreover, the law gave *Polri* greater powers to detain suspected terrorists, enabling preemptive arrests (McBeth, 2019; Suryadinata, 2018). While anti-terrorism legislation is a legitimate tool for any democratic state to combat terrorist threats, concerns have been raised about the potential for misuse of the law against political and social opposition. These concerns are based on the observation that the broad and vague definitions[70] within the legislation lower the threshold for prosecution, expand the latitude of state security forces in dealing with perceived threats, and broaden the definition of terrorism. Furthermore, the lack of clear regulatory oversight[71] has been identified as a potential vulnerability in this context. (Amnesty International Indonesia, 2018; McBeth, 2019; Anindya, 2024; Williams, 2022) These fears materialized at the latest in 2021, when the government designated the *Organisasi Papua Merdeka* (OPM), a separatist movement in Papua, as a terrorist organization. This label facilitated the deployment of military forces to Papua under counterterrorism legislation, leading to heightened surveillance, mass arrests, and the militarization of the region. Papuan activists opposing policies such as the division of Papua into smaller provinces in 2022 faced heavy suppression under this framework (Williams, 2022). For the Indonesian government, controlling Papua is about more than addressing separatist violence – it is about safeguarding the nation's perceived unity, legitimizing state authority, and maintaining the appearance of a strong state. However, this approach has undermined political freedoms, deepened militarization, and exacerbated tensions in the region (cf. Chapter 4.3.2.1.).

The Widodo administration's decision to expand the military's powers, as evidenced by developments during the COVID-19 pandemic and the passage of the 2023 New Civil Service Law (ASN Law), can be understood as a calculated response to multiple political, institutional, and practical challenges. This expansion reflects both immediate governance needs and

[70] The May 13, 2018, bombings in Surabaya signaled a shift in the nature of, and government response to, terrorist attacks in Indonesia. The bombings hastened the parliament's approval of amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Law, which resulted in a broad and arbitrary definition of terrorism and, among other things, gave the police more pre-emptive arrest powers (Suryadinata, 2018).

[71] The revised Anti-Terror Law should have been followed by a regulation defining its clear role and how its separated or complements the work of Detachment 88 (national police counter-terrorism squad) and the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) (McBeth, 2019). However, this regulation has never been passed, leaving the anti-terror unit without proper oversight (Anindya, 2024).

broader political strategies that prioritize stability and consolidation of power over the principles of civilian supremacy. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the military's extensive healthcare network and logistical capacity positioned it as an indispensable actor in managing a public health crisis of unprecedented scale. In a context where civilian institutions often lacked the infrastructure and resources to respond effectively, delegating significant responsibilities to the military was a pragmatic choice for the Widodo administration. This reliance reinforced the military's institutional credibility and entrenched its role in civilian governance, making its expanded powers appear both natural and necessary to the public (Setiyawan, 2023; The Economic Times, 2024). Beyond the immediate crisis, the passage of the ASN Law in 2023 reintroduced provisions allowing active military personnel to occupy civilian roles and enabling civilians to assume certain military and police positions. This development reflects a deliberate strategy to integrate the military more closely into the state apparatus, a move reminiscent of the *dwifungsi* doctrine of the Suharto era (Laksmana, 2022). For the Widodo administration, this policy serves several purposes. First, it helps secure the loyalty of a powerful institution with deep-rooted political and social influence, ensuring the military's alignment with the administration amidst intra-elite competition. By granting the military access to civilian roles and increasing its formal powers, the administration reinforces the military's vested interest in maintaining the political status quo. Second, expanding the military's authority is a response to perceived threats to national stability, such as separatist movements, protests, and political opposition. By embedding the military more deeply in governance, the administration strengthens its ability to manage dissent and enforce its policies. The military's broad network, territorial command structure, and public perception as the "most trusted state institution" (Setiyawan, 2023) make it an effective tool for asserting state authority, particularly in regions like Papua where separatist sentiment and anti-government protests remain significant challenges. Finally, the expansion of military powers reflects Widodo's governance style, which prioritizes pragmatic alliances and centralized control over adherence to reformist ideals. By leveraging the military's capabilities and granting it expanded roles, Widodo consolidates his power base and mitigates risks posed by potential rivals or destabilizing forces. This approach demonstrates a shift away from the democratic reforms of the *reformasi* era and emphasizes the enduring influence of institutional actors like the military in shaping Indonesia's political landscape. In sum, the Widodo administration's willingness to expand the military's powers stems from a combination of governance necessities, strategic calculations, and the military's institutional leverage.

Joko Widodo's consolidation of executive power throughout his presidency reflects a deliberate strategy intertwined with structural adaptations to Indonesia's entrenched political and institutional dynamics. By appointing loyalists from the military, business elites, and political coalitions to key cabinet positions, Jokowi co-opted potential rivals and fortified his

administration's control over critical government institutions. His repeated cabinet reshuffles, including the high-profile appointment of ex-military figures like Prabowo Subianto, were not merely acts of political pragmatism but carefully calibrated moves to neutralize opposition, secure oligarchic support, and ensure dominance over strategic ministries. However, Jokowi's centralization of power was as much a product of Indonesia's political system as it was of his own design. The country's post-Suharto political landscape has been shaped by the persistence of oligarchic networks, military influence, and a deeply entrenched patronage system. These legacies, which prioritize elite interests over public accountability, created a framework in which Jokowi's reliance on military elites, business figures, and former rivals was not optional but essential for governance. Rather than reshaping the system, Jokowi navigated and adapted to its demands, exemplifying how power-sharing and clientelism continue to define Indonesia's political process. Jokowi's efforts to consolidate authority, such as the passage of the controversial Omnibus Law and the strategic co-optation of elite networks, were calculated moves to strengthen his administration. Yet, these actions also reveal the structural constraints that limited his ability to govern independently of entrenched norms. The influence of oligarchs, military actors, and patronage networks not only dictated the terms of political survival but also reinforced a system resistant to reform. As a result, Jokowi's presidency reflects both a deliberate strategy to centralize power and a pragmatic response to the enduring realities of Indonesia's oligarchic, patronage-driven political system.

#### 4.3.1.3. Political Opportunism: The KPK and the Constitutional Court

The establishment of Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*, KPK) and Constitutional Court (*Mahkamah Konstitusi*, MK) in 2003 marked pivotal steps in the *reformasi* movement, aimed at combating corruption and establishing independent governance mechanisms (Mediana et al., 2021; Power, 2020, p.279; Power and Warburton, 2020a, p.9). As a symbol of this commitment, the KPK quickly gained a reputation as one of the world's most effective anti-corruption agencies, prosecuting high-profile officials and recovering several state assets in its early years (Coca, 2016; Kuris, 2012; Butt, 2012). However, under Joko Widodo's two terms as president, the KPK and MK experienced significant erosion of independence, with the KPK in particular becoming a tool for consolidating executive power rather than a bastion of accountability.

During its formative years, the KPK demonstrated remarkable independence, successfully prosecuting over 40 high-ranking officials and recovering millions in state assets between 2003 and 2009 (Kuris, 2012; Butt, 2012). Its autonomy, protected under the 2002 KPK Law, allowed the commission to act as a rare check on Indonesia's entrenched corruption networks (Butt, 2012). This effectiveness persisted through Joko Widodo's first term, with the agency initiating hundreds of investigations and achieving numerous convictions, including cases involving sitting government ministers, political party leaders, and parliamentarians (Dick and

Mulholland, 2016). By then, the KPK had solidified its reputation as a trusted public institution both domestically and internationally (Coca, 2016; Kuris, 2012; Butt, 2012). However, the KPK's assertiveness drew ire from oligarchic elites and other entrenched power structures. Efforts to undermine its authority included framing commissioners, weakening anti-corruption courts, and reducing its budget (Tomsa, 2015; Johnson, 2015). Institutional tensions, particularly with the State Police (*Polri*), began to escalate during SBY's presidency and continued under Jokowi. A flashpoint occurred in 2015 when the KPK prosecuted Budi Gunawan, the sole nominee for national police chief. This triggered retaliatory measures, including criminal charges against KPK officials and a controversial pre-trial ruling that overturned the case against Gunawan (Muhtadi, 2015, p.360). Simultaneously, the House of Representatives attempted to revise the 2002 KPK Law, aimed at curtailing the agency's investigative powers[72]. Faced with public opposition to these proposed revisions, Jokowi initially shelved these changes in 2015. (The Jakarta Post, 2015a) Widodo's decision to shelve the proposed revisions to the 2002 KPK Law in mid-2015 was a calculated response to growing public outcry. This decision was likely influenced by his need to bolster his political legitimacy as a reformist leader, a reputation he cultivated during his rise to the presidency. However, tensions persisted, culminating in the resignation of two KPK commissioners under police pressure and the appointment of new commissioners reportedly aligned with Jokowi and oligarchic interests (Power, 2018, p.331). Despite these challenges, the KPK retained a degree of independence throughout Jokowi's first term, enabling it to continue high-profile investigations, including subnational corruption cases involving 143 regional leaders by 2020 (Suswantoro, 2021). In the context of Indonesia's post-Suharto decentralization, where local governments gained more fiscal and executive authority, the creation of local clientelistic networks became essential for maintaining political control (Wiryawan and Otchia, 2022). This decentralization fragmented power and allowed local elites to pursue their own interests, often conflicting with national priorities (Firman, 2009). By nurturing clientelistic networks, regional elites increasingly obstructed the KPK's operations, signaling a shift in the balance of power.

Jokowi's second term marked a turning point in the KPK's trajectory. The passage of the 2019 KPK Law significantly weakened the commission's independence by bringing it under executive control and requiring presidential approval for investigative actions such as wiretapping (Butt, 2019; Trianita, 2019). This legislative change, signed amid pressure from figures like PDI-P chair Megawati Sukarnoputri, coincided with allegations of corruption against high-ranking political figures, including Megawati's son (Leahy, 2022). The law also allowed the government to appoint KPK commissioners directly (A'Yun and Mudhoffir, 2019),

[72] This plan was included in the 2015 National Legislation Program (*Prolegnas*), a list of law deliberation targets set by lawmakers and the government (The Jakarta Post, 2015a).

leading to controversial appointments such as Firli Bahuri, a police general with allegations of ethical violations (The Jakarta Post, 2019), or Idryanto Seno Adji, a former lawyer of Suharto and expert adviser for the Head of the National Police (*Kapolri*) (Mudhoffir, 2022, p.14). Moreover, the practice of recruiting staff from within the police, which itself is plagued by systemic corruption, creates conflicts of interest that hinder effective anti-corruption efforts involving the police or other state-linked institutions (Mudhoffir, 2022; see also Buttle et al., 2016; Quah, 2020). This politicization of the KPK's operations served to reinforce the perception of a decline in the institution's autonomy. Investigators faced physical intimidation, such as the 2017 acid attack on Novel Baswedan, who was investigating a major embezzlement case involving parliament speaker Setya Novanto[73] (Karensa, 2017; Nirmala, 2020). Simultaneously, smear campaigns[74], including accusations of Taliban influence among investigators, sought to delegitimize the commission (Baker, 2023; Wijayanto and Berenschot, 2021). Jokowi's second term also saw the KPK subjected to ideological and populist pressures. In 2021, Firli Bahuri implemented a controversial "national vision exam" to dismiss 57 KPK investigators and staff members, accusing them of insufficient allegiance to the *Pancasila*[75] ideology (Schütte, 2021; Baker, 2023). This action enabled the government to replace critical staff with loyalists, justified under the guise of national unity and patriotic framing, further eroding the institution's independence. Lastly, Article 11 of the KPK Law constrains the commission's capacity to investigate cases perceived to garner "public attention," thereby further curbing its operational capabilities (Juwita, 2019). While these tactics have certainly led to a concentration of power in the hands of the Jokowi administration, "a predominantly anti-political approach among civil society activists mainly aim(ed) [at] establish(ing) new institutions and policy designs to generate reforms, [has allowed] entrenched power relations to remain unchallenged and to pervade new institutions" (Mudhoffir, 2023, p.62).

The cumulative impact of these changes was a decline in the KPK's effectiveness. Investigations involving members of the national parliament and ministries dropped significantly by Jokowi's second term, correlating with a rise in public sector corruption and diminished trust in the commission (Isaac, 2024; Moch, 2020; Transparency International, various years). Meanwhile, laws such as the 2020 Mining Law and the Omnibus Law further entrenched oligarchic interests (Fernando et al., 2023; Asrinaldi et al., 2022), reflecting a broader pattern of governance aimed at consolidating executive power rather than strengthening accountability. In conclusion, the systematic weakening of the KPK during Jokowi's

[73] Novanto was subsequently jailed for 15 years in April 2018 (Leahy, 2022).
[74] For more on the political and social role and history of 'buzzers' in Indonesian campaigns, see Seto (2019).
[75] *Pancasila* is the foundational philosophical theory of Indonesia, consisting of five principles: 1. Belief in the one and only God; 2. Just and civilized humanity; 3. The unity of Indonesia; 4. Democracy is guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations among representatives; 5. Social justice for all Indonesians. Introduced by Sukarno, Indonesia's first president, Pancasila was meant to unify the diverse archipelago and promote national unity. (Siregar, 2024)

presidency, particularly in his second term, exemplifies the misuse of legal mechanisms to consolidate power and protect political elites, a form of "autocratic legalism" (Corrales, 2015). By subordinating the KPK to executive control, the administration has undermined Indonesia's anti-corruption framework, contributing to a decline in democratic governance and the reassertion of oligarchic dominance. This trajectory marks a significant reversal of the *reformasi* ideals that initially gave rise to the KPK as an independent watchdog.

The Constitutional Court (MK), once regarded as a highly independent judicial institution (Eddyono, 2018), has undergone a significant decline in autonomy during Joko Widodo's presidency, mirroring the co-optation observed in other key institutions like the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK). In young democracies, such as Indonesia, constitutional courts play a vital role in safeguarding democratic principles, protecting citizens' rights, and curbing executive overreach (Rudy et al., 2021). Historically, the MK exemplified "judicial activism" and "de facto independence," adjudicating critical political cases and challenging excessive executive authority (Dressel, 2014, p.264; Dressel and Inoue, 2018). However, under Jokowi, a troubling pattern of judicial politicization has emerged, undermining the post-authoritarian framework that sought to establish independent checks on power.

This erosion began early in Jokowi's administration with the formation of symbiotic relationships between the judiciary and executive power. While Suharto's New Order regime centralized power in Jakarta (Sidel, 1998; Gunn, 1979), Jokowi's administration extended this control through an oligarchic network embedded within a decentralized bureaucracy (Wiratraman, 2022). This network of capital owners has exerted growing influence over state institutions, further compromising judicial independence (ibid.). Notably, the 2020 amendments to the Constitutional Court Law, which extended judges' tenure and raised the minimum appointment age to 55, were framed as enhancing independence but instead entrenched loyalist judges, allowing them to remain in power for longer periods while limiting accountability and judicial turnover (Butt, 2020). This entrenchment diminishes the frequency of judicial turnover, limiting opportunities for the system to address biases or misconduct and curtailing accountability (ibid.). Jokowi's strategic co-optation of key figures has also contributed to this decline. In 2017, he appointed Saldi Isra, a prominent anti-corruption activist, to the Constitutional Court. While this move was seen as an attempt to incorporate an independent voice, it simultaneously reduced the likelihood that Isra would mobilize against government policies from outside the state apparatus (The Jakarta Post, 2017, 2020). The court's erosion became particularly evident in 2022, with the removal of Deputy Chief Justice Aswanto, who had been critical of the government's Omnibus Law. Despite his term being scheduled to run until 2029, Aswanto was dismissed with the assistance of the president, a move widely interpreted as retaliation for his independent rulings (Asshiddiqie, 2022; Lai, 2022). His replacement, Guntur Hamzah, swiftly faced allegations of ethical misconduct after

evidence emerged that he had altered Constitutional Court rulings to justify Aswanto's dismissal, exposing deep issues of integrity within the judiciary (Asshiddiqie, 2023). In a functioning democracy, the judiciary serves as a mechanism for preventing authoritarian tendencies and the abuse of power (Ginsburg et al., 2009). However, Appointing or removing judges based on their political alignment with the ruling party, rather than their qualifications and dedication to the rule of law, marks a significant deviation from democratic principles. Prioritizing political loyalty over legal integrity erodes the foundations of fairness, justice, and equality under the law. This practice not only diminishes public trust in the judiciary but also compromises its capacity to serve as an effective check on government power. The Constitutional Court's involvement in electoral politics further emphasizes its growing susceptibility to executive influence. In October 2023, the court lowered the age requirement for presidential and vice-presidential candidates, enabling Jokowi's son, Gibran Rakabuming, to run for vice president in the 2024 elections (Nikkei Asia, 2023; Llewellyn, 2023; Strangio, 2023a). This "brazen decision to intervene on behalf of a sitting president's son" (Pepinsky, 2024) showcases a blatant lack of judicial impartiality, and reflects the judiciary's susceptibility to nepotism and political manipulation. While Usman was dismissed in November 2023 due to clear partiality, the ruling in favor of Gibran remained in place (The Jakarta Post, 2023).

Beyond the MK, executive influence extends to other judicial institutions, with the Attorney General's Office (AGO) and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) being weaponized against political opposition. As the 2024 elections drew closer, the criminalization of opposition figures intensified, targeting members of coalitions such as NasDem, PKS, and PD, who endorsed Anies Baswedan as presidential candidate (Jakarta Post, 2023). A notable example of these politicized legal actions occurred in May 2023, when the AGO arrested Johnny G. Plate, NasDem's secretary-general and Minister of Communication and Information Technology, on corruption charges (Al Jazeera, 2023; Strangio, 2023b). This prosecution dealt a significant blow to NasDem, weakening one of Anies Baswedan's key supporters (Al Jazeera, 2023; The Jakarta Post, 2022). NasDem's support of Anies had already placed the party at odds with Jokowi's administration, leading to a clear shift in government attitudes towards the party (ibid.). The campaign of selective prosecution further fractured Anies' coalition, exacerbated by internal disputes over his decision to select Muhaimin Iskandar (PKB) as his running mate, which alienated Democratic Party chairman Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono and pushed the party to join Prabowo Subianto's camp (Tsauro and Susilo, 2023; Paat, 2023). The breakdown of Anies' coalition can be seen as the cumulative effect of both external legal pressure and internal political maneuvering, each of which benefited Jokowi's administration by fracturing the opposition and endorsing Prabowo and his running mate, Joko Widodo's son, instead. Similarly, the AGO played a critical role in dissolving the United Indonesia Coalition (KIB), composed of Golkar, PAN, and PPP, by leveraging corruption investigations against Golkar chairman Airlangga Hartarto (The Jakarta

Post, 2023). These efforts illustrate a pattern of legal mechanisms being wielded to suppress dissent, eliminate opposition, and consolidate executive power in favor of Jokowi's administration and his preferred candidates in the 2024 elections. The cumulative impact of these developments is a judiciary increasingly aligned with executive interests, reminiscent of the authoritarian manipulation observed during Suharto's New Order (Butt, 2023; Wiratraman, 2022). The politicization of judicial institutions has weakened their ability to act as independent arbiters, undermining public trust in the judiciary (Loasana, 2024) and contributing to the erosion of democratic governance in Indonesia.

Overall, the systematic weakening of Indonesia's legal institutions, specifically the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and the Constitutional Court (MK), under President Joko Widodo's administration exemplifies the deliberate erosion of democratic safeguards in favor of consolidating executive power. This calculated dismantling of institutional independence reflects a strategic move to neutralize perceived threats to the ruling elite's dominance. Autocratic legalism (Corrales, 2015) illustrates how formal legal mechanisms are employed to consolidate power under the guise of legality, while simultaneously repressing opposition. The KPK, once an emblem of Indonesia's anti-corruption efforts, has been systematically undermined through legislative reforms, selective prosecutions, and manipulations of its governance structure. Reforms to the KPK Law diminished its independence, subordinating it to the executive branch by placing it under the supervision of the executive. Changes to the appointment processes have further entrenched executive influence. Key leadership appointments now favor individuals with ties to political elites, weakening the commission's ability to independently investigate high-profile corruption cases. This co-optation of the KPK reflects an effort to insulate oligarchic networks from scrutiny, ensuring the protection of powerful political and economic interests. Similarly, the Constitutional Court has transitioned from a bulwark of judicial activism to an institution aligned with executive interests. This shift stems from alterations in judicial appointment processes that grant the executive and legislative branches greater control over the selection of justices. The appointment of loyalists and individuals with close ties to ruling elites has significantly curtailed the court's independence. Once a key institution for reviewing controversial legislation and checking executive overreach, the MK now prioritizes decisions that align with the administration's agenda, including rulings on electoral laws and governance that entrench the political status quo. The manipulation of legal mechanisms and appointment processes reflects a broader strategy to neutralize perceived risks. From the government's perspective, independent institutions such as the KPK and MK posed threats to executive authority and oligarchic networks. By weakening these bodies, the administration preemptively mitigates potential challenges from judicial rulings, corruption investigations, or independent electoral oversight. This approach ties together with Indonesia's *political cartelization*, where elite networks collaborate to maintain power by monopolizing key legal

and institutional levers at the expense of democratic institutions (see Chapters 4.3.1.1. and 4.3.1.2.) This trajectory mirrors the rise of a form of 'pragmatic authoritarianism' in Indonesia, where the guise of legality is employed to justify repressive measures against dissenting voices. The strategic co-optation of judicial and fourth-branch institutions enables the government to suppress opposition and civil society under the pretense of upholding the rule of law. By consolidating control over these institutions, the executive effectively disarms mechanisms that could challenge its authority, entrenching an authoritarian framework under the veneer of democratic governance. In summary, the weakening of the KPK and MK demonstrates a calculated effort to consolidate executive power in Indonesia. By manipulating appointment processes and leveraging legal reforms, the government has transformed institutions once dedicated to accountability into tools of repression. This consolidation reflects not only a strategic response to perceived threats but also a systematic reconfiguration of Indonesia's democratic institutions to favor the ruling elite at the expense of democratic principles.

### *4.3.2. Social Silencing*

My second assumption is that the incumbent consolidates control through the obstruction of civic space, authoritarian enforcement, and state-controlled narratives. This strategy primarily targets mechanisms of diagonal accountability. While Indonesia's democratic progress began to stagnate slightly after 2010 (Mietzner, 2012), it was only under President Joko Widodo that the military and oligarchic elites began to seriously consolidate their influence, with Jokowi granting himself the power to ban non-governmental organizations. This democratic decline was not solely driven by elites but was also shaped by lingering historical legacies and rising societal polarization, particularly after the anti-Ahok protests in 2016 (Jaffrey, 2020; Mietzner, 2021). Additionally, the government has increasingly resorted to forceful measures to suppress dissent, as seen in the student protests of 2019 and 2020, where security forces used tear gas and water cannons to disperse demonstrators (The Guardian, 2019; Lamb, 2019; Firdaus, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2019a, b). These developments have ultimately facilitated the centralization of executive power by curbing the apacity ofcivil society and the media to perform their essential democratic roles: acting as a watchdog to hold the government accountable (Robet et al., 2023). This section explores how tactics of social silencing have systematically weakened Indonesia's democratic quality, primarily focusing on the erosion of diagonal accountability by analyzing the weaponization of laws the role of security forces to curb dissent, as well as the undermining of media freedom.

#### 4.3.2.1. The Weaponization of Law: Restricting Freedoms in Post-*Reformasi* Indonesia

The latter half of the 21st century witnessed a pronounced shift in Indonesia's democratic trajectory. Democratic norms were systematically eroded through the strategic deployment of legal and extralegal mechanisms. This regression, often framed under the guise of maintaining public order and stability, represents a textbook case of "autocratic legalism" (Corrales, 2015).

A defining characteristic of this trend was the increasingly repressive actions under President Joko Widodo's administration. These actions included violent responses to civil society movements (Figure 4.2) and preemptive legal measures aimed at quelling opposition[76]. The Jokowi administration utilized both overt and covert strategies, leveraging laws and decrees to criminalize dissent, signaling a shift toward authoritarian governance.

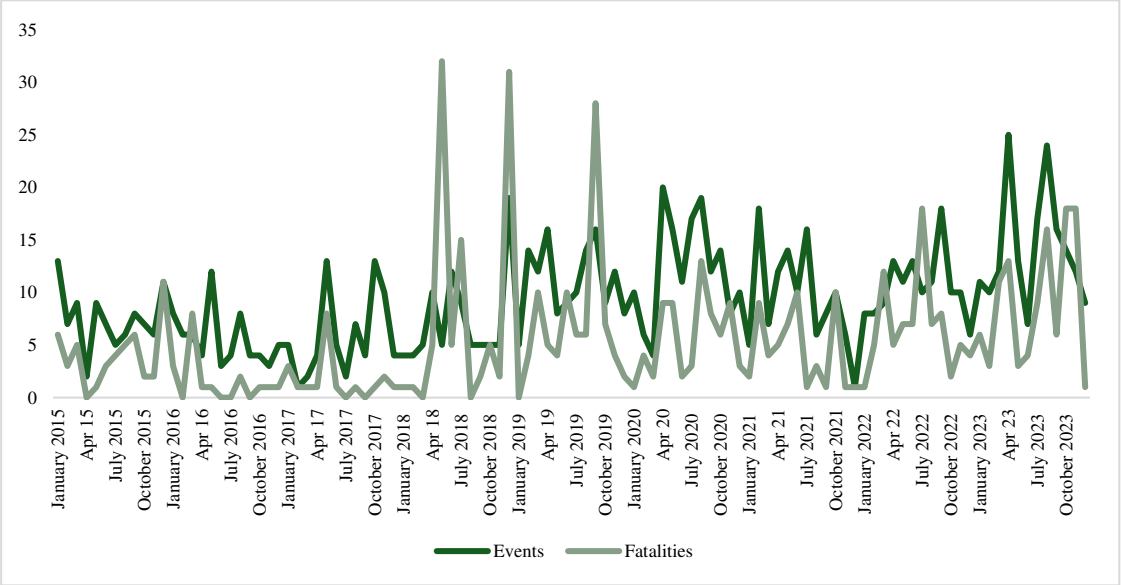


Figure 4.2. Total number of reported civilian targeting and fatalities in Indonesia by month, January 2015-December 2023.
*Source*: The author. Data by Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED, version 3), 2023.
*Notes*: Civilian targeting events include violence against civilians-events, and explosions/remote violence events in which civilians were directly targeted.

The groundwork for democratic regression was laid during the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY). Two pivotal legislative acts, the 2008 Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law[77]) and the 2013 Law on Mass Organizations (NGO Law), provided a legal basis for suppressing civil liberties. While the 2008 ITE Law was initially framed as a measure to regulate digital spaces, it contained vaguely defined defamation provisions that allowed the criminalization of dissenting voices. By targeting activists, journalists, and ordinary citizens, this law institutionalized discouraging critical discourse in public and online spheres (HRW, 2013; Mann, 2021; Amnesty International Indonesia, 2022). The 2013 NGO Law granted the executive sweeping authority to dissolve civil organizations without judicial oversight, undermining the principle of freedom of association, and signaling a broader trend of restricting civil society's autonomy (Hamid and Gammon, 2017). These laws, framed as democratic safeguards, institutionalized mechanisms of repression that subsequent administrations, particularly under Joko Widodo, exploited to consolidate power.

[76] See Appendix 9.a for a list of passend and or amended laws and decress in Indonesia during the presidency of Joko Widodo.
[77] The ITE Law has been revised twice since. The first amendment was issued in 2016, and the second amendment was passed by the House of Representatives on 5 December 2023 and signed into Law by Widodo on 2 January 2024 (Agi Legal, 2024).

Jokowi's initial years as president were characterized by progressive rhetoric, including promises to relax restrictions on foreign journalists in Papua[78] and reform repressive laws. However, these commitments remained largely superficial. While access for foreign journalists to Papua was nominally granted, stringent controls persisted (The Jakarta Post, 2015b, c; HRW, 2015). Despite these claims, human rights abuses continued unabated. The Human Rights Monitor, *Imparsial*, documented 192 cases of attacks on human rights defenders between 2014 and 2021, ranging from physical violence and intimidation to imprisonment and even murder (Imparsial, 2022). Several other human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), or Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) reported similar coercive tactics targeting the media. In practice, although foreign journalists were officially allowed to broadcast in and from Papua, their movements were closely monitored. This suggests that the government sought to portray a progressive image without making meaningful reforms. The government aimed to influence international perceptions of the deteriorating political and social situation in Papua by downplaying the violence and human rights abuses taking place there. (Amnesty International, 2015; RSF, 2018; AJI, various years)

Although penalties under the ITE Law were reduced, prosecutions soared, targeting activists, journalists, and private citizens, exacerbating self-censorship (Hamid, 2017; Freedom House, 2023). These contradictions signaled Jokowi's early balancing act between reformist aspirations and pragmatic consolidation of political power. Under Jokowi, the ITE Law evolved into a central tool for stifling dissent as prosecutions escalated during his first term (Table 4.3). The trend deepened with the enactment of the Anti-Terror Law (2018), which expanded the government's latitude to target dissenters under the guise of national security: Journalists, activists, and Indigenous Papuans became frequent targets of surveillance and repression (Civicus, 2022, 2023; Setiawan, 2020; SAFEnet, 2021, 2023). The deployment of Cyber Drone 9[79] in 2018 intensified "digital authoritarianism," amplifying the states' ability to suppress online dissent (Setiawan, 2020). The repression of online freedoms paralleled efforts to control narratives, marginalizing critical voices and fostering widespread self-censorship. Particularly in Papua, the increase in "autocratic legalism" (Corrales, 2015) and the introduction of Cyber

[78] The Papua conflict represents an enduring struggle in Western New Guinea between Indonesia and the Free Papua Movement (*Organisasi Papua Merdeka*, OPM). It commenced following the replacement of Dutch control by the Indonesian administration in 1963. The separatist movement in Papua seeks independence or a federation with Papua New Guinea. It accuses the Indonesian government of severe human rights abuses, including extra-judicial killings, violence, and suppression of expression (Freedom House, 2018a). International entities, including the United Nations, have drawn attention to the "shocking abuses" (United Nations, 2022) occurring in the region and have called for humanitarian aid to be provided. However, Indonesian authorities have restricted foreign access to the area, citing security concerns.

[79] *Cyber Drone 9* is an online system designed to detect potential content violations (Setiawan, 2020). Detrimentally affected by blocking of websites have since been especially minority groups, such as the LGBTQIA+-community (Freedom House, 2018b).

Drone 9 have had negative implications. The increase in online monitoring has facilitated political repression (Hamid, 2017; Amnesty International, 2018, 2020). Civic space, however, is essential to democracy as it allows citizens to freely exchange ideas and participate in public life. When people fear legal consequences or social retaliation for expressing their views, public discourse declines, hindering the ability to address critical societal issues effectively. In addition, Law No. 2/2021 on Papuan Special Autonomy ('Special Autonomy Law') centralized fiscal and administrative control, marginalizing indigenous representation in the DPRP and MRP, and intensifying protests that were met with excessive force by Indonesian security and law enforcement agencies (Supriatma, 2021; Amnesty International Indonesia, 2022). These measures illustrate a systematic approach to eroding judicial oversight and entrenching executive authority

Table 4.3. Individuals charged under the ITE Law – Comparison of SBY and Widodo.

| | *SBY (2008-2014)* | *Widodo (2014-2019)* | *Increase in %* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Private citizens* | 54 | 152 | 181.48 |
| *Journalists* | 3 | 22 | 633.33 |
| *Government officials* | 4 | 19 | 375 |
| *Politicians* | 2 | 3 | 50 |
| *Activists* | 9 | 12 | 33.33 |
| Total | 72 | 208 | 188.89 |

*Source*: The author. Amended from Setiawan (2020).

During Jokowi's first term, the intertwining of legal repression with rising conservatism manifested in targeted actions against two seemingly opposing groups: the LGBTQIA+ community and Islamist organizations. Both were framed by the government as threats to Indonesia's national identity and security, albeit for different reasons. This dual targeting reflects the government's strategic alignment with societal conservatism, which enabled greater state control while marginalizing groups perceived as politically or culturally disruptive. Publicly, Jokowi's administration projected an image of inclusivity, with rhetorical gestures such as calling on police to provide physical protection to LGBTQIA+ individuals (Coren et al., 2019; Kine, 2016; Sapiie et al., 2018; Wilkinson et al., 2017). However, these gestures lacked meaningful follow-through. De jure protections were insufficient, and de facto implementation of laws addressing violence and discrimination was virtually nonexistent. This gap between rhetoric and action highlighted the administration's prioritization of political optics over substantive reforms to protect marginalized groups. In practice, legal mechanisms such as the ITE Law were weaponized during Jokowi's first term to marginalize groups labeled as promoting "radical ideologies" (Tisnadibrata, 2017). The LGBTQIA+ community became a significant target, as rising societal conservatism painted their visibility and advocacy as contrary to national values. For example, the censorship of LGBTQIA+ content and the prohibition of online platforms for gay networking coincided with a surge in anti-LGBTQIA+

sentiment in politics and society (Swaragita, 2018; HRW, 2016a; Siregar, 2018; Kwok, 2016; Davies, 2016a). Conservative factions feared that greater LGBTQIA+ visibility could mirror progressive movements in other nations, which they perceived as a cultural threat (Kwok, 2016; Davies, 2016a). Senior government officials amplified these fears by framing LGBTQIA+ advocacy as a national security issue, depicting LGBTQIA+ activism as a "proxy war" orchestrated by Western nations to destabilize Indonesian sovereignty (Davies, 2016a; Hutton, 2016; Harsono and Knight, 2018). Consequently, the administration rejected aid aimed at reducing violence and discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals, citing conflicts with Indonesia's national identity and values (Rodríguez and Murtagh, 2022; Wiratraman, 2020). The rejection of foreign funding for LGBTQIA+ initiatives, however, also aligned with broader postcolonial resistance to external intervention. Indonesia's historical legacy of asymmetric economic dependencies and external interference has entrenched public skepticism toward perceived "Northern" or "Western" influence (Poppe and Wolff, 2017, p.16). Such measures often received domestic support, as seen under previous administrations and increasingly under Jokowi (Balendra and Silver, 2023; see also Davies, 2015). These policies were not limited to LGBTQIA+ issues; they extended restrictions on foreign research permits, including the banning or deportation of researchers whose work was critical of government policies (Wiratraman, 2020). By navigating these public sentiments, Jokowi's administration justified restrictions on civil society and marginalized groups under the guise of protecting national sovereignty and values. At the same time, these measures institutionalized discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community under the pretense of safeguarding cultural and religious integrity (Harsono and Knight, 2018).

Parallel to the repression of LGBTQIA+ communities, Jokowi's administration targeted Islamist organizations, particularly during politically volatile periods such as the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial elections. Groups such as the *Islamic Defenders Front* (Front Pembela Islam, FPI) and *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia*[80] (HTI) were accused of undermining democratic processes and national stability. In mid-2017, the government passed a decree[81] allowing the dissolution of civil society organizations without judicial oversight (Hadiz, 2017). This decree was first used to disband HTI, a nonviolent Islamist group, under the justification of protecting democracy and *Pancasila*, Indonesia's state ideology (Al Jazeera, 2017). In aaddition, minor critics of the government were targeted, and later, criminal charges for offenses such as treason, hate speech, and blasphemy were brought against high-ranking members of the FPI

[80] The HTI played a pivotal role in orchestrating the anti-Ahok demonstrations that were held mainly in Jakarta at the end of 2016. The protests serve as a reference point for a widespread Islamist mass mobilization across the country. The November demonstration in Jakarta was attended by an estimated 50,000–200,000 individuals and was aimed at Ahok based on alleged blasphemy of the Quran. A counter-demonstration led by government officials and social activists in support of interfaith unity was held on November 30. (BBC, 2016a, b)

[81] The decree amended the existing law regulating mass organizations.

and its leader, Habib Rizieq Shihab (Sulistiyanto, 2018). By framing its actions as necessary to protect national unity, Jokowi's administration not only suppressed Islamist dissent but also expanded executive control, echoing patterns of repression seen during the New Order era (Polymenopoulou, 2018; Yulius, 2017; Garcia Rodriguez, 2024). The banning of the FPI in 2020 further exemplified this approach, with the government citing violations of *Pancasila* as justification (The Jakarta Post, 2020a). The simultaneous targeting of LGBTQIA+ advocacy and Islamist mobilization reflects the rising societal conservatism that shaped Jokowi's governance. While these groups represented different ideological threats, they were both portrayed as challenges to Indonesia's national identity. Repression of the LGBTQIA+ community catered to conservative factions emphasizing religious and cultural values, while actions against Islamist groups targeted forces perceived as politically destabilizing. These actions demonstrated the government's alignment with traditional societal norms to bolster its legitimacy. Jokowi's administration used legal tools, such as the ITE law and the 2017 decree, to justify repression. Both LGBTQIA+ advocates and Islamist leaders were framed as radical elements threatening democracy and *Pancasila* (Polymenopoulou, 2018; Harsono and Knight, 2018; Hadiz, 2017; Sulistiyanto, 2018; Yulius, 2017), allowing the state to position itself as a defender of national values and unity.

Initially, Jokowi tolerated conservative forces, including Islamist groups, to consolidate his initially weak political position during his first term, and the prioritization of economic programs over ideological sentiments (Muhtadi, 2015; Warburton, 2016). However, as Widodo's political position solidified following his 2019 re-election, the administration increasingly relied on authoritarian measures to suppress dissent, targeting groups on both ends of the ideological spectrum (Mujani and Liddle, 2021). Revisions to Indonesia's ITE Law and the enactment of the new Criminal Code in 2022 significantly broadened the scope for arbitrary criminal prosecution. Initially designed to replace colonial-era legislation[82], the Criminal Code was an opportunity to protect civic freedoms and recognize sexual and reproductive rights. However, it instead included problematic provisions[83], which criminalize sexual relations outside marriage, restrict abortion, and stifle dissent against the state

[82] The predecessor to the new criminal code was the *Wetboek van Strafrecht voor Nederlandsch Indie* (WvS), introduced by Dutch colonists in 1918 (Butt, 2023).

[83] The new law criminalizes consensual sex outside of marriage and cohabitation of unrelated persons. Since same-sex marriage is not recognized in Indonesia, the provisions effectively render same-sex sexual conduct illegal. The law also recognizes "any living law" in the country, which could be interpreted as legitimizing hundreds of discriminatory regulations based on Sharia (Islamic) law that local authorities have imposed in jurisdictions across the country, including curfews for women and girls, mandatory hijab dress codes, and provisions that could impact the rights of the LGBTIA+ community. The new law maintains provisions criminalizing abortion and expands criminalization to include providing information about obtaining abortions or providing information about contraception to children. The law's blasphemy chapter was expanded to include an article criminalizing apostasy. The law also criminalizes speech insulting or demeaning senior government officials or state institutions and expands articles on criminal defamation and "fake news". (IFJ, 2022; Harsono, 2022; see also Butt, 2023)

philosophy, *Pancasila* (Butt, 2023). The morality provisions partly enacted to garner public support ahead of the 2024 elections (Jaffrey and Warburton, 2022) also reflect the conservative Islamic shift, leading to a sharp rise in the criminalization of free speech in Widodo's second term, with Indonesian police, the public, and state apparatus enforcing these laws (Amnesty International Indonesia, 2022, 2024; Ambyo, 2023; SafeNet, 2023; see Figure 4.3). For example, Anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric and censorship increased, bolstered by the Criminal Code's morality clauses and preexisting blasphemy laws (Swaragita, 2018; HRW, 2016a, 2023; Siregar, 2018).

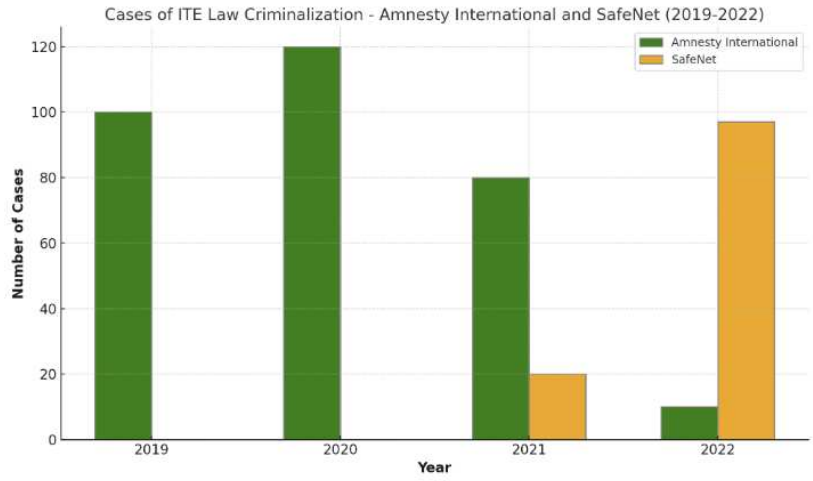


Figure 4.3. Individuals prosecuted under the ITE Law under the Jokowi administration (2019-2022).
*Source*: The author. Based on data from Amnesty International Indonesia (2022) and SafeNet (2023).

Before the 2019 elections, the government already used various tactics, such as arrests and investigations, to suppress opposition groups they perceived as a threat (Aspinall and Mietzner, 2019). However, with the increase in protests in response to legislative amendments like the KPK Law (2019), ITE Law (2023), and the Criminal Code (2022) during Widodo's second term (2019-2024), perceived as curtailing civic space, (extra-)legal suppression not only increased but also shifted in its nature. Initially, the government's actions seemed aimed at securing Widodo's re-election in 2019 by complying with Indonesia's conservative shift (Power, 2018). However, this alignment with conservatism extended beyond mere rhetoric. Repressive legislative frameworks, such as the 2008 ITE Law and the pornography law, were weaponized against marginalized groups, including the LGBTQIA+ community (Hegarty, 2022; Harsono, 2018; Wieringa, 2019). These laws, with their broad and vague provisions, thus facilitated censorship, criminalization, and the erosion of personal liberties. This period marked the foundation of autocratic legalism under Jokowi, where repressive measures were framed as legal safeguards for national security and cultural values. Jokowi's re-election in 2019 marked a turning point, as his administration's repressive tactics shifted from election-focused measures to a broader strategy of executive consolidation. The student-led protests in September 2019, opposing amendments to the KPK Law and the passing of the Criminal Code

represented Indonesia's largest pro-democracy movement in two decades (Jaffrey, 2019; Al Jazeera, 2019a, b; HRW, 2019a, b; Lamb, 2019). Protesters argued that the amendments, which weakened Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), infringed on personal liberties and symbolized a capitulation to rising radical Islamic influence (ibid.). The government's response was marked by reactive tactics of state violence and coercion. Security forces employed excessive force, detaining and intimidating demonstrators, particularly students (HRW, 2019a, b; Al Jazeera, 2019a, b). While the protests initially succeeded in postponing revisions to the Criminal Code, the movement to protect the KPK ultimately dissipated by October 2019, highlighting the administration's ability to suppress dissent through intimidation and force (HRW, 2019a, b; Lamb and Teresia, 2022). This period highlighted the transition from reactive suppression aimed at securing electoral success to proactive measures designed to expand executive control.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided a new context for Jokowi's administration to intensify its repression. Critics of the government's pandemic response and other controversial policies, such as the amended Criminal Code, were targeted through arrests and legal intimidation (Amnesty International Indonesia, 2022; Reporters Without Borders, 2020; SAFEnet, 2021). The broad provisions of the ITE Law became a primary tool for silencing dissent, with its "catch-all" nature enabling the prosecution of virtually any form of criticism (Reporters Without Borders, 2020; SAFEnet, 2021). Simultaneously, the government enacted measures to institutionalize censorship and control civil society. The incorporation of parts of the 1965 Blasphemy Law[84] into the Criminal Code in December 2022 expanded executive power to prosecute perceived blasphemy and apostasy (HRW, 2023). This move reinforced the intertwining of religious conservatism with state repression, as opposition and dissent were increasingly framed as threats to religious harmony and national stability. By Jokowi's second term, the consolidation of power thus became increasingly evident through a series of legislative amendments that restricted civic freedoms. Despite Widodo initially ordering the "socialization" of the Criminal Code, it was enacted in December 2022[85] and incorporated measures that further curtailed personal and civil liberties, including provisions criminalizing criticism of state institutions and infringing on freedoms of expression (ibid.). By framing opposition or criticism as religious blasphemy, the state could now justify legal actions against political opponents and civil society activists. While prosecutions under the blasphemy law have been used under previous administrations to eliminate perceived threats to "national security" (Crouch, 2012), there has been a considerable increase under Jokowi, exemplified by high-profile cases like that of Ahok, which highlighted the ITE Law's role in targeting

[84] The 1965 Blasphemy Law, originally designed to empower religious leaders and safeguard the conventional interpretation of Indonesia's recognized religions, identified deviant beliefs as potential threats to social order.
[85] The DPR enacted the revised Criminal Code on December 6, 2022, which was subsequently signed into law by Widodo on January 2, 2023. It will become effective in January 2026 (HRW, 2024).

minorities and critics during Joko Widodo's first term (Butt, 2018; Harsono, 2018). Since the incorporation of the blasphemy law into the Criminal Code, charges due to alleged blasphemy have further increased (Harsono, 2018, 2022; Llewellyn, 2023).

President Joko Widodo's administration has embodied the duality of governance marked by autocratic legalism, wherein repressive measures are cloaked in legality and framed as responses to societal and security challenges. This strategy reveals a deliberate balancing act, leveraging both conservative and progressive legislative agendas to consolidate power, suppress dissent, and appease conflicting societal factions. First, Jokowi's governance draws heavily on legal precedents established during the administration of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), illustrating a historical continuity in autocratic legalism. Laws such as the ITE Law, Blasphemy Law, and morality provisions in the Criminal Code were refined and weaponized to target opposition groups, marginalized communities, and activists. This institutionalization of repression underlines the enduring role of legal frameworks in undermining democratic rights while maintaining a veneer of legitimacy. Second, the intertwining of religious conservatism with state repression was a defining feature of Jokowi's second term. By aligning with conservative Islamic values, the government enacted legislation and rhetoric aimed at winning support from Muslim constituencies and elites. Anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric, defamation laws, and blasphemy charges were employed to marginalize groups deemed disruptive to traditional values. The framing of LGBTQIA+ advocacy as a "proxy war" orchestrated by Western nations reflects the instrumentalization of societal conservatism to justify repression. At the same time, Jokowi's administration rejected foreign funding for LGBTQIA+ initiatives and restricted critical research permits, aligning with postcolonial resistance to perceived Western interference. These measures resonated with domestic sentiments, bolstering support for the government while shrinking civic space. Third, Jokowi adeptly exploited crises, such as the 2019 student protests and the COVID-19 pandemic, to justify repressive actions. The 2019 protests against the KPK Law amendments, Indonesia's largest pro-democracy movement in two decades, were met with violent suppression and intimidation. Similarly, the pandemic was used as a pretext for heightened censorship and arrests targeting government critics. These actions reflect a strategic use of crises to consolidate executive power under the guise of maintaining stability and security. While repressive measures were thus a large part of Jokowi's governance strategy during his second term, selective progressive reforms, such as the Sexual Violence Law passed in 2022, reveal a calculated effort to manage dissent. This landmark law, long delayed due to resistance from religious conservatives, was enacted following public outrage over high-profile rape cases (Strangio, 2022c). Such reforms can be understood as concessions designed to reduce pressure, limit economic and political costs from mass mobilization, and appease reformist factions without undermining the broader authoritarian trajectory (Mueller, 2022). This juxtaposition of conservative repression and selective progressivism exemplifies Jokowi's

ability to navigate competing societal pressures. On one hand, he appealed to conservative forces by reinforcing traditional values through rhetoric and legislation; on the other hand, he strategically addressed specific grievances to prevent large-scale unrest and mitigate the political costs of escalating protests.

The cumulative effect of these policies has been the systematic erosion of large parts of Indonesia's democratic norms. The intertwining of religious conservatism, digital authoritarianism, and judicial erosion has created a climate of fear and repression that stifles public discourse (Civicus, 2022). Marginalized groups, particularly LGBTQIA+ communities, have faced institutionalized discrimination under the pretense of safeguarding cultural and religious integrity, while dissenters have been silenced through intimidation and violence (HRW, 2018; Wieringa, 2019). All in all, Jokowi's administration exemplifies a governance model that selectively suppresses dissent and marginalizes vulnerable groups while balancing competing societal forces. By aligning with religious conservatism and leveraging crises, Jokowi has solidified executive power at the expense of civil liberties. Nevertheless, selective concessions, such as the Sexual Violence Law, illustrate the nuances of Jokowi's governance strategy, wherein limited progressive reforms serve as instruments to manage unrest and maintain control. The strategic integration of repression and reform has enabled Jokowi to navigate the demands of a pluralistic society while consolidating state authority, ultimately undermining Indonesia's democratic resilience.

#### 4.3.2.2. Violence as Governance Tool: The Security Forces' Role in Stifling Political Dissent

Indonesia's democratic governance under President Joko Widodo has experienced significant erosion, marked by a shift from a rule-of-law framework to one dominated by strategic political objectives. This evolution reflects an expansion of executive authority that undermines judicial independence, curtails civil liberties, and weakens democratic institutions. Indonesia's early 2000s democratic transition was characterized by reforms that depoliticized the military, established an independent judiciary, and created pivotal institutions like the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and the Constitutional Court (Aspinall, 2010; Ziegenhain, 2016; Nordholt, 2005). However, under Jokowi's administration, these democratic pillars have deteriorated, with law enforcement increasingly weaponized to suppress dissent and consolidate political power. This centralization of authority under Jokowi has reversed earlier progress in limiting executive overreach. Key institutions designed to safeguard democracy, including law enforcement agencies, have been co-opted to curtail protests and target opposition voices. This centralization has not only compromised the independence of these bodies but has also resulted in the selective application of the law, serving political interests rather than justice. (Aspinall and Mietzner, 2019; Power, 2018) A notable example of this decline occurred following Jokowi's reelection in May 2019. Protests by supporters of his rival,

Prabowo Subianto, were met with a disproportionate response, including mass arrests, deployment of security forces, and social media restrictions (Aspinall and Mietzner, 2019; BBC, 2019a; Deutsche Welle, 2019a). While these actions were framed as measures to maintain national security, they highlight the state's selective approach to certain dissent and the use of force to suppress dissent. Such actions illustrate a deeper institutional shift, where law enforcement operates not as an impartial arbiter but as an instrument of the ruling elite. This authoritarian trend extends beyond isolated incidents. Jokowi's first term (2014-2019) marked the onset of what scholars have described as an "illiberal turn" in Indonesian politics (Diprose et al., 2019). Successive events, including the government's handling of protests against amendments to the KPK Law and the aggressive suppression of dissent in Papua, reveal a broader pattern of state-sponsored violence and repression (see also Chapter 4.3.1.3; see Table 4.4). These developments suggest a systematic erosion of civil and political rights, which contradict the foundational principles of democratic governance. While some may argue that the state's actions, such as the heavy-handed response to the 2019 unrest, were exceptional and necessitated by specific circumstances, the broader pattern of suppression indicates otherwise. The consistent use of state apparatus to quell dissent and marginalize opposition reflects a deliberate strategy to entrench executive dominance at the expense of Indonesia's democratic principles.

Table 4.4. Overview of key incidents of political violence in Indonesia (2014-2023).

| Incident | Year | Description | State Response | Casualties/Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jakarta Governor Election Protests | 2016 | Protests led by Islamist groups after Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) was accused of blasphemy. | Clashes with police and conviction of Ahok. | Increased religious tensions; multiple injuries during protests; conviction of Ahok intensified public divisions. |
| Papua Conflict Escalation | 2018-2020 | Separatist violence and protests in Papua, including the killing of 19 workers by separatist groups. Clashes between Indonesian military and separatists. | Deployment of military; forceful suppression of separatist activities. | Numerous civilian and military casualties; displacement of civilians; August 2019 riots left dozens dead. |
| Post-Election Riots | May 2019 | Supporters of Prabowo Subianto protested after Jokowi's re-election, alleging electoral fraud. | Security forces used tear gas, rubber bullets, and water cannons to disperse crowds. | At least 9 deaths, hundreds injured, and significant property damage in Jakarta. |
| Omnibus Law Protests | October 2020 | Widespread protests against the Omnibus Law on Job Creation, seen as undermining labor and environmental protections. | Police used tear gas, water cannons; mass arrests of protesters in major cities. | Hundreds of injuries, arrests, and heightened public dissent toward the government. |
| Papua Autonomy Law Protests | 2021-2022 | Protests in Papua against revisions to the Special Autonomy Law, perceived as reducing local control. | Police dispersed protests with force; clashes between separatist groups and the military. | Deaths and injuries reported; increased tensions between local Papuans and state authorities. |
| 2022 Indonesian Student Protests | April 2022 | Student protests triggered by rumors regarding a delay of the 2024 elections and proposal of amending the Constitution to allow a third presidential term. | Police arrested protesters and dispersed demonstrations. | Temporary detentions of students; protests raised public awareness of democratic concerns. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fuel Price Hike Protests | September 2022 | Protests across Indonesia in response to sharp increases in fuel prices. | Police used tear gas and water cannons; numerous arrests reported in major cities. | Clashes with security forces led to injuries and temporary detentions; economic dissatisfaction remained high. |
| Anti-Mining Protests | 2021-2023 | Protests by environmental activists and local communities against mining operations in Sulawesi and Kalimantan. | Police and private security forces clashed with demonstrators. | Arrests and injuries reported; environmental concerns gained national attention. |
| 2023 Land Rights Protests | 2023 | Indigenous communities protested against land seizures for development projects in Kalimantan and Sumatra. | Security forces forcibly dispersed protests; negotiations with affected communities initiated. | Injuries and detentions; growing focus on indigenous rights and environmental degradation. |
| LGBTQ+ Rights Protests | 2017-2023 | Rising protests and violent clashes over LGBTQ+ rights, fueled by societal conservatism and increasing activism. | Crackdowns on LGBTQ+ gatherings and activists; arrests reported. | Increased societal polarization; human rights organizations raised international awareness of discrimination issues. |

*Source*: Compiled by the author.
*Notes*: Non-exhaustive list.

The sporadic yet systematic deployment of state violence in Indonesia has been enabled and exacerbated by a shifting legal framework under President Widodo (cf. Chapter 4.3.1.3). Enhanced powers granted to the state security apparatus, combined with a "high degree of impunity for [their] illegal behavior" (Strangio, 2022a), have led to the arbitrary restriction of democratic freedoms. This has fostered an increasingly authoritarian environment. Authoritarianism has further entrenched itself through pervasive corruption and administrative malfeasance. The high costs associated with political candidacies and bureaucratic promotions compel many elites to engage in illicit activities, creating a system where political success is closely tied to corruption (Mietzner, 2007, 2015a; McLeod, 2008). Consequently, most political and bureaucratic elites are legally compromised but evade consequences by leveraging their wealth and influence. Indonesia's legal institutions, as described by Cribb (2011), function as "systems of exemptions," selectively applying laws based on social and economic power rather than enforcing them consistently. Historically, the unequal application of the law in the post-New Order era was driven more by economic and social disparities than overt political bias. However, under President Jokowi, the legal system has become increasingly partisan. Allies of the president enjoy greater legal immunity, while opponents face harsher consequences. This shift has heightened the political implications of the legal system, as Jokowi's administration systematically exploits illegality to shield supporters and punish adversaries (Tomsa, 2015). The legal shift under Jokowi, marked by the politicization of law enforcement and the selective application of justice, has facilitated and legitimized violent state repression. By granting immunity to allies and targeting opponents, the administration has institutionalized the use of force to suppress dissent and enabled widespread corruption. This erosion of legal impartiality allows the state to frame repressive actions as necessary for maintaining order. In reality, such actions serve to protect those in

power and stifle opposition, marking a deepening authoritarian turn in Indonesian governance.

A case in point remains the Papua conflict in which state violence is justified citing national security by labeling armed groups in the region as "terrorist organizations" under the rather arbitrary formulated 2018 Anti-Terror Law (Lamb, 2021). In response, the government was *legally* able to broaden its security approach. What followed, however, was an increase in arbitrary killings, grave human rights violations and a continued culture of impunity for state violations of human and civil rights (Chauvel, 2021).

> "Of the 69 cases of suspected unlawful killings by security forces in Papua that Amnesty International has documented (between January 2010 and February 2018), virtually no criminal investigations have been carried out by an institution independent of the one whose members were suspected of committing the killing. Amnesty International also found that in 25 cases there has been no investigation at all. In 26 cases the police or military claimed to have conducted internal investigations, but the results were not made public. (…) As for prosecutions, members of the security forces who commit unlawful killings in Papua have never been brought before an independent civilian court of law. In a few cases of suspected unlawful killings, police personnel received punishment when found by internal disciplinary mechanism to have been involved in the killings. A few cases of unlawful killings by military personnel in Papua were brought to military tribunals" (Amnesty International Indonesia, 2018, p.51)

This trend continued well into Joko Widodo's second term in office, where the "protests-state violence-misuse of laws" circle continued. The Indonesian government's response to the 2019 Papuan protests, under President Joko Widodo, illustrates a misuse of legal authority and justification of human rights violations in the name of national security. Following the protests, dozens were arrested on charges ranging from looting to treason (Reuters, 2019a, b). These arrests criminalized dissent, targeting not only protesters in Papua but also students in Jakarta. In an attempt to control the situation, the government imposed a total internet blackout in Papua for about three weeks following the protests. Officials claimed the blackout was necessary to prevent the spread of hate speech and misinformation. (Deutsche Welle, 2019b) However, public organizations filed a lawsuit, and in June 2020, the Jakarta Administrative Court ruled the blackout illegal, stating it violated emergency law and free speech rights as the government had not declared a state of emergency, as such a declaration would not have met the standards and criteria. Local riots were also not part of the emergency doctrine. (The Jakarta Post, 2020b; Rahman and Tang, 2022) In a related case, the Constitutional Court later ruled in October 2021 that internet restrictions during unrest were constitutional, provided they followed clear procedures and were temporary (Da Costa and Widianto, 2021). This decision reinforced the government's ability to suppress information under the guise of public safety, revealing a pattern of prioritizing security over civil liberties. In summary, the government's actions during the protests, namely arbitrary arrests, internet blackouts, and legal defenses, demonstrate a clear misuse of power and an ongoing

suppression of dissent in Papua. The Papua uprising exemplifies the systematic misuse of state violence and legal mechanisms under the Jokowi administration, as previously discussed. However, this is not an isolated incident but part of a broader pattern.

In addition, the Jokowi government has strategically employed legal measures to criminalize opponents under the pretext of combating "anti-democratic threats" such as "fake news" and "Islamism." This tactic often involves leveraging existing defamation and electronic information laws to target critics both online and offline. For example, individuals who associated Jokowi with communism or criticized his administration faced legal consequences. A notable case is preacher Alfian Tanjung, who received a two-year prison sentence in 2017 for accusing Jokowi of communist affiliations (The Jakarta Post, 2018c). Similarly, Ahmad Dhani, a prominent ally of Prabowo, was sentenced to 18 months in 2019 for tweets that allegedly defamed Ahok's supporters and, by extension, Jokowi (Jakarta Post, 2019a, b). These instances illustrate how defamation laws have been systematically used to silence dissent. The crackdown on opposition figures is further exemplified by the charges filed against FPI's leader, Rizieq Shihab. Facing charges widely seen as politically motivated, Rizieq fled to Saudi Arabia in 2017. From exile, he continued to oppose Jokowi, particularly by supporting Prabowo. (Osman and Waikar, 2018; The Jakarta Post, 2017, 2020c). This illustrates how trumped-up charges were used to weaken extra-institutional opponents.

Under President Joko Widodo, Indonesia has experienced a significant erosion of democratic governance through the systematic use of violence and legal manipulation to suppress political dissent. However, state violence in Indonesia is not employed as a pervasive tool of social control but rather in sporadic, systematic instances, often in response to perceived threats arising from mass mobilization, elections, or contentious legal reforms. This is reminiscent of repressive tactics in some authoritarian contexts where regimes deploy violence based on the perceived threat posed by dissent to maintain regime stability (Escribà-Folch, 2013; Gerschewski, 2013; Carey, 2010; Sutton et al., 2014). In Indonesia, state violence has been used during destabilizing protests, such as the 2019 post-election riots and the Omnibus Law protests. While Indonesia remains a democracy, the authoritarian shift under Widodo reflects a strategic and targeted use of repression. The connection between repression and dissent offers crucial insights into the dynamics of protest and state violence in Indonesia. The reciprocal relationship, where protest activity triggers state repression and repression subsequently influences dissent, has been observed in various cases (Carey, 2006), but also in Indonesia. For example, while repression has stifled dissent in some contexts, such as in Papua, it has also triggered a backlash, as seen in the protests against the KPK law and the 2022 fuel price hikes. This dynamic is consistent with the inverted-U relationship proposed by Zhukov et al. (2019), where protest activity is minimized under conditions of very high or very

low repression. Indonesia's sporadic yet targeted use of violence reflects a balancing act, where moderate levels of repression have fueled continued resistance.

Beyond physical repression, the Indonesian government has increasingly relied on legal mechanisms to institutionalize control. Laws concerning defamation, anti-terrorism, and electronic information have been strategically used to criminalize dissent. These legal frameworks provide a veneer of legitimacy for suppressing criticism and opposition under the guise of combating "fake news" or terrorism. The selective enforcement of these laws against political opponents illustrates how the legal system has become an instrument of state repression, complementing the sporadic use of violence. Corruption and impunity among political elites further exacerbate these issues. Allies of the president often escape legal consequences, while opponents face disproportionate punishments. This unequal application of the law has transformed Indonesia's legal system into a partisan tool of control rather than an impartial arbiter of justice. In regions like Papua, where separatist movements directly challenge state authority, broad security laws have been leveraged to justify violent repression. This has resulted in severe human rights violations and entrenched impunity for security forces. In conclusion, while the Widodo administration has not employed violence as a blanket tool of repression, its targeted and reactive use of violence during perceived political threats, combined with preventive legal strategies to suppress dissent, signals a deeper authoritarian turn in Indonesian governance.

#### 4.3.2.3. Censorship and Propaganda

During the New Order, the media was subjected to severe constraints, predominantly through self-censorship. Upon assuming power, Suharto's government promptly enacted a Press Bill that imposed strict and punitive controls on the media (Lee, 1971). Despite periods of relative openness, the corporatization of journalism became a defining feature of the New Order era (Romano, 2003; Dhakidae, 1991). The journalists' union, PWI, was purged of leftist elements and transformed into a state apparatus for disseminating government policy (Hill, 1994; Romano, 2003). The Indonesian government actively promoted self-censorship, with Suharto issuing a directive in 1984 requiring rigorous pre-publication censorship of all news content (New York Times, 1984). The Ministry of Information exercised tight control over the distribution of printed media, routinely imposing bans on publications that were seen as critical or disruptive to the regime's narrative. In the period between 1965 and 1994, more than 30 bans were issued (Heryanto, 2003). Furthermore, "envelope journalism," the practice of accepting bribes in exchange for positive coverage, became prevalent, fostering a culture where journalists self-censored to maintain access and economic survival. Fear of retaliation, state surveillance, and direct threats ensured that sensitive topics such as government corruption, military operations, and the business dealings of Suharto's family remained largely untouched by the press. (Romano, 2003; Schwartz, 1994)

Following the collapse of Suharto's regime, Indonesia sought to embrace a more liberal and democratic political system. Several strategic reforms were enacted, including legislation on the press (1999), broadcasting (2002), and access to information (2008). These reforms significantly liberalized the media landscape, leading to a rise in critical articles about the government and its institutions (Kitley, 2008, p.221). However, Indonesia's media ownership soon fell into the hands of a small number of oligarchs whose political and business interests often took precedence over journalistic integrity (Hadiz and Robinson, 2004; Tapsell, 2015; Warburton and Aspinall, 2019). As Tapsell (2012) notes, media owners have since leveraged their platforms to push personal or political agendas, effectively prolonging the culture of self-censorship. This oligarchic control has shaped modern Indonesian media, where critical reporting often takes a backseat to the interests of powerful owners (see also Primandari, 2022). Figure 4.4 depicts changes in media control between 2010 and 2023 distinguished into traditional media control and digital and social media control, whereby traditional media control consists of metrics related to government censorship of traditional media (TV, newspapers), media self-censorship, media bias, and corruption in media, and digital and social media control includes metrics related to government censorship of social media and internet censorship efforts. The data indicates an overall decrease in traditional control mechanisms (2014-2019: 0.749; 2020-2023: 0.308) in Indonesia at the end of Widodo's first term and during his second term and an overall increase in digital and social media control (2014-2019: 0.3672; 2020-2023: 0.457). These trends suggest a *persistent yet shifting* pattern of government influence over the media. The reduction in traditional media control mechanisms reflects moments of apparent liberalization, particularly during the early years of Widodo's administration. However, the corresponding increase in digital and social media control demonstrates a strategic pivot towards regulating the digital sphere, which has become a dominant platform for public discourse and dissent. This is particularly evident in 2023, when efforts to control digital spaces intensified, reflecting the administration's response to the growing role of social media in mobilizing dissent and challenging state narratives. (Sardini et al., 2024) These platforms provide avenues for broader reach and real-time mobilization, making them critical arenas for political expression and activism. The government's heightened regulation of digital spaces through social media censorship, content takedowns, and internet shutdowns represents an effort to counter this shift and curtail the effectiveness of digital dissent.

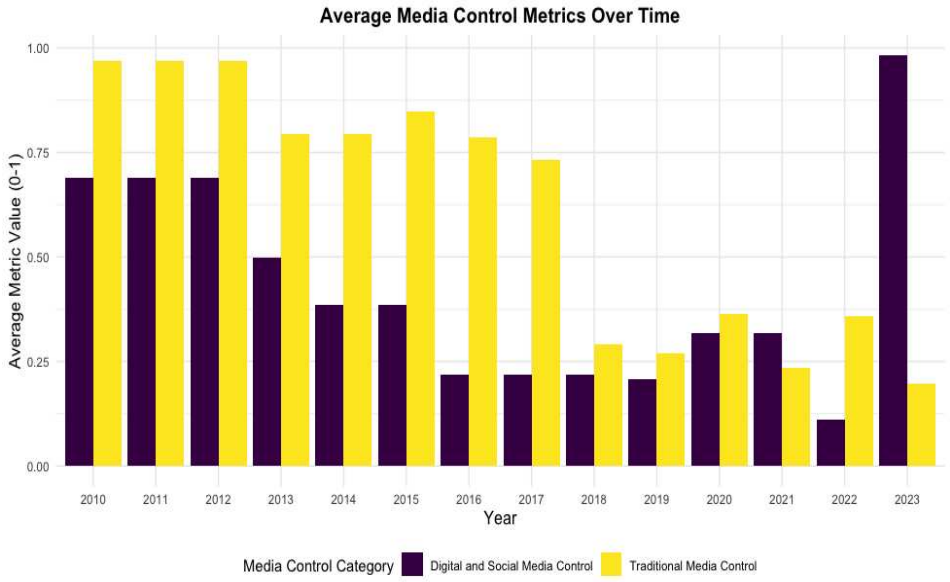


Figure 4.4. Media control in Indonesia, 2010-2023.
*Source*: The author. Based on data from V-Dem (v14).
*Notes*: Media control category = Average Traditional Media Control per year (Government censorship effort — Media, *v2mecenefm*; Media self-censorship, *v2meslfcen*; Media bias, *v2mebias*; Media corrupt, *v2mecorrpt*) + Average Digital and Social Media Control per year (Government social media censorship in practice, *v2smgovsmcenprc*; Government social media shut down in practice, *v2smgovsm*; Internet censorship effort, *v2mecenefi*). The variables have been rescaled to 0-1; 0 = low level of control/censorship; 1 = high level of control/censorship.

Under President Jokowi, media control in Indonesia has taken on subtler but equally restrictive forms compared to the blatant suppression seen during the New Order era. His administration has relied on legal tools, regulatory frameworks, and digital platforms to silence critical voices, reflecting a shift in strategy rather than a departure from control. One of the most prominent instruments of repression is the 2008 Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE) and its various amendments. Originally intended to regulate e-commerce, the law has been weaponized to curtail freedom of expression online. Its vaguely defined offenses, such as "defamation" and "hate speech," have been broadly interpreted to target critics of the government. For instance, Haris Azhar, Founder and Executive Director of *Lokataru*[86], and Fatia Maulidiyanti, Coordinator of *KontraS*[87] until 2023, faced prosecution under this law after accusing Coordinating Minister Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan and military officials of ties to a controversial gold mining project in West Papua[88] (Abdullah Naim et al., 2021; FIDH, 2024). Journalists are also vulnerable, with the law threatening penalties of up to six years in prison or substantial fines for online defamation. According to SAFEnet, a digital rights defender in Southeast Asia, at least 14 charges were brought against media organizations

[86] *Lokatatur Foundation* (LF) is an Indonesia-based NGO working on the promotion of accountability of public and private institutions.
[87] The Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (*KontraS)* is an Indonesian human rights organization that investigates forced disappearances and acts of violence.
[88] Both, Fatia Maulidiyanti and Haris Azhar, were acquitted in early 2024 by the East Jakarta District Court (FIDH, 2024).

and journalists between 2008 and 2020 (SAFEnet, 2021). Although the ITE Law was revised in 2016, its inherent vagueness was left unaddressed, enabling its continued use as a tool for intimidation (cf. Chapter 4.3.2.1). This climate of fear stifles journalists and potential whistleblowers, discouraging the exposure of sensitive issues like military misconduct or high-level corruption (Carson and Gibbons, 2023).

In addition to the ITE Law, Jokowi's administration has leaned heavily on Ministerial Regulation 5 (MR5), introduced in 2020. This regulation oversees private "electronic systems operators" (ESOs), including social media platforms, search engines, and messaging services. MR5 grants the government sweeping powers to access user data and issue notice-and-takedown orders for content deemed undesirable. (Article 19, 2021) Platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram are particularly affected, as a large proportion of Indonesians rely on these platforms for news. Enforcement of MR5 has coincided with heightened political control over online discourse, especially ahead of pivotal events like the 2024 presidential election (Masduki, 2021; Sastramidjaja et al., 2022). The administration has also employed paid online influencers, known as "buzzers," to shape narratives in favor of preferred candidates (Halimatusa'diyah and Adam, 2024; Burgess and Souisa, 2024). Civil society groups and media outlets have criticized MR5 for its intrusive provisions and its suppression of free speech in the digital space (Strangio, 2022b; HRW, 2021; AJI, 2022; GNI, 2021). While the government's legal and regulatory measures have imposed significant constraints on media freedom, they have also prompted a parallel rise in grassroots efforts to counter these challenges. Indonesia's civil society has demonstrated resilience in responding to the erosion of press freedom and the growing prevalence of disinformation. For instance, the Indonesia Anti-Hoax Community (*Mafindo*), a multi-stakeholder NGO with over 15,000 members, has emerged as a significant actor in combating (government-sponsored) misinformation. Collaborating with *Cek Fakta*, a fact-checking organization, *Mafindo* empowers citizens to verify information and counter the spread of falsehoods online (Syarifah et al., 2022; Aïmeur et al., 2023). These efforts are emblematic of a broader societal commitment to transparency and accountability, offering a counterbalance to the state's restrictive measures. By fostering digital literacy and promoting fact-checking, such initiatives aim to safeguard democratic principles and ensure that alternative narratives can persist in the public domain.

Despite these efforts, press freedom has continued to decline under Jokowi's administration, as reflected in various international rankings. Freedom House reports a significant drop in Indonesia's press freedom score, falling from 57 in 2002 to 124 in 2018, as partisan websites, disinformation campaigns, and government intimidation tactics have proliferated. Similarly, the 2023 Reporters Without Borders index ranks Indonesia 108th out of 179 countries, a marked decline from its peak of 57th in 2002 (Figure 4.5). These trends highlight how Jokowi's

administration has moved from overt state censorship during Suharto's authoritarian regime to subtler, insidious forms of media control.

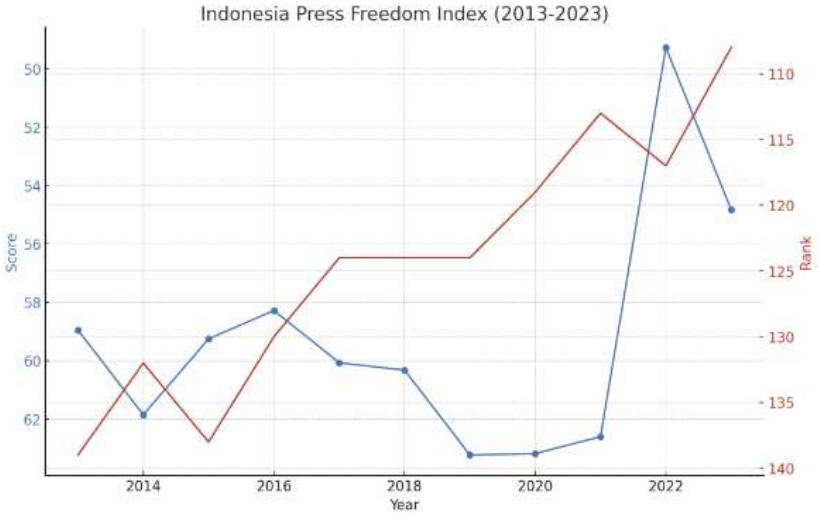


Figure 4.5. Press Freedom Index Indonesia, 2013-2023.
*Source*: The author. Based on data from Reporters Without Borders, various years.

The dynamics of censorship and propaganda in Indonesia under Suharto's New Order and President Jokowi's administration reveal shifting patterns and evolving tactics of media control. During Suharto's New Order, media control was overt, characterized by stringent self-censorship, direct government intervention, and the corporatization of journalism. Suharto utilized self-censorship, supported by legal instruments like the Press Bill, and intimidation tactics, including media bans, to manipulate public discourse, create an illusion of stability, and suppress opposition. These strategies align with practices common in authoritarian regimes, where control over media serves to consolidate power and marginalize dissent (King et al., 2013; de Juan et al., 2021). In the post-Suharto era, initial reforms liberalized the media landscape. However, this progress was soon undermined by the concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few oligarchs, leading to a new form of media control. Under Jokowi, media suppression reflects global trends in which governments employ legal, economic, and media strategies to silence criticism while maintaining a democratic façade (Brancati, 2014). Jokowi's administration increasingly relies on digital and legal tools, such as the ITE Law and MR5, to stifle dissent online. This shift from controlling traditional media to policing digital platforms mirrors tactics used by modern autocracies, where governments exploit social media for surveillance and control (King et al., 2013).

The ITE Law and MR5 provide legal frameworks that enable digital repression, echoing patterns observed in other autocratizing democracies. Ambiguous laws are employed to target critics, avoiding outright censorship while maintaining plausible deniability (Corrales, 2015, 2020; Scheppele, 2018). These tactics illustrate how erosion agents consolidate power by controlling information rather than relying solely on overt repressive tools (Guriev and

Treisman, 2022). In this context, social media and encrypted messaging apps (EMAs) such as WhatsApp and Telegram present dual challenges. On the one hand, they provide platforms for state surveillance and propaganda. On the other, they empower civil society to organize and resist, decentralizing the dissemination of information and complicating efforts to impose top-down control. Indonesia's experience with digital repression, propaganda, and oligarchic media structures demonstrates how modern autocratizers adapt to the evolving media environment. Jokowi's administration has used buzzers and digital surveillance to influence online discourse, particularly in the lead-up to the 2024 elections (Ufen, 2024). These tactics reflect broader trends in digital authoritarianism, where governments employ covert mechanisms to shape public opinion and suppress dissent. At the same time, the speed and volume of digital communication on social media and EMAs challenge direct censorship, forcing the state to balance overt repression with subtle manipulation of information. The rise of digital platforms has transformed the dynamics of censorship. Unlike traditional media, where states could impose direct hierarchical control, these platforms distribute information in a decentralized manner, enabling greater public engagement in discourse. This shift highlights the ongoing tension between state authority and civil society resistance in the digital era. The Indonesian case illustrates the intertwined relationship between repression, propaganda, and grassroots organizing, offering insights into how contemporary autocracies are adapting to the evolving landscape of media and information control. (Masduki, 2021; Ufen, 2024)

## 4.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter explored how Indonesia's democratic institutions have weakened under the presidency of Joko Widodo, focusing on the dual strategies of institutional capture and social silencing. These strategies have systematically eroded accountability mechanisms and concentrated executive power, reducing Indonesia's democracy to a façade that retains superficial legitimacy while losing its substantive democratic functions. The findings show that the interaction of institutional capture and social silencing has been pivotal to Indonesia's democratic regression (see Table 4.5). While deeper structural factors, such as weak institutionalization, ethno-religious divisions, and authoritarian legacies, form the backdrop, these two strategies were the primary drivers of democratic decline. The analysis can be divided into four key phases. These reflect the proposed causal mechanism (cf. Chapter 2).

The first phase involves institutional capture, where the executive manipulates political structures, engages in legal and constitutional engineering, and reorganizes state institutions to undermine checks and balances. Under Widodo's leadership, this has included reforms like the 2019 revisions to the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) law, which diminished its independence, and the Omnibus Law on Job Creation, which bypassed traditional legislative

checks. Widodo also neutralized opposition by forming broad political coalitions, such as co-opting former rivals like Prabowo Subianto into his administration, thereby consolidating control over the legislature. This supports the hypothesis that institutional capture facilitates the erosion of democracy's structural safeguards (H1). Institutional capture thus served as the foundation for weakening accountability mechanisms and concentrating executive power. The second phase, social silencing, targets dissent through the suppression of civic space and public discourse. The administration deployed legal measures, including the Mass Organizations Law and the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law, to restrict civil society organizations and criminalize online dissent. Despite instances of democratic resilience at the grassroots level, by censoring media and employing online influencers to control narratives, the government effectively limited the capacity of civil society to challenge state actions. These tactics align with the growing trend of digital authoritarianism, where regimes exploit digital platforms to suppress criticism and legitimize power. The intersection of institutional capture and social silencing has not only undermined accountability but also ensured minimal resistance to executive overreach, supporting Hypothesis 2.

The third phase examines the cumulative impact of these strategies on accountability mechanisms. Institutional capture and social silencing together weakened horizontal accountability (judiciary and legislative oversight), vertical accountability (elections), and diagonal accountability (media and civil society). For instance, judiciary co-optation and coalition-building eroded checks among state institutions, while restrictions on media and civil society diminished external oversight. Elections were reduced to elite bargaining, with broad coalitions neutralizing meaningful competition. This multi-faceted weakening of accountability mechanisms further entrenched executive dominance, as proposed by the third hypothesis (H3). This phase reveals how the erosion of accountability mechanisms underpins the broader trend of democratic backsliding.

In the final phase, the concentration of executive power emerges as the culmination of these processes. Jokowi's administration exploited its control over key institutions, the judiciary, and public discourse to operate with minimal opposition. Although democratic institutions like elections remain outwardly intact and avenues of democratic resilience remain, the substantive roles of democratic institutions have been hollowed out. The pragmatic authoritarianism resulting from these dynamics reflects a long-term shift toward entrenched executive control, supporting the hypothesis that accountability erosion facilitates power concentration (H4). This trajectory also highlights the dual nature of democratic decline in Indonesia: a façade of legitimacy masking substantial democratic deficits.

However, the findings suggest that these developments cannot solely be attributed to deliberateness. Instead, it contextualizes them within deeper structural challenges. Indonesia's fragile democratic institutions, rooted in the legacy of Suharto's authoritarian rule, remain

susceptible to manipulation by entrenched oligarchic and patronage networks. Jokowi's governance reflects a navigation of these systemic vulnerabilities, where political survival requires elite co-optation and coalition-building. For instance, the expansion of Jokowi's coalition and the integration of opposition figures such as Prabowo Subianto diluted opposition influence but also exemplify the necessity of pragmatic compromises in a fragmented political system. Ethno-religious tensions further complicate this landscape as the suppression of Islamist groups, could be interpreted not simply as a move to silence political opposition, but as an attempt to maintain national unity in the face of societal and religious pressures. The deep cleavages within Indonesian society, exacerbated by ethno-religious tensions, create an environment where leaders are forced to strike a balance between appeasing multiple factions and maintaining order, sometimes at the expense of democratic pluralism. Similarly, the fragmented and internally weak nature of Indonesia's political party system further thwarts the dynamics of democratic erosion.

Jokowi's consolidation of power can be viewed as a pragmatic response to these structural weaknesses rather than a deliberate effort to dismantle democratic opposition. Many of Indonesia's political parties lack internal cohesion and are heavily influenced by oligarchic interests, reducing their ability to function as independent or unified entities. This systemic fragility incentivizes leaders like Jokowi to build coalitions and engage in elite negotiations. While these actions suppress opposition influence, they largely reflect the instability inherent in the political party system itself, where governance often relies on concessions and strategic alignments that blur the lines between opposition and government. This points toward Jokowi's actions as strategic responses to systemic flaws rather than purely authoritarian ambitions. Nonetheless, the cumulative impact of these structural challenges and strategic decisions has significantly weakened Indonesia's democratic accountability. While systemic weaknesses such as oligarchic dominance, patronage, and weak institutionalization provided fertile ground for democratic backsliding, Jokowi strategically exploited these conditions. By co-opting opposition figures, forming broad coalitions, and weakening independent institutions, his administration has reinforced executive power at the expense of democratic norms. Therefore, the erosion of democratic accountability under Jokowi can be seen as a multifaceted phenomenon, comprising systemic vulnerabilities and deliberate actions, which have resulted in a notable deterioration of Indonesia's democratic institutions.

Taken together, the findings of this chapter reveal that institutional capture and social silencing have significantly weakened Indonesia's democratic accountability under Jokowi's administration. However, these developments should not be viewed in isolation from Indonesia's broader structural and systemic challenges. The fragility of democratic institutions, oligarchic dominance, and ethno-religious divisions have all contributed to the erosion of accountability mechanisms, creating an environment where executive overreach

becomes a byproduct of navigating systemic vulnerabilities. While Jokowi's actions have accelerated these trends, they also reflect deeper challenges inherent in Indonesia's democratic system.

Table 4.5. Summary of Evidence: Case Study Indonesia

| **Part of Causal Mechanism** | **Results** |
|---|---|
| Part 01: Institutional Capture | **Supported**. Jokowi manipulated political structures, engaged in legal and constitutional engineering (e.g., KPK law revisions, Omnibus Law), and reorganized institutions by appointing loyalists to reduce checks on executive power. |
| Part 02: Social Silencing | **Supported**. The administration curtailed civic space and restricted opposition through legal tools (e.g., Mass Organizations Law, ITE Law), media censorship, and manipulation of public narratives using online influencers. |
| Part 03: Weakening Accountability Mechanisms | **Supported**. Institutional capture and social silencing jointly weakened horizontal (judiciary, legislature), vertical (electoral manipulation), and diagonal accountability (media and civil society suppression). |
| Part 04: Concentration of Executive Power | **Supported**. Jokowi's administration successfully concentrated executive power by co-opting state institutions and suppressing dissent, resulting in weakened democratic accountability and greater executive authority. |

*Source*: The author.

# 5. Democratic Erosion in the Philippines[89]

In February 1986, the Philippines embarked on a new chapter of democracy following the peaceful People Power Revolution, which toppled Ferdinand Marcos and ended more than two decades of authoritarian rule. This historic transition ushered in a period of democratic governance characterized by free elections, a new constitution, and the reconstruction of political institutions. Over the subsequent decades, the Philippines stood out as one of Southeast Asia's democratic outliers. Yet, elements of illiberalism persisted within its political framework. The presidency of Rodrigo Duterte, beginning in 2016, marked a significant turning point in this democratic trajectory. Duterte's administration was characterized by a dramatic democratic backslide, driven by a brutal war on drugs, populist rhetoric, and authoritarian tendencies. This chapter seeks to analyze how the Philippines' democracy has eroded under Duterte's leadership, focusing on whether tactics of institutional capture and social silencing played key roles in undermining democratic accountability and consolidating executive power.

The analysis is organized into four sections. Section 5.1 contextualizes the current challenges to Philippine democracy by reviewing the nation's political history, particularly the transition to democracy after Marcos' fall in 1986. Section 5.2 explores the political, social, and economic factors that paved the way for Duterte's electoral victory in 2016. Section 5.3 examines Duterte's governance tactics, investigating the use of institutional capture and social silencing to weaken democratic checks and balances and concentrate executive authority. Finally, Section 5.4 summarizes the findings, highlighting the role of authoritarian legacies from the Marcos era, fragile institutional structures, and deep socio-political divides in exacerbating democratic erosion during Duterte's presidency.

## 5.1. Democratic Development in the Philippines

The Philippine Revolution of 1896, a response to profound discontent with colonial Spanish governance, marked a radical struggle for emancipation and self-governance, ultimately resulting in U.S. dominion following the Spanish-American War from 1898 to 1946. Despite achieving independence in 1946 and concluding 381 years of colonial rule, the pervasive influence of colonialism persisted in post-war administrations, influencing economic dependence, resistance movements, and government policies. (Ocampo, 2016; Abinales and Amoroso 2005, 2017; McCoy, 1994; Kerkvliet, 2002) A significant turning point was the electoral victory of Ferdinand Marcos in 1965, who subsequently became the 10th President of the Philippines. The ensuing Marcos regime (1965-1986) left an indelible imprint across the Philippine nation-state that reverberates across the political, economic, social, and

[89] For a timeline of major political events since the fall of Marcos in 1986, see Appendix 7.

institutional structures (Abinales and Amoroso, 2017). From 1972 to 1981, he ruled the country under martial law, which granted him extensive powers under the 1973 Constitution that centralized authority and circumvented constitutional constraints, ushering in an era of authoritarian rule. Civil liberties were significantly constrained during this period, and political opposition was effectively suppressed. (ibid) Marcos was eventually deposed by a nonviolent revolution in 1986 (*'EDSA', 'People Power Revolution'*), which occurred in the wake of the assassination of opposition leader Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. in 1983, sparking public outrage and intensified opposition against Marcos[90]. Marcos implemented "constitutional authoritarianism" through the New Society Movement, characterized by significant corruption, state violence, and economic mismanagement, which created widespread discontent among Filipinos (Hedman, 2006; Quimpo, 2008; Davies, 2016b; Magramo, 2022). The systematic suppression of opposition and civil society, coupled with unprecedented violence to quell dissent, exacerbated these grievances. In response, civil society movements, encompassing church groups, student organizations, and various advocacy groups, played a crucial role in mobilizing opposition against the Marcos regime. These movements provided a platform for collective action and resistance. (Hedman, 2006; Youngblood, 2019; Rodan, 2022)

Following the end of Ferdinand Marcos' 21-year dictatorship, the Philippines embraced renewed democratic aspirations with the election of Corazon Aquino as president. Aquino, the widow of opposition leader Benigno Aquino, ushered in a period of significant political transformation, marked by the (re)introduction of regular, competitive elections. Under Aquino's leadership, and that of her four successors[91], sweeping reforms were implemented to dismantle the autocratic foundations established during the Marcos era. These reforms included the replacement of the 1973 Constitution, the removal of Marcos loyalists from key positions across the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and the establishment of a multi-party system characterized by non-ideological parties (Villanueva, 1992; Teehankee, 2002). Accompanying these institutional changes was the liberalization of the media and civil society, which gained greater freedom to operate and voice dissent (Manglapus, 1989, p.9). Despite these advances, Philippine politics and society remain deeply entrenched in a socio-economic system that perpetuates extreme inequalities in the distribution of both economic and political resources (Magadia, 1999, p.265). Traditional political clans continue to dominate the political arena, while the authoritarian legacies of the Marcos regime persist in various forms. One of the most notable legacies is the military's continued involvement in politics.

[90] Despite his ouster, the Marcos family has retained significant influence in Philippine politics. Imelda Marcos and her children, particularly Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr., have held various political positions. In 2022, Marcos Jr. was elected President of the Philippines, marking a significant political comeback for the Marcos family (Caballero-Anthony, 2022).

[91] Fidel Ramos (1992-1998), Joseph Estrada (1998-2001), Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (2001-2010), and Benigno Aquino III (2010-2016).

While legally subordinate to the civilian government, civil-military relations in practice are characterized by collaboration rather than strict subordination, blurring the boundaries between civilian oversight and military autonomy (De Castro, 2013, p.157). Another enduring legacy is the imprint of Marcos' martial law, during which the concept of "constitutional authoritarianism" was introduced to build a "New Society". Under this framework, constitutional law was manipulated to justify authoritarian rule, enabling the suppression of dissent, centralization of power, and control of the judiciary – all under the pretense of legality and reform. This strategic exploitation of constitutional provisions not only entrenched authoritarian control during the Marcos regime but also left an enduring mark on post-martial law governance. The remnants of these legal manipulations continue to shape the Philippines' political landscape, undermining the full realization of democratic ideals and perpetuating systemic inequalities. (Rosenberg, 1979; Wurfel, 1977; Tilman, 1976; Overholt, 1986; Robles, 2016; Brillantes, 1987)

The socio-economic and political dynamics of the Marcos era are deeply intertwined and remain critical for understanding the contemporary nature of Philippine politics. While the Marcos regime initially pursued policies aimed at fostering economic growth and modernization, these efforts were undermined by pervasive corruption and crony capitalism Infrastructure development, often heralded as a cornerstone of Marcos's political vision, served dual purposes: advancing modernization and securing political patronage. Although these projects improved the nation's infrastructure, their benefits were disproportionately channeled to a privileged elite closely aligned with the regime. (Doronila, 1983; Schock, 1999; Curaming and Lisandro, 2010; Hutchcroft and Rocamora, 2003) This elite group reaped significant economic rewards, not based on merit or innovation, but through a system of neopatrimonialism, referring to the use of state resources to consolidate power by distributing economic privileges among loyal supporters (Abinales and Amoroso, 2017). This practice solidified Marcos's political dominance while institutionalizing a system in which economic opportunities were allocated based on political loyalty rather than competence or merit. Consequently, economic growth during this period failed to translate into widespread development, leaving the broader Filipino population marginalized and grappling with economic stagnation. The inequitable distribution of wealth and opportunities under Marcos fostered a widespread perception of injustice and entrenched political corruption. For many Filipinos, economic progress was a façade, as the benefits of development were confined to a small circle of elites while the majority remained excluded from the nation's prosperity. This growing public discontent culminated in the People Power Revolution of 1986, a mass uprising that led to the ousting of Marcos and the restoration of democratic governance. However, the legacy of crony capitalism has proven remarkably resilient, continuing to influence Philippine politics and governance in the post-Marcos era, perpetuating corruption and deepening socio-

economic inequality. (Doronila, 1983; Schock, 1999; Curaming and Lisandro, 2010; Hutchcroft and Rocamora, 2003)

The presidency of Corazon Aquino (1986–1992), which followed the ousting of Ferdinand Marcos, marked a critical juncture in restoring democratic governance. Aquino's administration abolished the Marcos-era parliament and authoritarian constitution, promulgating a new democratic constitution in 1987. However, her tenure was beset by several coup attempts, particularly by military factions loyal to Marcos. Although Aquino succeeded in rebuilding democratic institutions, her efforts to revive the economy were hampered by persistent issues such as debt and widespread poverty. Fidel V. Ramos (1992–1998) succeeded Aquino with a reform-oriented agenda. Ramos implemented significant economic reforms to liberalize the economy, privatize state-owned enterprises, and attract foreign investment. He also prioritized infrastructure development to stimulate growth and pursued peace talks with communist insurgents and Muslim separatists. While he made substantial progress, these efforts remained incomplete. The administration of Joseph Estrada (1998–2001) shifted the government focus to populist policies, earning widespread support from the poor. However, Estrada's presidency was plagued by allegations of corruption, culminating in his impeachment trial. In January 2001, mounting public pressure led to the second People Power Revolution (EDSA II), forcing Estrada to step down. His vice president, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (2001–2010), succeeded him. Under Arroyo, the Philippines experienced economic growth and infrastructure expansion, contributing to greater economic stability. However, her administration was marred by controversies, including accusations of electoral fraud and corruption. A coup attempt in 2006 prompted Arroyo to declare a state of emergency, further fueling political tensions. Despite these challenges, Arroyo completed her term, giving the presidency to Benigno Aquino III (2010–2016). Benigno Aquino III's administration focused on transparency, anti-corruption measures, and good governance. He advanced peace negotiations with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), culminating in the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro in 2014. (Deinla and Dressel, 2019; Villanueva, 1992; Hedman and Sidel, 2000) Post-Marcos administrations thus prioritized economic liberalization, infrastructure development, and poverty alleviation, albeit with mixed results. While progress was made in these areas, corruption and political instability remain pervasive challenges.

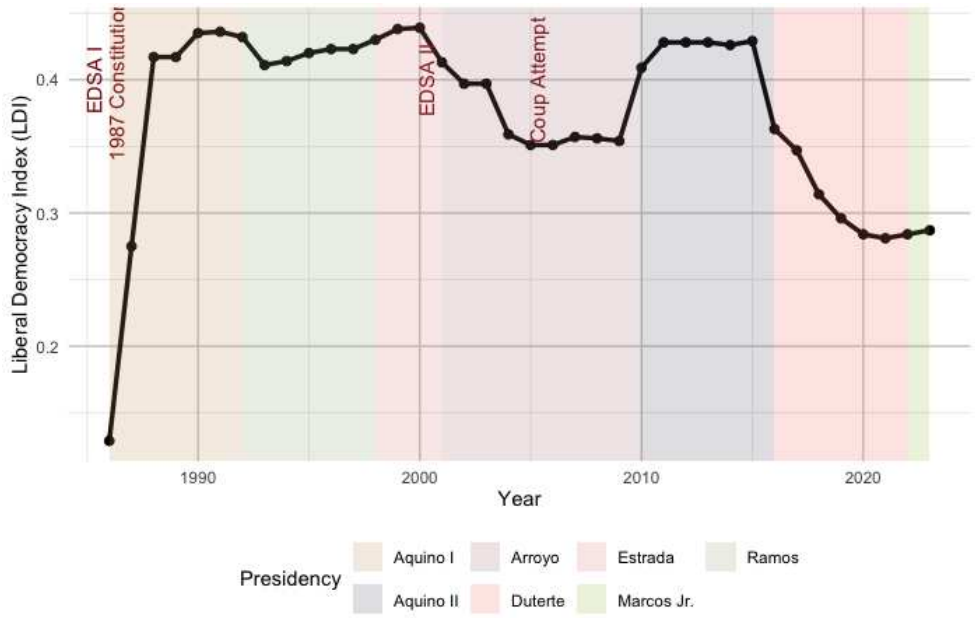


Figure 5.1. Liberal Democracy in the Philippines (1986-2023): Insights and Trends.
*Source*: The author.

Since the presidency of Rodrigo Duterte (2016-2022) began, the Philippines has experienced a deepening of its democratic challenges (see Figure 5.1). This period was characterized by an aggressive and controversial "war on drugs," which resulted in significant human rights violations, such as thousands of extrajudicial killings (EJKs). Democratic institutions were systematically weakened as judicial independence was undermined, media freedoms were suppressed, and legislative checks and balances were eroded. The enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2020 further restricted civil liberties, while the practice of "red-tagging," labeling individuals or groups as communist insurgents, intensified threats to dissent and opposition. The election of Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. 2022, the son of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, stresses a resurgence of historical revisionism and highlights a shift away from the democratic gains achieved in the post-Marcos era (Ayson and Reyes, 2023; Grunebaum, 2023). The following section examines the specific events that have triggered the democratic decline under Duterte, with a particular focus on Duterte's 2016 election victory and his subsequent efforts to expand executive power through institutional capture and social silencing.

## 5.2. Triggering Democratic Erosion: The 2016 Presidential Elections in the Philippines

The 2016 Philippine presidential race featured Manuel "Mar" Araneta Roxas II, a pro-administration candidate and ally of outgoing President Benigno "Noynoy" S. Aquino III, competing against four major contenders who positioned themselves as critics of Aquino's presidency. These alternatives, Vice President Jejomar "Jojo" C. Binay, Senator Grace Poe,

Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Roa Duterte, and Senator Miriam Palma Defensor Santiago[92], campaigned on the perceived deficiencies of Aquino's administration. A sixth candidate, former party-list representative Roy Villareal Señeres, remained on the ballot despite his passing before the election. Ultimately, Rodrigo Duterte emerged victorious, becoming the 16th President of the Philippines following the elections on May 9, 2016[93] (Holmes, 2016).

Duterte's election marked several historical firsts in Philippine politics. He was the first president-elect to ascend directly from a local political office, the first from Mindanao, a region marked by poverty and unrest, and the oldest to assume the presidency (Gavilan, 2016; Casiple, 2016). Additionally, Duterte was the first self-declared "left-leaning" or "left-of-center or socialist" president, distinguishing himself ideologically while also being the first 'lawyer-president' since Ferdinand Marcos (Gavilan, 2016). His electoral victory continued a recurring post-Marcos pattern of alternating "reformist" and "populist" leadership. This dynamic began in 1998, when Joseph Estrada, a populist with strong mass appeal, succeeded Fidel Ramos, a military reformer who leveraged traditional patronage politics for economic reforms (Hutchcroft, 2008, p.144). However, Estrada's tenure ended prematurely in 2001 after a civilian-military uprising, supported by the Catholic Church, over allegations of corruption. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Estrada's vice president, then completed his term, advocating for good governance with backing from civil society organizations (Curato, 2016). Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino, elected in 2010, succeeded Arroyo on a platform emphasizing anti-corruption and governance reform aimed at restoring public trust.

During his campaign, Duterte vowed to address key issues resonating with the electorate: reducing crime, particularly drug-related offenses, ending corruption and elite-dominated governance, and modernizing the nation's deteriorating infrastructure. These promises were encapsulated in the slogan "#ChangeIsComing," which became a rallying cry among his supporters (Gavilan, 2016). The context of the 2016 election heightened the appeal of these pledges, as crime rates had surged in the year leading up to the vote. Many Filipinos, frustrated and disillusioned, expressed their anger through what analysts described as a "protest vote" (Casiple, 2016; Teehankee and Thompson, 2016). Duterte's populist rhetoric and image of decisive leadership resonated strongly, resulting in the highest voter turnout since the post-Marcos elections of 1987. With over 16 million votes (~39 percent), Duterte secured a decisive victory, demonstrating his ability to channel the electorate's dissatisfaction into electoral success (cf. Table 5.1).

[92] Defensor-Santiago died shortly after the elections.
[93] In the Philippines, national elections are held every 6 years. Both the president and the vice-president are elected through direct vote. However, voters cast separate ballots for President and Vice President, allowing them to choose candidates from different parties. The candidate who receives the majority of the votes is declared the winner. If no candidate achieves a majority, a runoff election is held between the top candidates. See Appendix 11.b for further information.

Table 5.1. Electoral Results of the Philippine Presidential Elections 2016.

| ***Candidate*** | ***Party*** | ***Votes*** | ***Votes in %*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Rodrigo Duterte* | PDP-Laban | 16,601,997 | 39.02 |
| *Mar Roxas* | Liberal Party | 9,978,175 | 23.45 |
| *Grace Poe* | Independent | 9,100,991 | 21.39 |
| *Jejomar Binay* | United Nationalist Alliance | 5,416,140 | 12.73 |
| *Miriam Defensor Santiago* | People's Reform Party | 1,455,532 | 3.42 |
| *Total* | | 42,552,835 | 100 |

*Source*: Congress of the Philippines (2016).

Rodrigo Duterte's rise to the presidency of the Philippines was rooted in widespread public discontent with crime, corruption, and the dysfunction of government institutions. Presenting himself as a strongman with an iron-fisted approach, Duterte leveraged his reputation as the crime-fighting mayor of Davao City, promising to save the country from the perils of drug trafficking, criminality, and systemic corruption (Curato, 2016). His campaign resonated particularly with middle-class Filipinos frustrated by a government that seemed incapable of addressing pressing security and governance issues. Despite significant pro-democratic reforms after the Marcos era, systemic problems such as oligarchic control, socioeconomic inequality, and a failure to deliver on social justice and sustainable development persisted, creating fertile ground for Duterte's populist appeal. (Slater and Arugay, 2018; Heydarian, 2018; Timberman, 2016) The "Daang Matuwid" ('straight path') reformist agenda of Duterte's predecessor, Noynoy Aquino, failed to meet public expectations. Aquino's administration faced accusations of politicized justice, selective prosecution in high-profile corruption cases, and governance failures, such as the mishandled 2015 anti-terrorist operation that resulted in the deaths of 44 police officers (Teehankee and Thompson, 2016). These controversies tarnished Aquino's reformist credentials and heightened frustration with entrenched elite dominance in Filipino politics. Duterte seized upon this disillusionment, positioning himself as an anti-establishment leader determined to overhaul the political system plagued by patronage, crony capitalism, and corruption (Heydarian, 2018). Instead, Duterte's campaign promised inclusive growth and justice for marginalized communities, particularly the Muslim population in Mindanao, through federalist structures and stringent law-and-order policies (Dressel and Bonoan, 2019). However, his campaign's most potent message was his commitment to restoring security, a theme with deep historical roots in the Philippines' political discourse. From Ferdinand Marcos' martial law era to the crime-focused rhetoric of successive administrations, the issue of law and order has consistently been a central concern. Aquino's perceived inability to address crime, particularly the burgeoning drug trade involving an

estimated 1.8 million individuals[94] by 2016, amplified public fears and frustrations, further fueling Duterte's campaign promises, backed by his 'impressive' records as Mayor of Davao (Curato, 2016; Thompson, 2016; Casiple, 2016).

Duterte's success can also be attributed to his unique communication style, which combined blunt rhetoric with relatable street language. Despite his elite background, Duterte cultivated an image as "one of the people," which resonated strongly with poorer Filipinos (Arguelles, 2019). The People Power Revolution failed the "De-Marcosization" (Corsino, 1980, p.263) of the government with many of the 'old guard' joining the subsequent administrations, including military officers (Casiple, 2016). Instead of progressive social reforms, Filipino governance was based on 'booty capitalism' or 'crony capitalism' (Hutchcroft, 1998). This has led to a deep and diversified supporter base of Duterte, who "came to power with an anti-crime agenda and an anti-elite and anti-liberal discourse" but, quite paradoxically, "rules with the support of most of the elite and the direct assistance of a section of the left" (Bello, 2017, p.22). His populist approach reinforced the presumed binary between "the people" and "the elite," portraying himself as the only leader capable of dismantling this post-EDSA political order that had failed to deliver meaningful reforms for ordinary citizens (Casiple, 2016; Timberman, 2019). As mayor of Davao City, Duterte implemented controversial policies, including extrajudicial killings and death squads, which he claimed were instrumental in reducing crime and disorder. This "Davao legacy" of restoring order and improving public goods such as infrastructure, social security, and education bolstered his credentials as a results-oriented leader. (David, 2016; Thompson, 2016) Duterte's framing of crime and drugs as national security issues, rather than just social problems, appealed to middle-class voters who feared that their economic gains from years of growth would be undermined unless order was restored (Ochoa and Ong, 2022; Geçer and Mahinay, 2018; Quimpo, 2017; Teehankee and Thompson, 2016). Duterte's campaign centered on the slogan "#ChangeIsComing," promising a break from the failures of the past (Al Jazeera, 2016a, b; Dressel and Bonoan, 2019). His provocative rhetoric, often blending 'menace' with 'charm', reinforced his image as a decisive and authentic leader capable of imposing discipline on a system perceived as 'chaotic' (Thompson, 2016). His willingness to take extreme measures, including risking his own life, further solidified his reputation as a strongman dedicated to national restoration (David, 2016).

[94] During the presidency of Corazon Aquino, crime trends remain a subject of debate among scholars and analysts. While some sources suggest a decline in crime rates during her tenure (Curato, 2016), others present contradictory evidence pointing to an increase in criminal activity (Thompson, 2016). For instance, by 2016, government estimates indicated that approximately 1.8 million individuals were involved in the use or trafficking of illicit drugs (Curato, 2016). This divergence in crime data highlights the broader challenges of relying on official crime statistics as definitive measures of societal or political outcomes. Factors such as political motivations, underreporting, and shifts in law enforcement practices can significantly influence the reliability of these statistics, complicating efforts to establish clear trends. Additionally, in contentious political environments, crime data can be manipulated to advance specific agendas. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that in recent decades, the Philippines has emerged as a significant hub for the illicit drug trade in Southeast Asia (Casiple, 2016).

Leveraging social media and grassroots campaigning, Duterte's team bypassed traditional political structures and media channels to build direct connections with voters. This part of the campaign was built on "information manipulation" (Maxwell, 2019) and "disinformation" (Ong and Cabañes, 2019). Volunteer-driven campaigns amplified his message across platforms like Facebook and Twitter, while televised debates showcased his blunt, "no holds barred performance" because "in the era of mediated populism, the candidate with the best told narrative is well-placed to win media attention, and ultimately voter support" (McCargo, 2016, pp.187, 189; Teehankee and Thompson, 2016). This combination of social media manipulation, grassroots efforts, and strategic use of traditional media allowed Duterte to outmaneuver more conventional candidates tied to established political dynasties: "Populist groups are formed around social media networks and channel their anger through these online spaces…including a more direct communication between populist leaders and their base, (and) the creation of channels that sideline those of mainstream media" (Flew and Iosifidis, 2020, p.4). As Duterte's candidacy gained momentum, traditional political parties and local political clans began to align themselves with his campaign (Teehankee and Thompson, 2016). Duterte's leadership style, referred to as '*Dutertismo*,' reflects a blend of populism and authoritarianism (David, 2016). As a "patron-strongman," he "combines high levels of input legitimacy (…) with output legitimacy prevalently in the form of the provision of law and order but also in the form of economic government for the people" (Kreuzer, 2020, p.2). This dual legitimacy has sustained his popularity, despite widespread international criticism of his endorsement of extrajudicial killings and disregard for the rule of law (Curato, 2016, 2018). His administration's emphasis on discipline, both in public behavior and governance, resonated with voters disillusioned by the inefficiencies and corruption of previous administrations. Duterte's rise to power is emblematic of the deep-seated frustrations of Filipinos with a political system that has long favored the elite while neglecting the needs of ordinary citizens. His campaign, built on the promise of restoring law and order, addressing economic inequality, and overhauling a corrupt system, tapped into a collective yearning for a progressive leadership.

### 5.3. Democratic Breakdown: The Autocratic Expansion Model (AEM) in Duterte's Philippines (2016-2022)[95]

Rodrigo Duterte's populist and authoritarian leadership style became the hallmark of his governance. Duterte campaigned on a platform of strongman rule, promising to eradicate crime and corruption, often through extrajudicial means. Once in office, he put this campaign rhetoric into action by launching a nationwide 'war on drugs' that resulted in widespread

[95] For the evaluation of *empirical uniqueness and certainty*, see Appendix 4.

human rights violations. What Duterte did was not only evade democratic conventions, but in doing so, he actively undermined fundamental institutions and consolidated power in such a matter that contributed to democratic decline. The Duterte regime systematically undermined the institutions designed to uphold checks and balances, including the judiciary, the legislature, and the Commission on Human Rights (CHR). By co-opting or neutralizing these bodies from within, Duterte diminished their capacity to pose an effective check on the executive. This erosion of democratic norms and institutions echoed the country's authoritarian past under Ferdinand Marcos. While the 1986 People Power Revolution restored democracy, the persistence of political dynasties, a weak party system, and enduring public frustration with corruption and crime created fertile ground for Duterte's rise as a populist strongman. Under Duterte, civil society and media organizations faced substantial repression. The administration resorted to repressive tools like the Anti-Terror Law and tactics such as red-tagging, meaning labeling activists as communists or terrorists, to silence dissent. Independent media outlets critical of the government, including *Rappler*, were targeted for legal harassment and intimidation. Suppression of civil society and the press only further weakened societal checks on Duterte's power, further consolidating his authoritarian grip. Duterte had strong alliances with the military and police forces and used these ties to push his most contentious policies, such as the war on drugs. The militarization of the police and the close linkage between the executive and the security apparatuses have allowed Duterte to bypass democratic processes and crack down on opposition. By making state security forces an extension of his administration's policy, Duterte consolidated his power at the expense of dissenting voices. The Philippines, given its experience with Marcos, was still susceptible to populist and authoritarian appeals. He had successfully used that vulnerability by offering himself as a solution to the country's perpetual problems of crime and corruption. His message resonated particularly with the people who had grown tired of decades of elite-dominated politics and weak governance. Duterte's presidency finally broke democratic norms in the Philippines, as authoritarian practices blended with populist rhetoric in a bid to consolidate power and quash dissent. His administration's attacks on institutions, civil society, and the press undermined the very foundations of democracy.

### *5.3.1. Institutional Capture*

Duterte's administration exhibited a clear pattern of influencing every branch of government to consolidate power and suppress dissent. Key institutions, such as the judiciary, law enforcement, and the legislature, were considered increasingly compromised, with appointments often given to those loyal to Duterte. governance. The erosion of checks and balances enabled Duterte to move forward with controversial policies, such as his vicious war on drugs, with minimal resistance. For example, the judiciary saw the removal of those who were perceived to be leading figures in opposition to Duterte's agenda and their replacement

with more pliable individuals who would help him advance his goals. Similarly, the police and military were politicized, becoming tools of Duterte's power. The police, especially, were at the forefront of implementing his war on drugs, often acting with impunity and in disregard for legal norms and human rights. The politicization of these institutions allowed Duterte to circumvent democratic processes and eliminate opposition, further weakening democratic checks. All in all, institutional capture grossly undermined the independence and integrity of democratic institutions in the Philippines, solidifying Duterte's influence and contributing to continued democratic erosion. This section discusses how the tactics of institutional capture have systematically weakened the democratic quality of the Philippines, focusing on how horizontal and vertical accountability has been eroded by analyzing key examples of dynastical families, patronage politics, the institutionalization of hyper-presidentialism, and attacks on the CHR.

#### 5.3.1.1. The Scourges of Democratic Development: Political Dynasties and Patronage Politics

The Philippines has long been characterized by the prevalence of political dynasties[96], families or networks of relatives who maintain control over the political offices and power within particular localities or political subdivisions over extended periods (Gutierrez, 1992; Fegan, 1993). This phenomenon is linked to the country's "patrimonial oligarchic state" (Hutchcroft, 1998, p.20), wherein the oligarchy, a powerful subset of these dynastic families, forms the upper echelon of the ruling class (Park, 2008). David and Legara (2015) have highlighted the resilience of entrenched political dynasties in the Philippines and attributed such resistance to their ability to diversify economically. This diversification allows these families to adjust to the changing circumstances as they continue to maintain their dominance in politics (ibid.). For new dynasties, this implies that even in the poorest provinces, small dynastic families can emerge and grow in influence. With patrimonial politics firmly embedded in the Philippine state in the post-war period, the political dynasties also became stronger. This entrenchment was further facilitated by the rise of rents in the economy and post-Marcos's decentralization efforts, which in turn meant the privatization of public resources (McCoy, 1994). With this, the more the public resources were siphoned to private hands, the more a few political families were strengthened and the state resources and bureaucratic control weakened. Established political dynasties face a time horizon for policymaking that goes beyond term limits, allowing them to implement long-term policies and secure national resources for their local districts (Tusalem and Pe-Aguirre, 2013; Serrano, 2020). Yet, these dynasties are equally capable of pillaging state resources and constricting political and economic competition through rent-

[96] Political dynasties were established during the era of American colonialization (Sidel, 1999). Its members are generally part of the elite in their society. They frequently perform various economic, social, and political functions, consolidating their power and influence (McCoy, 1994). They often operate within formal institutions such as political parties. They play a central role at the local level, shaping their dynamics and operations. (Fegan, 1993)

seeking, electoral violence, and vote buying, thus narrowing socioeconomic opportunities within their areas of jurisdiction (McCoy, 1994; Rivera, 1994; Sidel, 1997; Mendoza et al., 2014, 2022). They thrive on political and economic inequalities to discourage criticism, sustain patronage networks, and remain in office.

Thus, dynastic persistence in the Philippines is a historic burden on economic development as well as political competition. Although several decades have passed since advocacy programs started raising awareness about the deleterious consequences of dynastic rule, Congress has failed to pass laws for anti-dynasty reforms. The Anti-Political Dynasty bill was first proposed in the Eighth Congress, in 1987, and repeated up to the Eighteenth Congress in 2019 (Yusingco et al., 2023). As the current proportion of political dynasties in the Philippine Congress today is at approximately 77 percent of legislators, which has grown over the decades (Mendoza et al., 2019, 2023), it appears that there is an abiding conflict of interest to promote legislation that will foster genuine political competition. In the scenario where access to the political system is a critical source of dynastic persistence, such disproportionate political power would be concentrated in a few families (Querubin, 2012). In this respect, such a high concentration undermines the quality of democracy and economic development in the long run. Accordingly, some scholars note that the dynastic nature of Philippine politics has perpetuated the personalistic pattern of governance which consequently impedes the strong state formation and comprehensive national policy adaptations by the state (Hedman and Sidel, 2000; Coronel et al., 2004). This has meant that political dynasty members often hinder reforms such as the attempts at passing the Anti-Political Dynasty bill that threaten to undermine their interests. The implication is that it hinders the development of more political parties to represent an increasingly diverse range of voter needs. The perpetuation of political dynasties has been linked to rent-seeking practices and the diversion of state resources for private gain (McCoy, 1994; Hutchcroft, 1998). Where political power is concentrated in a few families, the potential for political capture increases, resulting in the adoption of policies that favor a limited set of interests. Apart from entrenching their power, political dynasties have a negative impact on human development, entrenching poverty and underdevelopment. Dynasties deplete state resources by diverting public funds to networks of allies instead of investing fully in public goods and poverty reduction programs (Mendoza et al., 2016, 2019; Tusalem and Pe-Aquirre, 2013). Studies, for example, show that higher dynastic shares[97] have a deteriorating effect on poverty, particularly in regions outside Luzon[98] (Mendoza et al., 2019). While the People Power Revolution in 1986 gave hope to a decline in the oligarchic class, the growing trend of fat

[97] "Dynastic share" (Mendoza et al. 2016) refers to the proportion of positions that dynastic politicians hold in the same province over four electoral terms.
[98] Luzon is the largest and most populous island in the Philippines. Further, it is also the economic and political center of the nation and home to the country's capital city, Metro Manila.

dynasties[99] since the 1987 constitution has, on the contrary, consolidated power among few families, which has been reinforcing inequality and weak democratic accountability (Mendoza et al., 2019, 2023).

Political dynasties employ several strategies to maintain their power, including accumulation of wealth, mobilization of political machinery, coalition building, and control of media (Coronel et al., 2004). These strategies allow established and emergent dynasties to use resources to capture and hold onto political offices during the democratic transition of the post-Marcos period (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005; Teehankee, 2001; Winters, 2011). The persistence of patronage politics and a focus on clientelistic exchanges over public service provision further undermine electoral accountability (Cruz et al., 2017, 2019). As a result, politicians are more likely to succeed by engaging in patronage and offering immediate rewards to voters rather than by demonstrating their ability to provide broad-based public services or effective governance. For instance, during the 2022 national elections, the proportion of fat dynastic politicians among local elected leaders went up from 22 percent in 1992 to 30.6 percent (Mendoza et al., 2023). In fact, fat dynastic politicians now hold approximately 5,500 of the almost 18,000 elected posts (ibid.). In a patrimonial oligarchic state, there is a symbiotic relationship between the state and the oligarchy. Whereas the oligarchy maintains economic power largely independently, this wealth and influence are significantly bolstered by state actions and policies (Hutchcroft, 1998). This relationship often leads to a concentration of both political and economic power in the hands of a few. In such a system, political influence and economic resources self-reinforce, resulting in a "captured democracy" (e.g., Acemoglu and Robinson, 2008).

By tradition, Duterte comes from a political dynasty that stretches from his father and uncle down to a cousin and his children in three generations of rule (Thompson, 2016). While pre-2016 elections, the Duterte family dynasty could not be considered an 'oligarchic' dynasty as they did not have "monopolistic control over both coercive and economic resources within given territorial jurisdictions or bailiwicks" (Sidel, 1999, p.19), they had been linked to several other dynastical families, including the Marcos family (Dulay et al., 2023). Interestingly, Duterte started his presidency with a pledge to "destroy the oligarchs that are embedded in government" (Corrales, 2016), extending his electoral campaign spiel of framing the war on drugs as a fight between virtuous citizens and a corrupt elite. Despite his connections to several powerful political families, Duterte positioned himself as an outsider and a provincial underdog challenging the entrenched oligarchs in Manila. He castigated his predecessors, Noynoy Aquino and Mar Roxas, as symbols of an oligarchic elite that did not want to reform itself or promote genuine economic development (Abao, 2016; Kusaka, 2018; McCoy, 1994;

[99] "Fat dynasties" involve multiple family members holding office simultaneously, while "thin dynasties" refer to sequential office holding of a family (Mendoza et al., 2019).

Thompson, 2016). Duterte's anti-oligarch rhetoric was adopted by a public angry about poverty and inequality despite years of reported growth under the Aquino government.

Individuals holding oligarchic power are vulnerable to being targeted by populist leaders like Duterte, who adopt a "rich versus poor" narrative and promote an anti-elite stance, despite their own elite status (Thompson, 2010, pp.157-158). However, Duterte's presidency demonstrates a more selective strategy in addressing the oligarchy, suggesting a dual tactic: leveraging the oligarchic system for personal benefit while eliminating those who pose obstacles to his agenda. The Lopez and Villar families represent two prominent oligarchic dynasties in the Philippines, but their rise to power and political strategies offers contrasting narratives. The Lopez family represents an older form of oligarchic dominance, one that has its roots in pre-industrial landholding and evolved into diversified sectors over time, particularly media. (McCoy, 1994) Their rise was not purely economic but deeply tied to political alliances, illustrating how oligarchies in the Philippines have historically relied on close relationships with the state to expand their power. The Lopezes' strategic engagement with the government was crucial in securing concessions and rent-seeking opportunities, which allowed them to expand beyond agriculture into media, energy, and other industries. Their media holdings, particularly ABS-CBN, were not just business ventures but political tools, used to support allies and attack adversaries. (ibid.) This intertwining of economic and political power highlights the Lopez family's role as a classic example of oligarchic rent-seeking, where private wealth is accumulated through privileged access to public resources. However, their political fortunes shifted drastically under the Marcos regime, which saw them as a threat. Marcos' moves to expropriate Lopez's businesses during Martial Law, particularly ABS-CBN and Meralco, reflect the vulnerability of oligarchs who lose political favor. Political power in the Philippines is thus contingent on maintaining political alliances. When those alliances falter, as they did with Marcos, oligarchic families can face severe repression (Vera Files, 2016). Despite this, the Lopezes' ability to bounce back after the fall of Marcos, particularly through the support of President Cory Aquino following the 1986 People Power Revolution, shows the resilience of entrenched elites. Their rapid re-acquisition of assets and the rebuilding of their media empire illustrates how oligarchies are not easily dismantled but can reconstitute themselves when political conditions shift in their favor. The Lopezes' revival of ABS-CBN post-Marcos further emphasizes the ongoing role of media as a tool for political influence. ABS-CBN became a major player not just in entertainment but in shaping public discourse and politics, making or breaking political careers (Limos, 2020). However, this also led to accusations of bias and the perception that the network primarily served the Lopezes' interests (Ravago, 2023). The closure of ABS-CBN in 2020 under Duterte, following the denial of its franchise renewal, was widely seen as politically motivated, stemming from the network's critical stance towards his administration and its historical ties to the Aquino family (Lalu and Subingbing, 2021).

In contrast, the Villar family exemplifies a newer form of oligarchic power that has risen in the context of the Philippines' evolving political economy. Unlike the Lopezes, whose wealth was historically tied to land and media, the Villars built their fortune primarily through real estate and mass housing, sectors that have benefited from close ties to government infrastructure projects and policies (Regilme, 2023). Manny Villar's ability to leverage his political career, serving as a congressman and senator, and running for president in 2010, into business opportunities exemplifies a more modern form of oligarchic entrepreneurship (Tomacruz, 2022; Mendoza et al., 2019; Ager, 2019). The Villars' success is deeply tied to their strategic political alignments, first with previous administrations and, more recently, with Duterte and Marcos Jr., illustrating a pattern of oligarchic families allying themselves with whoever holds political power to safeguard and expand their interests. The Villars' rapid rise to prominence, particularly under Duterte, reflects how oligarchic power is not monolithic but can shift depending on political conditions. Duterte's administration granted the Villars key economic benefits, such as awarding them the broadcast frequency previously held by ABS-CBN after its closure, consolidating pro-regime narratives and controlling the flow of information to favor the administration's propaganda. (Camus, 2022; Talabong, 2022) The Villars' close political alignment with Duterte was further demonstrated when Manny Villar's wife, Cynthia, and their daughter, Camille, voted against ABS-CBN's franchise renewal. Meanwhile, Emmeline Aglipay-Villar, the wife of their son Mark, played a role in approving the allocation of ABS-CBN's former frequencies to Villar-owned companies (Rey, 2022; Gonzales, 2022). This concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a single-family illustrates how oligarchic interests are being perpetuated rather than dismantled, despite Duterte's rhetoric against oligarchy. The contrasting experiences of the Lopez and Villar families under Duterte reveal a pattern of selective oligarchic dismantling, where the power of certain oligarchic families was weakened while others were enabled to rise. This tactic was thus utilized to attack specific elites while maintaining alliances with others who supported the regime. Duterte's approach to oligarchic power, then, is less about dismantling it entirely and more about reshaping it to fit his political agenda. The Lopezes, with their historical ties to opposition politics, became a target, while the Villars, who aligned themselves with Duterte's administration, were able to expand their power and influence.

In short, the legacies of the Marcos regime, which institutionalized the interlocking of political and economic power among oligarchic families, laid the groundwork for Duterte's ability to function within this system. By exploiting the oligarchic network, Duterte advanced not only his personal political dynasty but also reduced elite conflict by selectively targeting some oligarchic families, like the Lopezes, while favoring others, such as the Villars. This dynamic is a function of a deliberate balancing act to maintain his dominance over the state and the oligarchy without being challenged by other oligarchs.

#### 5.3.1.2. Hyper-Presidentialism in Action: The Role of Patronage and Political Loyalty in Duterte's Government

The Philippines has a presidential system marked by a clear separation between the president and Congress, with both being elected independently and serving fixed terms (Thompson, 2017). This institutional structure is susceptible to gridlock due to the absence of a democratic mechanism to resolve conflicts between these two electorally independent entities (Linz, 1990). Moreover, the weak party system of the country is marked by temporary alliances and personalities that are primarily oriented toward electoral success without clear ideological objectives (Quimpo, 2007). Once in office, political cleavages dissolve into ad hoc alliances motivated by patronage, party-switching, and machine politics since the president frequently holds less than 25 percent of seats in both Houses[100] (Hutchcroft, 2020; Mietzner, 2021) and yields a political environment that hovers around patronage and not policy (Teehankee and Calimbahin, 2020; see Chapter 5.3.2.1.).

This inherent instability is exacerbated by the persistent preeminence of political dynasties and patronage politics, undermining the very core of a stable, cohesive party system. (Kasuya, 2009; Montinola, 1999) Duterte exploited a weak party structure and a high incidence of party-switching in Congress – which diminishes accountability, creates fewer electoral choices, and inhibits long-term policy development. (Desposato, 2005; Manacsa and Tan, 2005; Montinola, 1999) This paved the way for what is known as "coalitional presidentialism," a political reality where legislative support hinges on the president's ability to dole out resources and influence (Power, 2010; Chaisty et al., 2018). Duterte capitalized on this systemic volatility to his advantage, using *turncoatism* (post-election party-switching) through both formal (veto and budget powers) and informal (pork-barrel) mechanisms to forge a supermajority (Teehankee and Kasuya, 2020). By doing so, Duterte effectively neutralized the opposition, ensuring that his legislative agenda would surely be advanced with the least possible resistance. Although this practice is not unique to his administration with an average of 33.5 percent of all lower house representatives elected to Congress having defected to join the clientelistic networks since 1987 (Teehankee, 2012), party-switching under Duterte accelerated and exploited to an extent that the formation of a supermajority in both Houses was realized. Although Duterte came to power with what can be termed a 'micro-party' (*PDP-Laban*) with only one senator and three seats in the House of Representatives, it soon became the majority ruling coalition by pulling 268 out of 304 members of the House of Representatives to his side. (Mietzner, 2021; see Figure 5.2) This historically has allowed presidents to steer the legislative agenda, thereby giving them the leverage for the top positions in the legislature, like the Speakership

[100] The Congress of the Philippines is a bicameral legislative body composed of two chambers, namely the Senate (the upper chamber) and the House of Representatives (the lower chamber). Similar to that of the United States, in the Philippines there are two major types of elections: the national and the mid-term elections. Refer to Appendix 11.b for further information.

of both Houses, for example (Montinola, 1999; Tomsa and Ufen, 2013). In Duterte's term, this is manifested in the promotion of Pantaleon Alvarez as House Speaker and Aquilino Pimentel as Senate President, both from the president's party, the PDP-Laban (Romero, 2016).

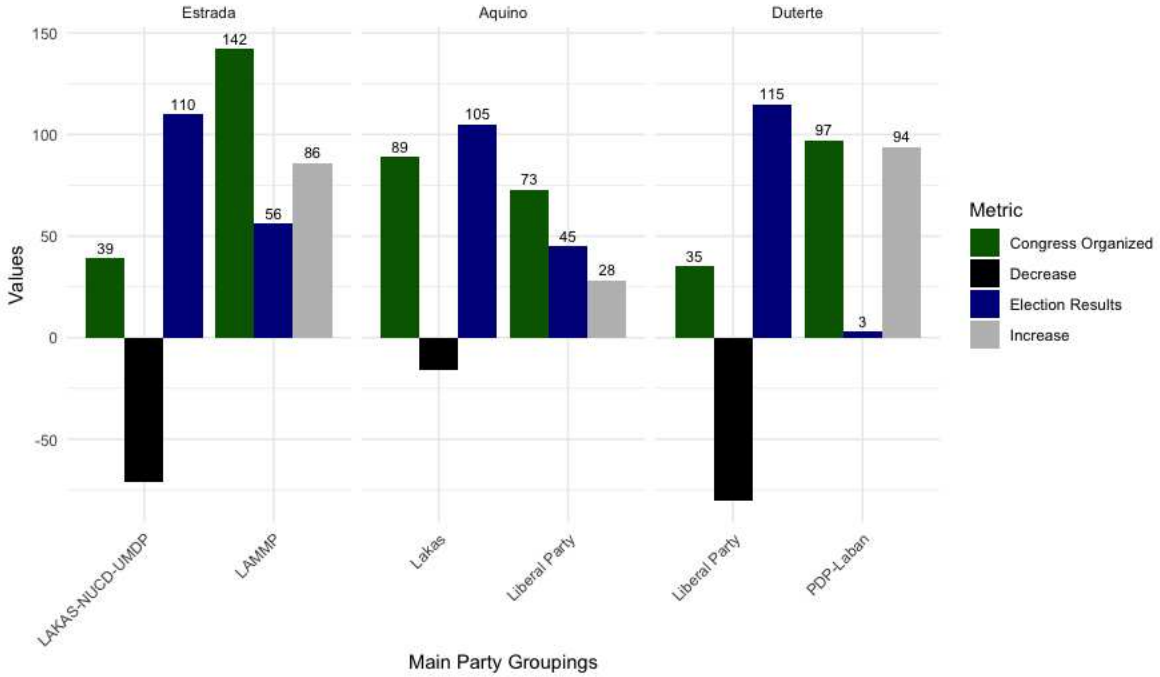


Figure 5.2. Post-Election Party Switching in the House of Representatives until 2016 in the Philippines. *Source*: The author. Amended from Rood, 2019, p.76.

The congressional alignment with Duterte's agenda eased the passage of controversial measures, including those underpinning his violent "war on drugs" and anti-communist campaigns. This concentration of power reflects a form of "hyper-presidentialism" (Rose-Ackerman et al., 2011), where control over the legislative budget and resources transformed the state into a pliant apparatus for Duterte's policies. His control over the budget, including the ability to allocate discretionary funds to loyal legislators, allowed him to maintain a loyal base in Congress while undermining any attempts to introduce checks on his power, making presidential authority "nearly ubiquitous (throughout) the entire state apparatus." (Ronas, 2016, p. 81; Teehankee, 2016, p. 294; Mendoza and Thompson, 2018; Dressel and Susilo, 2023; Holmes, 2019; Teehankee and Kasuya, 2019) By marginalizing opposition through budgetary rewards and political coercion, Duterte reduced the legislature to a rubber stamp for his administration's initiatives. The lack of meaningful opposition in the 2019 midterm elections, where Duterte's allies swept over 85 percent of seats, highlights the extent to which political dynasties and party-switching contributed to this (BBC, 2019b; Figure 5.3). This shift not only sidelined opposition voices but also entrenched dynastic politics, as the majority of legislators

and party-list representatives elected hailed from political clans loyal to Duterte (Teehankee and Kasuya, 2020; Vartavarian, 2018).

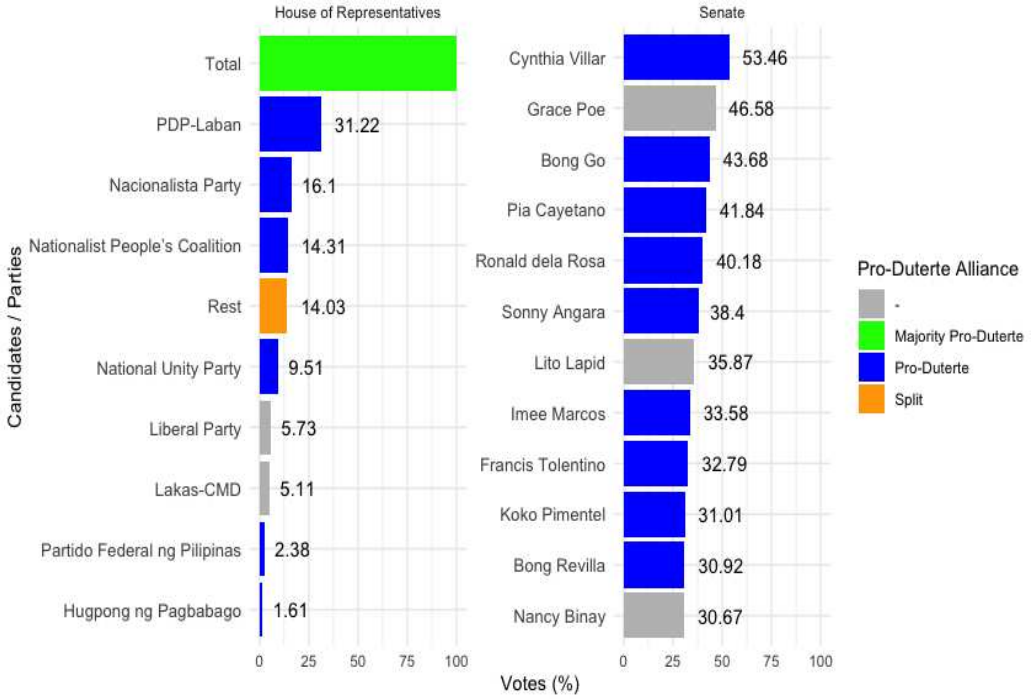


Figure 5.3. Results of the Senate and House of Representatives 2019 Midterm Elections.
*Source*: The author. Data from Comelec (2019a, b).
*Notes*: **Hugpong ng Pagbabago* is an alliance backed by Sara Duterte, then-Mayor of Davao and daughter of Rodrigo Duterte.

The 2019 midterm elections in the Philippines were a realignment of political dynamics that gave President Duterte the needed political leverage to push for his authoritarian populist agenda (Teehankee and Kasuya, 2019; Timberman, 2019). This reconfiguration is manifested in Duterte's consolidation of power through political dynasties and parties allied with him that fielded his administration's senatorial candidates. This was the period of a "new presidential bandwagon", amidst an era of dynastic politics, weak political parties, and populist mobilization (Teehankee and Kasuya, 2019). In contrast to the previous traditional reliance on patronage, Duterte has eschewed party building and focused on mass populist support ahead of the midterm elections. This shift has played a significant role in undermining coordination between political parties in Congress, as evidenced by the ongoing leadership infighting over the Speakership of the House of Representatives and the rise of an "anarchy of parties." In this context, congressional representatives have sought to capitalize on Duterte's popularity to secure their positions through parties favored by the administration and senatorial slates. (Teehankee and Kasuya, 2020) The midterm elections illuminated how political dynasties associated with Duterte, including the Marcoses and Villars, successfully attained both national and local offices, whereas those that were not aligned with him, such as the Aquino and Binay family, experienced significant setbacks (Jiao et al., 2019). Duterte effectively

capitalized on the historically fragile party system of the Philippines, the persistence of dynastic politics, and the lack of robust institutional checks to strengthen his hold on power.

In addition, Duterte systematically undermined the autonomy of government institutions through strategic appointments of trusted associates, former military officials, and relatives to key positions (see Figure 5.4). This strategy ensured that power was concentrated in the hands of those who proved their loyalty to him, thus eliminating the essential checks and balances critical to democratic governance. An integral part of this plan was his appointment of retired police and military generals to key cabinet positions. This change altered the composition of the executive branch and gave the security forces greater influence over the civilian government. By increasing the presence of military personnel in positions generally reserved for civilians, Duterte blurred the lines between civilian and military power, effectively sabotaging the autonomy of civilian institutions. Another tactic used by Duterte was the "recycling" of officials, namely the reassignment to new government positions of individuals who had been removed from their posts due to allegations of corruption. This approach not only contradicted his self-proclaimed anti-corruption stance but also stressed that loyalty to his administration trumped the principles of integrity and accountability. By August 2019, barely three years into his presidency, Duterte had replaced nearly half (47 percent) of his cabinet. The number of former military and police generals in these positions had almost tripled, from 4 at the beginning of his presidency to 11 after the 2019 midterm elections. (Ranada, 2019; Teodoro, 2022) This was a clear pattern of consolidating his dominance by embedding loyalists in key institutions and ensuring their dependence on his leadership.

Figure 5.4. Ex-Military/Police and Family/Friends in the Duterte Administration, 2016-2022.
*Source*: The author. Based on data from Ranada (2019); Gulf News (2019); Teodoro (2022).
*Notes*: non-exhaustive list.

Rodrigo Duterte's initial post-2016 attempt to broaden his political base by appointing left-leaning politicians to key government positions, particularly within the context of peace talks

with the communist insurgency, can be seen as a calculated tactic of institutional capture. While this move initially appeared to signal a pragmatic effort to integrate diverse political ideologies and foster peace, it was ultimately a short-lived strategy aimed at neutralizing opposition from the political left rather than a genuine embrace of political pluralism. By offering roles in four executive departments to leftist leaders, Duterte temporarily diffused potential opposition, projecting an image of inclusivity. However, this strategy soon unraveled as tensions grew between left-leaning officials and Duterte's broader agenda, particularly his aggressive "war on drugs" campaign. The breakdown of peace negotiations with communist rebels further complicated this alliance, leading to the dismissal or resignation of these leftist appointees. (International Crisis Group, 2023; Esguerra, 2018) This shift revealed Duterte's prioritization of loyalty and control over any sincere attempt to foster ideological diversity within his government. The brief inclusion of leftist figures can thus be understood as a tactical maneuver to co-opt potential critics while maintaining firm control over the state apparatus. Once these appointees no longer served his objectives, they were sidelined or removed, reinforcing the idea that Duterte valued loyalty to his administration above ideological alignment or institutional balance. This approach not only perpetuated a culture of impunity, where political survival depended not on adherence to principles or institutional norms but on unwavering loyalty to Duterte's administration but also enabled Duterte to project an outward image of inclusive governance while consolidating authoritarian control.

The *de facto* political impact of this pattern can be observed in Duterte's involvement with the Commission on Elections (COMELEC). In 2018, Duterte appointed Sheriff Abas as COMELEC Chairman, a figure with familial ties to influential political actors, including Mohagher Iqbal of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). This strategic positioning of trusted allies continued with Saidamen Pangarungan, a personal associate from Duterte's San Beda College days, who was appointed to COMELEC in 2022 (Gulf News, 2019). These appointments served to manipulate the institution in favor of Duterte's political interests, as evidenced by COMELEC's decision to grant a House of Representatives seat to Ducielle Cardema from the Duterte Youth Party, despite procedural irregularities and pending legal cases (ABS-CBN News, 2020). All of Duterte's COMELEC appointees voted in favor of Cardema (ibid.), highlighting how COMELEC was weaponized to manipulate electoral outcomes in favor of his administration, thereby undermining the integrity and impartiality essential for the democratic process.

Moreover, Duterte used personal and political connections to increase his influence through political patronage. He strategically distributed public resources and projects to areas and candidates that supported his administration, empowering their electoral chances while weakening opposition candidates who did not have the same support. This further entrenched a system of political patronage in which loyalty to Duterte paid off in real electoral and political

dividends. For example, during the midterm elections of 2019, the endorsement and support from Duterte's administration were crucial for the electoral success of his favored senatorial candidates, who not only prevailed in the elections but also reinforced his authority over the legislative branch (Teehankee and Kasuya, 2020). By strategically directing resources to his allies while depriving adversaries of such support, Duterte's administration effectively altered the political environment to preserve its supremacy. This not only created a political alliance but also entrenched the family in both regional and national politics (Jiao et al., 2019; Arguillas, 2019). The continuing grip of the Duterte family on Davao City[101] and Sara Duterte's rise to the vice presidency in 2022 (Dulay et al., 2023) exemplifies the crucial role of political dynasties and patronage in the consolidation of Duterte's power. The concentration of power in trusted allies and relatives sabotaged the democratic principle of equal contestation at the cost of significant disempowerment for those outside Duterte's inner circle. Thereby, independent opposition, diversity of politics, and vertical accountability were all crippled because Duterte's domination in electoral management and resource control rendered most serious opposition against him ineffective. Contrary to Duterte's rhetoric of eliminating political patronage and oligarchic control, his regime strengthened these phenomena.

The most prominent and obvious example of the real political consequences of this trend is Duterte's infamous 'war on drugs,' which started as Operation 'Double Barrel' (PNP Commission, 2016), a national anti-drug campaign, launched a day after Duterte took office (Reyes, 2016). Regardless of the democratic tenet of the separation of powers, Duterte has been able to bypass traditional checks and balances. An unprecedented number of extrajudicial killings[102] (EJKs) marked the administration's political agenda, with little opposition coming from the dominant political elite. This is largely because of the dominance of *fat dynasties* in Congress, where a significant percentage of House members belong to political families with vested interests at the provincial and municipal levels (Mendoza et al., 2019, 2023). The House, divided into fractious political parties and held hostage by patronage-based politics, failed to meaningfully push back against Duterte's plans despite token opposition from the Liberal Party and the *Makabayan* coalition. Its failure to react to Duterte's aggressive anti-drug campaign reflects the systemic weaknesses of the institution, as witnessed by the lack of any action from the Human Rights and Dangerous Drugs Committees regarding mass violence. Moreover, Duterte's considerable powers of appointment and budget allocation contributed to

[101] Sara Duterte served as the Mayor of Davao City prior to the vice presidency. Paolo Duterte was vice mayor until 2019, when his brother Sebastian replaced him. Sebastian Duterte is the mayor of Davao City since 2022. Paolo Duterte has also held the post of representative for the 1st District of Davao City since 2019 and a former Deputy Speaker of the House for Political Affairs (Jiao et al., 2019; Arguillas, 2019).

[102] In the Philippines, extrajudicial killings have historically been either committed or tolerated by the state, military, police, and other para-military groups. The outcome of EJKs is usually characterized by the lack of accountability of the perpetrators, inter alia, due to the nonspecific legal definition of what is meant to be EJK (Pangilinan, 2012).

congressional quiescence. Nevertheless, Duterte's legislative achievements were not due simply to acquiescence. He strategically centralized power through a two-pronged approach: exploiting the structural weaknesses in the party system to create a supermajority and tactically appointing loyalists to key positions in the legislature. Despite some resistance from lawmakers, civil society groups, and the courts, Duterte's strategy worked to prevent any effective restraint on his anti-drug campaign. In addition, the massive popular support for the campaign and the pro-'drug war' view dominant among a majority of the further reduced any chance of mass mobilization against his policies. As such, there was little chance of broad-based opposition, which has enabled Duterte to push his agenda with little check on his actions. (Kreuzer, 2020; Iglesias, 2022, 2023)

In sum, Duterte engineered a political environment that stifled opposition, rewarded loyalty, and turned critical state institutions into subservient instruments of his authoritarian agenda. Meanwhile, he has resorted to strategic maneuvering, including party-switching and placing loyalists in key positions, while manipulating public resources to consolidate power at the expense of prospects for strong checks and balances. This framework of institutional authority, through Congress and law enforcement agencies, had enabled Duterte to push through with his policies with little resistance, undermining democratic values in the process.

5.3.1.3. Jailing the Opposition

> *"The Senate is the people's last line of defence within the government against continuing attempts to undermine our democracy and attack our human rights. The opposition in the Senate will continue to build issue-based alliances with our colleagues to defend and promote the people's cherished freedoms and democracy"* (Senator Risa Hontiveros in Regencia, 2019)

In the wake of Duterte's consolidation of executive power, much of which was orchestrated through the politicization and popularization of the 'war on drugs,' he employed a variety of tactics designed to subvert accountability and weaken the opposition. Central to his strategy was the 'weaponization' of state institutions, in particular the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, to target political opponents (see Table 5.2). The justification for the 'war on drugs' was steeply based on exaggerated security threats the drug trade allegedly posed. This allowed him to not only incorporate the national police into his power base (Quimpo, 2017) but also cultivate a culture of moral panic. The use of such othering rhetoric framed the users as existential threats to public safety and created a climate of fear where the erosion of civil liberties was entered as justifiable by many (Bautista, 2017). Duterte continued to deploy the rhetoric of "othering" drug users and dealers leading to the creation of dichotomies where an 'us versus them' framing steered the dehumanization of those who were the target of the President's policy initiatives (Lasco, 2020). This framing thus formed a populist tool for obtaining compliance with punitive measures. Scholars have described Duterte's approach as "penal populism," exploiting fears of crime and security to legitimize authoritarian practices

(Curato, 2016). In effect, such approaches of short-term hard deterrence were used to reinforce human-rights violations while furthering an authoritarian aim through public approval of such measures (Ramos, 2020).

One of the clearest examples of undermining the rule of law during and after Duterte's 'war on drugs' is the systematic use of legal threats, intimidation, and selective prosecution against those members of Congress opposing Duterte's policies. Leila de Lima's arrest[103] and detention on charges considered fabricated is an example of social silencing using the courts for legal harassment. De Lima became a target after launching a Senate inquiry into extrajudicial killings related to the war on drugs (Rappler, 2017). Her arrest marked a turning point in Duterte's strategy to combat opposition, clearly declaring that those daring to stand against him would suffer great hardships. Many of the charges brought against his other staunch critic, Senator Antonio Trillanes, after verbally opposing the drug war and the corruption accusations, were also questionable. No less, the Duterte government renewed old complaints and intensified the legal onslaught against Trillanes, demonstrating that Duterte was launching a politically motivated war on his perceived enemies in the Senate. Trillanes' past involvement in coup attempts against former President Gloria Arroyo made him an ideal target for Duterte, who hoped to discredit his most outspoken critics by smearing them as being subversive. (ABS-CBN News, 2018; Addison, 2007; Al Jazeera, 2018a) The re-introduction of politically motivated libel charges against Trillanes demonstrates how Duterte has weaponized the legal apparatus against political dissent.

In addition to judicial harassment, Duterte used his control over the legislative process to weaken the institutional capacity of the opposition. His manipulation of parliamentary rules ensured that the House of Representatives became an arena dominated by pro-government lawmakers. This undermining of checks and balances was further facilitated by co-opting opposition factions like the radical left-leaning *Makabayan bloc*[104] (see Chapter 5.3.1.2.). By exploiting divisions between radical and moderate leftist organizations[105], Duterte neutralized

[103] Out of the three cases against her, two have been dismissed and for the last with pending proceedings, she sought for bail on health grounds, which was granted in March 2023 under the Marcos Jr. administration (Reuters, 2023).

[104] Institutionally, even before the Congress convened for the first time in July of 2016, there were only about eight genuine members of the opposition or minority out of 297 representatives in the House of Representatives, while in the 24-member Senate, there were three members of the minority who still had to prove their opposition credentials. The rest had joined the majority, some out of belief; some out of loyalty; some to get committee chairmanships, access to presidential funds, and good appointments for their followers; some out of a misguided sense of being more effective as "a loyal opposition"; and perhaps some out of fear of political and physical retribution from the president or his more rabid supporters (Bello, 2017).

[105] Duterte inherited a weakened civil society characterized by a moderate left closely associated with the outgoing president Benigno Aquino III, a radical left that struggled with public support and faced opposition from the country's security forces, and various issue-based and developmental CSOs that encountered public distrust due to the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) scandal (Arugay and Baquisal, 2023).

what could have been a formidable opposition front, incorporating leftist figures into his administration before later sidelining them (Tupaz, 2016). Individuals within the *Makabayan bloc* that opposed Duterte's war on drugs were also curtailed through legal mechanisms. Antonio Tinio and Ariel Casilao, for example, were charged with child abuse for participating in a protest against martial law in Mindanao (Cepeda, 2018). This tactical inclusion followed by marginalization demonstrates Duterte's strategic use of coalition-building to consolidate power early on, only to discard these alliances once they outlived their usefulness.

Moreover, Duterte's treatment of lawmakers who opposed the reintroduction of the death penalty in 2017 is indicative of his broader approach to governing through intimidation and punishment. Lawmakers who stood against his agenda faced retaliatory actions such as losing key committee positions or funding for their constituencies. The "purge" of eleven legislators – all members of Duterte's ruling coalition – from influential posts, including former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, reveals how Duterte used institutional levers to enforce party loyalty and suppress dissent within his coalition. (Mogato, 2017a; Reuters, 2017a) By stripping members of his own ruling coalition of political power and resources, Duterte demonstrated that loyalty to him was conditional and transactional. This action demonstrates his willingness to enforce discipline within his ranks, even at the expense of his own allies, as he was not afraid to sacrifice his loyalists to maintain control. Duterte strategically used institutional levers, such as committee positions and funding, as both punishment and a reminder of the precariousness of access to state resources and patronage under his rule. Lawmakers, who strayed from his agenda, even on key policy issues like the reintroduction of the death penalty, faced tangible consequences, thereby reinforcing the perception that dissent, even within his own camp, would be met with retaliation. Beyond legal and institutional methods, Duterte also engaged in more direct forms of repression, including extrajudicial means to eliminate opposition at the local level. The assassination of local politicians, such as Tanauan Mayor Antonio Halili, who was accused without evidence of involvement in the drug trade, highlights Duterte's willingness to use violence as a tool for political consolidation. These extrajudicial killings, framed as necessary to combat 'narco-politicians,' served not only to eliminate rivals but also to instill fear among those who might oppose Duterte's rule. (Acayan, 2018; Ghani, 2018; Talabong, 2019)

Table 5.2. List of prominent jailed/criminally charged opposition members under Duterte.

| Name | Position | (Justification of) Charges | Source | Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Leila de Lima | Senator of the Philippines | Charged with fabricated conspiracy to drug trafficking for launching a Senate inquiry into extrajudicial killings related to the war on drugs. | Buan (2017) | 2017 |
| Antonio Trillanes | Senator of the Philippines | Libel and the revival of old charges related to criticism of Duterte's drug war and corruption allegations. | ABS-CBN News (2018) | 2018 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Risa Hontiveros | Senator of the Philippines | Charged with kidnapping and obstruction of justice for protecting witnesses in the killing of Kian delos Santos. | Cayabyab (2017) | 2017 |
| Antonio Tinio | Member of the House of Representatives (Makabayan bloc) | Charged with child abuse for protesting against martial law in Mindanao. | Cepeda (2018) | 2018 |
| Ariel Casilao | Member of the House of Representatives (Makabayan bloc) | Charged with child abuse for protesting against martial law in Mindanao. | Cepeda (2018) | 2018 |
| Gloria Macapagal Arroyo | Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives | Lost the position of Deputy Speaker for voting against Duterte's bill for the reintroduction of the death penalty. | Mogato (2017a); Reuters (2017) | 2017 |
| Antonio Halili | Mayor of Tanauan, Batangas | Murdered; accused of being a 'narco-politician' without evidence. | Acayan (2018); Talabong (2018) | 2018 |
| Eleven Legislators (incl. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo) | Various positions in the House of Representatives | Stripped of key posts in committees for opposing a revival of the death penalty bill championed by Duterte. | Mogato (2017a); Reuters (2017) | 2017 |

*Source*: Compiled by the author.
*Notes*: non-exhaustive list.

Duterte's strategy represents a deliberate and nuanced approach to consolidating power through the erosion of democratic safeguards, employing both legal and extrajudicial means. Weaponizing state institutions, particularly the judiciary and law enforcement, Duterte systematically disempowered political dissent and opposition, turning the democratic process into instruments of repression. Coupled with punitive actions against dissenting legislators and the co-opting and undermining of rival factions in his coalition further diminished institutional checks and balances. This process swept aside critics and redefined the parameters of political participation, whereby loyalty to Duterte was rewarded with compliance, and dissent was punished. Working to undermine judiciary independence, manipulating the legislative process, and sanctioning extrajudicial violence, he consolidated executive power at the expense of democratic governance. This act led to an accelerating demise of the capability of democratic institutions to hold him accountable, and further still, in the journey of the Philippines down a designated path of authoritarianism cloaked under the guise of law and order.

#### 5.3.1.4. Silencing Human Rights: Attacks on the Commission of Human Rights

The Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has been tasked since its establishment in 1987 with investigating human rights violations against marginalized and vulnerable sectors. It is constitutionally mandated to investigate alleged human rights violations carried out by state actors. The CHR has consistently raised concerns about police abuses in the war on drugs (Commission on Human Rights, 2022), military abuses against indigenous groups and other civilians in the war against communists (Commission on Human Rights, 2019) and increasing threats to human rights defenders in the Philippines (Commission on Human Rights, 2020b). The CHR is not subject to the control of other branches of government. On

September 12, 2017, the "Legislators at the House of Representatives overwhelmingly yielded to the wishes expressed by President Rodrigo Duterte (to abolish the national human rights body) in his second State of the Nation Address" (Gavilan, 2022a). Duterte deemed the CHR's involvement in matters within his jurisdiction, particularly their investigations into his "war on drugs," to be a violation of his authority. However, since the CHR is *de jure* a constitutionally created independent body, the complete abolishment of the institution would require a constitutional change, according to the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines[106], therefore, Duterte aimed different tactics to undermine the body's power. Duterte's administration utilized a combination of financial leverage, coercive directives, and public discrediting to weaken the CHR and ensure its compliance.

A key tactic in Duterte's strategy to undermine the CHR's authority was financial manipulation particularly the threat of Duterte and his allies in the lower house of Congress to slash the CHR's budget to a token $20 in 2017 (Deutsche Welle, 2017; Mogato, 2017b; Reuters, 2017b). This form of economic coercion, or what I refer to as "conditional restoration", forced the CHR into a position where its financial survival depended on its willingness to extend its investigations beyond its constitutional mandate. This diverted the CHR's limited resources away from its primary role of investigating state-perpetrated abuses and aligned its efforts with the government's law-and-order narrative (Reuters, 2017b). This tactic partly neutralized the Commission's independent oversight by essentially bribing the CHR to dilute its focus on state actors, diverting its attention to insurgents and criminal groups (ibid.). The genuine impact is a noteable weakening of human rights advocacy in the Philippines. By forcing the CHR to engage in areas outside its core mandate, the Duterte administration effectively minimized its capacity to hold state actors accountable, leaving many abuses unaddressed. Duterte's directive for police and military agencies to withhold cooperation with CHR investigations further exemplifies his tactic of institutional obstruction. (Commission of Human Rights, 2022, pp.27-34; Talabong, 2017) These orders have made it nearly impossible for the Commission to conduct detailed investigations into extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations during the drug war, not only by blocking access to key documents but also by prohibiting state agencies from participating in CHR-led proceedings. For example, in 2022, "at least 297 drug-related killings – 216 of which were committed in police operations – out of the 798 incidents analyzed by the CHR for its report lacked any police documents due to alleged outright denials, lack of response from police, and pending clearance from higher offices" (Gavilan, 2022b). However, the impeding of CHR operations is not a singular event. While CHR investigations under the Duterte administration continue to produce tangible results in terms of the number and types of crimes and perpetrators (see Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.6), most

[106] Amendments to the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines can be proposed either by a People's Initiative, a Constituent Assembly, or a Constitutional Convention (Constitution of the Philippines, 1987).

of the crimes uncovered have never been brought to justice (U.S. Government of State, various years).

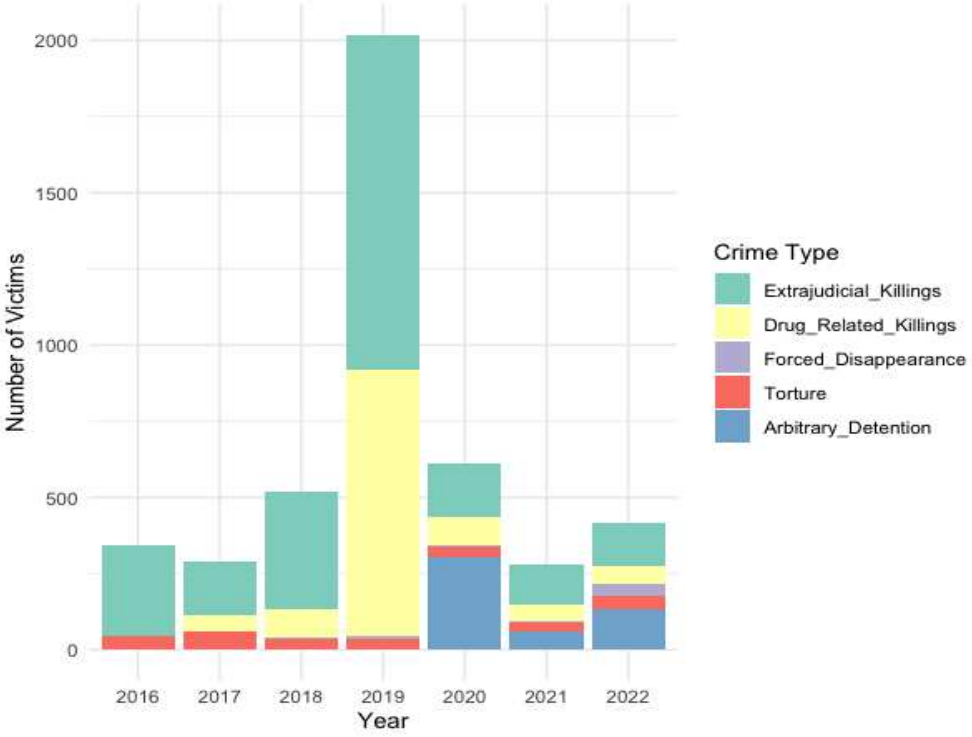


Figure 5.5. Cases investigated by the CHR by number of victims, type and crime and perpetrator.
*Source*: The author. Based on data from the U.S. Department of State (various years).

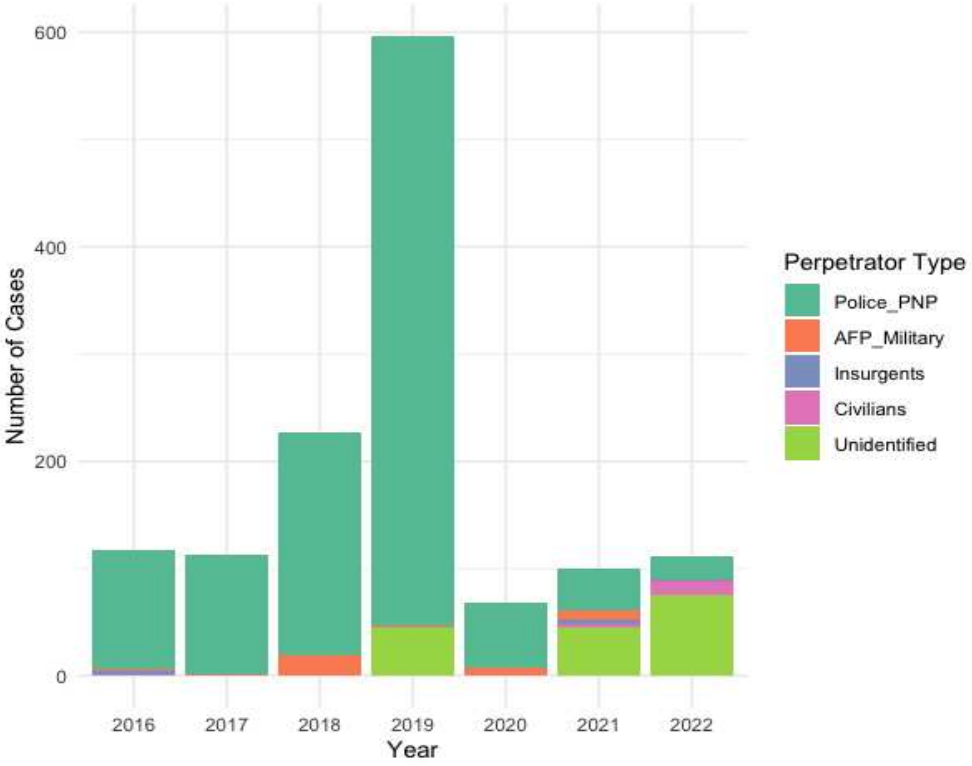


Figure 5.6. Cases investigated by the CHR by perpetrator type.
*Source*: The author. Based on data from the U.S. Department of State (various years).

Overall, the CHR was unable to fully carry out its constitutionally-mandated role, leaving many state-sanctioned human rights violations unresolved. This tactic thus shielded state actors from scrutiny, contributing to a culture of impunity in the Philippines. The real-life consequence is the effective obstruction of justice, as victims of state violence, especially in marginalized communities, have limited means of holding the perpetrators accountable. Duterte's administration thus entrenched an environment where state-sanctioned violence could be carried out with little fear of reprisal, further consolidating his power.

Duterte's success in undermining human rights was not only institutional but also ideological. Through persistent public discrediting of human rights discourse, he managed to vilify the concept itself, particularly by framing it as an obstacle to his law-and-order agenda. In his rhetoric, human rights were portrayed as Western-imposed values that protect drug lords and exacerbate the country's pre-existing problems. By linking human rights to criminality and foreign interference, Duterte made human rights a "dirty word" (Smith, 2017) in the public sphere, gaining support from nationalist and anti-Western sentiments. The demonization of human rights weakened opposition to his policies and made it easier for the administration to justify draconian measures under the guise of protecting national sovereignty and order. Duterte also regularly accused the CHR of being "one-sided" in criticizing abuses of state actors and called on CHR to investigate crimes committed by rebel groups as well, which was outside the CHR's mandate (Gavilan, 2017). The misrepresentation of CHR as caring only for the human rights of "criminals" and thereby contributing to widespread criminality, has gained substantial support among Duterte supporters, forcing the CHR to constantly clarify its mandate and the importance of due process for every citizen (Commission on Human Rights, 2020a). Overall, Duterte has succeeded in his campaign to denigrate human rights by associating them with protection for criminals and foreign interference. In addition, the opposition to his attacks on human rights has not been strong or large enough to effectively counter his efforts, both domestically and internationally (Smith, 2017). Without a powerful and unified opposition, Duterte's systematic weakening of institutions like the CHR has gone largely unchecked, allowing for the further consolidation of executive power. In practical terms, this has left Filipinos with fewer avenues to seek redress for state-perpetrated abuses, as independent bodies are either weakened or co-opted. The result is an increasingly authoritarian political environment where executive dominance overrides human rights protections.

Duterte's systematic efforts to undermine the CHR illustrate how democratic institutions are weakened while executive power is strengthened. Through financial pressure, obstructive tactics and public criticism, Duterte effectively diminished a key oversight organization designed to monitor state abuses and protect human rights. His administration framed human rights as a challenge to law and order, intertwining this narrative with nationalist and strong

anti-Western sentiments, which further weakened public support for the CHR and human rights advocacy overall. As a result, state abuses, in particular against marginalized and vulnerable groups, have largely gone overlooked and unmonitored, fostering a culture of impunity.

### *5.3.2. Social Silencing*

The Philippines has always had a dynamic and politically engaged civil society. As a result of a firm assurance of the principles of democracy, civil society has stood firm in its fight against cases of absolute use of power and corruption. Societal mobilization was best seen in the landmark 'people power' uprisings; the news vital in the turfing of the Marcos rule in 1986 and the removal of Joseph Estrada in 2001 (Mendoza, 2011). Nevertheless, the civil society experienced challenges in the populist and illiberal six-year Duterte government (2016-2022), before being harassed, persecuted, disoriented by disinformation, and sometimes threatened with violence. Useful aspects of democracy are means to ensure stakeholder involvement as well as civil and political rights, and balances in government authority. Duterte's presidency was unapologetic for the raging threats to the Philippine democracy where the administration's interference with press freedom, military approach to governance, and complete disdain for the rule of law has been identified (Dressel and Bonoan, 2019). Nevertheless, the Philippine leader completed his term of office as the most popular elected head of state since the break from dictatorship in 1986. Because Philippine civil society had proven to be resourceful, credible, and with a long-standing democratic tradition, there were expectations that civil society would check Duterte. Still, civil society could not reclaim its prior position as a protector of democracy after the fall of the Soviet regime (Lorch, 2021). Duterte effectively launched a successful attack on civil society. At the same time, civil society itself was composed of competing groups, a significant portion of which Duterte managed to win over and influence early in his presidency.

#### 5.3.2.1. Securitizing Civil Society: Duterte's Tactics of Control and Suppression

During Duterte's term in office, civil society remained highly polarized: On the one hand, many people supported Duterte and encouraged him even though his track record was full of obvious human rights violations. On the other hand, there have been several CSOs who have protested against the various deprivations of civil and political rights by Duterte which unfortunately were normally isolated with limited organizational strength or capability to pose a threat to Duterte. (Lorch, 2021) This fragmentation hindered civil society from channeling their triumphs of the past in acting as a counterforce to Duterte's systematic strategy of silencing dissent and consolidating executive power. He did so by undermining mechanisms of accountability, particularly through the securitization of civil society and the manipulation of legal frameworks. This was not only a campaign to overcome the opposition; this was an

obvious work of powerful state machinery to remove the liberties of civil society and its ability to hold the government accountable.

Selective cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was one of several approaches used in this strategy. Duterte also sidelined progressive civil society organizations that opposed his administration's policies while endorsing government-supporting CSOs that could be easily suborned into implementing his agenda. These pro-government NGOs, often incentivized by increased access to power and resources, helped reinforce Duterte's narrative of broad popular support while sidelining dissent. For example, the Philippine National Police (PNP) coalition with organizations like Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC) exemplifies this co-option. VACC, despite initially opposing Duterte's more extreme measures, was still authorized to investigate government personnel, showing how alignment with Duterte could yield power and influence. In addition, the promotion and support of government-run or initiated NGOs (GRINGOs), such as *Kabataan Kontra Droga at Terorismo* (KKDAT), a Philippine National Police (PNP) project launched in 2022 to mobilize youth against illegal drugs and terrorism. (Arugay and Baquisal, 2023) By aligning these organizations with government objectives, Duterte instrumentalized civil society participation, turning it into a tool for consolidating political power rather than a platform for independent public discourse or accountability. This tactic of supporting pro-government NGOs extended the administration's control over civil society by reshaping its priorities. The government's selective inclusion of favorable NGOs in consultative processes, coupled with financial mechanisms that rewarded compliance, ensured that civil society groups aligned with Duterte's securitized agenda were empowered, while those critical of his administration were marginalized or labeled as dangerous (Arugay, 2021). By fostering organizations that supported his administration's counter-terrorism and anti-drug campaigns, Duterte created an environment where public participation was channeled through state-controlled mechanisms, effectively neutralizing dissent and weakening the ability of civil society to hold the government accountable.

This tactic of selective engagement was further compounded by defining and neutralizing other groups and people seen as anti-administration. A typical instance of this was in the "red-tagging" of groups deemed to have links to left-leaning groups especially those affiliated with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its allies. Finally, the establishment of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) made this strategy even more official by branding the civic groups who opposed the administration and linked with the CPP-NPA-NDF as threats to security and labeling them as terrorists (Amnesty International, n.D., 2023; Ballaran, 2017; Gita, 2018). This led to an increase in red-tagging and security operations (ibid.). The frequency of red-tagging not only lessened the credibility of these opposition groups but also put their members at risk of harassment, monitoring, and

sometimes assassination. Through associating activism with terror, the Duterte regime stifled critical voices and diminished responsibility; discussions became a militarized space where dissent was deemed as a betrayal.

Throughout Duterte's administration, new laws and policies were enacted that deliberately sought to marginalize dissent and control the voices of critical CSOs. Notable among these were Memoranda #14 and #15 from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), as well as the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) of 2020 (Arugay and Baquisal, 2023; Lorch, 2021). These measures were not just legal tools for governance but were weaponized to suppress opposition. Memorandum #14 granted the SEC broad discretionary powers to identify CSOs at risk of terrorist financing and money laundering (Arugay and Baquisal, 2023), effectively allowing the state to target and scrutinize organizations without judicial oversight. By compelling CSOs to disclose sensitive information, the administration eroded their autonomy and increased their vulnerability to state interference, leading to a chilling effect on activism and advocacy (Civicus, 2019). Memorandum #15 further categorized CSOs based on their perceived risk of communist terrorism – labeling them as "low," "medium," or "high-risk." This classification was used as a pretext to intensify surveillance and control over organizations critical of Duterte's policies (Lorch, 2021). While counter-terrorism financing (CTF) regulations are not uncommon, Duterte's administration exploited them to undermine groups that opposed or critiqued the government, turning these laws into instruments of political control. The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 deepened this strategy by providing the Anti-Terrorism Council (ATC), composed entirely of presidential appointees, with sweeping powers to label individuals and organizations as terrorists based on vague definitions of terrorism. This designation could occur without adequate judicial review, allowing the government to surveil, detain, and freeze the assets of targeted groups or individuals on suspicion alone (Torres, 2023; Pulta, 2021). This framework, in effect, weaponized the legal system to silence dissent, as accusations of terrorism became a method to cripple civil society's operations. As a result, organizations with frozen assets or terror designations were forced to suspend their activities, severely undermining their ability to function independently. By targeting CSOs' capacity to access essential resources like bank accounts and contracts, Duterte's administration effectively stifled civil society's ability to mobilize, advocate, or challenge government policies, contributing to social silencing (USAID, 2022).

Duterte's strategy of social silencing extended beyond civil society organizations, targeting traditional institutions of accountability like the Catholic Church and stifling NGO operations through financial restrictions and aggressive "red-tagging." Historically, the Catholic Church played a key role in opposing authoritarian regimes, such as during the Marcos era (Bautista, 2010), but Duterte actively worked to undermine its moral and political influence. By exploiting internal scandals, including sexual abuse cases, Duterte – at least partly –

discredited the Church's authority, neutralizing it as a political adversary (Ryan Maboloc, 2022; Chua and Labiste, 2020; Mendoza, 2020; Regencia, 2018). Even vocal Church leaders like Archbishop Socrates Villegas were marginalized by Duterte's persistent attacks, which also included public threats against clergy members (Coronel, 2017; Rappler, 2018). Besides the Church, Duterte also cut many civil society's financial sources of funding especially those foreign funds used by non-governmental organizations with governance, transparency, and election observation activities. Initially in his presidency, Duterte decided to sever the Philippine's relationship with the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) of the USAID over its provisions regarding human rights (Reuters, 2017). This decision cut off a vital source of funding for many development-oriented NGOs. Moreover, the administration imposed hefty restrictions requiring foreign diplomatic missions to obtain clearance before funding Philippine NGOs, severely limiting the financial autonomy of civil society groups (USAID, 2022). This financial chokehold together with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy greatly affected many NGOs especially those in the civic space and advocacy especially in the realms of governance (Civicus, 2021). These oppressive measures were justified by the (perceived) threat of terrorism in the country. However, the near reckless application of "red-tagging" demonstrates the politicized aspect of those "security" efforts. Red-tagging transformed into a weapon used to quash opposition as critics of the administration including minority legislators, opposition lawyers, and civil society leaders were maligned and harassed (Marasigan, 2022). This reckless labeling also included nonpolitical activities, including food aid distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic, which the government accused of criminal conduct (Ragragio, 2021). Through these rhetorical, financial, and red-tagging approaches, the Duterte administration demobilized civil society to discourage checks on executive power and suppression of potential dissidents.

In summary, Duterte has effectively remapped civil society actors and suffocated collective action mechanisms legally, financially, and rhetorically. By working with only those NGOs that are supportive of the government, neutralizing civil society projects, and vilifying liberal organizations, Duterte dismantled the possibility of having a strong civil society to monitor the abuses of power. Similarly, Duterte's defamation of social structures of moral authority, the Catholic Church being a good example, weakened future organized opposition to his rule. The belittlement and subversion of the role of the Church and other civil society actors has been realized by Duterte, making executive power almost unfettered. His administration's attempt to cut down foreign donors, increase red-tagging, and utilization of government-sponsored CSOs enabled him to curb the opposition and establish more authoritarian power in the government.

#### 5.3.2.2. Surveillance, Suppression, and Free Speech: The Consequences of the Anti-Terror Law

The Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, signed into law by President Rodrigo Duterte on July 3, 2020, is a classic example of "autocratic legalism" – the use of legalistic rationality to erode democratic checks and balances and strengthen the power of the executive branch of government (Corrales, 2015, 2020). The law represents a critical element of Duterte's broader strategy of institutional capture (see Chapter 5.2.1.) and social silencing. By cloaking authoritarian measures within legal and procedural legitimacy, Duterte has been able to neutralize dissent, limit freedoms, and reduce the capacity of civil society and independent institutions to hold his government accountable.

Criticized for his ruthless approach to governance, Duterte's strategies in passing the Anti-Terrorism Act show how laws work toward social erasure. Presented as an anticrime measure in response to genuine security threats, such as insurgencies and extremism, the law contains very broad definitions of terrorism, including the outlawing of 'incitement' based on what the Constitution calls 'speeches' or 'banners'; this gives the executive a useful legal weapon to disarm dissent (Sobel, 2020). This is rather broad and vague language, which allows the state to construe opposition as a security risk. Thus, the government can suppress the opposition under the guise of law (Ranada, 2020). That the law permits suspects to be detained for up to 24 days without a warrant or writing of specific charges is a clear throw-back to the dictatorship era, way longer than what is obtained in most parts of the world (Amnesty International, 2021); it offers the government an "open-ended basis for prosecuting speech" (HRW, 2020). This further enhances the executive arms to deal with any persons without having to involve the courts, hence further encouraging the sporting of arbitrary arrest and detention. The law, therefore, enables tyranny of the executives and easily enables Duterte to discretionarily remove judicial barriers even as he presents the acts as being within the security interest of the country.

Consolidation of executive control is also made firmer by the granting of extensive powers under the law to the Anti-Terrorism Council, composed of presidential appointees. Although the Philippine Supreme Court had already ruled that some of the more stringent provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act were unconstitutional (Dela Cruz and Morales, 2021; Yabes, 2022), it has to be noted that the ATC could designate terrorists, persons, or groups, outside of due process. This is anan alarming transference of quasi-judicial powers to the executive department. It diminishes the judicial scrutiny and consolidates power in the executive, annihilating vital checks and balances. More than undermining due process by taking out the judiciary in labeling somebody a terrorist, the law would enable Duterte to continue targeting political opponents and civic society on grounds of counterterrorism (Dela Cruz and Morales, 2021; see Chapter 5.3.2.1). Provisions in the Anti-Terrorism Act have been used to muzzle civil

society and limit freedom of expression through the practice of red-tagging. Under Duterte, the latter has become an officially entrenched tactic for silencing critics and political opponents (Haynes, 2021). Using the law's ambiguous definition of terrorism, Duterte has criminalized dissent – a tactic that allows the state to apprehend and detain activists, journalists, and opposition figures with little evidence and even without judicial process. This tactic has had real-life devastating consequences for civil society. For example, journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio has been detained since 2020 on fabricated charges of illegal possession of firearms and explosives (OHCHR, 2024). Her case represents the deployment of the Anti-Terrorism Act against those who criticize the government, showing how the discretionary application of state power seeks to quell media freedom. Overall, red tagging under Duterte has resulted in 78 deaths and 136 arrests in 2020 (Haynes, 2021). For journalists, in particular, red-tagging became deadly. Reporters Without Borders (various years) found that between 2016 and 2022, 20 journalists were either killed or detained in the Philippines. This law thus serves as a tool for repression rather than legitimate counterterrorism, allowing Duterte to weaponize legal institutions against his critics. Duterte's broader strategy of media suppression further illustrates how autocratic legalism is used to consolidate power. The forced shutdown of ABS-CBN in May 2020, which deprived millions of Filipinos of a crucial source of news, and the cyber-libel conviction of Maria Ressa, both illustrate the administration's use of legal tactics to dismantle independent media (Civicus, 2020). By weaponizing defamation and libel laws, Duterte has created an environment of self-censorship, where journalists and media outlets are reluctant to criticize the administration out of fear of legal retaliation (Macaraig and Hameleers, 2022).

The legalism that accompanies Duterte's autocratic socio-political regime is as far-reaching. The Law's broad definitions have led to infringements of human rights, such as arbitrary arrests and detention of citizens, thereby restricting the operations of civil society. President Duterte's crackdown on progressive groups, media, and political enemies has witnessed a culture of repression. The law, despite purporting to counter acts of terrorism, has disproportionately been applied to stifle democracy, and freedom of speech, and deeply affects the Philippine legal system. The weakening of judicial accountability is even more pernicious because it reduces channels that citizens can turn to seeking remedies for abuses committed by the state. The judiciary that forcefully curtailed executive authority in the past has been quietly sidelined, and bodies such as the ATC seized its functions. This has contributed to enhanced cases of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and political charges, and prosecution, often with apparent impunity for perpetrators (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2019). Also, by concentrating the coercive power within the state, Duterte has practically insulated his government from any accountability checks and balances while at the same time reducing the capabilities of the independent agencies established for the defense of human rights. Violations of civil liberties have also increased through state-sanctioned violence, which

has led to post-law politically instigated killings and arrests an indication of the environment that obtains for the groups that seek to challenge the government.

5.3.2.3. Media Censorship and Freedom of the Press

Duterte's administration exhibited a calculated use of social silencing tactics designed to suppress criticism and evade accountability. Central to this strategy was the manipulation of both legal frameworks and public discourse to delegitimize dissent, thereby consolidating power. Setting media as allies or foes was a strategy that formed the first stage of Duterte's presidency and created a dichotomy between the presses. Newspaper organizations and individual journalists deemed unfavorable to his administration were labeled as unpatriotic, anti-state actors whose narratives threatened national security, or described falsely as purveyors of 'fake news' (Coronel, 2019; Fonbuena, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2020, 2022). Duterte thus weaponized public sentiment by fostering an anti-elite, anti-mainstream media narrative that was consistent with populist discourse. These invectives made by the president whenever he encountered critical journalists and the media as corrupt oligarchic institutions reduced the credibility of the media and contributed to impunity and self-censorship of the press (Coronel, 2019).

Laws[107] themselves were used as weapons to go after the independent media as well. The closure of ABS-CBN in 2020 was a perfect example of how Duterte employed laws that would allow him to go after perceived rivals. Duterte said this was part of his war against powerful private corporations and oligarchs. (Aspinwall, 2020, Gutierrez, 2020; Merez, 2020) The rejection of the broadcaster's franchise renewal by Congress despite its widespread public reach demonstrated how legal tools were co-opted for political purposes. Similarly, independent media platforms such as *Rappler* faced relentless legal harassment through trumped-up charges of tax evasion and libel (Posetti et al., 2021). Such cases reflect how autocratic legalism enabled Duterte to erode press freedom while maintaining the formal appearance of rule-of-law governance. It was not just legislation to steer the nation and control its affairs but a weapon of oppression, allowing the regime to keep unpopular outlets in check without necessarily directly violating the constitutional provision on press freedom. Laws such as the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 and the Cybercrime Prevention Act only further embedded Duterte's power to stifle the media and civil society. Under the guise of fighting terrorism and cybercrime, these laws were packed with rather vague articles that increased the possibility of state surveillance and criminalized oppositional opinions online. (Sajor, 2022; Moon, 2021) Under the pretext of national security, the government could easily conflate legitimate criticism with subversive activity, justifying the repression of journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens. Despite avenues for direct and indirect mobilization by the press, such efforts

[107] See Appendix 9.b for a list of passend and or amendend laws and decrees during Duterte's presidency.

"had little effect on curtailing the Duterte government's attacks on press freedom, broadly because there is an overall lack of unity within the media sector" (Lozada, 2023). As a result of Duterte's tactics and limited avenues for democratic resilience from the press, press freedom declined (see Figure 5.7).

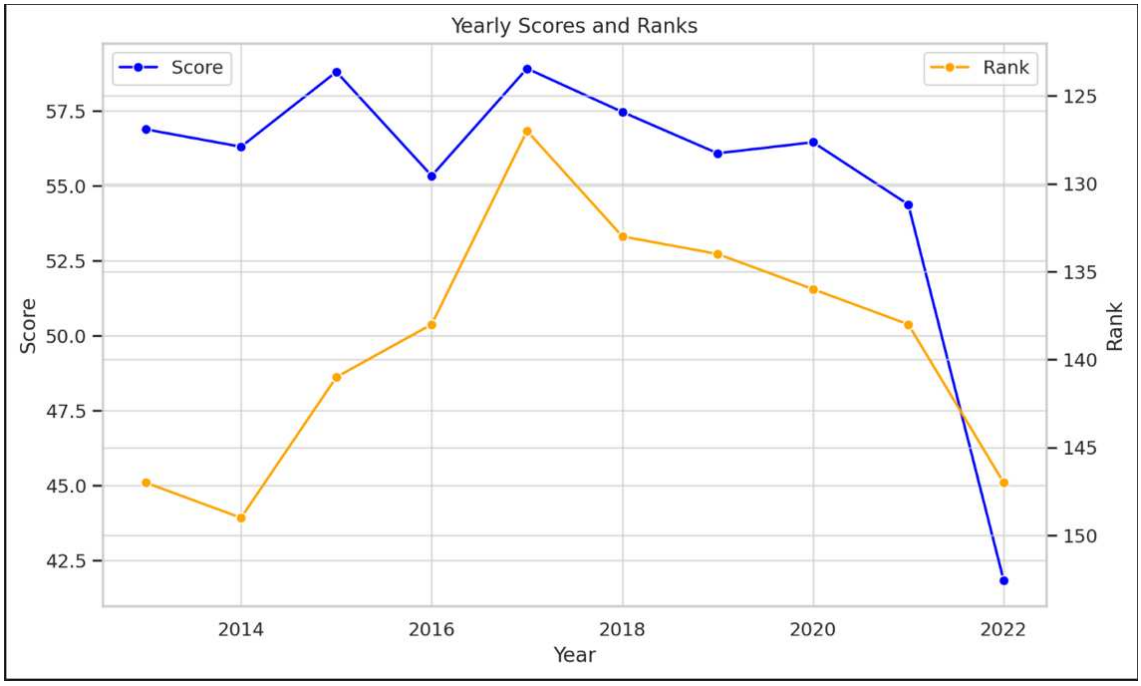


Figure 5.7. World Press Freedom Index Philippines, 2013-2022.
*Source*: The author. Based on data from Reporters Without Borders (various years).

Duterte's divide-and-rule strategy in the media sector was mirrored by his broader consolidation of power within the government. To further weaken the institutions that would watch over him, Duterte eliminated the power base that would have checked him. In the course of the presidential campaigns, he vilified independent journalism as part of a plan to weaken other arms of government, starting with the judicature and legislature. For instance, there was weaponization of the judicial system seen in the removal from office of Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno who was a political opponent of Duterte and had been voicing her disapproval of President Duterte's war on drugs (O'Grady, 2018; Al Jazeera, 2018b). It also further helped Duterte to consider and gain the power to deliberately marginalize the legislature. In sum, with the help of the key legislative branches on his side, Duterte was able to disarm one of the authorities' main pillars of control. However, what cannot be missed is that state-controlled propaganda was instrumental in Duterte's establishment of authoritarianism.

Essential players and government-sympathizing troll factories regulated the platforms to suppress the opposition whilst deploying the administration's propaganda and discrediting independent media while promoting regime-friendly content (Sombatpoonsiri, 2018; Divinagracia, 2020). The frequent attacks on media freedom through cyber terrorism and the 'red-tagging' of journalists and activists fueled the climate of fear and resulted in self-

censorship (CMFR, 2020). These digital strategies demonstrate a profound knowledge of how new media technologies could be employed to go around the conventional media and influence public opinion directly. As a result of these tactics, self-censorship became pervasive among journalists (Balod and Hameleers, 2021). Such self-censorship hinders independent journalism, as journalists would choose to remain silent for fear of severe punishment for publishing critical and sensitive stories (Graber, 2015). The culture of impunity deepened, with few perpetrators of violence against journalists facing justice, signaling the state's tacit endorsement of such acts. As journalists increasingly feared for their safety, key stories exposing government misconduct remained untold, effectively shielding Duterte's administration from scrutiny. (Al Jazeera, 2020; Freedom House, 2019) The systematic erosion of democratic institutions by Duterte threatened the fragile democracy of the nation. By undermining press freedom, Duterte also weakened the judiciary's capacity for independent oversight. This, in turn, weakened checks on executive power, allowing for increased executive dominance. Shrinking civic space also made it more difficult for civil society organizations to operate freely, further concentrating power within the executive branch (Puente, 2020). The pandemic exacerbated these trends, as emergency laws provided additional pretexts for restricting dissent and consolidating control over information (Bernadas and Ilagan, 2020; Puente, 2020). Duterte's assault on the media, therefore, represents a broader strategy of autocratic consolidation, where legal frameworks are repurposed to subdue dissent and entrench executive authority. This tactic not only silenced critical journalism but also weakened the institutions necessary for democratic accountability, leaving the Philippines more vulnerable to authoritarianism.

## 5.4. Chapter Summary

Table 5.3. Summary of Evidence: Case Study Philippines.

| **Part of Causal Mechanism** | **Result** |
|---|---|
| Part 01: Institutional Capture | **Supported**. Duterte manipulated political institutions, neutralizing checks and balances. |
| Part 02: Social Silencing | **Supported**. The government suppressed independent media and civil society through legal harassment and even violence. |
| Part 03: Weakening Accountability Mechanisms | **Supported**. Horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability mechanisms were systematically eroded. |
| Part 04: Concentration of Executive Power | **Supported**. Institutional capture and social silencing promoted the concentration and centralization of power, resulting in the loss of democratic qualities. |

*Source*: The author.

The present chapter analyzes how democratic accountability was undermined and executive power became concentrated in the Philippines during Rodrigo Duterte's presidency, mainly using two mechanisms: institutional capture and social silencing. In this respect, it also deals

with the role of political dynasties, the influence of the Marcos era's authoritarian legacy, and weak institutionalization (see Table 5.3.).

Hypothesis I argues that institutional capture increases the concentration of executive power since checks and balances are weakened, enabling the executive to take control of state institutions and sideline opposition. In particular, the manipulation of political structures, namely, through co-opting Congress, the judiciary, and anti-corruption bodies, eroded horizontal accountability and consolidated executive authority in Duterte's hands. Duterte's manipulation of traditional party-switching was all he needed to constitute a loyal ruling coalition, ensuring that the legislative branch gave way to allegiance with the executive rather than democratic oversight. Similarly, the judiciary was compromised by Duterte through the appointment of key allies to judicial posts, ensuring favorable decisions that would weaken institutional checks on the executive. For instance, the judiciary signed off on the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, an act that further reduced civil liberties and permitted the suppression of dissent. Thus, institutional capture facilitated the centralization of executive power by emptying state institutions and capturing them to serve Duterte's interests rather than upholding democratic checks and balances.

Hypothesis H2 states that social silencing, as a means for suppressing public dissent and independent voices, consolidates the power of the chief executive through the elimination of any potential for external accountability. The empirical evidence from the Philippine case supports this hypothesis. Suppression of media was one of the major elements in Duterte's approach. Independent outlets such as ABS-CBN and *Rappler* were hounded with legal harassment and disinformation campaigns, undermining the capacity of the media to hold the government accountable and limiting the electorate's access to unbiased information. Duterte's public vilification of critics, including journalists and human rights defenders, framed dissent as a national security threat, thereby justifying extrajudicial violence and repression. This created a climate of fear, effectively neutralizing opposition and further consolidating Duterte's power. Social silencing has been working effectively alongside institutional capture, muzzling independent oversight and dissent that can insulate Duterte from the scrutiny and resistance coming from outside.

Hypothesis H3 argues that the resulting weakening of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability mechanisms leads to a greater concentration of executive power. This hypothesis finds some empirical validation in the case of the Philippines. Indeed, during his administration, Duterte systematically dismantled these forms of accountability. Horizontal accountability was severely compromised through the co-optation of Congress and the judiciary. This meant that with the lawmakers and judges loyal to him, checks and balances in the system were neutralized. The vertical accountability of the electorate was weakened by Duterte's control over political parties and media narratives. The administration used party

loyalty and restrictive independent journalism to undermine the capability of the electorate to make an informed choice, thus diluting democracy. Diagonal accountability, which is driven by non-state actors through civil society and the media, was also eroded. Social silencing marginalized civil society actors and neutralized institutions like the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, preventing effective checks against Duterte's policies. This systematic weakening of accountability mechanisms across all dimensions facilitated the concentration of executive power, as institutions designed to provide checks on authority were rendered ineffective.

Hypothesis H4 states that the interaction of institutional capture and social silencing results in the centralization of power in the executive, making the democratic regime one in which authoritarian rule is exercised behind the façade of democratic institutions. The case of the Philippines supports this hypothesis. Institutional capture enabled Duterte to dominate the formal structures of the state, while social silencing ensured that voices of opposition from outside the structures were silenced. Taken together, these processes formed a self-reinforcing feedback loop: the more power Duterte gathered in his hands, the more effectively he could suppress opposition, and the more he suppressed opposition, the easier it became to concentrate authority. The interaction of these mechanisms resulted in a democratic breakdown, whereby the formal structures of democracy remained intact, but their substantive functions were hollowed out, leaving the Philippines under Duterte's administration with authoritarian control masked by the appearance of democratic legitimacy. In sum, this chapter has shown that democratic erosion in Duterte's Philippines was characterized by institutional capture and social silencing that operated conjunctively to nullify opposition and destroy accountability mechanisms to concentrate executive power. It follows from this those authoritarian practices cloaked within rule of law institutions can empty democratic institutions of their democratic substance and enable authoritarianism to operate wearing democratic garb.

In addition to institutional capture and social silencing, the role of political dynasties, authoritarian legacies from the Marcos era, weak institutionalization, and social cleavages help explain the conditions that made Duterte's consolidation of power possible. Political dynasties have long dominated the Philippine political landscape and played a pivotal role in facilitating Duterte's rise to power and concentrating executive authority. These elite, entrenched families command large political and economic resources and will resist democratic reforms to the degree that such reforms undermine their hegemony. Duterte exploited these patronage structures to bolster political loyalty at the cost of weakening the opposition. First, the political dynasties have traditionally forged alliances with each ruling administration in the Philippines to ensure their continued grip on power. Duterte took advantage of this dynamic, granting protection and access to state resources in return for the support of powerful families. This

reliance on dynastic networks meant that Duterte's policies would be widely supported, even those that undermined democratic principles. Second, political dynasties helped neutralize potential opposition to Duterte by aligning with his administration. Dynastic politicians received promises of political favors or protection from prosecution in exchange for their support of the ruling coalition. This coalition relationship shielded Duterte from formidable political opposition, and thus he could dismantle accountability mechanisms with limited concern about resistance from the elite. Third, the preponderance of political dynasties further undermined vertical accountability since local political elites proved more loyal to the president than to their constituents. This ultimately made a dent in voters' accountability of such politicians, since it became not about the representation of the public interest but the maintenance of family power. Thus, the role those political dynasties have played in eroding Philippine democracy fits within the larger pattern in which entrenched elites hijack state institutions for the entrenchment of their interests and eventually the overconcentration of power in the executive while weakening democratic accountability. (cf. Chapters 5.3.1.1. and 5.3.1.2.)

The authoritarian legacy of Ferdinand Marcos's dictatorship has continued to strongly influence the political trajectory of the Philippines. In Duterte's time, many of the authoritarian practices from the Marcos era were revived and reimagined, fostering a culture of impunity and further facilitating democratic erosion. Duterte's administration drew on the authoritarian toolkit established under Marcos, particularly the use of martial law, extrajudicial killings, and military repression. His brutal "war on drugs" has eerily echoed the repressive policies of the Marcos regime, with thousands of state-sanctioned killings instilling fear and degrading the rule of law. The residual impact of the Marcos regime's martial law practices contributed to the entrenchment of Duterte's power. Many institutions, including the military and police, had never fully been reformed after the Marcos dictatorship; this made it easier to use repressive measures under Duterte. Under Duterte, the culture of military involvement in internal policing continued, with security forces being at the forefront of his authoritarian governance. Also, Duterte benefited from nostalgia for authoritarian rule. Many Filipinos, disillusioned with the post-Marcos democratic period due to corruption and political instability, viewed Duterte's strongman tactics as a necessary solution to societal problems. This perception legitimized his authoritarian actions, reinforcing public support for the erosion of democratic institutions. The Marcos-era authoritarian legacy provided Duterte with both a model and a justification for his governance style, to which one can trace the breakdown in democracy: normalizing repression and undermining democratic norms. (cf. Chapters 5.2., 5.3.2.1, and 5.3.2.2.)

The weak institutionalization of democratic structures in the Philippines allowed Duterte to capture and manipulate state apparatuses more easily. The fragility of democratic institutions

created vulnerabilities that could be exploited for authoritarian ends. The political system of the Philippines is marked by fragmentation, with weak political parties often based on personalist politics rather than coherent ideological platforms. This environment enabled Duterte to manipulate the system through party-switching (*turncoatism*), where politicians abandoned their party affiliations to align with the president's coalition in exchange for political favors or protection. This lack of stable party systems weakened Congress's ability to function as a check on executive power. The judiciary's independence was undermined by weak institutional safeguards, allowing Duterte to appoint allies to key positions. Where the judiciary has shown an inability to stand firm against executive overreach, controversial laws that consolidated power in the hands of the executive were passed, such as the Anti-Terrorism Act. This inability of courts to function as a check on the powers of the president illustrates how weakly institutionalized democracies are at risk of authoritarian manipulation. In this context of poor institutionalization, civil society and other non-state actors had little influence on the governance process. While some groups, such as human rights organizations, tried to challenge Duterte's policies, both social silencing and institutional weaknesses hindered their efforts to serve effectively as checks on executive power. The weak institutionalization of democratic structures created an environment in which accountability mechanisms were easily co-opted or bypassed, allowing Duterte to centralize authority with little resistance. (cf. Chapters 5.2, 5.3.1.1., 5.3.1.2.)

Social cleavages along class and regional lines also contributed to Duterte's consolidation of power. In particular, Duterte's populist rhetoric and authoritarian policies exploited and further deepened the divides, enabling him to present himself as a champion of the disempowered. Duterte's appeal to the working class and the poor, especially with his hardline stance against crime and populist message, was able to mobilize support from the most disenfranchised sectors. Duterte was from Mindanao in the South and had once served as mayor of Davao City. His outsider status from Manila-based elites further cemented his populist persona, with his administration appealing to the regional identities of people in certain areas of the Philippines that are particularly underdeveloped and poorer in the south. Duterte tapped regional cleavages and consequently managed to consolidate a broader mass support base and, conversely, undermine potential opposition led by more established political elites in other regions. Thus, mobilizing populist support across these social cleavages enabled Duterte to undermine political pluralism and create a divisive political environment that further eroded democratic governance. (cf. Chapter 5.2)

The erosion of democratic accountability and the crystallization of executive power under Rodrigo Duterte cannot be explained without undergirding the role of political dynasties, the Marcos-era authoritarian legacy, weak institutionalization, and social cleavages that created the environment within which Duterte could capture state institutions and silence dissent.

These factors not only aided in Duterte's authoritarian consolidation but also reflected structural weaknesses within the Philippine political system, which presaged such an outcome. The structural-institutional factors, combined with the two main strategies, namely institutional capture and social silencing, were responsible for the hollowing out of democratic institutions, leaving the Philippines with an authoritarian regime camouflaged by democratic legitimacy.

# 6. Democratic Regression in Thailand[108]

Thai politics can well be described as the oscillation between military and monarchial powers. The country has been in a pattern of transition from military dictatorship to democracy, and back to military rule since Thailand became a constitutional monarchy in 1932. Instead, the monarchy has always been a central and revered governing force that sometimes cooperates with the military to preserve the nation's order. This rather unchanging fact has shaped Thailand's democracy profoundly. During 1997-2001, Thailand was in a real democratic transition, and under the Thai Rak Thai party led by Thaksin Shinawatra, the process of democratic regression was aggravating; the pro-democracy forces recognized that the Thai Rak Thai government under Thaksin had been aggressively eroding democratic institution and had become increasingly authoritarian, culminating in the coup in 2006. Consequently, this chapter seeks to address the research question of how Thaksin has weakened Thai democracy. I look at how institutional capture and social censorship have led to the weakening of democratic liberalism as well as how executive dominance has been used to create democratic regression.

I proceed in three steps. First, an overview of Thai politics, describing the dynamic relationship between the military, monarchy, and democracy and the role of these institutions in structuring Thai politics, is provided. The factors that contributed to the success of Thaksin in the 2001 election are discussed in Section 6.2. Section 6.3 discusses the extent to which Thaksin did or did not use institutional capture and social silencing to undermine democratic accountability and concentrate power in the hands of the executive. Finally, Section 6.4 provides a summary of the findings. In addition, Section 6.4 examines how Thailand's military-monarchy duopoly, institutionalization (or the lack thereof), and the polarization of civil society contributed to democratic backsliding in the country.

## 6.1. The Military-Monarchy Construct: Thailand's Political Development[109]

Thailand's (formerly Siam) history is deeply shaped by its monarchical tradition, with the rise of the Sukhothai Kingdom (1238-1438) establishing a foundation of Thai identity and Theravada Buddhism as unifying forces. While Thailand escaped direct colonial rule[110], early 20th century stagnation, and economic challenges weakened the legitimacy of its absolute monarchy (Copeland, 2021). This became a turning point with the 1932 coup by the People's

[108] For the evaluation of *empirical uniqueness and certainty*, see Appendix 5.
[109] For a timeline referencing major political events since 1973, see Appendix 8.
[110] Thailand's colonial history is unique compared to many other Southeast Asian countries because it was never directly colonized by a Western power. Instead, Thailand navigated a complex landscape of imperialism through a combination of diplomacy, modernization, and strategic concessions (Ferrara, 2015).

Party on June 24, 1932, transforming Thailand into a constitutional monarchy under King Prajadhipok[111] (Rama VII) (Baker and Phongpaichit, 2014, pp.115–120; Baker and Phongpaichit, 2009). This was, however, more of a symbolic revolution as power would swing between the monarchy, military, and elected officials for decades afterward, building the stage for a constant democracy-authoritarianism tension. The institutionalization of authoritarianism was marked by the rise of Phibun Songkhram in 1938. Drawing on the European fascist models, Phibun pursued a nationalist vision of ethnic homogeneity and Buddhist values while reducing the monarchy's traditional power (Murashima, 2005a, b; 2006; Suwannathat-Pian, 1996, pp.106–108, 149). This period symbolizes the first major challenge to royal absolutism, as his renaming of the kingdom to "Thailand" in 1939 epitomized his push for cultural nationalism (Kasetsiri, 2022; Suwannathat-Pian, 1996; Reynolds, 2004). However, later on, Phibun's policies alienated key factions; his adherence to Japan in the Second World War contributed to his downfall[112] (Batson, 1974; Suwannathat-Pian, 1996).

The post-war period was equally unstable, as Thailand's political landscape was shaped by Cold War dynamics. Wary of Pridi's[113] policies, royalists and conservatives allied with the military, leading to a 1947 coup justified by King Ananda's unsolved death and endorsed by King Bhumibol[114] (Ferrara, 2014). The coup reintroduced royalist constitutions with a royal-appointed upper house and privy council. Regardless, Phibun returned to power in 1948, reinstating the constitution of 1932 and making common cause with the U.S. through a mutual anti-communism (Fineman, 1997, pp. 38–62; Suwannathat-Pian, 1996, pp. 137–144; Takahashi, 2022). Phibun was more circumspect in raising King Bhumibol's profile publicly, but his efforts to assert Buddhist influence and pursue independent foreign policies put him at odds with the monarchy and the U.S. Sarit Thanarat's 1957 coup further cemented military control, boosting King Bhumibol's position by wedding old royalism to military nationalism. (Chaloemtiarana, 2007, pp. 66–68, 205; Fineman, 1997, p. 242; Malitz, 2022) Thus, the monarchy was reinstituted as a moral and political authority under Sarit and his successors to help legitimize military rule while the trappings of democracy were preserved.

---

[111] King Prajadhipok was abdicated in 1935, and his nephew Ananda Mahidol (Rama VIII) became the new king (Baker and Phongpaichit, 2014).

[112] A coalition, including the Free Thai movement, opposed the alliance with Japan and ousted Phibun in 1944. The Free Thai movement, formed during World War II, resisted Japanese occupation after Thailand joined the Axis powers in 1941. Comprised of anti-Japanese groups both within and outside Thailand, the movement worked with the Allies to restore the country's independence. Their efforts were pivotal in regaining sovereignty and shaping Thailand's postwar politics and diplomatic relations (Reynolds, 2005; Maleenont, 2010).

[113] Pridi Banomyong led the Free Thai movement that ousted Phibun in 1944, leading to Thailand's transition to a U.S.-backed democracy (Maleenont, 2010).

[114] King Ananda Mahidol (Rama VIII) died aged 20 in June 1946 from a gunshot wound to the head. His death has remained unsolved until today and remains subjected to much speculation and controversy (Chachavalpongpun, 2021). King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) ascended to the throne following his brother King Rama VIII's mysterious death. Rama IV was the longest-reigning monarch in Thai History (1946-2016) and remains highly revered by the Thai people (Crossette, 2016).

By the 1970s, dissatisfaction with military rule grew, especially among students and intellectuals who sought genuine democratic reform (Kongkirati, 2013, pp. 468-486). The protests of 1973 and the subsequent resignation of Dictator Thanom Kittikachorn revealed cracks in the military-royalist alliance, but the student movement also showed the enduring influence of illiberal nationalism (Prizzia and Sinsawasdi, 1974; Phuaphansawat, 2018, p. 365; Neher, 1992). While calling for democratic reforms, student organizations still supported the monarchy as a stabilizing influence. However, political liberalization and alliances with labor unions and farmers radicalized the student movement and posed a threat to conservative interests amid the collapse of an anti-communist campaign. This event led to the Thammasat University massacre in October 1976 (Kongkirati, 2006, p. 19; Winichakul, 2016, 2020). This brutal crackdown on the student protesters and subsequent coups[115] reflects the lengths to which conservative elites were willing to go to protect their hold on power. Even during periods when Thailand was experiencing political liberalization, such as during the tenure of Prem Tinsulanonda from 1980 to 1988, military and royalist influence remained strong (Baker and Phongpaichit, 2014, pp. 249-251). However, the turning point seemed to be the 1992 'Black May' massacre[116], in which military men stepped back from politicizing officially and allowed the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai to move on with democratic reforms successfully (Neher, 1995). Consequently, Thailand experienced considerable political and social turmoil. The Constitution of 1997, though strengthened parliamentary democracy, hence provided a clear civilian administration that was highly stable (Bamrungsuk, 2019; Hewison, 2007; Kuhonta, 2008). Despite its formal retreat from politics, the military remained the central player in Thai politics, maintaining close ties with the monarchy that had emerged as a powerful force with substantial influence outside of constitutional bounds, termed "democratic royalism" (Winichakul, 2008, p. 22; Chambers and Waitoolkiat, 2016). The reforms under the 1997 Constitution laid the ground for continuous political instability.

The "network monarchy" (McCargo, 2005) was seriously disrupted with the rise of Thaksin Shinawatra via strong populist appeal, especially in rural areas, in the early 2000s, along with his dominance of elected institutions (Pathmanand, 2008, p.130; see Figure 6.1). Ultimately, however, Thaksin and his supporters were not able to fully undermine this "Thai-style democracy," emphasizing the authority of monarchy and military over elected institutions in their favor, leading to his overthrow in the 19 September 2006 coup (McCargo, 2005; see also

[115] Thanin Kraivichien was installed as Prime Minister following the coup. He promoted a hyper-royalist vision of the nation, emphasizing loyalty to the monarchy as the core of Thai identity. However, his dictatorship quickly lost military support, leading to his downfall within a year. In his stead, the military placed Kriangsak Chamanon as Prime Minister (1977-1980). (Neher, 1992)

[116] The 'Black May' or 'Bloody May' was a series of mass protests against the military regime established following the 1991 coup d`état, and subsequent crackdowns by security forces and police in Bangkok in May 1992 (Paribatra, 1993).

Baker, 2016; Mérieau, 2016a, b; Hewison, 2010, p.127). The military justified the coup by framing Thaksin as a threat to the monarchy, exploiting his strained relationship with King Bhumibol (Connors, 2008, p.142). While Thailand has since struggled with political instability, the enduring conflict between elected officials and the royalist-military elite continues to define the country's political trajectory (Chachavalpongpun, 2011). The extra-constitutional influence wielded by the monarchy and frequent interventions into politics by the military undergirds this unresolved tension between democratic aspiration and authoritarian structure.

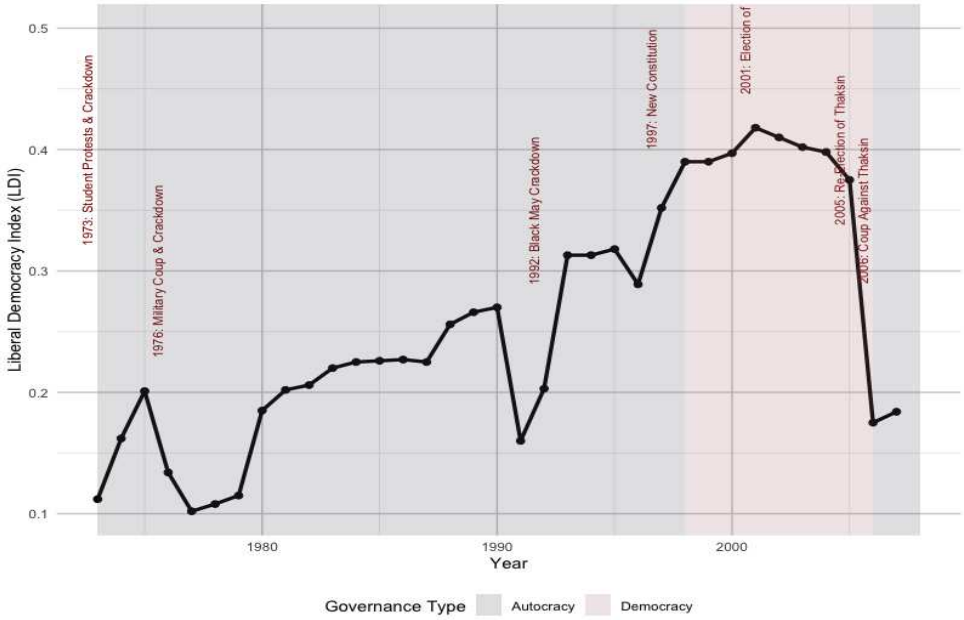


Figure 6.1. Liberal Democracy in Thailand (1973-2007): Insights and Trends.
*Source*: The author.

## 6.2. Thais Love Thailand: The Rise of Thaksin Shinawatra

The 2001 elections[117] in Thailand, facilitated by constitutional reforms from 1997, marked a pivotal shift in the nation's political landscape, consolidating power in the hands of Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai party and reconfiguring the relationship between political elites, economic forces, and the electorate. In November 2000, Thailand's Democrat-led government dissolved the National Assembly under provisions of the newly adopted 1997 Constitution to pave the way for elections scheduled for January 6, 2001 (Case, 2001, p.535). This election, the first under the 1997 Constitution, saw the number of political parties represented in parliament dramatically reduced from 43 to 10 (Hicken, 2006). Stabilization of government and reduction of corruption, exacerbated by fragmented political coalitions, were among the key goals of the constitutional reforms. Before the reforms, small parties had disproportionate power in

[117] See Appendix 11.c for further information on the electoral system of Thailand, and the 2001 and 2005 elections.

relation to larger ones through threats to withdraw support, which often meant patronage appointments and vote buying became prevalent (McCargo, 2002). A factor contributing to such generalized corruption was that elections merely became exercises in benefit sharing with the spoils going largely to the elites (ibid.).

The 2001 election saw the emergence of telecommunications tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party, which won a landslide 248 out of 500 seats. This victory, coupled with subsequent mergers with both the Liberal Party (*Seritham*) and the New Aspiration Party, gave TRT a parliamentary majority and enabled Thaksin to establish a stable coalition government (Nelson, 2002). In stark contrast to prior administrations, Thaksin's government became the first democratically elected administration in Thai history to complete a full four-year term, signaling a shift in the political landscape (Ferrara, 2015). Simultaneously, the elimination of numerous minor and medium-sized political parties left the Thai political landscape with only five major parties for the first time in history (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005, p.14; see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1. Electoral Results for the House of Representatives, 2001 General Elections.

| **Ruling Coalition/ Opposition** | **Party** | **Party-List** | | **Constituency** | | **Total Seats** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | % Votes | Seats | % Votes | Seats | |
| **Ruling** | Thai Rak Thai | 39.91 | 48 | 35.68 | 200 | 248 |
| **Opposition** | Democratic Party | 25.86 | 31 | 24.94 | 97 | 128 |
| **Ruling** | New Aspiration Party | 6.89 | 8 | 9.03 | 28 | 36 |
| **Opposition** | National Development Party | 6.05 | 7 | 8.56 | 22 | 29 |
| **Ruling** | Thai Nation Party | 5.23 | 6 | 8.25 | 35 | 41 |
| **Merged with TRT** | Seritham | 2.84 | 0 | 3.82 | 14 | 14 |
| **Opposition** | People's Party | 1.24 | 0 | 3.15 | 2 | 2 |
| | Others | 2.25 | 0 | 1.11 | 2 | 2 |
| | Total | 100% | 100 | 100% | 400 | 500 |

*Source*: The author. Based on data from Nelson (2002).

The success of TRT was deeply intertwined with the political and economic shifts of the 1990s. Thailand's 1997 Constitution sought to ameliorate chronic problems of political instability and corruption by weakening the executive-legislative link and institutionalizing political parties (Kongkirati, 2019; Kuhonta, 2008). This move came after there was general dissatisfaction with the way Thai democracy was working, where money politics and elite capture had stalled reforms and undermined public trust in political institutions (Dressel, 2009). The 1997 reforms also sought to break the cycle of vote buying and clientelism that had dominated Thai

politics, contributing to both fragmentation and corruption[118] (Bunbongkarn, 1999). The new constitution brought in a number of mechanisms that were supposed to produce a more stable party system: compulsory voting, restrictions on party-switching and major changes to the electoral system (Kongkirati, 2019; McCargo, 2002). The block-vote system was replaced with a mixed-member system, wherein 400 of the 500 parliamentary representatives were elected via first-past-the-post (FPTP), with the remaining 100 seats filled through proportional representation[119] (Croissant and Dosch, 2001). This reform, inter alia, was meant to promote party coherence and curb the role of patron-client networks in the electoral process. For the first time, this party-list system allowed technocrats and professionals to gain entry into politics without traditional clientelistic campaigning and, therefore, enhanced the organizational capacity of the political parties (Hicken, 2006).

Most of all, Thaksin's TRT was most capable of capitalizing on such reforms. His campaign introduced a new kind of policy-driven politics, stressing concrete and populist policies that appealed directly to the electorate, the rural poor, and the working class in the cities especially hurt by the 1997 financial crisis (Kongkirati, 2013). This has made Thaksin a winner at the elections because he was presented to those segments of the electorate as an exceptionally strong leader able to fight those grievances that previous governments have been unable to handle (Funston, 2002). Despite these institutional reforms, many of the traditional practices of Thai "money politics" persisted. Thaksin's rise to power, though facilitated by the new political framework, was underpinned by substantial financial resources (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005; Phongpaichit and Baker, 2002, p.11). TRT's success owed much to its ability to buy political support, exploiting a football-style 'transfer market' where politicians were recruited from other parties in exchange for hefty financial rewards (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005). Thaksin's party-building strategy involved co-opting local godfathers and prominent regional leaders into the TRT's structure, ensuring their loyalty while consolidating his political base (Phongpaichit and Baker, 2009). In essence, while the 1997 Constitution attempted to reform the political system, Thaksin adapted these rules to his advantage, blending populism with traditional clientelistic practices. The TRT's financial power also granted the party control over the supposedly reining-in-the-local-bosses party list system.

[118] The Constitution established three independent bodies to ensure checks and balances. The Election Commission (EC) oversees national and local elections, aiming to prevent fraud and legitimize the electoral process. It can nullify elections where fraud is proven and order new ones. The National Counter-Corruption Commission (NCCC) replaced a less independent body, tasked with investigating and prosecuting corruption. The Constitutional Court rules on the constitutionality of actions and laws, reinforcing the rule of law essential to a strong democracy (Prasirtsuk, 2007).

[119] Any party receiving less than 5% of the total votes for the party list will not have its candidates elected and its votes will be discarded. The remaining votes are divided by 100 to determine the number required for each candidate. The number of representatives each party can send to Parliament is calculated using the d'Hondt formula. Candidates must have been members of their nominating party for at least 90 days and cannot hold multiple memberships. Since 1997, candidates must have at least a bachelor's degree, a requirement that excludes over 95% of the Thai electorate. (Croissant and Dosch, 2001)

Thaksin's ability to command substantial financial resources coupled with his populist rhetoric enabled TRT to outcompete other parties not only at the constituency level but also in the national proportional representation vote (Hewison, 2010). This combination of structural advantages and effective political communication gave TRT a decisive edge over its rivals.

Thaksin's populist platform, featuring policies such as universal healthcare, debt relief for farmers, and rural development funds, helped solidify his appeal to the lower and middle classes disproportionally affected by the 1997 Asian financial crisis (Phongpaichit and Baker, 2009). His ability to deliver quick, tangible benefits further distinguished TRT from previous governments, which had largely failed to implement policies that resonated with the electorate (Hewison, 2010; Walker, 2012). This "populism for capitalism" (Kasian, 2006) was instrumental in building a loyal voter base, particularly in rural areas where voters had long felt neglected by Bangkok-based elites. Thaksin's dominance also signaled a broader shift in Thai politics. Before 1997, political power had been concentrated among business elites and bureaucratic networks that relied on fragmented coalitions and patronage to maintain control (Chaiwat and Phongpaichit, 2008). Thaksin, however, wanted to concentrate power in the TRT, using his financial resources and populist policies to establish a new political order centered on a strong, single-party government. In the process, he redefined the relationship between business and politics in Thailand, bringing some of the country's wealthiest capital holders directly into the political arena (Phongpaichit and Baker, 2002). Despite his successes, Thaksin's methods were not without controversy. His reliance on financial inducements and patron-client relationships raised concerns about the persistence of money politics under a new guise. While the 1997 Constitution aimed to curb corruption and clientelism, Thaksin's TRT adapted to these constraints by integrating traditional patronage networks into its broader political structure, thus amplifying rather than diminishing the influence of money in politics (Phongpaichit and Baker, 2009).

The victory of Thaksin Shinawatra in the 2001 elections was, thus, an outcome interlinked with structural reforms, economic discontent, and strategic political maneuvering. The Constitution promulgated in 1997, aimed at stabilizing the political system and purging it of corruption, ironically permitted the emergence of a new form of political dominance no less pernicious than its predecessors, combining populist policies with old-style patronage and financial influence. The TRT of Thaksin took advantage of both the grievances of the electorate and the new electoral system to gain an overwhelming victory, which became a turning point in Thai politics. Although the government led by Thaksin enjoyed unprecedented political stability during his first term, its reliance on financial resources and clientelistic practices showed how far Thai democracy still had to go. The 2001 election thus set the stage for the future of Thai politics, with the balance between reform and entrenched patronage continuing to shape the country's political trajectory.

## 6.3. The Autocratic Expansion Model in Thailand: Pathways to Democratic Breakdown and Military Takeover

Thaksin Shinawatra systematically captured Thailand's institutions to consolidate executive power, eroding democratic accountability. He absorbed smaller parties into his Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party, forming a dominant coalition that marginalized the opposition. By exploiting the 1997 Constitution and co-opting the Senate, Thaksin secured disproportionate power and filled independent agencies like the Election Commission and Constitutional Court with loyalists, weakening their oversight role. He restructured the military and bureaucracy, placing allies in key positions to neutralize opposition, while patronage networks reinforced his control at local and national levels. Thaksin also employed social silencing tactics to suppress dissent. He delayed independent media regulation, manipulated media ownership, and used outdated laws to control public narratives. His war on drugs empowered security forces, undermining judicial oversight, while libel suits and media co-optation fostered self-censorship. These strategies curtailed civic space and consolidated executive power. Thaksin's assertion that "democracy is just a tool" (Thaiger, 2003) exemplifies his use of democratic structures to entrench authoritarianism, deliberately weakening accountability mechanisms to centralize his authority.

### *6.3.1. Institutional Capture*

Thaksin Shinawatra employed several tactics to capture Thailand's institutions and consolidate executive power. First, he manipulated political structures by absorbing smaller parties into his Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party, forming a dominant coalition in the House of Representatives, which marginalized the opposition and weakened checks on executive authority. His manipulation of the 1997 Constitution allowed him to exploit the proportional electoral system, securing disproportionate power through TRT's electoral dominance. Thaksin also co-opted the Senate, turning it from a non-partisan body into a supporter of his government by aligning senators with TRT. He further undermined independent agencies like the Election Commission and Constitutional Court by filling them with loyalists, eroding their ability to act as checks on his administration. Thaksin restructured the military and bureaucracy, placing loyal family members and allies in key positions, thus neutralizing the military as a counterbalance to his power. His frequent cabinet reshuffles and appointments of non-MPs ensured loyalty over political merit, sidelining traditional checks and balances. These tactics were underpinned by patronage networks that extended his influence both locally and nationally, which, in turn, further entrenched state institutions and limited accountability. The following sections elaborate on how these tactics have been deployed: the weakening of oversight bodies, the co-optation of key institutions, and the suppression of dissent that have collectively driven Thailand's democratic decline.

#### 6.3.1.1. From Oversight to Overreach: The Senate and House of Representatives under Thaksin Shinawatra

In Thailand's fragmented political landscape, coalition building is often seen as essential for bringing about stability and governance. However, under Thaksin Shinawatra's administration, this tactic evolved into a strategic manipulation of state institutions, aimed at consolidating executive power. Securing cabinet seats became crucial not only for accessing national resources but also for exercising decision-making authority that benefitted Thaksin's supporters, fostering a cycle of corruption that further entrenched his power (Ufen, 2008). Key intermediaries, particularly provincial power brokers, exploited this pragmatic political culture to prioritize immediate gains over ideological alignment, facilitating coalition building while exacerbating corruption at both local and national levels (Chattharakul, 2010). Thaksin's strategy was bolstered by a weak legal and regulatory framework and the enduring influence of military and bureaucratic elites. These factors, combined with a stark urban-rural divide, created a socio-economic dependence on patronage networks (Thananithichot, 2012).

The 1997 Constitution, while ostensibly aimed at enhancing political party stability and accountability, effectively strengthened the executive branch by granting the Prime Minister significant power over Members of Parliament (MPs) and complicating the mechanisms for accountability (Kuhonta, 2008; Ockey, 2003). Although intended to strengthen political parties and weaken individual politicians, the newly established mixed-member proportional electoral system inadvertently favored Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party, allowing it to secure a disproportionate number of seats in the House of Representatives after the 2001 elections. Thaksin's party initially captured nearly half of the available seats, and through strategic absorption of medium-sized parties, such as *Seritham*, New Aspiration, and *Chart Pattana*, he transformed a minimum-winning coalition into a grand coalition (Ockey, 2003). This consolidation rendered the parliamentary opposition largely incapable, effectively diminishing factional influence and facilitating Thaksin's dominance over cabinet appointments and policy direction (ibid.). He employed a divide-and-rule strategy, leveraging his telecommunications conglomerate to limit the political influence of factional leaders and ensure the stability of his coalition government (Nam and Nethipo, 2022). By 2005, Thaksin's coalition commanded over 70 percent of lower house seats, establishing the TRT as the largest political party in Thai history and securing a solid legislative majority (Pongsudhirak, 2003; see Table 6.2).

Table 6.2. Party Defections and Co-optations under Thaksin's first term in office.

| **Party** | **Seats 2001*** | **Government Position 2001** | **Government Position 2004 (End of Term)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *TRT* | 248 | Pro-Government | Pro-Government |
| *Democratic Party* | 128 | Opposition | Opposition |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *New Aspiration Party (NAP)* | 36 | Pro-Government | Pro-Government |
| *National Development Party (CPP)* | 29 | Opposition (briefly) | Pro-Government |
| *Thai Nation Party (CTP)* | 41 | Opposition | Pro-Government |
| *Seritham* | 14 | Opposition (briefly) | Pro-Government |
| *Total Seats Pro-Government* | 286 (57.2%) | | 370 (74%) |

*Source*: The author. Based on data from Nelson (2002).

The constitutional provisions that required ministers to resign from their legislative seats further entrenched Thaksin's power by making defections costly for elected officials. The Prime Minister's ability to call elections on short notice and the rule requiring candidates to be party members for a minimum of 90 days effectively neutralized the opposition's capacity to draw away coalition members, thereby stabilizing Thaksin's government. (Chambers, 2005) As factions were integrated into the TRT coalition, the likelihood of losing power diminished, consolidating Thaksin's authority while eroding the opposition's independence (Ferrara, 2015). Subsequently, Thaksin shrewdly used his influence over various factions within the TRT and its allied organizations to advance his policy objectives. Despite controversies over the funding methods and effectiveness of these policies, they garnered considerable support from provincial voters and the urban working class. This allowed the Thai Rak Thai to claim credit for improving the livelihoods of villagers, thereby shifting the perception of resource allocation from personal to party patronage. As a result, the TRT strengthened its electoral base and further centralized power over provincial politicians. By 2005, Thaksin had successfully marginalized every element of his coalition. (Ockey, 2004, p. 50)

Thaksin's cabinet composition was another tactical maneuver aimed at reinforcing executive control. By appointing a majority of non-MPs, particularly during his second term (Sawasdee, 2018), he minimized the influence of traditional party structures and factional politics. Non-MP ministers, often selected for their loyalty rather than their political clout (Helms, 2023), allowed Thaksin to sidestep conventional parliamentary checks and balances. This structural shift was facilitated by the 1997 Constitution, which discouraged rapid turnover of cabinet members, thus giving Thaksin leverage to consolidate power and maintain stability (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005). The selection of cabinet members based on loyalty and personal connections rather than political merit – characteristics of nepotism – further impeded accountability. Thaksin appointed family members and close allies to key positions, compromising the independence of supervisory institutions (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005; Leyland, 2007). For instance, his relatives held influential roles, such as his younger sister as chairperson of the National Women's Association, while his associates occupied key ministerial positions (Hewison, 2010; Suehiro, 2014; Pathmanand, 2016). Such strategic placements suggest both the continuation of cronyism and reliance on patronage networks to

consolidate executive power (Montesano, 2002, p.91; see Table 6.3). Moreover, frequent reshuffles kept ministerial positions fluid, keeping the influence of a single bloc to a minimum (Kongkirati, 2014). In essence, such a nepotistic approach diluted institutional oversight, while centralizing power in the hands of Thaksin. By placing loyalists in critical positions, Thaksin created a power base less vulnerable to the dynamics of coalition politics. This strategic distancing from parliamentary influence allowed him to cultivate personal authority and execute policies with diminished scrutiny, effectively consolidating executive power (Indridason and Kam, 2008). As a result, Thaksin's administration exemplified how legal and institutional engineering could be employed to attack accountability mechanisms, thus undermining the checks and balances crucial for democratic governance.

Table 6.3. Strategic appointments under Thaksin (2001-2005).

| Name | Relation to Thaksin | Position | (Non-)Government Role |
|---|---|---|---|
| *General Somthat Attanant* | Thaksin loyalist | Army Chief | Government (Army) |
| *General Chalyasit Shinawatra* | Cousin of Thaksin | Assistant Army Chief (later Army Commander-in-Chief, 2004) | Government (Army) |
| *Snoh Thientong's Wife* | Alliance with Thaksin via Snoh | Culture Minister | Government |
| *Prommin Lertsuriyadej* | Thaksin Confidant | Deputy Prime Minister | Government |
| *Visanu Kruea-ngam* | Thaksin Confidant | Deputy Prime Minister | Government |
| *Suriya Juengrungruangkit* | Thaksin Inner Circle | Minister of Transport | Government |
| *Somsak Thepsuthin* | Thaksin Inner Circle | Minister of Industry | Government |
| *Somkid Jatusripitak* | Close ally of Thaksin | Finance Minister | Government |
| *Adisai Bodharamik* | Close ally of Thaksin | Commerce Minister | Government |
| *Yaowaret Shinawatra* | Younger Sister | Chairperson of the National Women Association | Government |
| *Yaopa Shinawatra* | Younger Sister | Clique Leader of Thai Rak Thai (TRT) | Political Party |
| *Phatharathananunth Wongsawat* | Husband of Yaopa Shinawatra | Permanent Secretary of Justice | Government |
| *Priaopan Damapong* | Elder Brother of Thaksin's Wife | Deputy Commissioner of the National Police | Government |
| *Chaiyasit Shinawatra* | Cousin | Army Commander-in-Chief | Government (Military) |
| *Uthai Shinawatra* | Cousin | Permanent Secretary of Defense | Government (Military) |
| *Somkhit Chatusiphitak* | Close Friend | Finance Minister | Government |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Sonthaya Khunpluem* | Son of a provincial 'godfather' (political ally) | Minister of Science | Government |

*Source*: Compiled by author. Based on Suehiro (2014); Montesano (2002); Pongsudhirak (2003), Pathmanand (2016).

The 1997 Constitution of Thailand aimed to create a political environment characterized by robust party structures while allowing individual politicians some autonomy. This intention manifested in a bicameral legislature comprising a more partisan House of Representatives and a Senate designed to operate independently of party affiliations (Kuhonta, 2008). The reform of the Senate introduced direct election by the people and gave it substantial oversight powers through the power of impeachment and approving appointments to independent agencies like the Election Commission (EC) and the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) (Chambers, 2009). However, Thaksin's government successfully manipulated these institutional arrangements to defeat their purpose and consolidate the executive power through three key methods: manipulation of political institutions, legal engineering, and institutional restructuring.

First, the manipulation of political structures became evident in Thaksin's approach to the Senate. Initially envisioned as a non-partisan body (Nelson, 2014), the Senate devolved into a vehicle for Thaksin's political dominance. Senators, originally prohibited from party affiliation, increasingly aligned themselves with the ruling Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party, turning the Senate into a supportive entity rather than an impartial arbiter of governance. By 2004, the number of pro-Thaksin senators had tripled. (Chambers, 2009) "Indeed, after about two years of its operation, the Senate seemed to have changed from being a reasonably neutral body to an organ of open support for the Thaksin Shinawatra government. This was due both to Thaksin's attempt to neutralize independent sources of power, but also to the political self-interests of the senators" (Nelson 2014, p.59). Contributory to this phenomenon was the rise of political dynasties within Parliament (Nishizaki, 2022; Chambers et al., 2023). Consequently, the Senate and party-list system have served as mechanisms for political families to continue wielding influence, passing down their power to subsequent generations, and ensuring family dominance in parliament (see Table 6.4). As a result, the Senate has become more of a "rubber stamp" for the government, functioning less as a check on executive authority (Chambers, 2009). The transformation of the Senate reflects Thaksin's strategic use of political patronage in which he cultivated senatorial loyalty through appointments, financial inducements, and political alignments that neutralized the capacity of the Senate to act as check on executive power.

Table 6.4. Political families in the elected senate, 2000-2004.

| MPs | Total number of MPs (A) | Number of those stemming from political families (B) | Extended political family dominance (B/A) | Those in (B) who have served as constituency MPs (C) | The extent of overlap with constituency MPs (C/B) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Senators | 518 | 220 | 42.5% | 59 | 26.8% |
| Party-list MPs | 361 | 177 | 49.0% | 114 | 64.4% |

*Source*: Nishizaki, 2022, p.148.

Secondly, legal and constitutional engineering played a critical role in Thaksin's consolidation of power. The constitutional design allowed for the establishment of independent bodies meant to oversee government conduct, yet these agencies were increasingly influenced by Thaksin's administration. For instance, the EC was endowed with significant powers to regulate electoral processes and even disqualify candidates. However, the head of the EC, a position that Thaksin effectively controlled, became a crucial actor in shaping electoral outcomes favorably for the TRT (Maisrikrod, 2008; Mutebi, 2008). This pattern extended to the selection of judges for the Constitutional Court, where Thaksin ensured that a substantial proportion of appointees were aligned with his political interests. While in 2001 five out of 15 Constitutional Court judges were pro-government, by March 2003, seven out of 15 Constitutional Court judges were pro-government with the three newest additions having close ties to Thaksin (Phongpaichit and Baker, 2004, p.175). By "stacking" independent institutions with loyalists, Thaksin systematically weakened the autonomy of these bodies, allowing him to circumvent accountability mechanisms that were supposed to check executive overreach Thaksin's strategic appointments and Thailand's patronage legacy weakened the Constitutional Court's role as a neutral guardian of the constitution. Entrenched in political and patronage networks, the Court became increasingly politicized, particularly in overseeing political parties. Numerous petitions and rulings on party dissolutions and officeholder removals reflect the Court's alignment with political interests. Rather than serving as an impartial institution, it was exploited to undermine rivals, becoming a key player in the broader conflict between pro- and anti-Thaksin forces. (Tonsakulrungruang, 2017; Dressel and Tonsakulrungruang, 2019; Dressel, 2010; Mérieau, 2016a, b)

Lastly, institutional reorganization under Thaksin's government further dismantled existing checks and balances. The Senate's initial promise as a non-partisan body was defeated by Thaksin's strategic placements that encouraged a culture of partisanship and loyalty above impartial governance. As senators became increasingly beholden to the TRT, the Senate's original mandate of oversight diminished. (Phongpaichit and Baker, 2004; Chambers, 2009) This shift was intensified by the fact that many independent agencies, including the NACC and the Ombudsman, failed to function as intended, with decisions often swayed by political considerations rather than legal and ethical standards (Bidhya, 2000). Consequently, the

Senate's role in facilitating accountability was severely compromised, allowing the TRT to pursue its agenda with minimal resistance. Despite the 1997 Constitution being heralded as an "anti-corruption constitution" and establishing a framework for government accountability (Borwornsak, 2013), the dynamic of Thaksin's administration transformed it into a mechanism for consolidating power rather than promoting democratic governance. The Senate's initial success in representing a non-partisan voice was quickly undermined by Thaksin's political maneuvering, as the very structures designed to promote accountability, and independence became instruments of his dominance.

Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party actively pursued a strategy of absorbing smaller parties even before formally assuming power in 2001. By convincing or pressuring these parties to merge with the TRT or join coalitions, Thaksin weakened political pluralism and solidified his dominance in the House of Representatives. The 1997 Constitution's mixed-member proportional representation system aimed to stabilize the party system and strengthen government stability; however, it inadvertently facilitated Thaksin's consolidation of power. The dual electoral mechanism allowed Thaksin to leverage single-member constituencies effectively, securing a disproportionate number of seats relative to his vote share. (Reilly, 2006) The 2005 parliamentary elections marked a pivotal moment in this trajectory, with the TRT securing 377 out of 500 seats, establishing a one-party hegemonic dominance that eroded democratic checks on executive power (Kuhonta and Mutebi, 2006). This supermajority allowed Thaksin to sideline the opposition effectively, nullifying their ability to call for no-confidence motions and weakening Parliament's capacity to hold the executive accountable (ibid.). With fewer checks in place, the Parliament became an echo chamber for Thaksin's policies, and critical mechanisms for scrutiny were rendered ineffective. Moreover, the TRT's populist policies, such as the 30-baht healthcare scheme and rural development funds, further entrenched Thaksin's support among the electorate (Worawan, 2003), obscuring the erosion of democratic governance. This strategic alignment of popular policies with consolidating power exemplifies how Thaksin effectively sidestepped traditional accountability mechanisms, focusing instead on maintaining direct support from the populace while neutralizing institutional checks. In conclusion, Thaksin's strategic maneuvering in both the Senate and the House of Representatives exemplifies a systematic approach to consolidating power. By manipulating political structures, engineering legal frameworks, and reorganizing institutions, Thaksin undermined the checks and balances intended to sustain democratic governance in Thailand. This legacy of political domination reshaped the trajectory of Thai politics: "Whether one labels his regime as "semi-authoritarian", "soft-authoritarian", "diminished democracy", or simply "delegated democracy", there is little doubt that Thaksin's administration has shown greater authoritarian tendencies in comparison to his immediate predecessors" (Mutebi, 2006, p.303-304).

6.3.1.2. The Military, the Police, the Bureaucracy, and The Palace under Thaksin

Thaksin Shinawatra's premiership from 2001 to 2006 signaled a remarkable transformation of Thailand's political and military landscape by the personalization of power. Thaksin's approach was not only directed at assuming full control but also restructuring the state apparatus systematically to nullify opposition and solidify his grip. Thaksin's most notable tactic was his co-optation of the military, a key institution in Thai politics, historically acting as both an arbiter of power and an agent of intervention in civilian governments (Chambers, 2013). Upon coming to power, Thaksin strategically neutralized military influence by reshuffling key leadership roles. In 2002, he replaced General Surayuth Chulanont, an army chief aligned with the monarchy and who favored a hardline stance on issues like Myanmar and the United Wa State Army (UWSA), with the more compliant General Somthat Attanant (Pongsudhirak, 2003; Mutebi, 2003). Through this reshuffle, Thaksin effectively neutralized the influence of factions within the military that were aligned with the monarchy or potentially hostile to his rule (Pongsudhirak, 2003). This reshuffle did more than shift personnel; it systematically altered the power balance within the military at least for a certain period. Thaksin also engaged in a tactic of appointing family members and close allies to senior military positions. His cousin, General Chaisit Shinawatra, was made Army Commander in 2002, exemplifying Thaksin's nepotistic approach to controlling the military hierarchy (Chambers, 2013, p.846). By elevating figures like Chaisit and promoting his classmates from the armed forces, Thaksin surrounded himself with loyalists, ensuring that the military, traditionally a check on executive power, became a tool for his consolidation of authority (Ockey, 2007, p.99).

Additionally, Thaksin curbed the military's influence by appointing retired officers such as former Prime Minister General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh as Minister of Defense and General Yuthasak Sasiprapha as Deputy Defense Minister (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005, p.70). These appointments allowed Thaksin to maintain civilian control over the military while placing figures who had close personal ties to him in critical roles. Chavalit's New Aspiration Party merged with Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party, giving Thaksin further influence over military-linked political factions (ibid., p.102). In return, Thaksin used Chavalit's loyalists as leverage against General Prem, the influential Privy Council Chair, isolating the royalist military faction (Chambers, 2013, p. 849; cf. Table 6.3).

During Thaksin Shinawatra's premiership, his relationship with the military and the palace was a key factor in the executive power grab. Thaksin also used the Royal Thai Police, especially as a counterweight to the military, traditionally the dominant force in Thailand's security apparatus. Thaksin extended police power in areas that were traditionally under military control, such as counterinsurgency operations in Thailand's southern provinces, moves that generated great resentment among officers (Thayer, 2007, p.13). The redistribution of internal

security tasks alienated these leaders from the military brass but entrenched Thaksin's hands in the state's internal security structures. Thaksin's relationship with the palace was equally troubled as his political dominance began to eclipse the monarchy's traditional role as the ultimate arbiter of Thai politics. Whereas Thaksin seemed to have royal support at the beginning, the palace soon became suspicious of his rising power. Thaksin's centralizing authority and his popularity across the board seemed to trespass on the King's symbolic position as the unifying figure of the nation. This tension between Thaksin and the palace contributed to the eventual 2006 coup, viewed at least partially as a fight between Thaksin and the monarchy.

Thaksin's control over the military budget became a crucial tool in his effort to diminish the military's influence. By centralizing military spending decisions through his office, Thaksin reduced the defense budget as a percentage of GDP, transferring more funds to civilian projects (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005, p.137). Between 2001 and 2006, military spending declined by 0.4 percent of the GDP, frustrating senior military leaders who relied on these resources as their bases of power. This reduction in defense spending, coupled with Thaksin's efforts to privatize military-controlled enterprises, such as the army-run Channel Five television station, further strained his relationship with the military. (Rowley, 2010) The declining military budget and Thaksin's attempts to insert loyalists into key military positions, including his cousin, General Chaisit Shinawatra, as Army Commander, weakened the traditional autonomy of the armed forces, leading to increasing dissatisfaction among senior military officers (Chambers, 2013, p.846).

Thaksin's efforts to consolidate power extended beyond the military into the bureaucratic apparatus, which he sought to control through institutional restructuring. His views on bureaucracy and governance set the stage for his approach to reform, which, while popular among the masses, also drew significant criticism and partly influenced his eventual ousting. Thaksin identified the old-fashioned bureaucracy as the primary obstacle to his reform agenda. He observed that Thai bureaucracy was characterized by excessive agencies and a lack of cohesive organization, leading to slow public services that contradicted the demands of global capitalism for speed (Suehiro, 2014). He criticized the bureaucratic culture for its inefficiency, lack of strategic policymaking, and a conservative attitude resistant to external criticism. At the end of 2002, Thaksin launched his reform efforts, including the passing of the Bureaucratic Restructuring Bill as well as The Ministerial Restructuring Bill in 2002 (ibid.). These bills allowed Thaksin to reshape the state apparatus. In October 2002, he established the Public Sector Development Commission (PSDC) (ibid.), and created six new ministries, including the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports. These newly formed ministries were intended not only to modernize the bureaucracy but also to serve as political tools through which Thaksin could appoint loyalists

to key positions. (Painter, 2006; Suehiro, 2014) For example, the ICT Ministry was instrumental in Thaksin's control over media and telecommunications, industries that were directly tied to his business interests. By placing loyalists in charge of the ICT Ministry, Thaksin ensured that these sectors remained under his influence, which proved crucial in shaping public opinion and controlling political discourse. Similarly, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports helped promote Thaksin's populist policies, boosting his popularity among rural voters while diminishing the influence of bureaucratic factions that opposed him. (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005, pp.78-83) Essentially, Thaksin aimed to transition the Thai state apparatus from a technocratic policy-making to a more centralized approach. He aimed to replace the traditional function-based budget system with an agenda-based system and emphasized the need for modern bureaucratic practices (Suehiro, 2014).

As a direct result of these reforms, career civil servants who were not aligned with Thaksin's political agenda, for example, were sidelined in favor of individuals whose primary loyalty was to the Thai Rak Thai Party (Pongsudhirak, 2003). This strategy not only increased the executive's control over policy implementation but also ensured that the bureaucracy, traditionally a neutral institution, became an extension of Thaksin's political machine. However, Thaksin's approach dismantled established practices like seniority and quasi-familial relationships within the bureaucracy, leading to resentment and resistance from civil servants (Suehiro 2014). Overall, Thaksin maintained a dual identity as both a populist and state reformist. His policies, particularly his welfare capitalism approach, garnered substantial public support. Programs like the universal healthcare scheme and the "One Tampon, One Product" initiative were extremely popular with Thailand's rural majority, helping to build a powerful electoral base for the Thai Rak Thai Party, contrasting sharply with lukewarm reactions to anti-corruption efforts and state enterprise restructuring. (Anh, 2013; McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005, p.43) These policies not only improved the livelihoods of rural Thais but also created a loyal voting constituency that handed Thaksin landslide electoral victories in both 2001 and 2005 (Phongpaichit and Baker, 2009, p.20). However, Thaksin's populism alienated the urban middle class and upper classes, who viewed his policies as fiscally irresponsible and a threat to traditional power structures, particularly the monarchy (McCargo, 2005, p.510).

By 2005, Thailand was deeply divided between the political polarities of the rural lower classes, who supported Thaksin Shinawatra, and the urban elite, who increasingly opposed his governance. This division manifested as widespread anti-Thaksin protests in Bangkok, fueled by discomfort among military and political elites regarding Thaksin's consolidation of power (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005, p. 147). One of Thaksin's most contentious reforms was the restructuring of the national budget system, which prioritized social spending initiatives for the rural poor but significantly reduced military funding. This decision alienated segments of

the military, as it directly affected their resources and authority. Thaksin's direct interventions in military appointments further escalated tensions, as military leaders felt their influence was being undermined (Suehiro, 2014). As Thaksin's government progressed, his focus began to shift toward ambitious mega-projects and policies perceived to benefit the urban elite rather than the general populace. This shift was marked by disillusionment among the rural constituents who had initially supported him. Additionally, Thaksin's controversial sale of family stocks of his Shin Corporation, which he conducted without paying taxes, further eroded his credibility and fueled anti-Thaksin sentiment, particularly among the middle class in Bangkok (Pongsudhirak, 2006; Phongpaichit and Baker 2009). The culmination of public discontent and growing military dissatisfaction with Thaksin's policies led to a breaking point. The military, feeling sidelined and increasingly antagonistic toward Thaksin's reforms, ultimately intervened. In September 2006, the military staged a coup, ousting Thaksin from power and dismantling his administration's policies. The new military-backed government quickly reinstated traditional bureaucratic structures and priorities, including increased defense spending and a return to a function-based budget allocation (Suehiro, 2014).

The tenure of Thaksin Shinawatra as Prime Minister exemplified a sophisticated and controversial exercise in institutional capture; he systematically reshaped Thailand's monarchy-military-bureaucracy complex to consolidate his power. His approach involved the strategic appointment of loyalists and family members within the military, as well as the sidelining of royalist factions that historically held sway over Thailand's political landscape. By reducing military autonomy, controlling its budget, and empowering the police, Thaksin weakened the military's traditional role as a guardian of the state. Meanwhile, his reforms within the bureaucracy sought to dismantle entrenched practices and neutralize opposition, ensuring that the state's administrative apparatus became an extension of his Thai Rak Thai Party. However, these tactics also created profound resentment among military elites, royalist factions, and conservative civil servants, culminating in the 2006 military coup. Thaksin's attempt to centralize power and erode traditional authority structures, especially the monarchy's symbolic and political role, led to his eventual downfall, illustrating the limits of executive overreach in the face of deeply rooted institutional power in Thailand.

### *6.3.2. Social Silencing*[120]

Under Thaksin Shinawatra, social silencing was systematically employed to consolidate executive power and suppress dissent. He obstructed civic space by delaying the implementation of independent media regulation, using outdated laws like the 1955 Radio and Television Act to control media channels. Thaksin's "war on drugs" involved extrajudicial

[120] See Appendix 9.c for a list of passed and or amended laws and decrees in Thailand during the premiership of Thaksin Shinawatra.

killings and allowed security forces to act with impunity, eroding judicial oversight. In the South, he abolished local governance bodies and intensified authoritarian enforcement, heightening regional tensions. Media ownership and advertising revenue were manipulated to pressure critical outlets, while libel suits fostered self-censorship among journalists. Community radio, initially a grassroots platform, was co-opted to serve state messaging. Thus, Thaksin's administration employed tactics that systematically curtailed civic space, reinforced authoritarian practices, and controlled state narratives to consolidate executive power, obstructing accountability mechanisms. His era is marked by an explicit strategy of using democratic structures to entrench authoritarianism: "I am going to use democracy as the means to my end, and that is authoritarianism" (Zawacki, 2017, p.129).

6.3.2.1. Thailand's South and the War on Drugs

Thaksin's administration, characterized by a toxic mix of impunity and authoritarianism, led to significant human rights abuses (Zawacki, 2017). His tenure saw a sharp decline in civil liberties, most notably in Thailand's southern provinces, where long-standing separatist unrest was reignited by his policies (Connors, 2006; McCargo, 2006). The Southern insurgency, once quelled, re-emerged as Thaksin sought to undermine his political opposition, the Democratic Party, which had a near political monopole in the region (ibid.). His strategic dismantling of military influence in the South (Thayer, 2007), coupled with the replacement of local officials with loyalists, was part of a broader effort to centralize control and reduce checks on executive power. This approach not only weakened institutional accountability but also disrupted local governance, severing critical feedback mechanisms between local populations and the government.

Thaksin began his tenure by seeking to reduce the military's role in Southern Thailand, shifting authority to the Royal Thai Police, not only to create a counterweight to the military (Thayer, 2007) but also to minimize smuggling business at the borders, where the military was supposedly involved in (McCargo, 2006). In addition, Thaksin began replacing key local officials with loyalists in 2001, centralizing power within his administration (ibid.). This consolidation reduced institutional checks on his authority and created a disconnect between local governance and the central executive, undermining local responsiveness. While consolidating control, Thaksin's approach also disrupted local governance and led to significant regional resistance, particularly in the South. (Liow and Pathan, 2010) He also moved to reverse the institutional changes made by General Prem in the region in the 1980s, abolishing the Civilian-Police-Military Taskforce 43 (CPM 43) and the *Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre* (SBPAC) on 1 May 2002 (Melvin, 2007). Instead, Thaksin instituted a new security structure, *The Southern Border Provinces Peace Building Command* (SBPPC), based in Bangkok and placed under the supervision of Chidchai Vanasatidya. The new apparatus adopted a more top-down approach, and its operational capabilities were

severely hampered by the fact that its command changed hands five times between April 2004 and October 2006 (Harish and Liow, 2007). He disrupted existing power structures that previously operated as horizontal checks by doing so. Prem's reforms had established bodies to maintain regional stability and integrate various elements of governance (military, civilian, police), which acted as a buffer against unilateral executive actions. Moreover, this move also undermined the strength of the military and of power structures linked to the monarchical network, centering on SBPAC. Thaksin's actions in the South reflect a clear strategy of authoritarian enforcement, replacing regional governance structures with loyalist-controlled apparatuses. His abolition of SBPAC and the launch of the SBPPC was a move toward centralizing security operations, effectively reducing the military's role while placing the region under police authority. (McCargo, 2006; Harish and Liow, 2007) This restructuring weakened horizontal checks within the region, undermining any meaningful local opposition or resistance to his rule. The ensuing violence, particularly the "war on drugs", "Tak Bai incident" and "Krue Se Mosque incident," highlight the failures of this strategy, with excessive military and police force exacerbating tensions (Melvin, 2007; McCargo, 2008).

In 2003, Thaksin abolished both SBPAC and other longstanding security arrangements in the region and launched a 'war on drugs' (Phongpaichit, 2003), highlighting his use of authoritarian enforcement to maintain political power. Although it was largely successful in its stated aims, the campaign, marked by over 2,800 extrajudicial killings, with half of them turning out to be unrelated to drugs, demonstrates a deliberate manipulation of state power to bolster his political standing while fostering fear among the population. (Melvin, 2007; HRW, 2008) By linking drugs to societal threats such as corruption and foreign influence[121], Thaksin shaped public perception to legitimize state violence (Phongpaichit, 2003; Phongpaichit and Baker, 2003; Sunpuwan and Nivomsilpa, 2012). Financial incentives for law enforcement, including quotas based on arrests and body counts, entrenched these practices, creating an environment where security forces operated with impunity (The New York Times, 2003a, b, c; LA Times, 2003a, b; Phongpaichit and Baker, 2003; HRW, 2004). The judiciary's failure to hold officers accountable for abuses, even in cases where victims were clearly uninvolved in drug-related activities, further illustrates the consolidation of executive power at the expense of legal oversight (HRW, 2004). Despite international condemnation, the campaign remained popular among the Thai public. Thaksin justified Thailand's war on drugs by downplaying mistakes as inevitable in such a large campaign and rejecting allegations of widespread

[121] Thaksin's campaign was fueled by a long-standing public anxiety over rising drug use, particularly methamphetamine (*ya baa*), which saw a dramatic increase of 1,000 percent between 1993 and 2001, surpassing heroin as the primary drug of choice in Thailand. The growing perception that drug influx was linked to migrants from Myanmar intensified societal fears, intertwining issues of drug abuse with national identity and leading to the stigmatization of minority ethnic groups. This context of drug-related anxiety and xenophobia set the stage for Thaksin's aggressive policies against drug use and trafficking. (Reid and Costigan, 2002; Sunpuwan and Niyomsilpa, 2012)

extrajudicial killings, attributing most deaths to internal gang violence. He framed the crackdown as a moral imperative to protect future generations and used war metaphors to legitimize the use of force. Thaksin shifted focus to the campaign's successes, such as arrests and drug seizures, and positions the police as acting in self-defense. By doing so, he sought to maintain public support despite the high death toll. (Aglionby, 2003a, b).

In the South, the drug war helped to further destabilize the situation at a time of change and when the police were growing increasingly aggressive in their policies toward the Malay Muslim community (International Crisis Group, 2005). In 2004, the situation deteriorated further with a series of violent clashes. The "January Fourth Incident" refers to an incident when armed men attacked the *Narathiwat Ratchanakharin* camp, killing four soldiers and stealing over 400 rifles, which provoked military retaliation and the imposition of martial law (Chambers et al., 2019). The "Krue Se Mosque incident" took place on April 28, 2004, when militants attacked several security checkpoints, leading to a large-scale confrontation resulting in the deaths of 105 militants, five security personnel and one civilian (Wattana, 2006). The "Tak Bai incident" on October 25, 2004, was a mass demonstration where seven men were shot dead, and 78 protestors died of suffocation while being transported in army trucks (Ferrara, 2015). The 2004 Tak Bai incident serves as a case study in state-controlled narratives and government impunity. Despite a fact-finding commission that acknowledged excessive force by security personnel, no prosecutions followed, exposing severe flaws within Thailand's justice system, marked by a lack of accountability for security forces and government officials. This failure to address abuses reflects the broader trend under Thaksin's rule, where state violence was normalized, and judicial systems were constrained by political influence. As the 20-year statute of limitations approaches in October 2024, the absence of legal consequences for those responsible for the Tak Bai deaths demonstrates the enduring flaws in Thailand's justice system. (HRW, 2024)

Thaksin Shinawatra's tactics, marked by authoritarian enforcement, impunity, and state-sanctioned violence, ultimately backfired, exposing the fragility of governance rooted in repression rather than accountability. His strategies, particularly in Thailand's southern provinces and through the infamous "war on drugs," sought to quash dissent and centralize power by manipulating security forces and undermining local governance structures. By consolidating control over the police, sidelining the military, and fostering an environment of impunity, Thaksin weakened institutional checks, disrupted democratic accountability, and fostered deep societal divisions. These methods, while temporarily effective in neutralizing opposition and bolstering his political standing, led to widespread human rights abuses, entrenched mistrust of state institutions, and exacerbated violence, particularly in the South. However, the ultimate failure of Thaksin's tactics also offers insights into avenues of democratic resilience during his tenure.

This wide protest and growing discontent across urban and elite sectors, on the one hand, attest to the potential of collective action to challenge centralized power. But Thaksin's enduring popularity in many rural areas, above all in the North and Northeast, problematizes any clear narrative of democratic resilience. While the urban elites and middle-class sectors were up in arms against his centralization of power, the large electorate in the countryside remained loyal as they benefited from his populist policies, including healthcare reforms and debt relief. This divide points to a fundamental challenge that Thailand's democracy faces: striking a balance between regional inequalities and political representation. Thaksin's legacy shows that such socioeconomic disparities need to be addressed, as they feed into political polarization and work against the possibility of sustainable democratic governance. In the end, Thaksin's defeat shows that repressive and selective governance is often not sustainable.

#### 6.3.2.2. Media Censorship and Media Ownership under Thaksin

The evolution of media liberalization in Thailand presents a compelling case study of the relationship between constitutional ideals and authoritarian governance. The period following the 1997 Constitution, which enshrined media freedoms, initially yielded a vibrant media landscape marked by investigative journalism and a reduction in overt political interference. Freedom House recognized this progress, ranking Thailand's press as "free" between 1999 and 2002, the first such designation in two decades. Reporters Without Borders analyses yielded similar results (see Figure 6.2). However, this liberal environment began to erode post-2003, coinciding with escalating political tensions, the war on drugs, and unrest in Thailand's southern regions.

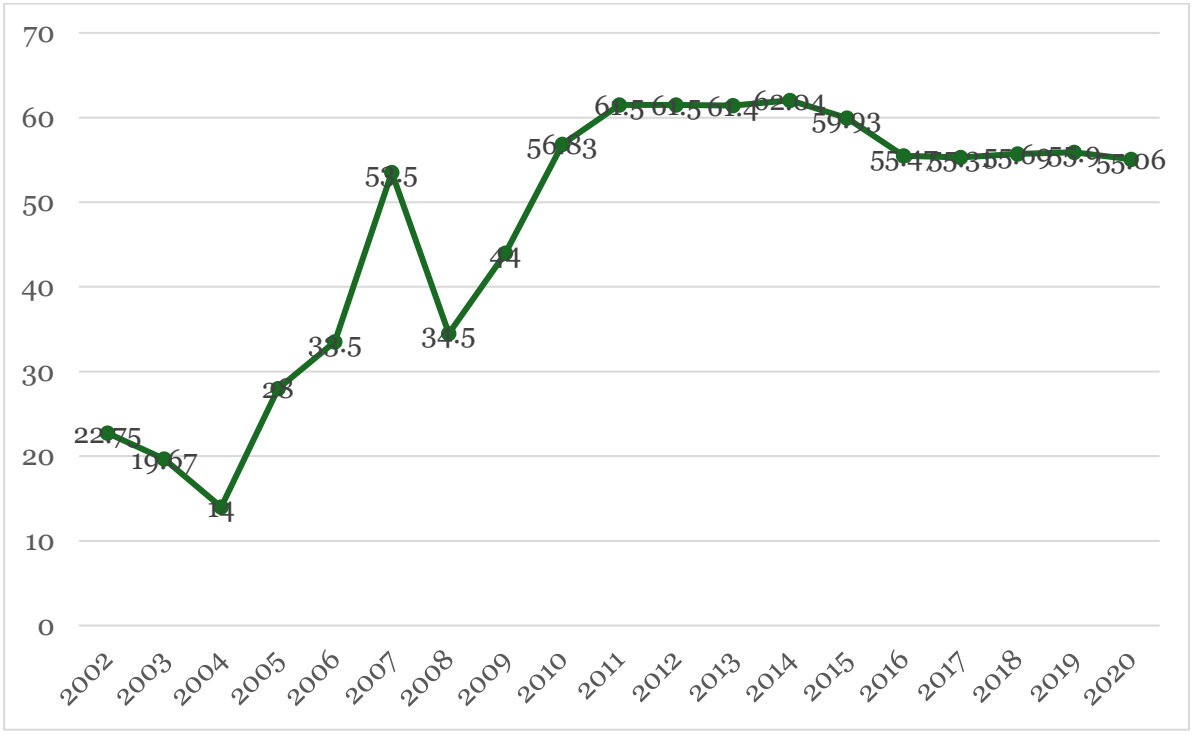


Figure 6.2. Degree of Freedom for Journalist (2002-2020) in Thailand.
*Source*: The author. Based on data from Reporters Without Border (various years).

The notion of "people's media" emerged in this context, yet the Thai media landscape has remained significantly constrained by state control. Traditional legislation, like the 1955 Radio and Television Act, reinforced structural censorship and made the government an exclusive owner of the airwaves, which has suppressed independent broadcasting. (Ubonrat, 2005, p.53) In such an environment, the media act more as an extension of state propaganda rather than as a watchdog of democracy. This has resulted in strong self-censorship among those granted concessions by the state and those working directly for state-run media. (Rananand, 2007) The events of Black May 1992 served as a pivotal moment, revealing the dangers of state-controlled narratives. During the civil unrest, the military's censorship prevented accurate reporting, leading to public confusion and frustration. In response, media activists initiated reforms to challenge the entrenched state control and foster an independent media environment. (Rananand, 2007; Sinpeng and Hemtanon, 2019; McCargo, 2002) This activism resulted in significant changes in the 1990s, highlighted by the inclusion of Articles 39, 40, and 41 in the 1997 Constitution, which sought to protect freedom of expression and public access to airwaves (Ubonrat, 2005). Despite these constitutional guarantees, the practical implementation of media freedom faced persistent challenges. The establishment of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC[122]) was fraught with difficulties, largely due to resistance from vested interests within the government and military. This created a regulatory vacuum, perpetuating confusion and limiting the potential for independent media to flourish. (Brooten and Klangnarong, 2009)

Traditionally, the ownership structure of both the telecommunication and broadcasting systems in Thailand has been in the hands of the state and the military since their inception. While most print media outlets are privately owned, the state has traditionally retained ownership of radio and television stations. This was generally overseen by the Public Relations Department (PRD), which the Office of the Prime Minister, and the Ministry of Defense administers (Wongrujira, 2008; see Table 6.5). Additionally, the Mass Communication Organization of Thailand (MCOT) was a state-owned enterprise that owned a number of radio stations and television channels. Despite its privatization and subsequent transformation into a public company in 2004, MCOT remains under the majority ownership of the Ministry of Finance. Consequently, in addition to political actors, business actors were also pivotal stakeholders in the realm of broadcasting media (Wangvivatana, 2005). The broadcasting media thus were regarded as instruments for national unity and stability, as well as government public relations tools.

[122] The NBC was eventually formed post-Coup in 2010 as the *National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission* (NBTC).

Table 6.5. Ownership Structure of Thai Broadcasting Media, 2005.

| State Agencies | Radio Stations | TV network |
|---|---|---|
| Ministry of Defense | 212 | 2 |
| Ministry of Transportation and Communication | 19 | -/- |
| PRD | 147 | 2 |
| MCOT | 62 | 2 |
| National Police Bureau | 41 | -/- |
| Ministry of Foreign Affairs | 1 | -/- |
| Ministry of Agriculture | 5 | -/- |
| Ministry of Education | 15 | -/- |
| Parliament | 16 | -/- |
| Others | 17 | -/- |
| Total | 535 | 6 |

*Source*: Wongrujira, 2008, p.2.

The rise of Thaksin Shinawatra between 2001 and 2006 was a turning point in the continuing struggle for media independence. Instead of overt censorship, Thaksin's government used more subtle methods to undermine media rights, notably through libel suits and manipulating advertising revenues to exert control over critical outlets. The acquisition of iTV[123] by Shin Corporation exemplified this strategy, as it concentrated media ownership within the hands of Thaksin's family, creating conflicts of interest and weakening media independence (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005; ARTICLE 19, 2005). Additionally, media concessions were awarded to private companies as part of a patronage system. These companies formed close ties with the military or the government when the concessions were granted, leading to the extension of television concessions for over 50 years. The ownership structure of radio stations mirrors that of television stations. While many FM radio stations are established and owned by the state, a significant number in urban areas either operate under concessions granted to private companies or lease their airtime to them. (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005) Thaksin's approach not only obstructed civic space but also fostered a climate of self-censorship among journalists, who were increasingly hesitant to tackle sensitive subjects due to fear of legal repercussions. Moreover, the Thaksin administration's frequent use of libel suits against journalists contributed to a climate of self-censorship: "ultimately [Thaksin] used legal measures to threaten and punish the media so to create a climate of fear and to silence them" (Ubonrat 2007, p.7). Rather than silencing dissent, however, Thaksin's attempts to curb media opposition in the long term inadvertently empowered his critics. For example, the cancellation of the popular talk show "Thailand Weekly" in 2006 served to further galvanize opposition to Thaksin. Sonthi Limthongkun, the owner of the Manager Group and a former Thaksin supporter, became a vocal critic of the TRT government following its 2005 re-election. (CPJ, 2006; Nelson, 2005; Ockey, 2007; The Sydney Herald, 2007) By the time of the September

[123] Shin Corporation initially purchased 40% of iTV shares in May 2000, prior to Thaksin's term as Prime Minister. Over the next five years, their stake increased to 80%, effectively consolidating control and marginalizing other shareholders. The only significant opposition came from the Nation Multimedia Group, alongside protests from iTV staff, academics, and NGOs. The Chuan Leekpai government had previously lifted a 10% ownership cap embedded in iTV's license, facilitating Shin Corporation's majority control. (ARTICLE 19, 2005)

2006 coup, both The Nation and the Manager were instrumental in rallying support for the overthrow of Thaksin's government. Moreover, Thaksin's administration utilized legal barriers and bureaucratic delays to obstruct the establishment of independent regulatory bodies such as the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). The *2000 Frequency Allocation Act* had been passed to liberalize broadcasting and telecommunications, but its implementation was delayed due to media advocates opposed to the appointing of government and industry proxies to NBC. This delay created a situation of regulatory vacuum that resulted in media outlets being vulnerable to state influence and, therefore, hampered an independent civic space for operations of free media. Additionally, through the regulation of frequency allocations, the government held indirect control over media outlets, thus limiting the practice of independent community radio. (Brooten and Klangnarong, 2009)

The Thaksin government employed coercive measures to suppress media organizations critical of the regime. Investigations by the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) into executives of media outlets such as The Nation Media Group, which voiced dissent against Thaksin, exemplified the use of state apparatuses to intimidate and silence critics. In addition, Thaksin and his relatives had been buying shares of media businesses. For example, 20% of the Nation Multimedia Group that ran the newspaper "the Nation" was owned by relatives of the secretary general and Cabinet minister of Thai Rak Thai. (Pathmanand, 2005; CPJ, 2004) Furthermore, the Thaksin regime took advantage of old laws, such as the 1955 Radio and Television Broadcast Act, to exercise control over community radio, which directly contradicts the spirit of the 1997 Constitution, guaranteeing freedom of the media. The government used legal pretexts for raids and seizures of equipment in radio stations that acted against its power, showing how the enforcement mechanisms had been weaponized against any opposition. (Brooten and Klangnarong, 2009) The co-optation of community radio took this platform for civic engagement from the grassroots to that which serves state-aligned messaging. A cabinet resolution allowed, in 2003, for the Public Relations Department (PRD) to impose a system whereby it can sell airtime and obligate community radios with onerous registration requirements, effectively bringing those radio stations under state regulation. Furthermore, the possibility of advertising revenue in community radio opened up commercial interest and deflected the accountability to the public by profit motive interests. (ibid.) This diluted the line between community and commercial interests, diluting the original purpose of those media reform efforts, as a result ensuring that such potential counterweights to his government's narratives were firmly co-opted into serving broader Thaksin objectives. Such tactics not only systematically undermined constitutional guarantees of media freedom in Thailand but also reinforced a strongly centralized executive, obstructive to any form of independent media and civic activism against state power.

## 6.4. Chapter Summary

Table 6.6. Summary of Evidence: Case Study Thailand.

| Part of Causal Mechanism | Result |
|---|---|
| Part 01: Institutional Capture | **Supported**. The reshaping by Thaksin of key state structures, such as the judiciary and the Election Commission through loyalist appointments, reveals how institutional capture has increased executive power. |
| Part 02: Social Silencing | **Supported**. Thaksin's regime systematically obstructed civic space and media freedoms, using legal intimidation to silence opposition and critical voices in the media. |
| Part 03: Weakening Accountability Mechanisms | **Supported**. Thaksin dismantled key accountability structures, including the judiciary and Senate, and suppressed civil society, thereby eliminating significant checks on his executive authority. |
| Part 04: Concentration of Executive Power | **Supported**. The interaction between institutional capture, social silencing, and weakened accountability produced an unenviable concentration of power within the executive under Thaksin's strong will. |

Source: The author.

This chapter has explored how democratic accountability has been undermined and executive power concentrated during the premiership of Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand. Two strategies have dominated this process: institutional capture and social silencing. In this regard, I also discuss the role of the military and the monarchy. Throughout the following analysis, I refer to the hypothesized causal mechanism proposed in Chapter 2 and check its validity against the findings (see Table 6.6).

Hypothesis H1 depicts that the capture of key state institutions is one of increasingly concentrated executive power in cases of high levels of institutional capture. Moreover, it shows accountability for a total lack of institutional autonomy. Thailand under Thaksin is a case in point. For example, manipulation of the structures, laws, and other institutions helped Thaksin gain full control of his political structure, which further hindered any kind of oversight of independent bodies. This manipulation allowed him to bypass checks on his authority and implement policies with minimal resistance. The erosion of independent institutions, such as the judiciary and the Senate, exemplifies how institutional capture created an environment conducive to executive power concentration. Thaksin's tactics included packing the Constitutional Court and the Election Commission with loyalists, undermining judicial and electoral accountability, and further cementing his grip on power.

Hypothesis H2 argues that social silencing tactics increase the effectiveness of institutional capture, which in turn is associated with more concentrated executive power. This hypothesis finds support in Thailand. Thaksin's regime adopted several social silencing methods, such as impeding civic space and manipulating media narratives, which directly undermined the ability of civil society and independent media to check executive power. The willful obstruction of the liberalization of the media and legal intimidation of critical outlets serve as good

examples of how social silencing was effectively used to mute voices of dissent. Where institutional capture provided the necessary conditions, social silencing tactics enabled Thaksin to govern with little public scrutiny and opposition.

Hypothesis H3 argues that the weakening of accountability mechanisms is a key factor that enables the concentration of executive power. Evidence from the case of Thailand supports this hypothesis. Thaksin's administration systematically dismantled horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability structures. The manipulation of the legislature, co-option of the judiciary, and suppression of civil society organizations created an environment where traditional checks on executive power were rendered ineffective. For instance, the co-optation of the Senate and judicial appointments by Thaksin ensured that the electoral processes and legal frameworks favored his interests and severely undermined accountability. The erosion of these mechanisms ultimately allowed him to sustain his grip on power.

Hypothesis H4 postulates that the concentration of executive power is an outcome of the synergistic interaction of institutional capture and social silencing, further weakening accountability mechanisms. The analysis of Thaksin's tenure demonstrates that through the systematic dismantling of checks and balances, coupled with the creation of a political environment that discouraged open dissent, Thaksin was able to consolidate power with limited opposition. His strategies resulted in a highly centralized authority based on manipulating legislative, judiciary, and media institutions to his favor. This leads to a political structure in which Thaksin can apply almost unilateral decisions, digging deeper and increasing political polarization. The premiership of Thaksin Shinawatra represents an interesting case study in which institutional capture and social silencing had been used as tools in undermining democratic accountability and consolidating executive power. In any case, this seems to be an effective method of consolidation only in the short term, as it led to increased political instability and polarization in Thailand.

Together with institutional capture and social silencing, some broader structural factors contributed to this political environment and enabled Thaksin Shinawatra's consolidation of power and eventual downfall. The structural dynamics include weak institutionalization, authoritarian legacies, social-political cleavages, and military and monarchy influences. These factors in tandem essentially explain the frailty of democracy in Thailand during the regime of Thaksin and also define the political conditions that made that democracy prone to be captured by the authoritarian leader.

The weak institutionalization of democratic structures in Thailand created important vulnerabilities that Thaksin exploited. Thailand's political system has been traditionally fragmented, with unstable political parties lacking cohesive ideologies. It is in this environment that Thaksin could use his wealth and influence to establish a strong personalist party, Thai Rak Thai (TRT), which was able to sideline established political parties. The weak

party system reduced parliamentary checks on the executive, and Thaksin came to monopolize political life. In addition, the judiciary's independence was undermined as several key appointments of loyalists enabled Thaksin to evade judicial checks. The abuses of the law illustrated the ease with which weakly institutionalized democracies could be manipulated for authoritarian purposes. Civil society organizations, though active, faced severe limitations in challenging Thaksin's government since their efforts have often been met with repression or co-optation, further diminishing democratic checks. (cf. Chapters 6.2, 6.3.1.1., 6.3.2.1.) Thailand's historical legacy of authoritarianism also played a role in enabling Thaksin's consolidation of power. Decades of military coups and interventions created a political culture where military involvement in governance became normalized. The frequent coups of the military, often justified to restore order, have created an environment that has been conducive to authoritarian rule. Thaksin capitalized on this dynamic by co-opting military leaders. His government also resorted to common authoritarian practices of the previous regimes, such as media repression and deploying security forces against opponents. These actions created a culture of impunity in which Thaksin could avoid democratic norms while still appearing legitimate. (cf. Chapters 6.3.1.1., 6.3.2.1., 6.3.2.2.)

Class and regional divides were at the heart of Thaksin's strategy for legitimacy: populist policies such as universal healthcare targeted low-income and rural groups, especially in northern and northeastern Thailand. These policies mobilized significant support from marginalized groups who saw Thaksin as a champion of their interests. Thaksin's rhetoric framed traditional elites as impediments to progress and justified his authoritarian measures as necessary to move the common people forward. His personal background from the rural north further allowed him to tap into regional grievances, positioning himself as a leader who understands and represents the underdeveloped regions. By appealing to these regional cleavages, Thaksin undermined opposition from entrenched urban elites and created a polarized political environment in which his regime could consolidate power. (cf. 6.2)

The relationship between the military and the monarchy also had an impact on the political scenario of Thaksin's regime. It is traditionally accepted that the Thai military justifies its political intervention on the basis of protecting the monarchy. To benefit from this 'tradition,' Thaksin, first, tried to secure the loyalty of the monarchy and the military in his effort to consolidate power. The populist policies pursued by him had been framed in such a manner as to suggest that they were going to correspond with the symbolic role of the monarchy for the support of the poor in the countryside, thus reinforcing his imagery. However, when Thaksin's actions began to challenge entrenched power structures, this delicate balance unraveled. Indeed, his conflicts with the royalist factions later on led to his toppling in 2006 through a military coup. (cf. Chapter 6.3.1.1.)

To understand the erosion of democratic accountability and centralization of executive power under Thaksin Shinawatra, it is necessary to look at the deeper structural weaknesses within Thailand's political system. Weak institutionalization, authoritarian legacies, social-political cleavages, and the influence of the military and monarchy, all played critical roles in structuring an enabling environment conducive to Thaksin's authoritarian consolidation. Taken together, these factors, along with institutional capture and social silencing, hollowed out Thailand's democratic institutions and left the country vulnerable to authoritarianism wrapped in the cloak of democratic legitimacy. While these strategies allowed Thaksin to dominate his opponents in the short run, they also proved to be the sources of his political demise, as the fragile alliances he relied on broke apart and the structural weaknesses he exploited became his liabilities.

# 7. Comparative Analysis

The prior three within-country chapters on democratic decline in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand have revealed a wealth of similarities, yet many differences, as to how political leaders, most importantly democratically elected incumbents, and structural and institutional legacies are contributing to and impeding democratic erosion across these three countries. These within-country analyses also provide much insight into the mechanisms that lead to executive aggrandizement, including tactics of institutional capture and social silencing. This chapter supplements such analyses by putting the findings into a wider comparative perspective. This comparison seeks to offer even more profound insights into how variations in political contexts, institutional structures, and leadership styles affect the path toward democratic decline in different case studies. Based on these analyses, the chapter attains two noteworthy results. It first identifies which single or combined factors most greatly explain the erosion of democratic institutions across the cases, thus underlining patterns beyond national contexts. The chapter also provides additional evidence from six other countries, namely Bolivia, Sri Lanka, Benin, Zambia, Turkey, and Brazil, to increase the generalizability, validity, and reliability of the findings and to provide a broader understanding of how the dynamics observed in Southeast Asia resonate globally. In addressing these objectives, the chapter bridges within-case analysis with broader cross-regional insights, contributing to the literature on democratic decline.

Section 7.1 compares the findings of the Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand case studies, exploring how the different institutional structures, leadership strategies, and sociopolitical contexts influenced the nature of institutional capture and social silencing tactics adopted in each country. Section 7.2 shows that the dynamics of institutional capture and social silencing that are at the heart of democratic decline in Southeast Asia have resonance in other political contexts. Drawing on evidence from six different cases, this section identifies commonalities and divergences that highlight both the universality and specificity of executive aggrandizement strategies. Finally, Section 7.3 summarizes the comparative findings and discusses their implications for understanding democratic erosion. By integrating insights from both regional and cross-regional analyses, this section offers a framework for identifying vulnerabilities in democratic systems and evaluating strategies for safeguarding against autocratization.

## 7.1. Intra-regional Comparison

Institutional capture is a major mechanism of executive power consolidation in the third-wave democracies of Southeast Asia (cf. Chapter 2). It serves to undermine democratic accountability mechanisms and frees the executive to strengthen its grip on state institutions

with fewer constraints. The qualitative findings of this dissertation support the assumption made that the three tactics of institutional capture, namely manipulation of political structures, legal and constitutional engineering, and reorganization of institutions, drive democratic decline by eroding checks and balances over time. However, the effects of institutional capture are influenced by the historical, structural, and political contexts in which they occur. The process of democratization and the lingering institutional legacies of authoritarian regimes, such as entrenched elites and inherited frameworks, create challenges that shape the varied outcomes of institutional capture.

This argument is investigated in case studies of Indonesia under Widodo, the Philippines under Duterte, and Thailand under Thaksin. In each case, democratically elected leaders employed tactics of institutional capture to weaken checks on executive authority and enhance their dominance over state institutions. While legislative bodies and the judiciary were consistently targeted, the specific independent institutions attacked varied between cases, reflecting differences in political structures and historical conditions. The findings underline three key points: First, institutional legacies significantly shape the vulnerabilities to institutional capture in each context. Second, leaders' strategies are decisive in determining how these tactics are implemented. Third, factors such as political culture and elite dynamics influence which institutions are targeted and how successful the efforts are. Put together, these findings demonstrate how historical conditions, leadership choices, and the political environment set the course for democratic decline.

The first finding emphasizes that *the manipulation of political structures* emerges as a central mechanism for consolidating executive power and weakening democratic accountability, as evidenced in the cases of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. This tactic operates by exploiting systemic vulnerabilities, such as fragmented party systems and entrenched patronage politics, while leveraging structural and contextual factors to neutralize opposition and consolidate control over key institutions. The effectiveness of this approach depends not only on preexisting institutional weaknesses but also on the strategic choices of leaders to exploit or amplify these conditions. As a result, legislative oversight becomes skewed in favor of the executive, diminishing the ability of both the legislature and judiciary to effectively check executive power (cf. Figure 2.3). In Indonesia, President Widodo consolidated power through strategic coalition-building and political appointments, particularly targeting opposition parties like Gerindra. By incorporating these parties into the ruling coalition, Widodo reduced intra-elite threats and mitigated ethno-religious cleavages, securing a supermajority in parliament. This left institutionalized opposition significantly weakened. Rapid revisions of the KPK Law that limited independence for Indonesia's best-known anti-corruption commission indicate the ways consolidation of legislative and judicial power can also disable key oversight bodies. This, however, does not happen only in the context of a conscious process in Indonesia

by President Widodo of consolidating executive power. They are rather symptoms of more profound structural problems inherent in the political system of the country, specifically the strong oligarchic networks that permeate the state. Such networks consist of entrenched elites with large economic and political influence that have traditionally shaped Indonesia's political landscape. They dominate decision-making processes, prioritizing their own interests over broader democratic principles, which creates systemic barriers to genuine accountability and reform. Widodo's reliance on coalition-building and political appointments, while strategic, can be understood as both a necessity and a byproduct of these oligarchic structures. The fragmented nature of Indonesian politics, combined with the outsized role of oligarchs, compels leaders to form alliances with powerful elites and parties to maintain political stability and secure parliamentary support. This dependency limits the scope for independent governance and reform, as the leader must navigate the competing interests of coalition partners and oligarchic patrons. Moreover, these structural challenges lead to unintended consequences. For example, while Widodo's co-optation of opposition parties such as Gerindra helped mitigate ethno-religious cleavages and intra-elite conflicts, it also contributed to the erosion of institutional checks and balances. The resulting supermajority in parliament diminished the capacity for robust opposition, enabling legislative changes like the revision of the KPK Law with minimal resistance. This, in turn, weakened Indonesia's most important anti-corruption body, reducing its independence and effectiveness. In this context, Widodo's actions reflect a broader dynamic where leaders are constrained by structural conditions that incentivize the consolidation of power. Rather than an overt strategy to entrench executive dominance, these developments highlight the structural and systemic flaws in Indonesia's political framework. They highlight how oligarchic networks, combined with the pressures of coalition politics, can undermine democratic accountability and lead to outcomes that unintentionally weaken democratic institutions (cf. Chapter 4).

By contrast, Philippine President Duterte seized on the country's divided party system to exploit long-established patterns of post-election party-switching and patronage politics to entrench his power. Though these practices have been embedded in the Philippines' political culture for a long period of time, Duterte rehashed and used them as effective instruments in strengthening his hand against Congress and weakening opposition elements. By presenting these practices not merely as traditional mechanisms of governance but as necessary tools for advancing his populist agenda, Duterte amplified their utility in entrenching executive power. Party-switching, known locally as "*balimbing*" politics (Mendoza et al., 2014), has historically been seen as an opportunistic but commonplace feature of Philippine politics, where elected officials shift allegiance to the ruling coalition after elections to gain access to political spoils. Duterte, however, escalated this practice by using it to secure a supermajority in Congress. Through strategic patronage and promises of access to resources and positions, he incentivized lawmakers to align with his administration. This effectively reduced the opposition to a

marginal presence in the legislature, neutralizing dissent and enabling him to pass controversial measures with minimal resistance. Duterte also reframed patronage politics, portraying his distribution of political favors as a pragmatic means of delivering "strong leadership" in the face of a dysfunctional political system. Presenting himself as an outsider fighting entrenched elites, he demonized the traditional party-switching practices, claiming to use them not for self-enrichment but to dismantle inefficiency and corruption. He cultivated a narrative of justification for his heavy-handed consolidation of power and thus stigmatized those who stood against his methods. Duterte's strategic appointments to the judiciary further consolidated his grip on power. He attained self-serving decisions by placing his loyalists in key judicial positions. For instance, the judiciary had signed off on the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 that grossly curtailed civil liberties and allowed the government to suppress dissent in the name of national security. These judicial actions not only supported Duterte's policies but also undermined institutional checks designed to safeguard democratic freedoms. By deepening the fragmentation of the political system and exploiting its inherent weaknesses, Duterte entrenched his dominance. His approach not only exacerbated the disunity of opposition forces but also set a precedent for the further erosion of democratic norms. Ultimately, Duterte's manipulation of party-switching and patronage politics redefined these practices as instruments of authoritarian consolidation, masking their traditional role in Philippine politics while amplifying their impact on democratic decline. (cf. Chapter 5). In Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra pursued a different path to power consolidation by focusing on the absorption and centralization of political authority within his party, the Thai Rak Thai (TRT).

Thaksin's systematic integration of smaller parties into his party transformed the fragmented parliamentary landscape into one dominated by TRT, ensuring an overwhelming majority in the House of Representatives. The consolidation not only minimized political competition but also gave Thaksin unparalleled control over the legislative process, with effective sidelining of opposition forces and alternative voices. Thaksin's reach went even beyond parliament into the Senate, which was supposed to act as a non-partisan check on executive power. He co-opted the Senate through strategic appointments and constitutional reforms, transforming it into an institution beholden to his administration. This dramatically changed the balance of power, removing one of the most important mechanisms of oversight and further solidifying his grasp on Thailand's political system. By neutralizing the Senate's oversight capacity, Thaksin removed a key institutional check on executive power. This allowed his administration to push through policies and decisions with minimal resistance, consolidating his authority across multiple branches of government. Thaksin's actions not only concentrated power within the executive but also eroded the principles of accountability and independence that are foundational to democratic governance. These strategies emphasize Thaksin's calculated approach to power consolidation. Unlike leaders who relied heavily on patronage or coalition-

building, Thaksin focused on institutional dominance, leveraging constitutional mechanisms to solidify his position. His actions exemplify how the manipulation of institutional frameworks can undermine democratic safeguards and facilitate the unchecked expansion of executive authority. (cf. Chapter 6)

Though they differ, these cases together illustrate how the manipulation of political structures undercuts democratic accountability through context-specific strategies. In Indonesia, structural constraints and oligarchic dominance shaped a reliance on coalition-building, with unintended consequences for institutional integrity. In the Philippines, the deliberate exploitation by Duterte of fragmentation and patronage politics redefined traditional practices as instruments of authoritarian consolidation. In Thailand, Thaksin's institutional transformation stresses the power of constitutional and structural reforms to eliminate mechanisms of oversight. The comparison shows that while the outcomes – entrenched executive power and weakened institutional checks – are the same and trajectories are similar yet reflect distinct interactions between structural conditions and leadership strategies.

The second finding highlights the critical role of *legal and constitutional engineering* in consolidating executive power by formalizing dominance within existing frameworks. This mechanism systematically undermines horizontal and diagonal accountability, reducing the capacity of institutions embedded within the regime and extra-institutional actors to challenge executive authority. By skewing laws to favor executive priorities, leaders are able to advance their agendas while maintaining the appearance of legality, as demonstrated in the cases of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. The variation in approaches across these cases reflects the differing nature of perceived threats to executive authority, whether they stem from institutional constraints or societal dissent. In Indonesia, the passage of the 2020 Omnibus Law on Job Creation illustrates legal engineering aimed at bolstering executive control. This sweeping reform was advanced under President Widodo with minimal public or legislative scrutiny, reflecting a deliberate effort to bypass meaningful debate and opposition. By embedding executive priorities into legal frameworks while limiting mechanisms for contestation, Widodo leveraged the concept of "abusive constitutional borrowing" (Dixon and Landau, 2021), where existing legal structures are manipulated to consolidate power. This approach allowed Widodo to promote his policy agenda under the pretense of legal reform, thereby weakening democratic accountability without overtly violating constitutional norms. In the Philippines, for instance, Duterte's Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 is a case of using legal frameworks to consolidate executive pre-eminence. Under the guise of national security, Duterte expanded the powers of the state and created a strong legal framework for suppressing dissent and opposition. While presenting the law as a necessity for maintaining order, the legislation provided the government with sweeping authority to curtail civil liberties, silence critics, and weaken institutional checks. This tactic of embedding authoritarian practices

within legal frameworks demonstrates how legal engineering can legitimize repressive measures while consolidating executive authority. In Thailand, Thaksin pursued a different strategy, focusing less on the creation of repressive legal measures and more on institutional packing to secure favorable outcomes. By appointing loyalists to key oversight bodies such as the Election Commission and the Constitutional Court, Thaksin was able to tilt the legal and electoral playing field in his favor. This approach reduced the independence of institutions that were designed to hold the executive accountable, ensuring that legal challenges and disputes consistently aligned with his interests. Thaksin's focus on controlling oversight bodies rather than enacting overtly repressive laws reflects a strategic response to the perceived sources of opposition, prioritizing the neutralization of institutional checks over societal dissent. In comparing these cases, legal and constitutional engineering emerges as a versatile tool for undermining accountability, though its form varies based on the leader's perception of threats. Widodo and Duterte leaned toward legislative reforms to embed executive priorities in legal frameworks, reflecting contexts where societal opposition or dissent posed significant challenges. Thaksin, by contrast, prioritized institutional control through appointments, indicating a greater concern with managing regime-internal threats. These differences demonstrate how legal frameworks and institutional manipulation are tailored to specific political contexts, enabling leaders to consolidate power while navigating distinct sources of opposition.

Third, *institutional reorganization* emerges as a pivotal strategy in the weakening of independent oversight bodies, varying in scope and execution based on the perceived threats faced by respective leaders. In Indonesia, Joko Widodo undermined the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), a key institution in combating corruption, with 2019 legal revisions that curtailed its independence and effectiveness. This strategic move did more than simply weaken the KPK's capacity for holding officials to account; it helped Jokowi solidify control over one of the most important checks on the executive. In the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte similarly took on the Commission on Human Rights, using budgetary threats and public vilification to undermine its oversight functions. This occurred in parallel with Duterte's widely criticized war on drugs, which included extrajudicial killings on a massive scale, and demonstrated how the weakening of oversight institutions facilitated unchecked state abuses. In contrast, Thailand's Thaksin Shinawatra pursued a more expansive strategy of institutional restructuring centered on securing control over the military and strategic sectors of governance. He reshuffled military leadership to ensure loyalty and reduced military budgets, consolidating his influence over security forces. Beyond the military, Thaksin expanded executive power by creating new ministries, enabling tighter control over critical sectors such as media and telecommunications. These cases highlight a recurring pattern: institutional reorganization served as a mechanism for reducing accountability and enabling democratic erosion, with its targets shaped by the threat perceptions of each leader. Jokowi and Duterte

concentrated their efforts on undermining institutions central to anti-corruption and human rights protections, whereas Thaksin's strategy encompassed broader structural changes, particularly within the military and governance sectors. In essence, the trajectory of institutional reorganization reflects a balance between leaders' immediate priorities and the structural weaknesses they seek to exploit.

Social silencing is an important mechanism for the suppression of dissent and limitation of independent voices, enabling the consolidation of executive power by weakening external accountability. In Chapter 2, I argued that this strategy works by closing civic space, imposing authoritarian controls, and structuring state-controlled narratives that dismantle mechanisms of democratic accountability. These findings are the basis for this argument since restrictions on civil society and the media have weakened the checks on executive power in Southeast Asia's third-wave democracies. However, the effectiveness of social silencing varies in different contexts and particular conditions under which it has operated. My case studies explore how leaders in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand –Joko Widodo, Rodrigo Duterte, and Thaksin Shinawatra, respectively – have used social silencing to suppress civil society and media. In each of these cases, evidence shows that social silencing has empowered executive power by dismantling diagonal accountability and thus the capacity of independent actors to challenge or scrutinize the government. This restriction enables leaders to rule with limited supervision and suppress opposition, in turn concentrating power in the executive while weakening democratic checks and balances. While the cases all exhibited this pattern, they also showed important variation in the forms and extent of social silencing, including the level of violence or coercion involved. These variations show how the leaders adjusted their strategies to suit the respective country's political and social situation. By drawing these case studies together, three critical findings emerge on the mechanisms and outcomes of social silencing across these cases.

*Obstruction of civic space* is an important strategy to weaken civil society's capacity to monitor government activities and reduce public participation in democratic processes. The leaders in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand used legal, bureaucratic, and coercive measures to neutralize critical voices, which allowed the consolidation of executive power. Although the overall objective is similar in most cases, the circumscription of accountability and erosion of democratic safeguards, the particular strategies pursued are reflective of the strategic priorities of each leader, the institutional landscape, and the available resources. Joko Widodo made use of legislative tools, like the 2017 Mass Organizations Law, to compel CSOs to toe the line with the state ideology. By demanding ideological uniformity, the law diminished CSOs' potential for challenging state policies or advocating pluralism. This tactic framed dissent as a failure to adhere to national values, silencing alternative voices while consolidating executive power. Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines used securitization by "red-tagging" progressive

organizations as communist sympathizers or terrorists. This delegitimized civil society constricted their access to resources, and legitimized state repression in the name of national security. By casting dissenting voices as threats to the state itself, Duterte not only neutralized opposition but also made the public wary of engagement with civil society initiatives. Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand adopted a different path, leveraging his ownership of a media conglomerate to obstruct civic space and control information flows. His dual strategy involved delaying the implementation of the 2000 Frequency Allocation Act, which was intended to democratize media access while also using outdated media control laws to maintain state influence over broadcasting. As the owner of a significant portion of the country's media landscape, Thaksin directly controlled public narratives, suppressing independent media while amplifying state-aligned messaging. This dual reliance on state mechanisms and private ownership not only consolidated his control but also highlighted the conflict of interest inherent in his strategy. These cases collectively demonstrate that obstruction of civic space consistently undermines democratic accountability, yet each leader's political context, threat perception, and resources available shaped the approaches employed. Joko Widodo and Duterte focused on ideological alignment and national security framing to delegitimize opposition, while Thaksin relied on his media ownership to exert direct control over information. The variations illustrate how leaders adapt their strategies to exploit institutional weaknesses, ultimately achieving similar outcomes of reduced accountability and eroded democratic norms.

The reliance on *authoritarian enforcement* reflects significant differences in the strategies pursued by Joko Widodo, Rodrigo Duterte, and Thaksin Shinawatra, which in turn reflects how leaders calibrate their tactics according to perceived threats and socio-political contexts. These differences illustrate a spectrum of authoritarian practices, from legal repression to overt violence, each tailored to consolidate power and suppress dissent. In Indonesia, Widodo did focus on legal mechanisms for managing dissent, relying heavily on the use of laws that reach into the digital realm as ways of extending state power. The law on Electronic Information and Transactions criminalizes online dissent and frames critical speech as disrupting public order. This then allows the government to silence opposition through the courts – a way of maintaining a veneer of legality while limiting overt state violence. The resort to legal repression by Widodo thus reflects the more institutionalized legal system of Indonesia, which allows for more control through bureaucratic and judicial means than through direct repression. By contrast, authoritarian repression in both the Philippines and Thailand has involved widespread state violence. A particularly brutal example is Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs, in which police and vigilante forces have used extrajudicial killings against often marginalized communities, instilling widespread fear. This tactic suppresses not only dissent but also civic resistance, consolidating power through terror. Similarly, Thaksin's war on drugs in Thailand relied on extrajudicial violence, with security forces operating with

near-total impunity. The widespread killings served as a punitive measure to intimidate the population and silence opposition, aligning with the region's legacy of strongman politics and state-sponsored violence. These divergent strategies emphasize the role of historical and socio-political factors in shaping modes of enforcement. Indonesia's emphasis on legal repression reflects a system where institutionalized legal mechanisms are deeply entrenched and serve as a tool for authoritarian control. By contrast, the Philippines and Thailand demonstrate how state violence can be framed as a necessity for maintaining national security, a narrative rooted in their histories of militarized governance and strongman rule. This use of violence not only erodes the rule of law but also directly silences opposition, consolidating power through fear rather than institutional processes. In sum, the findings suggest that authoritarian enforcement as a mechanism for democratic decline operates along a continuum: Indonesia employs legal repression and selective force, leveraging institutional frameworks, while the Philippines and Thailand often relied on overt violence to suppress dissent. These distinctions highlight the relationship between institutional capacity and historical precedent in shaping the tactics of authoritarian leaders.

*State-controlled narratives* play a pivotal role in social silencing, serving as a mechanism for consolidating executive power and eroding democratic accountability. By controlling the flow of information, leaders in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand have undermined independent media and shaped public discourse to suppress dissent. However, the methods employed not only reflect the varying degrees of media independence and institutional constraints in each country, ranging from direct confrontation to indirect manipulation, but also the perceived threats faced by the leaders. By tailoring strategies to their threat perceptions and political contexts, these leaders employed varying approaches to neutralize independent media and solidify their authority. In Indonesia, Joko Widodo's threat perception centered on the destabilizing potential of mass protests and political dissent, also in the digital realm. In response, his administration employed regulatory enforcement and selective censorship to control media narratives. During protests or periods of heightened dissent, internet shutdowns and media censorship were used to limit the dissemination of critical information. The Indonesian Broadcasting Commission selectively enforced media regulations to suppress anti-government voices while amplifying pro-state narratives. These measures reflect Widodo's focus on managing dissent through institutional mechanisms rather than direct confrontation, consistent with Indonesia's relatively structured legal environment (cf. Chapter 4). Rodrigo Duterte's view in the Philippines is that independent media are an affront to the legitimacy and authority of his administration, especially with regard to its controversial policies like the war on drugs. In return, Duterte used an attack dog approach, where one example is that he declared ABS-CBN, the nation's largest television network, was forced to shut down, and targeted journalists, such as Maria Ressa, who was harassed and slapped with court cases. These actions were coupled with disinformation campaigns that portrayed critics

as threats to national security, further undermining public trust in independent media. Duterte's strategy highlights his readiness to confront perceived threats head-on, leveraging state power to dismantle dissenting voices overtly (cf. Chapter 5). Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand faced a different type of threat: the risk posed by critical media coverage that could undermine his extensive political and economic interests. His response was shaped by his family's ownership of iTV and the government's influence over advertising revenue, which allowed him to pressure media outlets into self-censorship. By delaying the implementation of the 2000 Frequency Allocation Act, which would have democratized access to broadcasting, and leveraging financial dependency, Thaksin effectively marginalized critical voices without resorting to outright bans or direct confrontation. This reflects a perception of the media as a manageable threat, addressed through economic coercion and regulatory control rather than overt suppression (cf. Chapter 6). These findings suggest that the control of state narratives as a mechanism for democratic decline is closely tied to the leaders' perceptions of the threats they face, and the independence and institutional resilience of each country's media landscape. Widodo's selective censorship reflects a response to the potential for large-scale dissent, Duterte's direct suppression reveals a focus on neutralizing immediate challenges to his authority, and Thaksin's economic manipulation demonstrates an approach tailored to managing institutionalized media landscapes. Despite these differences, in all cases, state-controlled narratives serve as a powerful tool for eroding accountability, shaping public discourse to suppress dissent, and consolidating executive power.

The systematic weakening of democratic accountability in Southeast Asia's third-wave democracies is a result of the cumulative interaction between institutional capture and social silencing. My third hypothesis is that such a decline is not the result of isolated actions but rather one of a deliberative sequence of tactics that moves from preventive institutional manipulation to reactive repression. The case studies of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand demonstrate both the strategic elements of these approaches and the structural factors that constrain and shape leaders' actions. However, while many of these tactics are deliberate, they are also influenced by structural legacies and institutional weaknesses. In that case, leaders behave within the scope of inherited political dynamics, but having consolidated power, the final actions taken under them represent more deliberate and intentional strategies of power consolidation via the weakening of political and social opposition. Five main findings stand out here:

First, institutional capture and social silencing by Widodo, Duterte, and Thaksin reflect both structural legacies and deliberate strategies that are tailored to exploit institutional vulnerabilities. Leaders first moved in the space provided by entrenched political norms, such as tenuous party systems, patronage networks, or authoritarian legacies, before moving to increasingly strategic steps to consolidate the power of the executive. Widodo's Omnibus Law

and judicial appointments certainly leveraged Indonesia's politically fragmented landscape to his own advantage in consolidating his power through the veneer of reform. These early measures indicate structural opportunities provided by weak party systems and executive dominance. Later actions, such as the selective prosecution of dissenters under the ITE Law, show clearer moves toward centralizing power, suppressing dissent, and weakening diagonal accountability. In Duterte's case, the reliance on *turncoatism* – a perennial feature of Philippine politics – leveraged existing systems of patronage to consolidate legislative support in the first instance. However, the immediate escalation to extrajudicial violence through the war on drugs marked a more deliberate departure from structural exploitation to overtly repressive measures. This reversal of sequencing reflects his perception of drugs as an existential threat requiring immediate and violent suppression. Thaksin's delay of the 2000 Frequency Allocation Act and his placing loyalists in key oversight bodies reflect preemptive exploitation of structural weaknesses in Thailand's media and judicial systems. These preventive tactics of narrative control and oversight mechanisms gave way to more deliberate and reactive actions, such as extrajudicial violence during his war on drugs, when opposition mounted.

This leads me to my second finding. In Indonesia and Thailand, the incumbents followed a progression from *preventive to reactive measures*, using institutional manipulation to preempt political opposition and escalating into reactive (non-) violent tactics of coercion as opposition grows. In contrast, Duterte turned this sequence around and focused on violence as reactive tactic immediately after his election; changes in institutions came both near simultaneously and later (preventive). For instance, Widodo first utilized preventive legal instruments, such as the ITE Law, to criminalize dissent in the digital space and therefore repress criticism without necessarily applying direct violence. Such early legal repression managed to consolidate power with limited public outcry. With time, this was supplemented by a more systematic strategy of placing loyalists in key oversight institutions that weakened horizontal accountability further. The reactive measures to the emergence of opposition or dissent in his rule included selective prosecutions and clamping down on civil society. In contrast, Duterte launched his war on drugs immediately after assuming office as a preventive tactic, using violence to silence opposition before the institutionalization of repression with laws like the Anti-Terrorism Act, justifying his actions in the name of national security. In Thailand, efforts by Thaksin to control media and institutional bodies began as preventive measures but escalated into reactive violent tactics once opposition or societal unrest seemed to appear, especially in Thailand's South.

The sequencing of tactics in Indonesia and Thailand illustrates this pattern: democratically elected incumbents begin with *preventive tactics* to capture institutions or manipulate legal frameworks to preemptively consolidate power and suppress political dissent to implement

their “change project” (Kneuer, 2021). Once dissent grows or institutional challenges emerge, they escalate to *reactive measures*, including overt coercion or violence. This escalation is key to understanding how accountability mechanisms are gradually weakened over time. Initially, these actions appear to be part of normal political strategies – whether through legal reforms or political appointments – but as opposition grows and these measures escalate into repressive tactics, vertical, horizontal, and diagonal accountability are severely undermined. In sum, the cumulative impact of these tactics, especially their sequencing from *preventive to reactive measures*, is what ultimately leads to the weakening of democratic accountability in these third-wave democracies. The gradual shift from institutional capture to more overt repression reflects a calculated strategy that allows these leaders to entrench their power while eroding the mechanisms that could challenge their authority. The case of the Philippines under Duterte, however, can be considered as an outlier. In contrast to Widodo and Thaksin, Duterte started with state violence as a reactive tool while simultaneously building a supermajority in Congress (see Figure 7.1). First, Duterte won the election 2016 on the ‘war on drugs,’ widely popular among the electorate. The immediate post-election fulfillment of the election promise gave him the popular legitimacy, at least initially, to use his more illiberal and violent tactics. Second, in contrast to Thaksin and Widodo, who could seek re-election, the Philippines has a one-term presidential term limit. If the timeline of erosion is examined, it becomes clear that Widodo escalated his aggrandizement tactics post-re-election in 2019, and so did Thaksin post-reelection 2005. In contrast, Duterte’s strict one-term limit and reliance on the war on drugs immediately after taking office reflect an urgent attempt to assert control to fulfill campaign promises to consolidate power in the absence of a longer-term to gradually institutionalize his authority while working on expanding his dynastic family. Duterte’s prioritization of violence over institutional manipulation reflects a context-specific adaptation to his environment and constraints. If anything, this divergence stresses how leaders adapt authoritarian-leaning tactics to their political circumstances, balancing structural legacies, institutional dynamics, and public expectations.

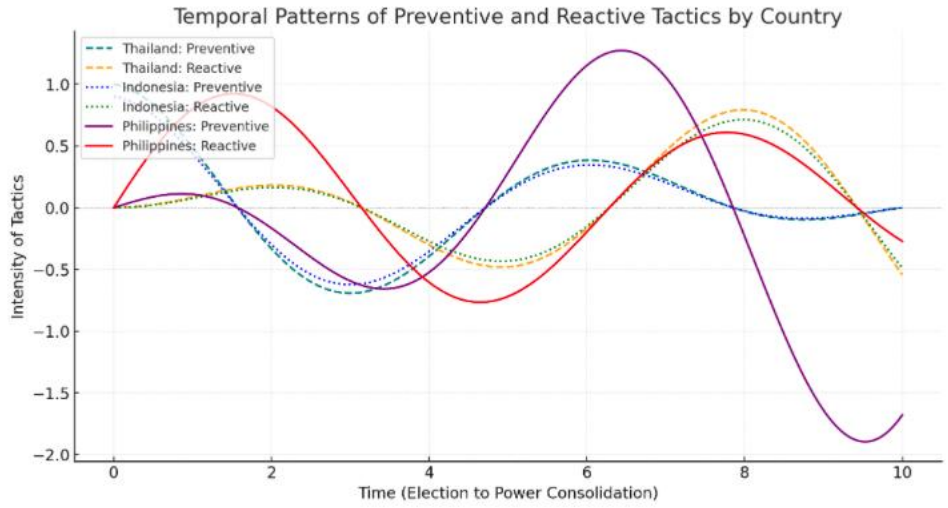


Figure 7.1. Temporal Patterns of preventive and reactive tactics by country.
*Source*: The author.
*Notes*: Thailand: Preventive tactics in teal - note the high initial pulse and gradual tapering. Reactive tactics in orange – note the slow build-up. Indonesia: Preventive tactics in blue, desaturated for contrast. Reactive tactics in green, mirroring Thailand with some dampening. Philippines: Preventive tactics in purple, ramping later in the series. Reactive tactics in red, reflecting Duterte's initial reliance on state violence.

The third finding is the use of national security threats as justification for repressive tactics. Real or constructed national security threats are used to justify repression by framing dissent as a risk to public safety or national stability. Such framing assists in neutralizing opposition without jeopardizing public support. In Indonesia, Widodo portrayed online dissent as a threat to national harmony and justified censorship and prosecutions under the ITE Law. Through it, Duterte justified extrajudicial killings in the Philippines; he described his war against drugs as a moral necessity. Likewise, Thaksin also managed to frame the war on drugs as something indispensable for the orderly conduct of life, thereby making criticism of the violence attached to this campaign irrelevant. My fourth finding points to a double-edged role of media in autocratizing processes: media is both suppressed to silence opposition and co-opted to propagate state-aligned narratives. Leaders adjust these strategies according to media independence and the resources at hand. Duterte has aggressively targeted independent outlets like ABS-CBN while using disinformation campaigns to delegitimize critics. Thaksin used his family's ownership of iTV and government advertising revenue to encourage self-censorship among other outlets. Widodo resorted to selective application of media regulations and shutdowns of the internet to suppress dissent while maintaining the veneer of press freedom. Fifth, the weakening of accountability mechanisms leaves long-lasting vulnerabilities, meaning that democratic erosion could continue after these leaders have left office. Institutional changes, such as Widodo's judicial appointments and Duterte's Anti-Terrorism Act, set precedents for future authoritarian practices. Media suppression under Thaksin and Duterte weakened the capacity of civil society to resist further erosion. When these

structural impacts continue to persist, creating systemic fragility against future authoritarian tendencies.

Hypothesis H4 argued that the weakening of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal mechanisms of accountability through institutional capture and social silencing facilitates incumbents to consolidate power. While the hypothesis is supported by the findings of the three case studies, a comparative lens shows that executive concentration of power is not always a purely deliberate and strategic leader choice. As argued, leaders' choices in such third-wave democracies are often accompanied by structural deficits and institutional legacies. Such vulnerabilities can make executive aggrandizement the unintended consequence of leaders' efforts to address such preexisting conditions. Despite findings indicating that deliberate efforts at executive power consolidation are evident in each of the three cases, structural dynamics have magnified this outcome. In Indonesia, Jokowi's efforts to consolidate power have largely been a response to structural pressures. The under-institutionalized of the party system and deeply entrenched patronage networks meant that Widodo had to make strategic alliances and appointments to maintain political stability. Indonesia's fragmented party system has created an environment in which coalitions are both necessary and unstable. To manage such an environment, Widodo has used tools like the ITE Law to manage dissent, and he has placed both loyalists and party allies in strategic positions to quell intra-elite conflict. While these actions concentrated executive power, they were as much about ensuring political stability as they were about consolidating control. Rodrigo Duterte's consolidation of power reflects a mix of intentional strategy and the acceleration of long-standing institutional weaknesses. Deep-seated *turncoatism* and the weak institutionalization of political parties in the Philippines made it fertile ground for Duterte's rapid aggrandizement. Duterte also deliberately pursued measures to weaken accountability, such as the war on drugs, which silenced opposition through increasing state-sponsored violence, and the Anti-Terrorism Act, which institutionalized repression under the guise of national security. While Duterte's strategy was overtly focused on concentrating power, the speed and extent of his dominance were amplified by these structural factors. Thaksin Shinawatra's executive aggrandizement took place within a political system that is marred by a legacy of centralized power and weak institutional checks. Clearly, his conscious actions of media control and appointment of loyalists reflect a well-planned attempt to gain hegemony in the political landscape, but they have also been shaped by Thailand's political legacies, whereby strongman politics and weak checks and balances provided fertile ground for Thaksin to consolidate power. These institutional vulnerabilities allowed him to control media outlets and exercise financial influence over independent organizations. Though many of Thaksin's actions were deliberate, his dominance was also an unintended consequence of navigating a system that historically placed significant power in the hands of the executive.

Aggregated across the three cases, the findings suggest that the concentration of power at the executive is the product of both deliberate strategies and the amplification of structural dynamics. Leaders use institutional capture and social silencing to weaken accountability mechanisms, but the extent of their success can depend on pre-existing conditions. For example, leaders actively utilize legal frameworks to suppress dissent and consolidate control. On the other hand, weak party systems, entrenched patronage networks, and historical precedents for centralized power facilitate these efforts, often making executive aggrandizement an unintended byproduct of navigating these constraints. Yet, the interaction of such deliberate acts and structural legacies effectively undermines vertical, horizontal, and diagonal accountability and allows leaders to accumulate power. This dynamic operates through a pathway of preventive and reactive measures. These can range from the preventive, such as legal reforms and strategic appointments, to the reactive escalation of coercion, violence, or targeted legal persecution. In sum, leaders consolidate executive power through a combination of preventive and reactive tactics tailored to the country's political and social dynamics (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1. Intra-regional comparison of preventive and reactive tactics.

| **Dimension** | **Thaksin** | **Widodo** | **Duterte** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Preventive Measures* | Media control, legal reforms, strategic appointments. | ITE Law, NGO restrictions, institutional influence. | Anti-Terrorism Act, executive control over enforcement. |
| *Reactive Measures* | Emergency decrees, suppression of protests. | Police suppression, targeted prosecutions. | Extrajudicial killings, martial law, media crackdowns. |
| *Primary Sequence* | Preventive → Reactive | Balanced mix of preventive and reactive measures. | Reactive → Preventive |
| *Structural Enablers* | Weak party system, patronage networks, judicial weaknesses. | Corruption vulnerabilities, weak civil society. | Historical precedent for authoritarianism, legal loopholes. |

*Source*: The author.

In sum, I find that in all three cases under review, the democratically elected leaders (X) drove democratic decline (Y) by utilizing institutional capture and social silencing to undermine all three accountability mechanisms and, nearly simultaneously, to consolidate executive power in their hands (CM) (see Table 7.2). While the empirical findings demonstrate a clear sequence 'X → CM → Y', there is a clear divergent pattern in both the sequence and intensity of tactics in the case of the Philippines. While Thaksin and Widodo mostly relied on preventive measures, Duterte reversed this sequence, commencing with reactive measures and then subsequently institutionalizing his power by creating a supermajority in parliament or utilizing autocratic legalism to further silence dissent. Secondly, Duterte's reliance on violence outpaced the preventive strategies in the other two cases, indicating a variation in tactics based on his threat perception, as argued above.

Table 7.2. Summary of Evidence: Intra-Regional Comparison.

| Hypothesis | Result |
|---|---|
| H1: Institutional Capture | **Supported**. Evidence of legal reforms, strategic appointments, and institutional reorganization in all cases. |
| H2: Social Silencing | **Supported**. All cases show systematic suppression of civic space, the media, and dissent through legal and coercive means. |
| H3: Erosion of Accountability Mechanisms | **Supported**. The cumulative weakening of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal accountability was an outcome in all three cases. |
| H4: Executive Power Consolidation | **Supported**. Accountability mechanisms that were weakenend through institutional capture and social silencing enabled executive power consolidation. |

*Source*: The author.

### 7.2. Cross-Case Analysis

Prior research suggests that executive actions targeting diagonal safeguards typically dominate the initial stages of democratic backsliding and often serve as precursors to broader assaults on democratic quality (Wunsch and Blanchard, 2023). However, my within-case and comparative analysis of strategies and tactics of executive aggrandizement in third-wave democracies produce mixed results: while attacks on horizontal accountability tend to be given precedence in Indonesia and Thailand, the "Duterte case" reveals another pattern of violent attacks against a particular branch of society combined with an attack on horizontal accountability. These findings, however, suffer from two limitations regarding their generalizability. First, the study focuses on electoral third-wave democracies within Southeast Asia, and its lessons may not be generalizable to other regions with different political, social, or historical contexts. This, in turn, means regional characteristics – Indonesia's authoritarian legacies, the Philippines' entrenched dynastic politics, and Thailand's history of military interventions – do matter in shaping the dynamics of executive aggrandizement in ways that do not translate directly into other regions. Second, despite efforts to maximize variation in executive tactics and the role of institutional safeguards, there are region-specific factors such as regional political alliances, cultural norms, or security concerns that influence patterns of backsliding and are usually not generalizable. These factors create unique trajectories of democratic erosion that differ from those observed in other parts of the world.

This subchapter will discuss the strategies and tactics of executive aggrandizement in third-wave democracies outside Southeast Asia to address these limitations and enhance the generalizability, validity, and robustness of my findings. By broadening the geographic scope, the analysis seeks to identify both shared patterns and context-specific variations in how executives erode accountability mechanisms to consolidate power. This extended analysis bolsters the theoretical claim that executive aggrandizement is a key pathway for democratic backsliding in third-wave democracies. In addition, it allows for a robustness test of the AEM to see if it travels across different political contexts. A cursory analysis of the case selection is

done on a representative set of electoral third-wave democracies that have undergone democratic erosion through executive aggrandizement: Benin, Brazil, Turkey, Zambia, Bolivia, and Sri Lanka (see Table 7.3). These cases represent a wide variety of sociopolitical contexts, ranging from Latin America, Africa, and Europe to South Asia, and thus have cross-regional relevance for the AEM framework. I find that in each of the cases, a mix of institutional capture and social silencing tactics to consolidate their power was used. While the broad strokes of the tactics they employed are consistent with the AEM, and their trajectories reflect experiences in Indonesia under Joko Widodo, the Philippines under Rodrigo Duterte, and Thailand under Thaksin Shinawatra, their specific political, historical, and cultural contexts create differences. The following sub-section discusses these six cases.

Table 7.3. Selected Cases of Executive Aggrandizement in Third-Wave Democracies Outside Southeast Asia.

| Country | Leader(s) | Years in Power | Onset EA: Electoral Democracy (0/1) | Executive Aggrandizement (EA) (0/1) | Authoritarian Legacy (0/1) | Third-wave democracy (0/1) | Social/Political Polarization (0/1) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Turkey | Recep Tayyip Erdoğan | 2003–present | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1/1 |
| Brazil | Jair Bolsonaro | 2019–2022 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1/1 |
| Zambia | Michael Sata | 2007-2014 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1/1 |
| Bolivia | Evo Morales | 2005-2019 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1/1 |
| Benin | Patrice Talon | 2016-present | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1/1 |
| Sri Lanka | Rajapaksa | 2019-2022 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1/1 |

*Source*: Compiled by the author.
*Notes*: 0=no; 1=yes.
See Appendix 2 for the full list.

**Turkey: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2003–present)**

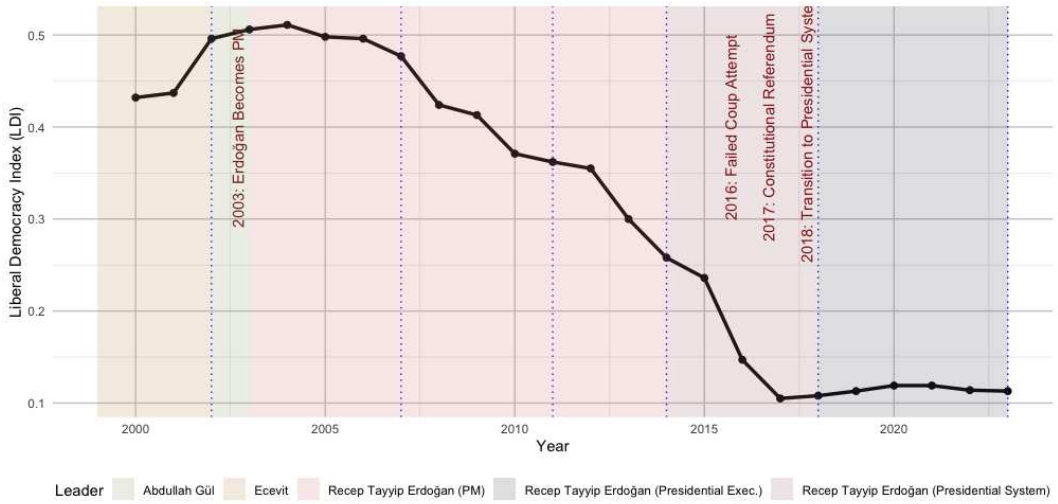


Figure 7.2. Changes in Liberal Democracy and Leadership Trends in Turkey (2000–2023).
*Source*: Author's own analysis.
*Notes*: Data source (LDI) = V-Dem Institute, v14.
Scale: 0-1. 0=lowest; 1=highest.

The AKP acquired power in 2002, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected to the post of prime minister in 2003 (later becoming president in 2014), marking a pivotal juncture in Turkey's political history (see Figure 7.2). This electoral victory was driven by the general public's discontent with the coalition government that had governed the country during a severe economic crisis in 2001. The crisis, characterized by skyrocketing inflation, a 9.5 percent contraction of GDP, and high unemployment, seriously undermined the confidence in traditional secularist parties (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu, 2009). At this juncture, the AKP successfully positioned itself as a reformist, inclusive, and moderate force. The AKP strategically distanced itself from overt Islamist policies to broaden its appeal, advocating for economic recovery, democratic reforms, and European Union membership aspirations (Kirişci and Sloat, 2019; Somer, 2019). This positioning attracted a diverse coalition of voters, including the urban middle class, conservative Muslims, and those disillusioned with secular elites, leading to the AKP's decisive electoral victory (ibid.).

The subsequent autocratization of Turkey under Erdoğan and the AKP was a very gradual process of democratic erosion rooted in structural vulnerabilities, strategic maneuvering, and historical legacies. Initial democratic reforms of the AKP, especially on its way to EU membership, lost their momentum by 2007, a period during which Erdoğan's interest in democratization started to fade away, allowing him to use the increased dominance of the AKP toward further centralization of power. Long-standing Turkish tradition of centralized control, weak rule of law, and politicized bureaucracy created institutional weaknesses that the AKP could exploit. (Eissenstat, 2017) The failed 2016 coup attempt served as a critical turning point, enabling Erdoğan to justify a massive crackdown on opposition figures, journalists, and civil

society under the guise of restoring stability. In turn, electoral success allowed Erdoğan to make constitutional changes, such as the 2017 referendum replacing Turkey's parliamentary system with a presidential one that invested tremendous powers in the executive (Gandhi, 2019). The height of institutional capture to consolidate power for Erdoğan has been reached. Further developments were exacerbated by the AKP's increased use of nationalist and Islamist rhetoric, which further polarized society and allowed Erdoğan to consolidate his base while marginalizing opposition groups. (Somer 2019) Furthermore, the collapse of the EU accession process for Turkey freed him from external pressure for democratic reforms and thus emboldened him in his autocratic policies with fewer constraints (Kirişci and Sloat, 2019).

According to the AEM, the specific tactics of institutional capture to consolidate power can be divided into the manipulation of political structures, legal and constitutional engineering, and institutional reorganization. Erdoğan and the AKP manipulated political structures to distort democratic processes and narrow opposition. Early on, the party achieved electoral dominance through the creation of wide coalitions and the engineering of supermajorities that enabled it to enact wide-ranging reforms (Çarkoğlu and Kalaycıoğlu, 2009). This was followed by the strategic manipulation of the electoral system, such as introducing higher parliamentary thresholds to marginalize smaller parties like the pro-Kurdish HDP. The 2017 constitutional referendum, which introduced a presidential system, was a culmination of this tactic, concentrating executive authority in Erdoğan's hands. (Gandhi, 2019) The AKP exploited and restructured Turkey's legal frameworks to weaken institutional oversight and entrench authoritarianism. Reforms cloaked in democratic language – such as enhancing the judiciary's efficiency – masked the removal of independent judges and the packing of courts with Erdoğan loyalists (Gall, 2019). Besides, "autocratic legalism" (Corrales, 2015, 2020) was used to criminalize dissent by using loosely worded anti-terrorism and libel laws, thus silencing opposition in the name of national security (Eissenstat, 2017). Institutional reorganization became a hallmark of Erdoğan's consolidation of power. Security forces and bureaucracies were systematically overhauled to purge critics and install party loyalists. For example, following the 2016 coup attempt, a massive purge saw thousands of civil servants, military personnel, and academics removed under accusations of ties to the Gülen Movement, which Erdoğan blamed for the coup (Somer, 2019). This reorganization extended to local governance, where AKP "caretaker governments" replaced elected Kurdish mayors, undermining democratic representation.

Specific ways of social silencing to consolidate power can be differentiated, according to the AEM, into obstructing civic space, authoritarian enforcement, and state-controlled narratives. The AKP put heavy restrictions on civil society organizations, especially those critical of the government. Legal constraints and bureaucratic barriers were imposed on NGOs, and foreign funding of such organizations was hindered. This approach weakened independent civil society

and shielded the regime from grassroots opposition. (Eissenstat, 2017) Erdoğan's government practiced widespread intimidation, harassment, and arbitrary detention of journalists, academics, and political dissidents. High-profile figures, such as HDP co-leader Selahattin Demirtaş, were charged with crimes in an effort to quell their influence. The use of surveillance and targeted crackdowns on protests, such as during the Gezi Park demonstrations, further discouraged public dissent (Gandhi, 2019; Demirel-Pegg, 2018). Control of media became a central pillar of Erdoğan's strategy. Independent media outlets were shut down or acquired by government-affiliated entities, while state-owned media disseminated pro-AKP propaganda. In practice, this has meant monitoring, censoring, and outright banning online platforms to halt the spread of anti-government narratives. This "information dominance" created an environment in which Erdoğan's control over the narrative was largely unchallenged. (HRW, 2016b; Caliskan, 2024)

Against this background, the executive aggrandizement under Erdoğan seems to be a textbook example of tactics of institutional capture and social silencing for consolidating executive power. However, there are also sharp contrasts with Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. First, while the electoral victory of Erdoğan contributed to democratic erosion, there was a decade between his first electoral victory and the onset of executive aggrandizement. Although autocratizing tendencies were recognized even before Erdoğan came to power, executive aggrandizement did not fully start until the 2016 failed coup attempt. The coup attempt provided the perfect pretext for a massive power grab. By framing the purge as a necessary step to restore order, Erdoğan consolidated control over key institutions and implemented constitutional reforms that eliminated checks on his authority (Eissenstat, 2017). In addition, the fading prospects of EU accession removed external incentives for democratic reform. With less need to adhere to European standards, Erdoğan's government increasingly embraced nationalist and authoritarian policies (Kirişci and Sloat, 2019).

**Brazil: Jair Bolsonaro (2019-2022)**

Jair Bolsonaro's rise to power exemplifies the strategic use of populist rhetoric and religious nationalism to appeal to a disenchanted electorate. Despite his long tenure in parliament, Bolsonaro avoided traditional institutional leadership roles, cultivating a reputation as an anti-system politician. His campaign capitalized on widespread dissatisfaction with Brazil's political establishment, leveraging his ideological extremism and provocative persona. Central to his appeal has been a populist narrative conjoining national identity with Christian faith, demonizing non-Christians, and advancing an exclusionary definition of "the people." Bolsonaro's slogans, such as "Brazil above everything, God above everyone," echoed particularly among evangelical voters and conservatives. By framing his government as Christian and targeting perceived "enemies" such as artists, intellectuals, and minorities,

Bolsonaro built a platform that was openly hostile to pluralism, instead opting for homogeneity. His success underlines the strong tendency of exclusionary populist rhetoric, especially interwoven with religious nationalism, to garner electoral support during periods of political and economic crises. (do Nascimento Cunha, 2023; Abrucio et al., 2020; Tamaki, 2021; Rocha et al., 2021)

Bolsonaro did not spare any ammunition in manipulating, restructuring, and engineering the law in his consolidation of power, undermining democratic norms, and neutralizing opposition in Brazil's institutional structures to enable the entrenchment of authoritarian governance. First, Bolsonaro created opportunistic alliances with the right-wing political camps and centrão (centrist) parties in exchange for legislative support. Such coalition building, despite all the anti-establishment rhetoric, came as a guarantee against impeachment and gave him greater leeway in Congress (Rennó, 2020). Although Bolsonaro did not obtain constitutional supermajorities, in contrast to his counterpart Joko Widodo in Indonesia, for example, his alliances weakened oppositionist blocs. While this alignment thus protected Bolsonaro against impeachment, it greatly watered down his executive power. Bolsonaro gave up the right to budgetary allocations via the *orçamento secreto* (secret budget), which allowed centrão legislators to take possession of discretionary funds in return for legislative support. Bolsonaro's failure to maintain predictable coalitional support resulted in some key defeats in Congress. For example, his efforts at constitutional amendments like returning to printed ballots were defeated, as were proposals regulating online content. Moreover, Bolsonaro experienced a record number of congressional overrides of his vetoes, highlighting legislative independence as a check on his authority. (Hunter and Power, 2023)

Bolsonaro's government took advantage of the ambiguities in the law to challenge and discredit Brazil's democratic institutions. For example, his administration attacked judicial independence through the discrediting of the Supreme Court and the Electoral Court, accusing those entities of bias and corruption (Ceia, 2024). Moreover, Bolsonaro invoked provisions like Article 142 of the Constitution, which allows military involvement in maintaining order, as justification for potential anti-democratic interventions (Akkoyunlu and Lima, 2022). This tactic created a veneer of legality for his threats against democratic checks. On the other hand, Bolsonaro's calls to impeach justices Luís Roberto Barroso and Alexandre de Moraes were blocked by the Senate, whose president, Rodrigo Pacheco, refused to advance these motions. This demonstrated the limitations of Bolsonaro's influence within the legislative and judicial domains. (Melo and Pereira, 2024)

Bolsonaro systematically appointed allies and ideologically aligned individuals to key judicial and administrative posts, including the Supreme Court and federal agencies. This strategy eroded institutional impartiality and facilitated his agenda (Savarese, 2021; Bueno Aires Times, 2020). Bolsonaro restructured Brazil's military and police hierarchies, ensuring loyalty

among law enforcement and armed forces. This reorganization fostered a militarized governance style that prioritized Bolsonaro's directives over constitutional norms (Milhorance, 2022). The centralization of power in federal institutions and the weakening of local governance structures ensured tighter executive control, minimizing regional resistance to federal policies (Lotta, 2023). Despite the restructuring of the military, the armed forces showed a lack of support for Bolsonaro, for example, when he attempted to secure military backing for a coup, which floundered due to the refusal of key military leaders, or when military chiefs resigned in response to the firing of the defense minister. (Hunter and Vega, 2021; CNN, 2024).

Bolsonaro also implemented bureaucratic and legal obstacles for NGOs and other advocacy groups in general and, more so, on environmental and Indigenous issues. These included restricting foreign funding and investigating them to discredit their work. (Soares and Baines, 2021; Gonçalves and Cafrune, 2023) Oppositional political voices, journalists, and activists faced threats, arrests, and smear campaigns of terror. Among these were arbitrary detentions of protesters and monitoring of opposition leaders (Abrucio et al., 2020). In addition, Bolsonaro weaponized the judiciary and law enforcement to discourage protests and suppress opposition gatherings under the pretext of public security. Bolsonaro's administration also increased control over state media, ensuring a pro-government narrative while discrediting critical outlets. Social media platforms were similarly co-opted to amplify propaganda and silence dissent. (Santini et al., 2021; Ozawa et al., 2023; Recuero et al., 2022). In addition, pro-government organizations emerged to delegitimize independent civil society efforts, further marginalizing dissenting voices. Bolsonaro's government used social media quite aggressively to spread misinformation, suppress opposing narratives, and enhance his populist messaging. Bolsonaro has made effective use of WhatsApp and Facebook to spread disinformation, polarize the electorate, and mobilize his base. This approach was amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, where Bolsonaro minimized the severity of the virus, undermined scientific recommendations, and spread false stories about vaccines and public health measures. (Rennó, 2020; Santini et al., 2021; Ozawa et al., 2023; Recuero et al., 2022)

The tipping point for Brazil's autocratization process under Bolsonaro was rooted in the cumulative erosion of trust in democratic institutions, which was accentuated by systemic crises. The impeachment of Dilma Rousseff (Workers Party, PT) in 2016 initiated a period of political instability. The subsequent interim government of Michel Temer (2016–2018) faced widespread unpopularity, setting the stage for anti-system rhetoric to flourish (Scruggs, 2017). The economic crisis of 2013–2014, coupled with the Lava Jato (Car Wash) corruption investigations, brought about public disillusionment with traditional political parties, creating fertile ground for Bolsonaro's rise as an anti-establishment figure (Rennó, 2020). Protests against corruption and inadequate public services in 2013 undermined confidence in the

democratic bases of the New Republic. These events inaugurated a process of institutional fragility that Bolsonaro would later instrumentalize. The pandemic further destabilized governance structures. Bolsonaro's defiance of public health measures and his support of anti-scientific rhetoric heightened polarization. (Miskolci, 2023; Von Bülow and Abers, 2024). His repeated attacks on governors, Congress, and the judiciary during the crisis exposed his disregard for democratic norms and strengthened his populist base. Applying the AEM to executive aggrandizement under Jair Bolsonaro, it is clear that his government embodies the core principles of the model by attempting to weaken institutional checks, consolidate executive authority, and marginalize opposition through legal manipulation, institutional capture, and social silencing. However, much of Bolsonaro's actions were constrained by Brazil's effective judiciary, watchful civil society, and a federal structure that offered multiple veto points, preventing the autocratic consolidation from reaching full circle (see Figure 7.3).

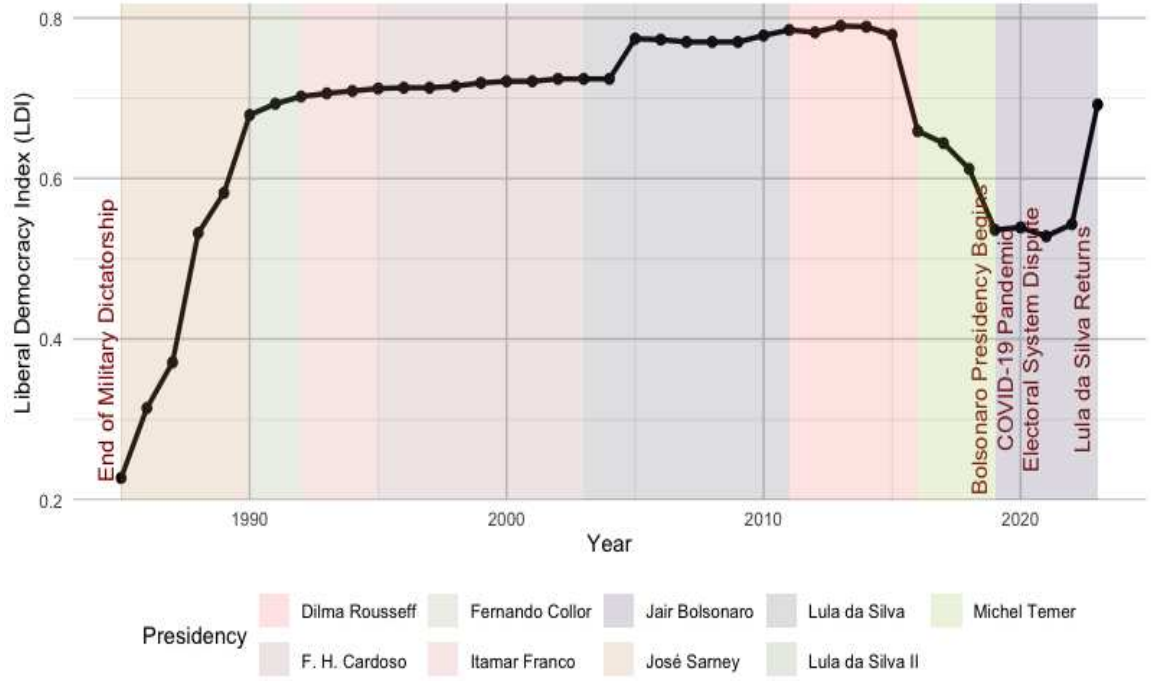


Figure 7.3. Changes in Liberal Democracy and Leadership Trends in Brazil (1985-2023).
*Source*: Author's analysis.
*Notes*: Data source (LDI) = V-Dem Institute, v14.
Scale: 0-1. 0=lowest; 1=highest.

### Benin: Patrice Talon (2016 - today)

Historically, Benin has been considered a beacon for democracy in West Africa, and its transition to multiparty politics in 1990 was hailed as an example for the region. It was the "Conference of the Nation's Living Forces" that paved the way for democratic governance, with its call for inclusive coalitions and broad representation as a means of avoiding the ethno-regional conflict that had plagued the country since independence (Banégas, 2003; Magnusson, 2001). However, Benin has seen a drastic decline in democratic performance since

Patrice Talon came to power in 2016. Talon consolidated power through institutional capture and social silencing, changing the face of politics and weakening democratic norms (Dénakpo, 2021).

Patrice Talon, a wealthy businessman with extensive economic interests, entered politics as a reformist outsider in the 2016 presidential election. His victory followed widespread dissatisfaction with the corruption-ridden administration of Thomas Boni Yayi, who himself had relied on Talon for financial backing in earlier campaigns (Preuss, 2019). Talon's presidency marked a departure from the inclusive power-sharing arrangements that had previously stabilized Benin's democracy. Once in office, Talon systematically dismantled the mechanisms of coalition governance, centralizing political and economic power to eliminate opposition and entrench his authority (Freedom House, 2020). Under Talon's leadership, the judiciary, electoral system, and legislature have been subjugated to consolidate executive dominance. These efforts reflect a systematic approach, where institutional manipulation undermines checks and balances. Talon restructured the judiciary to serve his interests. The establishment of the Court for the Repression of Economic Offenses and Terrorism (CRIET) in 2018 was framed as an anti-corruption initiative but became a tool for persecuting opposition figures. Prominent leaders such as Reckya Madougou and Joël Aïvo were sentenced to lengthy prison terms under dubious charges, silencing dissent and discouraging political challenges. (Lepidi and Kpatindé, 2021) Talon also reorganized the Constitutional Court, filling it with loyalists, including his former personal lawyer in a critical position. This court validated electoral reforms that excluded opposition parties from participating in key elections and thus legitimized Talon's grip on power. (Kohnert and Preuss, 2019) Electoral manipulation has indeed been one of the hallmarks of Talon's strategy. New rules in 2019 made it compulsory for political parties to get Certificates of Conformity from the Ministry of the Interior to qualify for elections. Consequently, in the parliamentary elections that year, only two pro-government parties were allowed to run, making the legislature completely dominated by Talon's allies. Voter turnout fell to a historic low of roughly 20 percent, reflecting widespread public disillusionment with the process (BTI, 2024). For the 2021 presidential election, Talon proposed sponsorship requirements to bar credible opposition candidates, and hence, he was able to secure re-election (Duerksen, 2021). The legislature, hitherto an institution that provided an arena for ampler coalition building, is now a mere rubber stamp of the executive. After the 2019 elections, Talon has dominated all parliamentary activity. He centralized budgetary powers to ensure the reward of loyalists and secured patronage networks (Canen et al., 2021). This dismantling of legislative independence marked the end of Benin's tradition of power-sharing and accountability, shifting the balance of power entirely toward the executive.

Talon's administration has thus used a raft of strategies to suppress dissent and lower civic engagement, ensuring limited resistance to his autocratic consolidation. Civil society in Benin,

once so vibrant and instrumental in the democratic transition, has been systematically weakened. Whereas organizations such as the Catholic Church, independent press, and trade unions traditionally played significant watchdog roles, their influence has waned under Talon's regime. The freedom to strike was limited in 2018 and drastically weakened labor unions that were very active in publicly protesting against governments. Trade unions now face reduced bargaining power, and only three remain representative after the 2021 elections, showing a narrowing of labor rights (BTI, 2022). Protests against Talon's government have been violently repressed. A 2018 law limiting strikes in sectors like health, justice, and the military triggered wide resistance, culminating in a three-day strike by public sector workers. Although the Constitutional Court annulled the law, police violence and legal intimidation continued from the government to prevent further protests (RFI, 2018; Lepidi and Kpatindé, 2021). The flashpoint of the government trying to tax social media in 2019 was similarly greeted with public outcry that made its withdrawal necessary. These instances are indicative of the great resilience of civil society within Benin despite systematic repression (BTI, 2024). Media censorship and disinformation have been used as an important tool for silencing opposition. Opposition-aligned media outlets have been shut down, while pro-government narratives dominate public discourse. Internet shutdowns during protests and elections further curtailed dissent. Talon's government has also leveraged fake news to discredit opposition figures and manipulate public opinion, exacerbating polarization and undermining trust in democratic processes (Gamai, 2022).

Benin's post-1990 democratic framework relied on inclusive power-sharing arrangements, where political and economic elites shared resources and access to state power. This arrangement mitigated the ethno-regional divisions that had historically destabilized the country. Presidents like Mathieu Kérékou and Nicéphore Soglo maintained fluid coalitions that ensured political alternation and stability. However, Talon's presidency has marked the breakdown of this compact (Coppedge et al., 2020). Talon's monopolization of power reflects a premeditated move away from coalition governance. His inability to accommodate political opposition and economic competitors is linked to his interest in consolidating control over Benin's lucrative resources, such as the port of Cotonou. This shift has increased political instability, where tensions have risen between the executive and marginalized groups. Ethno-regional divisions, long dormant under the power-sharing model, risk re-emerging in the absence of inclusive governance (Preuss, 2019). The economic structure of Benin has been a rentier state, where material benefits are directly related to access to political power. In line with this, Talon has used state resources to reward loyalists and marginalize opponents to consolidate power. His control over the cotton industry, one of the main sectors of the economy, shows how economic and political dominance are intertwined in Benin (Kpatindé, 2019). The erosion of inclusive coalitions threatens to exacerbate economic disparities and undermine public trust in democratic institutions.

Using the AEM framework, Talon's trajectory could be summarized as follows: his initial electoral victory set off a process of capturing institutions and silencing dissent through which he dismantled Benin's democratic framework. The subjugation of the judiciary and manipulation of electoral results ensured minimal opposition, while media censorship and violent crackdowns neutralized civic resistance. These measures culminated in the erosion of power-sharing arrangements that had previously stabilized Benin's democracy. Patrice Talon's presidency has transformed Benin from a model of African democracy into a cautionary tale of democratic backsliding (see Figure 7.4). Talon has succeeded in centralizing power and marginalizing opposition through a strategy of institutional capture and social silencing. ´

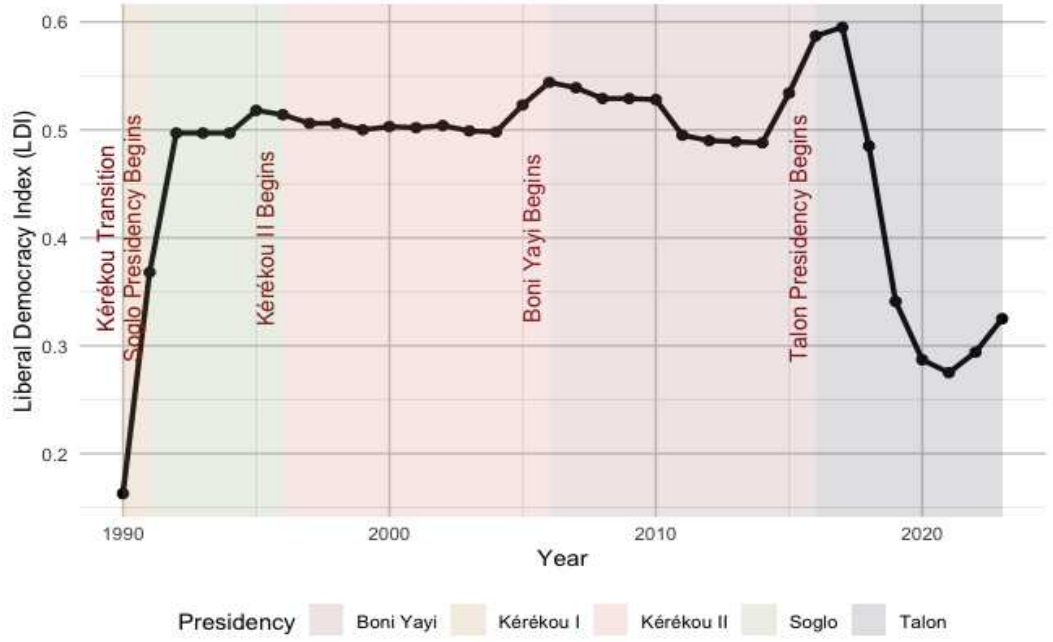


Figure 7.4. Changes in Liberal Democracy and Leadership Trends in Benin (1990-2023).
*Source*: Author's analysis.
*Notes*: Data source (LDI) = V-Dem Institute, v14.
Scale: 0-1. 0=lowest; 1=highest.

### Zambia: Michael Sata (2007-2014)

Zambia transitioned from a one-party state to a multiparty democracy following its democratic transition in 1991, marked by a peaceful transfer of power from Kenneth Kaunda's United National Independence Party (UNIP) to the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) (Cheeseman and Larmer, 2015). In so doing, Zambia emerged as a model of democratization in Africa, characterized by peaceful electoral turnovers and a robust civil society. All that dramatically changed with the election of Michael Sata and his Patriotic Front in 2011. With his populist rhetoric and promises to put the interests of ordinary Zambians first, Sata rallied a wide coalition of the urban poor, informal workers, and youth who felt alienated by the neoliberal politics of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy. His presidency presided over

an increasingly dominant executive with erosions in institutional autonomy, as Sata resorted to interventionist policies and patronage appointments.

Michael Sata's ascendency to power was embedded in his connection with the urban informal economy, especially among populations such as street vendors, bus drivers, and market traders in Zambia (Larmer and Fraser, 2007; Resnick and Thurlow, 2014). The populist nature of his discourse positioned him as a "Man of Action" who was able to meet the economic and social needs of Zambia, an image further consolidated by his performances both as District Governor of Lusaka in the 1980s and as Minister of Local Government in the 1990s (Sishuwa, 2016). Development projects, such as the flyover bridges and low-cost housing built during his tenure, lent further credibility among urban voters, who viewed him as a solution provider rather than a promoter of neoliberal policies in cahoots with the elite. So, the frequent target of Sata's rhetoric included what he termed the 'cosy' alliance between the MMD government and foreign enterprises, most of all, Chinese investors. He also criticized the unfavorable working conditions in Chinese-owned mines and the sidelining of informal traders while pledging to prioritize "Zambia for Zambians." (Resnick and Thurlow, 2014; Larmer and Fraser, 2007; Scott, 2019) That is an ethnic-populist strategy pursued by many heads of state, including Evo Morales of Bolivia and Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, through nationalist and interventionist appeals to grievances of excluded or marginalized groups (Cheeseman and Larmer, 2015).

After winning the 2011 presidential election, Sata implemented policies aimed at centralizing power within the executive. His administration was marked by heavy reliance on patronage and the consolidation of state institutions under presidential control. Party-switching, or the deliberate inducement of MPs to defect to the ruling party, further weakened parliamentary oversight. This practice, a hallmark of Zambian politics since the MMD era, was employed aggressively under the PF. Sata appointed 13 opposition MPs to government positions, effectively undermining their parties and manufacturing a parliamentary majority (Arriola et al., 2021). Sata appointed close associates and family members to key government positions. These included Guy Scott as Vice President, Alexander Chikwanda (his uncle) as Finance Minister, and Miles Sampa (his nephew) as Deputy Finance Minister (Sishuwa, 2016). Cabinet appointments extended to political allies like Wynter Kabimba as Justice Minister (Siachiwena, 2021) and members of a so-called "cartel," including Mutembo Nchito as Director of Public Prosecutions and Mumba Malila as Attorney General. These appointments entrenched loyalty to Sata within the government but also limited institutional independence. (ibid.)

Sata adopted an interventionist approach early in his presidency, reversing privatizations conducted by his predecessors. In 2011, his administration returned the Finance Bank to its previous owners, citing irregularities in its sale under the MMD government (Cheelo and Hinfelaar, 2020). Similarly, the partial privatization of Zamtel, Zambia's largest telecom

company, was reversed in 2012, with Sata's government claiming the sale to a Libyan investor was fraudulent. These actions were framed as efforts to protect Zambian interests but also concentrated economic power under the state and the executive. Sata further centralized power by establishing the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) in 2014, modeled after a parastatal from the Kaunda era. The IDC, chaired by Sata, served as an active shareholder in state-owned enterprises and absorbed agencies like the Road Development Agency (RDA) and the Public Private Partnership Unit (Hinfelaar and Sichone, 2019). These moves positioned the presidency as the locus of economic decision-making, bypassing other branches of government.

The judiciary became a prime target of executive aggrandizement. There was huge pressure on the Zambian courts from the executive, which was exacerbated by a lack of financial independence of the judiciary and a lack of security of tenure of judicial officers. One obvious act of judicial lawfare took place in 2012 when President Michael Sata suspended three judges – High Court judges Nigel Mutuna and Charles Kajimanga and Supreme Court judge Phillip Musonda – on unsubstantiated grounds. These judges sought judicial review of the president's actions, but Zambia's Supreme Court upheld Sata's decision, citing the president's constitutional powers. (Masengu, 2017) Critics argued this move undermined judicial independence and exemplified the executive's encroachment on the judiciary. Sata's government also targeted opposition figures, often using legal pretexts. The head of the United Party for National Development, Hakainde Hichilema, was arrested several times on various charges, which ranged from inciting protests to treason. While such arrests were cloaked in legalism, they were widely regarded as part of an attempt to weaken opposition ranks in advance of elections. Sata's populism was consistently at odds with his governance practices. (Fraser, 2017) However, he had promised to restrict the influence of Chinese investors, his government kept very close ties with China. Barely any weeks into his election, Sata hosted a luncheon for the Chinese Ambassador and a delegation of 150 Chinese businessmen, securing development assistance from them in terms of infrastructure projects (Leslie, 2016). These were clearly contrary to his election campaign utterances but typical of Zambia's dependence on Chinese investments. In order to maintain popular support, Sata implemented reforms that would increase disposable income, especially for formal economy workers. The 2012 national budget, presented by Finance Minister Alexander Chikwanda, included tax reductions in line with the PF manifesto. However, these reforms did little to address the structural inequalities affecting rural populations and urban informal workers, many of whom had been key to Sata's electoral success. (ibid.)

Backsliding in Zambia under Sata was less pronounced than in the other cases in the sample; nonetheless, it served as a prerequisite to the later breakdown under Lungu after Sata died in office, leaving the nation vulnerable and insecure under an acting president (see Figure 7.5).

Civil society, which had been instrumental in the democratization process of Zambia, was co-opted and repressed. Prominent activists were either absorbed into government positions or silenced through harassment and arrests (Dwyer and Zeilig, 2012). Media houses perceived to be critical of the government were targeted, further limiting avenues for accountability. The legislature also struggled to provide effective oversight as party switching and patronage appointments eroded its independence. Sata's consolidation of power weakened democratic institutions and fostered a climate of executive dominance.

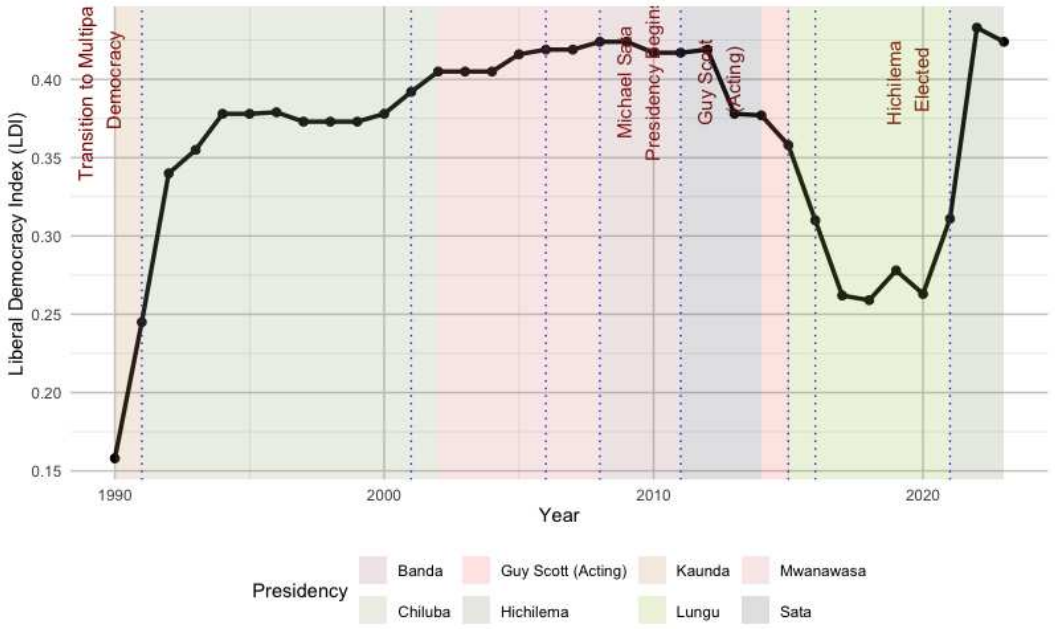


Figure 7.5. Changes in Liberal Democracy and Leadership Trends in Zambia (1990-2023).
*Source*: Author's analysis.
*Notes*: Data source (LDI) = V-Dem Institute, v14.
Scale: 0-1. 0=lowest; 1=highest.

### Bolivia: Evo Morales (2005-2019)

Evo Morales's election in 2005 was a watershed moment for Bolivia. A poor indigenous farmer by origin, Morales rose to prominence in the 1980s as a union leader for coca farmers in El Chapare who resisted U.S.-backed eradication efforts. His leadership of the *Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS),* a coalition of miners, farmers, and leftist urban groups, amplified his appeal as a populist figure who promised to address entrenched inequalities and foreign exploitation of Bolivia's resources (Blair and Collyns, 2019). Morales's rise was fueled by mass dissatisfaction with neoliberal policies, the corruption of Bolivia's European-descended elites, and the inability of former President Carlos Mesa (2003-2005) to mediate between the left-indigenous bloc and the eastern-bourgeois bloc divided along class, race, and regional lines (Webber, 2010). These factors coupled with structural inequalities and political unrest, laid the foundation for Morales's ascent as Bolivia's first indigenous president in December 2005.

The Gas War of 2003–2005, during which the armed forces killed over 60 protesters opposing natural gas sales to the U.S. via Chile, discredited Bolivia's ruling class and created a political vacuum. From this division and failed mediation, the MAS came to articulate the left-indigenous bloc and parts of the middle class that were being dislocated with promises to "end the colonial state" (Blair and Collyns, 2019). Under the leadership of Evo Morales, MAS took advantage of the massive frustration over neoliberal policies and the very long marginalization of indigenous people. The MAS was committed to confronting the deep-seated oligarchic structures and to the rights of Bolivia's majority indigenous population. Yet, it is important to underline that Morales, and the MAS did not emerge in complete opposition to the neoliberal framework established by previous regimes. During Mesa's presidency, Morales engaged in strategic collaboration with the neoliberal administration, leveraging his growing popularity to influence policy while positioning himself as the primary alternative to the collapsing government. This relationship highlights the reformist – not revolutionary – trajectory that the MAS would later adopt upon assuming power. (Webber, 2010) Morales won the 2005 election with more than 50% of the vote – a historic mandate for a country usually beset by political instability. His victory marked a new era of indigenous representation, plurinational governance, and anti-imperialist politics. Morales leveraged a commodity boom to nationalize Bolivia's oil and gas sectors, funding social programs that reduced poverty from 59 percent to 35 percent and transformed Bolivia into one of South America's fastest-growing economies (Blair and Collyns, 2019). These achievements solidified Morales's popularity and ensured repeated electoral victories in 2009 and 2014. His tenure ultimately devolved into competitive authoritarianism, as Morales and the MAS engaged in institutional capture and social silencing by systematically skewing electoral, judicial, and media arenas. Morales undermined democratic norms, institutional autonomy, and political pluralism. (Cameron, 2018; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, 2015)

While Morales's early reforms expanded Indigenous and women's representation and restructured Bolivia as a plurinational state, granting official status to 36 indigenous languages, these initiatives increasingly became tools for consolidating MAS dominance. The MAS has systematically politicized Bolivia's electoral management body (EMB), undermining its autonomy and ensuring pro-incumbent biases. For example, changes in legislation allowed MAS allies to capture the *Tribunal Supremo Electoral* (TSE), which by 2019 saw the EMB become 63 percent less independent than previously (Sánchez-Sibony, 2021). These manipulations led to the contentious 2019 election, where irregularities, including an unexplained stop in vote counting, led the Organization of American States (OAS) to accuse fraud. The resultant protests and violence constituted a collapse of public confidence in the electoral process (Cameron, 2018). Morales practiced "autocratic legalism" to get around institutional constraints. In 2014, having won a third term, Morales attempted to seek a fourth, even though the Bolivian constitution forbids it. A 2016 referendum narrowly defeated this

move, but Morales's MAS-dominated legislature allowed the Constitutional Tribunal to abolish term limits in 2017 on grounds that they violated Morales's human rights. This abuse of constitutional frameworks undermined the rule of law and institutional integrity (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, 2015). The MAS packed key institutions with loyalists, ensuring judicial and legislative compliance with Morales's agenda. Judges and electoral officials were appointed from MAS-drawn shortlists, enabling the party to weaponize legal systems against opponents. Anti-corruption laws were applied retroactively to disqualify rivals, further twisting political competition (Sánchez-Sibony, 2021). This institutional reorganization secured the MAS hegemony at all levels of government.

The Morales administration used laws like the Antiracism Law of 2010 to cut down civil society. This law, though progressive in nature, was used to suppress dissent, slap defamation lawsuits on journalists, and limit opposition movements. The regulatory pressures focused on NGOs that were critical of the government, shrinking civic space and fostering self-censorship among activists. (Cameron, 2018) Morales's government increasingly suppressed dissent through harassment, intimidation, and arrests of opposition figures. Peaceful protesters against projects like the "Tipnis highway[124]" faced violent crackdowns, and electoral rivals were systematically excluded through judicial persecution. These tactics alienated indigenous groups, environmental activists, and urban middle-class voters who had supported Morales. The MAS used its control of state resources to gain editorial control of several major media outlets. It silenced independent journalists with defamation suits and economic pressures, allowing pro-government narratives to dominate the airwaves. By 2019, Bolivia had dropped to 113th in the World Press Freedom Index, which reflected Morales's success in limiting impartial information (Sánchez-Sibony 2021). The fraud of the 2019 election was the culmination of Morales's authoritarian tendencies. When vote counting was paused under suspicious circumstances, the OAS reported "clear manipulation," triggering mass protests that escalated into violent clashes. Morales initially agreed to fresh elections but faced mounting pressure from a police mutiny, a general strike, and a "suggestion" to resign from Bolivia's top general (Cameron, 2018). Morales fled to Mexico, branding the events a coup, while Bolivia descended into political turmoil under a self-declared interim government led by Jeanine Áñez (Figure 7.6).

In sum, while initially hailed for championing indigenous rights and economic reform, Morales used Bolivia's institutions to entrench MAS dominance and chip away at democratic norms.

[124] The Villa Tunari - San Ignacio de Moxos Highway is a development project in the construction of a highway through the Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS), which is a protected area and the home of many indigenous peoples. Protests by TIPNIS were dealt with through violent government repression (Delgado, 2017).

The manipulation of electoral, judicial, and media systems only testifies to the fragility of democratic governance in the face of autocratic expansion.

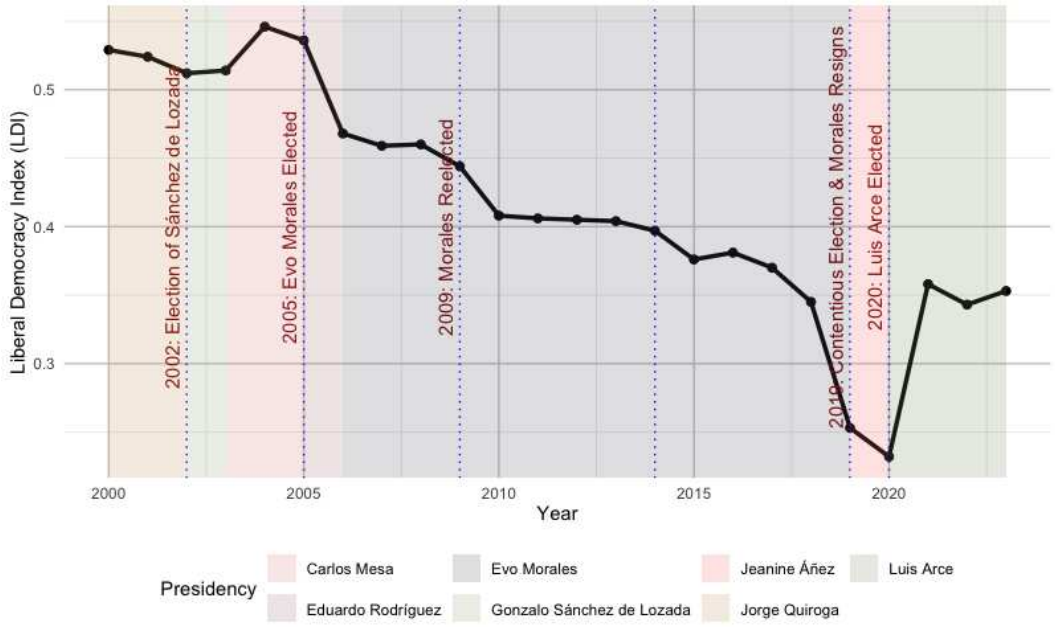


Figure 7.6. Changes in Liberal Democracy and Leadership Trends in Bolivia (2000-2023).
*Source*: Author's analysis.
*Notes*: Data source (LDI) = V-Dem Institute, v14.
Scale: 0-1. 0=lowest; 1=highest.

### Sri Lanka: Gotabaya Rajapaksa (2019-2022)

Gotabaya Rajapaksa's election as Sri Lanka's president in November 2019 marked the return of the Rajapaksa family to the center of power, driven by a strong nationalist sentiment following the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks. His campaign focused on promises to strengthen national security, restore economic stability, and uphold the Sinhala-Buddhist majority's dominance, resonating deeply with a public disillusioned by prior governance failures (Fernando, 2020; Karcher and Kapur, 2022). Shortly after taking office, Gotabaya appointed his brother, Mahinda Rajapaksa, as Prime Minister, consolidating familial rule and setting the stage for sweeping changes in the country's governance (de Votta, 2021).

The return of the Rajapaksas ushered in what Neil de Votta (2021) called a "militarized ethnocracy," which came with dire implications for Sri Lanka's democracy. Gotabaya, relying on military allies while advancing ethnic majoritarianism himself, further entrenched authoritarian government. The COVID-19 pandemic provided further opportunities for consolidation, as emergency measures were used to undermine any semblance of checks and balances. Structural factors, that is, the institutional system of government, more precisely the centralized semi-presidential system introduced in 1978, coupled with entrenched patterns of ethno-nationalism, were exploited for the entrenchment of majoritarian rule. The reinstallation of family dominance sidelined opposition voices and marginalized minority

groups, further eroding democratic norms. These developments reflected a broader pattern of institutional decline, as military-backed governance and ideological alignment with Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism dismantled avenues for pluralism and democratic accountability (Fuglerud, 2020; Fonseka et al., 2021; de Votta, 2022).

Rajapaksa manipulated political structures to consolidate his power, beginning with the dissolution of parliament in March 2020, six months before its term expired. The subsequent postponement of elections due to the COVID-19 pandemic created a period of unchecked executive authority, with no parliamentary oversight of the president's actions during critical months (de Votta, 2021). Once elections were held in August 2020, his party alliance secured a near two-thirds majority in parliament, enabling the rapid consolidation of executive power through the 20th Amendment to the constitution (Wickramasinghe, 2021). This amendment subordinated the prime minister to the president, weakened parliamentary independence, and centralized authority, exemplifying tactics of creating supermajorities and intra-elite coalition-building to secure dominance. The Rajapaksa administration exploited legal frameworks to weaken institutional checks. The 20th Amendment epitomized autocratic legalism by granting the president extensive powers to appoint justices, dissolve the legislature prematurely, and declare emergencies unilaterally (Gomez, 2022). These changes mirrored abusive constitutional borrowing, as Rajapaksa leveraged existing legal norms to institutionalize hyper-presidentialism, curtailing the independence of the judiciary, legislature, and accountability commissions. Institutional reorganization under Rajapaksa ensured loyalty across key state functions. The president appointed military allies and family members to critical positions, consolidating control over the administration. Military officers were installed as task force coordinators in all districts during the pandemic, sidelining civilian authorities and reducing transparency (Fonseka et al., 2021). The Ministry of Defense absorbed oversight of civilian policing and NGO registration, further centralizing executive influence. Additionally, Gotabaya empowered agencies like the National Operation Center for COVID-19 under direct military leadership, effectively reorienting the government’s administrative machinery to serve his authoritarian agenda. The Rajapaksa government restricted civic space by enforcing archaic legal instruments like the colonial-era Quarantine and Prevention of Diseases Ordinance of 1897 to suppress protests and civil society activities. Broad public health mandates were exploited to stifle opposition rallies and enforce restrictions on NGO operations (Ganeshathasan, 2021). NGOs faced heightened surveillance and bureaucratic obstacles, further limiting their activities. Suppressing dissent became a hallmark of Rajapaksa’s tenure. Protesters and activists were routinely subjected to intimidation, arbitrary arrests, and violent crackdowns. For example, peaceful protests against ethnic and religious discrimination, such as the 2021 Pottuvil-to-Polikandy march, faced surveillance, court orders, and police harassment (Fonseka, 2024).

Under Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Sri Lanka witnessed executive aggrandizement through the strategic implementation of institutional capture and social silencing (cf. Figure 7.7). Manipulation of political structures, such as the dissolution of parliament and constitutional engineering, enabled the centralization of executive authority. At the same time, suppressing dissent and impeding civic space limited opposition and perpetuated the state's control over public discourse. These tactics undermined democratic norms, entrenched majoritarian rule, and deepened the governance crisis of the country, ultimately fueling widespread protests that led to Rajapaksa's resignation in 2022.

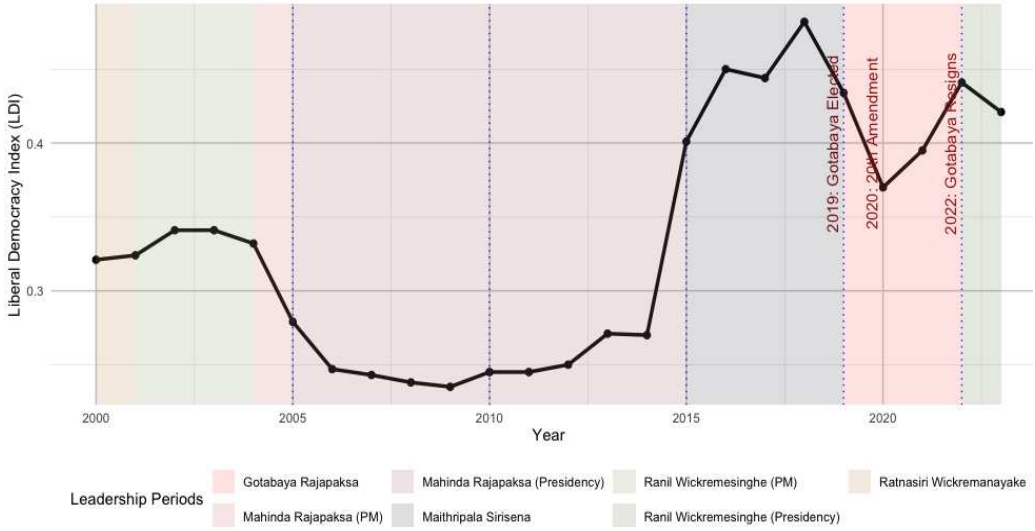


Figure 7.7. Changes in Liberal Democracy and Leadership Trends in Sri Lanka (2000-2023).
*Source*: Author's analysis.
*Notes*: Data source (LDI) = V-Dem Institute, v14. Scale: 0-1. 0=lowest; 1=highest.

## 7.3. Comparative Findings

Neither of the presented cases is an anomaly as a declining third-wave democracy in their respective regions. Over the past two decades, all world regions have experienced various episodes of autocratization (Nord et al., 2024). Yet, the the degree of democratic erosion differs from one country to another. Additionally, an in-depth examination of various cases of executive overreach in third-wave democracies reveals a substantial variation in both tactics and outcomes (see also Mainwaring and Bizzarro, 2019; Laebens, 2023; Wunsch and Blanchard, 2023). In short, the regression of electoral third-wave democracies through executive aggrandizement produced several outcomes (see Table 7.4). Some experienced a breakdown of democracy, as seen in the cases of Benin and Turkey, which are both ongoing episodes of aggrandizement, as well as Zambia. In Benin, after President Talon introduced new electoral rules and a stark crackdown on his political opponents, he was able to consolidate his power in 2021, enabling him to rule at least until 2026. Major democracy indices reflect this shift, downgrading Benin to "partly free" (Freedom House, 2020), describing it as an electoral autocracy since 2019 (V-Dem), or sliding from a "defective democracy" into a "moderate

autocracy" (Bertelsmann Transformation Index, 2020, 2024). In Turkey, following the Gezi Protests in the summer of 2013, and "the outbreak of a politically explosive corruption scandal that tainted then-Prime Minister Erdogan in late 2013 have proven to be a watershed moment to pinpoint the exact timeline for Turkey's democratic breakdown" (Erdem, 2018, p.5). The failed coup attempt in 2016 then provided the perfect pretext for a massive power grab. By framing the purge as a necessary step to restore order, Erdoğan consolidated control over key institutions and implemented constitutional reforms that eliminated checks on his authority, before amending the constitution to introduce a presidential system. This move gave Erdogan massive executive powers. (Eissenstat, 2017; Gandhi, 2019) Since then, Turkey has experienced continued and worsening restrictions on freedoms of assembly, association, and expression, and political interference in the electoral process (Freedom House, 2024).

The political landscape in Zambia changed with the election victory of Michael Sata's Patriotic Front (PF) in 2011. Sata's populist rhetoric and chauvinism, centered around placing the interests of ordinary Zambians first, unified a broad coalition of the urban poor, informal workers, and disgruntled youth who felt let down by the neoliberal policies of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD). However, his presidency marked increasing executive dominance and institutional erosion. Sata used interventionist policies and patronage to consolidate power, co-opting civil society and repressing dissent. Activists were silenced or absorbed into government roles, and critical media outlets were targeted. Legislative oversight declined as party switching and patronage undermined independence, leading to weakened democratic institutions and a democratic breakdown by 2013. After Sata died in 2014 and Edgar Lungu was elected to president, authoritarian consolidation continued until the election of opposition candidate Hakainde Hichilema in August 2021 (Resnick, 2022). Others were followed by a democratic comeback as seen in the case of Bolivia (Laebens, 2023). While mass protests and violence erupted after the disputed 2019 elections, which ultimately forced Morales out of office and into exile, new general elections held in 2020, the return of the MAS to power, and subnational elections held in 2021 were credible and fair, and the results were accepted, ending the crisis of democracy in Bolivia. Nevertheless, the underlying causes of the political violence of 2019 and the exacerbating social and political divisions continue to pose a threat to the country's political stability. (Freedom House, 2024; BTI, 2024)

Others experienced "near misses" (Ginsburg and Huq, 2018), where democracy weakened, although backsliding was ultimately halted as observed in Brazil. In Brazil, far-right populist Jair Bolsonaro did much damage to the institutional setting and the rights of thousands of Brazilians, where marginalized communities were detrimentally affected. Yet, "the institutional elements of Brazil's political system, especially its consensual features – multipartyism, a strong legislature and judicial system, federalism, and a historical legacy of resilience – provide(d) antidotes against populism's illiberal and antidemocratic initiatives"

(Melo and Perreira, 2024, p.18) Bolsonaro's illiberal tactics never – in contrast to Benin, Zambia, or Turkey – led to a breakdown of democracy. Instead, Brazilians fed up with poor economic growth, increased food insecurity, and a disastrous handling of the COVID-19 pandemic (Natal and Schreiber, 2022), voted him out of office in 2022 and, instead, elected center-left Luis Inácio Lula Da Silva (president from 2003–2010). Lula Da Silva, since assuming office, has "fulfilled the main mission entrusted to him by the electorate of Brazil. (…) Today, the country has settled into a semblance of peace. Democracy has regained its momentum and institutional normality reigns after the turbulent four years of the far-right administration led by Jair Bolsonaro" (Gortázar, 2024).

Sri Lanka is experiencing an ongoing episode of democratic decline without a full regime reversal. While democracy under Gotabaya Rajapaksa (2019–2022) did not entirely collapse, democratic backsliding has continued under President Ranil Wickremesinghe (2022–2024). It remains uncertain whether newly elected President Anura Kumara Dissanayake can reverse this trajectory of democratic erosion. Unlike Bolsonaro, the Rajapaksas were ousted by nonviolent protests. In May 2022, these protests forced Gotabaya's brothers – Mahinda Rajapaksa, then prime minister, and Basil Rajapaksa, then finance minister – to resign from their official positions. On July 9, 2022, hundreds of thousands gathered in the national capital for peaceful demonstrations. When protesters marched on the presidential office and residence, Gotabaya fled mere minutes before the crowds arrived. That evening, the speaker of parliament announced that Gotabaya had agreed to step down (de Votta, 2022). Since then, Sri Lanka has made notable economic progress. However, democratic backsliding has persisted, as President Wickremesinghe curtailed civil rights and sought to postpone elections (BTI, 2024; Freedom House, 2024). Whether Sri Lanka can halt its democratic decline hinges on the leadership and policies of its newly elected president[125].

Table 7.4. Outcomes of Episodes of Executive Aggrandizement.

| Country | Outcome | Brief Description |
|---|---|---|
| Benin | Ongoing democratic erosion | Consolidation of power by President Talon through electoral rule changes and political crackdowns. |
| Turkey | Ongoing democratic erosion | Consolidation of power by Erdoğan post-2013 coups and 2016 coup attempt, with restrictions on freedoms. |
| Zambia | Democratic breakdown, then recovery (2021) | Institutional erosion and repression under Sata (and later Lugu); rebound with Hichilema's election in 2021. |
| Bolivia | Democratic recovery | Crisis after disputed 2019 elections resolved by fair elections in 2020, though rifts remain. |
| Brazil | Democratic recovery | Bolsonaro's illiberal tactics did not result in a breakdown; democracy restored under Lula in 2022. |
| Sri Lanka | Ongoing democratic erosion | Nonviolent protests ousted Rajapaksa; civil rights curtailed under Wickremesinghe. |

*Source*: The author.

[125] Sri Lanka held presidential elections in September 2024. Anura Kumara Dissanayake (National People's Power), a left-wing politician won the 2024 presidential elections in a second round of voting (no candidate won a majority in the first round) and assumed office end of September of the same year. Ranil Wickremesinghe was eliminated after the first round of voting. (Perera and Guinto, 2024)

In terms of tactics of institutional capture and social silencing, the incumbents have shown some similarities but also striking differences. To be sure, institutional capture involves the manipulation, engineering, and reorganization of institutions to consolidate executive power. First, all incumbents strategically built coalitions to secure legislative or parliamentary dominance. Evo Morales strengthened alliances with the MAS coalition to unify the left-indigenous bloc and secure repeated electoral victories through mass appeal. Gotabaya Rajapaksa leveraged Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism to create a near two-thirds parliamentary majority, enabling the 20th Amendment to the constitution. Patrice Talon marginalized opposition parties by introducing restrictive "Certificates of Conformity," ensuring legislative dominance through pro-government coalitions. Michael Sata used patronage to co-opt opposition MPs, appointing 13 to key positions to secure parliamentary control. Erdoğan formed broad coalitions during AKP's early years, later using electoral system manipulation (e.g., high thresholds) to marginalize smaller parties, especially the pro-Kurdish HDP. Jair Bolsonaro aligned with centrist parties (centrão) despite anti-establishment rhetoric, though his alliances were less stable compared to the others. Unique patterns can be attributed to Rajapaksa, Erdoğan, and Morales who pursued constitutional changes enabled by parliamentary dominance. Erdoğan's 2017 referendum shifted Turkey from a parliamentary to a presidential system, while Rajapaksa's 20th Amendment centralized Sri Lanka's executive power. Talon bypassed supermajorities by excluding credible opposition. In addition, Talon's electoral reforms were the most explicit in disenfranchising opposition, while Morales and Erdoğan used legal ambiguities to influence elections. Bolsonaro's attempts to manipulate electoral were thwarted.

Second, all incumbents utilized legal frameworks to legitimize their actions while undermining democratic norms. Morales nullified term limits by framing his right to run for re-election as a human rights issue despite a failed referendum. Rajapaksa used the 20th Amendment to weaken checks and balances, granting himself unilateral powers over judicial and legislative appointments. Talon established the CRIET to persecute opposition figures under the guise of anti-corruption measures. Sata exploited constitutional ambiguities to suspend judges and limit judicial review. Erdoğan packed courts with loyalists while criminalizing dissent under broad anti-terrorism laws. Bolsonaro weaponized the judiciary against dissent but faced constraints from Brazil's fragmented system. However, there are also noticeable distinctive patterns. Both Erdoğan and Morales leaned heavily on constitutional reforms to bypass institutional constraints. In contrast, Talon and Rajapaksa employed amendments rather than constitutional reforms that disguised authoritarian measures as necessary legal reforms. While Morales, Erdoğan, and Sata reshaped the judiciary, Talon's use of the CRIET stands out for explicitly targeting opposition figures under pseudo-legal justifications.

Third, in all cases loyalty appointments were widespread, with each leader restructuring agencies to ensure compliance. Morales politicized Bolivia's Electoral Management Body (EMB) to favor the MAS, reducing its independence by 63 percent. Rajapaksa appointed military allies and family members to critical state roles. Talon replaced Constitutional Court members with loyalists, ensuring control over judicial interpretations. Sata appointed close associates and family members to critical government and economic positions. Erdoğan purged thousands of civil servants and military personnel post-2016 coup attempt, restructuring Turkey's bureaucracy and local governance. Bolsonaro militarized governance through appointments in law enforcement and federal agencies, though resistance within the military limited his consolidation. Noticeable differences include the way the incumbents used their security forces and the local governance structures. While Erdoğan and Rajapaksa used security forces as political tools post-crisis (coup and pandemic), Bolsonaro's attempts were met with military resistance. Interestingly, Erdoğan replaced Kurdish mayors with AKP caretakers, undermining local representation. Talon focused on centralizing governance to control economic resources like the port of Cotonou.

Social silencing refers to suppressing dissent and shaping public discourse to insulate the regime from opposition. In all six cases, autocratic legalism was utilized to intimidate civil society and the media. Morales used laws like the Antiracism Law to intimidate NGOs and opposition movements. Rajapaksa leveraged colonial-era laws to restrict NGO activity and surveillance of civil society. Talon enforced NGO restrictions and restricted union activities. Sata coopted activists into government roles or silenced them through intimidation. Erdoğan imposed funding restrictions on NGOs, particularly Kurdish or foreign-supported organizations. Bolsonaro especially targeted environmental and Indigenous advocacy groups by restricting foreign funding, which they heavily rely on. Interestingly, all erosion agents also initiated different harassment strategies and oversaw crackdowns on protests. Morales targeted peaceful Indigenous protests and arrested opposition figures. Rajapaksa cracked down violently on ethnic and religious dissent, particularly the 2021 Pottuvil-to-Polikandy march. Talon suppressed protests against electoral laws using police violence. Sata arrested opposition leaders under vague charges. Erdoğan suppressed dissent during events like the Gezi Park protests and post-coup purges. Bolsonaro conducted arbitrary arrests during anti-government protests, though these actions faced judiciary pushback. In addition, in all six cases, narratives leveraging socio-political cleavages have been heavily used to control critical media and journalists. Morales secured editorial control over media, silencing independent journalism. Rajapaksa dominated state media and suppressed dissenting coverage. Talon used media shutdowns and misinformation to discredit the opposition. Sata targeted critical media outlets and journalists. Erdoğan controlled state media and censored online platforms, expanding pro-AKP narratives. Bolsonaro leveraged social media for disinformation campaigns, focusing on polarizing narratives during the COVID-19 pandemic. In sum, the six

incumbents' utilization of tactics of institutional capture and social silencing reveals overarching similarities and localized adaptions. All cases demonstrated manipulation of political structures and reorganization of institutions, with varying emphasis on electoral systems (Talon) or judicial reshaping (Erdoğan and Morales). State-controlled narratives and authoritarian enforcement were universal, but leaders like Bolsonaro relied more heavily on digital disinformation than others.

Taken together, the six cases of executive aggrandizement under Morales, Rajapaksa, Talon, Sata, Erdoğan, and Bolsonaro reveal a particular relationship between preventive tactics (proactively reducing threats to power), reactive tactics (reacting to crises or opposition challenges) and perceived threat perception of the incumbent. Understanding the sequencing and emphasis on reactive versus preventive strategies offers insights into the timing, conditions, and trajectory of institutional capture and social silencing in these regimes. To be sure, reactive tactics are employed in response to immediate challenges, such as political crises, opposition movements, or societal unrest. These tactics often involve suppressing dissent, reshaping institutions to neutralize threats, and framing actions as necessary to address instability or maintain order. Preventive tactics, on the other hand, are employed to preemptively weaken opposition, entrench executive power, and avoid potential threats to authority. These tactics often include systemic institutional manipulation, long-term planning, and gradual erosion of democratic norms. In the case of Bolivia during Evo Morales's presidency, widespread protests and allegations of election fraud in 2019 triggered an abrupt pause in vote counting, followed by irregularities denounced by the Organization of American States (OAS). This was a reactive attempt to secure electoral victory. Morales's use of the Constitutional Tribunal to nullify term limits in 2017 also reflects a reaction to his loss in the 2016 referendum. While initially effective, reactive tactics culminated in public distrust and escalated protests, leading to Morales's ouster. In contrast, the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks triggered the electoral victory of Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Rajapaksa's nationalist platform and subsequent militarization of governance capitalized on public fear following the terrorist attacks. His use of emergency measures during the COVID-19 pandemic to centralize power and bypass parliament reflects reactive strategies justified by crises. While effective in consolidating power initially, reactive overreach contributed to widespread protests during the 2022 economic crisis, culminating in his resignation. In Turkey, in stark contrast, the 2016 coup attempt triggered Erdoğan's purges of the judiciary, military, and civil service, reconfiguring Turkey's institutions to eliminate dissent and ensure loyalty. These reactive measures were justified under national security concerns. In contrast to Morales and Rajapaksa, Erdoğan successfully consolidated power through reactive purges, which enabled long-term institutional restructuring. In Brazil, public disillusionment with traditional parties after the Lava Jato scandal triggered an amplification of populist rhetoric, targeting the judiciary with accusations of bias and leveraging social media disinformation during the

pandemic to control narratives. Despite significant efforts, however, these reactive measures were constrained by institutional pushback and Brazil's decentralized federal structure. In the case of preventive tactics, Patrice Talon (Benin) implemented restrictive electoral reforms from 2016 onward, such as the Certificate of Conformity, to bar opposition parties from elections and stacked the Constitutional Court with loyalists. These measures were designed to eliminate political competition before it could materialize. Such preventive tactics ensured sustained dominance over Benin's political system, but they also contributed to declining voter participation and growing public disenchantment. In the case of Michael Sata in Zambia, his reliance on patronage and co-optation of opposition MPs aimed to build a parliamentary majority preemptively reduced the likelihood of effective legislative resistance. His appointments of loyalists to key positions in the judiciary and government further insulated his regime from accountability. These preventive measures secured temporary dominance but eroded democratic norms, contributing to institutional fragility after Sata's tenure. In Turkey, even before the 2016 coup, Erdoğan pursued gradual preventive measures, such as packing courts with AKP loyalists and introducing higher parliamentary thresholds to weaken smaller parties. The 2017 constitutional referendum consolidated executive power. These preventive tactics laid the groundwork for Erdoğan's long-term consolidation, allowing him to respond decisively with reactive purges after the coup attempt.

In sum, empirical findings suggest a context-dependent relationship between threat perception and the deployment of reactive and preventive tactics in cases of executive aggrandizement in electoral third-wave democracies. While heightened threat perception often correlates with a preference for reactive tactics, such as suppressing dissent or leveraging crises to consolidate power, preventive tactics typically reflect a strategic approach to mitigate potential threats before they materialize (see Table 7.5). However, this relationship does not imply mono-causality nor universally applicability, even in seemingly analogous contextual conditions. Variations in institutional frameworks, societal resilience, and leadership styles influence the sequencing, intensity, and outcomes of these tactics, stressing the need for nuanced, case-specific analysis rather than deterministic assumptions.

Table 7.5. Cross-Case Findings: Relationship between Threat Perception and Tactics.

| | | Tactics | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Reactive | Preventive |
| Perceived Threats | Horizontal | Purges | Stacking and packing; reforms; laws |
| | Vertical | Electoral manipulation; disinformation | Electoral manipulation; media control; |
| | Diagonal | Suppression social opposition | Suppression political opposition |

*Source*: The author.

All in all, by examining Indonesia under Widodo, the Philippines under Duterte, Thailand under Thaksin, and discussing insights from six additional cases (Morales in Bolivia,

Rajapaksa in Sri Lanka, Talon in Benin, Sata in Zambia, Erdoğan in Turkey, and Bolsonaro in Brazil), four distinct patterns and lessons emerge.

First, crises often serve as turning points, enabling leaders to justify rapid and sweeping measures that might otherwise face resistance. For example, Erdoğan's post-coup purges enabled him to consolidate the judiciary and security forces more thoroughly than preventive tactics alone could have achieved. In Sri Lanka, Rajapaksa's emergency powers during COVID-19 allowed him to bypass institutional checks and centralize governance. Morales's electoral crisis highlighted the limitations of preventive tactics, as reactive measures like vote manipulation undermined public trust. In Indonesia, Widodo's reliance on preventive measures such as the ITE Law) limited overt crises, but his reactive prosecution of dissenters during protests demonstrated how controlled repression could stabilize the regime. Duterte's Philippines was distinct in the beginning with crisis-driven reactive tactics, leveraging fear to establish control, but his inability to institutionalize preventive measures for long-term stability ultimately constrained his consolidation.

Second, long-term success in autocratization depends on establishing systemic control before crises emerge. Talon's preventive reforms reduced opposition capacity, ensuring that no major challenge could disrupt his rule. Sata's patronage networks minimized legislative resistance, although they eventually strained Zambia's political system. Erdoğan's gradual preventive measures created a resilient system that weathered significant reactive shocks like the 2016 coup. In Thailand, Thaksin employed preventive measures such as media control and economic centralization to weaken opposition and insulate his regime. However, reactive measures like emergency decrees to suppress protests eventually backfired, leading to his ouster. Widodo's Indonesia also exemplifies effective preventive tactics, with legal reforms such as the ITE Law and strategic appointments undermining opposition and limiting resistance without relying on overt violence.

Third, leaders who failed to combine preventive and reactive measures faced constraints and were unable to gain long-term advantages. For example, while Bolsonaro was adept at reactive disinformation campaigns, his inability to establish preventive institutional control through the judiciary and Congress limited his consolidation. In the case of Evo Morales, the preventive politicization of electoral bodies was undone by public backlash when reactive vote manipulation undermined legitimacy. In the case of Turkey, preventive reforms laid the foundation for systemic control, while reactive measures such as the post-coup purges, allowed Erdoğan to consolidate power during a crisis. In Sri Lanka, Rajapaksa was initially successful in exploiting crisis, for example, the post-Easter Sunday and COVID-19 emergency measures, excessive reliance on reactive tactics during the 2022 economic crisis alienated the public and triggered his downfall. In Duterte's Philippines, the heavy emphasis on reactive violence without sustained preventive groundwork limited his long-term consolidation.

Fourth, the temporal sequencing of tactics seems to be a crucial element of executive aggrandizement in terms of the long-term sustainability of executive power concentration. Preventive strategies build a strong foundation for autocratization and enable leaders to weather crises. Reactive-first strategies exploit immediate crises effectively but often fail to ensure sustained consolidation due to insufficient institutional control. However, leaders adapt their strategies to domestic conditions, crisis contexts, and institutional resistance. For instance, in Brazil, Bolsonaro's reactive disinformation campaigns were limited by the decentralized nature of Brazil's federal system and judicial pushback while Thaksin's Thailand demonstrated that preventive tactics could stabilize regimes temporarily, but reliance on reactive measures in times of unrest could exacerbate resistance.

Overall, leaders like Erdoğan, who seamlessly combine preventive and reactive tactics, achieve sustained control, while those who rely excessively on one approach face significant resistance. Erdoğan's case exemplifies this dynamic. However, the overreliance on reactive tactics often backfires by exacerbating unrest. Rajapaksas and Morales's reliance on reactive measures during crises eventually undermined their regimes. Preventive tactics tend to erode long-term democratic norms but cannot guarantee indefinite dominance, as seen in Benin (Talon) or Zambia (Sata) where public discontent grew in response to preventive tactics (see Table 7.6).

Table 7.6. Summary: Cross Case Comparison of Tactics vs. Outcomes.

| Tactics / Outcomes | Strong Consolidation | Medium Consolidation | Failed Consolidation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Preventive-Dominant | | Talon (Benin), Sata (Zambia) | Thaksin (Thailand) |
| Reactive-Dominant | | Duterte (Philippines) | Rajapaksa (Sri Lanka), Morales (Bolivia), Bolsonaro (Brazil) |
| Balanced (Preventive + Reactive) | Erdoğan (Turkey)* | Widodo (Indonesia) | - |

*Source*: The author.
*Notes*: *post-coup attempt actions were also reactive but combined with a preventive base.

# Part IV.
*Conclusion*

# 8. Conclusion

## 8.1. Summary of Findings

A key critique of autocratization research lies with the theoretical and empirical preoccupation with executive aggrandizement, more specifically with political actors, especially incumbents as erosion agents (Bajpai and Kureshi, 2022). However, studying both executive aggrandizement and democratically elected leaders aggrandizing remain an important part of scholarship when looking into the theoretical advancement of recent research and the empirical reality of autocratization affecting democracies, it becomes clear that the majority of cases of democratic decline within already existing democracies are cases of executive aggrandizement. In a recent publication, Croissant and Tomini (2024) have inter alia argued that future studies on autocratization must focus on the "analysis of causal mechanisms," and "the identification of the varieties of autocratization models" as previous studies lack "causal relationships related to explanations or consequences of autocratization." (p.13). From an empirical perspective, Laebens (2023), for example, identified 26 cases of executive aggrandizement in democracies worldwide between 1989 and 2019. In addition, democratic decline or erosion also has many real-life implications: For example, democratically elected leaders undermining the very core principles of what makes a democracy democratic show us that agency remains a critical element when it comes to understanding mechanisms of democratic erosion. Building on these findings, my dissertation has focused on the interaction of agency and structural conditions of democratic decline rather than solely focusing on the role of incumbents in autocratization processes – although they play – together with institutions and structural conditions – the main role, guided by four research questions:

*A. How do incumbents in Southeast Asia's third-wave democracies erode accountability mechanisms to consolidate executive power?*

*B. Which specific strategies do incumbents employ to undermine horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability in Southeast Asia's third-wave democracies?*

*C. What are the consequences of these strategies for democratic governance?*

*D. How do varying socio-political or structural-institutional contexts shape the deployment of these strategies?*

Through these guiding research questions, I have been able to explore how aspiring autocrats exploit the inherent structural and institutional complexities and vulnerabilities within the democratic systems of third-wave democracies to dismantle democratic safeguards. More broadly, this connects to the work of Ding and Slater (2021), who conceptualize democratic erosion as an interplay between authoritarian-minded leaders and the institutions they seek to transform, highlighting the endogenous nature of democratic decline.

In my research, I also trace sequences of institutional changes, analyzing both their temporal progression and their causal relationships. However, I also pay attention to reactive tactics of erosion that go beyond institutional manipulation and take more aggressive, non-institutional forms, such as the use of state violence. These reactive tactics highlight how democratic erosion does not always unfold through gradual institutional decay but can also involve more abrupt and forceful methods aimed at suppressing opposition and civil society, thereby consolidating authoritarian control. By incorporating these reactive tactics into the analysis, I recognize that democratic backsliding can be both a strategic, incremental process and a more direct, coercive one when certain threats emerge. This broader conceptualization of erosion aligns with core arguments from studies on state repression in autocracies (e.g., De Mesquita et al., 2003; Davenport, 2007a, b, c,) and highlights that autocratizers can shift between institutional manipulation and (overt) aggressive tactics, depending on the threat perception of the incumbent and his government but also institutional and structural preconditions. It highlights the importance of understanding not only how institutions are weakened over time but also how (extra-)legal measures are deployed as part of the erosion process. This dual focus on (non-)institutional tactics contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of democratic erosion. While institutional changes often create the legal and procedural framework for autocratic consolidation, the use of state violence and other extra-institutional measures reveal the extent to which erosion agents are willing to undermine democratic principles in pursuit of power. Consequently, this approach broadens the scope of how we analyze erosion sequences, allowing for a more nuanced exploration of the various methods employed by erosion agents to dismantle democracy. Broadly building on Coppedge et al. (2022), I have thus approached these sequences not as a linear progression of events but as a dynamic process where (extra)institutional change is often the result of the interactions between erosion agents and opposition forces, as well as between erosion agents and the institutional frameworks themselves. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how erosion progresses, depending on the relationship between actors (state/non-state) and structural-institutional arrangements. The present study offers a more holistic view of democratic backsliding by examining the purposeful institutional changes made by erosion agents and how these changes shape the capacity of the political and social opposition to maneuver. In this sense, my research extends beyond agency-focused explanations to include the pre-existing structural and institutional vulnerabilities within democracies that erosion agents exploit.

The AEM framework offers a useful prism to analyze the motivations of the autocratization process in general and the needs for power consolidation and preventive actions against perceived threats in particular. Using case studies from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, I showed how such leaders as President Joko Widodo, Rodrigo Duterte, and Thaksin Shinawatra used a mixture of institutional capture and social silencing to consolidate their

rule. These democratically elected leaders compromised some of the most significant principles of democracy, co-opting the judiciary, suppressing dissent, and manipulating electoral processes. In every instance, the justification was based on a need to respond to perceived existential threats, both internal and external, that legitimized the increasingly authoritarian behavior of these leaders. However, the research indicates that erosion agents do not always have the intent to autocratize but, instead, might be driven by structural and institutional constraints, such as authoritarian legacies, patronage networks, and elite threats. In some instances, they could also be responding to political constrains and vulnerabilities inherent in "their" democracies and not necessarily striving to depose democratic institutions. In Indonesia, for example, President Joko Widodo had to work through a very difficult political terrain characterized by internal party strife and oligarchic influence, in which oligarchs hold both substantial political and economic power. Entrenched within the very sinew of this country's politics, these oligarchic forces tend to circumscribe the limits within which executives may act and thus shape how leaders like Widodo can operate. Consequently, leaders in such an environment do things that look autocratic, not necessarily, because they want to destroy democracy but as a means of managing or surviving within the constraints imposed by these entrenched elites. I have also found similar results in the cases of Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Turkey, Sri Lanka, and Zambia (cf. Chapter 7.2), strengthening the reliability, validity and generalizability of my findings. This dynamic underlines how the autocratization processes themselves might be shaped by the path-dependent legacies of their predecessor political systems. More specifically, leaders are frequently compelled to steer through dense patronage systems or placate key elites to maintain positions in politics. Here, democratic erosion would result more from a series of pressures rather than fully from a premeditated plan for consolidating authority. Yet, as leaders navigate these challenges, their actions can nonetheless contribute to democratic erosion, whether intentionally or unintentionally. This, however, does not mean that there cannot be a shift from a reaction to pre-existing conditions to intent as seen in the case of Indonesia under Joko Widodo. This observation introduces a key question for further research: At what point do the actions of these leaders' transition from being responses to structural and or institutional constraints to deliberate efforts at autocratization?

In sum, the four guiding research questions have allowed me to explore the specific strategies and tactics employed by leaders to consolidate executive power, the consequences for democratic governance, and how socio-political contexts have influenced these approaches, answering the four main research questions (see Table 8.1). First, my findings demonstrate how incumbents in Southeast Asia exploit institutional weaknesses, manipulate legal frameworks, and suppress dissent to weaken accountability mechanisms that consolidate executive power. In Indonesia, for example, President Joko Widodo undermined the Corruption Eradication Commission by revising legislation to cut its investigative powers and

diminish its independence. In so doing, the executive was able to avoid scrutiny while retaining at least the veneer of legality. For instance, in the Philippines, President Rodrigo Duterte weaponized the judiciary and had critics removed, including Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno, who had challenged his policies. He also emasculated the Commission on Human Rights and its capacity to hold his administration accountable for human rights violations. Meanwhile, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra had managed to sidestep parliamentary scrutiny via constitutional amendments and decrees to consolidate executive powers in the hands of a few. These examples all point to a common trend of how incumbents systematically weaken institutions intended to check their power and avoid both public and institutional scrutiny.

Second, I have identified a variety of tactics that incumbents have employed to undermine horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability. In the case of horizontal accountability, this is through co-opting oversight bodies, engaging in court-packing, and manipulating the judiciary in ways that nullify institutional checks on incumbents. Incumbents co-opted oversight institutions and weakened the judiciary in Indonesia under President Widodo and in the Philippines with the removal of Chief Justice Sereno and control of the judiciary by Duterte. Thaksin in Thailand used court-packing together with legislative dominance to consolidate his authority. To weaken vertical accountability, incumbents suppress free media, manipulate voter participation, and impose restrictions on civil society. Duterte's government in the Philippines cracked down on critical media outlets like ABS-CBN and *Rappler*, while Widodo employed strategic lawsuits against independent journalists in Indonesia. In Thailand, Thaksin rigged elections through vote-buying and opposition movement control. Diagonal accountability has been weakened through targeting of civil society organizations, introduction of restrictive NGO laws, and dissemination of disinformation. In Indonesia, Widodo introduced hostile regulations against civil society organizations; Duterte in the Philippines demonized and criminalized NGOs; and Thaksin of Thailand enacted hostile media laws that hampered the ability of watchdog groups to hold his administration to account.

Third, the erosion of accountability mechanisms has one very important consequence for democratic governance: democratic backsliding in reduced electoral competitiveness and weakened democratic institutions. Anti-corruption enforcement diminished in Indonesia under Widodo. In the Philippines, Duterte's war on drugs has been linked to widespread extrajudicial killings, undermining the rule of law. Thailand has suffered from deteriorated democratic institutions under Thaksin, culminating in an eventual military coup. Another consequence is the weakening of the rule of law, where judicial bias and the erosion of oversight bodies create an environment of impunity. For instance, Duterte's administration in the Philippines completely disregarded human rights and judicial protections, making extrajudicial actions the new normal. Public trust in democratic institutions also decreases as

accountability mechanisms are dismantled. In Indonesia, for instance, public confidence in the KPK fell by as much as after Widodo's administration reduced its independence.

Fourth, the socio-political and structural-institutional contexts of each country determine the actual deployment of these tactics. In Indonesia, for instance, a robust civil society compelled Widodo to implement more systemic and systematic measures after his re-election, including legislative and regulatory changes. Duterte relied on his populist appeal and wide public mandate in implementing open strategies: frontal attacks against the independent media and society, especially those perceived as 'drug users'. Where institutional independence is particularly weak, as in Thailand, Thaksin was able to engage in structural manipulation and electoral corruption with less overall resistance. These contextual differences illustrate that although the goal of consolidating power might be constant, incumbents adjust their means according to local dynamics.

In sum, my thesis shows that incumbents in Southeast Asia's third-wave democracies systematically whittle away at accountability mechanisms as a means of consolidating executive power. Leaders such as Widodo, Duterte, and Thaksin have adopted strategies for undermining democratic governance through various forms of accountability: horizontal, vertical, and diagonal. The weakened rule of law and legislative institutions, as well as the diminished capabilities of civil society that have resulted speak volumes about the fragility of democratic systems when accountability mechanisms are compromised. Additionally, it shows how such strategies are located in various socio-political contexts; that is, incumbents astutely exploit local dynamics in place. These findings build essential knowledge for policymakers, scholars, and civil society actors interested in preventing democratic erosion in similar contexts.

Table 8.1. Case Study Insights: How Incumbents Consolidate Power in Southeast Asia.

| **Research Question** | **Conclusion** |
|---|---|
| A. How do incumbents erode accountability mechanisms to consolidate executive power? | Incumbents erode accountability mechanisms by undermining anti-corruption bodies, silencing critical media, weaponizing the judiciary, and manipulating constitutional frameworks to entrench executive power. |
| B. Which specific strategies do incumbents employ to undermine horizontal, vertical, and diagonal accountability? | Incumbents employ strategies such as politicizing independent institutions, using propaganda and disinformation, stifling opposition parties, and curbing civil society and media freedom to undermine various forms of accountability. |
| C. What are the consequences of these strategies for democratic governance? | The erosion of accountability mechanisms leads to democratic regression, institutional decay, and the normalization of authoritarian practices, undermining democratic governance and public trust. |
| D. How do varying socio-political or structural-institutional contexts shape the deployment of these strategies? | Socio-political contexts, such as military dominance, oligarchic networks, party fragmentation, strength of civil society, determine the strategies incumbents use. |

*Source*: The author.

## 8.2. Contributions and Limitations

Based on the findings presented in this dissertation, my research makes several theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions to the autocratization literature but also acknowledges limitations. This dissertation makes three theoretical contributions: First, it deepens our understanding of how institutional capture and social silencing operate as mechanism of democratic erosion; second, it demonstrates that executive aggrandizement is not necessarily always a deliberate and intentional move; and third, it provides a new framework by which to analyze the sequencing and escalation of these mechanisms within third-wave democracies. These contributions are among many reasons why this dissertation is important.

First, the dual-mechanism approach I introduce offers a more inclusive model through which to understand autocratization by showing how state-centric institutional manipulation and society-centric repression complement each other in achieving a concentration of executive power. Previous research has all too often isolated these strategies and focused on either the one or the other. Yet my research suggests that it is only through their iterative interaction that autocratization accelerates more profoundly and systemically, providing, in this way, a far finer grain for how democratic erosion unfolds. Second, my findings challenge the common perception in the literature that autocratization is either a purposeful or an ideologically motivated process. Drawing on the experiences of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand, this dissertation demonstrates that processes of autocratization can arise from leaders' reactions to structural legacies and political constraints rather than from inherent authoritarian motives. This reframes the discussion from viewing the process of autocratization as intentional "power grab" to one in which context-driven forces, shaped by specific external pressures and a political environment, play a greater role. Third, this dissertation represents an advance in the temporal understanding of how autocratic leaders escalate repression dynamics. In line with that, I outline a theoretical framework that explains the transition that can occur from preventive measures, through the use of legal reform and strategic appointments, to reactive tactics, including full-scale violence or state-perpetrated legal persecution against their opponents. Nonetheless, executive aggrandizement is not a linear process, so preventive and reactive measures can vary depending on the existing (perceived) threat level of the incumbent government, as seen in the case of Duterte. This sequencing analysis enriches the literature by explaining the dynamic nature of executive aggrandizement, focusing on the relationship between institutional and extra-institutional strategies over time. This yields a more differentiated explanation of how democratic qualities are worn away, often in ways that are both subtle and invisible.

These contributions notwithstanding, the dissertation acknowledges a number of theoretical limitations. First, the AEM is context-bound and largely applies to weakly institutionalized

third-wave democracies. The model underlines the importance of contextual factors, such as political, economic, and social, in shaping the process of autocratization, and therefore, its generalizability outside these contexts is limited. This specificity, while useful for understanding particular cases, suggests that the AEM is not a one-size-fits-all explanation for executive aggrandizement. Second, while the model is inherently dynamic, it faces challenges in accounting for the evolving tactics of autocratization. This means that the model would have to be constantly updated and refined as political leaders develop new ways of consolidating power. Third, the AEM is based on the intentionality behind executive aggrandizement. Yet, as my findings indicate, autocratization is often driven by structural and institutional dynamics rather than, or in addition to, the deliberate actions of leaders. It is a fluid process that requires attention to irregular or reactive factors that serve as catalysts for democratic erosion. Finally, while the AEM highlights the institutional and strategic aspects of autocratization, it falls short of fully addressing the cultural and social contexts in which these processes are embedded. The dynamics of autocratization are deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and social dimensions that the AEM does not fully capture.

This study also offers several methodological contributions to the growing autocratization literature. This dissertation has presented an under-utilized approach through which to investigate causal mechanisms of executive aggrandizement. Moreover, it departs from a standard process tracing methodology by introducing a comparative element into the analysis. Such innovations are important for several reasons. By focusing on the causal mechanisms of executive aggrandizement, this approach has provided a framework in which to trace the sequences of institutional change and then link such processes more directly to specific actions taken by political leaders. In addition, my approach has integrated the analysis of structural factors and institutional legacies into how the preexisting vulnerabilities of the political system influence the choices made by the leaders. In addition, by incorporating a intra-regional and cross-case comparison, my approach allows for cross-case generalization to be made without compromising the robustness of my within-in case findings. Third, by framing democratic erosion as a dynamic process rather than a linear sequence of events, my research expands the methodological toolkit of scholars. This dynamic framework allows for the study of feedback loops between autocratic leaders and opposition forces, detailing how changes in the institutional arrangements alter the landscape of resistance.

Empirically, this dissertation contributes to the literature by (1) expanding existing knowledge of mechanisms and motivations behind autocratization through detailed case studies and (2) by providing both intra-regional and cross-case evidence. First, this research refines existing theoretical frameworks by examining the interaction between agency, institutions and structures during executive aggrandizement in third-wave democracies. It reinforces the fact that aggrandizement is path-dependent in nature, and rarely linear; instead, it is highly

contingent on the interaction of historical legacies and immediate political pressures. Second, the use of both single case studies and intra-regional comparisons within Southeast Asia deepens the understanding of how local (historical) contexts can shape strategies and responses of erosion and resilience. This strengthens the robustness and generalization of findings.

While this dissertation makes important contributions to the methodological and empirical knowledge in the growing body of research on autocratization, it also has three key limitations. First, the methodological approach I employ offers deep insights into the process of executive aggrandizement in three Southeast Asian third-wave democracies that share strong historical and political similarities. This allows for a detailed understanding of the regional dynamics. However, this makes the results highly context-specific, meaning that my empirical findings are limited in their generalizability. To mitigate this limitation, I have extended the analysis by considering six additional cases of executive aggrandizement outside Southeast Asia. These additional cases demonstrate that the AEM is not just an artifact of the region but resonates rather well in other political and cultural contexts. While regional specificity in the Southeast Asian cases puts emphasis on the necessity to analyze regional dynamics, the cross-case comparison enhances the external validity of the findings.

Second, by integrating findings from these additional cases, the research highlights several commonalities in how leaders balance preventive and reactive strategies to consolidate power. In all cases, crises are moments when leaders seek to justify sweeping measures. In Turkey, Erdoğan's post-coup purges and Rajapaksa's emergency powers during the COVID-19 crisis in Sri Lanka allowed these leaders to consolidate power in ways that prevention alone could not. In Indonesia, Widodo uses the ITE law as a preventive tactic but responds to demonstrations with (extra-)legal tools of repression that cement his grip on power. On the other hand, Duterte's crisis-driven tactics in the Philippines have shown initial success, but without institutional embedding, consolidation will not be sustainable. Preventive strategies have often been the source of sustained success in autocratization processes. Talon's reforms in Benin neutralized opposition long before crises occurred. Similarly, the gradualist preventive measures of Erdoğan in Turkey created a system resistant to reactive shocks such as the 2016 coup. However, leaders like Bolsonaro in Brazil simply could not establish the relevant preventive institutional controls to preserve his power from checks by other institutions. Leaders who did not combine preventive and reactive measures were usually vulnerable to threats. For example, Bolsonaro's reactive disinformation campaigns were restricted by Brazil's decentralized federal system and judicial resistance. Similarly, Evo Morales' preemptive politicization of electoral bodies was balanced by a public backlash against reactive electoral manipulation that ultimately undermined his legitimacy. Sequencing thus seems crucial to the sustainability of executive aggrandizement. Preventive-first strategies, such as

those in Turkey, were better positioned to weather crises. Reactive-first strategies, such as those pursued by Duterte in the Philippines, are more vulnerable to collapse due to weak institutional checks and balances. This research advances our knowledge of autocratization by showing that the patterns identified in Southeast Asia also manifest themselves in different global contexts. Future research should test whether the identified mechanisms hold in regions experiencing democratic backsliding under different dynamics.

A third limitation stems from a potential selection bias in the case studies. By focusing on countries where autocratization has progressed significantly, this dissertation inherently prioritizes cases of successful democratic erosion. While this approach is helpful in understanding the nature and process of autocratization, it tends to blind us to other cases where democratic institutions were more resilient, or where autocratic tendencies coalesced but were then subdued. Such an approach could inadvertently reinforce a deterministic narrative, suggesting that democratic regression is an inevitable outcome once autocratic tendencies emerge. This perspective reduces the visibility of countervailing factors, such as strength of civil society or the judiciary, that could prevent or reverse autocratization. Without considering these dynamics, the analysis risks creating a self-fulfilling framework in which democratic erosion appears inevitable, thereby underestimating democratic resilience and resistance. Future research should therefore include cases of stalled or reversed autocratization to test the robustness of the AEM. In addition, this could also prove valuable insights into factors that contribute to democratic decline and democratic resilience.

## 8.3. Avenues for Future Research

This dissertation has emphasized the importance of understanding executive aggrandizement within the broader context of interactions among agency, structure, and institutions. In doing so, it highlights several key directions for future research that address existing gaps in the literature while advancing both theoretical and practical knowledge. A mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, emerges as a particularly promising way to explore these dynamics. By examining the relationship between structural vulnerabilities, institutional resilience, and mechanisms of resistance, future research could deepen our understanding of executive aggrandizement and contribute actionable strategies to safeguard democracy.

A critical takeaway from this dissertation is the necessity of employing mixed-methods approaches to capture the nuanced dynamics of executive aggrandizement. By combining the contextual richness of qualitative case studies with the generalizability of quantitative cross-case analyses, researchers can generate empirically robust findings with more actionable policy recommendations. For instance, comparative qualitative research could explore how

institutional arrangements vary across political and cultural settings and how these arrangements interact with structural factors. These findings could then inform quantitative studies testing the prevalence and impact of these interactions in a larger sample of third-wave democracies. Such integrative approaches would not only enhance our empirical understanding of institutional resilience but also identify the configurations most likely to resist executive overreach. Future research could also leverage process-tracing techniques to examine the sequencing of executive tactics, complemented by quantitative time-series analyses to uncover broader patterns. By combining methods in this way, scholars can address questions that are otherwise difficult to answer with a single approach: How do structural vulnerabilities interact with institutional arrangements? What strategies are most effective in countering autocratization, and how do they vary across contexts?

This dissertation highlights the importance of structural factors, such as socioeconomic inequality, colonial legacies, and economic crises, in catalyzing executive aggrandizement. However, these effects are mediated through institutional frameworks and the actions of key actors, stressing the need for a deeper exploration of these dynamics. Future research could examine how structural vulnerabilities shape decision-making and institutional responses. For example, qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews with political elites, civil society leaders, and academics, could uncover mechanisms through which structural conditions influence democratic erosion. Such interviews could shed light on how elites justify or resist executive overreach, as well as the role of public discourse in shaping these decisions. Quantitative studies could complement these insights by examining large datasets to identify patterns and causal relationships between structural factors and democratic erosion. Variables such as income inequality, education, colonial history, and institutional strength could be analyzed across countries and over time, revealing trends that qualitative methods might miss. Together, these approaches would offer a more nuanced understanding of how structural vulnerabilities shape autocratic tendencies while helping policymakers address both immediate institutional weaknesses and deeper structural conditions.

While executive aggrandizement often exploits institutional weaknesses, resistance to such tendencies can emerge from various societal and institutional actors. Future research should explore the mechanisms of resistance, including elite fragmentation, public backlash, and judicial interventions, that disrupt autocratic ambitions. Comparative cross-regional studies could analyze how structural constraints affect resistance to autocratization. Additionally, the role of non-state actors, including civil society organizations, grassroots movements, and private entities, deserves closer examination. These actors often mobilize resistance through advocacy, protests, or legal challenges, offering insights into how opposition to autocratic tendencies is sustained. By studying these dynamics, future research could identify the factors that enhance democratic resilience. For instance, examining successful cases of resistance

could provide valuable lessons for policymakers on how to strengthen democratic institutions in the face of rising authoritarian pressures.

Another critical area for future research is the timing and sequencing of tactics used in executive aggrandizement. This dissertation demonstrates how leaders initially rely on legal and institutional manipulations before resorting to more overtly repressive measures, such as censorship or force. Understanding the timing and effectiveness of these tactics could shed light on the progression of autocratization. Qualitative process-tracing approaches could examine specific case studies to trace how leaders shift from preventive to reactive measures under varying conditions. Quantitative time-series analyses could track the prevalence and impact of these tactics across multiple countries over time. Moreover, future studies could investigate how reactive measures, such as repression or legal manipulation, are met with opposition from democratic institutions, civil society, and international actors. By identifying the mechanisms that counteract autocratization, researchers could provide actionable strategies for preserving democratic space and countering executive overreach.

To fully understand executive aggrandizement, future research must embrace interdisciplinary approaches. Drawing insights from sociology, political economy, communication studies, and other disciplines could deepen our understanding of cultural, ideological, and narrative dimensions of autocratization. For example, scholars could explore how political narratives and media discourse shape public perceptions of executive overreach. Additionally, global and regional diffusion effects merit closer examination. Comparative studies could investigate how democratic backsliding in one country influences neighboring states through shared strategies or power dynamics. By integrating interdisciplinary and global perspectives, future research could uncover the broader systemic and cultural forces driving autocratization. In sum, this dissertation argues that understanding executive aggrandizement requires an integrative approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods, examines the relationship between structural and institutional factors, and explores mechanisms of resistance and resilience. By addressing these research directions, scholars could significantly advance both theoretical and practical knowledge. Future studies should therefore focus on identifying the most effective strategies for countering autocratization, understanding the role of timing and sequencing in executive tactics, and embracing interdisciplinary perspectives to enrich this field. Ultimately, these efforts would contribute to safeguarding and strengthening democratic institutions in the face of rising authoritarian pressures.

## Bibliography


A'yun, R.Q., and Mudhoffir, A.M. (2019). The End of the KPK-at the Hands of the 'Good' President. *Indonesia at Melbourne*, 24 September 2019, online: https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/the-end-of-the-kpk-at-the-hands-of-the-good-president/

Abao, C. (2016). Engaging Duterte, engaging ourselves. *Rappler*, 16 July 2016, online: https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/139850-engaging-duterte-engaging-ourselves/

Abdullah Naim, A., Saini, A., Shahbanu, A., Kusuma, K. B. H., Johansyah, M., Jamil, M., & Apriando, T. (2021). *Small islands of Indonesia: The land of mines. Report on the destruction of the entire bodies of small islands of Indonesia by mineral and coal mines*. Jakarta: Jaringan Advokasi Tambang (Mining Advocacy Network).

Abinales, P.N., & Amoroso, D.J. (2005). *State and Society in the Philippines*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Abinales, P.N., & Amoroso, D.J. (2017). *State and Society in the Philippines, 2nd edition*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Abrucio, F. L., Grin, E. J., Franzese, C., Segatto, C. I., & Couto, C. G. (2020). Combating COVID-19 under Bolsonaro's federalism: a case of intergovernmental incoordination. *Revista de Administração Pública*, *54*, 663-677.

ABS-CBN News. (2018). "TIMELINE: The tumultuous career of Antonio Trillanes IV." *ABS CBN News,* 5 September 2018, online: https://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/09/04/18/timeline-the-tumultuous-career-of-antonio-trillanes-iv.

ABS-CBN News. (2020). Comelec's Guanzon opposes 'unconstitutional' decision to proclaim Duterte Youth rep. *ABS CBN News,* 10 October 2020, online: https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/10/10/20/comelecs-guanzon-opposes-unconstitutional-decision-to-proclaim-duterte-youth-rep

Acayan, E. (2018). 'Killers have no fear of God or respect for human life'. *Al Jazeera*, 12 July 2018, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2018/7/12/killers-have-no-fear-of-god-or-respect-for-human-life

Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2008). Persistence of power, elites, and institutions. *American Economic Review*, *98*(1), 267-293.

Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2013). *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty* (Reprint Edition). Crown.

Addison, A. (2007). Another Philippines Coup Plot Fails. *TIME*, 29 November 2007, online: https://time.com/archive/6941965/another-philippines-coup-plot-fails/

Afrimadona. (2021). Revisiting Political Polarisation in Indonesia: A Case Study of Jakarta's Electorate. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 40(2), 315-339.

Ager, M. (2019). Sen. Villar: We are a 'good dynasty.' *Inquirer*, 11 April 2019, online: https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1105538/sen-villar-we-are-a-good-dynasty

Agi Legal. (2024). "Indonesia amends Electronic Information Transactions Law." AGI Legal, 28 February 2024, online: https://www.agilegal.id/publication/articles/27510/amends-electronic-information-and-transactions-law.

Aglionby, J. (2003a). The war on yaa-baa. *The Guardian,* 4 December 2003, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/dec/04/drugstrade

Aglionby, J. (2003b). Thai leader justifies 1 100 drug war deaths. *Mail & Guardian*, 3 March 2004, online: https://mg.co.za/article/2003-03-03-thai-leader-justifies-1-100-drug-war-deaths/

Aguilar, A. A. (2023). Courts and the judicial erosion of democracy in Latin America. *Politics & Policy*, *51*(1), 7–25. https://doi.org/10.1111/polp.12516

Agustino, L., Hikmawan, M. D., & Silas, J. (2024). DECENTRALIZATION IN INDONESIA: FROM REFORMATION TO THE LOCAL REGIME. *Public Policy and Administration*, *23*(2), 237-258.

Ahram, A. I. (2011). The theory and method of comparative area studies. *Qualitative Research*, *11*(1), 69–90. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794110385297

Aïmeur, E., Amri, S., & Brassard, G. (2023). Fake news, disinformation and misinformation in social media: A review. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, *13*(1), 30. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13278-023-01028-5

Akkoyunlu, K., & Lima, J. A. (2022). Brazil's Stealth Military Intervention. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, *14*(1), 31–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/1866802X211039860

Al Jazeera. (2016a). "Philippine polls: Rodrigo Duterte headed for victory." *Al Jazeera*, 10 May 2016, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/5/10/philippines-polls-rodrigo-duterte-headed-for-victory.

Al Jazeera. (2016b). “Rodrigo Duterte officially wins Philippines presidency.” *Al Jazeera,* 27 May 2016, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/5/27/rodrigo-duterte-officially-wins-philippines-presidency.
Al Jazeera. (2018a). “Philippines’ Duterte orders arrest of opposition senator.” *Al Jazeera*, 4 September 2018, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/9/4/philippines-duterte-orders-arrest-of-opposition-senator
Al Jazeera. (2018b). “Philippine chief justice Sereno, Duterte’s critic, removed.” *Al Jazeera*, 11 May 2018, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/5/11/philippine-chief-justice-sereno-dutertes-critic-removed.
Al Jazeera. (2019a). “Indonesia protests: Hundreds hurt in student-police clashes.” *Al Jazeera,* 25 September 2019, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/9/25/indonesia-protests-hundreds-hurt-in-student-police-clashes
Al Jazeera. (2019b). “Jakarta protests: Fireworks, tear gas mark Jokowi’s re-election.” *Al Jazeera,* 23 May 2019, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2019/5/23/jakarta-protests-fireworks-tear-gas-mark-jokowis-re-election
Al Jazeera. (2019c). “Indonesia’s Widodo appoints archrival as defence minister.” *Al Jazeera,* 23 October 2019, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/10/23/indonesias-widodo-appoints-archrival-as-defence-minister
Al Jazeera. (2020a). “Alarm over Duterte’s new anti-terrorism bill for Philippines.” *Al Jazeera,* 1 June 2020, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/1/alarm-over-dutertes-new-anti-terrorism-bill-for-philippines
Al Jazeera. (2020b). “Near impunity’ for drug war killings in the Philippines, UN says.” *Al Jazeera,* 4 June 2020, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/4/near-impunity-for-drug-war-killings-in-the-philippines-un-says.
Al Jazeera. (2022). “Philippines: Maria Ressa’s Rappler news site ordered shut down.” *Al Jazeera*, 29 June 2022, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/29/philippines-maria-ressas-rappler-news-site-ordered-to-shut-down.
Al Jazeera. (2023). “Indonesia’s communication minister arrested in corruption case.” *Al Jazeera,* 17 May 2023, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/17/indonesias-communication-minister-arrested-in-corruption-case.
Albertus, M. (2019). The Fate of Former Authoritarian Elites Under Democracy. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *63*(3), 727–759. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002718761791
Albertus, M., & Menaldo, V. (2018). *Authoritarianism and the Elite Origins of Democracy*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108185950
Alexander, G., & McKeown, T. J. (1985). *Case Studies And Theories Of Organizational Decision Making*.
Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI). (2022). “Indonesia: Ministerial Regulation 5 Threatens to Restrict Press and Internet Freedom.” *Aliansi Jurnalis Independen,* 25 July 2022, online: https://aji.or.id/informasi/indonesia-ministerial-regulation-5-threatens-restrict-press-and-internet-freedom.
Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (various years). “Aliansi Jurnalis Independen. Data Kekerasan.” *Aliansi Jurnalis Independen*, online: https://advokasi.aji.or.id/en/index/data-kekerasan/6.html.
Ambardi, K. (2008). The Making of the Indonesian Multiparty System: A Cartelized Party System and Its Origin. *Doctoral dissertation*, Ohio State University.
Ambyo, T. (2023). “Indonesia’s New Criminal Code: Scaling Up Conservatism and Watering Down Protections for Critics and Minorities.” *Australian Institute of International Affairs,* 11 January 2023, online: https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/indonesias-new-criminal-code-scaling-up-conservatism-and-watering-down-protections-for-critics-and-minorities/.
Amnesty International Indonesia. (2018). *“Don’t Bother, Just Let Him Die.” Killing with impunity in Papua*. Jakarta: Amnesty International Indonesia.
Amnesty International Indonesia. (2022). *Silencing Voices, Suppressing Criticism. The Decline in Indonesia’s Civil Liberties*. Jakarta: Amnesty International Indonesia. https://www.amnesty.id/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/ASA2160132022_FINAL_The-Decline-of-Civil-Liberties-in-Indonesia.pdf.
Amnesty International. (2015). “Indonesia: Allow foreign journalists and NGOs access to Papua.” *Amnesty International,* 4 May 2015, online: https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ASA2115752015ENGLISH.pdf
Amnesty International. (2019). “’They Just Kill’. Ongoing Extrajudicial Executions and Other Violations in the Philippines’ ‘War on Drugs’”. *Amnesty International*, online: https://amnistia.org.ar/wp-content/uploads/delightful-downloads/2019/07/PHILIPPINES-

THEY-JUST-KILL-ONGOING-EXTRAJUDICIAL-EXECUTIONS-AND-OTHER-VIOLATIONS-IN-THE-PHILIPPINES-WAR-ON-DRUGS.pdf.
Amnesty International. (2020). "Indonesia: End Wave of Digital Attacks on Students, Journalists, Activists." *Amnesty International,* 20 June 2020, online: https://www.amnesty.id/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Final_Amnesty-International-Indonesia-Public-Statement-on-Digital-Attacks-17-June-2020.pdf.
Amnesty International. (2021). Anti-Terror Act remains dangerous and fundamentally flawed. *Amnesty International,* 9 December 2021, online: https://www.amnesty.org.ph/2021/12/anti-terror-act-remains-dangerous-and-fundamentally-flawed/
Amnesty International. (n.D.). "Red tagging." *Amnesty International*, online: https://www.amnesty.org.ph/campaigns/anti-terrorism-and-hr/red-tagging/.
Andersen, D., Knutsen, C. H., & Skaaning, S.-E. (2023). *Dimensions of State Capacity and Modes of Democratic Breakdown*. Quality of Government Institute, University of Gothenburg.
Angela, D., & Kosandi, M. (2019). Military Business in Indonesia: Army Cooperative after Acquisition Policy 2009 and Its Impact on Civil-military Relations. *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research*.
Anh, N. T. (2013). One Village One Product (OVOP) in Japan to One Tambon One Product (OTOP) in Thailand: Lessons for Grass Root Development in Developing Countries. *Journal of Social and Development Sciences*, *4*(12), 529–537. https://doi.org/10.22610/jsds.v4i12.794
Anindya, C. R. R. (2024). *SECURITISATION, NATIONAL ACTION PLAN, AND LAW ON TERRORISM IN THE PHILIPPINES AND INDONESIA: QUESTIONING COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH*.
Ansell, B. W., & Samuels, D. J. (2014). *Inequality and Democratization*. Cambridge University Press.
Antlov, H., and Cederroth, S. (2004). *Elections in Indonesia: The New Order and Beyond*. Routledge.
Arbatli, E., & Rosenberg, D. (2021). United we stand, divided we rule: How political polarization erodes democracy. *Democratization*, *28*(2), 285–307. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1818068
Arguelles, C. V. (2019). "We are Rodrigo Duterte": Dimensions of the Philippine Populist Publics' Vote. *Asian Politics & Policy*, *11*(3), 417–437. https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12472
Arguillas, F.V. (2019). Political Conjuncture and Scholarly Disjunctures: Reflections on Studies of the Philippine State under Marcos. *Philippine Studies: Historical & Ethnographic Viewpoints*, *67*(1), 3–30.
Arifianto, A. R. (2016). Jokowi's Second Cabinet Reshuffle: Implications for Indonesian Politics. (RSIS Commentaries, No. 194). *RSIS Commentaries*. Singapore: Nanyang Technological University.
Arifin, M. Z., Nugroho, W. B., Cortés, A. M. N., & Purnama, P. (2022a). The Ratification of Omnibus Law: A Sign of Democratic Deconsolidation in Indonesia. *JSW (Jurnal Sosiologi Walisongo)*, *6*(1), 13–28. https://doi.org/10.21580/jsw.2022.6.1.9666
Arifin, S. (2021). Illiberal tendencies in Indonesian legislation: *The case of the omnibus law on job creation*. *The Theory and Practice of Legislation*, *9*(3), 386–403.
Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). (2023). "Data Export Tool, version 3. Asia Pacific." *Acleddata.com*, online: https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/.
Arriola, L. R. (2009). Patronage and Political Stability in Africa. *Comparative Political Studies*, *42*(10), 1339–1362. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009332126
Arriola, L. R. (2013). *Multi-Ethnic Coalitions in Africa: Business Financing of Opposition Election Campaigns*. Cambridge University Press.
Arriola, L.R., Rakner, L., & van de Walle, N. (2021). Democratic Backsliding in Africa? Autocratization, Resilience, and Contention. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Article 19. (2005). Freedom of Expression and the Media in Thailand. London and Bangkok: Article 19. https://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/publications/thailand-baseline-study.pdf.
Article 19. (2021). *Indonesia: Regulation of the Minister of Communication and Informatics Number 5 of 2020 on Private Electronic System of Operations (Ministerial Regulation 5).* London and Bangkok: Article 19.
Arugay, A. A. (2021). Civil society and the security sector in the Philippines after 9/11: Tensions between democracy and homeland security. In S. N. Romaniuk & E. T. Njoku (Eds.), *Counterterrorism and civil society: Post-9/11 progress and challenges* (pp. 283–294). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
Arugay, A. A., & J.K.A. Baquisal. (2023). Bowed, Bent, & Broken: Duterte's Assaults on Civil Society in the Philippines. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 42(3), 328-349.
Ash, K. (2016). Threats to Leaders' Political Survival and Pro-Government Militia Formation. *International Interactions*, *42*(5), 703–728. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2016.1138108

Aspinall, E. (2005). Elections and the Normalization of Politics in Indonesia. *South East Asia Research*, *13*(2), 117–156. https://doi.org/10.5367/0000000054604515
Aspinall, E. (2010). Indonesia in 2009: Democratic Triumphs and Trials. *Southeast Asian Affairs 2010*, 102-125. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/429570
Aspinall, E. (2013). A NATION IN FRAGMENTS: Patronage and Neoliberalism in Contemporary Indonesia. *Critical Asian Studies*, *45*(1), 27–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2013.758820
Aspinall, E. (2014). Money politics. Patronage and clientelism in Southeast Asia In W. Case (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Democratization*, 299-313. London: Routledge.
Aspinall, E. (2015). Oligarchic Populism: Prabowo Subianto's Challenge to Indonesian Democracy. *Indonesia*, *99*(1), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1353/ind.2015.0002
Aspinall, E., & Fealy, G. (Eds.). (2010). *Soeharto's New Order and Its Legacy: Essays in honour of Harold Crouch* (1st ed.). ANU Press. https://doi.org/10.22459/SNOL.08.2010
Aspinall, E., & Mietzner, M. (2014). Indonesian Politics in 2014: Democracy's Close Call. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, *50*(3), 347–369. https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2014.980375
Aspinall, E., & Mietzner, M. (2019). Southeast Asia's Troubling Elections: Nondemocratic Pluralism in Indonesia. *Journal of Democracy*, *30*(4), 104–118.
Aspinall, E., and As'ad, M.U. (2015). The patronage patchwork: village brokerage networks and the power of the state in an Indonesian election. *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde,* 171(02/03), 165-195.
Aspinall, E., and Berenschot, W. (2019). Democracy for Sale. Elections, Clientelism, and the State in Indonesia. Cornell University Press.
Aspinall, E., Mietzner, M., & Tomsa, D. (2015). *The Yudhoyono Presidency: Indonesia's Decade of Stability and Stagnation*. ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814620727
Aspinall, E., Rohman, N., Hamdi, A. Z., Rubaidi, & Triantini, Z. E. (2017). VOTE BUYING IN INDONESIA: CANDIDATE STRATEGIES, MARKET LOGIC AND EFFECTIVENESS. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, *17*(1), 1–27. doi:10.1017/jea.2016.31
Aspinwall, N. (2020). "Duterte Takes Aim at 'Oligarchs' in Address to Nation as Philippines' COVID-19 Cases Rise." *The Diplomat*, 28 July 2020, online: https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/duterte-takes-aim-at-oligarchs-in-address-to-nation-as-philippines-covid-19-cases-rise/.
Asrinaldi, Yusoff, M. A., & Karim, D. Z. A. (2022). Oligarchy in the Jokowi government and its influence on the implementation of legislative function in Indonesia. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, *7*(2), 189–203. https://doi.org/10.1177/2057891121995564
Asshiddiqie, J. (2022). The DPR attacks the Constitutional Court – and judicial independence. *Indonesia at Melbourne,* online: https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/the-dpr-attacks-the-constitutional-court-and-judicial-independence/
Asshiddiqie, J. (2023). *Can a Constitutional Court Judgment be Changed? Newly Installed Judge Faces Ethics Council.* Parkville: University of Melbourne, online: https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/can-a-constitutional-court-judgment-be-changed-newly-installed-judge-faces-ethics-council/
Ayson, M.E.G., & Reyes, L.G.S. (2023). Repositioning Marcosian politics: assessing Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s first year of presidency. *UP Los Banos Journal*, 21(3), 96-125.
Aytaç, S. E., Schiumerini, L., & Stokes, S. (2017). Protests and Repression in New Democracies. *Perspectives on Politics*, *15*(1), 62–82. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592716004138
Ayvazyan, K. (2019). The Shrinking Space of Civil Society: a Report on Trends, Responses, and the Role of Donors. (Opuscula, 128). Berlin: Maecenata Institut für Philanthropie und Zivilgesellschaft. https://nbn-resolving.org/ urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-62273-3.
Bachabi, M. (2018). Mouvement social au Bénin: les syndicats demandent un dialogue sur les réformes. Radio France Internationale (rfi), 18 January 2018
Bail, C. A., Argyle, L. P., Brown, T. W., Bumpus, J. P., Chen, H., Hunzaker, M. B. F., Lee, J., Mann, M., Merhout, F., & Volfovsky, A. (2018). Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *115*(37), 9216–9221. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1804840115
Bajpai, R., & Kureshi, Y. (2022). Mechanisms of democratic authoritarianism: de-centring the executive in South Asia and beyond. *Democratization*, *29*(8), 1375–1396. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2022.2062324
Baker, A., & Wigan, D. (2017). Constructing and contesting City of London power: NGOs and the emergence of noisier financial politics. *Economy and Society*, *46*(2), 185–210. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147.2017.1359909
Baker, C. (2016). The 2014 Thai *Coup* and Some Roots of Authoritarianism. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *46*(3), 388–404. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2016.1150500

Baker, C., & Phongpaichit, P. (2009). *A History of Thailand* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Baker, C., & Phongpaichit, P. (2014). *A History of Thailand* (3rd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Baker, J. (2015). 7 Professionalism without reform: the security sector under Yudhoyono. In E. Aspinall et al. (eds.), *The Yudhoyono Presidency: Indonesia's Decade of Stability and Stagnation* (pp. 114-135). Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814620727-010
Baker, J. (2023). Reformasi Reversal: Structural Drivers of Democratic Decline In Jokowi's Middle-Income Indonesia. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, *59*(3), 341–364. https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2023.2286020
Bakir, C. (2023). The vicious circle of policy advisory systems and knowledge regimes in consolidated authoritarian regimes. *Policy and Society*, *42*(3), 419–439. https://doi.org/10.1093/polsoc/puad013
Bakke, K. M., Mitchell, N. J. and Smidt, H. M. (2020) "When States Crack Down on Human Rights Defenders", International Studies Quarterly, 64(1): 85–96.
Baldwin, K. (2014). When Politicians Cede Control of Resources: Land, Chiefs, and Coalition-Building in Africa. *Comparative Politics*, *46*(3), 253–271. https://doi.org/10.5129/001041514810943036
Balendra, N., & Silver, N. (2023). *PHILANTHROPIC PROTECTIONISM IN THE INDO-PACIFIC. How Foreign Funding Restrictions Hampered Non-Profit Organizations in the Indo-Pacific Region During COVID-19*. Washington D.C.: International Center for Not-For-Profit Law. https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Foreign-funding-report-final.pdf.
Ballaran, J. (2017). Duterte declares CPP, NPA as terrorist organizations. Inquirer, 5 December, 2017, online: https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/950017/duterte-declares-cpp-npa-as-terrorist-organizations
Balod, H. S. S., & Hameleers, M. (2021). Fighting for truth? The role perceptions of Filipino journalists in an era of mis- and disinformation. *Journalism*, *22*(9), 2368–2385. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919865109
Balzacq, T. (2005). The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context. *European Journal of International Relations, 11*(2), 171-201. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066105052960
Balzacq, T. (2011). Enquiries into Methods: A New Framework for Securitization Analysis. In Balzacq, T. (Ed.), *Securitization Theory: How security problems emerge and dissolve*. London and New York: Routledge.
Bamrungsuk, S. (2019). Thailand's Zigzag Road to Democracy: Continuity and Change in Military Intervention. In M. Montesano, T. Chong & S. Heng (Eds.), *After the Coup: The National Council for Peace and Order Era and the Future of Thailand* (pp. 170-193). Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814843058-008
Banégas, R. (2003). La dynamique des revendications démocratiques. In Banégas, R. (ed.), *La démocratie à pas de caméléon. Transition et imaginaires politiques au Bénin,* pp. 93-133. Karthala.
Bar-Hillel, M. (1980). The base-rate fallacy in probability judgments. *Acta Psychologica*, *44*(3), 211–233. https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-6918(80)90046-3
Barreda, M. (2014). The Quality of Democratic Accountability: A Comparative View of Latin America. *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, *47*(2), 307–326.
Bartels, L. M., Daxecker, U. E., Hyde, S. D., Lindberg, S. I., & Nooruddin, I. (2023). The Forum: Global Challenges to Democracy? Perspectives on Democratic Backsliding. *International Studies Review*, *25*(2), viad019. https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viad019
Basedau, M. (2023). Under Pressure: Democratisation Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa. *GIGA Focus Africa*, *4*. https://doi.org/10.57671/GFAF-23042
Basedau, M., & Köllner, P. (2005). *Factionalism in political parties: An analytical framework for comparative studies* (GIGA Working Paper No. 12). German Institute of Global and Area Studies. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.909172
Batson, B. A. (1974). The fall of the Phibun Government, 1944. *Journal of the Siam Society*, *62*(2), 89-120.
Bauer, M. W., & Becker, S. (2020). Democratic Backsliding, Populism, and Public Administration. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, *3*(1), 19–31. https://doi.org/10.1093/ppmgov/gvz026
Bauer, M. W., Lotta, G., & de Holanda Schmidt, F. (2024). Bureaucratic militarization as a mode of democratic backsliding: Lessons from Brazil. *Democratization*, *0*(0), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2024.2382355

Bautista, J. (2010). Church and State in the Philippines Tackling Life Issues in a "Culture Of Death". Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia, 25(1), 29-53.
Bautista, L.B. (2017). Duterte and his quixotic war on drugs. Faculty of Law, Humanities and the Arts: University of Wollongong, online: https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=3877&context=lhapapers
BBC. (2014a). "Joko Widodo wins Indonesia presidential election." *BBC*, 22 July 2014, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28415536.
BBC. (2014b). "Joko Widodo sworn in as Indonesian president." *BBC*, 20 October 2014, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-29684776.
BBC. (2016a). "Indonesia protest: Jakarta anti-governor rally turns violent." *BBC*, 4 November 2016, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37856476.
BBC. (2016b). "Jakarta governor protests: Thousands attend unity rally." *BBC*, 4 December 2016, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38199549.
BBC. (2019a). "Indonesia election: Joko Widodo re-elected as president." *BBC*, 21 May 2019, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48331879.
BBC. (2019b). "Philippine mid-terms: Duterte consolidates grip on power." *BBC*, 22 May 2019, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48277482.
BBC. (2020). "Indonesia: Thousands protest against 'omnibus law' on jobs." *BBC*, 8 October 2020, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54460090.
Beach, D. (2016). It's all about mechanisms – what process-tracing case studies should be tracing. *New Political Economy*, *21*(5), 463–472.
Beach, D. (2017). Process Tracing Methods in the Social Sciences. In D. Beach, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.176
Beach, D., & Pedersen, R. B. (2013). *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines* (1st Edition). The University of Michigan Press.
Beach, D., & Pedersen, R. B. (2016). *Causal Case Study Methods: Foundations and Guidelines for Comparing, Matching, and Tracing*. The University of Michigan Press.
Beach, D., & Pedersen, R. B. (2018). Selecting Appropriate Cases When Tracing Causal Mechanisms. *Sociological Methods & Research*, *47*(4), 837–871. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124115622510
Beach, D., & Pedersen, R. B. (2019). *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines* (2nd ed.). The University of Michigan Press.
Beach, D., Camacho, G., & Siewert, M. (2022). *Going beyond the single case: Comparative Process Tracing as a tool to enable generalizations about causal processes*. APSA Preprints. https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2022-fpx3v
Beetham, D. (1991). *The Legitimation of Power*. Macmillan Education UK. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-21599-7
Bell, S., Murdie, A., Blocksome, P., & Brown, K. (2013). Force Multipliers: Conditional Effectiveness of Military and INGO Human Security Interventions. *Journal of Human Rights 12*(4), 397–422.
Bello, W. (2017). The Spider Spins His Web: Rodrigo Duterte's Ascent to Power. *Philippine Sociological Review*, *65*, 19–47.
Bengtsson, B., & Hertting, N. (2014). Generalization by Mechanism: Thin Rationality and Ideal-type Analysis in Case Study Research. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, *44*(6), 707–732. https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393113506495
Bennett, A. (2008). Process Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology* (pp. 702–721). https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199286546.003.0030
Bennett, A. (2015). Disciplining our conjectures: Systematizing process tracing with Bayesian analysis. In A. Bennett & J. T. Checkel (Eds.), *Process tracing: From metaphor to analytic tool* (pp. 276–298). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139858472.015
Bennett, A., & Checkel, J. T. (Eds.). (2015). *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139858472
Berenschot, W. (2018). The Political Economy of Clientelism: A Comparative Study of Indonesia's Patronage Democracy. *Comparative Political Studies*, *51*(12), 1563–1593. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018758756
Berger, M.T. (1997). Old state and new empire in Indonesia: debating the rise and decline of Suharto's New Order. *Third World Quarterly*, 18(2), 321-361.
Bermeo, N. (2016). On Democratic Backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, *27*(1), 5–19.
Bernadas, J. M. A. C., & Ilagan, K. (2020). Journalism, public health, and COVID-19: Some preliminary insights from the Philippines. *Media International Australia*, *177*(1), 132–138. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X20953854

Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI). (2022). “Benin Country Report 2022.” Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung.
Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI). (2024). “Benin Country Report 2024.” Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung.
Bethke, F. S., & Wolff, J. (2020). COVID-19 and shrinking civic spaces: Patterns and consequences. *Zeitschrift Für Friedens- Und Konfliktforschung*, *9*(2), 363–374. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42597-020-00038-w
Bidhya, B. 2000. “Governance Reform in Thailand: Questionable Assumptions, Uncertain Outcomes.” *Governance* 13 (3): 393–408.
Blair, L., & Collyns, D. (2019). “Evo Morales: indigenous leader who changed Bolivia but stayed too long.” *The Guardian*, 15 November 2019, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/15/evo-morales-indigenous-leader-who-changed-bolivia-but-stayed-too-long.
Bloodgood, E. A. (2010). Institutional environment and the organization of advocacy NGOs in the OECD. In A. Prakash & M. K. Gugerty (Eds.), *Advocacy Organizations and Collective Action* (pp. 91–130). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Boese, V. A. (2019). How (not) to measure democracy. *International Area Studies Review*, *22*(2), 95–127. https://doi.org/10.1177/2233865918815571
Boese, V. A., Edgell, A. B., Hellmeier, S., Maerz, S. F., & Lindberg, S. I. (2020). Deterring Dictatorship: Explaining Democratic Resilience since 1900. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3605368
Boese, V. A., Edgell, A. B., Hellmeier, S., Maerz, S. F., & Lindberg, S. I. (2021). How democracies prevail: Democratic resilience as a two-stage process. *Democratization*, *28*(5), 885–907. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.1891413
Boix, C. (2003). *Democracy and Redistribution*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511804960
Booth, K. (2007). *Theory of World Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Borwornsak, U. (2013). Depoliticising Key Institutions for Combatting Corruption: the new Thai Constitution. In Larmour Peter & Wolanin, Nick (eds.) *Corruption and Anti-corruption*, 177-203. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
Boulding, C. (2014). *NGOs, Political Protest, and Civil Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Bourchier, D., & Hadiz, V. (Eds.). (2014). *Indonesian Politics and Society* (0 ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203987728
Bradshaw, S., & Howard, P. N. (2018). THE GLOBAL ORGANIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS. *Journal of International Affairs*, *71*(1.5), 23–32.
Brady, H. E., & Collier, D. (2010). *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (Second Edition). Globe Pequot Publishing Group Inc/Bloomsbury.
Brancati, D. (2014). Democratic Authoritarianism: Origins and Effects. *Annual Review of Political Science,* 17(1), 313-326.
Brechenmacher, S. (2017). *How state restrictions are reshaping civic space around the world*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2017/05/how-state-restrictions-are-reshaping-civic-space-around-the-world
Brillantes, A.B. (1987). *Dictatorship & Martial Law: Philippine Authoritarianism in 1972*. Great Book Publishers.
Brinks, D. M., & Blass, A. (2018). *The DNA of constitutional justice in Latin America: Politics, governance, and judicial design*. Cambridge University Press.
Bromley, P., Schofer, E., & Longhofer, W. (2020). Contentions over World Culture: The Rise of Legal Restrictions on Foreign Funding to NGOs, 1994–2015. *Social Forces*, *99*(1), 281–304. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soz138
Brooks, K.B. (2019). Indonesia’s Election Exposes Growing Religious Divide. *Council on Foreign Relations,* online: https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/indonesias-election-exposes-growing-religious-divide
Brooten, L., and Klangnarong, S. (2009). People's media and reform efforts in Thailand. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics, 5(*1), 103-117.
Brownlee, J. (2007). *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Buan, L. (2017), “EXPLAINER: What is Leila de Lima being accused of?” *Rappler*, 23 February 2017, online: https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/162354-explainer-leila-de-lima-accusations-drug-trade/.

Buehler, M., Schatz, E., Sameen Mohsin, A., Greene, C., & Sombatpoonsiri, J. (2021). *How Information Disorder Affirms Authoritarianism and Destabilizes Democracy: Evidence, Trends, and Actionable Mitigation Strategies from Asia and the Pacific.* U.S Agency for International Development.
Bueno Aires Times. (2020). "Bolsonaro names allies to head police, justice ministry in Brazil." *Bueno Aires Times*, 28 April 2020, online: https://www.batimes.com.ar/news/latin-america/brazil-leader-names-allies-to-head-police-justice-ministry.phtml.
Bulmer, E. (2019). *Independent Regulatory and Oversight (Fourth-Branch) Institutions*. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2019.27
Bunbongkarn, S. (1999). Southeast Asia After the Crisis: Thailand's Successful Reforms. *Journal of Democracy*, *10*(4), 54–68. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.1999.0058
Bunge, M. (1997). Mechanism and Explanation. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, *27*(4), 410–465. https://doi.org/10.1177/004839319702700402
Bünte, M., & Weiss, M. L. (2023). Civil Society and Democratic Decline in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *42*(3), 297–307. https://doi.org/10.1177/18681034231212488
Burgess, A., & Souisa, H. (2024). "Inside the world of Indonesia's social media 'buzzers' cashing in from pushing 2024 election propaganda." *ABC News*, 19 January 2024, online: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-01-20/political-buzzers-indonesia-election-misinformation-social-media/103298530?utm_campaign=abc_news_web&utm_content=link&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_source=abc_news_web.
Butt, S. (2012). *Corruption and Law in Indonesia*. Routledge.
Butt, S. (2018). Religious conservatism, Islamic criminal law and the judiciary in Indonesia: A tale of three courts. *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, *50*(3), 402–434. https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.2018.1532025
Butt, S. (2019). The Indonesian Constitutional Court: Reconfiguring Decentralization for Better or Worse? *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, *14*(1), 147–174. https://doi.org/10.1017/asjcl.2018.19
Butt, S. (2020). The 2020 Constitutional Court Law amendments: a 'gift' to judges? *Indonesia at Melbourne*, online: https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/the-2020-constitutional-court-law-amendments-a-gift-to-judges/
Butt, S. (2023). Indonesia's new Criminal Code: Indigenising and democratising Indonesian criminal law? *Griffith Law Review*, *32*(2), 190–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/10383441.2023.2243772
Butt, S., & Siregar, F. (2021). Multilayered Oversight: Electoral Administration in Indonesia. *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, *16*(S1), S121–S135. https://doi.org/10.1017/asjcl.2021.32
Buttle, J. W., Graham Davies, S., & Meliala, A. E. (2016). A cultural constraints theory of police corruption: Understanding the persistence of police corruption in contemporary Indonesia. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, *49*(3), 437–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/0004865815573875
Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis.* Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner.
Byrne, D. S., & Ragin, C. C. (Eds.). (2009). *The SAGE handbook of case-based methods*. SAGE.
Caballero-Anthony, M. (2022). A Marcos returns to power in the Philippines. *Brookings Institute,* 13 May 2022, online: https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-marcos-returns-to-power-in-the-philippines/.
Caliskan, E. (2024). "The Revival of Turkish Politics: Escaping Erdoğan's Shadow." *Carnegie Endowment,* 16 April 2024, online: https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2024/04/the-revival-of-turkish-politics-escaping-erdogans-shadow?lang=en.
Cameron, M. A. (2018). Making sense of competitive authoritarianism: Lessons from the Andes. *Latin American Politics and Society*, *60*(2), 1-22.
Campbell, D. T. (1975). III. "Degrees of Freedom" and the Case Study. *Comparative Political Studies*, *8*(2), 178–193. https://doi.org/10.1177/001041407500800204
Camus, M.R. (2022). "Billionaire Manny Villar to become next media tycoon after taking over ABS-CBN frequencies." *Inquirer.net*, 25 January 2022, online: https://business.inquirer.net/339531/billionaire-manny-villar-to-become-next-media-tycoon-after-taking-over-abs-cbn-frequencies.
Canen, N. & Ch, R. & Wantchekon, L. (2021): Political uncertainty and the forms of state capture. 'SSRN WP No. 4057107.
Carey, J., Clayton, K., Helmke, G., Nyhan, B., Sanders, M., & Stokes, S. (2022). Who will defend democracy? Evaluating tradeoffs in candidate support among partisan donors and voters.

*Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, *32*(1), 230–245. https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2020.1790577
Carey, S. C. (2006). The Dynamic Relationship Between Protest and Repression. *Political Research Quarterly*, *59*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290605900101
Carey, S. C. (2010). The Use of Repression as a Response to Domestic Dissent. *Political Studies*, *58*(1), 167–186. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2008.00771.x
Çarkoğlu, A., & Kalaycioğlu, E. (2009). *The Rising Tide of Conservatism in Turkey*. Palgrave Macmillan US. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230621534
Carothers, T. (1997). Democracy without Illusions. *Foreign Affairs*, *76*(1), 85. https://doi.org/10.2307/20047911
Carothers, T. (2002). The End of the Transition Paradigm. *Journal of Democracy*, *13*(1), 5–21.
Carothers, T. (2007). How Democracies Emerge: The "Sequencing" Fallacy. *Journal of Democracy*, *18*(1), 12–27.
Carothers, T., & Hartnett, B. (2024). Misunderstanding Democratic Backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, *35*(3), 24–37.
Carothers, T., & O'Donohue, A. (2020). *Political Polarization in South and Southeast Asia: Old Divisions, New Dangers*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2020/08/political-polarization-in-south-and-southeast-asia-old-divisions-new-dangers?lang=en
Carson, A., & Gibbons, A. (2023). The Big Chill? How Journalists and Sources Perceive and Respond to Fake News Laws in Indonesia and Singapore. *Journalism Studies*, *24*(14), 1819–1838. https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2023.2192299
Carter, E. B., & Carter, B. L. (2021). Propaganda and Protest in Autocracies. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *65*(5), 919–949. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002720975090
Cartledge, P. (2018). *Democracy: A Life*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
Case, W. (1995). *Comparing Regime Continuation and Change: Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia*. Australian National University: Department of Political and Social Change, online: https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/156626005.pdf.
Case, W. F. (2001). THAI DEMOCRACY, 2001. *Out of Equilibrium*. *Asian Survey*, *41*(3), 525–547. https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2001.41.3.525
Casiple, R. C. (2016). The Duterte Presidency as a Phenomenon. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *38*(2), 179–184
Cassani, A., & Tomini, L. (2019). *Autocratization in post-Cold War Political Regimes*. Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-03125-1
Cassani, A., & Tomini, L. (2020). *Trajectories and Modes of Autocratization in the Early 21st Century*. https://doi.org/10.1285/i20356609v13i3p1539
Castaldo, A., & Memoli, V. (2024). Political support and democratic backsliding trends. The strange case of Central and Eastern European countries. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, *32*(1), 138–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2023.2206115
Cayabyab, M.J. (2017). "Hontiveros charged with kidnapping, wiretapping." *Inquirer*, 25 September 2017, online: https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/933137/news-risa-hontiveros-jing-paras-kidnapping-wiretapping-obstruction-of-justice-ombudsman-vitaliano-aguirre.
Ceia, E. M. (2024). Populist Government and Judicial Power in Brazil in Times of the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Conflicting Relationship. In Kaidatzis, A. Kalampakou, E., Kamtsidou, I., Papastylianos, C., Stratilatis, C. (eds.), *The People's Constitution: The Populist Transformation of Constitutional Law?* (pp. 133-149). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
Cepeda, M. (2018) "Davao City police files child abuse complaint vs Makabayan congressmen." *Rappler*, 5 December 2018, online: https://www.rappler.com/philippines/218268-davao-city-police-child-abuse-complaint-antonio-tinio-ariel-casilao/.
Chachavalpongpun, P. (2011). Thaksin, the military, and Thailand's protracted political crisis. In: M. Mietzner (ed.), *The Political Resurgence of the Military in Southeast Asia*, Chapter 3. London: Routledge.
Chachavalpongpun, P. (2021). *Love and death of King Ananda Mahidol of Thailand*. Palgrave Macmillan.
Chaisty, P., Cheeseman, N., & Power, T. J. (2018). *Coalitional presidentialism in comparative perspective: Minority presidents in multiparty systems*. Oxford University Press.
Chaiwat, T., & Phongpaichit, P. (2008). Rents and rent-seeking in the Thaksin Era. In P. Phongpaichit & C. Baker (eds.), *Thai capital after the 1997 crisis*, pp. 249– 66. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
Chaloemtiarana, T. (2007). *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism*. Cornell University Press.
Chambers, P. (2005). Evolving Toward What? Parties, Factions, and Coalition Behavior in Thailand Today. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, *5*(3), 495–520.

Chambers, P. (2009). Superfluous, Mischievous, or Emancipating? Thailand's Evolving Senate Today. Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affiars, 28(3), 3-38.
Chambers, P. (2013). Unruly Boots: Military Power and Security Sector Reform Efforts in Thailand. *PRIF Report No.121*, online: https://www.prif.org/fileadmin/HSFK/hsfk_downloads/prif121.pdf.
Chambers, P., & Ufen, A. (2020). Causes, Effects, and Forms of Factionalism in Southeast Asia. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *39*(1), 3–16. https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103420916044
Chambers, P., & Waitoolkiat, N. (2016). The Resilience of Monarchised Military in Thailand. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *46*(3), 425–444. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2016.1161060
Chambers, P., Jitpiromsri, S., & Takahashi, K. (2023). The persevering power of provincial dynasties in Thai electoral politics. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, *8*(3), 787–807. https://doi.org/10.1177/20578911221142132
Chambers, P., Jitpiromsri, S., and Waitoolkiat, N. (2019). Introduction: Conflict on the Deep South of Thailand: Never-ending Stalemate? *Asian International Studies Review, 20*, 1-23.
Chandhoke, N. (2007). Civil society. *Development in Practice*, *17*(4–5), 607–614. https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520701469658
Chattharakul, A. (2010). Thai Electoral Campaigning: Vote-Canvassing Networks and Hybrid Voting. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 29(4), 67-95. https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341002900404
Chaudhry, S. (2022). The Assault on Civil Society: Explaining State Crackdown on NGOs. *International Organization*, *76*(3), 549–590. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818321000473
Chaudhry, S., & Heiss, A. (2021). Dynamics of International Giving: How Heuristics Shape Individual Donor Preferences. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *50*(3), 481–505. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764020971045
Chauvel, R. (2021). West Papua: Indonesia's last regional conflict. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, *32*(6), 913–944. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2021.1990491
Cheelo, C., & Hinfelaar, M. (2020). Bank of Zambia's autonomy amidst political turnovers in Zambia. E*SID Working Paper 153*. Manchester: Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre, The University of Manchester.
Cheeseman, N., & Dodsworth, S. (2023). Defending Civic Space: When are Campaigns against Repressive Laws Successful? *The Journal of Development Studies*, *59*(5), 619–636. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2022.2162882
Cheeseman, N., & Larmer, M. (2015). Ethnopopulism in Africa: Opposition mobilization in diverse and unequal societies. *Democratization*, *22*(1), 22-50.
Chesterley, N., & Roberti, P. (2018). Populism and institutional capture. *European Journal of Political Economy*, *53*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2017.06.004
Cheung, A. Y. H. (2018). *An Introduction to Abusive Legalism*. LawArXiv. https://doi.org/10.31228/osf.io/w9a6r
Choi, H. J., & Kim, D. (2018). Coup, riot, war: How political institutions and ethnic politics shape alternative forms of political violence. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *30*(4), 718–739. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2016.1228631
Christensen, D., & Weinstein, J. M. (2013). Defunding Dissent: Restrictions on Aid to NGOs. *Journal of Democracy*, *24*(2), 77–91. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2013.0026
Chua, Y. T., & Labiste, M. D. (2020). Duterte's Polemic Against the Catholic Church as Hate Speech. *Plaridel*, *17*(1).
Chull Shin, D. (2021). Democratic deconsolidation in East Asia: Exploring system realignments in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. *Democratization*, *28*(1), 142–160. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1826438
Chung, R. (2023). The Omnibus Law: The latest amendment and its impact. *IR Global*, 7 June 2023, online: https://irglobal.com/article/the-omnibus-law-the-latest-amendment-and-its-impact/
Cinelli, M., De Francisci Morales, G., Galeazzi, A., Quattrociocchi, W., & Starnini, M. (2021). The echo chamber effect on social media. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *118*(9), e2023301118. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2023301118
Civicus. (2019). 2019 State of Civil Society Report. *Civicus*, online: https://www.civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report-2019.
Civicus. (2020). 2020 State of Civil Society Report. *Civicus*, online: https://www.civicus.org/index.php/state-of-civil-society-report-2020.
Civicus. (2022). "Indonesian Authorities Criminalise Activists, Violently Suppress Protests Around Papua." *Civicus*, 19 May 2022, online: https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/indonesian-authorities-criminalise-activists-violently-suppress-protests-around-papua/.

Civicus. (2023). “Indonesia: Government Continues To Jail Papuan Activists, Criminalise Dissent And Target Journalists.” *Civicus*, 28 June 2023, online: https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/indonesia-government-continues-to-jail-papuan-activists-criminalise-dissent-and-target-journalists/.
Clayton, A., Oakley, P. & Taylor, J. (2002). Civil Society Organizations and Service Provision‖. *Civil Society and Social Movements Programme Paper Number 2*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
CMFR. (2020). “State of Media Freedom in PH.” *CMFR*, 3 May 2020, online: https://cmfr-phil.org/press-freedom-protection/state-of-media-freedom-in-ph/.
CNN. (2024). “Brazil’s Bolsonaro and allies indicted in 2022 coup plot probe.” *CNN*, 22 November 2024, online: https://edition.cnn.com/2024/11/21/americas/brazilian-ex-president-jair-bolsonaro-indicted-over-attempted-coup-plot/index.html.
Coca. (2016). “Indonesia’ Anti-Corruption Commission: The KPK.” *Centre for Public Impact*, online: https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study/indonesias-anti-corruption-commission-the-kpk
Collier, D. (2011). Understanding Process Tracing. *PS Political Science & Politics*, 44 (4), pp. 823–30.
Collier, D., & Mahoney, J. (1996). Insights and Pitfalls. Selection Bias in Qualitative Research. *World Politics*, 49(1), 56-91.
Collier, D., Brady, H. E., & Seawright, J. (2004). Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology. In H. E. Brady & D. Collier (Eds.), *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards* (pp. 229–266). Rowman and Littlefield.
Collier, D., Brady, H. E., & Seawright, J. (2010). Outdated Views of Qualitative Methods: Time to Move On. *Political Analysis*, *18*(4), 506–513.
Collier, R. B., & Collier, D. (1991). Critical Junctures and Historical Legacies. *SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 1750509*. Social Science Research Network.
Commission on Human Rights. (2019). *The Haran Report. On Human Rights Violations Against the Lumad of Mindanao*. Quezon City: Commission on Human Rights. https://chr2bucket.storage.googleapis.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/08164400/The-Haran-Report-2019-FINAL-REY-2019-12-04.pdf
Commission on Human Rights. (2020a). “Statement of CHR Spokesperson, Atty Jacqueline Ann de Guia, clarifying CHR’s mandate on upholding the human rights of all.” *Commission on Human Rights*, 30 September 2020, online: https://chr.gov.ph/statement-of-chr-spokesperson-atty-jacqueline-ann-de-guia-clarifying-chrs-mandate-on-upholding-the-human-rights-of-all/
Commission on Human Rights. (2020b). “Report On The Situation Of Human Rights Defenders In The Philippines.” *Commission on Human Rights*, July 2020, online: https://chr2bucket.storage.googleapis.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/08165055/CHRP-2020-Report-on-the-Situation-of-Human-Rights-Defenders.pdf
Commission on Human Rights. (2022). *Report on investigated killings in relation to the anti-illegal drug campaign*. Quezon City: Commission on Human Rights. https://chr2bucket.storage.googleapis.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/08154849/CHR-National-Report-April-2022-Full-Final.pdf
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). (2004). “Attacks on the Press 2003: Thailand.” *CPJ*, 11 March 2004, online: https://cpj.org/2004/03/attacks-on-the-press-2003-thailand/.
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). (2006). “Renewing a battle, Thai government lashes out at media owner.” *CPJ*, 27 January 2006, online: https://cpj.org/2006/01/renewing-a-battle-thai-government-lashes-out-at-me/.
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). (2019). “Global Impunity Index 2019.” *CPJ*, online: https://cpj.org/reports/2019/10/getting-away-with-murder-killed-justice/.
Congress of the Philippines. (2016). *Congress of the Philippines. Joint Public Session. Resolution of Both Houses No. 1*. Metro Manila: Republic of the Philippines. http://legacy.senate.gov.ph/16th_congress/resolutions/joint%20public%20session%20res%20both%20houses%20no.1.pdf.
Connors, M. K. (2006). Thaksin’s Thailand: Thai Politics in 2003-04. In Hogue, C. (ed.), *Thailand's economic recovery*, pp.26-45. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
Connors, M. K. (2008). Thailand-Four elections and a coup. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, *62*(4), 478–496. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357710802480717
Constitution of the Philippines. (1987). *Official Gazette: The 1987 Constitution Of The Republic Of The Philippines – Article XVII. Amendments or Revisions.* Philippines: National Printing Office, online: https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines-article-xvii/.
Cooley, A. (2015). Authoritarianism Goes Global: Countering Democratic Norms. *Journal of Democracy*, *26*(3), 49–63.

Copeland, M.P. (2021). Thai anti-colonialism: Economic nationalism and the end of the Chakri imperium. *Journal of Asia Pacific Studies, 6*(1).
Coppedge, M. (2017). Eroding Regimes: What, Where, and When? *SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 3066677*. Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3066677
Coppedge, M., Edgell, A. B., Knutsen, C. H., & Lindberg, S. I. (Eds.). (2022). *Why Democracies Develop and Decline*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009086974
Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Glynn, A., Knutsen, C. H., Lindberg, S. I., Pemstein, D., ... & Tzelgov, E. (2020). *Varieties of democracy: Measuring two centuries of political change*. Cambridge University Press.
Coren, A., Sit, J., & Regan, H. (2019). "President Joko Widodo says Islam in Indonesia is 'tolerant' as rights groups warn of rising fundamentalism." *CNN World*, 28 July 2019, online: https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/27/asia/indonesia-joko-widodo-interview-intl-hnk/index.html.
Coronel, S.S. (2017). "Are Priests Duterte's Fiercest Foes?" *New York Times*, 4 August 2017, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/04/opinion/are-priests-dutertes-fiercest-foes.html.
Coronel, S.S. (2019). "The Vigilante President. How Duterte's Brutal Populism Conquered the Philippines." *Foreign Affairs,* September/October 2019, online: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/philippines/2019-08-12/vigilante-president.
Coronel, S.S., Chua, Y.T., Cruz, B.B., & Rimban L. (2004). *How the Wealthy and Well-Born Dominate Congress*. Quezon City: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism.
Corrales, J. (2015). The Authoritarian Resurgence: Autocratic Legalism in Venezuela. *Journal of Democracy*, *26*(2), 37–51.
Corrales, J. (2020). Democratic backsliding through electoral irregularities: The case of Venezuela. *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y Del Caribe*, *109*, 41–65.
Corrales, J., & Penfold-Becerra, M. (2011). *Dragon in the Tropics: Hugo Chavez and the Political Economy of Revolution in Venezuela*. Brookings Institution Press.
Corsino, M. F. (1980). Prospects For Normalization In The Philippines. *Southeast Asian Affairs,* 259–269.
Cox, G. (1990). Electoral Laws And Electoral Competition. *Mathematical Social Sciences*, *20*(3), 302-302.
Cox, G. (1997). *Making Votes Count. Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
Cribb, R. (2011). A System of Exemptions: historicizing state illegality in Indonesia. In E. A. Aspinall &. G. Van Klinken (eds.), *The State and Illegality in Indonesia*, pp. 31-44. KITLV Press.
Croissant, A. & Dosch, J. (2001). Old Wine in New Bottlenecks? Elections in Thailand under the 1997 Constitution. *Leeds East Asia Papers, No. 63*. Leeds: Department of East Asian Studies, University of Leeds, http://www.leeds.ac.uk/east_asian/resources/content/Leap63.pdf.
Croissant, A. (2022). *Comparative Politics of Southeast Asia. An Introduction to Governments and Political Regimes, second edition*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
Croissant, A. (2022). Thailand: The Vicious Cycle of Civilian Government and Military Rule. In A. Croissant, *Comparative Politics of Southeast Asia* (pp. 315–359). Wiesbaden: Springer.
Croissant, A., & Haynes, J. (2021). Democratic regression in Asia: Introduction. *Democratization*, *28*(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1851203
Croissant, A., & Tomini, L. (2024). *The Routledge Handbook of Autocratization*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003306900
Crossette, B. (2016). "Bhumibol Adulyadej, 88, People's King of Thailand, Dies After 7-Decade Reign." *The New York Times*, 13 October 2016, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/14/world/asia/thai-king-bhumibol-adulyadej-dies.html.
Crouch, H. A. (2010). *Political Reform in Indonesia After Soeharto*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
Crozier, M. J., Preston, N., & Glade, T. (2013). Antecedent Conditions. In P. T. Bobrowsky (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Natural Hazards* (pp. 10–13). Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-4399-4_13
Cruz, C.L.P., Sison III, Conrado B. & Manalo, J.J. (2019). Dynasties or Non-Dynasties? A Comparative Case Study of Mandaluyong City and Muntinlupa City towards the Achievement of Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. *Assemblea: An Online Journal of Political Science,* 1(1).
Cunninham, P.J. (2004). "Government Pressure and Thailand's Press." *Nieman Reports*, 15 June 2014, online: https://niemanreports.org/government-pressure-and-thailands-press/.
Curaming, R., & Lisandro, C. (2010). *A Historicised (Re)Assessment of EDSA 'People Power' (1986), Asia Research Institute Working Paper 134*. Singapore: National University of Singapore.

Curato, N. (2016). Politics of anxiety, politics of hope: Penal populism and Duterte's rise to power. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *35*(3), 91-109.
Curato, N. (2018). The Power and Limits of Populism in the Philippines. *Current History*, *117*(800), 209–214.
Da Costa, A. & Widianto, S. (2021). "Indonesian internet blocks amid social unrest lawful, court rules." *Reuters*, 27 October 2021, online: https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/indonesian-internet-blocks-amid-social-unrest-lawful-court-rules-2021-10-27/.
Dahl, R. A. (1971). *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. Yale University Press.
Dahlberg, S., Linde, J., & Holmberg, S. (2014). Democratic Discontent in Old and New Democracies: Assessing the Importance of Democratic Input and Governmental Output. *Political Studies,* 63(1_suppl), 18-37. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12170
Dalpino, C. E. (2002). Indonesia's Democratic Difficulty: The Center Will Not Hold. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, *9*(1), 85-94.
Daly, T. G. (2022). "Good" Court-Packing? The Paradoxes of Constitutional Repair in Contexts of Democratic Decay. *German Law Journal*, *23*(8), 1071–1103. doi:10.1017/glj.2022.75.
Darling, F. C. (1978). Thailand in 1977: The Search for Stability and Progress. *Asian Survey*, *18*(2), 153–163. https://doi.org/10.2307/2643309
Dartanto, T. (2018). "How economic conditions affected voting in the 2014 election." *Indonesia at Melbourne*, online: https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/did-economic-conditions-affect-voting-behaviour-in-the-2014-election/
Davenport, C. (1995). Multi-Dimensional Threat Perception and State Repression: An Inquiry into Why States Apply Negative Sanctions. *American Journal of Political Science*, *39*(3), 683–713. https://doi.org/10.2307/2111650
Davenport, C. (2007a). State Repression and Political Order. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *10*(Volume 10, 2007), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.101405.143216
Davenport, C. (2007b). *State Repression and the Domestic Democratic Peace*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511510021
Davenport, C. (2007c). State Repression and the Tyrannical Peace. *Journal of Peace Research*, *44*(4), 485–504. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343307078940
Davenport, C. and Armstrong, D.A., II. (2004). Democracy and the Violation of Human Rights: A Statistical Analysis from 1976 to 1996. *American Journal of Political Science, 48*: 538-554. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0092-5853.2004.00086.x
David, C. C., & Legara, E. F. T. (2017). How voters combine candidates on the ballot: The case of the Philippine senatorial elections. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research,* 29(1), 70-94.
David, R. (2016). Dutertismo. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, *1*, 39-68.
Davies, B, (2015). Financial Sustainability and Funding Diversification: The Challenge for Indonesian NGOs. *Cardno*, online: https://www.ksi-indonesia.org/assets/uploads/original/2020/02/ksi-1580493181.pdf.
Davies, N. (2016b). "The $10bn question: what happened to the Marcos millions?" *The Guardian*, 7 May 2016, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/07/10bn-dollar-question-marcos-millions-nick-davies.
Davies, S. (2016a). "Indonesia's anti-LGBT panic." *East Asia Forum,* 15 July 2016, online: https://eastasiaforum.org/2016/07/15/indonesias-anti-lgbt-panic/.
De Castro, R. C. (2016). The Duterte Administration's Foreign Policy: Unravelling the Aquino Administration's Balancing Agenda on an Emergent China. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *35*(3), 139–159. https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341603500307
De Castro, R.C. (2013). 21st century Philippine Civil-Military Relations: Why Partnership instead of Subordindation? *50th Anniversary Issue of National Security Review: The Study of Philippine National Security at 50,* 134-161.
De Jaegher, K., & Hoyer, B. (2018). Preemptive repression: Deterrence, backfiring, iron fists, and velvet gloves. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 63*(2), 502–527. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717750450
De Juan, A., Haass, F., & Pierskalla, J. (2021). The partial effectiveness of indoctrination in autocracies: evidence from the German Democratic Republic. *World Politics*, 73(4), 593-628.
De Mesquita, B. (2005). The Quality of Terror. *American Journal of Political Science, 49*(3), 515-530.
De Mesquita, B. et al. (2003). *The Logic of Political Survival*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
De Silva, N., & Plagis, M. A. (2023). NGOs, international courts, and state backlash against human rights accountability: Evidence from NGO mobilization against Tanzania at the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. *Law & Society Review*, *57*(1), 36–60. https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12639
De Votta, N. (2021). Sri Lanka: The Return to Ethnocracy. *Journal of Democracy*, *32*(1), 96–110.
De Votta, N. (2022). Sri Lanka's agony. *Journal of Democracy*, *33*(3), 92-99.

Deinla, I., & Dressel, B. (2019). Introduction: From Aquino II to Duterte: Change, Continuity - and Rupture. In I. Deinla & B. Dressel. (Ed.), *From Aquino II to Duterte (2010 - 2018): Change, Continuity - and Rupture*, pp. 1-36. ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814843294-006
Dela Cruz, E., & Morales, N.J. (2021). "Philippines' Supreme Court rules parts of terrorism law unconstitutional." *Reuters*, 9 December 2021, online: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-supreme-court-says-parts-anti-terror-law-unconstitutional-2021-12-09/.
Delgado, A. C. (2017). The TIPNIS Conflict in Bolivia. *Contexto Internacional*, *39*(2), 373–392. https://doi.org/10.1590/s0102-8529.2017390200009
Demirel-Pegg, T. (2018). The Gezi Park Protests and the Escalation and De-Escalation of Political Contention. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, *22*(1), 138–155. https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2018.1506298
Dénakpo, V. 2021. "The jailed candidate: What Madougou's case tells us about Benin." *African Arguments*, 29 September 2021, online: https://africanarguments.org/2021/09/the-jailed-candidate-what-madougous-case-tells-us-about-benin.
Desposato, S. (2005). "The Impact of Party switching on Legislative Behavior in Brazil." *Paper prepared for the Research Group on Legislative Party Switching Conference, Charlottesville, Virginia, July 10-14, 2005.*
Deutsche Welle (DW). (2019a). "Deaths reported in Indonesia post-election riots." *DW*, 22 May 2019, online: https://www.dw.com/en/indonesia-election-deaths-reported-as-protesters-clash-with-police/a-48823682.
Deutsche Welle (DW). (2019b). „Indonesia blocks internet in Papua provinces." *DW*, 22 August 2019, online: https://www.dw.com/en/indonesia-blocks-internet-in-papua-amid-unrest/a-50120468.
Deutsche Welle. (2017) "Philippines cuts rights body budget to $20." *DW*, 13 September 2017, online: https://www.dw.com/en/philippines-commission-on-human-rights-budget-cut-to-20-amid-deadly-war-on-drugs/a-40476874.
Dhakidae, D. (1991). *The State, the Rise of Capital and the Fall of Political Journalism: Political Economy of Indonesian News Economy*. University Microfilms.
Diamond, L. (1997). *The end of the third wave and the global future of democracy*. Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS), Wien.
Diamond, L. (1999). *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. JHU Press.
Diamond, L. (2002). Elections Without Democracy: Thinking About Hybrid Regimes. *Journal of Democracy*, *13*(2), 21–35.
Diamond, L. (2008). The Democratic Rollback: The Resurgence of the Predatory State. *Foreign Affairs*, *87*(2), 36–48.
Diamond, L. (2011). Democracy's Third Wave Today. *Current History*, *110*(739), 299–307.
Diamond, L. (2021). Democratic regression in comparative perspective: Scope, methods, and causes. *Democratization*, *28*(1), 22–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1807517
Dick, H., & Mulholland, J. (2016). The Politics of Corruption in Indonesia. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, *17*(1), 43–49.
Ding, I., & Slater, D. (2021). Democratic decoupling. *Democratization*, *28*(1), 63–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1842361
Diprose, R., & Azca, M. N. (2019). Past communal conflict and contemporary security debates in Indonesia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *49*(5), 780-805.
Diprose, R., McRae, D., & Hadiz, V. R. (2019). Two decades of reformasi in Indonesia: its illiberal turn. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *49*(5), 691-712.
Divinagracia, A.A.G. (2020). "Rodrigo Duterte's Toolbox of Media Co-optation: The mainstream media vs. illiberal democracy in social media." *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, 27(2020), online: https://kyotoreview.org/issue-27/dutertes-toolbox-of-media-co-optation-mainstream-media-vs-illiberal-democracy-in-social-media/.
Dixon, R., & Landau, D. E. (2021). *Abusive constitutional borrowing: Legal globalization and the subversion of liberal democracy*, *first edition*. Oxford University Press.
do Nascimento Cunha, M. (2023). "Brazil above everything. God above everyone." Political-religious fundamentalist expressions in digital media in times of ultra-right populism in Brazil. *International Journal of Communication, 17,*2841–2863. http://ijoc.org.
Donno, D. (2013). Elections and Democratization in Authoritarian Regimes. *American Journal of Political Science*, *57*(3), 703–716. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12013
Doronila, A. (1983). *The Philippine media after Marcos: social dialogue or chaotic pluralism*. Canberra: Australian National University.
DPR. (2024). The House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia. About the House. *The House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia*, online: https://www.dpr.go.id/en/tentang/tugas-wewenang.

Dressel, B. (2009). Thailand's Elusive Quest for a Workable Constitution, 1997–2007. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *31*(2), 296. https://doi.org/10.1355/cs31-2e
Dressel, B. (2010). Judicialization of politics or politicization of the judiciary? Considerations from recent events in Thailand. *The Pacific Review*, *23*(5), 671–691. https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2010.521253
Dressel, B. (2014). Governance, Courts and Politics in Asia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *44*(2), 259–278. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2013.870827
Dressel, B., & Bonoan, C.R. (2019). Southeast Asia's Troubling Elections: Duterte Versus the Rule of Law. Journal of Democracy 30(4), 134-148. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jod.2019.0057.
Dressel, B., & Inoue, T. (2018). Megapolitical Cases before the Constitutional Court of Indonesia since 2004: An Empirical Study. *Constitutional Review*, *4*(2), 157. https://doi.org/10.31078/consrev421
Dressel, B., & Susilo, F. (2023). "Presidential Democracies." In P.J. Yap & R. Abeyratne (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Asian Parliaments*, pp. 82–99. London and New York: Routledge.
Dressel, B., & Tonsakulrungruang, K. (2019). Coloured judgements? The work of the Thai constitutional court, 1998–2016. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *49*(1), 1-23.
Duerksen, M. (2021). "The Dismantling of Benin's Democracy." Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 27 April 2021, online: https://africacenter.org/spotlight/dismantling-benin-democracy/.
Dukalskis, A. (2021). *Making the World Safe for Dictatorship*. Oxford University Press.
Dulay, D., Hicken, A., Menon, A., & Holmes, R. (2023). Continuity, history, and identity: Why Bongbong Marcos won the 2022 Philippine presidential election. *Pacific Affairs*, *96*(1), 85-104.
Dunn, J. (2005). *Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy*. New York: Atlantic Books.
Dupuy, K., Ron, J., & Prakash, A. (2016). Hands Off My Regime! Governments' Restrictions on Foreign Aid to Non-Governmental Organizations in Poor and Middle-Income Countries. *World Development*, *84*, 299–311. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2016.02.001
Dwyer, P., & Zeilig, L., (2012). *African struggles today: Social movements since independence*. Haymarket Books.
Eddyono, L. W. (2018). The Constitutional Court and Consolidation of Democracy in Indonesia. *Jurnal Konstitusi*, *15*(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.31078/jk1511
Edel, M. (2019). Lying, Denying, or Justifying?: Rethinking Authoritarian Repression Strategies in Light of Ben Ali's Tunisia. *Middle East Law and Governance*, *11*(1), 38–64. https://doi.org/10.1163/18763375-01101001
Edgell, A. B., Wilson, M. C., Boese, V. A., & Grahn, S. (2020). Democratic Legacies: Using Democratic Stock to Assess Norms, Growth, and Regime Trajectories. *SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 3595957*. Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3595957
Edgell, Amanda A.B., Matthew C. Wilson, Vanessa A. Boese, and Sandra Grahn. (2020). "Democratic Legacies: Using Democratic Stock to Assess Norms, Growth, and Regime Trajectories." *V-Dem Users Working Paper Series* 100, (2020): 1–38.
Efrat, A., & Yair, O. (2024). Foreign Agents? Public Attitudes toward NGOs in a Backsliding Democracy. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4726158
Eissenstat, H. (2017). Erdoğan as autocrat: A very Turkish tragedy. *en POMED, Project on Middle East Democracy*. https://mideastdc.org/publication/report-erdogan-as-autocrat-a-very-turkish-tragedy/.
Ekim, S., & Kirisci, K. (2017). The Turkish constitutional referendum, explained. *Brookings Institution,* 13 April 2017, online: https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-turkish-constitutional-referendum-explained/.
Elkins, Z., Ginsburg, T., & Melton, J. (2009). *The Endurance of National Constitutions*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511817595
EngageMedia. (2020). Online critics of Indonesia's Omnibus Law face arrests, harassment, and more. *EngageMedia*, 13 October 2020, online: https://engagemedia.org/2020/indonesia-omnibus-law/
Erdem B. (2018). Turkey's Democratic Breakdown and Press Freedom. *Global Media Journal 2018*, 16(30).
Escribà-Folch, A. (2013). Repression, political threats, and survival under autocracy. *International Political Science Review*, *34*(5), 543–560. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512113488259
Esguerra, C.V. (2018). "Holding peace talks in PH 'recipe for destruction': NDFP consultant." *ABS-CBN News*, 19 June 2018, online: https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/06/19/18/holding-peace-talks-in-ph-recipe-for-destruction-ndfp-consultant.
Falleti, T. G., & Lynch, J. F. (2009). Context and Causal Mechanisms in Political Analysis. *Comparative Political Studies*, *42*(9), 1143–1166. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009331724

Falleti, T. G., & Mahoney, J. (2015). The comparative sequential method. In J. Mahoney & K. Thelen (Eds.), *Advances in Comparative-Historical Analysis (Strategies for Social Inquiry)* (pp. 211–239). Cambridge University Press.
Fauzan, I., Arifin, A., Dalimunthe, M. A., & Rahmadani, S. (2023). The configuration of ethnic and religious relations towards the 2024 general election: A case study in Medan, Indonesia. *Multidisciplinary Science Journal*, *6*(2), 2024006. https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2024006
Fealy, G. (2011). Indonesian politics in 2011: Democratic regression and Yudhoyono's regal incumbency. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, *47*(3), 333–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2011.619050
Fealy, G. (2018). *Strangers Next Door?: Indonesia and Australia in the Asian Century*. Hart Publishing. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781509918195
Fealy, G. (2020). Jokowi in the Covid-19 era: Repressive pluralism, dynasticism and the overbearing state. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, *56*(3), 301-323.
Fegan B. (1993). Entrepreneurs in votes and violence: three generations of a peasant political family. In McCoy A. (Ed), *An anarchy of families: State and family in the Philippines* (pp. 33-108). University of Wisconsin Center for Southeast Asian Studies.
Feith, H. (1962). *The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Fernando, H., Galuh Larasati, Y., Abdullah, I., Jubba, H., Mugni, A., & Persadha, P. D. (2023). The de-existence of Islamic political parties in general elections: A case study of Indonesia as a Muslim-majority country. *Cogent Social Sciences*, *9*(1), 2225838. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2225838
Fernando, U. (2020). "Facing a Pandemic at a Time of Elections and Cricket: Socio- Political Consequences of Sri Lanka's COVID-19 Curfew." *The Asia-Pacific Journal, 18*(15/13), 1-10. https://doam.org/images/archiv/fernando_facing_a_pandemic_srilanka.pdf.
Ferrara, F. (2014). Unfinished business: The contagion of conflict over a century of Thai political development. In Chachavalpongpun, P. (ed.), *Good Coup" Gone Bad: Thailand's Political Development since Thaksin's Downfall*, 17-46. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.
Ferrara, F. (2015). *The Political Development of Modern Thailand.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
Fineman, D. (1997). A Special Relationship: The United States and Military Government in Thailand, 1947-1958. University of Hawai'i Press
Fionna, U., & Tomsa, D. (2017). Parties and Factions in Indonesia: The Effects of Historical Legacies and Institutional Engineering. 2017. *ISEAS Wotking Paper 2017*(1).
Fionna, U., & Tomsa, D. (2020). Changing Patterns of Factionalism in Indonesia: From Principle to Patronage. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *39*(1), 39–58. https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103419896904
Firdaus, F. (2020). "Indonesian police arrest hundreds during protests against labour law." *The Guardian*, 7 October 2020, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/07/indonesia-police-use-water-cannon-and-teargas-to-disperse-labour-law-protests.
Firman, T. (2009). Decentralization Reform And Local-Government Proliferation In Indonesia: Towards A Fragmentation Of Regional Development. *Review of Urban & Regional Development Studies*, *21*(2–3), 143–157. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-940X.2010.00165.x
Flew, T., & Iosifidis, P. (2020). Populism, globalisation and social media. *International Communication Gazette, 82*(1), 7-25. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048519880721
Floyd, R. (2015). Extraordinary or ordinary emergency measures: What, and who, defines the "success" of securitization? *Cambridge Review of International Affairs,* 29, 677-694.
Foa, R. S. (2021). Why Strongmen Win in Weak States. *Journal of Democracy*, *32*(1), 52–65.
Foa, R., & Mounk, Y. (2016). The Danger of Deconsolidation: The Democratic Disconnect. *Journal of Democracy*, *27*(3), 5-17.
Fonbuena, C. (2020). "Philippines moves to strip biggest media group of its franchise." *The Guardian*, 10 February 2020, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/10/philippines-moves-strip-biggest-media-group-franchise-abs-cbn.
Fong, B. C. H. (2023). What's driving the democratic recession in Asia? *International Affairs*, *99*(3), 1273–1291. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiad076
Fonseka, B. (2024). *Racism As A Risk Factor For Atrocity Crimes: A Case Study on Sri Lanka.* GIJTR. https://gijtr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Global-Racism-and-Atrocity-Crimes-Sri-Lanka-Case-Study-EN.pdf.

Fonseka, B., Ganeshathasan, L. and Welikala, A. (2021). Sri Lanka: Pandemic-catalyzed democratic backsliding. In V.V. Ramraj (Ed.), *Covid-19 in Asia: Law and policy context*, pp. 349-364. Oxford University Press,.
Fossati, D. (2019). The Resurgence of Ideology in Indonesia: Political Islam, Aliran and Political Behaviour. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *38*(2), 119–148. https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103419868400
Fossati, D., & Mietzner, M. (2019). Analyzing Indonesia's Populist Electorate. *Asian Survey*, *59*(5), 769–794. https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2019.59.5.769
Fossati, D., Muhtadi, B., & Warburton, E. (2022). Why democrats abandon democracy: Evidence from four survey experiments. *Party Politics*, *28*(3), 554–566. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068821992488
Francisco, K. (2016, September 16). LOOK BACK: When the Senate said "no" to US bases renewal. *RAPPLER*. https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/146410-look-back-senate-no-us-base-renewal-1991/
Fraser, A. (2017). Post-populism in Zambia: Michael Sata's rise, demise and legacy. *International Political Science Review*, *38*(4), 456-472.
Freedom House. (2018a). "Freedom in the World 2018. Indonesia. Freedom House," online: https://freedomhouse.org/country/indonesia/freedom-world/2018
Freedom House. (2018b). "Freedom on the Net 2018 – Indonesia. Freedom House," online: https://freedomhouse.org/country/indonesia/freedom-net/2018
Freedom House. (2020). "Freedom in the World 2020. Benin." *Freedom House*, online: https://freedomhouse.org/country/benin/freedom-world/2020.
Freedom House. (2023). "Freedom on the Net 2023. Indonesia." *Freedom House*, online: https://freedomhouse.org/country/indonesia/freedom-net/2023.
Freedom House. (2024). "Freedom in the World 2024. Turkey." *Freedom House*, online: https://freedomhouse.org/country/turkey/freedom-world/2024.
Freeman, W. (2020). Sidestepping the constitution: executive aggrandizement in Latin America and East Central Europe. *Const. Stud.,* 6, 35.
Friedman, E. (2019). *The Politics of Democratization: Generalizing East Asian Experiences*. Routledge.
Friedman, J. N., & Holden, R. (2020). Optimal Gerrymandering in a competitive environment. *Economic Theory Bulletin*, *8*(2), 347–367. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40505-020-00188-3
Fröhlich, C., & Skokova, Y. (2020). Two for One: Public Welfare and Regime Legitimacy Through State Funding for CSOs in Russia. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *31*(4), 698–709. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-020-00203-y
Fuglerud, Ø. (2020). Landscape of Repressed Memories: Triumphalism and Counter-Historical Narratives in Sri Lanka's Former War Zone. In Ø. Fuglerud, K. Larsen, and M. Prusac-Lindhagen (eds.), *Negotiating Memory from the Romans to the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 230-245. Routledge.
Fukuoka, Y. (2013a). Local Politics in Indonesia: Pathways to Power. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *43*(1), 186–188. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2012.721664
Fukuoka, Y. (2013b). Oligarchy and Democracy in Post-Suharto Indonesia. *Political Studies Review*, *11*(1), 52–64. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-9302.2012.00286.x
Fukuoka, Y., & Djani, L. (2016). Revisiting the rise of Jokowi: The triumph of reformasi or an oligarchic adaptation of post-clientelist initiatives?. *South East Asia Research*, *24*(2), 204-221.
Fukuyama, F. (1989). The End of History? *The National Interest*, *16*, 3–18.
Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man: With a new afterword*. Free Press.
Fukuyama, F. (2015). Why Is Democracy Performing So Poorly? *Journal of Democracy*, *26*(1), 11–20.
Funston, J. (2002). THAILAND: Thaksin Fever. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 305–325.
Gall, C. (2019). "Erdogan's Purges Leave Turkey's Justice System Reeling." *The New York Times,* 21 June 2019, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/21/world/asia/erdogan-turkey-courts-judiciary-justice.html.
Gamai, L. (2022). "L'écosystème des fausses informations au Benin: Une vue d'ensemble." *AfricaPortal*, 24 March 2022.
Gandhi, J. (2019). The Institutional Roots of Democratic Backsliding. *The Journal of Politics*, *81*(1), e11–e16. https://doi.org/10.1086/700653
Gandhi, J., & Ong, E. (2019). Committed or Conditional Democrats? Opposition Dynamics in Electoral Autocracies. *American Journal of Political Science*, *63*(4), 948–963. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12441
Ganeshathasan, L. (2021). Sri Lanka's Legal Response to COVID-19: Past Trends and Future Prospects. *Verfassungsblog: On Matters Constitutional*.

Garcia Holgado, B., & Sánchez Urribarri, R. (2023). Court-packing and democratic decay: A necessary relationship? *Global Constitutionalism*, *12*(2), 350–377. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2045381723000011
Garcia Rodriguez, D. (2024). Reimagining home and responsibility: The case of queer Indonesian Muslims. *Sexualities, 0*(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/13634607241248894
Gavilan, J. (2016). "The many firsts of president-elect Duterte." *Rappler*, 13 May 2016, online: https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/132862-rodrigo-duterte-president-firsts/.
Gavilan, J. (2017). "'My men' can snub your probe, Duterte tells CHR, Ombudsman." *Rappler*, 24 July 2017, online: https://www.rappler.com/philippines/176597-sona-2017-duterte-chr-ombudsman/.
Gavilan, J. (2019). "Who Are the Mayors, Vice Mayors Killed under Duterte?" *Rappler,* 11 July 2018, online: https://t1p.de/opyo.
Gavilan, J. (2022a). "They faced the worst crisis: CHR leadership who stood up to Duterte ends term." *Rappler*, 4 May 2022, online: https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/commission-human-rights-leadership-stood-up-to-duterte-ends-term/.
Gavilan, J. (2022b). "Duterte gov't stonewalled CHR's drug war probes." *Rappler*, 17 May 2022, online: https://www.rappler.com/philippines/duterte-government-stonewalled-commission-human-rights-drug-war-investigations/.
Geçer, E., & Mahinay, K.J. (2018). Framing The 'War On Drugs.' *The Philippines. Journal of Academic Inquiries / Akademik Incelemeler Dergisi, 2018*, 13(1).
Geddes, B. (1999). What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years? *Annual Review of Political Science*, *2*(1), 115–144. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.115
Geddes, B., & Zaller, J. (1989). Sources of Popular Support for Authoritarian Regimes. *American Journal of Political Science*, 33(2), 319-347.
Geddes, B., Wright, J., & Frantz, E. (2014). Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set. *Perspectives on Politics*, *12*(2), 313–331. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592714000851
George, A. L., & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences*. MIT Press.
Gerring, J. (2006). *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803123
Gerring, J. (2010). Causal Mechanisms: Yes, But.... *Comparative Political Studies*, *43*(11), 1499–1526. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414010376911
Gerschewski, J. (2013). The three pillars of stability: Legitimation, repression, and co-optation in autocratic regimes. *Democratization*, *20*(1), 13–38. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2013.738860
Gerschewski, J. (2021). Erosion or decay? Conceptualizing causes and mechanisms of democratic regression. *Democratization*, *28*(1), 43–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1826935
Ghani, F. (2018). "Duterte's war on drugs to become 'killing field' if goes on: CHR." *Al Jazeera*, 12 December 2018, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/12/dutertes-war-on-drugs-to-become-killing-field-if-goes-on-chr.
Ginsburg, T., & Huq, A. (2018). Democracy's Near Misses. *Journal of Democracy*, *29*(4), 16–30. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2018.0059
Ginsburg, T., & Moustafa, T. (2008). *Rule by Law: The Politics of Courts in Authoritarian Regimes*. Cambridge University Press.
Ginsburg, T., & Simpser, A. (2014). *Constitutions in authoritarian regimes*. Cambridge University Press.
Ginsburg, T., Elkins, Z., & Blount, J. (2009). Does the process of constitution-making matter? *Annual review of law and social science*, *5*(1), 201-223.
Girling, J. L. S. (1977). Thailand: The Coup and Its Implications. *Pacific Affairs*, *50*(3), 387. https://doi.org/10.2307/2757168
Gita, R.A. (2018). "Duterte creates task force to end local communist armed conflict." *SunStar*, 10 December 2018, online: https://www.sunstar.com.ph/manila/local-news/duterte-creates-task-force-to-end-local-communist-armed-conflict.
Glasius, M., Schalk, J., & De Lange, M. (2020). Illiberal Norm Diffusion: How Do Governments Learn to Restrict Nongovernmental Organizations? *International Studies Quarterly*, *64*(2), 453–468. https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqaa019
Glennan, S. S. (1996). Mechanisms and the nature of causation. *Erkenntnis*, *44*(1), 49–71. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00172853
Global Network Initiative (GNI). 2021. "GNI Expresses Concerns About and Calls on Indonesia to Reconsider the 'MR5' Regulation." *GNI*, 11 June 2021, online: https://globalnetworkinitiative.org/mr5-indonesia/.

Gloppen, S. (2018). Conceptualizing Lawfare: A Typology & Theoretical Framwork. *Working Paper*. Centre on Law & Social Trnasformation.
Goertz, G., & Mahoney, J. (2012). *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. Princeton University Press.
Goertz, G., & Mahoney, J. (2009). Scope in Case-Study Research. In D. Byrne, & C. C. Ragin (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Case-Based Methods,* pp. 307-317. Sage.
Goetz, A. M., & Jenkins, R. (2001). Hybrid forms of accountability: Citizen engagement in institutions of public-sector oversight in India. *Public Management Review, 3*(3), 363–383. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616670110051957
Goetz, A. M., & Jenkins, R. (2005). Reinventing accountability. In *Reinventing accountability* (pp. 17–42). Palgrave Macmillan.
Goetz, A. M., & Jenkins, R. (2005). *Reinventing Accountability*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230500143
Golden, M.A. (2003), Electoral connections: the effects of the personal vote on political patronage, bureaucracy and legislation in postwar Italy. *British Journal of Political Science*, 33(2), 189-212.
Gomez, M. (2022). Constitutional Struggle in Sri Lanka. *Federal Law Review*, *50*(2), 174-191.
Gonçalves, V. K., & Cafrune, M. E. (2023). Brazilian anti-indigenous politics: tracking changes on indigenous rights regulation during Bolsonaro's government. *Revista Direito e Práxis*, *14*(01), 436-457.
Gonzales, G. (2022). "Villar's ALLTV will live or die by its political past." *Rappler*, 1 October 2022, online: https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/alltv-network-will-live-die-by-political-past/.
Gonzalez Ocantos, E., & Sandholtz, W. (2021). International human rights courts and sources of resilience: The case of the Inter-American system. Law & Social Inquiry. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3816892.
Goodfellow, T. (2014). Legal manoeuvres and violence: Law making, protest and semi-authoritarianism in Uganda. *Development and Change, 45*(4), 753–776. https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12097
Gortázar, N. G. (2024). Lula returns democratic normality to Brazil after Bolsonaro's chaotic term. *EL PAÍS English*, 2 January 2024, online: https://english.elpais.com/international/2024-01-02/lula-returns-democratic-normality-to-brazil-after-bolsonaros-chaotic-term.html
Graber, D. A. (2015). Freedom of the press: Theories and realities. In K. Kenski & K. Hall Jamieson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political communication,* pp. 237-248. Oxford Academic.
Grabowska-Moroz, B., & Śniadach, O. (2021). The role of civil society in protecting judicial independence in times of rule of law backsliding in Poland. Utrecht Law Review, 17(2), 59–69. https://ssrn.com/abstract=3963277
Graham, M. H., & Svolik, M. W. (2020). Democracy in America? Partisanship, Polarization, and the Robustness of Support for Democracy in the United States. *American Political Science Review*, *114*(2), 392–409. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000052
Greenpeace. (2021). Coalruption. Shedding Light on Political Corruption in Indonesia's Coal Mining Sector. *Greenpeace*, online: https://www.greenpeace.org/static/planet4-indonesia-stateless/2018/12/727d7a2d-coalruption-english-web.pdf
Grillo, E., & Prato, C. (2023). Reference Points and Democratic Backsliding. *American Journal of Political Science*, *67*(1), 71–88. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12672
Grunebaum, D. (2023). „Nearly a Year into Office, Marcos Gets Mixed Analyst Reviews." *VOA News*, 8 June 2023, online: https://www.voanews.com/a/nearly-a-year-into-office-marcos-gets-mixed-analyst-reviews-/7128297.html.
Grzymala-Busse, A. (2011). Time Will Tell? Temporality and the Analysis of Causal Mechanisms and Processes. *Comparative Political Studies*, *44*(9), 1267–1297. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414010390653
Grzymala-Busse, A., & Luong, P. J. (2002). Reconceptualizing the State: Lessons from Post-Communism. *Politics & Society*, *30*(4), 529–554. https://doi.org/10.1177/003232902237825
Gulf News. (2019) "Meet Sheriff Abas, 40, youngest chief of the powerful Philippine election commission." *Gulf News,* 14 May 2019, online: https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/philippines/meet-sheriff-abas-40-youngest-chief-of-the-powerful-philippine-election-commission-1.1557838191205.
Gunawan, A.B. (2017). Civilian Control and Defense Policy in Indonesia's Nascent Democracy. In: Croissant, A., Kuehn, D. (eds) Reforming Civil-Military Relations in New Democracies. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-53189-2_7
Gunn, G. C. (1979). Ideology and the concept of government in the Indonesian New Order. *Asian Survey*, *19*(8), 751-769.
Guriev, S. M., & Treisman, D. (2022). *Spin dictators: The changing face of tyranny in the 21st century*. Princeton University Press.

Guriev, S., & Treisman, D. (2020). A theory of informational autocracy. *Journal of Public Economics*, *186*, 104158. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2020.104158
Gutierrez, E. (1992). *All in the Family: A Study of Elites and Power Relations in the Philippines*. Quezon City: Institute for Popular Democracy.
Gutierrez, J. (2020). "Leading Philippine Broadcaster, Target of Duterte's Ire, Forced Off the Air." *The New York Times*, 5 March 2020, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/05/world/asia/philippines-abs-cbn-duterte.html.
Guzzini, S. (2011). Securitization as a causal mechanism. *Security Dialogue, 42*, 329-341.
Hadiz, V. (2010). *Localising power in post-authoritarian Indonesia: A Southeast Asia perspective*. Stanford University Press.
Hadiz, V. R. (2000). Retrieving the Past for the Future? Indonesia and the New Order Legacy. *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, *28*(2), 11–33.
Hadiz, V. R. (2007). The Localization of Power in Southeast Asia. *Democratization*, *14*(5), 873–892. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340701635704
Hadiz, V. R., & Chryssogelos, A. (2017). Populism in world politics: A comparative cross-regional perspective. *International Political Science Review*, *38*(4), 399-411. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512117693908 (Original work published 2017)
Hadiz, V. R., & Robison, R. (2013). The political economy of oligarchy and the reorganization of power in Indonesia. *Indonesia*, *96*(1), 35-57.
Hadiz, V., & Robison, R. (2004). *Reorganising power in Indonesia: The politics of oligarchy in an age of markets (1st ed.)*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203401453
Hadiz, V.R. (1997). *Workers and the State in New Order Indonesia*. London & New York: Routledge.
Hadiz, VR. (2017). "Indonesia's Year of Democratic Setbacks: Towards a New Phase of Deepening Illiberalism?," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies, 53*(3), 261-278.
Hafidz, T.S. (2006). *Fading away?: the political role of the army in Indonesia's transition to democracy, 1998-2001*. Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University.
Haggard, S. (2000). *The political economy of the Asian financial crisis*. Washington D.C: Peterson Institute.
Haggard, S., & Kaufman, R. R. (2016). *Dictators and Democrats: Masses, Elites, and Regime Change*. Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1q1xs6z
Haggard, S., & Kaufman, R. R. (2021). The Anatomy of Democratic Backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, *32*(4), 27–41.
Haggard, S., & Tiede, L. (2024). Judicial backsliding: A guide to collapsing the separation of powers. *Democratization*, 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2024.2381092
Halimatusa'diyah, I., & Adam, R. (2024). Political buzzer networks as a threat to Indonesian democracy. *ISEAS Perspective, 2024(66)*. Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.
Hamid, U. (2017). Laws, crackdowns and control mechanisms: digital platforms and the state. In E. Jurriens (Ed.), *Digital Indonesia: Connectivity and Divergence*, pp. 93-109. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814786003-012
Hamid, U., & Gammon, L. (2017). "Jokowi forges a tool of repression." *New Mandala*, 13 July 2017, online: https://www.newmandala.org/jokowi-forges-tool-repression/
Hargens, B. (2020). "Oligarchic Cartelization in Post-Suharto Indonesia." *Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies*, online: https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/dissertations/7873
Haripin M (2021) Civil–military relations in post-authoritarian Indonesia: A turbulent Odyssey. In Al-Arian SA (ed.) *The Quest for Democracy: Examining Civil–Military Relations in Muslim Societies*, 291-303. Istanbul: Center for Islam and Global Affairs, Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University.
Haripin M, Anindya CR, & Priamarizki A. (2020). The politics of counter-terrorism in post-authoritarian states: Indonesia's experience, 1998–2018. *Defense & Security Analysis* 36(3): 275–299.
Haripin, M. & Priamarizki, A. (2023). "Jokowi consolidates influence over TNI as elections loom." *New Mandela,* 4 December 2023, online: https://www.newmandala.org/jokowi-consolidates-influence-over-tni-as-elections-loom/
Haripin, M. (2019). *Civil-military relations in Indonesia: The politics of military operations other than war*. Routledge.
Haripin, M., Priamarizki, A., & Nugroho, S. S. (2023). Quasi-civilian defence minister and civilian authority: The case study of Indonesia's Ministry of Defence during Joko Widodo's presidency. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, *8*(1), 164–183. https://doi.org/10.1177/20578911221141016
Harish, S. P., & Liow, J. C. (2007). The coup and the conflict in southern Thailand. *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 161-184.

Harsono, A. (2018). “The Human Cost of Indonesia’s Blasphemy Law.” *HRW*, 25 October 2018, online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/25/human-cost-indonesias-blasphemy-law.
Harsono, A. (2022). “Yet Another Victim of Indonesia’s Blasphemy Law. Former Government Minister Faces Prison for Allegedly Insulting Buddhism.” *HRW*, 12 August 2022, online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/12/yet-another-victim-indonesias-blasphemy-law.
Harsono, A., & Knight, K. (2018). “Scared in public and now no privacy”: Human rights and public health impacts of Indonesia’s anti-LGBT moral panic. *Human Rights Watch,* online: https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/accessible_document/indonesia0618_lgbt_web.pdf
Hassan, M. (2017). The Strategic Shuffle: Ethnic Geography, the Internal Security Apparatus, and Elections in Kenya. *American Journal of Political Science*, *61*(2), 382–395. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12279
Hassanpour, N. (2014). Media Disruption and Revolutionary Unrest: Evidence From Mubarak’s Quasi-Experiment. *Political Communication*, *31*(1), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2012.737439
Haynes, O. (2021). “Deadly ‘Red-Tagging’ Campaign Ramps Up in Philippines.” *VOA*, 18 February 2021, online: https://www.voanews.com/a/east-asia-pacific_deadly-red-tagging-campaign-ramps-philippines/6202221.html.
Hazama, Y., & Iba, Ş. (2017). Legislative agenda setting by a delegative democracy: Omnibus bills in the Turkish parliamentary system. *Turkish Studies*, *18*(2), 313–333. https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2016.1261022
Hedman, E.-L. (2006). *In the name of civil society. From Free Election Movements to People in the Phillippines*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
Hedman, E.-L., & Sidel, J. (2000). *Philippine Politics and Society in the Twentieth Century: Colonial Legacies, Post-Colonial Trajectories*. London & New York: Routledge.
Hedström, P., & Ylikoski, P. (2010). Causal Mechanisms in the Social Sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *36*(1), 49–67. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.012809.102632
Hegarty, B. (2022). Sex, crime and entertainment: Images of LGBT in the Indonesian news media. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, *50*(146), 33–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2022.2035074
Heiss, A., & Johnson, T. (2016). Internal, Interactive, and Institutional Factors: A Unified Framework for Understanding International Nongovernmental Organizations. *International Studies Review*, *18*(3), 528–541. https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viv014
Held, D. (2006). *Models of Democracy, 3rd edition*. Stanford University Press.
Helm, R. K., & Nasu, H. (2021). Regulatory Responses to ‘Fake News’ and Freedom of Expression: Normative and Empirical Evaluation. *Human Rights Law Review*, *21*(2), 302–328. https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngaa060
Helms, L. (2020). Leadership succession in politics: The democracy/autocracy divide revisited. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, *22*(2), 328–346. https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148120908528
Helms, L. (2023). Why do Parties Select Non-Partisan Ministers? The Paradox of Ministerial Selection in Austria. *Representation*, *59*(3), 513–530. https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2022.2111598
Hencken Ritter, E. (2014). Policy Disputes, Political Survival, and the Onset and Severity of State Repression. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *58*(1), 143–168.
Hernandez, C. G. (1988). The Philippines in 1987: Challenges of Redemocratization. *Asian Survey*, *28*(2), 229–241. https://doi.org/10.2307/2644824
Heryanto, A. (2003). *Popular Culture in Indonesia. Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics*. Routledge.
Hewison, K. (2007). Thailand after the “Good” Coup. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, *14*(1), 237–247.
Hewison, K. (2010). Thaksin Shinawatra and the Reshaping of Thai Politics. Contemporary Politics 16(2), 119–133.
Heydarian, R. J. (2018). “Bangsamoro Organic Law can be Duterte’s greatest legacy.” *Al Jazeera*, 1 August 2018, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/8/1/bangsamoro-organic-law-can-be-dutertes-greatest-legacy.
Hicken, A. (2006). Party fabrication: Constitutional reform and the rise of Thai Rak Thai. *Journal of East Asian Studies* 6: 381–407.
Hicken, A. (2009). *Building party systems in developing democracies*. Cambridge University Press.
Hicken, A. (2011). Clientelism. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *14*(1), 289–310. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.031908.220508
Hicken, A. (2018). The political party system 1. In M. Thompson & E.V. Batalla (eds.), *Routledge handbook of the contemporary Philippines*, pp. 38-54. Routledge.

Hicken, A., & Kuhonta, E. (2015). *Party System Institutionalization in Asia. Democracies, Autocracies, and the Shadows of the Past*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Hill, D. (1994). *The Press in New Order Indonesia*. Perth: University of Western Australia Press.
Himawan, E. M., Pohlman, A., & Louis, W. (2022). Revisiting the may 1998 riots in Indonesia: Civilians and their untold memories. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *41*(2), 240-257.
Hinfelaar, M., & Sichone, J. (2019). The challenge of sustaining a professional civil service amidst shifting political coalitions: the case of the Ministry of Finance in Zambia, 1991–2018. *Pockets of Effectiveness Working Paper No 6.* Manchester, UK: The University of Manchester.
Hinich, M. J., & Munger, M. C. (1994). *Ideology and the Theory of Political Choice*. University of Michigan Press. https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.13147
Holloway, J., & Manwaring, R. (2022). How well does 'resilience' apply to democracy? A systematic review. *Contemporary Politics*, *29*(1), 68–92. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2022.2069312
Holmes, R. D. (2016). The dark side of electoralism: Opinion polls and voting in the 2016 Philippine presidential election. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *35*(3), 15-38.
Holmes, R. D. (2019). The Myth of the Machine. *Electoral Dynamics in the Philippines: Money, Patronage and Clientelism at the Grassroots*, 44-61.
Horowitz, D. L. (2013). *Constitutional change and democracy in Indonesia*. Cambridge University Press.
Horz, C. M. (2021). Electoral Manipulation in Polarized Societies. *The Journal of Politics*, *83*(2), 483–497. https://doi.org/10.1086/709837
Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2004). "Not enough graves: The war on drugs, HIV/AIDS, and Violations of Human Rights." *Human Rights Watch*, 8 July 2004, online: https://www.hrw.org/report/2004/07/07/not-enough-graves/war-drugs-hiv/aids-and-violations-human-rights.
Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2008). "Thailand's 'war on drugs' International Harm Reduction Association and Human Rights Watch briefing paper." *Human Rights Watch*, 12 March 2008, online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/03/12/thailands-war-drugs
Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2013). *Word Report 2013: Indonesia,* online: https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/indonesia.
Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2015). "Something to Hide? Indonesia's Restrictions on Media Freedom and Rights Monitoring in Papua." *Human Rights Watch*, 10 November 2015, online: https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/11/11/something-hide/indonesias-restrictions-media-freedom-and-rights-monitoring-papua.
Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2016a). ""These Political Games Ruin Our Lives" Indonesia's LGBT Community Under Threat." *Human Rights Watch*, 16 August 2016, online: https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/08/11/these-political-games-ruin-our-lives/indonesias-lgbt-community-under-threat.
Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2016b). "Silencing Turkey's Media. The Government's Deepening Assault on Critical Journalism." *Human Rights Watch*, 15 December 2016, online: https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/12/15/silencing-turkeys-media/governments-deepening-assault-critical-journalism.
Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2019a). "Indonesia: Set Independent Inquiry into Jakarta Riots. 8 Protesters Fatally Shot." *HRW*, 31 May 2019, online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/05/31/indonesia-set-independent-inquiry-jakarta-riots.
Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2019b). "Indonesia: Draft Criminal Code Disastrous for Rights. Remove Provisions Harmful to Women, Minorities, Free Speech." *HRW*, 18 September 2019, online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/18/indonesia-draft-criminal-code-disastrous-rights.
Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2020). "Philippines: New Anti-Terrorism Act Endangers Rights." *HRW*, 5 June 2020, online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/05/philippines-new-anti-terrorism-act-endangers-rights.
Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2021). "Indonesia: Suspend, Revise New Internet Regulation. Privacy, Free Expression, Access to Information at Risk." *HRW*, 21 May 2021, online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/05/21/indonesia-suspend-revise-new-internet-regulation.
Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2023). "Indonesia: New Criminal Code Assaults Rights Heightened Discrimination Against Religious Minorities, Women, LGBT People." *Human Rights Watch*, 12 January, 2023, online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/12/indonesia-new-criminal-code-assaults-rights.
Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2024). "Thailand: 20 Years of Injustice for Tak Bai Massacre Victims." *Human Rights Watch,* 28 October 2024, online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/10/28/thailand-20-years-injustice-tak-bai-massacre-victims.

Hunter, W., & Power, T. J. (2023). Lula's Second Act. *Journal of Democracy*, *34*(1), 126-140.
Hunter, W., & Vega, D. (2021). Populism and the military: symbiosis and tension in Bolsonaro's Brazil. *Democratization*, *29*(2), 337–359. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.1956466
Huntington, S. P. (1991). Democracy's Third Wave. *Journal of Democracy*, *2*(2), 12–34.
Huq, A. Z., & Ginsburg, T. (2018). How to Lose a Constitutional Democracy. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2901776
Hutchcroft, P. D. (1998). *Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines*. Cornell University Press
Hutchcroft, P. D. (2008). The Arroyo Imbroglio in the Philippines. *Journal of Democracy*, *19*(1), 141–155. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2008.0001
Hutchcroft, P. D. (2020). Electoral System Redesign: An Opportunity For Effective Political Reform In The Philippines. In P. D. Hutchcroft (ed.), *Strong Patronage, Weak Parties*, pp. 1–25. World Scientific. https://doi.org/10.1142/9789811212604_0001
Hutchcroft, P. D., & Rocamora, J. (2003). Strong Demands and Weak Institutions: The Origins and Evolution of the Democratic Deficit in the Philippines. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, *3*(2), 259–292. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1598240800001363
Hutton, J. (2017). "Indonesia's Crackdown on Gay Men Moves From Bars Into the Home." *The New York Times,* 20 December 2017, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/20/world/asia/indonesia-gay-raids.html.
IDN Financials. (2024). "Jokowi reshuffles cabinet again, installing 2 former armed forces." *IDN Financials,* 24 February 2024, online: https://www.idnfinancials.com/news/49171/jokowi-reshuffles-cabinet-again-installing-armed-forces.
Iglesias, S. (2022). Violence and impunity: democratic backsliding in the Philippines and the 2022 elections. *Pacific Affairs*, *95*(3), 575-593.
Iglesias, S. (2023). Explaining the pattern of "war on drugs" violence in the Philippines under Duterte. *Asian Politics & Policy, 15*(2), 164-184.
Illari, P. M. (2011). Mechanistic Evidence: Disambiguating the Russo–Williamson Thesis. *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, *25*(2), 139–157. https://doi.org/10.1080/02698595.2011.574856
Imparsial. (2022). "Imparsial: Violence Against Human Rights Defenders Continues." *Imparsial*, 27 January 2022, online: https://imparsial.org/en/imparsial-kekerasan-terhadap-pembela-ham-terus-terjadi/.
Indridason, I. H., & Kam, C. (2008). Cabinet Reshuffles and Ministerial Drift. *British Journal of Political Science*, *38*(4), 621–656. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123408000318
International Crisis Group. (2005). "Southern Thailand: Insurgency, Not Jihad." *International Crisis Group,* 18 May 2005, online: https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/thailand/southern-thailand-insurgency-not-jihad.
International Crisis Group. (2023). "Southern Philippines: Making Peace Stick in the Bangsamoro." *International Crisis Group,* 1 May 2023, online: https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/philippines/331-southern-philippines-making-peace-stick-bangsamoro.
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). (2024). "Indonesia: Fatia Maulidiyanti and Haris Azhar acquitted." *Fidh*, 8 January 2024, online: https://www.fidh.org/en/region/asia/indonesia/indonesia-fatia-maulidiyanti-and-haris-azhar-acquitted.
International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). (2022). "Indonesia: New criminal code erodes freedom of press, expression." *IFJ*, 8 December 2022, online: https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/press-freedom/article/indonesia-new-criminal-code-erodes-freedom-of-press-expression.
Isaac, J. (2024). "Public trust on KPK declines post-legal revision." *Indonesia Business Post,* 14 May 2024, online: https://indonesiabusinesspost.com/insider/public-trust-on-kpk-declines-post-legal-revision/
Jaffrey, S. (2019). "Protests against Joko Widodo rock Indonesia." *Foreign Policy,* 30 September 2019, online: https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/09/30/protests-against-joko-widodo-rock-indonesia/.
Jaffrey, S. (2020). 15 In the state's stead? Vigilantism and policing of religious offence in Indonesia. In T. Power & E. Warburton (Ed.), *Democracy in Indonesia: From Stagnation to Regression?* pp. 303-325. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814881524-02
Jaffrey, S., & Warburton, E. (2022). "Indonesia's new criminal code turns representatives into rulers." *New Mandela,* 9 December 2022, online: https://www.newmandala.org/representatives-into-rulers/.
Jazuli, M. R., Idris, M. M., & Yaguma, P. (2022). The importance of institutional quality: Reviewing the relevance of Indonesia's Omnibus Law on national competitiveness. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *9*(1), 334. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01343-w

Jiao, C., Calonzo, A., & Dormido, H. (2019). "A Power Shift Is Under Way in Duterte's Game of Thrones." *Bloomberg*, 7 June 2019, online: https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2019-philippine-political-dynasties/.
Johnson, C. (2015). Indonesia: Planned new law on corruption commission postponed. *United States Library of Congress*, online: https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2015-10-20/indonesia-planned-new-law-on-corruption-commission-postponed
Josua, M. (2024). Justifications of repression in autocracies: An empirical analysis of Morocco and Tunisia, 2000–2010. *Contemporary Politics*, *30*(1), 108–136. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2023.2265287
Juwita, R. (2019). The Amendment of Anti-corruption Law in Indonesia: The Contribution to the Development of International Anti-corruption Law (December 20, 2021). Asian Yearbook of International Law, 25, 2019, *University of Groningen Faculty of Law Research Paper No. 21/2021*.
Kadewandana, D., & Endrődi-Kovács, V. (2022). The Relationship Between Business and Politics: A Study of Rent-Seeking in Indonesia. *ECONOMIC*, 133.
Kadirgamar, A. (2020). Polarization, Civil War, and Persistant Majoritarianism in Sri Lanka. In *Political Polarization in South and Southeast Asia: Old Divisions, New Dangers* (pp. 53–66).
Kaiser, M. I. (2017). The components and boundaries of mechanisms. In Glennan, S., & Illari, P. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Mechanisms and Mechanical Philosophy*, 116-130. London: Routledge.
Karcher, K. K., & Kapur, R. (2022). *Sri Lanka Bilanz der Gotabaya-Rajapaksa-Präsidentschaft: Die autokratische Struktur gerät ins Wanken*. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.
Karensa, E. (2017). "KPK Investigator Novel Suffers Burns to His Face After Acid Attack by Unknown Men." *Jakarta Globe,* 11 April 2017, online: https://jakartaglobe.id/news/kpk-investigator-novel-suffers-burns-after-acid-attack-by-unknown-men
Kasetsiri, C. (2022). *Thailand: A struggle for the nation*. ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.
Kasian, T. (2006). Toppling Thaksin. *New Left Review*, *39*(5), 5-37.
Katz, R. S., & Mair, P. (2009). The cartel party thesis: A restatement. *Perspectives on politics*, *7*(4), 753-766.
Katz, R. S., & Mair, P. (2018). *Democracy and the Cartelization of Political Parties*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Kaufman, R. R., & Haggard, S. (2019). Democratic Decline in the United States: What Can We Learn from Middle-Income Backsliding? *Perspectives on Politics*, *17*(2), 417–432. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592718003377
Keizer, E., & Franke, F.-N. (2019). "The Indonesian Fight Against Terrorism After The Elections." *Clingendael Spectator. Magazine for International Relations*, 22 May 2019, online: https://spectator.clingendael.org/en/publication/indonesian-fight-against-terrorism-after-elections.
Kendall-Taylor, A., & Frantz, E. (2014). How autocracies fall. *The Washington Quarterly, 37*(1), 35–47. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2014.893172
Kendall-Taylor, A., & Shullman, D. (2021). *Navigating the Deepening Russia-China Partnership*.
Kendall-Taylor, A., Lindstaedt, N., & Frantz, E. (2019). *Democracies and Authoritarian Regimes*. Oxford University Press.
Keremoğlu, E., Hellmeier, S., & Weidmann, N. B. (2022). Thin-skinned leaders: Regime legitimation, protest issues, and repression in autocracies. *Political Science Research and Methods*, *10*(1), 136–152. https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2021.19
Kerkvliet, B.J. (2002). *The Huk Rebellion: A study of peasant revolt in the Philippines*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
Khaitan, T. (2020). Killing a Constitution with a Thousand Cuts: Executive Aggrandizement and Party-state Fusion in India. *Law & Ethics of Human Rights*, *14*(1), 49–95. https://doi.org/10.1515/lehr-2020-2009
Khaitan, T. (2021). Guarantor Institutions. *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, *16*(S1), S40–S59. https://doi.org/10.1017/asjcl.2021.19
Khan, S., & VanWynsberghe, R. (2008). Cultivating the Under-Mined: Cross-Case Analysis as Knowledge Mobilization. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *9*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-9.1.334
Kine, P. (2016). "Indonesia President Jokowi Defends LGBT Rights. Government Shold Back Rhetoric With Action." *Human Rights Watch,* 20 October 2016, online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/20/indonesia-president-jokowi-defends-lgbt-rights.
King, G., Pan, J., & Roberts, M. E. (2013). How Censorship in China Allows Government Criticism but Silences Collective Expression. *American Political Science Review,* 107(2), 326–343.

King, P. (2004). *West Papua & Indonesia Since Suharto: Independence, Autonomy Or Chaos?*. UNSW Press.
Kingsbury, D. (2016). *Politics in Contemporary Southeast Asia* (0 ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315712888
Kirişci, K., & Sloat, A. (2019). "The rise and fall of liberal democracy in Turkey: Implications for the West." *Brookings*, February 2019, online: https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-rise-and-fall-of-liberal-democracy-in-turkey-implications-for-the-west/.
Kitley, P. (2008). Civil society and the media in Indonesia. In A. Azra & W. Hudson (Eds.), *Islam Beyond Conflict: Indonesian Islam and Western Political Theory,* pp. 211-222. Oxon & New York: Routledge.
Kittel, B., & Kuehn, D. (2013). Introduction: Reassessing the Methodology of Process Tracing. *European Political Science*, *12*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1057/eps.2012.4
Klein, G. R., & Regan, P. M. (2018). Dynamics of Political Protests. *International Organization*, *72*(2), 485–521. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818318000061
Klinken, G. A. van, & Berenschot, W. (Eds.). (2014). *In search of middle Indonesia: Middle classes in provincial towns*. Brill.
Kneuer, M. (2021). Unravelling democratic erosion: Who drives the slow death of democracy, and how? *Democratization*, *28*(8), 1442–1462. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.1925650
Knutsen, C. H., & Skaaning, S.-E. (2022). The Ups and Downs of Democracy, 1789–2018. In A. B. Edgell, C. H. Knutsen, M. Coppedge, & S. I. Lindberg (eds.), *Why Democracies Develop and Decline*, pp. 29–54. Cambridge University Press.
Knutsen, C. H., Marquardt, K. L., Seim, B., Coppedge, M., Medzihorsky, J., Edgell, A. B., Pemstein, D., Teorell, J., Gerring, J., & Lindberg, S. I. (2023). *Conceptual and Measurement Issues in Assessing Democratic Backsliding* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 4494175). Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4494175
Kohnert, D. & Preuss, H. (2019*). Benin's stealthy democracide: How Africa's model democracy commits suicide in stages*. Kiel, Hamburg: ZBW. Leibnitz Information Centre for Economics.
Kongkirati, P. (2006). Counter-movements in democratic transition: Thai rightwing movements after the 1973 popular uprising. *Asian Review*, *19*(1), 101–134. https://doi.org/10.58837/CHULA.ARV.19.1.5
Kongkirati, P. (2013). *Bosses, bullets, and ballots: Electoral violence and democracy in Thailand 1975–2011*. PhD diss., Australian National University, Canberra.
Kongkirati, P. (2014). The rise and fall of electoral violence in Thailand: Changing rules, structures and power landscapes, 1997–2011. *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 36 (3): 386–416.
Kongkirati, P. (2019). From Illiberal Democracy to Military Authoritarianism: Intra-Elite Struggle and Mass-Based Conflict in Deeply Polarized Thailand. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *681*(1), 24–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218806912
Kosandi, M., & Wahono, S. (2020). Military Reform in the Post-New Order Indonesia: A Transitional or a New Subtle Role in Indonesian Democracy? *Asian Politics & Policy*, *12*(2), 224–241. https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12534
Kosař, D., & Šipulová, K. (2023). Comparative court-packing. *International Journal of Constitutional Law*, *21*(1), 80–126. https://doi.org/10.1093/icon/moad012
Kosař, D., & Šipulová, K. (2023). Politics of judicial governance. In M. Tushnet & D. Kochenov (Eds.), *Research handbook on the politics of constitutional law* (pp. 262–285). Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839101649.00024
Kovács, K., & Scheppele, K. L. (2018). The fragility of an independent judiciary: Lessons from Hungary and Poland—and the European Union. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, *51*(3), 189–200. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2018.07.005
Kövér, Á., Antal, A., & Deák, I. (2021). Civil Society and COVID-19 in Hungary: The Complete Annexation of Civil Space. *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, *12*(1), 93–126. https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2020-0060
Kpatindé, F. (2019). "Patrice Talon veut transformer le Bénin en une immense SARL dont il serait l'unique actionnaire." *Le Monde*, 8 May 2019, online: https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/05/08/patrice-talon-veut-transformer-le-benin-en-une-immense-sarl-dont-il-serait-l-unique-actionnaire_5459603_3212.html
Kreuzer, M. (2016). Assessing causal inference problems with Bayesian process tracing: The economic effects of proportional representation and the problem of endogeneity. *New Political Economy*, *21*(5), 473–483. https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2015.1134467
Kreuzer, P. (2020) "A patron-strongman who delivers: explaining enduring public support for President Duterte in the Philippines." *PRIF Reports, 1*. Frankfurt am Main: Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung. https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/69009/ssoar-2020-kreuzer-

A_patron-strongman_who_delivers_explaining.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-2020-kreuzer-A_patron-strongman_who_delivers_explaining.pdf
Kroeger, A. M. (2020). Dominant Party Rule, Elections, and Cabinet Instability in African Autocracies. *British Journal of Political Science*, *50*(1), 79–101. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123417000497
Kuhonta, E. M. (2008). The Paradox of Thailand's 1997 "People's Constitution": Be Careful What You Wish For. *Asian Survey*, *48*(3), 373–392. https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2008.48.3.373
Kuhonta, E. M., & Mutebi, A. M. (2006). Thaksin Triumphant: The Implications of One-Party Dominance in Thailand. *Asian Affairs,* 33(1), 39–51.
Kuris, G. (2012). *Holding the high ground with public support: Indonesia's anti-corruption commission digs in, 2007–11*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University: Innovations for Successful Societies.
Kurlantzick, J. (2023). "Return of the Men in Green: The Revival of Military Political Power Worldwide and the Role of China and Russia." *Council of Foreign Relations*, 13 July 2023, online: https://www.cfr.org/blog/return-men-green-revival-military-political-power-worldwide-and-role-china-and-russia.
Kusaka, W. (2022). Fake News and State Violence: How Duterte Hijacked the Election and Democracy in the Philippines. In J. Gomez & R. Ramcharan (Eds.), *Fake News and Elections in Southeast Asia* (pp. 145-165). Routledge.
Kwok, Y. (2016). "Why Indonesia, the World's Biggest Muslim Democracy, Should Accept Its LGBT Citizens." *TIME*, 25 August 2016, online: https://time.com/4458727/indonesia-democracy-lgbt-discrimination/.
Laebens, M. G. (2023). "Beyond Democratic Backsliding: Executive Aggrandizement and its Outcomes." *Users Working Paper Series 2023:54,* online: https://www.v-dem.net/media/publications/UWP_54.pdf
Laebens, M. G., & Lührmann, A. (2021). What halts democratic erosion? The changing role of accountability. *Democratization*, *28*(5), 908–928. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.1897109
Lai, Y. (2022). Jokowi gives nod to controversial removal of constitutional justice. *The Jakarta Post*, 23 November 2022, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2022/11/23/jokowi-gives-nod-to-controversial-removal-of-constitutional-justice.html
Laksmana, E. A. (2019a). Civil-Military Relations under Jokowi: Between Military Corporate Interests and Presidential Handholding. *Asia Policy*, *26*(4), 63–71. https://doi.org/10.1353/asp.2019.0047
Laksmana, E. A. (2019b). Reshuffling the Deck? Military Corporatism, Promotional Logjams and Post-Authoritarian Civil-Military Relations in Indonesia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *49*(5), 806–836. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1613556
Laksmana, E. A. (2022). *Not Fading Away: Retired Military Officers in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia*. LSE Southeast Asia.
Lalu, G.P., & Subingbing, K. (2021). "AFP, PNP disown pro-Duterte accounts shut down by Facebook." *Inquirer,* 24 September 2020, online: https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1339534/facebook-shuts-pro-duterte-accounts-traced-to-china
Lamb, K. (2019). "Thousands protest against new criminal code in Indonesia." *The Guardian*, 24 September 2019, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/24/thousands-protest-against-new-criminal-code-across-indonesia
Lamb, K. (2021). "Indonesia designates Papuan separatists 'terrorists'." *Reuters*, 29 April 2021, online: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesia-designates-papuan-separatists-terrorists-2021-04-29/
Lamb, K., & Teresia, A. (2022). "Explainer: Why is Indonesia's new criminal code so controversial?." *Reuters*, 6 December 2022, online: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/why-is-indonesias-new-criminal-code-so-controversial-2022-12-06/
Landau, D. (2013). Abusive Constitutionalism. U.C. Davis L. Rev., 47(1), 189-260. https://ir.law.fsu.edu/articles/555
Larmer, M., & Fraser, A. (2007). Of cabbages and King Cobra: populist politics and Zambia's 2006 election. *African Affairs*, *106*(425), 611-637.
Lasco, G. (2020). Drugs and drug wars as populist tropes in Asia: Illustrative examples and implications for drug policy. *International Journal of Drug Policy, 77*, 102668. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2020.102668
Leahy, C. (2022). "Corruption just got easier in Indonesia." *ACGA*, 17 January 2022, online: https://www.acga-asia.org/blog-detail.php?id=47

LeBas, A. (2011). *From protest to parties: Party-building and democratization in Africa*. Oxford University Press.
Lee, D. (2018). The Legacies of the Reformasi Movement in Indonesia. *Current History*, *117*(800), 222–228.
Lee, F. L., & Chan, C. (2023). Legalization of press control under democratic backsliding: The case of post-national security law Hong Kong. *Media, Culture & Society*, *45*(5), 916–931. https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437221140525
Lee, H.O. (1971). *Indonesian government and press during guided democracy*. Switzerland: Inter Documentation Company.
Lepidi, P. & Kpatindé, F. (2021). "Au Bénin, la main lourde de la justice sur les opposants politiques." *Le Monde*, 11 December 2021, online: https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2021/12/11/au-benin-la-main-lourde-de-la-justice-sur-les-opposants-politiques_6105669_3212.html
Leslie, A. N. (2016). Zambia and China: Workers' Protest, Civil Society, and the Role of Opposition Politics in Elevating State Engagement. *African Studies Quarterly*, *16*(3 & 4), 89-106.
Lev, D.S. (2011). *The Transition to Guided Democracy: Indonesian Politics, 1957-1959*. Equinox Publishing.
Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2002). Elections Without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy*, *13*(2), 51–65.
Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2010). *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511781353
Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2020). The New Competitive Authoritarianism. *Journal of Democracy*, *31*(1), 51–65. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2020.0004
Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2023). Democracy's Surprising Resilience. *Journal of Democracy*, *34*(4), 5–20.
Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2024). The Resilience of Democracy's Third Wave. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, *57*(2), 198–201. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096523000914
Levitsky, S., & Ziblatt, D. (2018). *How Democracies Die* (1st ed.). Crown.
Lewis, D. (2013). Civil Society and the Authoritarian State: Cooperation, Contestation and Discourse. *Journal of Civil Society*, *9*(3), 325–340. https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2013.818767
Leyland, P. (2007). Thailand's constitutional watchdogs: Dobermans, bloodhounds, or lapdogs. *Journal of Comparative Law,* 2, 151–177.
Limos, M.A. (2020). "ABS-CBN's historic milestones through 70 years of service to the Filipino." *Esquire*, 6 May 2020, online: https://www.esquiremag.ph/long-reads/features/abs-cbn-history-and-milestones-a00293-20200506-lfrm2Linz, 1990
Lindberg, S. I. (2009). *Democratization by Elections: A New Mode of Transition*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
Lindberg, S. I. (2013). Mapping accountability: Core concept and subtypes. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *79*(2), 202–226. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852313477761
Linz, J. J. (1990). The perils of presidentialism. *Journal of democracy,* 1(1), 51-69.
Linz, J. J., & Stepan, A. (1996). *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. Johns Hopkins University Press. https://doi.org/10.56021/9780801851575
Liow, J.C., & Pathan, D. (2010). *Confronting ghosts. Thailand 's Shapeless Southern Insurgency*. Double Bay, New South Wales, Australia: Lowy Institute. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/115176/2010_04.pdf
Little, A., & Meng, A. (2023). *Measuring Democratic Backsliding* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 4327307). Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4327307
Llanos, M., Weber, C. T., & Heyl, C. (2014). „Informal Interference in the Judiciary in New Democracies." *GIGA Working Papers 245/2014*, online: https://pure.giga-hamburg.de/ws/files/21213485/wp245_llanos_weber_heyl_stroh_0.pdf.
Llewellyn, A. (2023). "Does God Need To Be Defended By Law?" *The Diplomat*, 25 September 2023, online: https://thediplomat.com/2023/09/does-god-need-to-be-defended-by-law/.
Loasana, N.A. (2024). Constitutional Court vows to regain public trust ahead of potential election disputes. *The Jakarta Post*, 12 January 2024, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2024/01/12/constitutional-court-vows-to-regain-public-trust-ahead-of-potential-election-disputes.html.
Lorch, J. (2021). Elite capture, civil society and democratic backsliding in Bangladesh, Thailand and the Philippines. *Democratization*, *28*(1), 81–102. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1842360
Los Angeles (LA) Times. (2003a). "Anti-Drug Campaign Killings to Be Probed." *LA Times,* 1 March 2003, online: https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-mar-01-fg-briefs1.5-story.html.
Los Angeles (LA) Times. (2003b). "Thailand Wages a Bloody War on Drugs." *LA Times,* 17 March 2003, online: https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-mar-17-fg-thai17-story.html.

Lotta, G. S. (2023). Implementation of Public Policy, Brazil. In Farazmand, A. (eds), *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance* (pp. 6522-6528). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
Loxton, J. (2015). Authoritarian Successor Parties. *Journal of Democracy*, *26*(3), 157–170.
Lozada, D. (2023). "Mobilising for press freedom in Duterte's Philippines: forms and challenges." *Melbourne Asia Review*, online: https://melbourneasiareview.edu.au/mobilising-for-press-freedom-in-dutertes-philippines-forms-and-challenges-2/
Lührmann, A. (2021). Disrupting the autocratization sequence: Towards democratic resilience. *Democratization*, *28*(5), 1017–1039. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.1928080
Lührmann, A., & Lindberg, S. I. (2019). A third wave of autocratization is here: What is new about it? *Democratization*, *26*(7), 1095–1113. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1582029
Lührmann, A., & Rooney, B. (2020). Autocratization by Decree: States of Emergency and Democratic Decline. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3582527
Lührmann, A., Marquardt, K. L., & Mechkova, V. (2020). Constraining Governments: New Indices of Vertical, Horizontal, and Diagonal Accountability. *American Political Science Review*, *114*(3), 811–820. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000222
Lührmann, A., Tannenberg, M., & Lindberg, S. I. (2018). Regimes of the World (RoW): Opening New Avenues for the Comparative Study of Political Regimes. *Politics and Governance*, *6*(1), 60–77. https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v6i1.1214
Lupu, N., & Riedl, R. B. (2013). Political Parties and Uncertainty in Developing Democracies. *Comparative Political Studies*, *46*(11), 1339–1365. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012453445
Lussier, D. N., & Fish, M. S. (2012). Indonesia: The benefits of civic engagement. *Journal of Democracy*, *23*(1), 70-84.
Lust-Okar, E. (2006). Elections under authoritarianism: Preliminary lessons from Jordan. *Democratization*, *13*(3), 456–471. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340600579359
Macaraig, A., & Hameleers, M. (2022). # DefendPressFreedom: paradigm repair, role perceptions and Filipino journalists' counterstrategies to anti-media populism and delegitimizing threats. *Journalism Studies*, *23*(16), 2078-2096.
Machamer, P. (2004). Activities and Causation: The Metaphysics and Epistemology of Mechanisms. *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, *18*(1), 27–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/0269859042331289242
Machamer, P., Darden, L., & Craver, C. F. (2000). Thinking about Mechanisms. *Philosophy of Science*, *67*(1), 1–25.
Maerz, S. F., Edgell, A. B., Wilson, M. C., Hellmeier, S., & Lindberg, S. I. (2021). A Framework for Understanding Regime Transformation: Introducing the ERT Dataset. *SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 3781485*. Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3781485
Maerz, S. F., Edgell, A. B., Wilson, M. C., Hellmeier, S., & Lindberg, S. I. (2024). Episodes of regime transformation. *Journal of Peace Research*, *61*(6), 967–984. https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433231168192
Magadia, J. (1999). Contemporary Civil Society In The Philippines. In D. Singh & J. Funston (eds.), *Southeast Asian Affairs 1999*, pp. 246-261. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812306890-017
Magaloni, B. (2008). Credible Power-Sharing and the Longevity of Authoritarian Rule. *Comparative Political Studies*, *41*(4–5), 715–741. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414007313124
Magaloni, B., & Kricheli, R. (2010). Political Order and One-Party Rule. *SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 1691289*. Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.031908.220529
Magnusson, B. A. (2001). Democratization and domestic insecurity: navigating the transition in Benin. *Comparative Politics*, 211-230.
Magramo, K. (2022). "They were tortured under Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos Snr. Now they fear their stories are being erased." *CNN World*, 30 September 2022, online: https://edition.cnn.com/2022/09/29/asia/philippines-martial-law-50-years-marcos-intl-hnk.
Mahoney, J. (2001). Path-Dependent Explanations of Regime Change: Central America in Comparative Perspective. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *36*(1), 111–141. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02687587
Mahoney, J. (2007). Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics. *Comparative Political Studies*, *40*(2), 122–144. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414006296345
Mahoney, J. (2008). Toward a Unified Theory of Causality. *Comparative Political Studies*, *41*(4–5), 412–436. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414007313115
Mahoney, J. (2010). After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research. *World Politics*, *62*(1), 120–147. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887109990220

Mahoney, J., & Goertz, G. (2006). A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research. *Political Analysis*, *14*(3), 227–249. https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpj017
Mahoney, J., & Snyder, R. (1999). Rethinking agency and structure in the study of regime change. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *34*(2), 3–32. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02687620
Mahoney, J., & Thelen, K. (2010). A Theory of Gradual Institutional Change. *Explaining Institutional Change, 1-37 (2010)*. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511806414.003
Mahy, P. (2022). Indonesia's Omnibus Law on Job Creation: Legal Hierarchy and Responses to Judicial Review in the Labour Cluster of Amendments. *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, *17*(1), 51–75. https://doi.org/10.1017/asjcl.2022.7
Mainwaring, S. (2003). Introduction: Democratic Accountability in Latin America. In S. Mainwairing and C. Welna (eds.), *Democratic Accountability in Latin America* (pp. 3–33). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Mainwaring, S., & Pérez-Liñán, A. (2015). Cross-currents in Latin America. *Journal of Democracy*, *26*(1), 114–127. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2015.0003
Maisrikrod, S. (2008). Civil Society, Accountability and Governance in Thailand: A Dim Case of Participatory Democracy. In *Globalization and its Counter-Forces in Southeast Asia* (pp. 97–116). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.
Malan, C., & Solomon, H. (2012). Between Conflict and Compromise in the Philippines. *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs*, *25*(1/2), 59–82.
Maleenont, N. (2010). "No God-Damned Thailander Can Be Trusted to Do a Job Without Getting Political Minded": The Free Thai Movement and the Politics of Independence During World War II. *Voces Novae, 2*(12), 81-110.
Malena, C. (2015). *Improving the Measurement of Civic Space.* London: Transparency & Accountability Initiative.
Malitz, D.M. (2022). A long-term view of Thai nationalisms: From royal to civic nationalism?. *ASIEN, 164/165,* 22-47.
Mallen, A. L., & García-guadilla, M. P. (2017). *Venezuela s Polarized Politics: The Paradox of Direct Democracy Under Chávez*. Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
Malley, M. (2009). Decentralization and democratic transition in Indonesia. In: G. Bland & C.J. Arnson (eds.) *Democratic Deficits: Addressing Challenges to Sustainability and Consolidation around the World,* pp. 135-146. Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
Manacsa, R. C., & Tan, A. C. (2005). Manufacturing parties: Re-examining the transient nature of Philippine political parties. *Party Politics*, *11*(6), 748-765.
Manglapus, R. S. (1989). Development Diplomacy: Filipino, Free, Farseeing. *World Bull.*, 5, 1.
Mann, T. (2021). "Attempts to revise draconian ITE Law stumble." *Indonesia at Melbourne*, 1 April 2021, online: https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/attempts-to-revise-draconian-ite-law-stumble/.
Marasigan, T. (2022). Red-tagging as a Human Rights Violation in the Philippines. *New Mandela*, 13 April 2022, online: https://www.newmandala.org/red-tagging-as-a-human-rights-violation-in-the-philippines/
Marshall, T.H. (1992). Citizenship and Social Class (1950). In: T.H. Marshall & T. Bottomore (eds.), *Citizenship and Social Class*, pp. 8-17. London: Pluto Press.
Martin, L. W., & Vanberg, G. (2020). Coalition Government, Legislative Institutions, and Public Policy in Parliamentary Democracies. *American Journal of Political Science*, *64*(2), 325–340. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12453
Martínez-Gallardo, C. (2014). Designing Cabinets: Presidential Politics and Ministerial Instability. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, *6*(2), 3–38. https://doi.org/10.1177/1866802X1400600201
Masduki. (2021). Media Control in the Digital Politics of Indonesia. *Media and Communication*, *9*(4), 52–61. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v9i4.4225
Masengu, T. (2017). The vulnerability of judges in contemporary Africa: Alarming trends. *Africa Today*, *63*(4), 3-19.
Mason, T. D., & Krane, D. A. (1989). The political economy of death squads: Toward a theory of the impact of state-sanctioned terror. *International Studies Quarterly, 33*(2), 175–198. https://doi.org/10.2307/2600536
Matsui, K. (2003). Decentralization in nation-state building of Indonesia. *IDE Research Paper*, *2*.
Mauk, M. (2020). *Citizen support for democratic and autocratic regimes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maxwell, S. R. (2019). Perceived threat of crime, authoritarianism, and the rise of a populist president in the Philippines. *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, *43*(3), 207-218.
McBeth, J. (2019). "Indonesia's military tightens its anti-terror grip." *Asia Times,* 8 August 2019, online: http://asiatimes.com/2019/08/indonesias-military-tightens-its-anti-terror-grip/
McCargo, D. (2002). *Reforming Thai Politics*. Singapore: NUS Press.
McCargo, D. (2005). Network monarchy and legitimacy crises in Thailand. *The Pacific Review*, *18*(4), 499–519. https://doi.org/10.1080/09512740500338937
McCargo, D. (2006). Thaksin and the resurgence of violence in the Thai South: Network monarchy strikes back? *Critical Asian Studies*, *38*(1), 39–71. https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710600556429
McCargo, D. (2008). THAILAND: State of Anxiety. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 333–356.
McCargo, D. (2016). Duterte's Mediated Populism. *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs 38*(2), 185-190. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/628454.
McCargo, D., & Pathmanand, U. (2005). *The Thaksinization of Thailand*. NIAS Press.
McCoy A.E. (1994) *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
McLeod, R. H. (2008). Inadequate budgets and salaries as instruments for institutionalizing public sector corruption in Indonesia. *South East Asia Research*, 16(2), 199-223.
Mechkova, V., Lührmann, A., & Lindberg, S. I. (2017). How Much Democratic Backsliding? *Journal of Democracy*, *28*(4), 162–169.
Mechkova, V., Lührmann, A., & Lindberg, S. I. (2019). The Accountability Sequence: From De-Jure to De-Facto Constraints on Governments. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *54*(1), 40–70. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12116-018-9262-5
Mediana, F. R. I., Asmara, M. G., & Cahyowati, R. R. (2021). The corruption eradication commission's (KPK) position and function in the Indonesian state system. *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, *8*(11), 345-358.
Melo, M. A., & Pereira, C. (2024). Why Didn't Brazilian Democracy Die? *Latin American Politics and Society*, 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1017/lap.2024.4
Melvin, N. J. (2007). Conflict in Southern Thailand. Islamism, violence and the state in the Patani insurgency. *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Policy Paper*, 20. https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/PP/SIPRIPP20.pdf
Mendelson, S. E. (2015, March 11). Dark days for civil society. *Foreign Affairs*. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/dark-days-civil-society
Mendoza A.M.J. (2011). People power in the Philippines, 1983-86. In A. Roberts & T.G. Ash (eds) *Civil Resistance and Power Politics: The Experience of Non-violent Action from Gandhi to the Present*, pp. 179-196. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Mendoza, D.J., Thompson, M.R. (2018). Congress: Separate but not equal. In Mark R. Thompson & E. V. C. Batalla (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of the Contemporary Philippines*, pp. 107-117. Taylor and Francis.
Mendoza, R. C. (2020). The Performance of the Christian Faith under a Populist President: The Case of the Philippine Church under Duterte. *MST Review, 22*(1).
Mendoza, R. U., Beja Jr, E. L., Venida, V. S., & Yap, D. B. (2016). Political dynasties and poverty: measurement and evidence of linkages in the Philippines. *Oxford Development Studies*, *44*(2), 189-201.
Mendoza, R. U., Cruz, J. F., & Yap II, D. B. (2014). Political Party Switching: It's More Fun in the Philippines. *Asian Institute of Management (AIM) Working Paper*, 14-019.
Mendoza, R. U., Cruz, J. F., & Yap II, D. B. (2014). Political Party Switching: It's More Fun in the Philippines. *SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 2492913*. Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2492913
Mendoza, R. U., Jaminola, L. M., & Yap, J. (2019). From fat to obese: Political dynasties after the 2019 midterm elections. *Ateneo School of Government working paper series, September*, 19-013.
Mendoza, R. U., Mendoza, G. A. S., Teehankee, J. C., Tuaño, P. A. P., & Yap, J. K. (2023). Interrogating the links between dynasties and development in the Philippines. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, *8*(3), 765-786.
Mendoza, R. U., Yap, J. K., Mendoza, G. A. S., Jaminola, L. III, & Yu, E. C. (2022). Political dynasties, business, and poverty in the Philippines. *Journal of Government and Economics, 7*, 100051. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jge.2022.100051
Merez A. (2020). "Duterte opens SONA 2020 with attack on 'oligarch' Lopezes." *ABS-CBN,* 20 July 2020, online: https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/07/27/20/duterte-opens-sona-2020-with-attack-on-oligarch-lopezes.

Mérieau, E. (2016a). Thailand's Deep State, Royal Power and the Constitutional Court (1997–2015). *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *46*(3), 445–466. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2016.1151917
Mérieau, E. (2016b) The legal–military alliance for illiberal constitutionalism in Thailand. In M. Bünte & B. (eds.), Politics and Constitutions in Southeast Asia, pp. 154–174 London, New York: Routledge.
Merolla, J. L., & Zechmeister, E. J. (2013). Evaluating Political Leaders in Times of Terror and Economic Threat: The Conditioning Influence of Politician Partisanship. *The Journal of Politics*, *75*(3), 599–612. https://doi.org/10.1017/S002238161300039X
Michaelsen, M., & Glasius, M. (2018). *Authoritarian Practices in the Digital Age. International Journal of Communication, 12*, 3788-3794.
Mietzner, M. (2006). *The Politics of Military Reform in Post-Suharto Indonesia*. Washington East-West Center.
Mietzner, M. (2007). Party financing in post-Soeharto Indonesia: between state subsidies and political corruption. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 29(2), 238-263.
Mietzner, M. (2008). Comparing Indonesia's party systems of the 1950s and the post-Suharto era: From centrifugal to centripetal inter-party competition. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *39*(3), 431–453. doi:10.1017/S0022463408000337
Mietzner, M. (2012). Indonesia's democratic stagnation: anti-reformist elites and resilient civil society. *Democratization*, *19*(2), 209-229.
Mietzner, M. (2013). Fighting the hellhounds: Pro-democracy activists and party politics in post-Suharto Indonesia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *43*(1), 28-50.
Mietzner, M. (2014a). Indonesia's 2014 elections: How Jokowi won and democracy survived. *Journal of Democracy*, *25*(4), 111-125.
Mietzner, M. (2014b). Indonesia's decentralization: The rise of local identities and the survival of the nation-state. *Regional dynamics in a decentralized Indonesia*, *501*, 45-67.
Mietzner, M. (2015a). Dysfunction by design: Political finance and corruption in Indonesia. *Critical Asian Studies*, *47*(4), 587-610.
Mietzner, M. (2015b). Indonesia: democratic consolidation and stagnation under Yudhoyono, 2004–2014. In *Routledge handbook of Southeast Asian democratization* (pp. 370-383). Routledge.
Mietzner, M. (2015c). *Reinventing Asian populism: Jokowi's rise, democracy, and political contestation in Indonesia*. Honolulu, HI: East-West Center.
Mietzner, M. (2015d). Indonesia in 2014: Jokowi and the Repolarization of Post-Soeharto Politics. *Southeast Asian Affairs 2015*, 117-138. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/583045.
Mietzner, M. (2016a). Coercing loyalty: coalitional presidentialism and party politics in Jokowi's Indonesia. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 38(2), 209-232.
Mietzner, M. (2016b). The Sukarno dynasty in Indonesia: Between institutionalisation, ideological continuity and crises of succession. *South East Asia Research*, *24*(3), 355-368.
Mietzner, M. (2017). Indonesia in 2016: Jokowi's presidency between elite consolidation and extra-parliamentary opposition. *Asian Survey*, *57*(1), 165-172.
Mietzner, M. (2018). Movement leaders, oligarchs, technocrats and autocratic mavericks: Populists in contemporary Asia. In C. de la Torre (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of global populism*, pp. 370-384. Routledge: London.
Mietzner, M. (2020). Authoritarian innovations in Indonesia: electoral narrowing, identity politics and executive illiberalism. *Democratization*, *27*(6), 1021–1036. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1704266
Mietzner, M. (2021). *Democratic Deconsolidation in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Mietzner, M. (2023). Defending the Constitution, But Which One? The Indonesian Military, Constitutional Change, and Political Contestation, 1945– 2020. In M. Crouch (ed.), Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia, pp. 49-66. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Mietzner, M., Muhtadi, B., & Halida, R. (2018). Entrepreneurs of grievance: Drivers and effects of Indonesia's Islamist mobilization. *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-en volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, *174*(2-3), 159-187.
Milhorance, C. (2022). Policy dismantling and democratic regression in Brazil under Bolsonaro: Coalition politics, ideas, and underlying discourses. *Review of Policy Research*, *39*(6), 752-770.
Miliuvienė, J. (2024). How to avoid constitutional court-packing in an era of democratic backsliding: Reflections on the appointment of constitutional judges. *Hungarian Journal of Legal Studies*, *65*(2), 182–203. https://doi.org/10.1556/2052.2024.00530
Miller, M. K. (2024). How Little and Meng's Objective Approach Fails in Democracies. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, *57*(2), 202–207. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096523001063

Miskolci, R. (2023). Beyond science denialism: disinformation during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Sociologias*, *25*, e-soc123090.
Moch, F.P.A. (2020). "Explainer: How the KPK is losing public trust." *The Jakarta Post*, 11 October 2020, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/10/11/explainer-how-the-kpk-is-losing-public-trust.html
Mogato, M. (2017a). "Philippines drugs war gets complex as Duterte creates new super-agency," *Reuters*, 10 March, 2017, online: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-philippines-drugs-idUSKBN16H1YV.
Mogato, M. (2017b). "Philippine Congress backs annual budget of just $20 for agency probing drugs war." *Reuters*, 12 September 2017, online: https://www.reuters.com/article/world/philippine-congress-backs-annual-budget-of-just-20-for-agency-probing-drugs-war-idUSKCN1BN1IB/.
Møller, J., & Skaaning, S.-E. (2024). *Democratization and Autocratization in Comparative Perspective: Concepts, Currents, Causes, Consequences, and Challenges*. Routledge & CRC Press.
Montesano, M. J. (2002). Thailand in 2001: learning to live with Thaksin?. *Asian Survey*, *42*(1), 90-99.
Montinola, G. R. (1999). Parties and Accountability in the Philippines. *Journal of Democracy*, *10*(1), 126-140.
Moon, M. (2021). "Philippines' Anti-Terrorism Act and Deteriorating Rule of Law." *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, 22 April 2021, online: https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2021/04/22/philippines-anti-terrorism-act-and-deteriorating-rule-of-law/.
Morgenbesser, L. (2020). *The Rise of Sophisticated Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
Moustafa, T. (2014). Law and Courts in Authoritarian Regimes. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, *10*(1), 281–299. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-110413-030532
Mubarak, H. (2021). Cleavage Structure Change in the 2019 General Election in Indonesia. *International Journal of Law Government and Communication*, *6*, 1–27. https://doi.org/10.35631/IJLGC.622001
Mudhoffir, A. M. (2022). *State of Disorder: Privatised Violence and the State in Indonesia*. Palgrave MacMillan.
Mudhoffir, A. M. (2023). The limits of civil society activism in Indonesia: The case of the weakening of the KPK. *Critical Asian Studies*, *55*(1), 62–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2022.2123019
Mueller, L. (2022). Crowd Cohesion and Protest Outcomes. *American Journal of Political Science*, *68*(1), 42–57. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12725
Muhtadi, B. (2015). Jokowi's first year: a weak president caught between reform and oligarchic politics. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, *51*(3), 349-368.
Muhtadi, B. (2023). Jokowi's High Approval Ratings Make Him Potential Kingmaker. *Perspective, 23(*38), 1-12. ISEAS: Yusof Ishak Institute. https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ISEAS_Perspective_2023_38.pdf.
Mujani, S., & Liddle, R. W. (2021). Indonesia: Jokowi Sidelines Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, *32*(4), 72–86.
Mujani, S., Liddle, R. W., & Ambardi, K. (2018). *Voting behavior in Indonesia since democratization: Critical democrats*. Cambridge University Press.
Mulholland, J., & Sanit, A. (2020). "The weakening of Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission." *East Asia Forum*, 28 January 2020, online: https://eastasiaforum.org/2020/01/28/the-weakening-of-indonesias-corruption-eradication-commission/.
Murashima, E. (2005a). Opposing French colonialism: Thailand and the independence movements in Indo-China in the early 1940s. *South East Asia Research*, *13*(3), 333-383.
Murashima, E. (2005b). Thailand and Indochina 1945–1950. *South East Asia Research*, *13*(3).
Murashima, E. (2006). The commemorative character of Thai historiography: The 1942–43 Thai military campaign in the Shan states depicted as a story of national salvation and the restoration of Thai independence. *Modern Asian Studies*, *40*(4), 1053-1096.
Mutebi, A. M. (2008). Explaining the failure of Thailand's anti-corruption regime. *Development and Change*, *39*(1), 147-171.
Mutebi, A.M. (2003). Thailand in 2002. Political Consolidation amid Economic Uncertainties. *Asian Survey, 43*(1), 101-112. https://library.fes.de/libalt/journals/swetsfulltext/16528403.pdf
Mutebi, A.M. (2006). Thailand's Independent Agencies under Thaksin: Relentless Gridlock and Uncertainty. In D. Singh & L. Salazar (ed.), *Southeast Asian Affairs 2006*, pp. 303-322. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812306968-020

Nam, I., & Nethipo, V. (2022). Building programmatic linkages in the periphery: the case of the TRT party in Thailand. *Politics & Society*, *50*(3), 413-454.
Natal, F. F., & Schreiber, A. (2022). „Democracy on the Razor's Edge: The 2022 Presidential Elections in Brazil." *PRIF BLOG*, 19 September 2022, online: https://blog.prif.org/2022/09/19/democracy-on-the-razors-edge-the-2022-presidential-elections-in-brazil/
Neary, A. (2014). "Red and White coalition spells trouble for Jokowi." *East Asia Forum,* 14 October 2014, online: https://eastasiaforum.org/2014/10/14/red-and-white-coalition-spells-trouble-for-jokowi/
Negretto, G. L., & Visconti, G. (2018). Electoral Reform Under Limited Party Competition: The Adoption of Proportional Representation in Latin America. *Latin American Politics and Society*, *60*(1), 27–51. https://doi.org/10.1017/lap.2017.5
Neher, C. D. (1992). Political Succession in Thailand. *Asian Survey*, *32*(7), 585–605. https://doi.org/10.2307/2644943
Neher, C. D. (1995). Democratization in Thailand. *Asian Affairs*, *21*(4), 195–209.
Nelson, M. H. (2002). Thailand's House Elections of 6 January 2001: Thaksin's Landslide Victory and Subsequent Narrow Escape. In M.H. Nelson (ed.), *Thailand's New Politics: KPI Yearbook 2001*, 283-441. Nonthaburi and Bangkok: King Prajadhipok's Institute and White Lotus Press.
Nelson, M. H. (2005). Thailand and Thaksin Shinawatra: From Election Triumph to Political Decline. *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia*, *4*(2), 5–13. https://doi.org/10.17477/JCEA.2005.4.2.005
Nelson, M. H. (2014). Constitutional Contestation over Thailand's Senate, 1997 to 2014. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *36*(1), 51–76.
Nikkei Asia. (2023). "Indonesia court removes barrier for Jokowi son's VP candidacy." *Nikkei Asia*, 16 October 2023, online: https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Indonesia-court-removes-barrier-for-Jokowi-son-s-VP-candidacy
Nirmala, R. (2020). "Indonesia: Rights Groups Question Trial in Acid-Attack Case." *Benar News,* 22 June 2020, online: https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/indonesian/trial-questioned-06222020161932.html
Nishizaki, Y. (2022). *Dynastic Democracy: Political Families of Thailand*. University of Wisconsin Pres.
Noland, M. (2000). The Philippines in the Asian Financial Crisis: How the Sick Man Avoided Pneumonia. *Asian Survey*, *40*(3), 401–412. https://doi.org/10.2307/3021153
Nord, M., Lundstedt, M., Altman, D., Angiolillo, F., Borella, C., Fernandes, T., Gastaldi, L., Good God, A., Natsika, N., and Lindberg., S.I. (2024). *Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot*. University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute.
Nordholt, H. S. (2005). Decentralisation in Indonesia: Less State, More Democracy? In J. Harriss, K. Stokke, & O. Törnquist (Eds.), *Politicising Democracy*, pp. 29–50. Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230502802_2
Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. (2019). *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108595841
Nullmeier, F. (2021). *Kausale Mechanismen und Process Tracing, ein Buch von Frank Nullmeier*. Campus Verlag.
O'Donnell, G. A. (1998). Horizontal Accountability in New Democracies. *Journal of Democracy*, *9*(3), 112–126.
O'Donnell, G. A., Schmitter, P. C., & Whitehead, L. (1986). *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*. Johns Hopkins University Press. https://doi.org/10.56021/9780801831928
O'Grady, S. (2018). "She was the enemy of Philippine President Duterte, and her fellow judges just sacked her." *The Washington Post, 11* March 2018, online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/05/11/she-was-the-enemy-of-philippine-president-duterte-and-her-fellow-judges-just-sacked-her/
Ocampo, A. (2016). 2. Colonial Legacies. In A. Ocampo (ed.), *The Latinos of Asia: How Filipino Americans Break the Rules of Race* (pp. 15-34). Redwood City: Stanford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804797573-002
Ochoa, D. P., & Ong, M. G. (2022). Negotiated Harms in Moralized Policies: The Case of Duterte's War on Drugs. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, *10*(2), 554-569. https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.5623.
Ockey, J. (2003). Change and continuity in the Thai political party system. *Asian Survey*, *43*(4), 663-680.
Ockey, J. (2004). State, bureaucracy and polity in modern Thai politics. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *34*(2), 143-162.
Ockey, J. (2007). Thailand in 2006: Retreat to military rule. *Asian Survey*, *47*(1), 133-140.

Oder, B. E. (2021). Turkey's Democratic Erosion: On Backsliding and the Constitution. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, *88*(2), 473–500.
OHCHR. (2024). "Philippines: Special Rapporteur calls for justice for journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio." *OHCHR*, 11 November 2024, online: https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/11/philippines-special-rapporteur-calls-justice-journalist-frenchie-mae-cumpio
Ong, J.C., & Cabañes, J. V. (2019). *Politics and Profit in the Fake News Factory: Four Work Models of Political Trolling in the Philippines*. Project Report. NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, Riga, Latvia.
Osman, M. N. M., & Waikar, P. (2018). Fear and Loathing: Uncivil Islamism and Indonesia's Anti-Ahok Movement. *Indonesia*, *106*, 89–109.
Overholt, W. H. (1986). The rise and fall of Ferdinand Marcos. *Asian Survey*, 26(11), 1137-1163.
Owen, G., & Grofman, B. (1988). Optimal partisan gerrymandering. *Political Geography Quarterly*, *7*(1), 5–22. https://doi.org/10.1016/0260-9827(88)90032-8
Ozawa, J. V., Woolley, S. C., Straubhaar, J., Riedl, M. J., Joseff, K., & Gursky, J. (2023). How disinformation on WhatsApp went from campaign weapon to governmental propaganda in Brazil. *Social Media+ Society*, *9*(1), 20563051231160632.
Paat, Y. (2023). "Democratic Party Abandons Ambition to Nominate Agus as VP Candidate." *Jakarta Globe,* 19 September 2023, online: https://jakartaglobe.id/news/democratic-party-abandons-ambition-to-nominate-agus-as-vp-candidate.
Painter, M. (2006). Thaksinisation or managerialism? Reforming the Thai bureaucracy. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *36*(1), 26–47. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472330680000031
Palumbo, A. (2016). *Political Accountability*. Routledge.
Pangilinan, C.D. (2012). The Dispute over Extrajudicial Killings: The Need to Define Extrajudicial Killings as State-Sponsored Acts*, PHIL. L. J. 86*, 811-861.
Papadopoulos, Y. (2023). *Understanding Accountability in Democratic Governance*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108973823
Paribatra, S. (1993). State and Society in Thailand: How Fragile the Democracy? *Asian Survey*, *33*(9), 879–893. https://doi.org/10.2307/2645235
Park, S.W. (2008) Oligarchic democracy in the Philippines: Democratization sans disintegration of political monopoly. In: Cho HY, Surendra L & Park E (eds) *States of Democracy: Oligarchic Democracies and Asian Democratization,* pp.117-136. Mumbai: Earthworm Books.
Pathmanand, U. (2005) "Thaksin and the Politics of Telecommunications." In D. McCargo & U. Pathmanand (Eds), *The Thaksinization of Thailand* (pp. 23-69). Bangkok: NIAS Press and Nordic Institute of Asian Studies.
Pathmanand, U. (2008). A different coup d'etat? *Journal of Contemporary Asia*. (38)1:124-142.
Pathmanand, U. (2016). Network Thaksin: Structure, roles and reaction. *Unequal Thailand: Aspects of income, wealth and power*, 136-161.
Pelizzo, R., & Stapenhurst, F. (2013). *Government accountability and legislative oversight* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315850610
Pelke, L., & Croissant, A. (2021). Conceptualizing and Measuring Autocratization Episodes. *Swiss Political Science Review*, *27*(2), 434–448. https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12437
Pepinsky, T. (2019). Islam and Indonesia's 2019 presidential election. *Asia Policy*, *14*(4), 54-62.
Pepinsky, T. (2024). Why Indonesia's Democracy Is in Danger. *Journal of Democracy*, online: https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/online-exclusive/why-indonesias-democracy-is-in-danger/
Perera, A., & Guinto, J. (2024). "Left-leaning leader wins Sri Lanka election in political paradigm shift." BBC, 22 September 2024, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clyznjz3d78o.
Peruzzotti, E., & Smulovitz, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Enforcing the Rule of Law: Social Accountability in the New Latin American Democracies*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
Peters, B. G., & Pierre, J. (2019). Populism and Public Administration: Confronting the Administrative State. *Administration & Society*, *51*(10), 1521–1545. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399719874749
Phongpaichit, P. (2003). Drug policy in Thailand. *Proceedings of the 2003 Lisbon International Symposium on Global Drug Policy, 23–25 October 2003*.
Phongpaichit, P., & Baker, C. (2002). Power in transition: Thailand in the 1990s. In *Political change in Thailand* (pp. 21-41). Routledge.
Phongpaichit, P., & Baker, C. (2003). Slaughter in the Name of a Drug War. *The New York Times*, 24 May 2003, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/24/opinion/slaughter-in-the-name-of-a-drug-war.html.
Phongpaichit, P., & Baker, C. (2004). *Thaksin: The business of politics in Thailand*. Nias Press.
Phongpaichit, P., & Baker, C. (2009). *Thaksin:(Expanded)*. Silkworm Books.

Phuaphansawat, K. (2018). Anti-royalism in Thailand since 2006: Ideological shifts and resistance. Journal of Contemporary Asia, 48(3), 363–394.
Piccinini, G. (2017). Activities Are Manifestations of Causal Powers. In M. P. Adams, Z. Biener, U. Feest, & J. A. Sullivan (Eds.), *Eppur si muove: Doing History and Philosophy of Science with Peter Machamer* (Vol. 81, pp. 171–182). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-52768-0_12
Pierson, P. (2000). Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics. *The American Political Science Review*, *94*(2), 251–267. https://doi.org/10.2307/2586011
PNP Commission. (2016). "CRAC_04. Investigative Directive Number 2016-12." Camp Crame, Quezon City: National Police Commission Philippines. https://didm.pnp.gov.ph/images/Investigative%20Directive/2016-12%20Additional%20Policies%20and%20Guidelines%20in%20the%20Conduct%20of%20PNP%20Anti-Illegal%20Drugs%20Campaign%20Plan%20Double%20Barrel.pdf.
Polymenopoulou, E. (2018). LGBTI Rights in Indonesia: A Human Rights Perspective. *Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights and the Law*, *19*(1), 27–44. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718158-01901002
Pongsudhirak, T. (2003). Thailand: Democratic Authoritarianism. *Southeast Asian Affairs, 2003,* 277-290.
Pongsudhirak, T. (2006). Thaksin's political zenith and nadir. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, *2006*(1), 283-302.
Poppe, A. E., & Wolff, J. (2017). The contested spaces of civil society in a plural world: Norm contestation in the debate about restrictions on international civil society support. *Contemporary Politics*, *23*(4), 469–488. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2017.1343219
Posetti, J., Shabbir, N., Maynard, D., Bontcheva, K., & Aboulez, N. (2021). *The chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists*. New York: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).
Power, T. J. (2010). Optimism, pessimism, and coalitional presidentialism: Debating the institutional design of Brazilian democracy. Bulletin of Latin American Research, 29(1), 18-33.
Power, T. P. & Warburton, E. (2020a). The decline of Indonesian democracy. In T. Power & E. Warburton (Ed.), *Democracy in Indonesia: From Stagnation to Regression?* (pp. 1-20). Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814881524-006
Power, T. P. (2018). Jokowi's authoritarian turn and Indonesia's democratic decline. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies, 54*(3), 307-338.
Power, T. P. (2020). 14 Assailing accountability: law enforcement politicisation, partisan coercion and executive aggrandisement under the Jokowi administration. In T. Power & E. Warburton (Ed.), *Democracy in Indonesia: From Stagnation to Regression?* (pp. 277-302). Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814881524-019
Power, T. P., & Warburton, E. (2020b). 13 A state of surveillance? Freedom of expression under the Jokowi presidency. In T. Power & E. Warburton (eds.), *Democracy in Indonesia* (pp. 254–274). ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814881524-018
Prasetyawan, W. (2014). Ethnicity and voting patterns in the 2007 and 2012 gubernatorial elections in Jakarta. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *33*(1), 29-54.
Prasirtsuk, K. (2007). From Political Reform and Economic Crisis to Coup d'état in Thailand: The Twists and Turns of the Political Economy, 1997–2006. *Asian Survey*, *47*(6), 872–893. https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2007.47.6.872
Prasodjo, D. (2021). *Jokowi and the New Indonesia: A Political Biography*. Tuttle Publishing.
Prendergast, D. (2019). The judicial role in protecting democracy from populism. *German Law Journal*, *20*(2), 245–262. https://doi.org/10.1017/glj.2019.15
Preuss, H.-J. (2019): Ware Freundschaft - Zwischen Nigeria und Benin ist ein Handelskonflikt entbrannt. *ipg-journal*, https://www.ipg-journal.de/regionen/afrika/artikel/ware-freundschaft-3764/
Price, M. E. (2015). *Free Expression, Globalism, and the New Strategic Communication*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Primandari, F. (2022) "Rethinking self-censorship in Southeast Asia's media landscape." *New Mandela*, 16 May 2022, online: https://www.newmandala.org/rethinking-self-censorship-in-southeast-asias-media-landscape/.
Prizzia, R., & Sinsawasdi, N. (1974). *Thailand: Student activism and political change*. Allied Printers U Chuliang Foundation.
Przeworski, A. (1986). Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy. In G. O'Donnell, P. C. Schmitter, & L. Whitehead (Eds.), *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule* (Vol. 3). The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Przeworski, A. (2019). *Crises of Democracy* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108671019
Przeworski, A., Alvarez, M. E., Cheibub, J. A., & Limongi, F. (2000). *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511804946
Przeworski, A., Stokes, S. C., & Manin, B. (Eds.). (1999). *Democracy, accountability, and representation* (Vol. 2). Cambridge University Press.
Puente, B. (2020). Muzzling the media: The perils of the critical press in the Philippines. *Media Asia*, *47*(1–2), 81–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2020.1818172
Pulta, B. (2021). "Oral arguments on anti-terror law rest to Feb. 2." *Philippine News Agency*, 15 January 2021, online: https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1127532.
Quah, J. S. (2020). Combating police corruption in Indonesia: cleansing the buaya (crocodile). *Asian Education and Development Studies*, *9*(2), 129-143.
Querubin, P. (2012). *Political reform and elite persistence: Term limits and political dynasties in the Philippines*. APSA 2012 Annual Meeting Paper.
Quimpo, N. G. (2007). THE PHILIPPINES: Political Parties and Corruption. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 277–294.
Quimpo, N. G. (2008). *Contested Democracy and the Left in the Philippines after Marcos*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Quimpo, N. G. (2017). Duterte's 'war on drugs': The securitization of illegal drugs and the return of national boss rule. *A Duterte reader: Critical essays on Rodrigo Duterte's early presidency*, 145-166.
Rabasa, A., & Haseman, J. (2002). *The military and democracy in Indonesia: Challenges, politics, and power* (MR-1599-SRF). RAND Corporation.
Ragin, C. C. (1987). *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. University of California Press.
Ragragio, J. L. D. (2021). Strongman, patronage and fake news: Anti-human rights discourses and populism in the Philippines. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *20*(6), 852-872.
Rahman, R. A., & Tang, S.-M. (2022). Fake News and Internet Shutdowns in Indonesia: Symptoms of Failure to Uphold Democracy. *Constitutional Review*, *8*(1), 151. https://doi.org/10.31078/consrev816
Rakner, L. (2021). Don't Touch My Constitution! Civil Society Resistance to Democratic Backsliding in Africa´s Pluralist Regimes. *Global Policy*, *12*(S5), 95–105. https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12991
Ramos, C.G. (2020), Change without Transformation: Social Policy Reforms in the Philippines under Duterte. *Development and Change, 51*, 485-505. https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12564
Ranada, P. (2019). "Evolution of the Duterte Cabinet." *Rappler*, 18 August 2019, online: https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/237745-evolution-duterte-cabinet/.
Ranada, P. (2020). "Duterte signs 'dangerous' anti-terror bill into law" *Rappler*, 3 July 2020, online: https://www.rappler.com/philippines/263289-duterte-signs-dangerous-anti-terror-bill-into-law/.
Rananand, P. R. (2007). Information Privacy in a Surveillance State: A Perspective from Thailand. In S. Hongladarom & C. Ess (Eds.), *Information Technology Ethics* (pp. 124–137). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-59904-310-4.ch009
Rappler. (2017). "Senator Leila de Lima arrested." *Rappler*, 24 February 2017, online: https://www.rappler.com/philippines/161278-leila-de-lima-surrender-drug-charges/.
Ravago, M.L.V. (2023). "The cost structure of electricity in the Philippines and other Asian countries: A comparative note." Ateneo de Manila University Department of Economics and Ateneo Center for Economic Research and Development Working Paper No. 2023-02.
Recuero, R., Soares, F. B., Vinhas, O., Volcan, T., Hüttner, L. R. G., & Silva, V. (2022). Bolsonaro and the far right: How disinformation about COVID-19 circulates on Facebook in Brazil. *International Journal of Communication*, *16*, 24.
Regencia, R. (2019). Duterte attempting to 'silence political opponents': Report. Al Jazeera, 25 June 2019, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/6/25/duterte-attempting-to-silence-political-opponents-report
Regencia, T. (2018). Philippines' Duterte: 'Kill those useless bishops'. Al Jazeera, 5 December 2018, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/5/philippines-duterte-kill-those-useless-bishops
Regilme Jr, S. S. F. (2023). Constitutional order in oligarchic democracies: Neoliberal rights versus socio-economic rights. *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, *19*(1), 126-143.
Reid, G., & Costigan, G. (2002). Revisiting" The Hidden Epidemic. *A situation assessment of drug use in Asia in the context of HIV/AIDS. Australia: Burnet Institute*.

Reilly, B. (2006). *Democracy and Diversity: Political Engineering in the Asia-Pacific*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Rennó, L. R. (2020). The Bolsonaro Voter: Issue Positions and Vote Choice in the 2018 Brazilian Presidential Elections. *Latin American Politics and Society*, *62*(4), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1017/lap.2020.13
Reporters Without Borders (RSF). (2018). „RFS's decries journalist's expulsion from Indonesia's Papua region." *RSF*, 6 February 2018, online: https://rsf.org/en/rsfs-decries-journalists-expulsion-indonesias-papua-region
Reporters Without Borders (RSF). (2020). "Indonesia used Covid-19 to silence criticism of government." RSF, 16 April 2020, online: https://rsf.org/en/indonesia-used-covid-19-silence-criticism-government.
Reporters Without Borders (RSF). (Various years). *World Press Freedom Index*. Reporters Without Borders, online: https://rsf.org/en/2023-world-press-freedom-index-journalism-threatened-fake-content-industry.
Resnick, D. & Thurlow, J. (2014). The Political Economy of Zambia's Recovery: Structural Change without Transformation?. IFPRI Discussion Paper 01320. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2405715.
Resnick, D. (2022). How Zambia's Opposition Won. *Journal of Democracy*, *33*(1), 70–84. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2022.0005
Reuters. (2017a). "Philippine lawmakers lose key posts after opposing death penalty." *Reuters*, 15 March 2017, online: https://www.reuters.com/article/world/philippine-lawmakers-lose-key-posts-after-opposing-death-penalty-idUSKBN16M1YQ/
Reuters. (2017b). "Philippine Congress agrees to restore rights commission budget from $20." *Reuters*, 20 September 2017, online: https://www.reuters.com/article/world/philippine-congress-agrees-to-restore-rights-commission-budget-from-20-idUSKCN1BV286/.
Reuters. (2019a). "Indonesia arrests dozens for Papua protests that set buildings afire." *Reuters*, 1 September 2019, online: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-indonesia-papua/indonesia-arrests-dozens-for-papua-protests-that-set-buildings-afire-idUSKCN1VM0ZG/.
Reuters. (2019b). "Indonesian police ban violent protests, separatism in Papua." *Reuters*, 2 September 2019, online: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-indonesia-papua-idUSKCN1VN0DQ/.
Reuters. (2023). "'Drug war' critic walks free after Philippine court grants bail." *Reuters*, 13 November 2023, online: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippine-court-grants-bail-ex-presidents-top-critic-after-6-years-jail-lawyer-2023-11-13/.
Rey, A. (2022). "Manny Villar gets ABS-CBN frequencies." *Rappler,* 25 January 2022, online: https://www.rappler.com/business/manny-villar-gets-abs-cbn-frequencies/
Reyes, D. A. (2016). The Spectacle of Violence in Duterte's "War on Drugs." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *35*(3), 111–137. https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341603500306
Reynolds, B. (2004). Phibun Songkhram and Thai nationalism in the Fascist era. *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, *3*(1), 99-134.
Reynolds, E. B. (2005). The origins of the Free Thai movement. In E.B. Reynolds (ed.), *Thailand's Secret War: OSS, SOE and the Free Thai Underground during World War II* (pp. 9–46). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
RFI. (2018). "Mouvement social au Bénin: les syndicats demandent un dialogue sur les réformes." *RFI*, 18 January 2018, online: https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20180118-benin-syndicats-demandent-dialogue-reformes-cgtb-moudachirou-bachabi.
Rhodes-Purdy, M., & Madrid, R. L. (2020). The perils of personalism. *Democratization*, *27*(2), 321–339. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1696310
Ricklefs, M. C. (2001). *A history of modern Indonesia since c. 1200* (3rd ed). Stanford Univ. Press.
Rinke, F., Fuchs, M.-C., Elsner, G., Natarajan, A., Wulff, A., Seidel, N., Rank, H., Muharemović, M., & Schoeller-Schletter, A. (2019). Corrupt judges – Threat to the constitutional state. *International Reports*, 4. Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. https://www.kas.de/en/web/auslandsinformationen/artikel/detail/-/content/corrupt-judges-threat-to-the-constitutional-state-1
Rivera, T. C. (with University of the Philippines & Philippine Center for Policy Studies). (1994). *Landlords and capitalists: Class, family, and state in Philippine manufacturing*. U.P. Center for Integrative and Development Studies and University of the Philippines Press in cooperation with the Philippine Center for Policy Studies.
Roberts, K. M. (2015). *Changing course in Latin America: Party systems in the neoliberal era*. Cambridge university press.
Roberts, M. E. (2018). *Censored: Distraction and diversion inside China's great firewall*. Princeton University Press.

Roberts, T., & Oosterom, M. (2024). Digital authoritarianism: a systematic literature review. *Information Technology for Development,* 1-25.
Robertson-Snape, F. (1999). Corruption, collusion and nepotism in Indonesia. *Third World Quarterly*, *20*(3), 589–602. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599913703
Robet, R., Fitri, M. R., & Kabelen, M. C. S. (2023). The state and Human Rights under Joko Widodo's Indonesia. *Cogent Social Sciences*, *9*(2), 2286041. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2286041
Robinson, G. (1992). The economic foundations of political conflict in Bali, 1950-1965. *Indonesia*, (54), 59-93.
Robles, R.E. (2016). Marcos Martial Law Never Again: A Brief History of Torture and Atrocity Under the New Society. Filipinos for a better Philippines INC.
Rocha Menocal, A., Fritz, V., & Rakner, L. (2008). Hybrid regimes and the challenges of deepening and sustaining democracy in developing countries1. *South African Journal of International Affairs*, *15*(1), 29–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/10220460802217934
Rocha, C., Solano, E., & Medeiros, J. (2021). *The Bolsonaro paradox: The public sphere and right-wing counterpublicity in contemporary Brazil*. Springer.
Rodan, G. (2004). *Transparency and Authoritarian Rule in Southeast Asia: Singapore and Malaysia*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203421017
Rodan, G. (2022). *Civil Society in Southeast Asia: Power Struggles and Political Regimes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Rodríguez, D. G., & Murtagh, B. (2022). Situating anti-LGBT moral panics in Indonesia: Homophobia, criminalisation, acceptance, and religiosity. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, *50*(146), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2022.2038871
Roessler, P. (2011). The Enemy Within: Personal Rule, Coups, and Civil War in Africa. *World Politics*, *63*(2), 300–346. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887111000049
Roessler, P., & Howard, M. (2009). Post-Cold War Political Regimes: When Do Elections Matter? In: S. Lindberg (Ed.), Democratization by Elections: A New Mode of Transition (pp. 101-128). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
Roessler, P., & Ohls, D. (2018). Self-Enforcing Power Sharing in Weak States. *International Organization*, *72*(2), 423–454. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818318000073
Roggeband, C., & Glasius, M. (2020). Uncivil Society. In R. A. List, H. K. Anheier, & S. Toepler (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Civil Society* (pp. 1–7). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-99675-2_6-1
Roggeband, C., & Krizsán, A. (2021). The Selective Closure of Civic Space. *Global Policy*, *12*(S5), 23–33. https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12973
Rohlfing, I. (2012). *Case Studies and Causal Inference*. Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137271327
Rolland, N. (2020). China's vision for a new world order. *NBR Special Report no.83,* https://www.nbr.org/publication/chinas-vision-for-a-new-world-order/
Romano, A.R. (2003). *Politics and the Press in Indonesia: understanding an evolving political culture.* New York and Oxon: Routledge.
Romero, P. (2016). "Belmonte: Alvarez to become speaker." *Phil Star*, 21 May 2016, online: https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/05/21/1585432/belmonte-alvarez-become-speaker.
Ronas, M.C. (2016). The Never Ending Democratization of the Philippines. In: F.B. Miranda & T.C. Rivera (eds.), *Chasing the Wind. Assessing Philippine Democracy*, 2nd edition, pp. 75-106. Quezon City: Commission on Human Rights Philippines.
Rood, S. (2019). 2. Finding Federalism in the Philippines: Federalism— "The Centerpiece of My Campaign". In I. Deinla & B. Dressel (Ed.), *From Aquino II to Duterte (2010–2018): Change, Continuity—and Rupture* (pp. 62-98). Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814843294-008
Rose, R., & Shin, D. C. (2001). Democratization Backwards: The Problem of Third-Wave Democracies. *British Journal of Political Science*, *31*(2), 331–354. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123401000138
Rose-Ackerman, Susan; Desierto, Diane A.; Volosin, Natalia. (2011). *Hyper-Presidentialism: Separation of Powers without Checks and Balances in Argentina and Philippines*. https://doi.org/10.15779/Z38XW8H
Rosenberg, D. (1979). *Marcos and Martial Law in the Philippines.* Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press.
Rosenbluth, F., & Shapiro, I. (2018). *Responsible parties: Saving democracy from itself*. Yale University Press.
Rowley, C., & Dela Rama, M. (2017). *The changing face of corruption in the Asia Pacific: Current perspectives and future challenges*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Rowley, K. (2010): "The Downfall of Thaksin Shinawatra's CEO State." *Nautilus Institute for Security and Stability*, 10 April 2010, online: www.nautilus.org/publications/essays/apsnet/policy-forum/2006/0634a-rowley.html.
Rudy, Perdana, R., & Wijaya. R. (2021). The Recognition of Customary Rights by Indonesian Constitutional Court. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplonary Stuides, 10*(3), pp.308-318.
Russo, F., & Williamson, J. (2007). Interpreting Causality in the Health Sciences. *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, *21*(2), 157–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/02698590701498084
Ryan Maboloc, C. (2022). An Analysis of the Philippine Catholic Church's Approach to President Duterte's Drug War. *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, *46*(3), 352-359. https://doi.org/10.1177/23969393221087062
Sadurski, W. (2018). *How Democracy Dies (in Poland): A Case Study of Anti-Constitutional Populist Backsliding* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 3103491). Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3103491
Sadurski, W. (2019). *Poland's Constitutional Breakdown*. Oxford University Press.
SAFEnet. (2021). *Digital Rights in Indonesia Situation Report 2020. Digital Repression Amid the Pandemic*. Denpasar, Bali: SAFEnet.
SAFEnet. (2023). *Digital Rights in Indonesia Situation Report 2022. The Collapse of Our Digital Rights*. Denpasar, Bali: SAFEnet.
Sajor, L. (2022). State Repression in the Philippines during COVID-19 and Beyond. In B. Bringel & G. Pleyers (Ed.), *Social Movements and Politics During COVID-19: Crisis, Solidarity and Change in a Global Pandemic* (pp. 52-59). Bristol, UK: Bristol University Press.
Salmon, W.C. (1998). *Causality and explanation*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Samuels, D. J. (2023). The International Context of Democratic Backsliding: Rethinking the Role of Third Wave "Prodemocracy" Global Actors. *Perspectives on Politics*, *21*(3), 1001–1012. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592722003334
Sánchez-Sibony, O. (2021). Competitive Authoritarianism in Morales's Bolivia: Skewing Arenas of Competition. *Latin American Politics and Society*, *63*(1), 118–144. https://doi.org/10.1017/lap.2020.35
Santini, R. M., Tucci, G., Salles, D., & de Almeida, A. R. D. (2021). Do you believe in fake after all? WhatsApp disinformation campaign during the Brazilian 2018 presidential election. *Politics of Disinformation: The Influence of Fake News on the Public Sphere*, 49-66.
Sapiie, M.A., Anya, A., & La Batu, S. (2018). "Amid criticism, Jokowi maintains stance on LGBT." *The Jakarta Post*, 7 February 2018, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/02/07/amid-criticism-jokowi-maintains-stance-lgbt.html.
Sardini, N. H., Wijayanto, W., & Elsitra, G. N. (2024). From Promoting Harmony to Spreading Threats: The Languages of Digital Security of Indonesian Cyber Police to Create Political Stability. *Politika: Jurnal Ilmu Politik*, *15*(2), 235–249. https://doi.org/10.14710/politika.15.2.2024.235-249
Sartori, G. (1984). *Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis*. SAGE Publications.
Sastramidjaja, Y., Rasidi, P. P., & Elsitra, G. N. (2022). *Peddling secrecy in a climate of distrust: Buzzers, rumours and implications for Indonesia's 2024 elections*. ISEAS Perspective, 2022(85). Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.
Sato, Y., Lundstedt, M., Morrison, K., Boese, V. A., & Lindberg, S. I. (2022). *Institutional Order in Episodes of Autocratization* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 4239798). Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4239798
Satrio, A. (2018). Constitutional Retrogression in Indonesia Under President Joko Widodo's Government: What Can the Constitutional Court Do? *Constitutional Review*, *4*(2), 271. https://doi.org/10.31078/consrev425
Savarese, M. (2021). "Brazil's senate OKs evangelical Bolsonaro ally to top court." AP News, 2 December 2021, online: https://apnews.com/article/sports-religion-brazil-jair-bolsonaro-a05027ef90234d49fd03c75acce74ab9.
Sawasdee, S. N. (2018). A Tale of Two Hybrid Regimes: A Study of Cabinets and Parliaments in Indonesia and Thailand. *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, *19*(2), 269–292. doi:10.1017/S1468109918000099
*S*chattschneider, E. E. (1958). *Equilibrium and. Change in American Politics*. College. Park: University of Maryland.
Schedler, A. (2001). Measuring Democratic Consolidation. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *36*(1), 66–92. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02687585
Schedler, A. (2002). Elections Without Democracy: The Menu of Manipulation. *Journal of Democracy*, *13*(2), 36–50.

Schedler, A. (2006). *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781685857479
Schedler, A. (2013). *The Politics of Uncertainty: Sustaining and Subverting Electoral Authoritarianism*. Oxford University Press.
Schedler, A., Diamond, L. J., & Plattner, M. F. (1999). *The Self-restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
Scheppele, K. L. (2018). Autocratic Legalism. *The University of Chicago Law Review*, *85*(2), 545–584.
Scheppele, K. L. (2022). How Viktor Orbán Wins. *Journal of Democracy*, *33*(3), 45–61. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2022.0039
Schmitter, P. C., & Karl, T. L. (1991). What Democracy Is. . . And Is Not. *Journal of Democracy*, *2*(3), 75–88.
Schock, K. (1999). People Power and Political Opportunities: Social Movement Mobilization and Outcomes in the Philippines and Burma. *Social Problems*, *46*(3), 355–375. https://doi.org/10.2307/3097105
Schütte, S. A. (2021). An administrative war at the KPK: Employees versus leadership. *Indonesia at Melbourne*, 9 June 2021, online: https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/an-administrative-war-at-the-kpk-employees-versus-leadership/
Schwartz, A. (1994). *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia in the 1990s*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
Scott, J. (2019). *Adventures in Zambian Politics: a story in black and white*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
Scruggs, G. (2017). Brazilian Judges Convict Popular Former Leader, Indict Unpopular Sitting President. https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur/14535
Sefsani, R., & Ziegenhain, P. (2015). Civil-society support – A decisive factor in the Indonesian Presidential Elections in 2014. *ASIEN 136*, 14-33, online: https://asien.asienforschung.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2015/10/04_136_Sefsani-Ziegenhain_Indonesien.pdf
Serrano, I. J. (2020). Do clans coordinate? Kinship-based reciprocity and the allocation of infrastructure programs and projects at the local level. *Philippine Political Science Association Working Paper Series*, *2*, 595-640.
Setia Negara, T. A., Anggoro, S. A., & Koeswahyono, I. (2024). Indonesian Job Creation Law: Neoliberal Legality, Authoritarianism and Executive Aggrandizement Under Joko Widodo. *Law and Development Review*, *17*(1), 155–197. https://doi.org/10.1515/ldr-2023-0022
Setiawan, K. (2020). 13 A state of surveillance? Freedom of expression under the Jokowi presidency. In T. Power & E. Warburton (Ed.), Democracy in Indonesia: From Stagnation to Regression? (pp. 254-274). Singapore: ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814881524-018.
Setiawan, K. M. P., & Tomsa, D. (2022). *Politics in Contemporary Indonesia: Institutional Change, Policy Challenges and Democratic Decline* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429459511
Setiyawan, D. G. (2023). Business as Usual despite Reform: The Indonesian Military under Jokowi. In A. Chong & N. Jenne (Eds.), *Asian Military Evolutions: Civil–Military Relations in Asia* (1st ed., pp. 46–67). Bristol University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.1231855.8.
Seto, A. (2019). Islamist Buzzers. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 187-208 Pages. https://doi.org/10.14764/10.ASEAS-0021
Shahbaz, A. (2018). "Freedom on the Net 2018. The Rise of Digital Authoritarianism. Fake news, data collection, and the challenge to democracy." *Freedom House*, online: https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2018/rise-digital-authoritarianism.
Shen-Bayh, F. (2018). Strategies of Repression: Judicial and Extrajudicial Methods of Autocratic Survival. *World Politics*, *70*(3), 321–357. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887118000047
Sherlock, S. (2007). Parliamentary Indicators - Indonesia. *WorldBank,* June 2007, online: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/249401468188934594/pdf/81128-ParliamentaryIndicatorsIndonesia-Box-377336B-PUBLIC.pdf.
Sherlock, S. (2009). Parties and elections in Indonesia: the consolidation of democracy. Parliament of Australia. *Research Paper, 35, 2008-09*. Parliament of Australie: Department of Parliamentary Services.
Shevtsova, L. (2015). The Authoritarian Resurgence: Forward to the Past in Russia. *Journal of Democracy*, *26*(2), 22–36.
Siachiwena, H. (2021). Populism in power: Public policy in Zambia under President Michael Sata and the Patriotic Front government. (*IDCPPA Working Paper No. 25*). Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa.
Sicat, G. (1998). The Philippine Economy in the Asian Crisis. *ASEAN Economic Bulletin*, *15*(3), 290–296.

Sidel, J. T. (1997). Philippine politics in town, district, and province: Bossism in Cavite and Cebu. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, *56*(4), 947-966.
Sidel, J. T. (1998). Macet total: Logics of circulation and accumulation in the demise of Indonesia's New Order. *Indonesia*, (66), 159-195.
Sidel, J. T. (1999). *Capital, coercion, and crime: Bossism in the Philippines*. Stanford University Press.
Simangan, D. (2024). Challenges and Prospects for Urban Peacebuilding in Post-Siege Marawi City, Philippines: People, Places, and Practices. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *43*(3), 452–471. https://doi.org/10.1177/18681034241251864
Singh, B. (2000). *Succession Politics in Indonesia: The 1998 Presidential Elections and the Fall of Suharto*. Basingstoke: MacMillan Press LTD.
Singh, D. (1993). THAILAND 1992: Repression and Return of Democracy. In *Southeast Asian Affairs 1993* (pp. 327–350). ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812306838-023
Singh, D., & Funston, J. (Eds.). (1999). CONTEMPORARY CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE PHILIPPINES. In *Southeast Asian Affairs 1999* (pp. 246–261). ISEAS Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1355/9789812306890-017
Sinkkonen, E. (2021). Dynamic dictators: Improving the research agenda on autocratization and authoritarian resilience. *Democratization*, *28*(6), 1172–1190. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.1903881
Sinpeng, A., & Hemtanon, W. (2019). Change and Continuity in the Politics of the Media after the Coup. In M. J. Montesano, T. Chong, & M. S. X. Heng (Eds.), *After the Coup: The National Council for Peace and Order Era and the Future of Thailand* (pp. 254–281). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.
Siregar, I. (2024). The Errors of the Democratic System According to Pancasila: A Critical Examination of Governance in Indonesia. *Polit Journal Scientific Journal of Politics*, *4*(2), 123-134. https://doi.org/10.33258/polit.v4i2.1158
Siregar, K. (2018). "'Moral Panic' targets Indonesia's LGBT community." *The Jakarta Post,* 18 November 2018, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/11/18/moral-panic-targets-indonesias-lgbt-community.html.
Sishuwa, S. (2016). Zambia's 2016 elections: Is a disputed outcome now inevitable?'. *African Arguments*, *1*.
Skaaning, S.-E. (2020). Waves of autocratization and democratization: A critical note on conceptualization and measurement. *Democratization*, *27*(8), 1533–1542. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1799194
Skocpol, T., & Somers, M. (1980). The uses of comparative history in macrosocial inquiry. *Comparative studies in society and history*, *22*(2), 174-197.
Slater, D. (2003). Iron cage in an iron fist: Authoritarian institutions and the personalization of power in Malaysia. *Comparative Politics*, 81-101.
Slater, D. (2004). Indonesia's accountability trap: Party cartels and presidential power after democratic transition. *Indonesia*, (78), 61-92.
Slater, D. (2010). *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge University Press.
Slater, D. (2018). Party cartelization, Indonesian-style: Presidential power-sharing and the contingency of democratic opposition. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, *18*(1), 23-46.
Slater, D., & Arugay, A. A. (2018). Polarizing Figures: Executive Power and Institutional Conflict in Asian Democracies. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *62*(1), 92–106. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218759577
Slater, D., & Simmons, E. (2013). Coping by colluding: Political uncertainty and promiscuous powersharing in Indonesia and Bolivia. *Comparative Political Studies*, *46*(11), 1366-1393.
Smith, T. (2017). "Duterte's Latest Target: The Commission on Human Rights." *The Diplomat*, 8 August 2017, online: https://thediplomat.com/2017/08/dutertes-latest-target-the-commission-on-human-rights/.
Soares, L. B., & Baines, S. G. (2021). "They are almost humans like us": indigenous politics and policy dismantling under Bolsonaro's government. *Revista Videre*, *13*(28).
Sobel, A. (2020). "The Philippines' Antiterror Bill Will Stifle Dissent." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,* 30 June 2020, online: https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2020/06/the-philippines-antiterror-bill-will-stifle-dissent?lang=en.
Sombatpoonsiri, J. (2018). Manipulating Civic Space: Cyber Trolling in Thailand and the Philippines. *GIGA Focus,* 3(2018), online: https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/giga-focus/manipulating-civic-space-cyber-trolling-in-thailand-and-the-philippines.
Sombatpoonsiri, J. (2020). 'Authoritarian civil society': How anti-democracy activism shapes Thailand's autocracy. *Journal of Civil Society, 16*(4), 333-350.

Sombatpoonsiri, J. (2024). Intersectional Powers of Digital Repression: How Activists are Digitally Watched, Charged, and Stigmatized in Thailand. *International Journal of Communication, 18,* 23.
Somer, M. (2019). Turkey: The Slippery Slope from Reformist to Revolutionary Polarization and Democratic Breakdown. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *681*(1), 42–61. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218818056
Somer, M., McCoy, J. L., & Luke, R. E. (2021). Pernicious polarization, autocratization and opposition strategies. *Democratization*, *28*(5), 929–948. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1865316
Springman, J., Malesky, E., Right, L., & Wibbels, E. (2022). The Effect of Government Repression on Civil Society: Evidence from Cambodia. *International Studies Quarterly*, *66*(3), sqac028. https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqac028
Starke, P. (2022). Process Tracing in der Policy-Forschung. In G. Wenzelburger & R. Zohlnhöfer (Eds.), *Handbuch Policy-Forschung* (pp. 1–26). Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-05678-0_17-1
Steinmo, S. (2008). Historical institutionalism. In D. Della Porta & M. Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective* (pp. 118–138). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511801938.008
Stockmann, D., & Gallagher, M. E. (2011). Remote Control: How the Media Sustain Authoritarian Rule in China. *Comparative Political Studies*, *44*(4), 436–467. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414010394773
Stokes, S. C. (1999). Political parties and democracy. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *2*(1), 243-267.
Stokes, S. C. (2001). Constituency Influence and Representation1. In J.I. Domínguez (ed.), *Political Parties*, pp. 153-170. New York: Routledge.
Stokke, K., & Kyaw, N. N. (2024). Revolutionary resistance against full autocratization. Actors and strategies of resistance after the 2021 military coup in Myanmar. *Political Geography*, *108*, 103011. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2023.103011
Strachwitz, R. G., & Toepler, S. (2022). Contested Civic Spaces in Liberal Democracies. *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, *13*(3), 179–193. https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2022-0026
Strangio, S. (2022a). "Indonesian Security Forces Responsible for Dozens of Extrajudicial Killings, Rights Group Says." *The Diplomat*, 13 December 2022, online: https://thediplomat.com/2022/12/indonesian-security-forces-responsible-for-dozens-of-extrajudicial-killings-rights-group-says/.
Strangio, S. (2022b). "Indonesia Prepping Strict New Rules for Online Platforms: Report." *The Diplomat*, 24 March 2022, online: https://thediplomat.com/2022/03/indonesia-prepping-strict-new-rules-for-online-platforms-report/.
Strangio, S. (2022c). "Indonesian Parliament Passes Long-Awaited Sexual Violence Bill." *The Diplomat*, 13 April 2022, online: https://thediplomat.com/2022/04/indonesian-parliament-passes-long-awaited-sexual-violence-bill/.
Strangio, S. (2023a). "Indonesia's Constitutional Court Rejects Challenge to Controversial Election Ruling." *The Diplomat*, 30 November 2023, online: https://thediplomat.com/2023/11/indonesias-constitutional-court-rejects-challenge-to-controversial-election-ruling/.
Strangio, S. (2023b). "Indonesian Communication Minister Arrested For Corruption." *The Diplomat*, 18 May 2023, online: https://thediplomat.com/2023/05/indonesian-communication-minister-arrested-for-corruption/.
Stroup, S. S. (2012). *Borders among activists: International NGOs in the United States, Britain, and France*. Cornell University Press.
Suehiro, A. (2014). Technocracy and Thaksinocracy in Thailand: Reforms of the Public Sector and the Budget System under the Thaksin Government. *Southeast Asian Studies,* 3(2), 299-344.
Sulistyo, H. (2002). "Electoral Politics in Indonesia: A Hard Way to Democracy." In: A. Croissant, A. Bruns, & M. John (eds.), *Electoral Politics in Southeast & East Asia*, pp. 75-100. Singapore: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
Sunpuwan, M., & Niyomsilpa, S. (2012). Perception and misperception: Thai public opinions on refugees and migrants from Myanmar. *Journal of Population and Social Studies*, *21*(1), 47-58.
Supriatma, M. 2021. *The Second Amendment to Papua's Special Autonomy Law and the Recentralization of Power to Jakarta*. Singapore: ISEAS Yuso Ishak Institute, online: https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ISEAS_Perspective_2021_123.pdf.
Suroyo, G., & Sulaiman, S. (2022, June 9). Explainer: What's at stake with Indonesia's controversial jobs creation law? *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/whats-stake-with-indonesias-controversial-jobs-creation-law-2022-06-09/

Suryadinata, L. (2018). Islamism and the New Anti-Terrorism Law in Indonesia. *Perspective*, 18(39), 1-7. Singapore: ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute.
Suswantoro, G. (2021). Money politics and the obstacles on national leadership succession. *Politik Indonesia: Indonesian Political Science Review*, *6*(3), 306–319. https://doi.org/10.15294/ipsr.v6i3.31580
Sutton, J., Butcher, C. R., & Svensson, I. (2014). Explaining political jiu-jitsu: Institution-building and the outcomes of regime violence against unarmed protests. *Journal of Peace Research*, *51*(5), 559–573. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343314531004
Suwannathat-Pian, K. (1996). Thai wartime leadership reconsidered: Phibun and Pridi. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *27*(1), 166-178.
Suwannathat-Pian, K. (2005). *Thailand's Durable Premier: Phibun through Three Decades 1932–1957.* Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
Svolik, M. W. (2012). *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139176040
Svolik, M. W. (2014). *Equilibrium Analysis of Political Institutions* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 2668795). Social Science Research Network. https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2668795
Svolik, M. W. (2015). Which Democracies Will Last? Coups, Incumbent Takeovers, and the Dynamic of Democratic Consolidation. *British Journal of Political Science*, *45*(4), 715–738. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123413000550
Svolik, M. W. (2019). Polarization versus Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, *30*(3), 20–32.
Swaragita, G. (2018). "Homophobic state forces LGBT community to lay low" *The Jakarta Post*, 17 May 2018, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/05/17/homophobic-state-forces-lgbt-community-lay-low.html.
Syarifah, E. R., Nugroho, S. E., Rupita, & Niko, N. (2022). The disinfodemic mitigation strategy of MAFINDO in Indonesia. *International Journal of Social Science, 1*(6), 879–888. https://doi.org/10.53625/ijss.v1i6.1903
Szostak, R. (2024). Restoring democratic stability: A backcasting wheel approach. *FUTURES & FORESIGHT SCIENCE*, *6*(3), e180. https://doi.org/10.1002/ffo2.180
Takahashi, K. (2022). How Phibun Returned to the Political Scene: Youth-led Rallies, Leaflets, and Petitions in 1947, 1948, and 2020. *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, *50*(1), 27–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/00927678.2022.2128244
Talabong, R. (2017). "Duterte ordered police not to share files with CHR – DILG." *Rappler*, 8 September 2017, online: https://www.rappler.com/philippines/181519-duterte-order-pnp-chr-refuse-share-case-folders/.
Talabong, R. (2018). "Tanauan City mayor Halili shot dead during flag ceremony." *Rappler*, 2 July 2018, online: https://www.rappler.com/philippines/206254-tanauan-antonio-halili-shot-critical-condition-july-2-2018/.
Talabong, R. (2019). "Duterte releases drug list ahead of 2019 elections." *Rappler*, 14 March 2019, online: https://www.rappler.com/philippines/elections/225735-duterte-releases-drug-list-ahead-of-2019-elections/.
Talabong, R. (2022). "ABS-CBN frequencies are Duterte's 'payback' to Villars — Bayan Muna." *Rappler,* 26 January 2022, online: https://www.rappler.com/nation/bayan-muna-statement-manny-villar-taking-over-abs-cbn-frequencies/.
Tamaki, E. R. (2021). The populist allure: an analysis of the Populism in Bolsonaro's government speeches (2019-2020).
Tambunan, D. (2023). The intervention of oligarchy in the Indonesian legislative process. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, *8*(2), 637–653. https://doi.org/10.1177/20578911231159395
Tapsell, R. (2012). Old Tricks in a New Era: Self-Censorship in Indonesian Journalism. *Asian Studies Review*, *36*(2), 227–245. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2012.685926
Tapsell, R. (2015). Indonesia's Media Oligarchy and the "Jokowi Phenomenon." *Indonesia*, *99*, 29. https://doi.org/10.5728/indonesia.99.0029
Tarrow, S. (2010). The Strategy of Paired Comparison: Toward a Theory of Practice. *Comparative Political Studies*, *43*(2), 230–259. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009350044
Teehankee, J. C. (2002). Electoral politics in the Philippines. In A. Croissant, G. Bruns & M. John (eds.), *Electoral Politics in Southeast and East Asia,* 149-202. Singapore: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
Teehankee, J. C. (2012). Clientelism and party politics in the Philippines. In *Party Politics in Southeast Asia* (pp. 186-214). Routledge.
Teehankee, J. C., & Calimbahin, C. A. A. (2020). Mapping the Philippines' defective democracy. *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, *47*(2), 97-125.

Teehankee, J. C., & Kasuya, Y. (2020). The 2019 midterm elections in the Philippines: Party system pathologies and Duterte's populist mobilization. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, *5*(1), 69-81.
Teehankee, J. C., & Thompson, M. R. (2016). Electing A Strongman. *Journal of Democracy*, *27*(4), 125–134. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0068
Teodoro, M. (2022). "Fast Facts: 7 Duterte appointees will run the May 2022 Elections." *PCIJ*, 10 March 2022, online: https://pcij.org/2022/03/10/seven-duterte-appointees-will-run-may-2022-elections/.
Thaiger. (2003). "Democracy is not my goal – Thaksin." Thaiger, 11 December 2003, online: https://thethaiger.com/news/phuket/Democracy-not-goal-Thaksin.
Thananithichot, S. (2012). Political engagement and participation of Thai citizens: The rural–urban disparity. *Contemporary Politics*, *18*(1), 87–108. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2012.651274
Thayer, C. (2007). "Insurgency in Southern Thailand: Literature Review," online: http://www.scribd.com/ doc/17965033/Thayer-Insurgency-in-Southern-Thailand.
The Conversation. (2020). "Why Indonesia's omnibus bill will not create jobs and only strengthen the oligarchy." *The Conversation,* 20 October 2020, online: https://theconversation.com/why-indonesias-omnibus-bill-will-not-create-jobs-and-only-strengthen-the-oligarchy-147997.
The Economic Times. (2024). "Why Indonesian army is expanding when other armies across the world are shrinking?" *The Economic Times*, 22 August 2024, online: https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/many-militaries-are-shrinking-why-not-indonesias/articleshow/112712709.cms?from=mdr.
The Guardian. (2019). "Indonesian students clash with police in protests over new law." The Guardian, 30 September 2019, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/30/indonesian-students-resume-anti-corruption-protests.
The Jakarta Post. (2014a). "Jokowi's Cabinet announced, here is the lineup." *The Jakarta Post*, 26 October, 2014, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/10/26/jokowis-cabinet-announced-here-lineup.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2014b). "Jokowi prepares for transition." *The Jakarta Post,* 4 August, 2014, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/08/04/jokowi-prepares-transition.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2014c). "Cabinet open to anyone: Jokowi." *The Jakarta Post*, 15 August 2014, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/08/15/cabinet-open-anyone-jokowi.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2015a). "Jokowi rejects House plan for KPK Law." *The Jakarta Post*, 20 June 2015, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/06/20/jokowi-rejects-house-plan-kpk-law.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2015b). "Some controls to remain on foreign journalists in Papua: Police." *The Jakarta Post*, 12 May 2015, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/05/12/some-controls-remain-foreign-journalists-papua-police.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2015c). "Foreign journalists must abide by laws in place on Papua access: Lawmaker." The Jakarta Post, 13 May 2015, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/05/13/foreign-journalists-must-abide-laws-place-papua-access-lawmaker.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2016). "Promotion for Budi Gunawan politically driven: expert." *The Jakarta Post,* 11 September 2016, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/09/11/promotion-for-budi-gunawan-politically-driven-expert.html
The Jakarta Post. (2017). "Greater Jakarta: Police vow to detain Rizieq." *The Jakarta Post*, 13 May 2017, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/05/13/greater-jakarta-police-vow-detain-rizieq.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2018a). "Jokowi agrees to revive Koopsusgab special forces." *The Jakarta Post,* 18 May 2018, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/05/18/jokowi-agrees-to-revive-koopsusgab-special-forces.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2018b). "Koopsusgab to take charge of military's counterterrorism role." *The Jakarta Post,* 25 May 2018, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/05/25/koopsusgab-take-charge-military-s-counterterrorism-role.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2018c). "Hate speech convict Alfian Tanjung sent to East Java prison after appeal rejected." *The Jakarta Post*, 12 June 2018, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/06/12/hate-speech-convict-alfian-tanjung-sent-to-east-java-prison-after-appeal-rejected.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2019). "House elects controversial police general to lead KPK." *The Jakarta Post,* 13 September 2019, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/09/13/house-elects-controversial-police-general-to-lead-kpk.html

The Jakarta Post. (2020a). “Government bans FPI activities.” *The Jakarta Post*, 20 December 2020, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/12/30/government-bans-fpi-and-its-activities.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2020b). “Illegal internet ban.” *The Jakarta Post,* 5 June 2020, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/06/05/illegal-internet-ban.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2020c). “Rizieq Shihab to return to Indonesia on Nov. 10, denies overstaying in Saudi Arabia.” *The Jakarta Post,* 4 November 2020, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/11/04/rizieq-shihab-to-return-to-indonesia-on-nov-10-denies-overstaying-in-saudi-arabia.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2022). “When NasDem chairman Surya Paloh walks out after Jokowi’s teasing.” *The Jakarta Post,* 24 October 2022, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2022/10/24/when-nasdem-chairman-surya-paloh-walks-out-after-jokowis-teasing.html.
The Jakarta Post. (2023). “Analysis: Corruption charge against minister alters 2024 political landscape.” *The Jakarta Post,* 29 May 2023, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2023/05/29/analysis-corruption-charge-against-minister-alters-2024-political-landscape.html
The New York Times (2003a). “Deaths Mount in Thai Drug Crackdown.” *The New York Times*, 17 February 2003, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/17/world/deaths-mount-in-thai-drug-crackdown.html
The New York Times (2003b). “A Wave of Drug Killings Is Linked to Thai Police.” *The New York Times,* 8 April 2003, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/08/world/a-wave-of-drug-killings-is-linked-to-thai-police.html
The New York Times (2003c). “Thailand's crackdown: Drug 'war' kills democracy, too.” *The New York Times*, 24 April 2003, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/24/opinion/IHT-thailands-crackdown-drug-war-kills-democracy-too.html
The Straits Times. (2019). “New chief, old style?: Jakarta Post.” *The Straits Times*, 5 November 2019, online: https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/new-chief-old-style-jakarta-post
The Sydney Herald. (2007). “Thaksin critic jailed for defamation.” *The Sydney Herald*, 30 March 2007, online: https://www.smh.com.au/world/thaksin-critic-jailed-for-defamation-20070330-gdpsr1.html?js-chunk-not-found-refresh=true.
Thelen, K. (1999). HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *2*(Volume 2, 1999), 369–404. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.369
Thies, C. G. (2002). A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations. *International Studies Perspectives*, *3*(4), 351–372. https://doi.org/10.1111/1528-3577.t01-1-00099
Thompson, M. R. (2010). Reformism vs. Populism in the Philippines. *Journal of Democracy*, *21*(4), 154-168.
Thompson, M. R. (2016). Bloodied Democracy: Duterte and the Death of Liberal Reformism in the Philippines. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 35(3), 39-68. https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341603500303
Thompson, M.R. (2017). “Duterte’s illiberal democracy.” *East Asia Forum*, 7 August 2017, online: https://eastasiaforum.org/2017/08/07/80706/.
Tilman, R. O. (1976). The Philippines under Martial Law. *Current History,* 71(422), 201–225.
Timberman, D. G. (2016). Elite Democracy Disrupted? *Journal of Democracy*, *27*(4), 135–144. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0069
Timberman, D.G. (2019). *Philippine Politics under Duterte: A Midterm Assessmnet*. Carnegie Endowmnet For International Peace. https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2019/01/philippine-politics-under-duterte-a-midterm-assessment?lang=en
Timoneda, J. C. (2021). Wealth wars: How productivity gaps explain democratic erosion in advanced economies. *European Political Science Review*, *13*(4), 506–527. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773921000229
Tisnadibrata, L. (2017). Jokowi takes authoritarian turn as Indonesian election looms. *Southeast Asia Globe,* 4 September 2017, online: http://sea-globe.com/hiz-%20but-tahrir-jokowi.
Toepler, S., Zimmer, A., Fröhlich, C., & Obuch, K. (2020). The Changing Space for NGOs: Civil Society in Authoritarian and Hybrid Regimes. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, *31*(4), 649–662. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-020-00240-7
Tomacruz, S. (2019). “29% of local posts now occupied by ‘fat’ political dynasties.” *Rappler,* 14 September 2019, online: https://www.rappler.com/nation/240037-study-local-posts-occupied-by-political-dynasties/.

Tomacruz, S. (2022). “Family business: Cayetanos, Villars, Estradas capture more Senate seats.” *Rappler*, 10 May 2022, online: https://www.rappler.com/philippines/elections/families-capture-more-senate-seats-2022/
Tomini, L. (2021). Don’t think of a wave! A research note about the current autocratization debate. *Democratization*, *28*(6), 1191–1201. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.1874933
Tomini, L., & Wagemann, C. (2018). Varieties of contemporary democratic breakdown and regression: A comparative analysis. *European Journal of Political Research*, *57*(3), 687–716. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12244
Tomini, L., Gibril, S., & Bochev, V. (2023). Standing up against autocratization across political regimes: A comparative analysis of resistance actors and strategies. *Democratization*, *30*(1), 119–138. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2022.2115480
Tomsa, D. (2008). *Party politics and democratization in Indonesia: Golkar in the post-Suharto era*. Routledge.
Tomsa, D. (2010). The Indonesian party system after the 2009 elections: towards stability?. *Problems of democratisation in Indonesia: Elections, institutions and society*, 141-159.
Tomsa, D. (2015). Local politics and corruption in Indonesia’s outer islands. *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-en volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, *171*(2-3), 196-219.
Tomsa, D., & Ufen, A. (2013). Introduction: clientelism and electoral competition in Southeast Asia. In: D. Tomsa & A Ufen (Eds.), *Political Parties in Southeast Asia: Clientelism and Electoral Competition in Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines* (pp. 1-19). NY: Routledge.
Tonsakulrungruang, K. (2017). Entrenching the minority: the Constitutional Court in Thailand's political conflict. *Wash. Int'l LJ*, *26*, 247.
Torres, P. (2023). Expanding the Executive: The Civilian and Military Infrastructure of a “Populist” Presidency. In R.A. Imbong (ed.), *Authoritarian Disaster: The Duterte Regime and the Prospects for a Marcos Presidency,* pp 25-42. New York: Nova Science Publishers.
Transparency International (various years). *Corruption Perception Index*. Berlin, Germany: Transparency International, International Secretariat.
Treisman, D. (2020). *Economic Development and Democracy: Predispositions and Triggers* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. 3602493). Social Science Research Network. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050718-043546
Treisman, D. (2023). How Great is the Current Danger to Democracy? Assessing the Risk With Historical Data. *Comparative Political Studies*, *56*(12), 1924–1952. https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231168363
Trianita, L. (2019). House Wishes to Restrict the KPK. Temp English, 10 September 2019, online: https://magz.tempo.co/read/cover-story/35897/house-wishesto-restrictthe-kpk.
Tsauro, A., & F. Susilo. (2023). NU factionalism on show after Anies-Muhaimin surprise. *New Mandela*, 12 September 2023, online: https://www.newmandala.org/nu-factionalism-on-show-after-anies-muhaimin-surprise/.
Tupaz, V. (2016). “Joma: Left welcomes Duterte offers of Cabinet posts.” *Rappler*, 16 May 2016, online: https://www.rappler.com/philippines/133269-joma-sison-left-welcomes-duterte-magnanimous-offers-cabinet-posts/.
Tusalem, R. F., & Pe-Aguirre, J. J. (2013). The Effect of Political Dynasties on Effective Democratic Governance: Evidence From the P hilippines. *Asian Politics & Policy*, *5*(3), 359-386.
U.S. Department of State (various years). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Philippines.* U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.
Ubonrat, S. (2005). *‘A Genealogy of Media Reform in Thailand and Its Discourses’, in Sopit Wangvivatana (ed.), Media Reform Going Backwards?, pp. 50–74.* Bangkok and Bonn: Thai Broadcast Journalists Association and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.
Ubonrat, S. (2007). New media for civil society and political censorship in Thailand. *Asia Rights Journal*, *8*, 1-12.
Ufen, A. (2008). Political party and party system institutionalization in Southeast Asia: lessons for democratic consolidation in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. *Pacific Review*, *21*(3), 327-350.
Ufen, A. (2012). Party systems, critical junctures, and cleavages in Southeast Asia. *Asian Survey*, *52*(3), 441-464.
Ufen, A. (2024). The Rise of Digital Repression in Indonesia under Joko Widodo. *GIGA Focus Asia*, *1*. https://doi.org/10.57671/GFAS-24012
Ulfelder, J., & Lustik, M. (2007). Modelling Transitions To and From Democracy. *Democratization*, *14*(3), 351–387. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340701303196

United Nations. (2022). “Indonesia: Shocking abuses against indigenous Papuans, rights experts report.” *United Nations,* 1 March 2022, online: https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113062.
USAID. (2022). *2021 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index*. For Asia. Washington, D.C., USA: U.S. Agency for International Development.
Utama, V.R. (2023). The unresolved legacy of the May 1998 riots in Indonesia. The Diplomat, 27 May 2023, online: https://thediplomat.com/2023/05/the-unresolved-legacy-of-the-may-1998-riots-in-indonesia/.
Uyangoda, J. (2021). *‘Executive Authoritarianism’ as Sri Lanka’s New Political Normal since COVID19*.
Vaccaro, A. (2021). Comparing measures of democracy: Statistical properties, convergence, and interchangeability. *European Political Science*, *20*(4), 666–684. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-021-00328-8
Van Ark, R., & Gherbaoui, T. (2024). Excessive Judicial Deference as Rule of Law Backsliding: When National Security and Effective Rights Protection Collide. *Utrecht Law Review*, *20*(3), 26–41. https://doi.org/10.36633/ulr.1081
van de Walle, N. (2007). *The Path from Neopatrimonialism: Democracy and Clientelism in Africa Today*. https://hdl.handle.net/1813/55028
Van Evera, S. (1997). *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*. Cornell University Press.
van Lit, J., van Ham, C., & Meijers, M. J. (2024). Countering autocratization: A roadmap for democratic defence. *Democratization*, *31*(4), 765–787. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2023.2279677
Vartavarian, M. (2018). Imperial ambiguities: The United States and Philippine Muslims. *South East Asia Research*, *26*(2), 132-146.
Vatikiotis, M. R. (1993). Indonesia's Foreign Policy in the 1990s. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 352-367.
Vera Files. (2016). “The Lopez Family.” *Media Ownership Monitor Philippines 2016*. https://philippines.mom-rsf.org/en/owners/individual-owners/detail/owner/owner/show/the-lopez-family/
Versteeg, M. (2023). Abusive Constitutional Borrowing: Legal Globalization and the Subversion of Liberal Democracy. *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, *71*(2), 495–499. https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcl/avad027
Villanueva, A. B. (1992). Post-Marcos: The state of Philippine politics and democracy during the Aquino Regime, 1986–92. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 174-187.
Von Bülow, M., & Abers, R. N. (2024). Denialism and populism: Two sides of a coin in Jair Bolsonaro's Brazil. *Government and Opposition*, *59*(4), 998-1016.
Waever, O. (1995). Securitization and desecuritization. In R.D. Lipschutz (ed.), *On security,* pp.46-87. NY: Columbia University Press.
Wahman, M. (2013). Opposition Coalitions and Democratization by Election. *Government and Opposition*, *48*(1), 3–32. https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2012.5
Wahman, M., & Boone, C. (2018). Captured Countryside? Stability and Change in Sub-National Support for African Incumbent Parties. *Comparative Politics*, *50*(2), 189–216. https://doi.org/10.5129/001041518822263593
Waldner, D. (2012). *Process Tracing and Causal Mechanisms | The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Social Science | Oxford Academic*. https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/36331/chapter-abstract/318708310?redirectedFrom=fulltext
Waldner, D., & Lust, E. (2018). Unwelcome Change: Coming to Terms with Democratic Backsliding. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *21*(Volume 21, 2018), 93–113. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050517-114628
Walker, A. (2012). *Thailand’s political peasants: Power in the modern rural economy*. University of Wisconsin Pres.
Wangvivatana, S. (2005). *Media reform going backward?* Bangkok and Bonn: Thai Broadcast Journalists Association and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. ´
Warburton, E. (2016). Jokowi and the new developmentalism. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, *52*(3), 297-320.
Warburton, E. (2020). Deepening polarization and democratic decline in Indonesia. *Political Polarization in South and Southeast Asia*, *17*.
Warburton, E. (2024). Private Power and Public Office: The Rise of Business Politicians in Indonesia. *Critical Asian Studies*, *56*(2), 184–206. https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2024.2334069
Warburton, E., & Aspinall, E. (2019). Explaining Indonesia’s democratic regression. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *41*(2), 255-285.

Wattana, S. (2006). Islam, radicalism, and violence in Southern Thailand: *Berjihad di Patani* and the 28 April 2004 attacks. *Critical Asian Studies*, *38*(1), 119–144. https://doi.org/10.1080/14672710600556494
Way, L. A., & Levitsky, S. (2006). The dynamics of autocratic coercion after the Cold War. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, *39*(3), 387–410.
Webber, J. R. (2010). Carlos Mesa, Evo Morales, and a Divided Bolivia (2003—2005). *Latin American Perspectives*, *37*(3), 51–70. https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X10364033
Whaley, F. (2012). "Philippine Chief Justice Removed Over Omission in Report on Assets." *The New York Times,* 30 May 2012, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/30/world/asia/philippines-chief-justice-removed-over-finances.html
Wickramasinghe, N. (2021). Sri Lanka in 2020: Return to Rajapaksa Regnum. *Asian Survey*, *61*(1), 211-216.
Widian, R., Satya, P. A. N. I. P., & Yazid, S. (2023). Religion in Indonesia's Elections: An Implementation of a Populist Strategy? *Politics and Religion*, *16*(2), 351–373. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048321000195
Wieringa, S.E. (2019). Criminalisation of Homosexuality in Indonesia: The Role of the Constitution and Civil Society. *Australian Journal of Asian Law*, 20(1), 227-245.
Wijayanto & Berenschot, W. (2021). Organisation and funding of social media propaganda. *Inside Indonesia,* 13 October 2021, online: https://www.insideindonesia.org/editions/edition-146-oct-dec-2021/organisation-and-funding-of-social-media-propaganda.
Wilkinson, C., Paula, G., Baden, O., & Antony J., L. (2017). LGBT Rights in Southeast Asia: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back? *IAFOR Journal of Asian Studies*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/10.22492/ijas.3.1.01
Williams, H. (2022). *One Year Later: Papua in the Wake of Indonesia's Terrorist Designation | New Perspectives on Asia | CSIS*. https://www.csis.org/blogs/new-perspectives-asia/one-year-later-papua-wake-indonesias-terrorist-designation
Winichakul, T. (2008). Toppling democracy. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *38*(1), 11–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472330701651937
Winichakul, T. (2016). Thailand's hyper-royalism: Its past success and present predicament'. *Trends in Southeast Asia*, *7*.
Winichakul, T. (2020). *Moments of silence: The unforgetting of the October 6, 1976, Massacre in Bangkok*. University of Hawaii Press.
Winters, J. A. (2013). Oligarchy and Democracy in Indonesia. *Indonesia*, *96*, 11. https://doi.org/10.5728/indonesia.96.0099
Winters, J. A. (2016). Electoral Dynamics in Indonesia: Money Politics, Patronage and Clientelism at the Grassroots. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, *52*(3), 405–409. https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2016.1236653
Winters, J. A. (2011). Democracy and Oligarchy in Indonesia. *Inside Indonesia Quarterly*, *104*, 1-4.
Wiratraman, H. P. (2020). Does Indonesian COVID-19 Emergency Law Secure Rule of Law and Human Rights? *Journal of Southeast Asian Human Rights*, *4*(1), 306. https://doi.org/10.19184/jseahr.v4i1.18244
Wiratraman, H. P. (2022). Constitutional Struggles and the Court in Indonesia's Turn to Authoritarian Politics. *Federal Law Review*, *50*(3), 314–330. https://doi.org/10.1177/0067205X221107404
Wiryawan, B. A., & Otchia, C. (2022). The legacy of the reformasi: The role of local government spending on industrial development in a decentralized Indonesia. *Journal of Economic Structures*, *11*(1), 3. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40008-022-00262-y
Wongrujira, M. (2008). Stakeholder Analysis of Communication Policy Reform in Thailand. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1572280
Worawan, C. (2003). Thaiand's Grass Roots Policies. *TDRI Quarterly Review*, *18*(2), 3-8.
Wright, J., & Escribà-Folch, A. (2012). Authoritarian institutions and regime survival: Transitions to democracy and subsequent autocracy. *British Journal of Political Science, 42*(2), 283–309. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123411000317
Wunsch, N., & Blanchard, P. (2023). Patterns of democratic backsliding in third-wave democracies: A sequence analysis perspective. *Democratization*, *30*(2), 278–301. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2022.2130260
Wurfel, D. (1977). Martial Law in the Philippines: The Methods of Regime Survival. *Pacific Affairs*, *50*(1), 5. https://doi.org/10.2307/2756116
Wuttke, A., Gavras, K., & Schoen, H. (2022). Have Europeans Grown Tired of Democracy? New Evidence from Eighteen Consolidated Democracies, 1981–2018. *British Journal of Political Science*, *52*(1), 416–428. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000149

Yabes, C. (2022). “Philippines’ anti-terror law poses a direct threat to democracy.” *Nikkei Asia,* 26 March 2022, online: https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/Philippines-anti-terror-law-poses-a-direct-threat-to-democracy.
Yardımcı-Geyikçi, Ş., & Yavuzyilmaz, H. (2022). Party (de)institutionalization in times of political uncertainty: The case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey. *Party Politics*, *28*(1), 71–84. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068820960010
Ylikoski, P., & Zahle, J. (2019). Case study research in the social sciences. *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A*, *78*, 1–4. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shpsa.2019.10.003
Young, J. K. (2012). Repression, Dissent, and the Onset of Civil War. *Political Research Quarterly*, *66*(3), 516–532. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912912452485
Youngblood, R.L. (2019). *Marcos against the church. Economic development and political repression in the Philippines*. Ithaca & London. Cornell University Press.
Yulius, H. (2017). Behind Political Homophobia: Global LGBT Rights and the Rise of Anti-LGBT Rhetoric in Indonesia. Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2 August 2017, online: https://www.boell.de/en/2017/08/02/global-lgbti-rights.
Yusingco, M. H. L., Mendoza, R. U., Mendoza, G. A. S., & Yap, J. (2023). A Philippine strongman's legislative and constitutional reforms legacy. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *42*(1), 63-89.
Zakaria, F. (1997). The Rise of Illiberal Democracy. *Foreign Affairs*, *76*(6), 22–43. https://doi.org/10.2307/20048274
Zawacki, B. (2017). *Thailand. Shifting Ground*. London: Zed
Zedelashvili, T. (2020). Black Sea region security, cyber warfare, and new technologies. *Ante Portas – Studia nad bezpieczeństwem, 2*(15), 25–33. https://doi.org/10.33674/220202
Zhukov, Y. M., Davenport, C., & Kostyuk, N. (2019). Introducing xSub: A new portal for cross-national data on subnational violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, *56*(4), 604–614. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343319836697
Ziegenhain, P. (2016). Decentralisation and its impact on the democratisation process. In M. Haug, M. Rössler & A.T. Grumblies (eds.), *Rethinking power relations in Indonesia: transforming the margins,* pp. 29-42. London & New York: Routledge.
Znoj, H. (2009). Deep Corruption in Indonesia - Discourses, Practices, Histories. In: Anders, Gerhard; Nuijten, Monique (Hg.) *Corruption and the Secret of Law. Law, Justice and Power* (S. 53-74). Burlington, VA: Ashgate

# *Appendix*

**Appendix 1.** *Empirical manifestations and observable manifestations of the proposed causal mechanism*

| | X | Causal Mechanism | | | | Y |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Electoral Victory of Erosion Agent** | **Part 01: Institutional Capture** | **Part 02: Social Silencing** | **Part 03: Dismantling of Accountability Mechanisms** | **Part 04: Expansion of Executive Power** | **Loss of Democratic Qualities** |
| **Theoretical conjecture** | Erosion agent is elected as president or prime minister in democratic elections.<br><br>*The election of an authoritarian-leaning leader can only be known *a posteriori* | The incumbent *captures* state institutions through the manipulation of political structures, legal and constitutional engineering, and institutional reorganization. | The incumbent *initiates* social silencing through the obstruction of civic space, authoritarian enforcement, and state-controlled narratives. | The cumulative effort of capturing state institutions and social silencing *leads* to weakening of vertical, horizontal and diagonal accountability mechanisms. | The weakening of all three accountability mechanisms *allows* the incumbent to concentrate executive power with undermined constraints. | The absence of checks and balances and a lack of government accountability, transparency, pluralism, and citizens' engagement has led to the *erosion* of democratic qualities. |
| **Empirical Manifestations** | A strong reliance on polarizing rhetoric that promises to "fix" the system. | Politicization of judicial appointments, stacking courts with loyalists, and attempts to weaken or control the independence of the judiciary. The introduction of laws that expand executive power while bypassing traditional checks. | Crackdown on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially those focused on human rights, by labeling them as foreign agents, restricting their funding, or passing restrictive laws on assembly. | Elections become increasingly uncompetitive due to unfair electoral practices, the use of state resources for campaigning, voter intimidation, or the absence of credible opposition. Erosion of media freedom limits citizens' ability to hold the government accountable. | The leader pushes for amendments to the constitution to extend term limits, weaken federalism, or reduce legislative and judicial oversight of the executive. These changes are often packaged as necessary reforms for stability or progress. | While elections continue to occur, they are increasingly ceremonial, with real competition diminished by barriers to entry, unfair media coverage, or intimidation. |
| | A significant degree of support from marginalized or disenfranchised voters, often due to dissatisfaction with the political status quo. | Use of executive decrees to bypass parliamentary debate, the co-opting of legislative bodies by expanding loyalist influence, or introducing new election laws that favor the ruling party. | State-controlled media propagating narratives that demonize opposition, spread misinformation, or justify the regime's actions. Control or censorship of the internet, social media, and private communication channels. | Institutions designed to check executive power, such as the judiciary, parliament, or independent commissions, are weakened or co-opted. This is seen in court rulings favoring the executive, parliamentary majorities rubber-stamping the leader's policies, and weakened oversight mechanisms. | Declaring states of emergency or using crisis situations (e.g., terrorism, public health, economic instability) to justify the concentration of power. Executive decrees become more common and are used to bypass the legislative process. | The political landscape becomes dominated by one party or coalition, with opposition voices marginalized or silenced. This can be through legal means (disqualification, imprisonment) or through societal means (intimidation, smear campaigns). |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Control over electoral commissions to manipulate the organization of future elections, for example, altering voting laws or rules that disadvantage opposition parties. | Legal and extralegal measures (e.g., arrests of opposition figures, journalists, and activists) are used to limit dissent. Increasing state surveillance and intimidation tactics against critics. | NGOs, media, and civic actors are systematically targeted and their ability to challenge or scrutinize the government is curtailed. Public watchdogs lose influence and independence. | The executive gains direct control over national resources, including the budget, which can be redirected toward loyalist groups or used to stifle opposition through economic means. | Civic participation diminishes, not only because of repression but also because citizens feel their participation does not matter due to rigged or manipulated systems. |
| | | Politicized appointment; weaponization of regulations; structural reorganization; undermining autonomy via budgetary control; judicial subversion of fourth-branch decisions | Amplification of societal divisions, often using identity-based conflicts or cultural issues. The erosion agent fuels these tensions to delegitimize critics and justify further consolidation of power. | | The executive's decisions increasingly reflect personal preferences or the preferences of a narrow group of elites, with diminished input from technocrats or independent experts. | Laws are increasingly interpreted in favor of the regime, with selective enforcement and manipulation of legal frameworks to entrench the executive's power. |
| | | Centralization of the military or police under loyal leadership, use of state security forces to silence critics or suppress protests. | Over time, individuals and media outlets voluntarily limit criticism due to fear of retribution, leading to reduced public discourse and open political debate. | | An increased reliance on the military or security forces to enforce political decisions or suppress dissent, effectively blending state and military power. | |
| **Observables** | Campaign speeches, media appearances, and social media activity where the candidates emphasize "us vs. them" narratives, attacks elites or political institutions, and or promises radical change. | Changes in the composition of courts (e.g., an unusual number of appointments, forced retirements of judges) that show increased loyalty to the executive. Decreased judicial review of government actions. | New laws restricting the operations of NGOs, particularly those receiving foreign funding or engaging in political activities. Monitoring of NGO registration data and the number of organizations forced to close or reduce activities. | Election irregularities become more frequent—e.g., voter suppression, gerrymandering, biased media coverage, or lack of viable opposition candidates. Election observation reports indicate a decline in electoral integrity. | Government pushes through amendments to extend term limits, curtail checks on executive authority, or declare states of emergency. Legislative records or government decrees show an increasing concentration of power in the executive. | Election monitoring organizations report increasing problems with election integrity, including voter intimidation, vote-rigging, media bias, or legal hurdles that block genuine opposition. Fewer political parties or candidates participate in elections. |
| | Voter demographic data showing a large proportion of votes from regions or populations historically | Bypassing of the legislature through executive decrees or emergency powers, or legislative bodies dominated by ruling party loyalists. Public | Increase in government censorship (internet shutdowns, bans on media outlets), arrests or harassment of journalists, defamation suits, or disinformation | Declining effectiveness of checks and balances, shown by legislatures rubber-stamping executive decisions without challenge, or rulings by courts that consistently favor the | Analysis of government activity shows a rising number of executive orders or decrees, especially those bypassing legislative debate. Data | Analysis of press freedom indexes (e.g., Reporters Without Borders) or civil society health indicators shows a dramatic decline in freedom of speech, press |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| underrepresented, economically struggling, or disillusioned with mainstream political parties. Survey data or exit polls can further confirm the alignment between voter dissatisfaction and support for the leader. | records show weakened opposition influence in law-making. | campaigns aimed at silencing dissenting voices. | government. Reports on institutional independence by bodies like Freedom House show decreased ratings. | on parliamentary activity show a corresponding decrease in legislative power. | freedom, and civic engagement. |
| | New laws or changes to election rules that favor the incumbent party, such as changes in district boundaries, voting systems, or qualification criteria for candidates. | Use of police or military to violently disperse peaceful protests. Arrests or detention of opposition leaders and activists during or after demonstrations. | Anti-corruption agencies, ombudspersons, or independent regulators lose power, funding, or face political interference. Reports from civil society or think tanks reveal a decrease in anti-corruption investigations or prosecutions against regime allies. | Media reports or academic studies note the centralization of decision-making in the executive branch, with less involvement of traditional democratic institutions (e.g., parliament, judiciary). Signs of clientelism and patronage networks expanding around the erosion agent. | Global governance indicators (e.g., World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, Varieties of Democracy [V-Dem] data) reflect declining performance in rule of law, control of corruption, and political accountability. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Replacement of key figures in independent institutions (e.g., central bank, public prosecutor's office, electoral commission) with individuals loyal to the erosion agent. | Expansion of state surveillance measures, including reports from civil rights organizations on increased monitoring of citizens, online censorship, or arrest of individuals based on social media posts. | Reports or data showing increased military or police involvement in enforcing political decisions, suppressing protests, or silencing opposition. Government budgets reflect growing spending on security forces loyal to the executive. | Surveys show declining voter turnout, reduced participation in civic activities, and a general sense of political apathy or fear. Opinion polls indicate a lack of faith in democratic processes or widespread fear of political retribution. |
| | Appointment of loyalists to key military or police leadership positions, increased presence of security forces during elections or political rallies, and documented instances of state security forces being deployed to suppress dissent, intimidate opposition, or curtail protests critical of the regime. | Analysis of state-controlled media shows a steady increase in one-sided narratives, demonization of opposition parties, and promotion of the incumbent's narratives.<br><br>Self-censorship leads to a decline in critical content and diversity of opinions in public discourse, with media and individuals avoiding sensitive topics or adopting neutral tones. This results in a chilling effect on speech, reducing robust political debate and open dialogue. | | Reports from international human rights organizations (e.g., Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch) document escalating abuses such as political imprisonment, restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, and torture or extrajudicial killings. |

*Source:* The author. Based Beach and Pedersen's (2019) framework.

**Appendix 2.** *Case Selection*

| Country | Leader | Leader "Spell" | 3rd Wave Democracy: Year of Transition | Executive Aggrandizement (EA) | Onset EA: Regime Type. | Authoritarian Legacies | Socio-political Cleavages | Weak Institutionalization |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Benin | Talon | 2016- | 1992 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Bolivia | Morales | 2006-2019 | 1986 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Brazil | Bolsonaro | 2019-2022 | 1987 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Dominican Rep. | Medina | 2012-2020 | 1982 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Ecuador | Correa | 2007-2017 | 1980 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Indonesia | Widodo | 2014-2024 | 2000 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Macedonia North | Gruevski | 2006-2016 | 1998 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Mexico | Lopez Obrador | 2018-2024 | 1996 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Moldova | Veronin | 2001-2009 | 1992 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Nicaragua | Ortega | 2006- | 1990 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Philippines | Duterte | 2016-2022 | 1988 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Sri Lanka | Rajapaksa | 2005-2015; 2019-2022 | 1995 | 1 | Electoral Democracy (2019) | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Thailand | Thaksin | 2001-2006 | 1997 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Zambia | Sata | 2011-2014 | 1994 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Turkey | Erdogan | 2014- | 1988 | 1 | Electoral Democracy | 1 | 1 | 1 |

*Source*: The author.
*Notes*: Regime type based on data (Regimes of the World, RoW) from the Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem, *v14*).

## Bibliography


Altuve, L. D. B. (2021). The Collective Promotion of Democracy and Authoritarian Backsliding: The Organization of American States in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Honduras. *The Latin Americanist*, *65*(2), 233-263.

Apaydin, F., Öngel, F. S., Schmid, J. W., & Ülker, E. (2022). When do workers support executive aggrandizement? Lessons from the recent Turkish experience. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 53(2), 142–159. https://doi.org/10.1111/irj.12360

Auerbach, K. R., & Kartner, J. (2023). How Do Political Parties Capture New Democracies? Hungary and North Macedonia in Comparison. *East European Politics and Societies*, *37*(2), 538-562.

Barocas, L., Berkowitz, S., Brockman, S., Harrold, M., Peebles, I., Puc, E., & Villasmil, J. P. (2023). *Democratic Backsliding in the Americas: A Case Study on Mexico*. Diplomacy Lab Project, Spring Semester 2023. American University.

Cheeseman, N., Ford, R., & Simutanyi, N. (2014). Is there a 'populist threat'in Zambia. *Zambia: Building Prosperity from Resource Wealth*, 339-365.

Cianetti, L., Dawson, J., & Hanley, S. (Eds.). (2019). *Rethinking' democratic backsliding' in Central and Eastern Europe*. London & New York: Routledge.

Cleary, M. R., & Öztürk, A. (2022). When does backsliding lead to breakdown? Uncertainty and opposition strategies in democracies at risk. *Perspectives on Politics*, *20*(1), 205-221.

Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Knutsen, C. H., Lindberg, S. I., Teorell, J., Altman, D., ... Ziblatt, D. (2024). Dataset v14 (Country-Year/Country-Date). V-Dem.

Cornejo, R. C., & Langston, J. (2023). Anti-Democratic Attitudes, the Winner-Loser Gap, and the Rise of the Left in Mexico. *Revista Latinoamericana de Opinión Pública*, *12*(2), 179-202.

Daly, T. G. (2020). Understanding multi-directional democratic decay: lessons from the rise of Bolsonaro in Brazil. *The Law & Ethics of Human Rights*, *14*(2), 199-226.

de Silva, M. M. D. S. (2022). Policy dismantling by capacity manipulation in a context of democratic backsliding: The bureaucracy in disarray in Bolsonaro's Brazil. *International Review of Public Policy*, *4*(03), 272-292.

DeVotta, N. (2021). Ethnoreligious nationalism and autocratization in Sri Lanka. In S. Widmalm (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Autocratization in South Asia*, pp. 285-297. Routledge.

Durotoye, A. (2016). Resurgent backsliding and democracy in Africa. *International Journal of African and Asian Studies*, *18*, 39-46.

Dussauge-Laguna, M. I. (2022). The promises and perils of populism for democratic policymaking: the case of Mexico. *Policy sciences*, *55*(4), 777-803.

Encarnación, O. G. (2023). Democratic Backsliding: Comparative Reflections on the American Experience. *Political Science Quarterly*, *138*(3), 407-423.

Ferraris, N. (2023). UNITED STATES, BRAZIL, POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND DEMOCRATIC PUSHBACK. ASSAULT ON DEMOCRACY?. *Il Politico*, *258*(1), 46-61.

Fomunyoh, C. (2020). Facing democratic backsliding in Africa and reversing the trend. *National Democratic Institute*, *30*.

Fonseka, B., Ganeshathasan, L., & Welikala, A. (2021). Sri Lanka: Pandemic-catalyzed democratic backsliding. In V.V. Ramraj (ed.), *Covid-19 in Asia: Law and policy contexts*, pp. 349-362. Oxford University Press.

Freidenberg, F. (2024). Democracy in Latin America: Between Backsliding and Resilience. *Athena–Critical Inquiries in Law, Philosophy and Globalization*, *4*(1), 68-109.

Gamboa, L., García-Holgado, B., & González-Ocantos, E. (2024). Courts against backsliding: Lessons from Latin America. *Law & Policy*.

Gyimah-Boadi, E. (2021). *Democratic backsliding in West Africa: Nature, causes, remedies*. Accra: Kofi Anan Foundation.

Haggard, S., & Kaufman, R. (2021). The anatomy of democratic backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, *32*(4), 27-41.

Hinfelaar, M., Rakner, L., & van de Walle, N. (2023). Backsliding in a Presidential Regime. Democratic Backsliding in Africa? In L.R. Arriola, L. Rakner, & N. van de Walle (eds.), *Democratic Backsliding in Africa. Autocratization, Resilience, and Contention,* pp. 187-211. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hinfelaar, M., Rakner, L., Sishuwa, S., & van de Walle, N. (2022). Legal autocratisation ahead of the 2021 Zambian elections. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *16*(4), 558-575.

Laebens, M. G. (2023). Beyond Democratic Backsliding: Executive Aggrandizement and its Outcomes. *V-DEM Working Paper, Series 2023:54*. https://www.v-dem.net/media/publications/UWP_54.pdf

Mainwaring, S., & Bizzarro, F. (2019). The fates of third-wave democracies. *Journal of Democracy*, *30*(1), 99-113.

Milhorance, C. (2022). Policy dismantling and democratic regression in Brazil under Bolsonaro: Coalition politics, ideas, and underlying discourses. *Review of Policy Research*, *39*(6), 752-770.
Morel, C., & Muñiz, A. (2023). The Transition and Consolidation of Democracy in the Dominican Republic: Continuities and Disruptions. In C. Morel & A, Muñiz, (ed.), *Dominican Politics in the Twenty First Century*, pp. 20-41. Routledge.
Perelló, L., & Navia, P. (2022). Changes in support for Nicaragua's Sandinista National Liberation Front during democratic backsliding. *Politics*, *42*(3), 426-442.
Puerta Riera, M.I. (2021). Democratic backsliding and autocratization: the political effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nicaragua and Venezuela. *GAPAC*, February 2021, online: https://gobiernoyanalisispolitico.org/democratic-backsliding-and-autocratization-the-political-effects-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-nicaragua-and-venezuela/
Rakner, L. (2021). Don't Touch My Constitution! Civil Society Resistance to Democratic Backsliding in Africa´ s Pluralist Regimes. *Global Policy*, *12*, 95-105.
Resnick, D. (2022). How Zambia's opposition won. *Journal of Democracy*, *33*(1), 70-84.
Riaz, A., & Rana, M. S. (2020). How Democracy Backslides: Tracing the Pathway in Six Countries. *APSA preprint,* 28 September 2020, online: https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/apsa/article-details/5f7233ce7abea50019269 0e6.
Riaz, A., & Rana, M. S. (2024). Bolivia: A Miracle Turning into a Competitive Autocracy. In A. Riaz & M.D. Rana (eds.), *How Autocrats Rise: Sequences of Democratic Backsliding*, pp. 83-112. Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
Schafer, D. (2021). A Popular Mandate for Strongmen: What Public Opinion Data Reveals About Support for Executive Aggrandizement in Turkey, 1996-2018. *South European Society and Politics*, *26*(3), 355–382. https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2022.2034689
Sotiropoulos, D. A. (2023a). How Elected Governments Make Democracies Backslide: The Case of North Macedonia. In D.A. Sotiropoulos (ed.), *The Irregular Pendulum of Democracy: Populism, Clientelism and Corruption in Post-Yugoslav Successor States*, pp. 311-354. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
Sotiropoulos, D. A. (2023b). The pendulum of democracy in post-Yugoslav successor states: Causes of the backsliding of democracy. In D.A. Sotiropoulos (ed.), *The irregular pendulum of democracy: Populism, clientelism and corruption in post-Yugoslav successor states*, pp. 71-103. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
Subedi, D. B. (2022). The emergence of populist nationalism and 'illiberal' peacebuilding in Sri Lanka. *Asian Studies Review*, *46*(2), 272-292.
Uyangoda, J. (2021). 'Executive Authoritarianism' as Sri Lanka's New Political Normal since COVID19. *Polity*, *9*(1&2), 6.
Wunsch, N., & Blanchard, P. (2023). Patterns of democratic backsliding in third-wave democracies: a sequence analysis perspective. *Democratization*, *30*(2), 278-301.

## **Appendix 3.** *Indonesia: Evaluation of empirical uniqueness and certainty*

| Mechanism | Causal hypothesis/Assumption | Proposition | Observable Implication | Empirical Observation | Triangulation and evaluation of sources | Evidence of proposition | Empirical uniqueness and certainty | Aggregation of evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Electoral Victory of Erosion Agent (X)** | Erosion agent is elected as president or prime minister in democratic elections based on anti-system, anti-establishment or other populist narratives by utilizing socio-political cleavages to his or her advantage.<br><br>*The election of an authoritarian-leaning leader can only be known a posteriori | A strong reliance on polarizing rhetoric that promises to "fix" the system. | Campaign speeches, media appearances, and social media activity where the candidates emphasize "us vs. them" narratives, attacks elites or political institutions, and or promises radical change. | Jokowi's 2014 and 2019 campaigns emphasized a "technocratic populist" style, focusing on programmatic issues, support for ethnic and religious minorities, and promises of greater representation for marginalized groups, aligning with his image as a leader of the 'ordinary' people. In contrast, Prabowo's "traditional populism" relied on nationalism, anti-foreign rhetoric, and appeals to right-wing Islamists and rural poor, underpinned by his elite military background and ties to Suharto-era authoritarianism. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources. | Findings indicate a reliance on polarizing rhetoric to mobilize support and frame governance as a system requiring radical correction. | High uniqueness and high certainty | The evidence supports the hypothesis that Jokowi's electoral victories in 2014 and 2019 were driven by populist narratives and socio-political cleavages.<br>Overall, the aggregation of evidence provides robust support for the hypothesis, with contextual conditions and Jokowi's campaign strategy linked to his electoral success. |
| | | A significant degree of support from marginalized or disenfranchised voters, often due to dissatisfaction with the political status quo. | Voter demographic data showing a large proportion of votes from regions or populations historically underrepresented, economically struggling, or disillusioned with mainstream political parties. | Disillusioned by persisting New Order legacies and SBY's 'lame duck' presidency, Joko Widodo's portrayal as a new type of leader who remained down-to-earth, distancing himself from traditional party politics and instead close to ordinary citizens, contributed significantly to his popularity. He was especially popular among those from lower social classes and the non-Muslim population. In both elections (2014 and 2019), electoral result demonstrates how ethno-religious cleavages, manifested in the dichotomy between Muslim and non-Muslim regions and Javanese versus non-Javanese areas, shaped voter preferences. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources, international and national newspapers and election observers. | Findings indicate that Jokowi appealed to marginalized and disenfranchised voters, particularly ethnic and religious minorities, through promises of greater representation and systemic reform, while Prabowo mobilized rural poor and Islamist groups dissatisfied with the political status quo, framing himself as a strongman to restore order and sovereignty. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | Politicization of judicial appointments, stacking courts with loyalists, and attempts to weaken or control the independence of the judiciary. The introduction of laws that expand executive power while bypassing traditional checks. | Changes in the composition of courts (e.g., an unusual number of appointments, forced retirements of judges) that show increased loyalty to the executive. Decreased judicial review of government actions. | Under President Joko Widodo's administration, the Constitutional Court (MK) and other judicial bodies have seen an influx of appointments favoring individuals with close ties to the executive and ruling elite. Legislative changes have granted the executive greater influence over judicial appointments, while rulings from previously independent courts increasingly align with government interests, such as approving controversial laws expanding executive power. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Findings indicate that the politicization of judicial appointments and restructuring of the judiciary under Jokowi demonstrates a deliberate effort to stack courts with loyalists. | Medium uniqueness and medium certainty | |
| | | Use of executive decrees to bypass parliamentary debate, the co-opting of legislative bodies by expanding loyalist influence, | Bypassing of the legislature through executive decrees or emergency powers, or legislative bodies dominated by ruling party loyalists. Public records show weakened opposition influence in law-making. | During Joko Widodo's presidency, the legislative was tilted in favor of Jokowi and the ruling coalition: Jokowi not only co-opted opposition parties in the ruling coalition, but he also stacked his ministry with loyalists. His supermajority led to arbitrary and pro-oligarchic decision-making (e.g., Omnibus Law). | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Findings indicate that the legislative was severely influenced by the ruling coalition, with Jokowi co-opting opposition parties and appointing loyalists to key ministerial | Medium uniqueness and medium certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Institutional Capture (Part 01)** | The incumbent *captures* state institutions through the manipulation of political structures, legal and constitutional engineering, and institutional reorganization (H1). | or introducing new election laws that favor the ruling party. | | | | positions, creating a supermajority. | | The aggregated evidence supports the hypothesis that the incumbent has engaged in institutional capture through a deliberate strategy of manipulating legal frameworks, political structures, and institutional reorganization. Sequence and patterns lend additional support by demonstrating systematic and chronological consistency.<br><br>The overall aggregation suggests a medium degree of certainty and medium uniqueness for the strategy of institutional capture. |
| | | Control over electoral commissions to manipulate the organization of future elections, for example, altering voting laws or rules that disadvantage opposition parties. | New laws or changes to election rules that favor the incumbent party, such as changes in district boundaries, voting systems, or qualification criteria for candidates. | The Constitutional Court (MK) has indirectly influenced the Election Commission (KPU) through rulings that uphold controversial electoral laws favoring the incumbent, such as changes to parliamentary threshold requirements. These rulings, combined with executive-aligned appointments to the MK, have reinforced the legal framework that benefits the ruling coalition and constrains the KPU's independence. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Findings indicate that the MK's decisions on amendments to electoral laws have shaped the commission's operations, indirectly advantaging the ruling party by upholding regulations that disadvantage opposition candidates and parties. | Medium uniqueness and medium certainty | |
| | | Politicized appointment; weaponization of regulations; structural reorganization; undermining autonomy via budgetary control; judicial subversion of fourth-branch decisions | Replacement of key figures in independent institutions (e.g., central bank, public prosecutor's office, anti-corruption commission) with individuals loyal to the erosion agent. | Empirical observations reveal systematic efforts to erode the independence of Indonesia's fourth-branch institutions, particularly the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), through politicized appointments, regulatory manipulation, and structural reorganization. Key leadership positions were filled with individuals loyal to entrenched political elites, facilitating the commission's integration into executive oversight. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Findings indicate that the independence of Indonesia's fourth-branch institutions, particularly the KPK, has been systematically eroded through politicized appointments and regulatory restructuring. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | Centralization of the military or police, use of state security forces to silence critics or suppress protests. | Appointment of loyalists to key military or police leadership positions, increased presence of security forces during elections or political rallies, and documented instances of state security forces being deployed to suppress dissent, intimidate opposition, or curtail protests critical of the regime. | Throughout his presidency, Joko Widodo utilized strategic appointments and cabinet reshuffles to centralize power, consolidate alliances, and manage competing political and societal forces. Between 2014 and 2023, Jokowi reshuffled his cabinet thirteen. These reshuffles consistently prioritized individuals from three key groups: business elites connected to oligarchic networks, former military and police officials with extensive political influence, and loyalists from his coalition partners, notably the PDI-P and NasDem. There has been a noticeable increase in military-involvement in business and politics during Jokowi's presidency as well as state security forces deployment during anti-government protests. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Findings indicate that Widodo appointed several military elites to key government positions and used state security forces to silence dissent. | Medium uniqueness and medium certainty | |
| | | Crackdown on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially those focused on human rights, by labeling them as foreign agents, restricting their funding, or passing restrictive laws on assembly. | New laws restricting the operations of NGOs, particularly those receiving foreign funding or engaging in political activities. Monitoring of NGO registration data and the number of organizations forced to close or reduce activities. | CSOs in Indonesia, particularly those advocating for human rights and democracy, have faced scrutiny and restrictions. Laws targeting NGOs receiving foreign funding or engaging in political activities have increased registration burdens and caused several organizations to cease operations or scale down. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Findings indicate a crackdown on CSOs through 'autocratic legalism'. | Medium uniqueness and medium certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Social Silencing (Part 02)** | The incumbent initiates social silencing through the obstruction of civic space, authoritarian enforcement, and state-controlled narratives (H2). | State-controlled media propagating narratives that demonize opposition, spread misinformation, or justify the regime's actions. Control or censorship of the internet, social media, and private communication channels. | Increase in government censorship (internet shutdowns, bans on media outlets), arrests or harassment of journalists, defamation suits, or disinformation campaigns aimed at silencing dissenting voices. | During the Widodo administration, internet shutdowns and restrictive laws were enforced during periods of unrest. Certain independent media outlets and journalists critical of the government faced lawsuits and bans, and the state's narrative dominated traditional and digital media platforms. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Findings indicate arbitrary arrests, and defamation against government critics as well as (digital) censorship. | Medium uniqueness and medium certainty | The aggregated evidence confirms H2. Each component of the hypothesis, obstruction of civic space, authoritarian enforcement, and state-controlled narratives, is substantiated by multiple examples of state actions aimed at silencing dissent.<br><br>The overall aggregation suggests a medium degree of certainty and a medium to high degree of uniqueness for the strategy of social silencing. |
| | | Legal and extralegal measures (e.g., arrests of opposition figures, journalists, and activists) are used to limit dissent. Increasing state surveillance and intimidation tactics against critics. | Use of police or military to violently disperse peaceful protests. Arrests or detention of opposition leaders and activists during or after demonstrations. Expansion of state surveillance measures, including reports from civil rights organizations on increased monitoring of citizens, online censorship, or arrest of individuals based on social media posts. | Peaceful demonstrations in various regions were met with excessive police force, and several opposition leaders were detained on charges often criticized as politically motivated. Reports from civil society indicated heightened surveillance of activists and opposition politicians' online activities. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Findings indicate various (extra-)legal measures taken against the opposition. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | Amplification of societal divisions, often using identity-based conflicts or cultural issues. The erosion agent fuels these tensions to delegitimize critics and justify further consolidation of power. | Steady increase in one-sided narratives, demonization of opposition parties, and promotion of the incumbent's narratives. | The administration's allies leveraged identity politics, particularly around religious and ethnic issues, to delegitimize opposition figures. Media campaigns highlighted "national unity" while portraying dissenters as threats to social cohesion. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Several studies and newspaper articles revealed the strategic use of identity-based messaging to consolidate power and weaken opposition support, particularly during election cycles. | Medium uniqueness and medium certainty | |
| | | Over time, individuals and media outlets voluntarily limit criticism due to fear of retribution, leading to reduced public discourse and open political debate. | Self-censorship leads to a decline in critical content and diversity of opinions in public discourse, with media and individuals avoiding sensitive topics or adopting neutral tones. This results in a chilling effect on speech, reducing robust political debate and open dialogue. | Self-censorship increased among journalists, academics, and social media users, with many avoiding contentious issues to prevent legal or social repercussions. This phenomenon created a chilling effect on discourse, limiting diverse political opinions and criticisms of government policies. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Journalists, independent media and scholars alike highlighted the ambiguous nature of defamation laws and their use to suppress dissent. | high uniqueness and medium certainty | |
| | | Elections become increasingly uncompetitive due to unfair electoral practices, the use of state resources for campaigning, voter intimidation, or the absence of credible opposition. Erosion of media | Election irregularities become more frequent, e.g., voter suppression, gerrymandering, biased media coverage, or lack of viable opposition candidates. Election observation reports indicate a decline in electoral integrity. | Under President Jokowi, Indonesia has seen allegations of voter intimidation, misuse of state resources for campaigning, and the marginalization of opposition parties. Instances of media suppression, including restrictions on press freedom and biased reporting in favor of the incumbent, have also been noted. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Reports from independent election observers, newspapers and scholars alike highlight irregularities. | medium uniqueness and high certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dismantling of Accountability Mechanism (Part 03)** | The cumulative effort of capturing state institutions and social silencing leads to weakening of vertical, horizontal and diagonal accountability mechanisms (H3). | freedom limits citizens' ability to hold the government accountable. | | | | | | The aggregated evidence shows moderate to strong support for H3. Vertical accountability shows high certainty and medium uniqueness that deliberate institutional capture and social silencing undermine electoral integrity. Horizontal and diagonal accountability evidence supports H3 moderately. |
| | | Institutions designed to check executive power, such as the judiciary, parliament, or independent commissions, are weakened or co-opted. This is seen in court rulings favoring the executive, parliamentary majorities rubber-stamping the leader's policies, and weakened oversight mechanisms. | Declining effectiveness of checks and balances, shown by legislatures rubber-stamping executive decisions without challenge, or rulings by courts that consistently favor the government. Reports on institutional independence by bodies like Freedom House show decreased ratings. | Under Jokowi, Indonesia has seen a decline in horizontal accountability, with the judiciary and legislature increasingly perceived as being aligned with the executive. Controversial reforms, such as those weakening the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), were passed with minimal opposition in parliament. The Constitutional Court has often issued rulings perceived as favorable to the government. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources, national sources, official state and fourth-branch documents, white and gray literature. | Findings indicate a weakening of institutional independence in Indonesia. | Medium uniqueness and medium certainty | |
| | | NGOs, media, and civic actors are systematically targeted and their ability to challenge or scrutinize the government is curtailed. Public watchdogs lose influence and independence. | Anti-corruption agencies, ombudspersons, or independent regulators lose power, funding, or face political interference. Reports from civil society or think tanks reveal a decrease in anti-corruption investigations or prosecutions against regime allies. | Under Jokowi, NGOs, media outlets, and civic actors critical of the government have faced growing pressures, including legal intimidation, harassment, and restrictive regulations. The KPK, a key public watchdog, has seen its independence eroded through legislative changes and politically influenced leadership appointments. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources, (inter-)national organizations | Findings indicate a decline in the effectiveness of watchdog institutions. | Medium uniqueness and medium certainty | |
| | | The leader pushes for amendments to the constitution to extend term limits, weaken federalism, or reduce legislative and judicial oversight of the executive. These changes are often packaged as necessary reforms for stability or progress. | Government pushes through amendments to extend term limits, curtail checks on executive authority, or declare states of emergency. Legislative records or government decrees show an increasing concentration of power in the executive. | During the Widodo administration, several legal frameworks and restrictive laws were passed, including laws curtailing civic freedoms and targeting NGOs. However, no direct constitutional amendments to extend term limits were enacted.<br>Emergency powers were enacted through legal instruments like the Omnibus Law, streamlining controversial reforms without thorough legislative debate, effectively curtailing checks on executive authority. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | There was a concentration of power in the executive branch through legislative tools and bypassing checks and balances during Widodo's terms in office; however, there were no constitutional amendments made. | Medium uniqueness and medium certainty | |
| | | Declaring states of emergency or using crisis situations (e.g., terrorism, public health, economic instability) to justify the concentration of power. Executive decrees become | Analysis of government activity shows a rising number of executive orders or decrees, especially those bypassing legislative debate. Data on parliamentary activity show a corresponding decrease in legislative power. | The Omnibus Law passed during Widodo's term is an example of sweeping reforms enacted with minimal legislative input.<br>Legislative activity on contentious laws significantly declined, reflecting the executive's dominance in setting the policy agenda. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Findings indicate that during Widodo's terms in office, there was an increased reliance on executive-driven policy processes, sidelining legislative scrutiny. | Medium uniqueness and medium certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Part 04: Expansion of Executive Power** | The weakening of all three accountability mechanisms allows the incumbent to concentrate executive power with little to no constraints (H4). | more common and are used to bypass the legislative process. | | | | | | The evidence confirms H4. Each accountability mechanism has been systematically weakened under Joko Widodo, enabling the concentration of executive power.<br><br>The overall aggregation suggests a medium to high degree of certainty and a medium to high degree of uniqueness that the observed patterns implicate deliberate executive actions as the primary driver of democratic erosion. |
| | | The executive gains direct control over national resources, including the budget, which can be redirected toward loyalist groups or used to stifle opposition through economic means. | Control over state resources allows the executive to disproportionately allocate funds to loyalist groups, evident in skewed budget priorities or financial favoritism. Simultaneously, opposition groups or dissenting regions face reduced funding or economic sanctions, weakening their capacity to challenge the regime. | Budgetary allocations under Widodo favored (state) institutions politically aligned with the administration (e.g., budget cuts to the KPK).<br>Evidence also suggests that state-owned enterprises were utilized to secure political loyalties. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Findings indicate that state resources were strategically allocated to consolidate the executive's influence and undermine opposition. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | The executive's decisions increasingly reflect personal preferences or the preferences of a narrow group of elites, with diminished input from technocrats or independent experts. | Media reports or academic studies note the centralization of decision-making in the executive branch, with less involvement of traditional democratic institutions (e.g., parliament, judiciary). Signs of clientelism and patronage networks expanding around the erosion agent. | Media and academic studies highlight the growing centralization of power around President Widodo, with decision-making increasingly concentrated in the executive branch.<br>Patronage networks and clientelism reportedly expanded, with appointments and financial allocations favoring loyalists. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Traditional institutions like the judiciary and parliament were marginalized in key decisions to bolster not only the incumbent's power and decision-making capabilities but also those of the oligarchic networks. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | An increased reliance on the military or security forces to enforce political decisions or suppress dissent, effectively blending state and military power. | Reports or data showing increased military or police involvement in enforcing political decisions, suppressing protests, or silencing opposition. Government budgets reflect growing spending on security forces loyal to the executive. | Instances of security forces being used to suppress protests, including excessive police force during peaceful demonstrations.<br>Reports of surveillance targeting opposition figures and activists. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers; (inter-)national human rights organizations | Security forces were utilized to silence dissent and enforce political objectives of the ruling elite. | Medium uniqueness and medium certainty | |
| **Loss of Democratic Qualities (Y)** | The absence of checks and balances and a lack of government accountability, transparency, pluralism, and citizens' engagement has led to the erosion of democratic qualities. | While elections continue to occur, they are increasingly ceremonial, with real competition diminished by barriers to entry, unfair media coverage, or intimidation. | Election monitoring organizations report increasing problems with election integrity, including voter intimidation, vote-rigging, media bias, or legal hurdles that block genuine opposition. Fewer political parties or candidates participate in elections. | Under President Jokowi, Indonesia has seen allegations of voter intimidation, misuse of state resources for campaigning, and the marginalization of opposition parties. Instances of media suppression, including restrictions on press freedom and biased reporting in favor of the incumbent, have also been noted. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Reports from independent election observers, newspapers and scholars alike highlight irregularities. | medium uniqueness and high certainty | The cumulative evidence demonstrates an erosion of democratic qualities in Indonesia under President Jokowi.<br>However, contrary to expectations, citizen participation remained high during Jokowi's tenure, highlighting an outcome where high voter turnout and protest activity persisted despite declining political and civil rights. |
| | | The political landscape becomes dominated by one party or coalition, with opposition voices marginalized or silenced. This can be through legal means (disqualification, | A lack of pluralism results in a disproportionate representation of one party in elections and government institutions, often accompanied by limited or absent opposition participation. This can be observed through frequent legal actions against opposition figures, diminished public presence of alternative voices, | By absorbing opposition parties and creating a supermajority in both terms in office, the political landscape became dominated by the ruling coalition, with the opposition relatively marginalized in terms of decision-making power. In addition, there were legal actions taken against members of the opposition when they did not comply, and propaganda increased around the times of elections. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The political landscape became dominated by the ruling coalition, with opposition voices marginalized through legal and societal means. | medium uniqueness and high certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | imprisonment) or through societal means (intimidation, smear campaigns). | and increased use of media for propaganda or intimidation campaigns. | | | | | Overall, however, the aggregation of evidence supports the hypothesis that institutional capture and societal silencing have contributed to democratic decline in Indonesia. The evidence, overall, shows high certainty and medium uniqueness. |
| | | Civic participation diminishes, not only because of repression but also because citizens feel their participation does not matter due to rigged or manipulated systems. | Decreased citizen participation is evident in lower voter turnout, reduced involvement in protests or civic activities, and widespread public apathy toward political processes. Surveys or social media may reflect growing cynicism, with citizens expressing distrust in institutions and skepticism about the impact of their engagement. | Indonesia during Widodo's terms in office showcase high voter turnout and high protest activity. However, trust in government institutions declined, e.g., the KPK. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings indicate that were was no decrease in citizen participation during Widodo's terms in office. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | Laws are increasingly interpreted in favor of the regime, with selective enforcement and manipulation of legal frameworks to entrench the executive's power. | The erosion of the rule of law is observable through biased judicial decisions favoring the regime, inconsistent application of laws, and legal reforms consolidating executive power. Opposition figures may face disproportionate legal scrutiny, while loyalists enjoy immunity from accountability. | Between 2014 and 2023, the judiciary became increasingly biased toward the Jokowi administration, favoring the regime in its decisions. Law enforcement agencies enjoy impunity, and the opposition faced disproportional legal scrutiny. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Findings indicate that laws were increasingly interpreted in favor of the regime, with selective enforcement and manipulation of legal frameworks to entrench the executive's power. | medium uniqueness and high certainty | |

*Source*: The author.

## **Appendix 4.** *Philippines: Evaluation of empirical uniqueness and certainty*

| Mechanism | Causal hypothesis/Assumption | Proposition | Observable Implication | Empirical Observation | Triangulation and evaluation of sources | Evidence of proposition | Empirical uniqueness and certainty | Aggregation of evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Electoral Victory of Erosion Agent (X)** | Erosion agent is elected as president or prime minister in democratic elections based on anti-system, anti-establishment or other populist narratives by utilizing socio-political cleavages to his or her advantage.<br><br>*The election of an authoritarian-leaning leader can only be known a posteriori | A strong reliance on polarizing rhetoric that promises to "fix" the system. | Campaign speeches, media appearances, and social media activity where the candidates emphasize "us vs. them" narratives, attacks elites or political institutions, and or promises radical change. | Leveraging social media and grassroots campaigning, Duterte's team bypassed traditional political structures and media channels to build direct connections with voters. Presenting himself as a strongman and leveraging his reputation as crime-fighting mayor of Davao City, Duterte's populist campaign promises including saving the country from the perils of drug trafficking, criminality, and systemic corruption, emphasizing us vs. them (as in the elite) narratives. Duterte's campaign also promised inclusive growth and justice for marginalized communities, particularly the Muslim population in Mindanao, through federalist structures and stringent law-and-order policies. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources. | Findings indicate that Duterte's campaign leveraged grassroots mobilization, populist rhetoric, and direct connections with voters to present himself as a strongman capable of dismantling elite systems and addressing systemic corruption. | medium uniqueness, high certainty | The evidence supports the hypothesis that Duterte's electoral victory in 2016 was driven by populist narratives and socio-political cleavages. Overall, the aggregation of evidence provides robust support for the hypothesis, linking pre-existing conditions and Duterte's campaign strategy to his electoral success. |
| | | A significant degree of support from marginalized or disenfranchised voters, often due to dissatisfaction with the political status quo. | Voter demographic data showing a large proportion of votes from regions or populations historically underrepresented, economically struggling, or disillusioned with mainstream political parties. | Duterte's populist rhetoric and image of decisive leadership resonated strongly, especially with poorer and middle-class Filipinos frustrated with the previous government, resulting in the highest voter turnout since the post-Marcos elections of 1987. With over 16 million votes (~39 percent), Duterte secured a decisive victory. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources, international and national newspapers and election observers. | Duterte's populist appeal resonated with economically struggling Filipinos, culminating in a historic voter turnout and a decisive electoral victory with over 16 million votes. | medium uniqueness, medium certainty | |
| **Institutional Capture (Part 01)** | The incumbent *captures* state institutions through the manipulation of political structures, legal and constitutional engineering, and institutional reorganization (H1). | Politicization of judicial appointments, stacking courts with loyalists, and attempts to weaken or control the independence of the judiciary. The introduction of laws that expand executive power while bypassing traditional checks. | Changes in the composition of courts (e.g., an unusual number of appointments, forced retirements of judges) that show increased loyalty to the executive. Decreased judicial review of government actions. | Under Duterte's administration, judicial bodies have seen an influx of appointments favoring individuals with close ties to the executive and ruling elite to replace those perceived as "opposition". Legislative changes have granted the executive greater influence over judicial appointments, while rulings from previously independent courts increasingly align with government interests, such as approving controversial laws expanding executive power. The judiciary was weaponized to target political opposition and critics. Moreover, The Anti-Terrorism Council's quasi-judicial powers weakened judicial oversight and consolidated executive power. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources and international and national newspapers. | Findings indicate that during Duterte's administration the judiciary was weaponized to curb opposition. State institutions were created to bypass traditional checks and balances. | High uniqueness and high certainty | The aggregated evidence supports the hypothesis that the incumbent has engaged in |
| | | Use of executive decrees to bypass parliamentary debate, the co-opting of legislative bodies by expanding loyalist influence, or introducing new election laws that favor the ruling party. | Bypassing of the legislature through executive decrees or emergency powers, or legislative bodies dominated by ruling party loyalists. Public records show weakened opposition influence in law-making. | Duterte's use of party-switching and patronage politics to create a legislative supermajority exemplifies how he bypassed meaningful legislative debate and reduced Congress to a rubber stamp for his policies. By leveraging weak party structures and structural volatility, he aligned legislative bodies with his administration, facilitating contentious policies such as the war on drugs. Apart from *turncatism*, Duterte's manipulation of parliamentary rules and purge of dissenting legislators ensured the legislature's compliance with his agenda. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Through party-switching and patronage, Duterte secured a legislative supermajority that reduced Congress to a rubber stamp for his policies, bypassing meaningful debate and opposition. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Control over electoral commissions to manipulate the organization of future elections, for example, altering voting laws or rules that disadvantage opposition parties. | New laws or changes to election rules that favor the incumbent party, such as changes in district boundaries, voting systems, or qualification criteria for candidates. | The appointment of loyalists to the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) demonstrates Duterte's manipulation of electoral processes. For example, the approval of Ducielle Cardema's candidacy despite legal irregularities shows the instrumentalization of COMELEC to favor Duterte's allies. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Findings demonstrate that Duterte's loyalist appointees in COMELEC manipulated the electoral processes. | medium uniqueness, medium certainty | institutional capture through a deliberate strategy of manipulating legal frameworks, political structures, and institutional reorganization.<br><br>The overall aggregation suggests a high degree of certainty and uniqueness for the strategy of institutional capture. |
| | | Politicized appointment; weaponization of regulations; structural reorganization; undermining autonomy via budgetary control; judicial subversion of fourth-branch decisions | Replacement of key figures in independent institutions (e.g., central bank, public prosecutor's office, anti-corruption commission) with individuals loyal to the erosion agent. | Through financial pressure, obstructive tactics and public criticism, Duterte effectively diminished the role and independent power of the CHR. His administration framed human rights as a challenge to law and order, intertwining this narrative with nationalist and strong anti-Western sentiments. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Findings indicate that fourth branch institutions were undermined by the Duterte administration. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | Centralization of the military or police under loyal leadership, use of state security forces to silence critics or suppress protests. | Appointment of loyalists to key military or police leadership positions, increased presence of security forces during elections or political rallies, and documented instances of state security forces being deployed to suppress dissent, intimidate opposition, or curtail protests critical of the regime. | The establishment of the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) institutionalized the red-tagging of civic groups and critics, effectively transforming security operations into tools of political repression. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Findings indicate that state security forces were created and used to institutionalize state repression. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| **Social Silencing (Part 02)** | The incumbent initiates social silencing through the obstruction of civic space, authoritarian enforcement, and state-controlled narratives (H2). | Crackdown on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially those focused on human rights, by labeling them as foreign agents, restricting their funding, or passing restrictive laws on assembly. | New laws restricting the operations of NGOs, particularly those receiving foreign funding or engaging in political activities. Monitoring of NGO registration data and the number of organizations forced to close or reduce activities. | Duterte's administration used red-tagging, financial restrictions, and legal mechanisms to target critical NGOs and civic groups, framing them as threats to national security. These actions deliberately stifled dissent and neutralized civil society's capacity for independent advocacy, consistent with the repression of civil society. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Findings indicate that the Duterte administration engaged in a crackdown on civil society through repressive actics and legal mechanisms. | High uniqueness and high certainty | The aggregated evidence confirms H2. Each component of the hypothesis, obstruction of civic space, authoritarian enforcement, and state-controlled narratives, is substantiated by multiple examples of state actions aimed at silencing dissent.<br>The overall aggregation suggests a high degree of certainty and medium to high uniqueness for the strategy of social silencing. |
| | | State-controlled media propagating narratives that demonize opposition, spread misinformation, or justify the regime's actions. Control or censorship of the internet, social media, and private communication channels. | Increase in government censorship (internet shutdowns, bans on media outlets), arrests or harassment of journalists, defamation suits, or disinformation campaigns aimed at silencing dissenting voices. | The closure of ABS-CBN, harassment of Rappler and Maria Ressa, and the use of legal tools were part of Duterte's systematic assault on press freedom. These actions curtailed independent media, fostered self-censorship, and allowed for state-controlled narratives to dominate public discourse. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Findings indicate that Duterte administration utilized state-controlled narratives and censorship. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | Legal and extralegal measures (e.g., arrests of opposition figures, journalists, and activists) are used to limit dissent. Increasing state surveillance and intimidation tactics against critics. | Use of police or military to violently disperse peaceful protests. Arrests or detention of opposition leaders and activists during or after demonstrations. Expansion of state surveillance measures, including reports from civil rights organizations on increased monitoring of citizens, online censorship, or arrest of individuals based on social media posts. | Duterte's administration employed legal harassment, intimidation, and extrajudicial killings to silence political dissent. Duterte's war on drugs illustrates the extreme use of executive power to enforce policies that disregarded democratic accountability. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Findings indicate that Duterte utilized state violence and legal harassment to silence critics. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | Amplification of societal divisions, often using identity-based conflicts or cultural issues. The erosion agent fuels these tensions to delegitimize critics and justify further consolidation of power. | steady increase in one-sided narratives, demonization of opposition parties, and promotion of the incumbent's narratives. | The administration's red-tagging and framing of dissent as subversion created divisions and fear. This "us vs. them" rhetoric vilified civic groups, opposition lawyers, and minority legislators, polarizing public discourse and delegitimizing opposition. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Findings indicate that Duterte's administration used red-tagging and "us vs. them" narratives to vilify critics, creating divisions and delegitimizing opposition. | medium uniqueness, high certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Over time, individuals and media outlets voluntarily limit criticism due to fear of retribution, leading to reduced public discourse and open political debate. | Self-censorship leads to a decline in critical content and diversity of opinions in public discourse, with media and individuals avoiding sensitive topics or adopting neutral tones. This results in a chilling effect on speech, reducing robust political debate and open dialogue. | Journalists and media outlets faced relentless legal harassment. Laws such as the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 and Cybercrime Prevention Act allowed vague definitions of terrorism and cybercrime to be weaponized, criminalizing oppositional opinions and intensifying the risk of retribution. Independent journalism declined significantly. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Findings indicate that journalists and media outlets practiced self-censorship due to Duterte's (extra-) legal harassment. | medium uniqueness, high certainty | |
| **Dismantling of Accountability Mechanism (Part 03)** | The cumulative effort of capturing state institutions and social silencing leads to weakening of vertical, horizontal and diagonal accountability mechanisms (H3). | Elections become increasingly uncompetitive due to unfair electoral practices, the use of state resources for campaigning, voter intimidation, or the absence of credible opposition. Erosion of media freedom limits citizens' ability to hold the government accountable. | Election irregularities become more frequent—e.g., voter suppression, gerrymandering, biased media coverage, or lack of viable opposition candidates. Election observation reports indicate a decline in electoral integrity. | Duterte's control over COMELEC enabled the manipulation of electoral processes, such as the approval of controversial candidates. These actions, coupled with the absence of credible opposition in the 2019 midterms, where pro-Duterte allies swept over 85% of seats, highlight a decline in electoral integrity. Biased media coverage, voter intimidation through red-tagging, and the strategic use of state resources for campaigning further marginalized opposition voices, reducing meaningful electoral competition. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Findings indicate that Duterte's control over COMELEC and biased media coverage led to uncompetitive elections, with pro-Duterte candidates sweeping the 2019 midterms amidst allegations of voter suppression and red-tagging. | medium uniqueness, high certainty | The aggregated evidence shows support for H3. Horizontal and diagonal accountability evidence supports H3 more strongly, while vertical accountability is shows medium uniqueness and with high certainty. |
| | | Institutions designed to check executive power, such as the judiciary, parliament, or independent commissions, are weakened or co-opted. This is seen in court rulings favoring the executive, parliamentary majorities rubber-stamping the leader's policies, and weakened oversight mechanisms. | Declining effectiveness of checks and balances, shown by legislatures rubber-stamping executive decisions without challenge, or rulings by courts that consistently favor the government. Reports on institutional independence by bodies like Freedom House show decreased ratings. | Duterte weakened horizontal accountability by stacking courts and oversight institutions with loyalists. The ATC, composed entirely of Duterte appointees, was given quasi-judicial powers to label individuals and groups as terrorists without adequate judicial review. The legislature, dominated by Duterte's supermajority coalition, acted as a rubber stamp for his agenda, passing contentious laws like the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 without substantial debate or opposition. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Duterte's supermajority coalition in Congress and judiciary appointments ensured that oversight mechanisms consistently favored his administration, bypassing checks and balances. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | NGOs, media, and civic actors are systematically targeted and their ability to challenge or scrutinize the government is curtailed. Public watchdogs lose influence and independence. | Anti-corruption agencies, ombudspersons, or independent regulators lose power, funding, or face political interference. Reports from civil society or think tanks reveal a decrease in anti-corruption investigations or prosecutions against regime allies. | Duterte's administration systematically targeted watchdogs through legal and financial restrictions. Independent media outlets faced relentless harassment through libel and tax evasion charges, while the forced closure of ABS-CBN deprived millions of Filipinos of an independent news source. The Anti-Terrorism Act's vague definitions enabled the red-tagging of activists and NGOs, limiting their ability to challenge government actions and resulting in arrests and frozen assets. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Independent watchdogs and media were neutralized through legal harassment, red-tagging, and financial restrictions, reducing their capacity to hold Duterte accountable. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| **Part 04: Expansion of Executive Power** | The weakening of all three accountability mechanisms allows the incumbent to concentrate executive power with little to no constraints (H4). | The leader pushes for amendments to the constitution to extend term limits, weaken federalism, or reduce legislative and judicial oversight of the executive. These changes are often packaged as necessary reforms for stability or progress. | Government pushes through amendments to extend term limits, curtail checks on executive authority, or declare states of emergency. Legislative records or government decrees show an increasing concentration of power in the executive. | Duterte proposed constitutional amendments under the guise of shifting to federalism, which would have extended term limits and consolidated executive power. Emergency measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as granting the president broad discretion over the national budget without legislative oversight, further eroded checks and balances and centralized authority within the executive branch. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Duterte's proposed federalism reforms sought to extend term limits and centralize executive power under the guise of decentralization. | high uniqueness, medium certainty | The evidence confirms H4, depicting high uniqueness and certainty. Each accountability mechanism has been systematically weakened under the Duterte administration, enabling the concentration of executive power. |
| | | Declaring states of emergency or using crisis situations (e.g., terrorism, public health, economic instability) to justify the concentration of power. Executive | Analysis of government activity shows a rising number of executive orders or decrees, especially those bypassing legislative debate. Data on parliamentary activity show a corresponding decrease in legislative power. | Duterte issued numerous executive orders to bypass legislative processes, particularly during the pandemic and the implementation of the war on drugs. These decrees allowed the deployment of state security forces to suppress dissent and | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Duterte used executive orders and emergency powers during the pandemic and the war on drugs to expand his authority while sidelining legislative oversight. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | decrees become more common and are used to bypass the legislative process. | | expand executive control, sidelining legislative debate and oversight. | | | | |
| | | The executive gains direct control over national resources, including the budget, which can be redirected toward loyalist groups or used to stifle opposition through economic means. | Control over state resources allows the executive to disproportionately allocate funds to loyalist groups, evident in skewed budget priorities or financial favoritism. Simultaneously, opposition groups or dissenting regions face reduced funding or economic sanctions, weakening their capacity to challenge the regime. | Duterte's administration disproportionately allocated state resources to regions and candidates loyal to his administration, as seen in the 2019 midterm elections, where pro-administration candidates benefited from increased funding and infrastructure projects. Meanwhile, opposition strongholds faced budget cuts and economic sanctions, undermining their ability to challenge Duterte's regime. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Duterte's administration redirected state resources to loyalist regions and candidates while depriving opposition areas of funding, weakening their capacity to challenge his regime. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | The executive's decisions increasingly reflect personal preferences or the preferences of a narrow group of elites, with diminished input from technocrats or independent experts. | Media reports or academic studies note the centralization of decision-making in the executive branch, with less involvement of traditional democratic institutions (e.g., parliament, judiciary). Signs of clientelism and patronage networks expanding around the erosion agent. | Duterte's centralization of decision-making is exemplified by his appointments of ex-military officials and loyalists to key government positions, such as the ATC and COMELEC. These appointments, based on personal loyalty rather than expertise, sidelined independent technocrats and institutions, institutionalizing patronage and clientelism. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Duterte's appointments of ex-military loyalists and personal allies to key government positions prioritized loyalty over expertise, consolidating power around his inner circle. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | An increased reliance on the military or security forces to enforce political decisions or suppress dissent, effectively blending state and military power. | Reports or data showing increased military or police involvement in enforcing political decisions, suppressing protests, or silencing opposition. Government budgets reflect growing spending on security forces loyal to the executive. | The Anti-Terrorism Act empowered security forces to suppress dissent under the pretext of counterterrorism, blurring the line between civilian and military roles. Duterte's reliance on retired military generals in his cabinet and the deployment of state security forces to intimidate opposition leaders and activists further entrenched the militarization of governance. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Duterte relied on retired military generals in his cabinet and empowered the police under the Anti-Terrorism Act to suppress dissent and consolidate power. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| **Loss of Democratic Qualities (Y)** | The absence of checks and balances and a lack of government accountability, transparency, pluralism, and citizens' engagement has led to the erosion of democratic qualities. | While elections continue to occur, they are increasingly ceremonial, with real competition diminished by barriers to entry, unfair media coverage, or intimidation. | Election monitoring organizations report increasing problems with election integrity, including voter intimidation, vote-rigging, media bias, or legal hurdles that block genuine opposition. Fewer political parties or candidates participate in elections. | Election irregularities during Duterte's administration, including voter intimidation through red-tagging and biased media coverage, reduced electoral integrity. The lack of viable opposition in the 2019 midterms, coupled with the administration's use of state resources for campaigning, rendered elections increasingly ceremonial, with real competition significantly diminished. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Findings indicate that elections under Duterte became increasingly ceremonial, with limited opposition, biased media coverage, and systemic voter intimidation diminishing genuine competition. | medium uniqueness, high certainty | The cumulative evidence demonstrates a strong erosion of democratic qualities in the Philippines under Rodrigo Duterte.<br><br>Contrary to expectations, citizen participation remained high during Duterte's tenure.<br><br>Overall, the aggregation of evidence supports the hypothesis that institutional capture and societal silencing have fostered to democratic decline in the Philippines. |
| | | The political landscape becomes dominated by one party or coalition, with opposition voices marginalized or silenced. This can be through legal means (disqualification, imprisonment) or through societal means (intimidation, smear campaigns). | A lack of pluralism results in a disproportionate representation of one party in elections and government institutions, often accompanied by limited or absent opposition participation. This can be observed through frequent legal actions against opposition figures, diminished public presence of alternative voices, and increased use of media for propaganda or intimidation campaigns. | Duterte's supermajority coalition, bolstered by party-switching and patronage politics, marginalized opposition voices in both houses of Congress. Legal actions further limited pluralism by silencing dissent and consolidating the dominance of pro-Duterte parties. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Duterte's supermajority coalition and red-tagging of opposition figures marginalized dissent and entrenched the dominance of pro-administration parties. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |
| | | Civic participation diminishes, not only because of repression but also because citizens feel their participation does not matter due to rigged or manipulated systems. | Decreased citizen participation is evident in lower voter turnout, reduced involvement in protests or civic activities, and widespread public apathy toward political processes. Surveys or social media may reflect growing cynicism, with citizens expressing distrust in | Duterte's terms in office showcase high voter turnout and high protest activity. However, trust in some government institutions declined. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings indicate that were was no decrease in citizen participation during Duterte's terms in office. | medium uniqueness, high certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | institutions and skepticism about the impact of their engagement. | | | | | |
| | | Laws are increasingly interpreted in favor of the regime, with selective enforcement and manipulation of legal frameworks to entrench the executive's power. | The erosion of the rule of law is observable through biased judicial decisions favoring the regime, inconsistent application of laws, and legal reforms consolidating executive power. Opposition figures may face disproportionate legal scrutiny, while loyalists enjoy immunity from accountability. | Selective enforcement of laws, such as the prosecution of opposition figures under trumped-up charges and the dismissal of cases against loyalists, demonstrated the erosion of the rule of law. Judicial decisions consistently favored Duterte's administration, while legal reforms like the Anti-Terrorism Act entrenched executive power and undermined judicial independence. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Legal reforms like the Anti-Terrorism Act and selective prosecution of opposition figures entrenched executive power and demonstrated the erosion of judicial independence. | High uniqueness and high certainty | |

*Source*: The author.

## **Appendix 5.** *Thailand: Evaluation of empirical uniqueness and certainty*

| Mechanism | Causal hypothesis/Assumption | Proposition | Observable Implication | Empirical Observation | Triangulation and evaluation of sources | Evidence of proposition | Empirical uniqueness and certainty | Aggregation of evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Electoral Victory of Erosion Agent (X)** | Erosion agent is elected as president or prime minister in democratic elections based on anti-system, anti-establishment or other populist narratives by utilizing socio-political cleavages to his or her advantage.<br><br>*The election of an authoritarian-leaning leader can only be known a posteriori | A strong reliance on polarizing rhetoric that promises to "fix" the system. | Campaign speeches, media appearances, and social media activity where the candidates emphasize "us vs. them" narratives, attacks elites or political institutions, and or promises radical change. | The success of TRT was deeply intertwined with the political and economic shifts of the 1990s. Thaksin's campaign introduced a new kind of policy-driven politics, stressing concrete and populist policies such as universal healthcare, debt relief for farmers, and rural development funds, strongly emphasizing the need for a radical change in politics. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources. | Evidence shows that Thaksin Shinawatra's political success was built on populist rhetoric promising to fix the system, building on pre-existing structural problems. | medium uniqueness, low certainty | The evidence supports the hypothesis that Thaksin's electoral victories in 2001 and his re-election in 2005 were driven by populist narratives, and pre-existing socio-political cleavages.<br>Overall, the aggregation of evidence provides robust support for the hypothesis. |
| | | A significant degree of support from marginalized or disenfranchised voters, often due to dissatisfaction with the political status quo. | Voter demographic data showing a large proportion of votes from regions or populations historically underrepresented, economically struggling, or disillusioned with mainstream political parties. | Thaksin's populist campaign promises and emphasis on us (the marginalized) and them (the elite) reasoned strongly with the lower and middle classes disproportionally affected by the Asian financial crisis. | Several reliable, trustworthy, and independent scholarly sources, international and national newspapers and election observers. | The findings indicate that Thaksin's populist campaign resonated strongly with the lower and middle classes, especially those affected by the 1997 Asian financial crisis. His framing of "us" versus "them" effectively appealed to marginalized voters, creating a broad base of support for his government. | medium uniqueness, medium certainty | |
| **Institutional Capture (Part 01)** | The incumbent *captures* state institutions through the manipulation of political structures, legal and constitutional engineering, and institutional reorganization (H1). | Politicization of judicial appointments, stacking courts with loyalists, and attempts to weaken or control the independence of the judiciary. The introduction of laws that expand executive power while bypassing traditional checks. | Changes in the composition of courts (e.g., an unusual number of appointments, forced retirements of judges) that show increased loyalty to the executive. Decreased judicial review of government actions. | Thaksin's administration influenced judicial appointments by ensuring that key judicial figures, particularly in the Constitutional Court, were aligned with his political interests. The Constitutional Court, for instance, became increasingly politicized, often acting as an instrument to undermine political opponents rather than providing independent oversight. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Evidence shows that Thaksin influenced judicial appointments to ensure alignment with his interests. | high uniqueness, high certainty | The evidence suggests a medium-to-high level support of the hypothesis that Thaksin captured state institutions through manipulation of political structures, legal and constitutional engineering, and institutional reorganization. He strategically aligned legislative bodies and stacked the judiciary with loyalists, weakening independent checks on executive power. These actions, alongside the politicization of key independent agencies, allowed Thaksin to consolidate control over the state's institutions, though the certainty of these findings is moderate due to the indirect nature of some evidence. |
| | | Use of executive decrees to bypass parliamentary debate, the co-opting of legislative bodies by expanding loyalist influence, or introducing new election laws that favor the ruling party. | Bypassing of the legislature through executive decrees or emergency powers, or legislative bodies dominated by ruling party loyalists. Public records show weakened opposition influence in law-making. | Thaksin dominated both the Senate and the House of Representatives, neutralizing opposition influence and strengthening his control. He also expanded loyalist influence through strategic coalition-building and party absorption, sidelining political pluralism and opposition parties, and creating a legislative body dominated by loyalists to the TRT.<br>In addition, Thaksin systematically restructured the bureaucracy and state apparatus to favor his party and consolidate his power inter alia through legal changes. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings indicate that Thaksin dominated and manipulated both the Senate and the House of Representatives, weakening the opposition. | medium uniqueness, medium certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Control over electoral commissions to manipulate the organization of future elections, for example, altering voting laws or rules that disadvantage opposition parties. | New laws or changes to election rules that favor the incumbent party, such as changes in district boundaries, voting systems, or qualification criteria for candidates. | Thaksin's control over the Election Commission (EC) allowed his government to manipulate the electoral process in his favor. The head of the EC was effectively under Thaksin's influence, which helped ensure favorable electoral outcomes for the TRT. Changes to electoral rules and district boundaries were made to benefit the incumbent party, further tilting the playing field against opposition parties. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Evidence shows that Thaksin exerted significant control over the EC, ensuring favorable electoral outcomes for his party. | high uniqueness, high certainty | |
| | | Politicized appointment; weaponization of regulations; structural reorganization; undermining autonomy via budgetary control; judicial subversion of fourth-branch decisions | Replacement of key figures in independent institutions (e.g., central bank, public prosecutor's office, anti-corruption commission) with individuals loyal to the erosion agent. | Thaksin's administration targeted independent bodies like the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), placing loyalists in key positions. The autonomy of these institutions was compromised as they became increasingly politicized. The NACC and other agencies, which were supposed to serve as checks on government actions, became tools of Thaksin's regime. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings indicate that Thaksin politicized key independent bodies in his favor. | medium uniqueness, low certainty | |
| | | Centralization of the military or police under loyal leadership, use of state security forces to silence critics or suppress protests. | Appointment of loyalists to key military or police leadership positions, increased presence of security forces during elections or political rallies, and documented instances of state security forces being deployed to suppress dissent, intimidate opposition, or curtail protests critical of the regime. | Thaksin's manipulation of the military was one of his central strategies for consolidating power. He replaced military leaders with more loyal figures. Additionally, he promoted family members to senior military positions. This co-optation of the military ensured that Thaksin could centralize power and reduce the military's traditional role as an autonomous body capable of challenging executive authority. Thaksin also used the Royal Thai Police to balance the military's power, engaging them in counterinsurgency operations and suppressing dissent. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Evidence shows that Thaksin centralized state security forces and inter alia used them to suppress opposition. | high uniqueness, high certainty | |
| **Social Silencing (Part 02)** | The incumbent initiates social silencing through the obstruction of civic space, authoritarian enforcement, and state-controlled narratives (H2). | Crackdown on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially those focused on human rights, by labeling them as foreign agents, restricting their funding, or passing restrictive laws on assembly. | New laws restricting the operations of NGOs, particularly those receiving foreign funding or engaging in political activities. Monitoring of NGO registration data and the number of organizations forced to close or reduce activities. | Through ownership stakes in media businesses, Thaksin's family consolidated control over a large portion of media in Thailand. Thaksin's government also implemented several covert measures to stifle independent media. Thaksin's administration used legal means to suppress media organizations. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings indicate that Thaksin's cracked down on independent media through legal measures, and only indirectly on NGOs. | medium uniqueness, low to medium certainty | The aggregation of evidence provides medium-to-high support for the hypothesis that Thaksin initiated social silencing through the obstruction of civic space, authoritarian enforcement, and state-controlled narratives (H2). His use of legal and extralegal measures to suppress media, intimidate journalists, and censor opposition demonstrates a clear effort to limit public discourse. Additionally, his government's control over media outlets and manipulation of narratives, along with violent repression of dissent, indicates an active attempt to silence social opposition. |
| | | State-controlled media propagating narratives that demonize opposition, spread misinformation, or justify the regime's actions. Control or censorship of the internet, social media, and private communication channels. | Increase in government censorship (internet shutdowns, bans on media outlets), arrests or harassment of journalists, defamation suits, or disinformation campaigns aimed at silencing dissenting voices. | Thaksin's media control strategies were key to maintaining a narrative that bolstered his administration. He strategically used state-controlled media to justify his authoritarian measures, including the "war on drugs" and suppression of regional resistance, especially in the South. State-run and pro-Thaksin media outlets became instruments of propaganda. The government utilized libel suits to intimidate journalists leveraging the legal system to silence dissent. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Evidence shows that Thaksin's administration strategically used state-controlled media to promote its narrative, justify controversial policies and suppress opposition. His use of libel suits, media acquisitions, and censorship of critical outlets was a key method for controlling information. | medium uniqueness, medium certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Legal and extralegal measures (e.g., arrests of opposition figures, journalists, and activists) are used to limit dissent. Increasing state surveillance and intimidation tactics against critics. | Use of police or military to violently disperse peaceful protests. Arrests or detention of opposition leaders and activists during or after demonstrations. Expansion of state surveillance measures, including reports from civil rights organizations on increased monitoring of citizens, online censorship, or arrest of individuals based on social media posts. | Thaksin's authoritarian enforcement is evident in his violent responses to opposition and protests, particularly in the Southern region. The military and police forces were deployed to suppress protests. Thaksin's government did not directly engage in large-scale arrests of opposition figures and activists outside the South but utilized the legal system to intimidate and suppress dissent. There is also evidence that his government used coercive power to suppress the media through state regulations, censorship, and control over radio and television airwaves. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings indicate that Thaksin's administration used legal measures alongside extralegal actions to suppress dissent. | high uniqueness, high certainty | |
| | | Amplification of societal divisions, often using identity-based conflicts or cultural issues. The erosion agent fuels these tensions to delegitimize critics and justify further consolidation of power. | steady increase in one-sided narratives, demonization of opposition parties, and promotion of the incumbent's narratives. | Thaksin's administration exacerbated societal divisions. His policies in the South intensified ethnic and religious divisions. The "war on drugs" also played a role in demonizing certain social groups and reinforcing a narrative that linked drugs with national security threats, using polarization to justify state violence. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Evidence shows that Thaksin's government exacerbated societal divisions, demonizing specific groups. | medium uniqueness, low certainty | |
| | | Over time, individuals and media outlets voluntarily limit criticism due to fear of retribution, leading to reduced public discourse and open political debate. | Self-censorship leads to a decline in critical content and diversity of opinions in public discourse, with media and individuals avoiding sensitive topics or adopting neutral tones. This results in a chilling effect on speech, reducing robust political debate and open dialogue. | Under Thaksin's rule, there was a strong culture of self-censorship among journalists and media outlets. Journalists and media outlets, fearing legal and political consequences from the regime's libel suits and media manipulations, avoided sensitive topics, leading to a reduction in open political debate. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings indicate that under Thaksin, there was a widespread culture of self-censorship. | medium uniqueness, medium certainty | |
| **Dismantling of Accountability Mechanism (Part 03)** | The cumulative effort of capturing state institutions and social silencing leads to weakening of vertical, horizontal and diagonal accountability mechanisms (H3). | Elections become increasingly uncompetitive due to unfair electoral practices, the use of state resources for campaigning, voter intimidation, or the absence of credible opposition. Erosion of media freedom limits citizens' ability to hold the government accountable. | Election irregularities become more frequent—e.g., voter suppression, gerrymandering, biased media coverage, or lack of viable opposition candidates. Election observation reports indicate a decline in electoral integrity. | The empirical observation suggests a decline in vertical accountability, with increasing manipulation of electoral processes such as gerrymandering, biased media coverage, and the use of state resources for campaigning. Thaksin's control over the Election Commission and alterations to electoral rules further tilted the playing field in favor of his government, undermining fair competition. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Evidence shows that vertical accountability was severely undermined during Thaksin's government. | medium uniqueness, high certainty | The findings support the hypothesis that the cumulative effort of capturing state institutions and social silencing leads to a weakening of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal accountability mechanisms (H3). The manipulation of electoral processes and state resources undermined vertical accountability, while political interference in the judiciary and legislature diminished horizontal checks on executive power. Simultaneously, the suppression of civil society, media, and independent watchdogs curtailed diagonal accountability, leading to an overall erosion of institutional oversight and accountability during Thaksin's administration. The certainty of the findings is high, given the consistency of |
| | | Institutions designed to check executive power, such as the judiciary, parliament, or independent commissions, are | Declining effectiveness of checks and balances, shown by legislatures rubber-stamping executive decisions without challenge, or rulings by courts that consistently favor the | The evidence shows a weakening of horizontal accountability through the co-optation of key state institutions. Thaksin's influence over judicial appointments, particularly to the Constitutional Court, and the alignment of the Senate with his political agenda contributed to a decline in checks and | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings indicate that horizontal accountability was weakened during Thaksin's administration. | medium uniqueness, high certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | weakened or co-opted. This is seen in court rulings favoring the executive, parliamentary majorities rubber-stamping the leader's policies, and weakened oversight mechanisms. | government. Reports on institutional independence by bodies like Freedom House show decreased ratings. | balances. The judiciary, legislature, and other oversight bodies became less effective, as decisions increasingly favored the executive, undermining institutional independence as noted by reports on institutional integrity. | | | | the observed empirical data across various facets of governance, institutional control, and social silencing within this context. |
| | | NGOs, media, and civic actors are systematically targeted and their ability to challenge or scrutinize the government is curtailed. Public watchdogs lose influence and independence. | Anti-corruption agencies, ombudspersons, or independent regulators lose power, funding, or face political interference. Reports from civil society or think tanks reveal a decrease in anti-corruption investigations or prosecutions against regime allies. | The disempowerment of watchdogs is clearly demonstrated by Thaksin's targeted weakening of independent bodies such as the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) and the media through (extra-)legal means. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The evidence shows that diagonal accountability was compromised under Thaksin's rule. | medium uniqueness, medium certainty | |
| **Part 04: Expansion of Executive Power** | The weakening of all three accountability mechanisms allows the incumbent to concentrate executive power with little to no constraints (H4). | The leader pushes for amendments to the constitution to extend term limits, weaken federalism, or reduce legislative and judicial oversight of the executive. These changes are often packaged as necessary reforms for stability or progress. | Government pushes through amendments to extend term limits, curtail checks on executive authority, or declare states of emergency. Legislative records or government decrees show an increasing concentration of power in the executive. | Thaksin's administration pushed for constitutional changes during his time in office, including amendments that increased executive power. His government notably utilized the 1997 Constitution's provisions for their favor. Notably, the mixed-member proportional representation system, which ensured that Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party could dominate the legislature. These constitutional shifts and legal reforms were aimed at consolidating power in the executive and sidelining checks from other branches of government. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Evidence shows that Thaksin pushed for constitutional and electoral reforms. | medium uniqueness, high certainty | The evidence suggests that the weakening of all three accountability mechanisms allowed Thaksin to bypass traditional democratic constraints, concentrate power, and govern with weakened checks. Thus, the aggregated evidence supports the hypothesis (H4) that the weakening of these accountability mechanisms contributed to the consolidation of executive power under Thaksin's leadership. |
| | | Declaring states of emergency or using crisis situations (e.g., terrorism, public health, economic instability) to justify the concentration of power. Executive decrees become more common and are used to bypass the legislative process. | Analysis of government activity shows a rising number of executive orders or decrees, especially those bypassing legislative debate. Data on parliamentary activity show a corresponding decrease in legislative power. | Thaksin increasingly used executive decrees to bypass the legislative process, consolidating power within the executive branch. For example, his administration passed key bills through executive orders, including the Bureaucratic Restructuring Bill and Ministerial Restructuring Bill, significantly weakening the legislative branch's role. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings show that Thaksin's administration increasingly used executive decrees, bypassing legislative debate, to secure policies that would benefit his control. | medium uniqueness, medium certainty | |
| | | The executive gains direct control over national resources, including the budget, which can be redirected toward loyalist groups or used to stifle opposition through economic means. | Control over state resources allows the executive to disproportionately allocate funds to loyalist groups, evident in skewed budget priorities or financial favoritism. Simultaneously, opposition groups or dissenting regions face reduced funding or economic sanctions, | Thaksin's control over state resources was used strategically to reward loyalist groups while sidelining political opponents. He reallocated state funds to rural development projects and used government resources to benefit constituencies aligned with his party, particularly in the wake of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Evidence suggests that opposition regions, such as the South, faced reduced government funding, consolidating Thaksin's support base while weakening dissenting voices. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Evidence indicates that Thaksin's government-controlled state resources in ways that disproportionately benefited loyalist groups. | high uniqueness, high certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | weakening their capacity to challenge the regime. | | | | | |
| | | The executive's decisions increasingly reflect personal preferences or the preferences of a narrow group of elites, with diminished input from technocrats or independent experts. | Media reports or academic studies note the centralization of decision-making in the executive branch, with less involvement of traditional democratic institutions (e.g., parliament, judiciary). Signs of clientelism and patronage networks expanding around the erosion agent. | Thaksin's decision-making increasingly centered on his personal preferences and the interests of a narrow political elite. His government's growing reliance on patronage networks and clientelism meant that decisions reflected the interests of those closest to him, sidelining technocratic expertise and traditional democratic processes. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Evidence suggests that decision-making under Thaksin was highly personalized, with policies often driven by his personal agenda and the preferences of a narrow elite group rather than technocrats or independent advisors. | medium uniqueness, high certainty | |
| | | An increased reliance on the military or security forces to enforce political decisions or suppress dissent, effectively blending state and military power. | Reports or data showing increased military or police involvement in enforcing political decisions, suppressing protests, or silencing opposition. Government budgets reflect growing spending on security forces loyal to the executive. | Thaksin employed military and police forces to suppress dissent and enforce political decisions. The government's reliance on the military for political purposes was evident during the violent suppression of protests and in counterinsurgency operations in the South. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings show that Thaksin relied on security forces, particularly the military and police, to suppress opposition, control protests, and maintain his grip on power. | medium uniqueness, medium certainty | |
| **Loss of Democratic Qualities (Y)** | The absence of checks and balances and a lack of government accountability, transparency, pluralism, and citizens' engagement has led to the erosion of democratic qualities. | While elections continue to occur, they are increasingly ceremonial, with real competition diminished by barriers to entry, unfair media coverage, or intimidation. | Election monitoring organizations report increasing problems with election integrity, including voter intimidation, vote-rigging, media bias, or legal hurdles that block genuine opposition. Fewer political parties or candidates participate in elections. | Thaksin's tenure demonstrated a consistent pattern of manipulating elections to reduce real competition. Election manipulation included media bias, control over state resources, strategic gerrymandering, and the suppression of opposition through both legal and extralegal means. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | Evidence shows that Thaksin's manipulation of electoral processes resulted in elections becoming increasingly ceremonial, where real political competition was effectively eliminated. | medium uniqueness, high certainty | The aggregated evidence supports the hypothesis that the absence of checks and balances, coupled with a lack of government accountability, transparency, pluralism, and citizen engagement, contributed to the erosion of democratic qualities. Thaksin's administration utilized various strategies to consolidate power, diminish opposition, and suppress public involvement, thereby weakening democratic norms and practices. The lack of truly competitive elections, and biased legal and media systems allowed the government to operate without significant oversight or accountability, eroding the democratic fabric of Thailand. |
| | | The political landscape becomes dominated by one party or coalition, with opposition voices marginalized or silenced. This can be through legal means (disqualification, imprisonment) or through societal means (intimidation, smear campaigns). | A lack of pluralism results in a disproportionate representation of one party in elections and government institutions, often accompanied by limited or absent opposition participation. This can be observed through frequent legal actions against opposition figures, diminished public presence of alternative voices, and increased use of media for propaganda or intimidation campaigns. | Thaksin's political strategy relied on consolidating power within his party and reducing the influence of opposition forces. Opposition figures were often disqualified, imprisoned, or marginalized through smear campaigns, media manipulation, and legal actions. His strategic use of media and legal institutions to delegitimize opponents further eroded political pluralism, with opposition parties being marginalized or eliminated from the political arena. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings indicate that Thaksin's regime systematically reduced political pluralism by using extra-legal and legal means. | high uniqueness, high certainty | |
| | | Civic participation diminishes, not only because of repression but also because citizens feel their participation does not matter due to rigged or manipulated systems. | Decreased citizen participation is evident in lower voter turnout, reduced involvement in protests or civic activities, and widespread public apathy toward political processes. Surveys or social media may reflect growing cynicism, with citizens expressing distrust in institutions and skepticism about the | While many citizens expressed distrust in the political system, there was no evidence of declining citizen participation in political processes during Thaksin's terms in office. There was high voter turnout, as well as protest and civic culture. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings indicate that were was no decrease in citizen participation during Thaksin's terms in office. | medium uniqueness, medium certainty | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | impact of their engagement. | | | | | |
| | | Laws are increasingly interpreted in favor of the regime, with selective enforcement and manipulation of legal frameworks to entrench the executive's power. | The erosion of the rule of law is observable through biased judicial decisions favoring the regime, inconsistent application of laws, and legal reforms consolidating executive power. Opposition figures may face disproportionate legal scrutiny, while loyalists enjoy immunity from accountability. | The erosion of the rule of law under Thaksin's leadership was marked by biased judicial rulings, selective law enforcement, and reforms that further consolidated executive power. Thaksin's government used legal frameworks to disqualify political opponents, while loyalists enjoyed impunity. The judicial system became more politicized, with decisions that consistently favored the regime, undermining judicial independence and reinforcing executive control. | Triangulated sources: reliable, trustworthy and independent scholarly sources, newspaper sources. | The findings show that Thaksin's government eroded the rule of law to consolidate power. | high uniqueness, high certainty | |

*Source*: The author.

**Appendix 6.** *Timeline Indonesia: Major Events (1998-2023)*

| Date | Event | Event Description | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| May 21, 1998 | Suharto Resignation | President Suharto resigned after 31 years in power, marking the end of the New Order regime. Vice President B.J. Habibie assumed the presidency, beginning the *reformasi* era. | Al Jazeera, 2023; Crouch, 2010; Mydans, 1998 |
| June 7, 1999 | Parliamentary Elections | Indonesia held its first free parliamentary elections since 1955, with the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) led by Megawati Sukarnoputri winning the most seats. | King, 2000; Liddle, 1999 |
| October 20, 1999 | Elections | Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) was elected President by the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), with Megawati Sukarnoputri as Vice President. | King, 2000; Liddle, 1999 |
| August 23, 2000 | Constitutional Amendment | The People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) amended the 1945 Constitution to reduce the military's role in politics and limit the presidency to two terms. | Indrayana, 2010 |
| July 23, 2001 | Megawati President | Abdurrahman Wahid was impeached by the MPR, and Megawati Sukarnoputri became Indonesia's first female President. | BBC, 2001 |
| October 12, 2002 | Bali bombings | A series of coordinated bombings in Bali killed 202 people, mostly foreign tourists, and were attributed to the terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah. | SBS Australia, 2022 |
| August 5, 2003 | Constitutional Court Established | The Constitutional Court of Indonesia was established, providing a mechanism for judicial review and the protection of constitutional rights. | Isra and Faiz, 2024 |
| October 20, 2004 | SBY Inaugurated | Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) was inaugurated as the 6th President of Indonesia, following the country's first direct presidential election. | Suryadinata, 2005 |
| December 26, 2004 | Aceh Tsunami | A massive tsunami, triggered by a 9.1-magnitude earthquake, struck Aceh and surrounding areas, leading to over 160,000 deaths in Indonesia and prompting international aid efforts. | Pedroletti, 2024 |
| August 15, 2005 | Helsinki Agreement | The Helsinki Agreement was signed between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), ending nearly 30 years of conflict in Aceh. | Aspinall, 2005 |
| July 17, 2006 | Java Earthquake and Tsunami | An earthquake struck the southern coast of Java, triggering a tsunami that killed more than 600 people and caused significant damage in the Pangandaran area. | Mori et al., 2007 |
| September 20, 2006 | Aceh Special Autonomy Law | The Law on the Governing of Aceh was passed, granting the province special autonomy and allowing for greater local governance following the peace agreement with GAM. | May, 2008 |
| October 2008 | Anti-Pornography Law | Indonesia enacted the Law on Anti-Pornography, which sparked controversy due to concerns over morality, freedom of expression, and its impact on local cultures. | Setiawati and Erviani, 2008; Rondonuwu, 2010 |
| July 8, 2009 | SBY Re-elected | Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was re-elected as President in a landslide victory, securing his second term in office with a focus on economic growth and anti-corruption efforts. | Onishi, 2009 |
| July 17, 2009 | Jakarta Hotel Bombings | Jakarta was hit by bombings at the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels. | Reuters, 2009; BBC, 2009 |
| October 20, 2014 | Jokowi Inaugurated | Jokowi was inaugurated as Indonesia's 7th President, with Jusuf Kalla as Vice President. | BBC, 2014 |
| October 27, 2014 | First Jokowi Cabinet | Jokowi appointed his first Cabinet, including ministers from his ruling coalition, which comprised PDI-P, NasDem, PKB, Hanura, and other smaller parties. | Kok, 2014 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| January 1, 2015 | AEC | Indonesia became the founding member of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), marking its commitment to regional economic integration. | Permatasari, 2020 |
| April 9, 2015 | Anti-drug-policy | The Indonesian government executed eight drug convicts, including foreign nationals, as part of its strict anti-drug policy, drawing international criticism. | Cochrane, 2015; Al Jazeera, 2015 |
| August 12, 2015 | Cabinet reshuffle | First Cabinet Reshuffle: Jokowi conducted his first Cabinet reshuffle, replacing six ministers to improve economic performance, particularly in the face of slowing growth. | Yusuf and Sumner, 2015; Deutsche Welle, 2015 |
| January 14, 2016 | Jakarta Terrorist Attacks | A series of bombings and shootings in central Jakarta by ISIS-affiliated militants resulted in the deaths of eight people, including four attackers. | BBC, 2016a; Deutsche Welle, 2016 |
| July 27, 2016 | Second Cabinet Reshuffle | Jokowi reshuffled his Cabinet again, bringing in Sri Mulyani Indrawati as Finance Minister, a significant move aimed at bolstering economic management. This reshuffle also saw the inclusion of Golkar Party members. | Arifianto, 2016; Chandra, 2016 |
| November 4, 2016 | Jakarta Protests | Massive protests in Jakarta (411 rally) against Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) over alleged blasphemy against Islam, marking significant religious and political tensions. | Al Jazeera, 2016; The Guardian, 2016; Kwok, 2016 |
| December 2, 2016 | Jakarta Protests | December 2016 Jakarta protests, also known as 212 Action, the 3rd Defend Islam Action and the 2 December Protest, was a mass protest led by Islamist groups in Jakarta. During the protest, marchers demanded the termination of the gubernatorial office held by Ahok, who had been accused of blasphemy. | BBC, 2016b; Aspinall and Mietzner, 2019; Alkatiri, 2023 |
| February 11 and 21, 2017 | Jakarta Protests | The Jakarta protests of February 2017 refer to a series of mass protests led by Islamist movements that took place in Jakarta, Indonesia, on February 11, 2017, and February 21, 2017, dubbed Action 112 and Action 212, respectively. The protests were against the incumbent governor of Jakarta, Ahok. | Aspinall and Mietzner, 2019; Alkatiri, 2023 |
| April 19, 2017 | Jakarta Gubernational Elections | Anies Baswedan wins the Jakarta gubernatorial election, defeating incumbent Ahok in a highly contentious race marked by issues of religion and identity politics. | Cochrane, 2017; BBC, 2017a |
| April 19, 2017 | Post-Election Protests Jakarta | After Anies Baswedan won the Jakarta gubernatorial election, protests and clashes occurred between his supporters and those of the defeated incumbent, Ahok. | Cochrane, 2017; BBC, 2017a |
| May 9, 2017 | Ahok Conviction | Ahok was sentenced to two years in prison for blasphemy, sparking national and international debates over religious freedom and the judiciary's independence. | Lamb, 2017; BBC, 2017b |
| January 17, 2018 | Cabinet Reshuffle | The third cabinet reshuffle was primarily aimed at strengthening political support ahead of the 2019 presidential election. Notable changes included the appointment of Moeldoko as Chief of the Presidential Staff Office. | Wong, 2018; |
| August 2018 | Ruling Coalition 2019 | Jokowi secured the backing of a broad coalition for his re-election bid, including PDI-P, Golkar, NasDem, PKB, Hanura, PPP, and Perindo. This coalition was seen as a strategic move to ensure a strong electoral base. | Ramadhani and Tejusijarana, 2018 |
| April 17, 2019 | Re-election Jokowi | Joko Widodo was re-elected as President, defeating Prabowo Subianto in a tightly contested and divisive election, with significant regional disparities in voting patterns. | BBC, 2019; Lamb, 2019a |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| May 21-22, 2019 | Jakarta Post-Election Riots | Post-election riots erupted in Jakarta following Prabowo's refusal to accept the election results, leading to clashes with police and several fatalities. | The Jakarta Post, 2019; Lamb, 2019a |
| September 23, 2019 | Student Protests against Omnibus Law and Criminal Code | Massive student-led protests erupted across Indonesia against the proposed Criminal Code revisions, which included controversial provisions on morality and defamation, and the Omnibus Law on Job Creation. The protests criticized the laws as a rollback of democratic reforms and an attack on civil liberties. | Lamb, 2019b; The Guardian, 2019b; Jaffrey, 2019 |
| October 20, 2019 | Jokowi Inauguration | Joko Widodo was inaugurated for his second term as President, with Ma'ruf Amin as Vice President. | Tehusijarana, 2019 |
| October 23, 2019 | Second Jokowi Cabinet announced | Jokowi's second-term Cabinet included members from his coalition, with notable appointments such as Prabowo Subianto as Minister of Defense. | Gorbiano, 2019; Al Jazeera, 2019 |
| December 23, 2020 | Cabinet Reshuffle | Jokowi reshuffled his Cabinet to improve pandemic response and economic recovery efforts. This reshuffle also further solified the coalition with Gerindra. | Gorbiano, 2020b; Strangio, 2020 |
| January 2020 | Protests against revised mining law | Environmental groups and local communities protested the passing of a revised Mining Law, which they claimed favored corporate interests over environmental and community rights. The law was seen as a threat to Indonesia's natural resources and indigenous communities. | Asmarini and Bernadette, 2020 |
| March 2, 2020 | COVID-19: First confirmed case | Indonesia confirmed its first cases of COVID-19, marking the beginning of the country's pandemic response, which included large-scale social restrictions and economic challenges. | Gorbiano, 2020a; Ratcliffe, 2020 |
| October 5, 2020 | Omnibus Law passed | The Omnibus Law was passed on October 5, 2020. | Sastramidjaja and Rasidi, 2021; BBC, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2020 |
| October 2020 | Protests against Omnibus Law | Following the official passage of the Omnibus Law on Job Creation, large-scale protests broke out in cities across Indonesia. Demonstrations were marked by clashes with the police, widespread arrests, and incidents of violence, with the protesters demanding the repeal of the law. | Sastramidjaja and Rasidi, 2021; BBC, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2020 |
| January 13, 2021 | Covid-19 Vaccination begins | Indonesia launched its COVID-19 vaccination campaign. | Al Jazeera, 2021 |
| April 2021 | Protests Over the Sexual Violence Eradication Bill | Women's rights groups and students organized protests demanding the swift passage of the Sexual Violence Eradication Bill, which had been delayed for years. | Pascaries, 2021 |
| April 28, 2021 | Formation of the Ministry of Investment | Jokowi restructured his Cabinet by creating the Ministry of Investment and appointing Bahlil Lahadalia as its head. | Medina, 2021 |
| April 12, 2022 | Law on Sexual Violence | Indonesian Parliament passed the Law on Sexual Violence, which was hailed as a milestone in addressing gender-based violence but also faced criticism for its limitations. | Karmini, 2022; Siregar and Prihatini, 2024 |
| June 15, 2022 | Cabinet Reshuffle | Jokowi made further changes to his Cabinet, including the replacement of several ministers to enhance his administration's performance in handling economic challenges and the ongoing pandemic recovery. | Lamb and Widianto, 2022; Strangio, 2022a; Lai and Suhenda, 2022 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| July 2022 | Protests over fuel price hikes | As global oil prices surged, the government announced an increase in fuel prices, leading to protests across Indonesia. Demonstrators, including labor unions and student groups, argued that the price hikes disproportionately affected low-income communities. | Widianto, 2022; The New York Times, 2022; Deutsche Welle, 2022 |
| August/September 2022 | Protests Against the New Criminal Code | As the Indonesian Parliament prepared to pass a new Criminal Code that included provisions criminalizing cohabitation, defamation, and blasphemy, protests erupted across the country. Critics argued that the new code threatened civil liberties and freedom of expression. | Rizki Akbari and Ks Maya, 2022; Baghdasaryan, 2022 |
| December 6, 2022 | Criminal Code is passed | The Indonesian Parliament passed a new Criminal Code that includes controversial provisions on morality, defamation, and blasphemy, leading to concerns about potential impacts on civil liberties and international criticism. | Strangio, 2022b; Pedroletti, 2022; Butt, 2023 |
| December 6, 2022 | Protests following the passing of the new Criminal Code | After the passage of the new Criminal Code, protests intensified, with activists, students, and legal experts calling for its repeal or revision, arguing that it represented a significant step back for democracy and human rights in Indonesia. | Janti, 2022; The Jakarta Post, 2022 |
| December 30, 2022 | *Perppu*, Number 2 on Job Creation | *Perppu* has been characterized as an effort to revive the Job Creation Law Number 11 of 2020, which was previously deemed unconstitutional due to insufficient public consultation. While the *Perppu* and the Omnibus Law on Job Creation share substantial similarities, the *Perppu* was developed through a more comprehensive consultation process. In March, the House of Representatives officially approved the *Perppu*, paving the way for it to become permanent legislation. | Nugraha, 2023; The Jakarta Post, 2023; Teresia and Suroyo, 2022 |
| January/February, 2023 | Labor Union Protests Against Omnibus Law Replacement | Labor unions held demonstrations across Indonesia to protest the government's refusal to revise the Omnibus Law on Job Creation, despite a Constitutional Court ruling that parts of the law were procedurally flawed. | Strangio, 2023b; Izzati, 2023 |
| March 21, 2023 | Emergency decree for Job Creation passed | The parliament passed the emergency decree for Job Creation, into law on 21 March 2023. | Industriall, 2023; Reuters, 2023 |
| April 11, 2023 | Protests against emergency decree for Job Creation | On 11 April, one hundred members of the Labour Party of Indonesia joined a demonstration against the new legislation at the main gate of the national parliament. | Industriall, 2023 |
| August 13, 2023 | Golkar, PAN, PKB form a coalition with Gerindra to endorse Prabowo as presidential candidate for the 2024 election. | Ahead of the 2024 presidential election, protests emerged both in support of and against the candidacy of Anies Baswedan, reflecting the deep political polarization in the country. | The Jakarta Post, 2024, a, b |
| October 12, 2023 | Former Agriculture Minister Syahrul Named Corruption Suspect | The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) confirmed that former Agriculture Minister Syahrul Yasin Limpo has been named a corruption suspect. This development followed his resignation from the cabinet to focus on the impending legal proceedings. | Jakarta Globe, 2023; Strangio, 2023a |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| October 2023 | Pre-Election Cabinet Adjustments | As the 2024 presidential election approached, Jokowi made strategic Cabinet changes to strengthen his administration's position. These changes included the inclusion of key political figures from coalition parties to maintain broad support. | The Jakarta Post, 2024c |

*Source:* Compiled by the author.

**Bibliography**


Al Jazeera. (2015). "Indonesia defends execution of drug convicts." *Al Jazeera*, 29 April 2015, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/4/29/indonesia-defends-execution-of-drug-convicts

Al Jazeera. (2016). "Indonesia: Thousands rally against blasphemy in Jakarta." *Al Jazeera*, 4 November 2016, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/11/4/indonesia-thousands-rally-against-blasphemy-in-jakarta

Al Jazeera. (2019). "Indonesia's Widodo appoints archrival as defence minister." *Al Jazeera,* 23 October 2019, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/10/23/indonesias-widodo-appoints-archrival-as-defence-minister

Al Jazeera. (2020). "Demonstrations sweep Indonesia over controversial labour law." *Al Jazeera*, 9 October 2020, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/9/demonstrations-sweep-indonesia-over-controversial-omnibus-law

Al Jazeera. (2021). "Indonesia to start mass COVID vaccination drive on January 13." *Al Jazeera*, 5 January 2021, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/5/indonesia-to-start-mass-covid-vaccination-drive-next-week

Al Jazeera. (2023). "Timeline: Key events since fall of Indonesia's Suharto." *Al Jazeera*, 24 May 2023, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/24/timeline-key-events-since-fall-of-indonesias-soeharto.

Alkatiri, Z. (2023). Defend Islam rally action 212 and their reunion: The failure of forming a New ritual. *Cogent Arts & Humanities, 10*(2). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2286069

Arifianto, A. R. (2016). Jokowi's Second Cabinet Reshuffle: Implications for Indonesian Politics. *RSIS Commentaries, No. 194*. Singapore: Nanyang Technological University.

Asmarini, W., & Bernadette, C. (2020). "Indonesia passes new mining law revisions, met with praise and protest." *Reuters*, 12 May 2020, online: https://www.reuters.com/article/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/indonesia-passes-new-mining-law-revisions-met-with-praise-and-protest-idUSL4N2CU2Q4/

Aspinall, E. (2005). *The Helsinki Agreement: A More Promising Basis for Peace in Aceh? (1st ed.)* East-West Center.

Aspinall, E., & Mietzner, M. (2019). Southeast Asia's Troubling Elections: Nondemocratic Pluralism in Indonesia. *Journal of Democracy 30*(4), 104-118. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jod.2019.0055

Baghdasaryan, M. (2022). "Indonesia's New Draft Criminal Code Restrains Political Dissent." *EFF*, 23 August 2022, online: https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2022/08/indonesias-new-draft-criminal-code-cracks-down-political-dissent

BBC. (2001). "Indonesia's leading lady." *BBC*, 9 August 2001, online: https://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/highlights/010809_megawati.shtml

BBC. (2009). "Fatal blast hit Jakarta hotels." *BBC*, 17 July 2009, online: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8155084.stm

BBC. (2014). "Joko Widodo wins Indonesia presidential election." *BBC*, 22 July 2014, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28415536

BBC. (2016a). "Jakarta attacks: Bombs and gunfire rock Indonesian capital." BBC, 14 January 2016, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35309195

BBC. (2016b). "Jakarta governor protests: Thousands attend unity rally." BBC, 4 December 2016, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38199549

BBC. (2017a). "Jakarta election: Christian governor concedes to Muslim rival." BBC, 19 April 2017, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39636974

BBC. (2017b). "Jakarta governor Ahok found guilty of blasphemy." *BBC*, 9 May 2017, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39853280

BBC. (2019). "Indonesia election: Joko Widodo re-elected as president." *BBC*, 21 May 2019, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48331879

BBC. (2020). "Indonesia: Thousands protest against ‚omnibus law' on jobs." *BBC*, 8 October 2020, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54460090

Butt, S. (2023). Indonesia's new Criminal Code: Indigenising and democratising Indonesian criminal law? *Griffith Law Review*, *32*(2), 190–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/10383441.2023.2243772
Chandra, N. (2016). "Indonesia's cabinet reshuffle may speed up reforms as Sri Mulyani Indrawiti returns." *CNBC*, 28 July 2016, online: https://www.cnbc.com/2016/07/28/indonesias-cabinet-reshuffle-may-speed-up-reforms-as-sri-mulyani-indrawati-returns.html
Cochrane, J. (2015). "Indonesia Executes 8, Including 7 Foreigners, Convicted on Drug Charges." *The New York Times,* 28 April 2015, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/29/world/asia/indonesia-execution.html
Cochrane, J. (2017). "Jakarta Governor Concedes Defeat in Religiously Tinged Election." *The New York Times*, 19 April 2017, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/19/world/asia/jakarta-election-ahok-anies-baswedan-indonesia.html
Crouch, H. A. (2010). *Political Reform in Indonesia After Soeharto*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
Crouch, M. A. (2012). Law and Religion in Indonesia: The Constitutional Court and the Blasphemy Law. *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, *7*, 1–46. doi:10.1017/S2194607800000582
Deutsche Welle (DW). (2015). "Indonesia cabinet reshuffle." *DW*, 8 December 2015, online: https://www.dw.com/en/eyeing-economy-jokowi-reshuffles-indonesia-cabinet/a-18642458
Deutsche Welle (DW). (2016). "Analysis on Jakarta attacks." *DW*, 14 January 2016, online: https://www.dw.com/en/analyst-an-attack-on-a-soft-target-was-feared/a-18979284
Deutsche Welle (DW). (2022). "Indonesia: Protests launched over fuel price increase." *DW*, 6 September 2022, online: https://www.dw.com/en/indonesia-protests-launched-over-fuel-price-increase/a-63032040
Gorbiano, M. (2019). "BREAKING: Jokowi announces his new Cabinet. Here's the line up." *The Jakarta Post,* 23 October 2019, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/10/23/breaking-jokowis-new-cabinet-announced-here-is-the-lineup.html
Gorbiano, M. (2020a). "BREAKING: Jokowi announces Indonesia's first two confirmed COVID-19 cases." *The Jakarta Post,* 2 March 2020, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/03/02/breaking-jokowi-announces-indonesias-first-two-confirmed-covid-19-cases.html
Gorbiano, M. (2020b). "More additions as Jokowi inaugurates new Cabinet members." *The Jakarta Post*, 23 December 2020, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/12/23/more-additions-as-jokowi-inaugurates-new-cabinet-members.html
Indrayana, D. (2010). „In search for a democratic constitution: Indonesian constitutional reform 1999-2002. *Jurnal Media Hukum, 17*(1), 115-131.
Industriall. (2023). "Indonesia passses emergency decree for Job Creation Law." *Industriall Union*, 12 April 2023, online: https://www.industriall-union.org/indonesia-passes-emergency-decree-for-job-creation-law
Isra, S., & Faiz, P. M. (2024). Chapter 3 The Indonesian Constitutional Court: An Overview. In Villiers, B., Isra, S., and Faiz, P.M. (eds.), *Courts and Diversity*, pp.55-94. Leiden, Niederlande: Brill | Nijhoff.
Izzati, N.R. (2023). "Emergency labour regulation changes spark worker anger a year out from election." *The Jakarta Post,* 17 January 2023, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2023/01/17/emergency-labour-regulation-changes-spark-worker-anger-a-year-out-from-election.html
Jaffrey, S. (2019). "Protests against Joko Widodo rock Indonesia." *Foreign Policy*, 30 September 2019, online: https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/09/30/protests-against-joko-widodo-rock-indonesia/
Jakarta Globe. (2023). "Former Agriculture Minister Syahrul Named Corruption Suspect." *Jakarta Globe,* 11 October 2023, online: https://jakartaglobe.id/news/former-agriculture-minister-syahrul-named-corruption-suspect
Janti, N. (2022). "House to pass KUHP bill despite protests." *The Jakarta Post*, 6 December 2022, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2022/12/06/lawmakers-press-ahead-with-criminal-code-revisions-despite-protests.html
Karmini, N. (2022). "Indonesia passes sexual violence law amid growing cases." *AP News,* 12 April 2022, online: https://apnews.com/article/indonesia-crime-religion-violence-8a538a4ba54a6c25691946dd68df32c4
King, D. Y. (2000). The 1999 Electoral Reforms in Indonesia: Debate, Design and Implementation. *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, *28*(2), 89–110.
Kwok, Y. (2014). "Indonesia's New President Appoints a Cabinet of Compromise." *TIME*, 27 October 2014, online: https://time.com/3540622/jokowi-cabinet-compromise-joko-widodo/

Kwok, Y. (2016). “Thousands of Hard-Line Muslims Rally Against Jakarta’s Governor for Alleged Blasphemy.” *TIME*, 4 November 2016, online: https://time.com/4558113/jakarta-blasphemy-protest-basuki/
Lai, Y. & Suhenda, D. (2022). “Jokowi orders seventh Cabinet reshuffle.” *The Jakarta Post*, 16 June 2022, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2022/06/15/jokowi-orders-seventh-cabinet-reshuffle.html
Lamb, K. (2017). “Jakarta governor Ahok sentenced to two years in prison for blasphemy.” *The Guardian*, 9 May 2017, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/09/jakarta-governor-ahok-found-guilty-of-blasphemy-jailed-for-two-years
Lamb, K. (2019a). “Indonesia riots: six dead after protesters clash with troops over election result.” *The Guardian*, 22 May 2019, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/22/indonesia-riots-protesters-clash-with-security-forces-over-election-result
Lamb, K. (2019b). “Thousands protest against new criminal code in Indonesia.” *The Guardian,* 24 September 2019, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/24/thousands-protest-against-new-criminal-code-across-indonesia
Lamb, K., & Widianto, S. (2022). “Indonesian president sacks trade minister after palm oil export uproar.” *Reuters*, 15 June 2022, online: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesia-president-tipped-reshuffle-cabinet-wednesday-2022-06-15/
Liddle, R. W. (1999). Indonesia’s Democratic Opening. *Government and Opposition*, *34*(1), 94–116.
May, B. (2008). The Law on the Governing of Aceh: The way forward or a source of conflicts? *Accord, 20*(2008). https://rc-services-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Reconfiguring_politics_the_Indonesia_Aceh_peace_process_Accord_Issue_20.pdf
Medina, A.F. (2021). “Indonesia Established New Investment Ministry.” *ASEAN Briefing,* 30 April 2021, online: https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/indonesia-establishes-new-investment-ministry/
Mori, J., et al., (2007). The 17 July 2006 Tsunami Earthquake in West Java, Indonesia. *Seismological Research Letters, 78*(2), March/April 2007, 2001-2007.
Mydans, S. (1998). “The Fall of Suharto: The Overview; Suharto, Besieged, Steps Down After 32-Year Rule in Indonesia.” *The New York Times*, 21 May 1998, online https://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/21/world/fall-suharto-overview-suharto-besieged-steps-down-after-32-year-rule-indonesia.html
Nugraha, R.M. (2023). “Job Creation Perpu passed as Law, Govt Remarks Global Uncertainty.” *Tempo*, 21 March 2023, online: https://en.tempo.co/read/1705374/job-creation-perpu-passed-as-law-govt-remarks-global-uncertainty
Onishi, N. (2009). “Final Results Confirm Victory for Indonesia’s President.” *The New York Times*, 24 July 2009, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/25/world/asia/25indo.html
Pascaries, F. (2021). “A long fight to end violence against women.” *The Jakarta Post*, 8 December 2021, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2021/12/07/a-long-fight-to-end-violence-against-women.html
Pedroletti, B. (2022). “Indonesia’s new morally strict criminal code sparks debate.” *Le Monde*, 22 December 2022, online: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/12/22/indonesia-s-new-morally-strict-criminal-code-sparks-debate_6008690_4.html
Pedroletti, B. (2024). “Twenty years after Indian Ocean tsunami, Asia commemorates the 220,000 victims.” *Le Monde,* 26 December 2024, online: https://www.lemonde.fr/en/natural-disasters/article/2024/12/26/twenty-years-after-indian-ocean-tsunami-asia-commemorates-the-220-000-victims_6736454_225.html
Permatasari, Y. (2020). Building Indonesia through ASEAN economic community. *Journal of ASEAN Studies, 8*(1), 81-93. https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v8i1.6040
Ramadhani, N.F., & Tehusijarana, K. (2018). “Jokowi’s coalition seeks more support for 2019 race.” *The Jakarta Post*, 11 April 2018, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/04/11/jokowi-s-coalition-seeks-more-support-2019-race.html
Ratcliffe, R. (2020). “First coronavirus cases confirmed in Indonesia amid fears nation is ill-prepared for outbreak.” *The Guardian,* 2 March 2020, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/02/first-coronavirus-cases-confirmed-in-indonesia-amid-fears-nation-is-ill-prepared-for-outbreak
Reuters. (2009). “Hotels targeted in deadly attacks and bombings.” *Reuters*, 17 July 2019, online: https://www.reuters.com/article/world/us/-hotels-targeted-in-deadly-attacks-and-bombings-idUSTRE56G0YF/

Reuters. (2023). “Indonesia passes jobs decree into law, easing investment uncertainty.” *Reuters*, 21 March 2023, online: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesias-parliament-passes-controversial-jobs-decree-into-law-2023-03-21/
Rizki Akbari, A. & Ks Maya, G.A. (2022). “Indonesia’s last change for a progressive criminal code.” *Indonesia at Melbourne,* 18 August 2022, online: https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/indonesias-last-chance-for-a-progressive-criminal-code/.
Rondonuwu, O. (2010). “Indonesia’s constitutional court defends pornography law.” *Reuters*, 25 March 2010, online: https://www.reuters.com/article/world/indonesias-constitutional-court-defends-pornography-law-idUSTRE62O28R/
Sastramidjaja, Y., & Rasidi, P.P. (2021). The Hashtag Battle over Indonesia’s Omnibus Law: From Digital Resistance to Cyber-Control. *ISEAS Perspective, 95*(2021), 1-15. https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ISEAS_Perspective_2021_95.pdf
SBS Australia. (2022). “202 people died in the 2002 Bali bombings. This is who they were.” *SBS Australia,* 29 September 2002, online: https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/202-people-died-in-the-2002-bali-bombings-this-is-who-they-were/ow30ib8sw
Setiawati, I., & Erviani, N.K. (2008). “Porn law casts a shadow over human rights.” *The Jakarta Post*, 10 December 2008, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2008/12/10/porn-law-casts-a-shadow-over-human-rights.html
Siregar, W.Z., & Prihatini, E.S. (2024). Passing the Sexual Violence Crime Law in Indonesia: Reflection of a Gender-Sensitive Parliament? *Politics and Governance*.
Strangio, S. (2020). “Amid Corruption and Covid-20, Jokowi Shakes Up Indonesia’s Cabinet.” *The Diplomat,* 23 December 2020, online: https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/amid-corruption-and-covid-19-jokowi-shakes-up-indonesias-cabinet/
Strangio, S. (2022a). “Indonesian President Reshuffles Cabinet Amid Food Inflation Crisis.” *The Diplomat,* 16 June 2022, online: https://thediplomat.com/2022/06/indonesian-president-reshuffles-cabinet-amid-food-inflation-crisis/
Strangio, S. (2022b). “Indonesia’s Parliament Passes Repressive New Penal Code.” *The Diplomat,* 6 December 2022, online: https://thediplomat.com/2022/12/indonesias-parliament-passes-repressive-new-penal-code/
Strangio, S. (2023a). “Indonesia’s Ex-Agriculture Minister Arrested on Accusations of Corruption.” *The Diplomat*, 13 October 2023, online: https://thediplomat.com/2023/10/indonesias-ex-agriculture-minister-arrested-on-accusations-of-corruption/
Strangio, S. (2023b). “In Indonesia, Thousands Rally Against Presidential Job Decree.” *The Diplomat*, 16 January 2023, online: https://thediplomat.com/2023/01/in-indonesia-thousands-rally-against-presidential-job-decree/
Suryadinata, L. (2005). INDONESIA: The Year of a Democratic Election. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 133–149.
Tehusijarana, K. (2019). “Jokowi, Ma’ruf inaugurated as president, vice president.” *The Jakarta Post,* 20 October 2019, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/10/20/jokowi-maruf-inaugurated-as-president-vice-president.html
Teresia, A., & Suroyo, G. (2022). “Indonesia issues emergency regulations to replace jobs law.” *Reuters*, 30 December 2022, online: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesia-issues-emergency-regulation-replace-controversial-job-creation-law-2022-12-30/
The Guardian. (2019b). “Indonesian students clash with police in protests over new law.” *The Guardian*, 30 September 2019, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/30/indonesian-students-resume-anti-corruption-protests
The Jakarta Post. (2019). “Post-election unrest grips Jakarta.” *The Jakarta Post*, 22 May 2019, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/05/22/post-election-unrest-grips-jakarta.html
The Jakarta Post. (2022). “Lawmakers pass revised Criminal Code despite protests.” *The Jakarta Post,* 6 December 2022, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2022/12/06/lawmakers-pass-revised-criminal-code-despite-protests.html
The Jakarta Post. (2023). “Analysis: Perppu creates problems, not jobs.” *The Jakarta Post,* 9 January 2023, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2023/01/09/analysis-perppu-creates-problems-not-jobs.html
The Jakarta Post. (2024a). “Protesters rally again in many cities over Jokowi's political manoeuvres.” *The Jakarta Post,* 25 August 2024, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2024/08/25/protesters-rally-again-in-many-cities-over-jokowis-political-manoeuvres.html
The Jakarta Post. (2024b). “Politicians scrap plan to change election rules after nationwide protests.” *The Jakarta Post*, 23 August 2024, online:

https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2024/08/23/politicians-scrap-plan-to-change-election-rules-after-nationwide-protests.html
The Jakarta Post. (2024c). "Jokowi's quest for survival." *The Jakarta Post,* 20 August 2024, online: https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2024/08/20/jokowis-quest-for-survival.html
The New York Times. (2022). "Thousands of Angry Indonesians Gather to Protest Rising Fuel Prices." *The New York Times,* 9 September 2022, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/09/world/asia/indonesia-fuel-protests.html
Widianto, S. (2022). "Protests across Indonesia anger mounts over fuel price increase." *Reuters*, 6 September 2022, online: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/rallies-expected-across-indonesia-anger-simmers-over-fuel-price-hike-2022-09-06/
Wong, A. (2018). "Indonesian leader's third cabinet reshuffle could have elections implications." *CNBC*, 19 January 2018, online: https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/19/third-reshuffle-in-five-years-may-help-joko-widodo-secure-his-next-term-advisory-says.html
Yusuf, A. A., & Sumner, A. (2015). Growth, Poverty, and Inequality under Jokowi. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies, 51*(3), 323–348. https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2015.1110685.

## **Appendix 7.** *Timeline Philippines: Major Events (1986-2022)*

| Date | Event | Event Description | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| February 22-25, 1986 | EDSA People Power Revolution | Peaceful uprising leads to the ousting of President Ferdinand Marcos. Corazon Aquino becomes President. | Overholt, 1986; Turner, 1990 |
| February 2, 1987 | Ratification of the 1987 Constitution | The 1987 Constitution is ratified, restoring democracy in the Philippines. | Hernandez, 1988 |
| August 28, 1987 | Coup Attempt | A coup led by Colonel Gregorio Honasan is thwarted. | Sussman, 1990 |
| December 1-9, 1989 | Coup Attempt | The most serious coup attempt against Aquino's administration occurs. U.S. forces provide air support to suppress it. | Washington Post, 1989 |
| September 16, 1991 | Senate Rejection of U.S. Bases Extension | The Philippine Senate rejects the extension of the U.S. bases agreement, leading to the withdrawal of U.S. military bases. | De Castro, 2003; Simbulan, 2018 |
| June 30, 1992 | Ramos Presidency | Fidel V. Ramos is inaugurated as the 12th President. Focus on economic reforms and peace agreements. | Parreñas, 1993; The New York Times, 1992 |
| September 2, 1996 | Peace Agreement with MNLF | The government and MNLF sign a peace agreement, ending decades of conflict in Mindanao. | Bauzon, 1999 |
| July 1997 | Asian Financial Crisis | The Asian Financial Crisis begins, severely affecting the Philippine economy. | Noland, 2000; Sicat, 1998 |
| June 30, 1998 | Estrada Presidency | Joseph Estrada is inaugurated as the 13th President of the Philippines. | Washington Post, 1998 |
| March 21, 2000 | All-Out War in Mindanao | President Estrada declares an "all-out war" against the MILF in Mindanao. | PhilStar, 2011; Malan and Solomon, 2012 |
| January 17-20, 2001 | EDSA II People Power Revolution | EDSA II leads to the ousting of President Estrada; Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo becomes President. | Reid, 2001; Global Nonviolent Action Database, 2013 |
| April 25, 2001 | Arrest of Estrada | Estrada is arrested on charges of plunder and corruption, leading to protests. | Chandrasekaran, 2001; The Guardian, 2001 |
| May 10, 2004 | Arroyo Re-election | Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo wins re-election amid allegations of electoral fraud. | Conde, 2004 |
| June 6, 2005 | "Hello Garci-" Scandal | The "Hello Garci" scandal breaks, involving alleged wiretapped conversations between Arroyo and an election official, leading to protests. | Mendez, 2014 |
| February 24, 2006 | State of Emergency Declaration | Arroyo declares a state of emergency (Proclamation 1017) following a coup attempt. | PhilStar, 2006; The New York Times, 2006 |
| November 23, 2009 | Maguindanao Massacre | The Maguindanao Massacre occurs, with 58 people killed, including 32 journalists. | Al Jazeera, 2009; RSF, 2019 |
| December 4, 2009 | Martial Law in Maguindanao | Arroyo declares martial law in Maguindanao to suppress a rebellion following the massacre. | Conde, 2009; Batty, 2009; Al Jazeera, 2009 |
| June 30, 2010 | Aquino III Presidency | Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III is inaugurated as the 15th President. | BBC, 2010 |
| December 12, 2011 | Impeachment of Chief Justice Corona | The House of Representatives impeaches Chief Justice Renato Corona. | BBC, 2011; Reuters, 2011 |
| May 29, 2012 | Conviction of Chief Justice Corona | Chief Justice Renato Corona is convicted and removed from office for failing to declare his assets properly. | Whaley, 2012; BBC, 2012 |
| September 9-28, 2013 | Zamboanga Siege | MNLF forces attack Zamboanga City, leading to a bloody standoff with government forces. | Taylor, 2013; Robinson et al., 2016 |
| January 25, 2015 | Mamasapano Clash | A botched police operation in Mamasapano, Maguindanao, results in the deaths of 44 members of the Philippine National Police-Special Action Force (PNP-SAF), leading to national outrage and questioning of President Aquino's administration. | CNN, 2015a,b |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| May 9, 2016 | Duterte Wins Presidential Election | Rodrigo Duterte is elected as the 16th President of the Philippines, with a platform focused on anti-crime and anti-drug campaigns. | BBC, 2016a; Al Jazeera, 2016; Campbell, 2016 |
| June 30, 2016 | Inauguration of President Rodrigo Duterte | Duterte is inaugurated as President, beginning his controversial term in office. | BBC, 2016b; Campbell, 2016; CNN, 2016 |
| July 1, 2016 | Launch of the War on Drugs | President Duterte officially launches his war on drugs, leading to thousands of deaths and widespread international criticism. | Lozada, 2021; Atun et al., 2019 |
| September 2016 | Drug War Extra-Judicial Killings | Two months into the Duterte presidency, official death total is 2000 (number likely much higher). | CGTN, 2017 |
| October 10, 2016 | Philippines Announces Separation from the U.S. | Duterte announces a "separation" from the United States during a state visit to China, signaling closer ties with China and Russia. | Blanchard, 2016; de Castro, 2016 |
| February 2017 | Protests Against Drug War | Thousands of people protested on Saturday against Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's deadly war on drugs. | Deutsche Welle, 2017b |
| April 20, 2017 | Drug War Extra-Judicial Killings | Death toll "war on drugs": 53,503<br>Death toll from legitimate police operations: 2,679. | CGTN, 2017 |
| May 23, 2017 | Martial Law Declared in Mindanao | Duterte declares martial law in Mindanao following the siege of Marawi by ISIS-linked militants, leading to a five-month-long military campaign. | Deutsche Welle, 2017a; Simangan, 2024 |
| August 2017 | Protests Against the War on Drugs | Nationwide protests erupt against extrajudicial killings linked to Duterte's war on drugs, including the deaths of minors. | Al Jazeera, 2017; CNN, 2017a |
| October 23, 2017 | End of the Marawi Siege | The Philippine government declares the end of the Marawi siege, but the city is left devastated, with thousands displaced and reconstruction needed. | Simangan, 2024; AP News, 2017; Deutsche Welle, 2017c |
| December 12, 2017 | Extension of Martial Law in Mindanao | Congress approves the extension of martial law in Mindanao until the end of 2018 to continue addressing security threats. | Amnesty International, 2017; CNN, 2017b |
| July 23, 2018 | Bangsamoro Organic Law Signed | Duterte signs the Bangsamoro Organic Law (Republic Act No. 11054), creating a new autonomous political entity in Muslim Mindanao, aimed at resolving the decades-long conflict in the region. | Bangsamoro Transition Authority, n.D.; Heydarian, 2018 |
| December 12, 2018 | Extension of Martial Law in Mindanao | Congress approves the extension of martial law in Mindanao until the end of 2019 to continue addressing security threats. | Cabico, 2018 |
| January 21 & February 6, 2019 | Bangsamoro Organic Law Plebiscite | A plebiscite is held to ratify the Bangsamoro Organic Law, resulting in the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). | Cook, 2018 |
| March 17, 2019 | Philippines Withdraws from the ICC | The Philippines officially withdraws from the International Criminal Court (ICC) following the court's preliminary examination of Duterte's war on drugs. | Gutierrez, 2019; Al Jazeera, 2019 |
| May 13, 2019 | Midterm Elections | The midterm elections see Duterte's allies win a majority in both houses of Congress, further consolidating his power. | CNN, 2019; The Diplomat, 2019 |
| July 22, 2019 | 3rd State of the Nation Address (SONA) | Duterte delivers his SONA, highlighting his administration's achievements and reaffirming his commitment to his key policies, including the war on drugs and infrastructure development. | PhilStar, 2019 |
| March 16, 2020 | Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) Imposed | The Philippines imposes an ECQ in Luzon and other regions to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to strict lockdowns and economic disruptions. | Santos, 2020 |
| July 3, 2020 | Anti-Terrorism Act Signed | Duterte signs the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 (Republic Act No. 11479), which faces widespread criticism for its broad definition of terrorism and potential to suppress dissent. | Merez, 2020; Sajor, 2022 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| July 10, 2020 | ABS-CBN Franchise Renewal Denied | The House of Representatives votes to deny the franchise renewal of ABS-CBN, the country's largest broadcasting network, sparking concerns over press freedom. | IFJ, 2020; BBC, 2020 |
| February 2021 | Vaccine Rollout Begins | The Philippines begins its COVID-19 vaccination program amid challenges in vaccine supply and distribution. | Caple et al., 2022 |
| March 29, 2021 | Lockdown Measures COVOD-19 | A surge in COVID-19 cases leads to stricter lockdown measures, including Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) in Metro Manila. | The Straits Times, 2021; ABS-CBN, 2021 |
| July 26, 2021 | Duterte's Final SONA | Duterte delivers his final State of the Nation Address, focusing on his administration's achievements and defending his controversial policies. | Rappler, 2021 |
| May 9, 2022 | Presidential Elections | The Philippines holds national and local elections. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. is elected President, and Sara Duterte-Carpio becomes Vice President. | ABS-CBN, 2022; Lema & dela Cruz, 2022 |
| June 30, 2022 | Inauguration | Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is sworn in as the 17th President of the Philippines. | BBC, 2022; Al Jazeera, 2022; NPR, 2022 |

*Source:* Compiled by the author.

## Bibliography


ABS-CBN. (2021). "NCR under ECQ from Aug. 6-20 to curb COVID-19 Delta variant spread: Palace." *ABS-CBN,* 30 July 2021, online: https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/07/30/21/metro-manila-ecq-from-august-2021.

ABS-CBN. (2022). "Congress proclaims Marcos, Duterte-Carpio winners of presidential, VP elections." *ABS-CBN,* 25 May 2022, online: https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/05/25/22/marcos-duterte-carpio-proclaimed-duly-elected-president-vp.

Al Jazeera. (2009). "Martial law in Philippine province." *Al Jazeera*, 5 December 2009, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2009/12/5/martial-law-in-philippine-province.

Al Jazeera. (2016). "Rodrigo Duterte officially wins Philippines presidency." *Al Jazeera*, 27 May 2016, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/5/27/rodrigo-duterte-officially-wins-philippines-presidency.

Al Jazeera. (2017). "Thousands demand end to killings in Duterte's drug war." *Al Jazeera*, 21 August 2017, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/8/21/thousands-demand-end-to-killings-in-dutertes-drug-war.

Al Jazeera. (2019). "Philippines officially out of the International Criminal Court." *Al Jazeera*, 17 March 2019, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/3/17/philippines-officially-out-of-the-international-criminal-court.

Al Jazeera. (2022). "Ferdinand Marcos Jr sworn in as Philippines president." *Al Jazeera,* 30 June 2022, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/30/ferdinand-marcos-jr-to-be-sworn-in-as-philippines-president.

Amnesty International. (2017). "Philippines: Extension to martial law a threat to civilians in Mindanao." *Amnesty International,* 13 December 2017, online: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2017/12/philippines-extension-of-martial-law-a-threat-to-civilians-in-mindanao/.

Atun, J. M. L., Mendoza, R. U., David, C. C., Cossid, R. P. N., & Soriano, C. R. R. (2019). The Philippines' antidrug campaign: Spatial and temporal patterns of killings linked to drugs. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, *73*, 100–111. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2019.07.035.

Bangsamoro Transition Authority. (n.D.). "Historical Development of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority – Parliament." *Parliament.bangsamoro.gov.ph*, online: https://parliament.bangsamoro.gov.ph/historical-development-of-the-bangsamoro-transition-authority-parliament/.

Batty, D. (2009). "Philippines president lifts martial law." *The Guardian*, 12 December 2009, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/dec/12/philippines-president-lifts-martial-law.

Bauzon, K. E. (1999). The Philippines: The 1996 Peace Agreement for the Southern Philippines: An Assessment. *Ethnic Studies Report*, *17*(2), 253-80.

BBC. (2010). "Benigno Aquino sworn in as new Philippine president." *BBC*, 30 June 2010, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/10457448.

BBC. (2011). “Philippines chief justice impeached by congress.” *BBC*, 12 December 2011, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16144786.
BBC. (2012). “Philippine top judge Renato Corona faces sack for corruption.” *BBC*, 29 May 2012, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18249759.
BBC. (2016a). “Philippines election: Maverick Rodrigo Duterte wins presidency.” *BBC*, 10 May 2016, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36253612.
BBC. (2016b). “Rodrigo Duterte sworn in as Philippines president.” *BBC*, 20 June 2016, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36670012.
BBC. (2020). “Philippines top broadcaster ABS-CBN denied new licence.” *BBC*, 10 July 2020, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53360925.
BBC. (2022). “Ferdinand Marcos Jr sworn in as Philippines president, replacing Duterte.” *BBC*, 30 June 2022, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-61976940.
Blanchard, B. (2016). “Duterte aligns Philippines with China, says U.S. has lost.” *Reuters*, 20 October 2016, online: https://www.reuters.com/article/world/duterte-aligns-philippines-with-china-says-us-has-lost-idUSKCN12K0AS/.
Cabico, G.K. (2018). “Congress extends martial law in Mindanao to end of 2019.” *PhilStar,* 12 December 2018, online: https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2018/12/12/1876448/congress-extends-martial-law-mindanao-end-2019.
Campbell, C. (2016). “Rodrigo Duterte Sworn In as President of the Philippines.” *TIME*, 30 June 2016, online: https://time.com/4388937/philippines-rodrigo-duterte-president-inauguration/.
Caple, A., Dimaano, A., Sagolili, M. M., Uy, A. A., Aguirre, P. M., Alano, D. L., Camaya, G. S., Ciriaco, B. J., Clavo, P. J. M., Cuyugan, D., Fermo, C. F. G., Lanete, P. J., La Torre, A. J., Loteyro, T., Lua, R. M., Manansala, N. G., Mosquito, R. W., Octaviano, A., Orfanel, A. E., … Austriaco, N. (2022). Interrogating COVID-19 vaccine intent in the Philippines with a nationwide open-access online survey. *PeerJ*, *10*, e12887. https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.12887.
CGTN. (2017). “Timeline of Philippine Drug War.” *CGTN*, 18 August 2017, online: https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d514f78554464776c6d636a4e6e62684a4856/share_p.html.
Chandrasekaran, R. (2001). “Estrada Arrested in Corruption Case.” *Washington Post*, 26 April 2001, online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/04/26/estrada-arrested-in-corruption-case/b837676e-3844-4cf9-8fe5-e54287cb808b/.
CNN (2015a). “43 Philippine police killed by Muslim rebels while hunting bomb makers.” *CNN*, 27 January 2015, online: https://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/26/world/philippines-maguindanao-milf-battle/index.html.
CNN. (2015b). “Philippines honors 44 slain commandos with a day or mourning.” *CNN*, 30 January 2015, online: https://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/30/world/philippines-day-mourning-milf/index.html.
CNN. (2016). “Rodrigo Duterte inaugurated as Philippines president.” *CNN*, 30 June 2016, online: https://edition.cnn.com/2016/06/29/asia/philippines-duterte-inauguration/index.html.
CNN. (2017a). “Could teenager’s shooting be a turning point in Duterte’s war on drugs? *CNN*, 24 August 2017, online: https://edition.cnn.com/2017/08/24/asia/kian-delos-santos-duterte-war-on-drugs/index.html.
CNN. (2017b). “Philippines congress extends martial law in Mindanao.” *CNN*, 13 December 2017, online: https://edition.cnn.com/2017/12/13/asia/mindanao-martial-law-extension-intl/index.html.
CNN. (2019). “Duterte’s children elected as Philippines President consolidates power in midterms.” *CNN*, 15 May 2019, online: https://edition.cnn.com/2019/05/15/asia/duterte-loyalists-sweep-philippines-midterms-intl/index.html.
Conde, C.H, (2004). “Philippine Congress proclaims Arroyo winner.” *The New York Times*, 25 June 2004, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/25/IHT-philippine-congress-proclaims-arroyo-winner.html.
Conde, C.H. (2009). “Critics Challenge Martial Law in Philippines.” *The New York Times,* 7 December 2009, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/08/world/asia/08phils.html.
Cook, M. (2018). “Three Challenges Facing the Bangsamoro Organic Law.” *ISEAS Perspective,* 2018(82). Singapore: ISEAS.
De Castro, R. C. (2003). Special Relations and Alliance Politics in Philippine-US Security Relations, 1990–2002. *Asian Perspective*, *27*(1), 137-164.
De Castro, R. C. (2016). The Duterte Administration’s Foreign Policy: Unravelling the Aquino Administration’s Balancing Agenda on an Emergent China. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *35*(3), 139–159. https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341603500307.
Deutsche Welle (DW). (2017a). “Duterte declares martial law after clash.” *DW,* 23 May 2017, online: *h*ttps://www.dw.com/en/duterte-declares-martial-law-as-philippine-troops-clash-with-gunmen/a-38959004.

Deutsche Welle (DW). (2017b). “Filipinos protest drug war on revolutionary anniversary.” *DW*, 25 February 2017, online: https://www.dw.com/en/philippine-citizens-protest-dutertes-drug-war-on-anniversary-of-dictatorship-overthrow/a-37713484.
Deutsche Welle (DW). (2017c). “Philippines says militants in Marawi “finished”” *DW, 23 October 2017, online:* https://www.dw.com/en/philippines-declares-end-to-battle-with-islamist-militants-in-marawi/a-41071123.
Global Nonviolent Action Database. (2013). “Philippine citizens overthrow President Joseph Estrada (People Power II), 2001.” *Global Nonviolent Action Database*, 3 March 2013, online: https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/philippine-citizens-overthrow-president-joseph-estrada-people-power-ii-2001.
Gomez, J. (2017). “Philippines declares end to 5-month militant siege in Marawi.” *AP News*, 23 October 2017, online: https://apnews.com/article/78d9ed99e45540fb9be359d828bf4881.
Gutierrez, J. (2019). “Philippines Officially Leaves the International Criminal Court.” *The New York Times*, 17 March 2019, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/17/world/asia/philippines-international-criminal-court.html.
Hernandez, C. G. (1988). The Philippines in 1987: Challenges of Redemocratization. *Asian Survey*, *28*(2), 229–241. https://doi.org/10.2307/2644824.
Heydarian, R. J. (2018). “Bangsamoro Organic Law can be Duterte’s greatest legacy.” *Al Jazeera*, 1 August 2018, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/8/1/bangsamoro-organic-law-can-be-dutertes-greatest-legacy.
IFJ. (2020). “Philippines: House committee denies ABS-CBN franchise renewal.” *IFJ*, 10 July 2020, online: https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/article/philippines-house-committee-denies-abs-cbn-franchise-renewal.
Lema, K., & Dela Cruz, E. (2022). „Philippines election winner Marcos tells world to judge him by actions, not family’s past.” *Reuters*, 10 May 2022, online: https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-election-win-returns-marcos-power-polarisation-2022-05-10/.
Lozada, D. (2021). How Duterte’s ‘war on drugs’ is being significantly opposed within the Philippines. *Melbourne Asia Review*, *2021*(7). https://www.melbourneasiareview.edu.au/how-dutertes-war-on-drugs-is-being-significantly-opposed-within-the-philippines/.
Malan, C., & Solomon, H. (2012). Between Conflict and Compromise in the Philippines. *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs, 25*(1/2), 59–82.
Mendez, C. (2014). “Hello Garci,10 years later: Never again.” *Philstar*, 29 May 2014, online: https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2014/05/29/1328562/hello-garci10-years-later-never-again.
Merez A. (2020). “Duterte opens SONA 2020 with attack on ‘oligarch’ Lopezes.” *ABS-CBN,* 20 July 2020, online: https://www.abs-cbn.com/news/07/27/20/duterte-opens-sona-2020-with-attack-on-oligarch-lopezes.
Noland, M. (2000). The Philippines in the Asian Financial Crisis: How the Sick Man Avoided Pneumonia. *Asian Survey*, *40*(3), 401–412. https://doi.org/10.2307/3021153.
NPR. (2022). “Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is sworn in as the Philippines 17th President.” *NPR*, 30 June 2022, online: https://www.npr.org/2022/06/30/1108843858/ferdinand-marcos-jr-is-sworn-in-as-the-philippines-17th-president.
Overholt, W. H. (1986). The rise and fall of Ferdinand Marcos. *Asian Survey*, *26*(11), 1137-1163.
Parreñas, J. C. (1993). Leadership succession and security in the Philippines. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 64-79.
PhilStar. (2006). “Sate of Emergency.” *PhilStar*, 25 February 2006, online: https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2006/02/25/323136/state-emergency.
PhilStar. (2011). “The folly of an all-out war versus the MILF.” *PhilStar,* 27 October 2011, online: https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2011/10/27/741415/folly-all-out-war-versus-milf.
PhilStar. (2019). “FULL TEXT: Duterte’s 2019 State of the Nation Address.” *PhilStar*, 22 July 2019, online: https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2019/07/22/1936926/full-text-dutertes-2019-state-nation-address.
Rappler. (2021). “FULL TEXT: President Duterte’s State of Nation Address 2021.” *Rappler,* 26 July 2021, online: https://www.rappler.com/philippines/full-text-rodrigo-duterte-state-nation-address-sona-2021/.
Reid, B. (2001). The Philippine democratic uprising and the contradictions of neoliberalism: Edsa II. *Third World Quarterly*, *22*(5), 777–793. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590120084593.
Reporters Without Borders (RSF). (2019). “Ten years after massacre of 32 reporters, Philippine justice on trial.” *RSF*, 22 November 2019, online: https://rsf.org/en/ten-years-after-massacre-32-reporters-philippine-justice-trial.
Reuters. (2011). “Lawmakers impeach Philippines’ Supreme Court chief justice.” *Reuters*, 12 December 2011, online: https://www.reuters.com/article/world/lawmakers-impeach-philippines-supreme-court-chief-justice-idUSDEE7BB0DE/.

Robinson, L., Johnston, P. B., & Oak, G. S. (2016). *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*. RAND Corporation.
Sajor, L. (2022). 6 State Repression in the Philippines during COVID-19 and Beyond. In B. Bringel & G. Pleyers (Ed.), *Social Movements and Politics During COVID-19: Crisis, Solidarity and Change in a Global Pandemic* (pp. 52-59). Bristol, UK: Bristol University Press. https://doi.org/10.56687/9781529217254-008
Santos, A. P. (2020). "Coronavirus: Philippines quarantines island of 57 million people." *Al Jazeera*, 16 march 2020, online: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/3/16/coronavirus-philippines-quarantines-island-of-57-million-people.
Sicat, G. (1998). The Philippine Economy in the Asian Crisis. *ASEAN Economic Bulletin*, *15*(3), 290–296.
Simangan, D. (2024). Challenges and Prospects for Urban Peacebuilding in Post-Siege Marawi City, Philippines: People, Places, and Practices. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *43*(3), 452–471. https://doi.org/10.1177/18681034241251864.
Simbulan, R. G. (2018). The Historic Senate Vote of 16 September 1991: Looking Back and Looking Forward Twenty-Five Years After. *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, *66*(1), 3-18.
Sussman, G. (1990). Politics and the press: The Philippines since Marcos. *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, *22*(1), 34-43.
Taylor, A. (2013). "Bloody Philippine Siege Brought to an End." *The Atlantic*, 30 September 2013, online: https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2013/09/bloody-philippine-siege-brought-to-an-end/100599/.
The Diplomat. (2019). "Duterte-Backed Candidates Win Big in Philippines' Midterm Elections." *The Diplomat*, 22 May 2019, online: https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/duterte-backed-candidates-win-big-in-philippines-midterm-elections/.
The Guardian. (2001). "Estrada arrested on new charges." *The Guardian*, 16 April 2001, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/apr/16/1.
The New York Times. (1992). "Ramos Sworn in as President." *The New York Times,* 30 June 1992, online: https://www.nytimes.com/1992/06/30/world/ramos-sworn-in-as-president.html.
The New York Times. (2006). "Arroyo declares state of emergency amid coup rumors." *The New York Times*, 24 February 2006, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/24/world/asia/arroyo-declares-state-of-emergency-amid-coup-rumors.html.
The Straits Times. (2021). "Metro Manila going into hard lockdown again to head off Covid-19 Delta surge." *The Straits Time,* 31 July 2021, online: https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/philippines-to-place-manila-area-in-lockdown-to-curb-delta-spread.
The Washington Post. (1989). "Coup attempts against Aquino." *The Washington Post*, 1 December 1989, online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1989/12/02/coup-attempts-against-aquino/87735ea5-0867-459d-96b9-fc8a79c81ffa/.
The Washington Post. (1998). "Estrada Formally Declared Election Winner." *The Washington Post*, 29 May 1998, online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/national/1998/05/30/estrada-formally-declared-election-winner/8ffa01a9-6d92-42af-b48a-0b455b282fb1/.
Turner, M. M. (1990). Authoritarian rule and the dilemma of legitimacy: The case of President Marcos of the Philippines. *The Pacific Review*, *3*(4), 349-362.
Whaley, F. (2012). "Philippine Chief Justice Removed Over Omission in Report on Assets." *The New York Times,* 29 May 2012, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/30/world/asia/philippines-chief-justice-removed-over-finances.html.

**Appendix 8.** *Timeline Thailand: Major Events (1973-2006)*

| Date | Event | Event Description | Source |
|---|---|---|---|
| October 14, 1973 | 1973 Thai Popular Uprising | A massive student-led protest against the military government of Thanom Kittikachorn culminates in a violent crackdown, resulting in the deaths of hundreds. King Bhumibol intervenes, leading to the resignation of the military government and the end of nearly two decades of military rule. | Heinze, 1974; Zimmerman, 1974 |
| October 1973 | New Constitution Drafting | Following the uprising, a new constitution is drafted, marking a transition to a more democratic system. The Constitution of 1974 is introduced, paving the way for parliamentary elections. | Kongkirati, 2024 |
| January 1975 | General Elections | Thailand holds its first democratic elections in over a decade, leading to the formation of a civilian government under Prime Minister Sanya Dharmasakti. | Kongkirati, 2024 |
| October 6, 1976 | Thammasat University Massacre | A violent crackdown on student protesters at Thammasat University by police, military, and right-wing paramilitary groups results in the deaths of dozens of students. The massacre leads to a coup d'état, and the military takes control under the leadership of Thanin Kraivichien. | Kongkirati, 2024 |
| October 1977 | Military Coup | The military, dissatisfied with Thanin Kraivichien's ultraconservative government, stages a coup. General Kriangsak Chomanan becomes Prime Minister, implementing more moderate policies and initiating political reforms. | Darling, 1978; Girling, 1977 |
| December 1978 | 1978 Constitution | A new constitution is promulgated, granting greater powers to the military and reducing the influence of elected officials. It marks a step back from the democratic gains of the early 1970s. | Tongdhamachart, 1979 |
| February 1980 | Prem Tinsulanonda as Prime Minister | General Prem Tinsulanonda is appointed Prime Minister. His tenure is marked by stability, economic growth, and a balancing act between the military and civilian politicians. | Chachavalpongpun and Kurlantzick, 2019 |
| 1983-1987 | Economic Boom | Thailand experiences significant economic growth during Prem's leadership, driven by industrialization and foreign investment. The country becomes one of Asia's fastest-growing economies. | Warr, 1997 |
| July 1988 | Political Stability | Prem declines to continue as Prime Minister after his third term, paving the way for Chatichai Choonhavan to become Prime Minister. Chatichai promotes a "Businessman's Cabinet" and further economic liberalization. | The New York Times, 1988; The Washington Post, 1988; Bhuchongkul, 1992 |
| February 23, 1991 | Military Coup | The military stages a bloodless coup against the government of Chatichai Choonhavan, accusing it of corruption. General Suchinda Kraprayoon leads the National Peace Keeping Council (NPKC), which takes control of the government. | Wallace, 1991; TIME, 1991 |
| March 1992 | Protests Against Military Rule | Massive protests, led by the middle class and students, erupt in Bangkok against Suchinda Kraprayoon's assumption of the role of the prime minister without being elected. These protests escalate into violence. | Bunbongkarn, 1993 |
| May 17-20, 1992 | Black May | The military violently suppresses pro-democracy demonstrations in Bangkok, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries. King Bhumibol intervenes, leading to Suchinda's resignation and the restoration of civilian rule. | Bunbongkarn, 1993 |
| September 13, 1992 | New Elections | New elections are held following the Black May events, leading to the victory of the Democrat Party and the appointment of Chuan Leekpai as Prime Minister. | Bunbongkarn, 1993; King, 1992 |
| December 1992 | Political Reforms | The new civilian government under Chuan Leekpai begins implementing political reforms to curb military influence and promote democratic governance. | Bunbongkarn, 1992 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| December 1996 | Constitution Drafting Assembly Established | A Constitution Drafting Assembly is established to create a new democratic constitution, reflecting public demand for political reform and transparency. | Klein, 1998; Hicken, 2006 |
| October 11, 1997 | Promulgation of the 1997 Constitution | The "People's Constitution" is enacted, introducing significant democratic reforms, including greater checks and balances, an independent judiciary, and stronger protections for civil liberties. | Hicken, 2006; Kuhonta, 2008 |
| November 1997 | Asian Financial Crisis | The Thai baht collapses, triggering the Asian Financial Crisis. Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh resigns, and Chuan Leekpai of the Democrat Party becomes Prime Minister, implementing IMF-led economic reforms. | Lauridsen, 1998 |
| January 6, 2001 | Thaksin Shinawatra Wins General Election | Thaksin Shinawatra, leader of the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party, wins a landslide victory in the general election, becoming Prime Minister. His policies focus on populism, including debt relief and universal healthcare. | Ockey, 2003 |
| February 2001 | Thaksinomics Introduced | Thaksin implements his economic policies, known as "Thaksinomics," which emphasize rural development, debt relief, and government intervention in the economy to stimulate growth. | Looney, 2003 |
| April 9, 2001 | Constitutional Court Ruling | Thaksin is found not guilty by the Constitutional Court on charges of asset concealment, allowing him to remain in office. The decision is controversial, and sparks debates over judicial independence. | The Guardian, 2001; The Washington Post, 2001 |
| February 2003 | War on Drugs Campaign Begins | Thaksin launches a brutal war on drugs, resulting in the extrajudicial killings of over 2,500 suspected drug dealers. The campaign receives widespread criticism for human rights abuses. | The Washington Post, 2003; BBC, 2006 |
| October 15, 2004 | Tak Bai Incident | Thai security forces crack down on a protest in Tak Bai, southern Thailand, leading to the deaths of 85 Muslim protesters, most of whom suffocated in military trucks. The incident exacerbates the insurgency in the south. | Amnesty International, 2023 |
| February 6, 2005 | Thaksin Re-elected | Thaksin wins re-election by a large margin, securing a second term as Prime Minister. His victory is seen as a mandate to continue his populist policies. | Croissant and Pojar, 2005; The New York Times, 2005 |
| September 19, 2006 | Military Coup | The Royal Thai Army, led by General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, stages a bloodless coup while Thaksin is in New York for a UN meeting. The military cites Thaksin's alleged corruption and abuse of power as reasons for the coup. Martial law is declared, and a military junta takes control. | Croissant, 2022; Chambers, 2013; Bünte and Prasse, 2007; Bünte, 2006 |
| October 1, 2006 | 2006 Interim Constitution Enacted | The military junta, known as the Council for Democratic Reform (CDR), enacts an interim constitution, suspending the 1997 Constitution and setting the stage for drafting a new one. | Bünte and Prasse, 2007; Bünte, 2006 |

*Source:* Compiled by the author.

## Bibliography


Albritton, R. B. (2005). Thailand in 2004: The "crisis in the South". *Asian Survey*, *45*(1), 166-173.

BBC. (2006). "Thailand investigates drugs war." *BBC News,* 14 November 2006, online: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6146854.stm.

Bhuchongkul, A. (1992). Thailand 1991: the return of the military. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 313-333.

Bunbongkarn, S. (1993). Thailand in 1992: In Search of a Democratic Order. *Asian Survey*, *33*(2), 218–223. https://doi.org/10.2307/2645333.

Bünte, M. (2006). Putsch in Thailand: Rückkehr des Militärs in die Politik? Südostasien aktuell. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian affairs*, 25(6), 35-46. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-336786

Bünte, M., and Prasse, K. (2007). Thailand Quo Vadis – The Kingdom since months after the military Coup, *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs,* 2/2007, pp. 67-79.

Chachavalpongpun, P., & Kurlantzick, J. (2019). “Prem Tinsulanonda’s Legacy—And the Failures of Thai Politics Today.” *Council on Foreign Relations,* 28 May 2019, online: https://www.cfr.org/blog/prem-tinsulanondas-legacy-and-failures-thai-politics-today.
Chambers, P. (2013). Military “Shadows” in Thailand Since the 2006 Coup. *Asian Affairs*, *40*(2), 67–82. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23527229
Croissant, A. (2022). Thailand: The Vicious Cycle of Civilian Government and Military Rule. In A. Croissant (ed.), *Comparative Politics of Southeast Asia* (pp. 315–359). Springer International Publishing.
Croissant, A., & Pojar, D.J. (2005). Quo Vadis Thailand? Thai Politics after the 2005 Parliamentary Election. *Strategic Insights, 4*(6). https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/imperia/md/content/fakultaeten/wiso/ipw/croissant/publications/croissant_pojar_2005_quo_vadis_thailand.pdf.
Darling, F. R. (1978). Thailand: Transitional Military Rule? *Current History*, *75*(442), 208-211.
Girling, J. L. (1977). Thailand: The coup and its implications. *Pacific Affairs*, *50*(3), 387-405.
Heinze, R.-I. (1974). Ten Days in October--Students vs. the Military: An Account of the Student Uprising in Thailand. *Asian Survey*, *14*(6), 491–508. https://doi.org/10.2307/2642679.
Hicken, A. (2006). Party Fabrication: Constitutional Reform and the Rise of Thai Rak Thai. *Journal of East Asian Studies*, *6*(3), 381–407.
King, D. E. (1992). The Thai Parliamentary Elections of 1992: Return to Democracy in an Atypical Year. *Asian Survey*, *32*(12), 1109–1123. https://doi.org/10.2307/2645041.
Klein, J. R. (1998). *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, 1997: a blueprint for participatory democracy*. Bangkok: Asia Foundation.
Kongkirati, P. (2024). *Thailand: Contestation, Polarization, and Democratic Regression*. Cambridge University Press.
Kuhonta, E. M. (2008). The Paradox of Thailand’s 1997 “People’s Constitution”: Be Careful What You Wish For. *Asian Survey*, *48*(3), 373–392. https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2008.48.3.373.
Lauridsen, L.S. (1998). Financial Crisis in Thailand: Conduct and Consequences? *World Development, 26*(8), pp. 1575-1591. http://kumlai.free.fr/RESEARCH/THESE/TEXTE/INEQUALITY/Thailande/The%20Financial%20Crisis%20in%20Thailand.pdf.
Looney, R. (2003). Thaksinomics: A New Asian Paradigm; *Strategic Insights, 2(12).*
Ockey, J. (2003). Change and continuity in the Thai political party system. *Asian Survey*, *43*(4), 663-680.
The Guardian. (2001). “Narrow win in court for Thai leader.” *The Guardian,* 4 August 2001, online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/aug/04/johnaglionby.
The New York Times. (1988). “Thai Prime Minister Declines Another Term.” *The New York Times*, 28 July 1988, online: https://www.nytimes.com/1988/07/28/world/thai-prime-minister-declines-another-term.html
The New York Times. (1991). “The World; In Thailand’s Coup, A Familiar Regional Variation on Democracy.” *The New York Times*, 3 March 1991, online: https://www.nytimes.com/1991/03/03/weekinreview/the-world-in-thailand-s-coup-a-familiar-regional-variation-on-democracy.html.
The New York Times. (2005). “Prime Minister Claims Landslide Election Win in Thailand.” *The New York Times*, 6 February 2005, online: https://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/06/international/asia/prime-minister-claims-landslide-election-win-in-thailand.html.
The Washington Post. (1988), Thai Premier Rejects Offer For New Term.” *The Washington Post*, 27 July 1988, online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/07/28/thai-premier-rejects-offer-for-new-term/55f49ecf-ac5c-4ffd-978b-d2f895d714b4/.
The Washington Post. (2001). “Judges Acquit Thai Leader of Corruption by Close Vote.” *The Washington Post*, 3 August 2001, online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/08/04/judges-acquit-thai-leader-of-corruption-by-close-vote/c80a2bcc-ce08-4141-a184-7ec2236fb1b1/.
The Washington Post. (2003). “Thailand’s Drug War Leaves Over 1,000 Dead.” *The Washington Post*, 9 March 2003, online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2003/03/09/thailands-drug-war-leaves-over-1000-dead/da289d8c-d9a1-4726-be91-0ef9e642c2d2/.
TIME. (1991). “THAILAND: Return of the Tanks.” *TIME*, 4 March 1991, online: https://time.com/archive/6717231/thailand-return-of-the-tanks/
Tongdhamachart, K. (1979). Thailand’s 1978 Constitution and Its Implications. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *1*(2), 125-140.
Wallace, C. P. (1991). “Thai Military Seizes Power in Bloodless Coup.” *LA Times*, 24 February 1991, online: https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-02-24-mn-2784-story.html.

Warr, P. G. (1997). The Thai economy: from boom to gloom? *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 317-333.
Zimmerman, R. F. (1974). Student “Revolution” in Thailand: The End of the Thai Bureaucratic Polity? *Asian Survey*, *14*(6), 509–529. https://doi.org/10.2307/2642680.

**Appendix 9.** *Amendments and laws: Indonesia (2014-2023), Philippines (2016-2022), and Thailand (2001-2006)*

a. Indonesia

| Law/Amendment | Date Passed | Overview |
|---|---|---|
| **ITE Law 2008** | April 21, 2008 | Originally intended to respond to rapid developments in information technology and fill legal gaps around issues such as electronic transactions and the position of digital information and signatures under Indonesian law. |
| **NGO Law 2013** | July 2, 2013 | Requires NGOs to register with the government and restricts foreign funding and involvement in NGO activities. NGOs are subject to state oversight. |
| **Perppu No. 2/2017 on Mass Organizations** | July 10, 2017 | Allowed the government to disband civil society organizations without judicial process. Targeted radical groups but could be used against other NGOs. |
| **Anti-Terror Law 2018** | May 25, 2018 | Expanded the definition of terrorism and allowed preemptive detentions. Increased the powers of police and military to counter terrorism. |
| **Revisions to the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) Law** | September 17, 2019 | Revised the powers of the KPK, introducing an oversight board and other measures that critics argue weakened the commission's effectiveness. |
| **Keppres No. 11/2020 on Public Health Emergency** | March 31, 2020 | Declared a state of emergency during the Covid-19 pandemic, giving the government broad powers to restrict movement and enforce health measures. |
| **Omnibus Law on Job Creation (Law No. 11 of 2020)** | November 2, 2020 | The law aimed at improving the business environment by amending 79 existing laws across various sectors, including labor, investment, and environment. |
| **Ministerial Regulation 5 (MR5)** | November 24, 2020 | Governs private 'electronic systems operators' (ESOs) such as social media platforms, search engines, and messaging services, granting government sweeping powers. |
| **Law No. 2/2021 on Papuan Special Autonomy** | July 15, 2021 | Reduced autonomy for indigenous Papuan political institutions and increased central government control over fiscal and administrative matters. |
| **Sexual Violence Law** | April 12, 2022 | Criminalizes various forms of sexual violence, including harassment and exploitation, and provides for victim protection and rehabilitation. |
| **Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law) Amendments** | November 28, 2016 (1st Amendment) April 12, 2022 (2nd Amendment) | Amended to address concerns about freedom of speech, reducing penalties for defamation and clarifying illegal content definitions. |
| **Penal Code Revision** | December 6, 2022 | Updated Indonesia's Penal Code, introducing controversial provisions on adultery, cohabitation, and defamation, while maintaining the death penalty. |
| **Law on the Sovereignty of the Nation** | February 14, 2023 | Introduced measures to protect Indonesia's territorial integrity, strategic assets, and critical infrastructure |
| **Amendments to the Labor Law** | August 23, 2023 | Further changes to the labor laws, addressing job security, minimum wage regulations, and contract employment, as part of ongoing adjustments to the Omnibus Law. |

*Source:* Compiled by the author.

b. Philippines

| Law/Amendment | Date Passed | Overview |
|---|---|---|
| **National Land Use Act** | Proposed; not yet enacted. | The bill aims to institutionalize land use planning and management. |
| **Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Law (Republic Act No. 10963)** | December 19, 2017 | The first package of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program, lowering personal income taxes while raising taxes on fuel, automobiles, and sugar-sweetened beverages. |
| **Ease of Doing Business Act (Republic Act No. 11032)** | May 28, 2018 | Aims to improve the Philippines' ranking in ease of doing business by streamlining processes in government transactions and enhancing transparency and efficiency. |
| **Anti-Hazing Act of 2018 (Republic Act No. 11053)** | June 29, 2018 | Strengthens the existing law by prohibiting all forms of hazing and providing harsher penalties for violators, following high-profile hazing incidents. |
| **Bangsamoro Organic Law (Republic Act No. 11054)** | July 26, 2018 | Establishes the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), providing for greater autonomy and addressing long-standing issues in the region. |
| **Philippine Identification System Act (Republic Act No. 11055)** | August 6, 2018 | Establishes a single national identification system for all citizens and resident aliens of the Philippines, aiming to simplify public and private transactions. |
| **Rice Tariffication Law (Republic Act No. 11203)** | February 14, 2019 | Replaces quantitative restrictions on rice imports with tariffs, aiming to stabilize rice prices and boost local production. |
| **Expanded Maternity Leave Law (Republic Act No. 11210)** | February 20, 2019 | Increases maternity leave from 60 to 105 days for female workers, with an additional 15 days for single mothers, covering all types of employment. |
| **Universal Health Care Act (Republic Act No. 11223)** | February 20, 2019 | Ensures all Filipinos are automatically enrolled in the National Health Insurance Program and expands access to quality health services. |
| **Revised Corporation Code of the Philippines (Republic Act No. 11232)** | February 20, 2019 | Updates the Corporation Code to make it easier to do business, including allowing a single person to form a corporation. |
| **Bayanihan to Heal as One Act (Republic Act No. 11469)** | March 24, 2020 | Grants the President special powers to address the COVID-19 pandemic, including reallocating funds and imposing quarantine measures. |
| **Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020 (Republic Act No. 11479)** | July 3, 2020 | Replaces the Human Security Act of 2007, expanding the definition of terrorism and allowing longer detention without a warrant, sparking concerns over potential human rights abuses. |
| **Bayanihan to Recover as One Act (Republic Act No. 11494)** | September 11, 2020 | Follow-up to the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, providing funding for health care, social protection, and economic recovery amid the pandemic. |

*Source*: Compiled by the author.

c. Thailand

| Law/Amendment | Date Passed | Overview |
|---|---|---|
| **Computer Crime Act** | 2007* | Although passed in 2007, discussions and drafting began in the early 2000s. It was aimed at combating cybercrime, including unauthorized access and hacking. |
| **Communications Authority of Thailand Act** | 2001 | Transformed the Communications Authority of Thailand (CAT) into a state enterprise, focusing on telecommunications and postal services. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Village Fund Act** | 2001 | Established village-level funds to provide micro-loans and financial support to rural communities, part of Thaksin Shinawatra's poverty alleviation program. |
| **Foreign Business Act (Amendment)** | 2002 | Tightened restrictions on foreign ownership in certain business sectors and redefined the types of activities that require special permissions. |
| **Alien Employment Act (Amendment)** | 2002 | Imposed stricter regulations on the employment of foreign workers, including requirements for work permits. |
| **National Education Act (Amendment)** | 2002 | Revised the 1999 National Education Act to include more details on educational standards, decentralization, and community participation. |
| **Health Act** | 2002 | Provided a legal framework for public health policies, focusing on accessibility, quality of care, and health promotion. |
| **Anti-Money Laundering Act (Amendment)** | 2003 | Expanded the scope of money laundering offenses and strengthened the powers of the Anti-Money Laundering Office (AMLO). |
| **Constitution (Amendment)** | 2003 | Amended to make changes related to the electoral system. |
| **Emergency Decree on Public Administration** | 2005 | Granted the government sweeping powers in dealing with emergencies, particularly in response to the insurgency in the southern provinces of Thailand. |

*Source*: Compiled by the author.

**Appendix 10.** *Independence of journalistic/media sources*

*a. Journalistic/media sources: Ownership and degree of independence*

| Newspaper | Based in (Country) | Ownership | Government-Owned/State-Sponsored |
|---|---|---|---|
| The New York Times (NYT) | United States of America (USA) | The New York Times Company | No |
| Los Angeles Times (LA Times) | United States of America (USA) | Los Angeles Times Communications LLC | No |
| British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) | United Kingdom | Corporation | No |
| Rappler | Philippines | Rappler Holdings Corporation | No |
| Deutsche Welle | Germany | Federal Republic of Germany | Yes |
| The Guardian | United Kingdom | Guardian Media Group | No |
| Al Jazeera Media Network (AJMN)* | Qatar | Emir Tamim bin Hamad al Thani | Yes |
| Cable News Network (CNN; CNN International) | United States | Warner Bros. Discovery | No |
| Reuters | United Kingdom | Division | No |
| Jakarta Post | Indonesia | PT Bina Media Tenggara (Kompas Gramedia Group) | No |
| Washington Post | United States | Nash Holdings | No |
| PhilStar | Philippines | PhilStar Daily Inc., MediaQuest Holdings | No |
| The Diplomat | United States | MHT Corporation | No |
| Antara News | Indonesia | Ministry of State-owned enterprises; Government of Indonesia | Yes |
| JakartaGlobe | Indonesia | B. Universe (Enggartiasto Lukita) | Not directly, but Lukita was part of Widodo's second cabinet. |
| TIME | United States | Time USA, LLC. | No |

*Source*: Compiled by the author. Based on data from the Media and Journalism Research Center (2024).
*Notes*: *The editorial independence of Al Jazeera is heavily influenced by the Qatari government, despite the network's internal guidelines aimed at maintaining objectivity. Experts in Doha suggest that Al Jazeera cannot fully escape the stringent censorship system imposed by the government. This influence is particularly evident in the network's coverage for local audiences, where criticism of Qatar's ruling elite, the government, or Islam is strictly prohibited. However, Al Jazeera is widely recognized for its bold reporting on international issues, especially through its English-language channels, which have gained a reputation for challenging and sometimes confronting Arab governments. The network's London station is noted for its assertive journalism, which often irritates other Arab nations. While Al Jazeera's Arabic channel practices self-censorship regarding domestic matters, focusing mainly on sensitive regional topics without criticizing Qatar itself, the non-Arabic outlets sometimes provide critical coverage of Qatari authorities and international matters (Media and Journalism Research Center, 2024).

*b. List of state-owned or controlled media in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand.*

| Country | Media Company | Typology |
|---|---|---|
| *Indonesia* | Antara News | Independent state-managed media |
| | Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI) | State-controlled media |
| | Television of the Republic Indonesia (TVRI) | State-controlled media |
| | | |
| *Philippines* | Intercontinental Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) | State-controlled media |
| | People's Television Network (PTV) | State-controlled media |
| | Philippine Broadcasting Service (PBS) | State-controlled media |
| | Philippines Information Agency (PIA) | State-controlled media |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Philippines News Agency | State-controlled media |
| | Radio of the Republic of Indonesia (RRI) | State-controlled media |
| | Radio Television Malacañang (RTVM) | State-controlled media |
| | | |
| *Thailand* | Channel 5 | State-controlled media |
| | MCOT | State-controlled media |
| | National Broadcasting Services of Thailand | State-controlled media |
| | Radio Thailand Satun | State-controlled media |
| | Thai Public Broadcasting Service | Independent public media |

*Source:* Compiled by the author. Based on data from Dragomir and Söderström (2022); Media and Journalism Research Center (2024).

## Bibliography


Dragomir, M. & A. Söderström. (2022). *The State of State Media. A Global Analysis of the Editorial Independence of State Media based on The State Media Matrix (2022 Edition)*. Media and Journalism Research Center.

Media and Journalism Research Center. (2024). *State Media Monitor. The world's state and public media database*. Tallinn, Estonia: Media & Journalism Research Center (MJRC).

**Appendix 11.** *Election Results in Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand*

*a. Indonesia*

Since the *reformasi* era began in 1998 following the fall of Suharto, Indonesia has made important strides in democratizing its electoral system. The 1945 Constitution of Indonesia has undergone several amendments to incorporate widely accepted democratic principles, including direct presidential elections and a more balanced power distribution. The main laws governing elections include the Law on General Elections, the Law on the Election of the President and Vice President, and the Law on Political Parties. The General Elections Commission (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*, KPU) is an independent body responsible for organizing elections. At the same time, the Election Supervisory Board (*Bawaslu*) oversees elections to ensure they are free and fair. (Asia Electoral Resource Center, 2024; Butt and Siregar, 2021; Sulistyo, 2002)

Indonesia is a representative republic where the President is both the head of State and head of government. The amended 1945 Constitution of Indonesia is the foundation for the country's system of government and has anchored the separation of powers. The President and Vice President of Indonesia are directly elected by the people by majority vote for a five-year term and can be re-elected only once. A candidate pair must win more than 50% of the vote nationally and at least 20% of the vote in more than half of the provinces to avoid a runoff. A runoff between the top two pairs is held if no pair achieves this. Legislative elections, where members of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), consisting of the Regional Representative Council (DPD) and the People's Representative Council (DPR) are elected, are also held every five years. Members of the DPR and DPDP are elected based on proportional representation: Members of the DPR, consisting of 560 members from multi-member consistencies, are elected based on proportional representation. There are currently 77 constituencies in Indonesia, and each return three to ten Members of Parliament based on population. The threshold for parties to enter the DPR has varied but currently stands at 4%. The 132 members of the DPD are elected from each province by a single non-transferable vote, with each province having the same number of representatives regardless of population. Indonesia has 33 multi-member districts that correspond with the 33 provinces of the country. The DPD acts as a regional representative body, providing input on regional issues but with limited legislative power. In local elections, governors, mayors, and regents are directly elected by the people in their respective regions. These elections are held simultaneously across the country but separate from national elections. (Asian Network for Free Elections, 2024; International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2024)

*Electoral Results 2014 and 2019*

The 2014 presidential election in Indonesia was held on July 9, 2014. Joko Widodo ('Jokowi') won the election with a margin of approximately 6.3%. The 2019 presidential election in Indonesia was held on April 17, 2019. Jokowi was re-elected with a margin of approximately 11%.

Table 11.1. Results of the Presidential Elections 2014 and 2019.

| Year | Main Contenders | Running Mate | Results | Margin |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2014** | Joko Widodo | Jusuf Kalla | 53.15% | 6,3% |
| | **Prabowo** Subianto | Hatta Rajasa | 46.85% | |
| **2019** | Joko Widodo | Ma'ruf Amin | 55.5% | 11% |
| | **Prabowo** Subianto | Sandiaga Uno | 44.5% | |

*Source*: The author. Based on data from BBC (2014, 2019); Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia (2019); Mubarak (2021).

The legislative election was held on April 9, 2014, and in 2019 the legislative election was held concurrently with the presidential election on April 17, 2019. In the legislative elections, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) demonstrated a consistent performance, maintaining a leading position in both the 2014 and 2019 elections. Gerindra and Golkar also showcased notable popular support in both elections.

Table 11.2. Results of the Legislative Elections 2014 and 2019: House of Representatives (DPR).

| Party | Votes (%) | | Seats | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2014** | **2019** | **2014** | **2019** |
| **Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P)** | 18.95 | 19.33 | 109 | 128 |
| Golkar Party | 14.75 | 12.31 | 91 | 85 |
| **Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra)** | 11.81 | 12.57 | 73 | 78 |
| **Democratic Party (PD)** | 10.18 | 7.77 | 61 | 54 |
| **National Awakening Party (PKB)** | 9.04 | 9.69 | 47 | 58 |
| **National Mandate Party (PAN)** | 7.59 | 6.84 | 49 | 44 |
| **Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)** | 6.79 | 8.21 | 40 | 50 |
| **United Development Party (PPP)** | 6.53 | 4.52 | 39 | 19 |
| **NasDem Party** | 6.72 | 9.05 | 35 | 59 |
| **Hanura Party** | 5.27 | 1.54 | 16 | 0 |

*Source:* The author. Based on data from IPU Parline (2014, 2019a); Jakarta Globe (2019).
*Note*: The remaining votes were split among smaller parties, none of which crossed the electoral threshold to gain seats.

### *b. Philippines*

Since the 1986 People Power Revolution, which marked the end of Ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship and the restoration of democracy in the Philippines, the country's electoral system has undergone significant changes. The 1987 Constitution, ratified under President Corazon Aquino, restored democratic institutions, including regular elections and the separation of powers. (Hernandez, 1988) The Philippines retained a presidential form of government, where the President serves as both the head of state and government. The President is elected by a direct popular vote for a single six-year term and cannot be re-elected. The Vice President is

elected separately from the President, meaning that the two can come from different political parties. The Vice President serves a six-year term and can be re-elected once. Such a plurality system ("first-past-the-post") denotes that the candidate who receives the most votes wins the election, regardless of whether they achieve an absolute majority (more than 50% of the votes). For example, in a multi-candidate race, a candidate could win with 30% of the vote if all other candidates receive less than that. (Croissant, 2022)

The Philippines has a bicameral legislature consisting of the Senate (upper house) and the House of Representatives (lower house). Each chamber has its own electoral system. The Senate is composed of 24 senators elected for six-year terms, with half elected every three years during midterm and general elections. Senators are elected at-large (nationwide), meaning the entire country votes as a single district. Each voter can select up to 12 candidates in an election, and the 12 candidates with the most votes are elected. The House of Representatives includes district representatives and party-list representatives. District representatives are elected by geographical constituencies, with each district electing one representative. The candidate with the most votes in a district wins the seat due to the first-past-the-post system. The party-list system allows voters to select a party rather than an individual candidate. Parties that receive at least 2% of the national vote are eligible for a seat. The total number of party-list representatives is capped at 20% of the total House membership. Parties are allocated seats in proportion to their share of the vote, with each party allowed a maximum of three seats. Members of the House are elected every three years. (Croissant, 2022)

*Electoral Results 2016*

The 2016 Philippine presidential and vice-presidential elections were held on May 9, 2016, as part of the 2016 General Election. Rodrigo Duterte was elected President of the Philippines with 39.01% of the popular vote. Leni Robredo narrowly won the vice-presidential election over Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos with 35.11%, son of former President Ferdinand Marcos.

Table 11.3. Results of the Presidential Elections 2016 (Popular Vote).

| Office | Main Contenders | Party | Results (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **President** | Rodrigo Duterte | PDP-Laban | 39.01% |
| | Mar Roxas | Liberal Party | 23.45% |
| | Grace Poe | Independent | 21.39% |
| | Jejomar Binay | United Nationalist Alliance | 12.73% |
| | Miriam Defensor Santiago | People's Reform Party | 3.42% |
| **Vice-President** | Leni Robredo | Liberal Party | 35.11% |
| | Ferdinand Marcos Jr. | Independent | 34.47% |
| | Alan Peter Cayetano | Independent | 14.38% |
| | Francis Escudero | Independent | 12.01% |
| | Antonio Trillanes | Independent | 2.11% |
| | Gregorio Honasan | United Nationalist Alliance | 1.92% |

*Source*: The author. Based on data from the Congress of the Philippines (2019).

The 2016 election of members to the Senate of the Philippines was held on May 9, 2016. The seats of 12 senators elected in 2010 were filled during this election. The winners in this election joined the winners of the 2013 election to form the 17th Congress of the Philippines. The senators elected in 2013 served until June 30, 2019, while the senators elected in this election served until June 30, 2022. The Senate election was part of the 2016 General Election, where elections for the president of the Philippines, vice president, members of the Philippine House of Representatives, and all local officials, including those from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, were held.

Table 11.4. Results of the 2016 Senate Elections.

| Candidate | Party | % |
|---|---|---|
| Franklin Drilon | Liberal Party | 41.37 |
| Joel Villanueva | Liberal Party | 41.04 |
| Tito Sotto | Nationalist People's Coalition | 38.24 |
| Panfilo Lacson | Independent | 37.63 |
| Dick Gordon | Independent | 37.17 |
| Migz Zubiri | Independent | 35.84 |
| Manny Pacquiao | United Nationalist Alliance | 35.68 |
| Francis Pangilinan | Liberal Party | 35.47 |
| Risa Hontiveros | Akbayan | 35.38 |
| Win Gatchalian | Nationalist People's Coalition | 33.25 |
| Ralph Recto | Liberal Party | 31.73 |
| Leila de Lima | Liberal Party | 31.45 |

*Source*: The author. Based on data from Rappler (2016).

The 2016 Philippine House of Representatives elections were held on May 9, 2016. The winning candidates comprise the House's delegation in the 17th Congress of the Philippines that served from June 30, 2016, to June 30, 2019. The House of Representatives elections were part of the 2016 General Election, where elections for President, Vice President, Senators, and all local officials, including those from the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, were also held.

The Philippines uses parallel voting in its lower house elections. There are 297 seats in the House; 238 of these are district representatives, and 59 are party-list representatives. In total, there is one party-list representative elected for every four district representatives. District representatives are elected under the plurality voting system from single-member districts. Party-list representatives are elected via the nationwide vote with a 2% "soft" election threshold with a 3-seat cap. The party in the party-list election with the most votes usually wins three seats, the other parties with more than 2% of the vote two seats, and the parties with less than 2% of the vote winning a seat each if the 20% quota is not met.

Table 11.5. Results of the 2016 House of Representatives Elections.

| | District representatives | |
|---|---|---|
| **Party** | **Votes (%)** | **Seats** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Liberal | 41.72 | 115 |
| NPC | 17.04 | 42 |
| NUP | 9.67 | 23 |
| Nacionalista | 9.42 | 24 |
| UNA | 6.62 | 11 |
| Others | 12.41 | 22 |
| **Party-list representatives** | | |
| Ako Bicol | 5.14 | 3 |
| Gabriela | 4.22 | 2 |
| 1-Pacman | 4.05 | 2 |
| ACT Teachers | 3.65 | 2 |
| Senior Citizens | 3.05 | 2 |
| KABAYAN | 2.60 | 2 |
| Agri-Agra | 2.58 | 2 |
| PBA | 2.41 | 2 |
| Buhay | 2.35 | 2 |
| Aboo | 2.26 | 2 |
| Anak Mindanao | 2.18 | 2 |
| Coop-NATCCO | 2.07 | 2 |
| Others | 41.45 | 34 |

*Source:* The author. Based on data from Halalan (2016); Philstar Global (2016); Croissant (2022).
*Notes:* Main results.

*Electoral Results: Midterms 2019*

The 2019 Philippine General Election, held on May 13, 2019, was a midterm election that took place halfway through President Rodrigo Duterte's term. The 2019 election of members to the Senate of the Philippines was held on May 13, 2019. The seats of 12 senators elected in 2013 were contested during this election, and the senators that were elected in this election serve up to June 30, 2025. The winners in this election joined the winners of the 2016 election to form the 18th Congress of the Philippines. The senators elected in 2016 served until June 30, 2022. The Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP–Laban), the ruling party headed by President Rodrigo Duterte, led its own administration coalition, the *Hugpong ng Pagbabago*. The Senate election was held concurrently with elections to the House of Representatives and local officials. *Hugpong ng Pagbabago* won overwhelmingly, while the main opposition coalition, *Otso Diretso*, was not able to win any seats in the Senate. *Hugpong* won 9 seats, while the Nationalist People's Coalition, United Nationalist Alliance, and an independent candidate won 1 seat each.

Table 11.6. Results of the 2019 elections: Senate

| **Candidate** | **Party** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Cynthia Villar | Nacionalista Party | 53.46 |
| Grace Poe | Independent | 46.58 |
| Bong Go | PDP-Laban | 43.68 |
| Pia Cayetano | Nacionalista Party | 41.84 |
| Ronald dela Rosa | PDP-Laban | 40.18 |
| Sonny Angara | Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino | 38.40 |
| Lito Lapid | Nationalist People's Coalition | 35.87 |
| Imee Marcos | Nactionalista Party | 33.58 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Francis Tolentino | PDP-Laban | 32.79 |
| Koko Pimentel | PDP-Laban | 31.01 |
| Bong Revilla | Lakas-CMD | 30.92 |
| Nancy Binay | United Nationalist Alliance | 30.67 |

*Source:* COMELEC (2019).

The 2019 Philippine House of Representatives elections were held on May 13, 2019. The pro-Duterte parties overwhelmingly won most of the seats. Pro-Duterte party-list ACT-CIS emerged as the topnotches in the party-list election.

Table 11.7. Results of the 2019 elections: House of Representatives

| **District representatives** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Party** | **Vote (%)** | **Seats** |
| Liberal | 31.22 | 82 |
| Nacionalista | 16.10 | 42 |
| NPC | 14.31 | 37 |
| NUP | 9.51 | 25 |
| Liberal | 5.73 | 18 |
| Lakas | 5.11 | 12 |
| Others | 15.11 | 27 |
| **Party-list representatives** | | |
| ACT-CIS | 9.51 | 3 |
| Bayan Muna | 4.01 | 3 |
| Ako Bikol | 3.76 | 2 |
| CIBAC | 3.33 | 2 |
| Ang Probinsyano | 2.76 | 2 |
| 1-PACMAN | 2.56 | 2 |
| MARINO | 2.44 | 2 |
| Probinsyano Ako | 2.26 | 2 |
| Others | 46.48 | 43 |

*Source:* The author. Based on data from COMELEC (2019b, c), IPU Parline (2019b).

### *c. Thailand*

Between 1997 and 2006, Thailand operated under a mixed-member electoral system that was introduced by the 1997 Constitution. This system aimed to improve representation and reduce corruption, addressing issues prevalent in earlier political systems. The election of the Prime Minister in Thailand involves both parliamentary and royal processes. The Prime Minister is elected by the members of the House of Representatives. After general elections, the newly elected House convenes to select the Prime Minister. The candidate for Prime Minister typically comes from the political party or coalition that holds the majority of seats in the House of Representatives. A majority vote (more than 50%) in the House is required to elect the Prime Minister. If no candidate secures a majority, further rounds of voting are held until a candidate receives sufficient support. After the House of Representatives votes to elect a Prime Minister, the candidate's name is submitted to the King of Thailand. The King's role is largely ceremonial in this context, and the candidate elected by the House is typically appointed as Prime Minister without issue. The official appointment by the King formally confirms the individual as the Prime Minister of Thailand. The Prime Minister serves a term that corresponds with the term of the House of Representatives, typically four years unless the House is dissolved early, which would lead to new elections and potentially a new Prime Minister. The Prime Minister can be

removed from office by a vote of no confidence in the House of Representatives, by resignation, or by other constitutional means. (Harding and Leyland, 2010; Croissant, 2022; Kokpol, 2002)

Thailand's legislature, known as the National Assembly, consists of two houses: the House of Representatives (lower house) and the Senate (upper house). The House is composed of 500 members, elected through a mixed-member system that combines first-past-the-post (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR). Members of the House of Representatives in Thailand, under the 1997 Constitution, served a term of four years. However, their time in office could be shorter if the House was dissolved before the end of the term. The Prime Minister had the authority to send a request to the King to dissolve the House of Representatives, leading to early general elections. 400 of these seats were elected through FPTP in single-member constituencies. Voters in each constituency selected one candidate, and the candidate with the most votes won. The remaining 100 seats were filled through a party-list proportional representation system. Thailand was divided into 8 regions, and voters cast a separate vote for a party. Seats were allocated to parties based on the proportion of votes they received nationwide, but within each region. The Senate consists of 200 members. Senators were elected directly by the people, a significant change from the previous systems where senators were often appointed. Each province in Thailand elected a number of senators based on its population size. This proportional representation ensured that more populous provinces had more senators, while less populous provinces had fewer. Senators were required to run as independents, meaning they could not be affiliated with any political party. This was intended to ensure that the Senate remained a non-partisan body focused on legislative oversight rather than political competition. Senators served a term of six years. (Croissant, 2022; Croissant and Pojar, 2005; Kokpol, 2002)

*Election Results 2001*

General elections were held in Thailand on 6 January 2001 to elect the 500 seats of the House of Representatives. Following the 1997 Constitution, the House of Representatives was composed of 400 members elected from single-member constituencies and 100 elected from national party lists on a proportional basis. The *Thai Rak Thai* (TRT) party, co-founded and led by Thaksin Shinawatra, won the largest number of votes and 248 of the 500 seats on a populist platform of economic growth and anti-corruption. Following the elections, it gained a parliamentary majority by merging with the New Aspiration Party, giving it 286 seats. A coalition government was formed with the Thai Nation Party. The Democrat Party, which had run on a platform supporting neoliberal, IMF-backed economic reforms, went into the opposition with the National Development Party.

Table 11.8. Electoral Results: House of Representatives 2001

| Party | Vote (%) | Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Thai Rak Thai | 29.91 | 248 |
| Democrat | 25.86 | 128 |
| New Aspiration | 6.89 | 36 |
| National Development | 6.05 | 29 |
| Chart Thai | 5.23 | 41 |
| Seritham | 2.84 | 14 |
| Thai Motherland | 2.09 | 1 |
| People's | 1.24 | 2 |
| Social Action | 0.16 | 1 |

*Source*: The author. Based on Nelson (2002).

*Election Results 2005*

General elections were held in Thailand on 6 February 2005. The result was a landslide victory for the Thai Rak Thai party of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, winning 377 of the 500 seats in the House of Representatives, with its former coalition partner, the Chart Thai Party, taking 25 seats. The opposition Democrat Party of Thailand won only 96 seats, and the newly formed Mahachon Party took two seats.

Table 11.9. Electoral Results: House of Representatives 2005

| Party | Vote (%) | Seats |
|---|---|---|
| Thai Rak Thai | 60.48 | 377 |
| Democrat | 22.96 | 96 |
| Chart Thai | 6.56 | 25 |
| Mahachon Party | 4.29 | 2 |

*Source*: Nelson (2008); Inter-parliamentary Union (n.d)

## Bibliography


ABS CBN. (2016). "Officially winners: Comelec proclaims 12 elected Senators." *ABC CBN*, 19 May 2016, online: https://www.abs-cbn.com/halalan2016/nation/05/19/16/officially-winners-comelec-proclaims-12-elected-senators.

Asia Electoral Resource Center (AERC). (2024). "Indonesia." *AERC*, online: https://aerc.anfrel.org/country/indonesia/.

Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL). (2019). *Media Reporting of Elections in Asia. Issues, Challenges and Lessons*. Bangkok, Thailand: ANFREL. https://anfrel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ANFREL_Media-Reporting-of-Elections-in-Asia_Issues-Challenges-and-Lessons.pdf.

Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL). (2024). *Asian Electoral Review. Advancing Electoral Democracy Through Electoral Reforms*. Bangkok, Thailand: ANFREL. https://anfrel.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/AER-ANFREL-2024_online-F-24Jan2024-1.pdf.

BBC. (2014). "Joko Widodo wins Indonesia presidential election." *BBC*, 22 July 2014, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28415536.

BBC. (2019). "Indonesia election: Joko Widodo re-elected as president." *BBC*, 21 May 2019, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48331879.

Butt, S., & Siregar, F. (2021). Multilayered Oversight: Electoral Administration in Indonesia. *Asian Journal of Comparative Law*, *16*(S1), S121–S135. doi:10.1017/asjcl.2021.32.
Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia. (2019). "Jokowi-Ma'ruf Wins Election: Election Commission." *Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia*, 21 May 2019, online: https://setkab.go.id/en/jokowi-maruf-wins-election-election-commission/.
COMELEC. (2019a). "Senatorial Summary Statement of Votes (by Rank)." *Comelec.gov.ph,* online: https://comelec.gov.ph/?r=2019NLE/ElectionResults_/SenatorialSummaryStatementofVotes.
COMELEC. (2019b). "Election Records and Statistics Department. Number of Elected Candidates by Party Affiliation Per Elective Position, by Sex." *Comelec.gov.ph,* online: https://comelec.gov.ph/php-tpls-attachments/2019NLE/Statistics/Elected_Candidates_by_Party_Affiliation.pdf.
COMELEC. (2019c). "Party List Canvass Report (By Rank)." *Comelec.gov.ph,* online: https://comelec.gov.ph/?r=2019NLE/ElectionResults_/PartyListCanvassReport.
Congress of the Philippines. (2016). *Congress of the Philippines. Joint Public Session. Resolution of Both Houses No. 1.* Metro Manila: Republic of the Philippines. http://legacy.senate.gov.ph/16th_congress/resolutions/joint%20public%20session%20res%20both%20houses%20no.1.pdf.
Croissant, A. (2022). *Comparative Politics of Southeast Asia. An Introduction to Governments and Political Regimes, second edition*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
Halalan. (2016). "Halalan 2016 – Party-List." *2016halalanresults.abs-cbn.com*, online: https://2016halalanresults.abs-cbn.com/party-list.html.
Harding, A., & Leyland, P. (2010). Constitutional Design in Thailand: The Management of Electoral Process in an Emergent Democracy. *Journal of Parliamentary and Political Law*, *4*(2), 299-321.
Hernandez, C. G. (1988). The Philippines in 1987: Challenges of Redemocratization. *Asian Survey*, *28*(2), 229–241. https://doi.org/10.2307/2644824.
International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). (2024). "Indonesia." *Ifes.org*, online: https://www.ifes.org/indonesia.
Inter-parliamentary Union (n.D.). "Thailand. Elections Held in 2005." *Ipu.org*, online: http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2311_05.htm.
IPU Parline. (2014). „Indonesia. House of Representatives – 2014." *Data.ipu.org*, online: https://data.ipu.org/parliament/ID/ID-LC01/election/ID-LC01-E20140409/.
IPU Parline. (2019a). "Indonesia. House of Representatives – 2019." *Data.ipu.org*, online: https://data.ipu.org/parliament/ID/ID-LC01/election/ID-LC01-E20190417/.
IPU Parline. (2019b). "Philippines: House of Representatives – 2019." *Data.ipu.org,* online: https://data.ipu.org/parliament/PH/PH-LC01/election/PH-LC01-E20190513/.
Jakarta Globe. (2019). "Jokowi Wins Re-Election, PDI-P Wins Most Seats." *Jakarta Globe*, 21 May 2019, online: https://jakartaglobe.id/context/jokowi-wins-reelection-pdip-wins-most-seats.
Kokpol, O. (2002). Electoral Politics in Thailand. In A. Croissant & M. John (eds.), *Electoral Politics in Southeast & East Asia*, pp. 277-321. Singapore: FES.
Nelson, M. H. (2002). Thailand's House Elections of 6 January 2001: Thaksin's Landslide Victory and Subsequent Narrow Escape. In M.H. Nelson (ed.), *Thailand's New Politics: KPI Yearbook 2001*, 283-441. Nonthaburi and Bangkok: King Prajadhipok's Institute and White Lotus Press.
Nelson, H. (2008). Thaksin's 2005 Electoral Triumph: Looking Back From the Election in 2007. *Working Paper Series, 98*(2008). Hong Kong: City University Hong Kong. https://www.newmandala.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/thaksins-triumph.pdf.
PhilStar. (2016). "Comelec proclaims 46 winning party-lists." *PhilStar*, 19 May 2016, online: https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/05/19/1584908/comelec-proclaims-46-winning-party-list.
Rappler. (2016). "Meet PH's 12 new senators." *Rappler*, 19 May 2016, online: https://www.rappler.com/philippines/elections/133540-senators-final-official-tally-proclamation/.
Sulistyo, H. (2002). "Electoral Politics in Indonesia: A Hard Way to Democracy." In: A. Croissant, A. Bruns, & M. John (eds.), *Electoral Politics in Southeast & East Asia*, pp. 75-100. Singapore: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.