

Call for Papers for a Special Issue
**Authoritarianism Reloaded? – Democratic Governance in Indonesia and
Timor-Leste**

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Photo: Leona Pröpper

While Timor-Leste struggles with the realisation of democratic governance some 20 years after independence, numerous indicators point to the decline of democracy in Indonesia.

The democratisation process in **Indonesia** was initially promising. Political reforms led to the establishment of a multi-party system, the removal of the military from parliament and political institutions, freedom of the press and decentralisation of state administrative authorities. However, many observers argue that the democratisation process has not necessarily led to sustainable changes concerning authoritarian power structures nurtured during the military regime.

The stagnation of the democratisation process was already one of the major challenges for the country before Joko Widodo's ("Jokowi") became president in 2014 for the first time. However, at least since the last quarter of his first term in office, there has been a clear decline in democratic governance and illiberal tendencies are intensifying. This is expressed in a number of developments and measures that weaken democratic procedures and institutions, restrict citizens' rights, reduce political transparency and strengthen or further legitimise the political influence of established (informal) alliances consisting of a triad of politics, business and the military. In the process, legal instruments are increasingly used that undermine the rule of law itself.

The protection of citizens' rights is subject to volatility, which is strongly influenced by regional circumstances and/or financial or (power) political interests. While the entanglement of private wealth and political power is reflected by growing alliances between powerful political and economic elites at the local level, despite the decentralisation reform introduced in 1999, individual legal measures aim at weakening

local participation rights. This includes both the legislative and intermediary levels as well as the civil society level.

The political, economic and social influence of new and old oligarchies as well as actors in the executive branch, especially members of the military, is on the rise. The party and campaign financing system is one of the main sources of unabated high levels of political corruption and limited participation opportunities for women and ethnically marginalised groups. It is not uncommon for transparency and citizen participation obligations, such as those stipulated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Indonesia is a signatory, to be circumvented with regard to legislative projects or infrastructure and economic development projects. The most recent and prominent example, both in terms of transparent governance and in terms of the centralisation of power and the undermining of democratic elements in various areas of legislation, is the so-called "Omnibus Law on Job Creation".

Meanwhile, about 20 years after independence, the young country of **Timor-Leste** still faces unresolved challenges in the areas of justice and access to justice, effective local governance, corruption, effective gender equality, media freedom and human rights. Abuse of office and nepotism also characterise governance in Timor-Leste. The political system is dominated by patronage and lack of accountability. The economy's heavy dependence on government spending fosters nepotism. At the same time, the judiciary is still not independent and corruption is widespread. This is not least because anti-corruption agencies lack sufficient funding to operate effectively. The 2017 elections did not lead to a stable government formation, which is why new elections were held in 2018. The ensuing initially relatively stable situation however, yielded a political stalemate between the government and the president, first over the distribution of power and then over the appointment of cabinet members. This stalemate had serious implications for budget negotiations and the effectiveness of public services in the first quarter of 2019 and onwards.

Legal regulations on land and property ownership remain unclear. Conflicting laws from the Portuguese, Indonesian and post-independence eras exacerbate the uncertainty.

Pandemic & Authoritarianism

Worldwide, the pandemic exacerbates existing inequalities and strengthens authoritarian tendencies. The fact that the Corona pandemic in both countries continues to have a (negative) impact on the realisation of democratic governance and encourages authoritarian tendencies is evident from the very beginning.

Even before the pandemic, the Indonesian government launched a number of legislative projects with an authoritarian character and increasingly acted through decrees, which, moreover, often violated existing law. In the wake of the Covid crisis, there is a growing trend to govern by decree, excluding parliamentary oversight, and to introduce controversial legislation in disregard of parliamentary procedures and beyond civil society participation.

In both countries, access to justice and essential public services is further impeded.

For this issue, we invite experts and civil society actors working for democracy to share their views, analysis and insights on how current political developments in Indonesia and Timor-Leste affect democracy and civil society.

While Timor-Leste hardly receives international public or political attention, Indonesia is in the political and economic limelight. The German Federal Government and the European Union are set on expanding economic and political relations with Indonesia. German companies in particular, are keen to strengthen business-ties and expand their business activities in Indonesia. Issues of democratic governance and Human

Rights however, are hardly taken into account in multi- or bilateral negotiations.

The journal aims to provide in depth knowledge as well as critical analysis and perspectives for action rooted in regional analysis, views and experiences. Directed at German/EU based politicians as well as organisations that work in the fields of human rights and south-north relations, activists and human rights defenders the journal will be distributed in German, and if possible, in English and free of charge in print and online.

The Guiding questions of this special issue are

- What are the current challenges to democracy?
- Which measures and domestic policy developments exhibit authoritarian tendencies or promote them and in what ways do they do so?
- How do existing laws and planned legal reforms as well as current government policies affect democracy and civil society?

Contributions touching on any of the following topics are as welcome as own suggestions.

1. State & Economy

- a) Corruption & Transparency
- b) Business regulation
- c) Rules and mechanisms to ensure economic participation opportunities for the population
- d) Relationship between the executive, especially the military and the economy

2. Law & Justice

- a) The right to equal protection under the law
- b) Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention
- c) The right to a fair trial
- d) Legal certainty
- e) Mechanisms and institutions that guarantee the right to life, liberty and security

3. State & Gender

- a) Mechanisms and normative frameworks to combat political (sexualised) violence against women and LGBTIQ
- b) Mechanisms and normative frameworks for gender equality for women and LGBTIQ in the workplace
- c) Political participation of women
- d) Legal and judicial equality for women and LGBTIQ

4. State, Government & Civil Society

- a) Enabling and providing access to citizen participation processes
- b) Free activity and participation of trade unions, Human rights and environmental defenders
- c) Access to information on government action (elections, laws, legislative initiatives)
- d) Opportunities for political participation for civil society

5. State and Media

- a) Independent media and freedom of information
- b) Free access to information for all citizens

c) Freedom of association, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly

Contributions from all fields are welcome. We encourage everybody, and especially colleagues from Indonesia and Timor-Leste as well as female and diverse colleagues to express their interest until **6th June 2021** preferably with a preliminary title and/or a short outline no more than 200 words in length to Christine Holike at watchindonesia@watchindonesia.de (you will be notified about the proceedings shortly after). Contributions in Bahasa Indonesia, English and German are welcome. To ensure a good quality of the translations, we kindly ask completed manuscripts in Bahasa Indonesia and English to be handed in by **10th August 2021**. The free journal will be published and distributed in September 2021.

STYLE GUIDELINES

The articles should consist of a **maximum of 6 pages or 10.000 signs (including spaces)** which encompass the main text, abstract, tables, photos and author's short biography and, if deemed necessary, references. Please make sure that all tables, graphs, and illustrations are appropriately scaled and legible; larger elements should be accounted for accordingly with respect to word count. Additional photos exceeding this limit are welcome. Please add the sources of the pictures, graphs, tables.

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