revolutionary reflections | reformasi dikorupsi: Indonesia under Jokowi

By Frans Ari Prasetyo - 10 April 2020

As Indonesia's increasingly authoritarian populist president Jokowi began his second term in autumn 2019, he finds himself confronted by a new generation radicalised by the converging crises of militarism, agrarian dispossession, environmental destruction and corruption. As Frans Ari Prasetyo describes, these crises converged at the time of last September’s global climate strike. Photos by author.

See also Frans Ari Prasetyo's earlier article in the revolutionary reflections series on the legacies of the 1955 Asian-African Conference in contemporary Bandung.

In the last two decades, Indonesia – a multiethnic country with 17,000 islands, 270 million citizens, 98,000 kilometers of coastline – has gone through extraordinary events, separatist and religious conflicts, tsunamis and earthquakes, financial crises, the end of the 32-year authoritarian regime, and a much-praised democratic transition. The fall of Suharto’s New Order Regime in May 1998 promised a democratic opening up and the removal of the authoritarian and militarist features of the old regime. Emerging from the ashes of authoritarianism, Indonesia has built a trusted and resilient electoral system over the past 20 years. But many in Indonesia now feel that the promise of reform has been betrayed: reformasi dikorupsi ('Reform Corrupted'). This article charts the resurgence of authoritarianism in Indonesia and the background to four convergent protest movements that may yet reshape Indonesian politics once again.

Reformasi

For 32 years (1967-98), Indonesia was ruled by an authoritarian-military regime, known as the New Order Regime (Orde Baru), led by General Suharto. Reformasi (Reform) is the name given to the movement that brought him down in 1998 and the period that followed. Reformasi created a new political landscape for Indonesia’s civilian population. Following the 1999 election, a wide range of democratic reforms were implemented. The role of the military in the civilian sphere was eliminated, and freedom of the press and civil expression was guaranteed. Power was decentralized. The Anti-Corruption Commission (KPK-Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi) began to combat the corruption that had become the hallmark of Suharto’s New Order Regime.
However, the progress of reformasi then began to stall. Increasingly, it seems that the clowns may be different, but the circus remains the same. The military has begun to re-assert its presence within state institutions, and political parties have become increasingly dominated by an oligarchic elite. Any pretence that these activities are the seeds of the new inside the shell of the old is a delusion. While there has been no complete return to the authoritarianism of the Suharto era, we are witnessing the creation of the kind of hybrid regime usefully described as ‘competitive authoritarianism’.[1] Elections have been competitive, the country boasts a vibrant civil society, and the press enjoys far more freedom than in most Asian states. This situation has been promoted, driven, encouraged and enjoyed by elites and parties who want to continue to dominate politics in Indonesia.

Competitive authoritarianism in these regime situation are diminished forms of authoritarianism, as they rely on formal democratic institutions as means of obtaining and exercising political authority, but they still violate the basic principles of a democracy. The presidential election in April 2019 vote was the fifth national legislative election and the fourth direct presidential election since 1998. Electoral practice since the reformasi era, especially in the 2014 election year, revealed some of the threats to democracy: the mobilisation of religious tensions, oligarchy, clientalism, and party cartelisation. These vulnerabilities are also the origin of authoritarian, sectarian populism and the restriction of civil liberty. The album Memobilisasi Kemuakan (‘Mobilize the weariness/disgust’) that appeared in the underground scene of Bandung in 2014 expressed frustration with these tendencies.[2] This situation continued in the 2019 elections.

**Jokowi re-elected**

The election of Jokowi, a political outsider, as president in 2014 was a high point for those tracking Indonesia’s democratic development. Joko Widodo (b. 1961), known as ‘Jokowi’, was elected through a democratic process. His supporters had high hopes, as he came from a working class background, and not from the political establishment. His political career was launched by the PDI-P (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan – ‘Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle’) in the local executive election for the small town of Solo (Surakarta) in Central Java in 2005. His success as mayor won him popular support, which led him to the centre of political power, when he was elected Governor of Jakarta in 2012. Jokowi’s election reflected the success of decentralization in the post-Suharto era, where local executive leaders could be adopted by parties supported by oligarchs and predatory business elites and promoted on the national level as representatives of ‘the people’.

The 2014 presidential election became the stage in which Indonesia’s post-Suharto drama played out. This election is considered to have represented the voice of the people after reformasi, because of the popularity of figures such as Jokowi, regardless of the interests and parties backing them. The election seemed to break the political chain of oligarch and patron-client relations, and embody civilian rule, just as the 1999 election had done. But while Jokowi may appear to represent ordinary people, in reality he serves oligarchic capitalist interests in neoliberal Indonesia.

Jokowi won the 2014 and 2019 election on a populist platform. In his first period, 2014-19, his developmentalist, performance-minded policies damaged the quality of Indonesia’s democracy. His government prioritised economic growth and infrastructure projects over any concern for human rights, civil society or social protection. Inequality is a contentious political issue in Indonesia. In 2019, as in 2014, Jokowi spoke routinely about how his welfare and land redistribution schemes could close the gap between rich and poor. I have written before on this site about the fake land reforms of his first term (land reform ‘Jokowi style’): in 2019, he promised to continue them.[3]

In his second election in 2019, Jokowi showed his authoritarian and militaristic style. He needed the support of the military, but also wanted to mobilise conservative populism on his side, increasingly emphasising his religious credentials. The strategy he chose to deal with
political opponents can be seen from his appointment of his electoral opponent the former New Order General Prabowo as Minister of Defence, and then his massive expansion of the military budget. Following a global trend, as seen in Trump or Bolsonaro, Jokowi combines popular practices, populism and authoritarian symbols. This has given rise to what is sometimes known as the ‘Neo-New Order’.

**Resistance**

In the transition period, between the presidential election (April 2019) and Jokowi’s inauguration (October 2019), Indonesia experienced a democratic and political upheaval that brought Jokowi – a incumbent president and then presidential candidate – come under significant public pressure. A wave of protests and demonstrations emerged in many cities in Indonesia with various problems and interests.

The causes are a gradual weakening of critical institutions such as the KPK anti-corruption agency, the judicial system and a gradual erosion of political norms. The mainstream press represents the priorities of its own oligarchy. In the meantime, militarism has returned to the public sphere of politics, reminiscent of the New Order era. Democratization in post-Suharto due to the genuinely reformist party or political coalition, predatory political-business interests nurtured under Suharto’s New Order managed to capture the new political and economic regimes.

The demise of Suharto’s New Order regime did not end the rampant corruption and internal mismanagement in the country’s bureaucracy. The predatory political-business interests nurtured under the New Order managed to reconstitute and reorganize themselves successfully within the new political and economic regimes, known as ‘Jokowinomics’. Corruption and the dominance of a political and business oligarchy survives not only because the political party-business interests nurtured under the New Order managed to capture the new political vehicles and institutions. Corruption, internal mismanagement and oligarchy continue to characterize the bureaucracy in the country as a whole. Meanwhile, further political turmoil is provoked by militarism in Papua, as explained below.

This tension between resilient elections and defective democracy partly reflects the political compromises of *reformasi*, which ended the Suharto regime and kick-started democratisation. The tension is embodied in Jokowi who won power because of competitive elections but has presided over a period of democratic backsliding. Jokowi has allowed militarism to return and has condemned the key *reformasi* institution of the KPK to a slow death through a planned revision to the anti-corruption law. Law enforcement agencies and the military have been emboldened by the expanding political roles given to them under Jokowi.

During the post-presidential government transition, there were four large-scale public actions intertwined in a social movement against the state which involved the role of students in Indonesia. This is the largest student action after the student action that occurred in 1998 which resulted in reform. Because it is closely related to the revision of the corruption bill, the student action this time is also known as the ‘*reformasi dikorupsi*’.

*Reformasi dikorupsi* recalls the other radicals in 1998–before *reformasi*, who promoted non-hierarchical self-organization, direct action of working class and poor people, include student, against the state. The revival of this movement again sees students at the core of radical protest. By direct action, we mean any activity undertaken individually and/or collectively outside-against-without the use of elected or self-appointed representatives, especially those in government. We are in a situation where we do not consider legality and parliamentarianism to be worthwhile strategic or tactical principles.

**Militarism in Papua**
The first social movement was provoked by militarism in Papua. Inequality, racism, fascism, colonialism and human rights violation have structure daily conflicts in Papua ever since its integration into Indonesia in 1963. Jokowi’s developmentalist government has carried out an extensive expansion of infrastructure in Papua to reduce conflicts and produce a good political image. However, both before and after the 2019 presidential election, tensions in Papua increased and led to riots, arrests of activists and armed conflict. In the last nine months, in the refugee camps caused by the conflict in Nduga-Papua, 184 indigenous people from Nduga have died, 41 of whom are children.

The Indonesian government responded through military operations, and the Ministry of Defence and Security cut off Papuans’ access to electricity and the internet. However, despite the government’s efforts, the situation in Papua is being met with political solidarity across Indonesia and the world. Students that come from Papua live in many cities across Indonesia, including in Bandung, where they have staged many peaceful protests and solidarity actions related to the situation in Papua. These have gained widespread public attention despite the threat of repression from the authorities on charges of subversion against the state. These actions began in August 2019 and continued until the end of September. They then began to subside slightly following repression by the police and military, and the sending of the army into Papua. Many Papuan activists have been arrested without cause, and remain in detention until now.

The current militarist policies in Papua are reminiscent of New Order policies in Timor Leste (East Timor). During the New Order, the Indonesian National Armed Forces or ABRI (Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia) had a very large role in the imposition of state security and order, controlling the government and regulating the country. This was justified according to the doctrine of dwifungsi (‘dual function’).[4] After the 1998 reformasi, the dwifungsi function was abolished, and ABRI was separated into the Indonesian National Military or TNI (Tentara Nasional Indonesia) and the Indonesian National Police-POLRI (Kepolisian Negara Republik Indonesia).

In 2019 Jokowi’s Government issued Presidential Regulation No. 37 on the Functional Position of the TNI which indirectly revived the dwifungsi ABRI, justifying the military practices that occur in Papua. The emergence of this regulation also triggered a wave of protests related to militarism policies in Indonesia under the Jokowi government—in addition to military practices that occurred in Papua.

Further protests were sparked by the 2019 draft state budget that Jokowi drew up with the House of Representatives or DPR (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat). The Ministry of Defence, which in fact covers the military (TNI) gets the most public money in a total of 106.6 trillion rupiah (ca. £5.6 bn), while the POLRI ranked third with 76.90 trillion rupiah (ca. £3.8 bn). Compare that with the Ministry of Social Affairs, which receives only 59.34 trillion rupiah (ca. £2.9 bn) and the Ministry of Education, which receives only 39.22 trillion rupiah (ca. £1.9 bn). The military budget expanded constantly across Jokowi’s first period of administration, and that is continuing in his second administration. Naturally, students protested against both state policies and the bloated funding of the military and the police. Even after the repression of the protests and the arrest of activists, the protests continue to this day, even if on a smaller scale.

**Indonesia burning**

The second movement related to the environment crisis. Forest and peatland fires became a politico-ecological problem for Jokowi at the transition between his first and second period. In his first period, there were forest fires every year, especially in Sumatra and Kalimantan, with a total land area of 4.08 million hectares.[5] However, there were two forest fires that led to political turbulence for Jokowi’s government. The first was in 2015: this was because of its scale, as the biggest fire in the five years of Jokowi’s first period. The second was 2019,
because of its timing, following a presidential election that had consumed a biggest social, political and logistical costs in post-reformation era.

In 2015, an area of Indonesian forest and land of 2.6 million ha burned: that is equal to 32 times the area of the capital city of Jakarta. The 2015 fires, the majority of which were in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Papua, resulted in 100,300 deaths. In 2019, according to data from the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) 328,724 ha of forest and peatland burned. Of the forest areas and peatlands that burned during the first period of Jokowi’s government, 80% were turned into oil palm plantations.

The Jokowi government has promoted aggressive investment in the palm oil industry, which it describes as its ‘golden child’ or ‘golden commodity’. It deliberately stimulates land demand to open new oil palm plantations. It is responding to the desire for technological fixes to solve capitalism’s environmental crisis, such as substituting energy from fossil fuels with biofuels. Biofuel technology is supplied by the palm oil industry, which requires land expansion, leading to increased demand for land and deforestation through burning forests. The smoke from the fire that covers Indonesia is the smoke of capitalist crisis. The capital accumulation scheme is determined by the conversion of forest land together with deforestation and climate change. What is happening in Sumatra, Kalimantan and Papua is nothing less than systematic genocide and ecocide.

These fires sharpened environmental criticisms of the Jokowi Government. On 20 September 2019, coinciding with the pre-inauguration transition period in Indonesia, there were Climate Strike demonstration in 163 countries worldwide with various taglines, such as Global Strike 4 Climate or Youth Strike 4 Climate Action. In Bandung, the tagline ‘Bandung Climate Strike’ was used by people from a whole range of backgrounds, raising various demands: stop burning forest, stop palm oil plantation expansion, punish the company that ignites the forest fires, stop the construction of a coal power station in West Java. For as long as Indonesian political industries are sustained by palm oil, there is no hope that smoke disaster from burning forest will cease; and for as long as coal power station construction permissions are still granted by the government, there is no hope that coal mining will be stopped.

Agrarian resistance
The third movement relates to the agrarian crisis. In his first term, Jokowi announced an initiative to institute agrarian reforms in accordance with Indonesia's post-independence, pre-Suharto era Basic Agrarian Law of 1960. In 2018, alongside with Global Peasant Day and Global Land Forum in Bandung,[7], the government enacted Presidential Regulation No. 86/2018 on Agrarian Reform with much fanfare. While Jokowi’s Agrarian Reform clothed its programme of land certification in populist rhetoric, in practice, it was designed to create financialised land markets. However, it was met with resistance once again. The People’s Alliance Against Eviction or ARAP (Aliansi Rakyat Anti Penggusuran), together with other global citizens, took up the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist spirit of the 1955 Bandung Declaration of Asia-Africa Conference. With their statement: ‘Let a New World be born in Bandung for a genuine land reform, not land grabs!’, ARAP affirmed the ten principles of their struggle against land grabs, evictions, and the neoliberal global land policies.[8]

The genuine Agrarian Reform was a revolution of agrarian structure to redistribute land and access from elites and oligarch, which controlled a large portion of Indonesian land. The majority of land-use in Indonesia is for palm oil plantations and coal mines. Those two commodities aren’t environmentally friendly but enjoy huge support from Jokowi’s Government. Agrarian Reform then targeted land in the cities. Much of the land area of Indonesia’s cities is already controlled by property tycoons, leading to gentrification, depriving people of access to housing, and attacking the right to the city.

In 17 April 2019, on International Peasant Day, people took to the streets in Bandung in protest against the Indonesian government. In addition to land justice and the fate of farmers, these protests were also provoked by the issuance of the draft of the Land Bill. Dianto Bachriadi from ARC (Agrarian Resources Center)-Bandung explained why this Land Bill was so problematic in a speech he gave at the Festival Kampung Kota II (FKK II) event in Tamansari Village in Bandung.[9] He said that Land bill must be rejected because:

1. It denies the basic constitution of the Indonesian state in Article 33 paragraph 3 of the 1945 Constitution concerning Indonesian citizens’ rights to natural resources including land.
2. It twists the mandates of the Basic Agrarian Law 1960—which should have been the main basis in agrarian reform for peoples, but this to the interests of investors and capital.
3. It revives the character of colonial legislation.
4. It legalises land ownership and large-scale ownership by elites and financiers.
5. It legalises monopolies on agrarian resources and people’s sources of livelihood.
6. It enables criminalization of people who refuse evictions.

In the context of Peasant Day 2020, policies about land—which closely related to the farmers, will make a lot of difficulties for farmers in accessing the lands, even the tilled land (by farmers of course) will be increasingly vulnerable to eviction threats. The Agrarian Reform Presidential Regulation did indeed emerge to reinforce Land bill. Moreover, it even made clear the concentration of land, land banking, land grabbing and investment-friendly financialization.

In his first administration, Jokowi enacted 16 economic deregulation and investment liberalization packages. At the beginning of his second period, Jokowi has introduced or amended 72 bills, supposedly to clear away obstacles for investment. These included the bill on environment and agrarian tenure. This will inevitably mean that land concentration and environmental degradation will increase. This situation further emphasizes how investors and oligarchs have great power in exploiting natural resources such as land, while changing public policies in their favour as part of their capital accumulation strategies in this republic. Meanwhile land-users – farmers and the urban poor – are impoverished by the system, as the state is ever more biased towards the interests of capital. And once impoverished, the citizens are even easier to dispossess, because development belongs to the rich.
The agrarian movement has produced several satirical slogans: for example, the slogan *Negara kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) became *Negara Kesatuan Republik Investor* (Unitary State of the Republic of Investor), satirising the grip of capital and capital investment over Indonesia. Another was *NKRI Harga Diskon* (NKRI at Discounted Price), as a satire on how the government always gave a discount for forest burners, corruptors, and investors—although they were ignoring legal challenges. The revision of the KPK Bill is part of the government’s discount agenda for corruptors. So opposition to the KPK Bill has generated a further protest wave.

#ReformasiDikorupsi

The fourth social movement relates to Indonesian state policy at the transition between Jokowi’s first and second terms of office. This movement is altogether larger in scale and involves many elements of civil society, including university students, middle school students, activists and other elements of civil society. It represents an accumulation of the previous movements. It reached its climax during a week of strike action, 24–30 September 2019, in many cities, including Bandung.

This strike has been provoked by a number of planned laws issued by the Jokowi government, and the House of Representatives (DPR), that aim to repress the people in the interests of oligarchic interests and capital. In particular, it has been provoked by the controversial planned revisions to the Anti-Corruption Commission (KPK) bill. In addition, there are several law regulation plans that must be criticized or cancelled. These are the core demands of the reformasi dikorupsi movement.

However, it also draws in demands related to the issue of Papua, climate issues through forest fires and land issues. Since the reformasi dikorupsi strike is especially focused on regulations, it has taken up the demands of the agrarian movement on the Land Bill in particular. The draft Land Bill does not accommodate the interests of the poor, especially the peasants because it does not specifically discuss the matter of assets and access in the land reform corridor or offer an overall overhaul related to land use. It does not discuss the inequality that lies at the root of the agrarian conflict. In fact, it legitimizes the government to act against the people’s interests.

Bandung, 20 September 2020. Photo by author
The granting of Right of Exploitation (Hak Guna Usaha/HGU) with an initial permit of 35 years, can be extended 35 years and extended again by 20 years: totally a possible 90 years. This stands in contradiction with the land reform programs and increases inequality in the distribution of land. Recognition of indigenous territories is to be based on the determination of the government, rather than the inhabitants themselves. Besides, if farmers cannot show proof of their land, the government will take over force: in effect, the state is reviving the Dutch-colonial era concept of Domein Verklaring. The revision of the laws on water must also be rejected, because it is designed to enable for corporations to manage or ‘control’ water for commercial purposes, even though water is a public good.

Then there are revisions to the Minerba law on minerals and coal, which once again favour investors’ perspectives. The revised plan only discusses how to smooth the issuance of mining permits, without about protecting living space (housing and land) and environmental sustainability. These revisions reveal the deals that the oligarchs have been striking since the election.

The Employment Bill revision is a major attack on workers’ rights. The interests of entrepreneurs dominate: the real value of wages can be lowered by employers in the case of inflation and slowing economic growth. It also abolishes menstrual leave rights, welfare benefits, and allows increased working hours and overtime.

Furthermore, if the revision of the KPK bill is agreed upon, the government will be able to assert its control over and disrupt the KPK’s independent work. With the executive, legislative and judiciary under the control of the oligarchs, the KPK remains as the most valuable remaining asset of Indonesia’s reformasi. Finally, the Criminal Code Bill, if passed, will allow the arrest of anyone who criticizes the President and his deputies. This is very dangerous for those who struggle to uphold democracy. All of these revisions lead in the direction of authoritarianism, and benefit the oligarchs who supported the New Order and the colonial era before. So we have to strike.

Jokowi and the DPR are returning us to New Order Governance through populism, militarism and neoliberalism in state policies. Indonesia is facing a crisis of democracy and the corruption of the legacy of the 1998 reformasi. This strike is an effort to show that democracy itself is now at stake. In Bandung, the strike is organized by ALARM (Aliansi Rakyat Menggugat – ‘People’s Alliance Sues the State’), with the same reformasi dikorupsi slogan, and the same demands as in other cities across Indonesia. Because reforms have been corrupted, the people move with their demands, namely:

- Reject the Criminal Code Bill, the Land Bill, the Labour Bill, the Penitentiary Bill, the Mineral-Coal Mining Bill. Urge the cancellation of the KPK Revision Act and the bill on water resources (SDA- Sumberdaya Air). Urgently endorse the draft Bill on the Elimination of Sexual Violence (PKS – Penghapusan Kekarasan Seksual) and the Domestic Workers Protection Bill
- Cancel the appointment of a problematic KPK leader chosen by DPR
- Reject occupation of Military and Police in Civil Position (reject Dwifungsi)
- Stop criminalization of activists
- Stop the burning of forests in Borneo and Sumatra carried out by corporations and prosecute forest-burning corporations and revoke their business licenses
- Resolve human rights violations and prosecute human rights criminals, including those in power/government circles and restore the rights of victims of human rights.

Another situation that has generated attention in this strike is the involvement of students under 17 years of age. This means many of them are below the age of majority (covering voting rights, citizenship cards and driving licences), as recognized by government. These students are a different generation from those who experience New Order and those who took part in the strikes during the 1998 reformasi. They are a new political generation in Indonesia who were have an earlier and better access in technology (especially social media)
and become part of the demographic boom that has been occurring in Indonesia over the past decade.

These students saw the political situation in Indonesia expressed through the laws just discussed. They are aware that these laws will overburden, disarm and disrupt democratic life and their access as citizens in the future. So, these students joined the strike line with university students and other civilians. As the voice of the future generation of the Indonesian nation, the ‘students union’ emphasised that they did not join the strike because of solicitation or orders, but because of their own desire after gathering information from university students and social media about the plans of the government and the DPR.

The involvement of students in strikes in many cities in Indonesia including in Bandung has generated a new social movement in the escalation of street politics. Political awareness has grown. The school students have also made an ironic reference to the fact that university students and other civil society organisations are usually more prominently represented, with their slogan: Mahasiswa Orasi, Pelajar Eksekusi – University Students Give Speeches, School Students Take Action!

The students declared that they would continue their strikes until their demands were fulfilled. Over the lead-up to Jokowi’s inauguration, the university and school strikes expanded on the streets, government buildings and campuses in various places in Indonesia and became harder. It felt as though a new space of action and new demands were being posed that recalled the reformasi strike 21 years earlier that brought down the New Order.

Finding an unfavourable situation, the Jokowi government through the police chief mobilized a very large police force to suppress this action which inflict violence to the demonstrators. Students are victims of state security. Two students in Kendari-Sulawesi were shot dead, while in Jakarta one student died from injuries sustained from the police, another student was killed by a truck while chased by police, and a further student working in the informal sector died from police violence. Thousands of others were injured by the police in many Indonesian cities.

In Bandung, the strike took place on successive days. Two black blocs formed, and were met with severe police repression. The greatest police repression took place on 30 September
2019, even though it had previously done the same thing. But this time, the police used more tear gas, water cannon, electric fence and made a blockade to lock up protesters so that they were easily targeted by gunfire, arrest and violence. The protesters made more black bloc, wearing black clothes and black masks.

A total of 429 people were injured due to police beatings, tear gas and water cannon. In this action students were conducting peaceful protests in front of Gedung Sate, the office of the governor of West Java, and in front of the nearby office of the legislature of West Java. The police blocked the area to kettle the demonstrators, and shoot them with tear gas and water cannon until their arrest. In addition, the police screened city streets and public spaces and made random arrests.

This replicated what had happened in the same space on 1 May 2019, when protestors had also formed a black bloc. On that occasion, the police managed to capture a total of 619 people and randomly captured all those who were dressed in black. Those arrested consisting of 326 adults and 293 people under 18 years old. Those arrested included 605 men and 14 women. While under arrest, they were stripped naked in public and their bodies and faces sprayed with pilox (spray paint), and subjected to further physical and verbal violence.

Bandung’s city police is instituting terror against its citizens in the public space of their own city. The slogan of the Indonesian Police is polisi melayani dan melindungi – ‘The police serve and protect’. So we had to ask, who do they serve and protects to? So we suggested yet another reading of the acronym of NKRI: not Negara Kesatuan Republik Investor – ‘Unitary State of the Republic of Investor’ but Negara Kepolisian Republik Investasi – ‘Police State of Republic Investment’.

The government also used less direct tactics to drive the movement off the streets, by putting pressure on school and campus leaders to instruct students to participate, or face academic punishments. Universities also threatened students with organisational punishments, such as the revocation of financial support.
The combination of such direct and indirect tactics has forced the movement to subside for now. The character and power of Jokowi’s government was revealed through his authoritarian-militaristic response to the student strike, which he portrayed as acts against the law and the government. Since his official inauguration in October, he has been able to turn the draft legislation that had sparked the protests into law. So for now the #ReformasiDikorupsi movement looks like it has been defeated. But repression alone will not resolve the four crises that came together in 2019. A new generation has been radicalised: a generation that emerged in the democracy created by reformasi, but was faced with a new way of authoritarianism, militarism and conservatism.

In the words of Nietzsche, ‘Government is the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it lies; and this lie slips from its mouth “I, government, am the people.”’

Everything the government, the oligarchs and the predatory business and party elites say is a lie, and they have stolen everything that belongs to the people. So, we as the people must fight as well as we can, fight with dignity.

We organize! We Protest! We Strike! We are from Bandung!!!

Notes


[9] In 2016 Ridwan Kamil (mayor Bandung 2013-18) evicted this village, displacing the homes of the urban poor in this area, in order to build elite apartments.