



Ear to Asia podcast

Title: Will Jokowi's victory be a win for Indonesia?

Description: Fresh after winning his second term as Indonesia's president, Joko Widodo faces stagnant economic growth, high youth unemployment, greater financial dependence on China, and a still powerful oligarchy. What reforms will Jokowi pursue, and what will be his political legacy? Indonesia watchers Professor Vedi Hadiz and Dr Ariane Utomo join presenter Ali Moore to discuss Jokowi 2.0.

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Ali Moore: Hello. I'm Ali Moore. This is Ear to Asia.

Vedi Hadiz: The five years of Jokowi's government has not been able to push back a tendency for increasing income inequality in Indonesia. In spite of all these investment in social services, poverty alleviation, health services, that tendency going back three decades has not been reversed by the Jokowi government.

Ariane Utomo: When we look at it from the big picture, long term perspective, we do see so much improvement in the nation. Life expectancy, for example, we've seen a massive improvement. The other human development indicators are also promising. So in that sense, I'm an optimist.

Ali Moore: In this episode, another term: what can Indonesians expect from Joko Widodo's second and final five years as president? Ear to Asia is the podcast from Asia Institute, the Asia research specialists at the University of Melbourne.

Indonesia's president, Joko Widodo, recently won a second and final term in a rematch against his rival, Former General Prabowo Subianto. It was a history-making election, 245,000 candidates vying for some 20,000 positions, the first time Indonesia has held simultaneous presidential and legislative polls. Five years ago, Jokowi won his first presidential bid, mainly because he was perceived as an outsider to Indonesia's powerful oligarchy. A small businessman and former mayor from a midsize city that was seen to represent the common folk of Indonesia. In contrast, Prabowo was regarded by those concerned about civil liberties as a throwback to Suharto-era authoritarian nationalism.

So how did Jokowi's presidential performance earn him a second electoral victory, and where to from here? As Jokowi enters his second term, Indonesia is faced with stagnant economic growth, increasing financial



dependency on China, a continuing need to deal with an unwieldy coalition, and an incoming vice president whom some regard as a hard-line Muslim cleric. Will Jokowi change tack going forward, and will he summon the audacity and fortitude to implement much-needed reforms for Indonesian society? Joining us in the studio to discuss key challenges to Jokowi 2.0 is political sociologist Professor Vedi Hadiz. Vedi is director of Asia Institute and Assistant Deputy Vice Chancellor International of the University of Melbourne. Also with us is Social Demographer Dr Ariane Utomo from the School of Geography, also at the University of Melbourne. Welcome back to Ear to Asia, Vedi, and welcome Ariane.

Vedi Hadiz: Hello.

Ariane Utomo: Thank you.

Ali Moore: Before we look at the specifics of the various policy issues now facing Joko Widodo and his government, how did he win that second term? What made voters give him another chance, Vedi?

Vedi Hadiz: Well, I think he did just about enough to maintain the support of a large enough section of the Indonesian population. I think expectations of him when he was elected the first time were always preposterously too high, so the fact that he didn't meet those expectations really should not have surprised anybody. But he did preside over economic stability. He did preside over general political stability, and I think most importantly, he himself was not caught in any significant scandal. The fact that he wasn't involved in any sort of corruption scandals, that nobody in his immediate circles were involved in any of those things as well, I think went down well with Indonesian people, because they're so used to corruption scandals.

Ali Moore: So it's what he did and what he didn't do?

Vedi Hadiz: Exactly, and I think the other thing that contributed to him winning was the fact that even though his opponent, Prabowo, is a person who can garner support levels that are sometimes close to that of being militant, in reality, he's a very divisive figure. As much as some people really love him, many people really fear him, so I think there might be a quite significant level of the population that voted for Jokowi not because they necessarily liked him a lot, although some do, but because they are fearful, especially, of Prabowo.

Ali Moore: Ariane, do you agree with that assessment?

Ariane Utomo: Yes. I would also start by looking at population geography, actually, which is my field. Where did Jokowi perform well and who and how many voters live there? Compared to the 2014 election results, there are indications of pretty

large swing of voters for Jokowi in the provinces where the high proportions of voters are located. So for example, there are indications of over 10 percentage point increase in Central and East Java, where 30% of the Indonesian population live.

Now, Ali, you didn't mention about Jokowi's running mate, Kiai Haji Ma'ruf Amin, his 75-year-old cleric, also leader of the Indonesian Muslim Leaders Assembly, and he's also a senior figure in NU, the Nahdlatul Ulama, which is the large mass Muslim organization in Indonesia. Now, while many liberal Indonesians, such as myself, were disappointed with his choice of running mate, I think it paid off at the end, given the boost in votes coming from a region in East Java which is known as the stronghold of Nahdlatul Ulama.

Ali Moore: So do you think that if it did boost his vote in some areas, when you talk about that higher percentage in the larger population areas, was that the choice of running mate or was that more about where his first-term spending and his first-term policies have had the biggest impact?

Ariane Utomo: I think the first rather than the latter, but just commenting on your point there about where his spending was, Jokowi also won quite significantly in the so-called minority majority provinces. These are provinces in Eastern Indonesia where you got pretty high levels of ethnic and religious diversity as opposed to the Muslim majority provinces in Sumatra, for example. Now, I notice here that also the quick count suggests there are substantial gains for Jokowi between 14 to 19 percentage points in places like North Sulawesi and the predominantly Hindu province of Bali, and also in East Nusa Tenggara and Papua.

Now, in places like East Nusa Tenggara, which has like over a third Catholic population residing there within the province, there have been large-scale infrastructure projects during his first term, so that might be a contributing factor, but secondly, I would go with Vedi's assessment that perhaps the lingering sense of fear or anxiety of political Islam that may rise along Prabowo presidency might also drive voters in those areas to vote for Jokowi.

Ali Moore: It's a little ironic though, isn't it, that on the one hand, you talk about his choice of running mate assisting him in some areas, and on the other, it was a fear of what Prabowo could represent.

Vedi Hadiz: Well, the choice of Ma'ruf Amin was a very highly calculated move. I think that it was a given that the choice would be unpopular among some sections of Jokowi's supporters, predominantly the sort of urban-residing, liberal, highly educated kind of person, like Ariane, but it was calculated that the choice of Ma'ruf Amin would nullify the ability of Prabowo to present himself as the sole representative of Islamic aspirations. Ma'ruf Amin, being

the head of the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, was very effective in restraining or confining the ability of Prabowo to present the election as a choice between a candidate who was pro-Islamic aspirations and one who was against it. Now, taken together, I think the calculation was right, that choosing Ma'ruf Amin meant gaining more votes among Muslims than losing the number of votes among secular liberals.

Ali Moore: So what does that say about the role of religious politics in democracy in Indonesia in 2019?

Vedi Hadiz: I think it's clear that compared to 30 years ago, Indonesia is a more conservative society. I think it's clear that Islamic politics is an important element in political contestation in Indonesia, important enough to be co-opted by the different parties that are in competition with each other, but that is not the same as saying that Islamic forces are on the verge of taking over the state, or that Indonesia is about to become an Islamic state. Those are quite preposterous ideas. So what's happened, really, is with the greater sort of conservative nature of Indonesian society, political parties have tried to cater to their sensibilities.

Now, that has come along, together with being vulnerable, though, to criticism coming from fringe groups, who talk about morality in absolute terms. They would be criticizing the Nahdlatul Ulama of Ma'ruf Amin or Muhammadiyah, the sort of mainstream organizations, as not being militantly Islamic enough, right? So, what happens is that a lot of these ideas which 20 years ago would have been crackpot ideas are now being mainstreamed into the Indonesian political discourse, as mainstream political parties and mainstream Islamic organizations incorporate that into their own discourse to insulate themselves from criticism from the fringe groups, because they fear that they'll take supporters away from them.

Ali Moore: And a point that you have made in another place is that that is not so different to what's happening in the US and Europe at the moment.

Vedi Hadiz: Absolutely. I think the parallel development, really, is that many ideas that are espoused by Donald Trump now, 20 or 30 years ago would have been not only anathema to American public discourse, but it would have been completely foreign even within the Republican Party, which he now has a stranglehold over. In Europe, the ideas of Nigel Farage, of Marine Le Pen, of Salvini in Italy, Geert Wilders in Holland, the Austrian far right, these were ideas that were on the fringe, but because they resonate, for particular kinds of reasons, with increasingly large sections of society, particularly center-right parties have come to incorporate these ideas into their own discourses, therefore mainstreaming into the general political discourse highly conservative, formerly crackpot ideas.



- Ali Moore: Ariane, that assessment that Vedi has just given us, is that how you see it?
- Ariane Utomo: Yeah. I have been thinking about why. Why is it the case that we are seeing this gaining momentum, not only of political Islam but the kind of Islamic lifestyling [crosstalk]
- Ali Moore: More conservative forces?
- Ariane Utomo: More conservative forces, but also increasing centrality of Islam and religion in the everyday life of urban, middle class Indonesians in particular. This could be just the natural consequences of the reform after the fall of Suharto in 1998. It unleashed a plethora of actors, including the fringe radical Islamists, if you like to say that. I agree with the observation that there's some sort of undercurrent towards a society where Islam and religion will be much more visible, not only in politics, but in the everyday life of Indonesians. But like what Vedi has said, I don't personally see this as a concern at this stage. It's not like we're going to be a-
- Vedi Hadiz: Islamic caliphate.
- Ariane Utomo: That's right. It's much more nuanced than that. If anything, my speculation is that the growing appeal of this so-called Islamic lifestyling, as Ariel Heryanto had referred to, is partly driven perhaps by global current of hyper-competition and precarious employment. You know, we live in an increasingly interconnected world, so just like in many places of the world, even like for the youth in Australia for example, many educated young Indonesians may find it quite difficult to navigate the pathways for upward mobility.
- Ali Moore: So you see it as a natural response to the environment?
- Ariane Utomo: I would think so. In the past, you know, if you study hard, you can graduate, get a good job, and start a family, and lead a comfortable middle class lifestyle, but with the changing nature of work and a more precarious employment, perhaps Islam offers some sort of, I don't know, a place of comfort to soothe the growing, collective anxiety driven by economic globalization. So-
- Vedi Hadiz: If I may just add to that a bit, it is because of those latter observations that I would suggest that it goes back beyond Reformasi, actually. I think that if you do trace these developments, they go back at least to the 1970s, and it is no coincidence that the same developments were occurring throughout the Muslim world. In the Middle East, in Malaysia, in various Muslim majority countries, you had growing Islamization since the 1970s, and that is not a coincidence, because it occurs simultaneously with the growing interaction between local economies and the globalized economy, thereby

changing the nature of work and the matters that you just talked about. Work has been redefined. There's a greater degree of uncertainty. Your credentials don't provide you with a certificate to success?

Ali Moore: And a sense of missing out, which is a global sense-

Vedi Hadiz: A sense of missing out, yes. Yeah, so social grievances get, I think, pent up, and there is no language of politics articulate that. And this is a product of the Cold War. Throughout the Muslim world, this is a product of the Cold War. So the Cold War resulted in not only the destruction of the left throughout the entire Muslim world, but also the domestication of the liberal current and the social democratic current. So all you have, really, are Islamists and various shades of nationalists. And this is what you find in Indonesia, exactly.

Ali Moore: This, of course, brings us, interestingly, to the question of the economy, and one of the big challenges for Jokowi, and you made the point, Vedi, at the beginning, that he has brought economic stability, although he's not met his expectations. 7% economic growth was never actually achieved, but how healthy is the Indonesian economy right now?

Vedi Hadiz: I think it's a mixed bag, really. I mean, sure, in terms of GDP in 2030, Indonesia will probably be, what is it, the seventh or eight largest country in the world, but, and here's a huge caveat here, inequalities have been on the rise, even though marginally it's improved in the last year, but just two years ago, really, Indonesia reached levels of economic inequalities that are historically unprecedented. I think today, it is estimated that about 1% of Indonesians control 50% of the wealth by the World Bank.

This has never happened before, and whilst a middle class has grown, estimates say 45%, 53%, I think if you look more closely at the data, a very large proportion of that 45% are on the borderline of the definition of middle class, which means they are precariously middle class. This is something that Inaya Rahmani has talked about in relation to Islamic consumerism as well. That means that a sickness in the family, a minor economic crisis, can put them back to the struggling lower classes, so there's a great deal of uncertainty there, right? So, these numbers don't reveal everything. More so, there are other numbers. Even though unemployment is at about 5 or 6%, underemployment is always at least 33%.

Ali Moore: And youth unemployment-

Vedi Hadiz: And youth-

Ali Moore: ... and it is a very young country.



- Vedi Hadiz: Absolutely.
- Ali Moore: It's sitting, I think, at... Well, something like 15, 16%.
- Vedi Hadiz: I think that's 15, 16% of official unemployment. I think it'd be higher in terms of the underemployment.
- Ali Moore: So these are huge challenges for Jokowi.
- Vedi Hadiz: Absolutely, and remember, the Indonesian demographic... What's the median age, about 30 in Indonesia? So we're talking about young people, who've gone through national education, because it's compulsory. Therefore, they've developed high expectations, high aspirations, and then they get into a situation in which, well, I was going to say guaranteed, but nothing leads them to any level of certainty, and how do you make sense of it? How do you make sense of it? There is no language of politics to make sense of that. Islam comes in, and provides values or absolute morality, right and wrong, which provides people with a guide.
- Ali Moore: How does Jokowi address that in his second term? He's already taken some measures regarding healthcare for lower income people, and education as well, but clearly a lot more has to be done. When you look at where the investment focus, the spend focus will be in this second term, do you think that's where, Ariane, that's where it's going to lie, the human capital, not the physical infrastructure?
- Ariane Utomo: Well, he did say during the last debate that that's what's going to be his focus in the second term, so the shift away from physical infrastructure investment-
- Ali Moore: So the roads, and the bridges, and the railways?
- Ariane Utomo: That's correct, more towards human capital investment. If you look at the state budget for 2019, we do see an increased allocation targeted for the bottom 40% of the population. For example, there's an increasing allocation for the village funds and for the so-called PKH - Program Keluarga Harapan and the Family Hope Program. This is sort of like a social assistance provided for the poorest of the poor family in Indonesia. So there is a growing pot of money allocate in that sense-
- Ali Moore: But that doesn't give jobs to young people.
- Ariane Utomo: It doesn't. Well, yes. As Pak Vedi had said, you know, we've got these high levels of inequality, and to what extent is this kind of intervention and policy approach can be effective enough, yeah, we have yet to see.



Vedi Hadiz: I mean, still people are living a hand-to-mouth existence, even-

Ariane Utomo: That's correct.

Vedi Hadiz: ... with these policies.

Ali Moore: At the same time of course, though, this is his second and final term. He can't run again. He doesn't have to be popular. What is to stop him simply putting the money where he thinks that it is necessary? Vedi, do you think he has the policies, that he has the... well, the will as well?

Vedi Hadiz: Well, first of all, you've got to look at the structure of the budget. There isn't really a lot of money to play around with in the budget, so a large proportion of the budget, in spite of the drawing down of the oil subsidies, really goes to routine expenditures, including paying for civil servants, public sector debt, and so on. There's a really limited pot of money to play around with in the first place, so that's one constraint.

The second constraint is this: It is a mistake to think that reforms are being inhibited by forces outside of the Jokowi coalition. The struggle in Indonesia has not been about reformers versus anti-reformers. There are anti-reformers in both camps. In fact, some of the people closest to Jokowi are as anti-reformist as you can imagine. So, with that sort of political consolation, how could Jokowi actually develop the sort of appetite to undertake large-scale reforms if he has to go against the forces that were responsible for him winning in the first place, the forces upon which he depends on maintaining his position?

Now, it is likely that in the next parliament, that the coalition supporting him will actually attain a majority, unlike in 2014, but I don't think that will make any difference, because what has inhibited large-scale reformist policies that overhaul things-

Ali Moore: That may help this gap of inequality-

Vedi Hadiz: Yeah, is not coming from the Prabowo camp; it's coming, equally, from within the parties that support him, who are as connected to entrenched oligarchic interests as the Prabowo camp is.

Ali Moore: You're listening to Ear to Asia from Asia Institute at the University of Melbourne. I'm Ali Moore, and I'm joined by Indonesian Political Expert Professor Vedi Hadiz and Indonesia Social Demographer Dr. Ariane Utomo, and we're discussing what Indonesia can expect from Joko Widodo's second term as president. Vedi, that point that you make there about, I suppose, resistance and the need to negotiate within his own coalition brings us very much to the question of the oligarchs and their role in Jakarta and in

Indonesia today. We said at the very beginning, when Jokowi first came to power in 2014, part of the reason that he was voted in was because he was seen as not part of this system. Is he now beholden to it?

Vedi Hadiz: Well, first of all, I never agreed with people who said that he wasn't part of the system. This was one of my major disagreements with analysts in 2014. There was no way that Jokowi would have reached the position that he attained by 2014 if he hadn't made deals with sections of the oligarchy. In fact, if you trace his political career, in Solo, that was already being undertaken. And certainly by-

Ali Moore: That was his home.

Vedi Hadiz: Exactly.

And by the time he became government of Jakarta, he was making deals with Prabowo, man, in 2012. So, he's not part of the oligarchy, in that he wasn't, unlike Prabowo, at the heart of the New Order system of power, being-

Ali Moore: The son-in-law of-

Vedi Hadiz: ... the son-in-law of-

Ali Moore: ... Suharto-

Vedi Hadiz: ... Suharto, being a lieutenant general, commander of special forces, et cetera. But, clearly he was somebody who could not have navigated through the oligarchic control political system if he wasn't able and willing to make deals. So from the very beginning, I had always questioned the degree to which not only was he able to deliver on reforms that people expected to, but also whether he was even willing to contemplate those-

Ali Moore: Because Ariane, that's a fair question, isn't it? Because arguably, why change a system that's allowed you to rise?

Ariane Utomo: Indeed. I mean, just going back to how difficult it is, I recall a report suggesting that the parliament had a very poor performance in the last five years. It was like maybe only six legislations will pass out of the 50 priority draft bills. So, I could imagine, even with influence on both side of politics, and oligarchs, it's just really hard to get things done.

Ali Moore: Why is that? What is it that makes the oligarchs so powerful in today's Indonesia? That may sound like an incredibly naïve question, but is it simply money? Is it respect and standing? I mean, what is it that allows them to direct the direction of a country?

- Vedi Hadiz: Well, the 1998 1999 reforms in Indonesia, you know, freedom of the press, elections, that's major by the way, I'm not underestimating that, quite strikingly did not result in the eradication of the New Order oligarchy. The institutional framework had changed, but in the context of a system of power that is still dominated by the old forces. So what happened, really, was that after '98 '99, the old forces were able to regroup, to redefine themselves as democrats. What happened was that the political parties, the parliaments, the social organizations that emerged after '98 '99 came to be dominated by the same forces that had dominated the New Order era institutions.
- Ali Moore: So is that just an integral part of the power system in Indonesia?
- Vedi Hadiz: It remains so at the moment, and-
- Ali Moore: But how would you change that, given what you've just said?
- Vedi Hadiz: Well, first of all, '98 '99 provided a window of opportunity. You had a crisis of the oligarchy, but there was no organized reformist force to fill in the gap. Therefore, the oligarchy was able to regroup after a certain period of time. I think that was key, and my view of history is that history is very stingy. It doesn't give you a lot of opportunities, and I think that time passed, and we're experiencing the ramifications of that, that yes, it is a democracy, and I would not want to underestimate that, because I appreciate elections. I appreciate being able to express my opinions without being jailed-
- Ariane Utomo: Kidnapped.
- Vedi Hadiz: ... or shot, or kidnapped-
- Ali Moore: And what the country-
- Vedi Hadiz: As some of my colleagues were in the 1990s.
- Ali Moore: What they pulled off with this election was truly extraordinary.
- Vedi Hadiz: Absolutely, and yeah, extraordinary feat, 193 million people voting and all that. There are all great, great things, right? But it will necessarily be a very flawed democracy, which maintains asymmetries in power, economic and political, as part of its very logic.
- Ali Moore: Ariane, you're nodding there. Do you see any change to the role and the relationships with the oligarchs, or is that just part of the system?



- Ariane Utomo: The oligarchs will always be there, but I am kind of more optimistic, because I feel that with the growing middle class, there's much more new money around. And with more new money, there's-
- Ali Moore: Less power for the old money.
- Ariane Utomo: That's correct.
- Ali Moore: It's good to have a note of optimism.
- Vedi Hadiz: Hopefully they just don't buy apartments in Melbourne, though.
- Ali Moore: I wanted to return to the question of economy and investment, because that, for Indonesia, is quite caught up with... If I don't say foreign policy, I can say foreign relations, because of the tight relationship with China, which is pouring significant funds into Indonesia as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. But I suppose my interest is does it come with ties? Vedi?
- Vedi Hadiz: Well, I think that dealing with China always comes with ties. For one thing, I think it inhibits the ability of Indonesia to participate independently in such things as conflicts in the South China Sea, that will seriously impact on Indonesia's ability to be a sort of mediator, especially if the Chinese are also talking about Natuna Islands, which is an Indonesian island, but I think this is what we need to understand: There's really not a lot of room to play around with the budget, right? So if you want to invest in infrastructure, you have to have private investment, and the Indonesian business class doesn't tend to take risks. They're used to playing it safe and being protected, you know?
- Ali Moore: So the money has to come from outside.
- Vedi Hadiz: Money has to come from outside. Now, the Americans and the Europeans tend not to invest in infrastructure. They tend to invest in other things, such as mining, these sorts of-
- Ali Moore: And even Australia invest more in New Zealand than it does in Indonesia.
- Vedi Hadiz: Well, that's interesting, isn't it? Given that there are three million people in New Zealand and 260 million people in Indonesia. So China, China's Belt and Road Initiative, and its generally outward-looking attitude or position as projected by Xi Jinping, coincides with Indonesia's need for foreign investment, right? So China is the logical source for it. It benefits the agenda of the Jokowi government. Now, what sort of strings come attached to that? I think the degree to which that is to be clear will still need to play out, that we already see that, for example, they have to already tweak things have to do with employment laws, because there is a convention in Chinese investment in infrastructure projects, that Chinese manpower has to be



used. So that already infringes upon, what is it, the policymaking independence of the Indonesian government.

And I think we'll probably see more of that, and of course, this is complicated by the fact that America is being extremely erratic. So if the Americans say, "We're only concerned about putting up a wall against Mexico and leave the rest of the world to its own devices," well, that does leave a huge gap with which really only China is capable of filling. And by the way, it's not just Indonesia that's trying to address and cope with this changing regional sort of constellation, but Australia, whose foreign policy really has been based on one principle, and that is follow the Americans. That's been the basis of the entire Australian foreign policy in Asia.

Ali Moore: Australian government, of course, would argue differently.

Vedi Hadiz: Of course, but-

Ali Moore: Which actually raises a question, though, that as you say, this challenge, this balance of power relationship between China and the US, and indeed Chinese investment, is a question for every country in the region. Australia is about to go to the polls, and we could be in for a change of government. Do you think that that will change the relationship between Indonesia and Australia?

Vedi Hadiz: Look, I think that the fates of Indonesia and Australia are entwined whether these countries like it or not -

Ali Moore: So which party, which prime minister, is really not that relevant?

Vedi Hadiz: Well, it is relevant, in that certain kinds of issues, certain kinds of diplomatic problems might tend to arise with particular kinds of parties in power in either place. Some parties may care more about human rights, others not, for example, but in the long view, and more fundamentally, whatever happens in relation to the sort of more minute matters that may result in big newspaper headlines from time to time, in general, really, Australia needs to have good relations with Indonesia, and whether Indonesia realizes it or not, and sometimes, I think Indonesia doesn't realize it as much as it should, it should cultivate good relations with Australia for various things that Australia can offer Indonesia that other powers may not be able to or are less likely to.

Ali Moore: Let's finish with a little bit of crystal ball gazing. We made the point earlier that he doesn't have to be popular, because he doesn't have to run again, but that doesn't mean that he will have the appetite, the will, or even has the political capital for major change, but what, Ariane, do you think are going to be his priorities in this second and final term?

- Ariane Utomo: Well, it's early days. He did talk about investment in human capital, talking about increasing the productivity level of the Indonesian labor force, but again, those are campaign talks. We don't know how effective that is going to be. You know, in the last week or so, the conversations among my own family, and my friends in Indonesia, is about this idea that Jokowi is going to move the Indonesian capital from Jakarta to what's one of the outer islands. What that might be has not been announced as yet-
- Ali Moore: And that would be a massive-
- Ariane Utomo: It would be a massive-
- Ali Moore: ... expensive, huge undertaking.
- Ariane Utomo: ... undertaking, exactly. So, I'm excited, if you like, to see whether this will actually take place, as-
- Ali Moore: That would be an extraordinary legacy.
- Ariane Utomo: It would be. I was raised, I spent a lot of my formative years, growing up in Jakarta, and there's a lot of things that I love about the city, but the reality is Jakarta is sinking. I'm sorry-
- Vedi Hadiz: Yeah, it's the fastest-sinking city in the world.
- Ariane Utomo: City in the world.
- Ali Moore: City in the world, yeah.
- Ariane Utomo: And, I mean, we've seen really good progress, for example with the opening of the MRT, but there are so many more things to do to make it a sustainable place to live, and with the growing population, at the moment about 10 million in the core, and almost 30 including the greater Jakarta region, is just very hard for anybody to govern effectively in that city.
- Ali Moore: So potentially, moving the capital could achieve or help resolve many of the challenges, the broader challenges?
- Ariane Utomo: Actually, the answer to that is I don't know. There have been talks about moving the capital for many-
- Vedi Hadiz: 50 years or 60 years.
- Ariane Utomo: ... for years, but it never happened.
- Ali Moore: Are you an optimist?



- Ariane Utomo: With regards to Indonesia, yes I am. I mean, when we look at it from the big picture, long-term perspective, being a demographer, we do see so much improvement in the nation. Just a general indicator, life expectancy, for example. We've seen a massive improvement in Indonesians' life expectancy, from under 50 in 1962, about 69 now, and the other indicators, you know, broad human development indicators, are also promising. So in that sense, I am optimist. Indonesians seems to have this knack of not being-
- Vedi Hadiz: Being self-critical?
- Ariane Utomo: Yeah, they seem to be quite happy with how things are going along.
- Vedi Hadiz: Complacent.
- Ali Moore: Complacent or getting on with it?
- Ariane Utomo: I reckon getting on with it.
- Vedi Hadiz: Getting on with it.
- Ali Moore: Vedi, what about you? What do you think will be his legacy?
- Vedi Hadiz: Oh, I think his main legacy would be keeping Prabowo out of power. That's his main legacy. The second thing is, I think, that he has squarely put into the Indonesian political discourse the importance of paying attention to such things as healthcare and social services. I think that is important, and that is something that future governments cannot immediately, I think, do away with, because it's squarely, I think, in the discourse. With regards to moving the capital, even rough government calculations suggest that the two phases that they talk about, whatever that means, would cost close to 1,000 trillion rupiahs. Now, don't ask me what that is in dollars, because I can't count that high, but that's an amazing amount of money. If the budget can't pay for it, again, where is the money going to come from? That's an interesting question.
- Ali Moore: But those earlier points you made, about Jokowi and what he has put into the public discussion and made part of the political lexicon, that's key, isn't it?
- Vedi Hadiz: I think it is, yeah. I think it is. I think that's one of the things that I think he would be fondly remembered for. I think he won't be fondly remembered for upholding human rights, because he's certainly let everybody down there, but he has walked the talk as much as he could within the confines of a budget, mind you, you know, in terms of investing in healthcare and social services. Far from enough given the scale of poverty, and disease, and the breadth of the Indonesian nation, just the size of it.



But it would be difficult now, I think, to just always talk about economic growth in Indonesia, and that's important, in spite of the fact that in reality, the five years of Jokowi's government has not been able to push back a tendency that started in the late 1980s for increasing income inequality in Indonesia. So in spite of all of these investments in social services, poverty alleviation, health services, that tendency going back three decades has not been reversed by the Jokowi government. Now, if a government that has as its platform social equality and social welfare can't do it, you wonder about the future government.

Ali Moore: Gosh, so much to talk about. You know, I think we should reconvene for another Ear to Asia podcast in the very short term. You raised, there, other issues such as human rights. I mean, there are just so many questions that I could put to the both of you, but thank you so much for your insights and for joining Ear to Asia, Vedi and Ariane.

Vedi Hadiz: No problem.

Ariane Utomo: Thank you so much.

Vedi Hadiz: Thank you very much.

Ariane Utomo: Thank you, Ali.

Ali Moore: Our guests have been Political Sociologist and Veteran Indonesia Researcher Professor Vedi Hadiz and Indonesia Social Demographer Dr. Ariane Utomo. Professor Hadiz is director of Asia Institute and Assistant Deputy Vice Chancellor International at the University of Melbourne, and Dr Utomo is from the School of Geography, also at the University of Melbourne. Ear to Asia is brought to you by Asia Institute. You can find more information about this and all our other episodes at the Asia Institute website.

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