Post-2024 Presidential Election: political parties' coalition or pragmatism



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On February 14, 2024, Indonesia conducted simultaneous general elections (*Pemilu*), to elect Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates, Members of the People's Consultative Assembly on national, provincial, and district/city levels, as well as selecting Regional Representative Council candidates.

Article 221 of Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning Elections stipulates that presidential and vice-presidential candidates are proposed as a pair, by a political party or a coalition of political parties.

Article 222 states that the candidate pair is proposed by a political party or coalition of political parties participating in the election, with the requirement of obtaining at least 20 percent of the total of seats in the House of Representatives (DPR), or obtaining 25 percent of nationally valid votes in a previous DPR election. Therefore, coalitions of parties have put forward three pairs of candidates for this 2024 election.

The three pairs are Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar, proposed by the *Nasdem* Party, *Kebangkitan Bangsa* Party (PKB), and *Keadilan Sejahtera* Party (PKS). Next, the Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka pair is proposed by the Gerindra Party, Golkar Party, *Demokrat* Party, and *Amanat Nasional* Party (PAN). The third pair is made up of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD, who are proposed by the *Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* Party (PDIP) and the *Persatuan Pembangunan* Party (PPP).

Political parties' alignment in each coalition shows how those with Islamic mass bases are joining forces with nationalist parties, which is a trend continuing from the last two elections, following in the tradition of the reform era, in 2014 and 2019.

In the 2014 elections, the Prabowo Subianto-Hatta Rajasa pair was supported by Golkar, Gerindra, PAN, PKS, PPP, Demokrat, and Bulan Bintang Party (PBB). Meanwhile, the Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Jusuf Kalla (JK) pair was supported by PDIP, PKB, Nasdem, Hanura, and PKPI. In 2019, the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin pair was supported by PDIP, Golkar, PKB, NasDem, PPP, Hanura, PKPI, Perindo, PSI, and PBB. On the other hand, their opponent, Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno, was supported by Gerindra, Demokrat, PAN, PKS, and *Berkarya* Party.

Elections in the reform era have shown fading ideological competition in practical politics. The majority of parties in Indonesia established after the reform era tend to fall into the "catch-all" type of party (Mellaz and Kartawidjaja, 2018).

Parties' fading ideology during the post-reform political constellation has shifted political parties toward becoming more pragmatic and transactional, as ideologies and political platforms are no longer the fundamental elements of competition. During elections, all parties tend to become more moderate, competing for votes from the same segments as other parties, which is also shown by how a coalition is formed, to support presidential and vice presidential candidates.

Indonesia's electoral system is also held accountable for the parties' coalition, as described in Articles 221 and 222 of Law Number 7 of 2017, regarding elections. These laws encourage political parties to form a coalition and seek members, even if their views differ. However, the political organizations' pragmatic nature ensures that challenges within party coalitions in Indonesian presidential elections are usually resolved promptly.

By way of illustration, there was a *Merah Putih* coalition in the 2014 elections that supported Prabowo Subianto-Hatta Rajasa. The members of that coalition—PAN, Golkar Party, and PPP—slowly shifted to support the Jokowi-JK government. Similarly, in 2019, both PAN and even Gerindra, the previously opposing party, joined the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin government.

Müller and Strøm suggest that parties have two main objectives: first, to survive, and second, to achieve success. Both objectives are relatively unique to each party, despite being the goals of political parties' establishment and existence. Based on these objectives, we can see the orientation of political parties. According to the behavior-based and rational choice study approach, Kaare Strøm categorizes party orientation into three categories: policy-seeking, vote-seeking, and office-seeking (Mellaz and Kartawidjaja, 2018).

"The Policy-Seeking Party" seeks to maximize the impact of policies, as illustrated by numerous examples of literature on traditional party functions. The fundamental feature of this paradigm is an intense focus on the policies advocated by the party. These policies include not only the Party's programs or ideological articulations but also a focus on specific topics or party demands.

"The Vote-Seeking Party" seeks to maximize its vote share to win elections and take control of the government. This party's main objective is electoral victory, although the party's ideas or positions on issues are more flexible. This flexibility is often used as a manipulative tool to gain or secure more votes.

"The Office-Seeking Party" seeks to maximize benefits and maintain control over any positions it controls. Its primary objective is to secure and maintain these positions or offices. This party model works to maintain power, independently or in collaboration with others, for its existence or as a balance, to garner patronage. These types of parties would avoid policy commitment, since it is considered counterproductive to the coalition or in elections; it is perceived as an attack on other parties, shutting off coalition chances.

Reflecting on the coalitions in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections, we can classify party orientation into two categories: The vote-seeking party and the office-seeking party. The vote-seeking party focuses on winning an election or, at the very least, passing the parliamentary threshold with a minimum of 4 percent of the votes. Nearly all parties fall into this category, except the winning party of the 2014 and 2019 elections, the PDI-P.

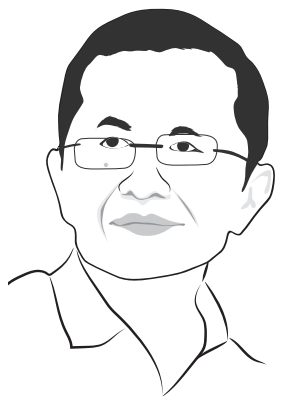
Meanwhile, the winning PDI-P can be categorized as the office-seeking party, as the PDI-P sought to maximize and secure its power, which means securing the positions or offices they held, even if it meant sharing power with other parties in a coalition.

Reviewing the previous elections, the 2024 presidential election will unfold a growing dynamic. Should the result be concluded in one round, parties from the losing candidate's coalition are likely to join the winning coalition or become supporters of the government. Correspondingly, should the election take two rounds, the losing coalition will likely align with the potentially winning coalition, to provide benefits for both parties. The public will once again witness political parties' sole pursuit of power.

Based on the above explanation, it is crucial to advocate for reforms within political parties to improve the quality of political parties as one of the pillars of democracy, and to achieve substantive democracy rather than merely procedural democracy. Political parties should not aim only to gain power; their ideologies should also strive to promote better public policies or otherwise become a policy-seeking party.

First and foremost, efforts must be made to improve the institutionalization of political parties, so that they can function as powerful democratic organizations. Second, measures should be aimed at improving political recruitment. Political recruitment should adhere to the principles of equality and gender. Third, address the issue of party funding, as parties and candidates' revenue and expenditures must be disclosed and reported under existing laws, whether through government subsidies or donations, to ensure public transparency.

The United States defaults on its Social Security



Dahlan Iskan
Former SOE Minister

The United States' social security hit a record-breaking level, exceeding one trillion dollars. USD 1,040,000,000,000, multiplied by IDR 15,000. The amount went back to the year 2022 but was only announced last year.

The number of Social Security recipients is also increasing, reaching 66 million people. This number has never gone down, even during Ronald Reagan's administration, which was known as "Reaganomics". During the Reagan era, in 1987, the number of Social Security recipients was only 37 million.

The US only spent US$120 billion, which was an increase from the figure of the previous government.

US Social Security and its recipients have always been similar to the state's debt: they have never declined.

The SSA, or the US's Social Security Administration, or the US Bansos, was first initiated in 1936, when America had just emerged from its most challenging times—the Great Economic Depression. Many companies went bankrupt, leading to massive layoffs.

Managing 66 million people is certainly not easy, and some recipients misuse it instead of adhering to proper governance. There has never been news of any corruption related to the US Bansos there. Instead, the recipients continue to receive their monthly social security, despite the recipients' employment or income increase. They still receive the old Banso amount: around IDR 20 million per month, or USD 1,700.

The social security amount should decrease when your "poverty" status changes. Those without any employment began to have income from their employment, or those with very little salary are now improving their life standards, or even those who were single are now married. All of these people should change their assistance status.

However, updating such data poses a challenge, resulting in agencies' overpayments in managing social assistance, that reached a staggering USD 23 billion last year, equivalent to approximately IDR 500 trillion.

As a response, these agencies have recently been sending emails to the social security recipients, notifying them that they have received assistance exceeding their entitlement, which they need to return. Last year alone, they managed to reclaim overpayments that amounted to nearly USD 5 billion, or around IDR 75 trillion. It is remarkable to see the recipients' compliance and willingness to return the money spent or perhaps saved.

Those who have not yet returned the overpaid amount still far outnumber those who have. They are allowed to file complaints, but the process can be lengthy. For those who have updated their data transparently and accurately, the social assistance agencies will cut the assistance amount for the next month and the following months until the debt is cleared.

The consequences of this crackdown on social security recipients, as you can imagine, can be highly dramatic. In the United States, the media reported the highlighting story of Denise Woods.

The assistance cutdown caused Denise to no longer afford her rent payment. Although she owns a car, she can no longer afford a house, forcing her to find a safe and free parking spot every night to sleep in the back of her car. I do not know how long she will have to live this way.

Denise is not the only one. Other Denises suffer from similar situations. Denise is lucky not to live homeless, unlike thousands of other Americans who are forced to sleep on the street or in front of stores.

Many cities are suffering the same thing: cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Portland, and more. Numerous businesses have closed down, unable to support themselves. The homeless issue has become more complex, due to laws preventing the homeless from being evicted.

The United States is now approaching a presidential election, yet Social Security is not considered a prominent issue.