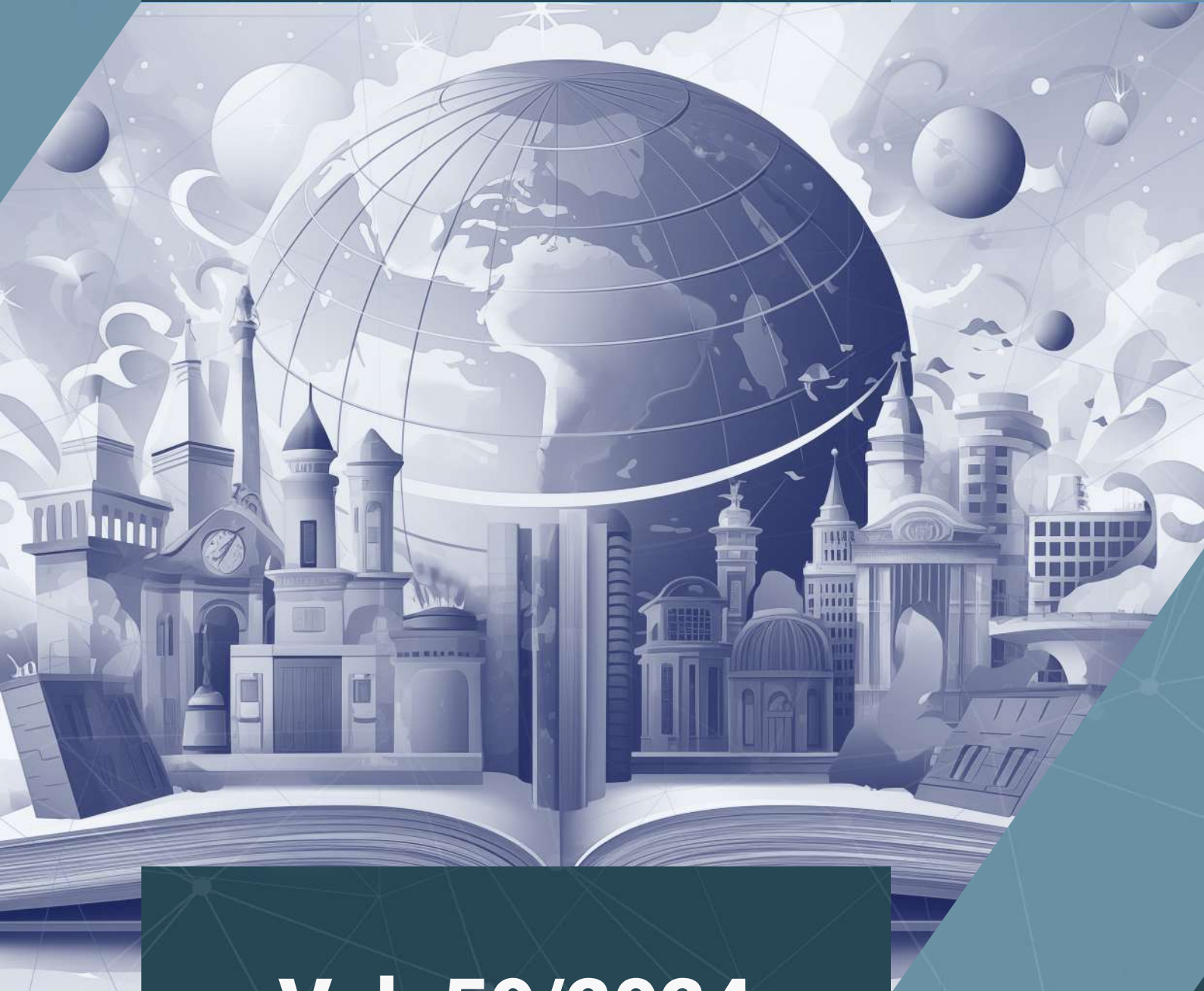




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The Strength of Figures and Characteristics of Political Party Leaders in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Election in Indonesia

M Najeri Al Syahrin

Government Science Study Program, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat University

Najeri.syahrin@ulm.ac.id

Abstract. This paper projects that the figures and characteristics of leaders are needed in the power of political parties, especially in contesting simultaneous regional elections in Indonesia. In the 2014 and 2019 elections, Jokowi and Prabowo Subianto, respectively, were two central figures in each party. Analysis of survey data for eight Indonesian elections shows that party leadership and identity are the most important determinants of party votes in legislative and presidential elections. Political parties must correctly place a central figure in their respective parties. The central figure serves as a booster, navigator, and inspiration for party cadres. In addition, figures can also be public reference material to choose one political party, when it is difficult for people to distinguish ideology between one party and another. Nevertheless, the system, traditions, and regeneration process must run as it should. Because only systems, traditions, and regeneration will be the foundation of the future. Political parties as a large organization are certainly not enough to rely on only one individual. There must be a regeneration of leadership within the party. So, if the central figure is no longer in the party, the party can still survive to maintain its existence in society.

Keywords. Figures, Characteristics, Political Leaders, Political Party, Regional Head Election

Introduction

Indonesia will hold simultaneous elections in 2024 by the provisions of Article 22 E of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and based on Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections (Boediningsih & Cahyono, 2022). Simultaneous elections will lead to the effectiveness and efficiency of holding elections, and the rights of citizens to choose intelligently will be more guaranteed, and it will also make financing more efficient for their implementation. Non-simultaneous elections give rise to various problems such as the high cost of holding elections, the occurrence of high-cost politics or money politics, and the occurrence of conflicts between different legislative candidates in winning the elections (Solihah, 2018).

Holding direct elections is not only a formal requirement for democracy to be fulfilled but must also be by the essence of democracy itself, namely based on the principles of direct, clean, honest, and fair or fair based on the conscience of the people (Simanjuntak, 2017). Apart from that, of course, the main aim of the general elections for the Legislature, President and

Vice President, and Regional Heads is to implement a peaceful succession of national leadership (Suteki, 2015).

One indicator of the growth of a democratic country is the regeneration of power and elections. This means that the ideal concept of democracy must fulfill the principles of elections held periodically and rotation of power (Siagian et al, 2022). The modern democratic system requires elections not only to be held as a leadership succession ritual. More than that, it is hoped that elections can be a complete actualization and manifestation of people's sovereignty. This principle has become the guideline for modern democratic countries in holding elections in recent decades.

Why is the issue of national leadership succession in elections always crucial? The field of leadership studies has grown rapidly in recent years. The explosion of interest in leadership presents a “paradox” for some political scientists. On the one hand, there are overlapping interests between issues related to political roles, agendas, decision-making, and the mobilization of support and authority. These terms are the main concepts in political science, especially related to the concept of power. The relationship of attraction and mutual correlation is found in the concepts of power and leadership. So far, political scientists have focused too much only on the concept of power, even though power is closely related to leadership issues. Political scientists tend to “ignore” the concept of leadership when studying changes in political systems and the behavior of those in positions of power. The concept of leadership has more appeal than the concept of power for analyzing political systems (Peele, 2005).

This article projects that the figures and characteristics of leaders are very much needed in power analysis, especially in contesting simultaneous regional head elections in Indonesia. This concept is put in place by projecting an agenda within the political party carried out by the leader's (*leader*) political parties in the contestation for power in the simultaneous regional head elections in 2024. The presence and existence of several political parties in Indonesia currently show symptoms of dependence on central figures. Just look, at the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) with its central figure Megawati Soekarno Putri, the Golkar Party with its central figure Airlangga Hartarto, the Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrat*) with its central figure Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono or AHY, the Greater Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra) with its central figure Prabowo Subianto, National Democrat (*Partai Nasdem*) with its central figure Surya Paloh, PSI with its central figure Kaesang Pangarep, as well as the National Awakening Party (PKB) with its central figure Muhaimin Iskandar. The reality above is certainly interesting to study about the strength of figures in the main political parties in the simultaneous regional head general election contestation in 2024.

Political Party Leader Figures and Elections

Figures are one of the important elements in political parties. Figures can be the driving force, navigator, and inspiration for the running of a political party. Likewise, figures need political parties as a means to carry out their idealism and devotion. Several figures behind political parties have at least two important powers. Firstly, charisma, with the charisma they have, helps make it easier for political parties to reach as many masses as possible. Secondly, financially, it cannot be denied that to run a political party organization, requires a large amount of funds, this is where the importance of a figure who has sufficient financial strength is (Ridoi, 2016).

From the aspect of political psychology, there is a significant influence of figures on the existence and existence of political parties, especially concerning the level of electability of political parties in society. From a psychological perspective, we can see several aspects that

are factors why a leader can be hated and liked by society at large, both in terms of background, motivation, attitude, character, and achievements (Muluk, 2010).

Two approaches can be used in observing political leadership. First, approach *agent-centered*. Namely, an approach that holds that political leadership is more influenced by the actor, both in terms of capacity, personality traits, and actions. Factors outside the actor, in the view of this approach, do not influence political form and leadership. In this approach, it requires an ideal leader who has advantages that are rarely possessed by the general public. Second, approach *environment-centered*. According to this approach, political leadership is determined more by environmental factors and the influence of the people who work for a political leader. This means that the heart of the progress and decline of political leadership is not focused on the figure of the leader, but on external factors outside a leader that determine the progress and decline of a political party (Muluk, 2010).

The leadership of political parties after the 2019 election and the 2024 presidential election are required to have the ability and authority to direct or mobilize their potential in implementing government programs. The problems faced by political party leaders after the election with very tight competition include a crisis of trust, conflicts of interest, lack of synergy between national leaders due to sectoral ego, regional autonomy, multi-ethnicity, multi-religion, and multiculturalism, as well as the erosion of local wisdom values. This requires typical leadership qualities (*leadership*) and statehood (*statesmanship*) for the sake of sustainable national development. There are two things needed from political party leadership as well as statesmen, namely vision and sympathy. A person who has a statesman character is *a great man*, a person who has a special character and is more than just a leader (*leader*). In reality, political party leaders conflict with one another, giving rise to the possibility of conflict between party masses. Likewise, the elected government is very vulnerable to being rejected by the party who loses the election, and even massive fraud occurs which is driven and aware of by the leadership of political parties.

Leaders must learn to integrate *interdependence* (state of interdependence) and *diversity* (diversity). The posture of a statesman includes the character of a national leader who has superior leadership and statesmanship indices and can work together and think and act across disciplines and sectors in decision-making. Thus, statesmanship is very necessary in the dynamic social situation of society and competition during the election process. Statesmanship is needed in individual leaders of political parties to unite perceptions and behavioral attitudes that have been segmented to prioritize national interests. Politics is not only related to decision-making and general policy but includes activities aimed at changes in the structure of society.

Political party leaders are considered to have power. Of the many definitions of the meaning of power, social power is the most relevant definition of power to explain figure power. Social forces are effective urges or impulses that lead to social action. In this case, the figure of the party leader is the most effective in producing social action both within the party and external to the party (Ridoi, 2016).

According to a survey conducted by Liddle and Mujani (2007), leadership, party identity, and religious orientation are the most interesting aspects of elections. The effect of leadership on voting is stronger in emerging democracies where political parties are a new phenomenon and non-party social leaders have an independent role in the transition to authoritarianism. Indonesian democracy, although not entirely new, was re-established after a long hiatus. Political parties were relatively institutionalized during previous authoritarian regimes, and non-party social leaders were particularly prominent in the transition in 1999 (the early days of reform).

Much historical evidence shows that parties and leaders have played an important role in shaping the popular vote in democratic elections in Indonesia. In the 1955 campaign, the PNI made many historical connections with the founding fathers of the nation, namely Soekarno. Mohammad Natsir of Masyumi was a charismatic leader who made many moves to define Muslim identity politics in the 1950s. Under Chairman D.N. Aidit, the communist party made remarkable progress coming back from its destruction by the army in 1948. In 1992, after Sukarno's daughter Megawati became its chairman, the PDI increased its vote by 4% compared to the previous 1987 election. In 1997, after Megawati had been forced out of office by Suharto, the party's vote plummeted from 14.9% to 3.1%. In 1999, the first democratic election, Megawati's PDI-P also decisively defeated the Golkar Party. In 1999, PAN led by Amien Rais achieved 7%. Even though Amien previously led Muhammadiyah, the largest Islamic organization that was affiliated with Masyumi, PAN is a secular party (Liddle & Mujani, 2007).

Likewise, several politicians claimed to represent tens of millions of NU members, but only PKB, led by Abdurrahman Wahid, received many votes. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in the first nearly party-free first round of the 2004 presidential election, won a solid plurality over Megawati, the previously formidable PDI-P candidate. For the second round, the Golkar Party, PDI-P, and several smaller parties with more than half of the parliamentary vote formed a National Coalition to support Megawati. Yudhoyono's Coalition People's Counter only contained PD himself, PKS, and several small parties, accounting for less than a quarter of the parliamentary vote. Yudhoyono still convincingly beat Megawati by 61% to 39%. Most of his votes in both the first and second rounds came from parties other than his own. In a series of surveys conducted by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI), Yudhoyono was consistently voters' first choice for most major parties (Liddle & Mujani, 2007).

In the 2014 and 2019 elections respectively, Jokowi and Prabowo Subianto were the two central figures in each party. Even though Jokowi is not the leader of the PDI-P, he has the figure and characteristics of a strong leader. The situation in 2014 reversed somewhat, Joko Widodo succeeded in increasing his electability to become the majority party with 18.9 percent of the vote. Joko Widodo's positive performance built the strength of loyalists and volunteers, successfully leading Joko Widodo to become President of the Republic of Indonesia. One of the important dimensions of power for a leader figure is due to position and personal factors. The position a person holds can be a factor in a person being in power. In modern society, position determines a person's power, but for traditional rural communities, personal ability provides more legitimacy than position. Jokowi in the PDIP leadership aspect is seen using this second perspective.

Prabowo Subianto in the 2009, 2014, and 2019 elections proved empirical facts that he succeeded in bringing the Gerindra Party to the top 3 positions in the 2014 Legislative Election and a significant increase in the Gerindra Party's vote share in the 2019 election. Prabowo Subianto's strong figure in Gerindra since 2009 will continue to exist even until 2024.

Analysis of survey data for eight Indonesian elections shows that party leadership and identity are the most important determinants of party votes in legislative and presidential elections. Democratic parties through general elections require enormous funds and drain energy. If it fails to meet expectations, the opposite is likely to happen, instead of being a transformative leader, the problem of national and state stability is at stake (Dewi, 2014). Therefore, now is the time to return the spirit of general elections to its initial goal, namely producing capable leaders who can bring about (transformative) change toward a more prosperous Indonesia.

Conclusion

Political parties must properly place central figures in their respective parties. The central figure functions as a motivator, navigator, and inspirer for party cadres. Apart from that, figures can also be used as reference material for the public to choose a political party, when people find it difficult to distinguish the ideology of one party from another. However, the system, traditions, and cadre formation process must work as they should. Because only systems, traditions, and cadre formation will be the foundation of the future. A political party as a large organization is certainly not enough if it only relies on one individual. There must be leadership regeneration within the party. So, if the central figure is no longer in the party, the party can still survive and maintain its existence in society.

The 2024 elections will be able to produce capable and transformative leaders if all levels of Indonesian society can think clearly in choosing the leaders of their choice. It is not money, throne, and position that are taken into consideration, but capacity and credibility are the main benchmarks in choosing a candidate.

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