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PDI-P Beyond 2024 General Elections: Opposition, Cadreisation, and Ideology

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The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) faces at least three challenges in the post-2024 General Elections environment: defining its position vis-à-vis the next administration, sustaining internal cohesion, and maintaining relevance of party ideology.



Can PDI-P maintain party cohesion in the face of Megawati's charismatic hold over the party leadership? Image from Wikimedia Commons.

On [28 July 2024](#), Indonesia's General Elections Committee (KPU) officially announced the Indonesia's Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) as the winner of the 2024 National Legislative Election in which the party secured more than 25 million votes. Furthermore, PDI-P secured 110 national [parliamentary seats](#), the largest in the national parliament (DPR RI). Despite such success, PDI-P failed to secure victory for its presidential candidate Ganjar Pranowo in the 2024 Presidential Elections. In addition, the party's relationship with the current Indonesian President Joko Widodo or Jokowi went sour after the president decided to unofficially endorse the President Elect and Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto. The situation consequently put PDI-P in an intricate situation vis-à-vis the next administration.

Meanwhile, the upcoming 2024 regional elections or *Pilkada* presents the next electoral battleground for PDI-P. Previous regional elections have been remarkable for [lack of genuine ideological contestation](#). Furthermore, Prabowo's coalition, the Indonesia Forward Coalition (*Koalisi Indonesia Maju* or KIM) initially pledged to continue their political pact for some key 2024 Regional Elections. The coalition even managed to force some regions, such as Batam city and Banten province, to only have one candidate until a few days before registration deadline. Nonetheless, the [Constitutional Court's decision](#) to lower candidate nomination threshold for the 2024

Regional Elections altered the situation. The decision provided a possibility for political parties, including PDI-P, to nominate a candidate singlehandedly or with a smaller coalition.

Here PDI-P faces at least three challenges. The first challenge is defining its political stance for the next five years. Striking the balance between cadre promotion and accommodation of popular figures, particularly for the upcoming 2024 regional elections, is the next challenge. Third, transactionalism, populism, and pork barrel politics in Indonesia have undermined the significance of party ideology. This will be a litmus test for political parties that emphasise on ideology, such as the PDI-P.

To Be an Opposition or Not to Be

The rift between PDI-P and Jokowi has created a whole new environment for the party. This led to PDI-P losing the president's political support, and also getting alienated from the executive power circle. As a consequence, the possibility of PDI-P becoming an opposition is also unclear. In May 2024, PDI-P Chairwoman Megawati Soekarnoputri hinted at [joining the opposition](#) by citing the importance of checks and balances in a democracy.

Being an opposition, or what Megawati described as *penyeimbang* or balancer, in reality is not new for PDI-P. The party played such a role during President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's presidencies from 2004–2009 and 2009–2014. The party adopted two different oppositional approaches for the two periods. The rise of the late Megawati's husband Taufiq Kiemas and their daughter Puan Maharani became the key difference. The Taufiq and Puan camp acted as a channel of communication between Yudhoyono and PDI-P in the 2009–2014 period. The Taufiq and Puan camp even initially pondered [the possibility of PDI-P joining the Yudhoyono coalition](#). Eventually, PDI-P kept its opposition stance, but the party secured the Speaker of People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) position for Taufiq at that time.

The same scenario might be replicated for the next five years. During the 2024 Presidential elections, Puan for several times toned down her party comrades' criticism towards President Jokowi. Such efforts could hint at her intention to rebuild a good relationship between PDI-P and Jokowi. In addition, the party's [longstanding relationship](#) with Prabowo can be another factor that might soften PDI-P's oppositional approach. Megawati once picked Prabowo for her vice-presidential candidate in the 2009 Presidential elections. Furthermore, both PDI-P and Prabowo's Great Indonesia Movement party (Gerindra) share [the same understanding on the implementation of Pancasila ideology](#).

Party Cadres Versus Popular Candidates

PDI-P has formed a reputation as a party that emphasises the importance of cadreisation. In the 2024 Regional Elections, PDI-P announced its candidates in three phases and some at the last minute before the registration deadline. PDI-P announced 610 names in the [first phase](#) and claimed 56.4% of them are internal cadre. For the [second](#) and [third](#) phases, the party revealed 169 and 90 names. Some [last minute](#) entries include candidates for Jakarta governor, West Java governor, and East Java governor. There was also an idea for the party to nominate Anies Baswedan for

Jakarta governor, but the plan [was scrapped](#). Then, the party's West Java branch wanted to register Anies for the province's gubernatorial election but that plan also [met a dead end](#). It was reported that there was [internal resistance](#) against Anies candidacy, though it was [denied by the party](#).

Although the party has pushed forward a significant number of cadres in the 2024 Regional Elections, PDI-P still requires external figures to be an electorally competitive party. Nevertheless, adopting too many popular external figures contains an inherent risk for the party's cohesion, notably those who differ with the party ideology, and undermine the cadre system. Such lack of attachment to party ideology and leadership might shape these external figures into rent-seeking politicians who could undermine party unity.

Relevance of Party Ideology and Leadership Regeneration

Back in March 2023, PDI-P, through its cadres Ganjar Pranowo and I Wayan Koster, rejected Israel's participation in the 2023 FIFA U-20 World Cup, which was supposed to be hosted by Indonesia, [citing Soekarno's ideal of a world without colonialism](#). In the end, Indonesia's status as the 2023 U-20 World Cup host was cancelled. Unfortunately, this did not [draw positive sentiment](#) on social media or from the wider Indonesian population. Here PDI-P needs to carefully formulate the implementation of its party ideology in order to fit into the existing socio-political context, notably amidst rampant populist political campaigns and [personalistic politics](#).

In addition to [Marhaenism](#), Megawati's strong charisma also serves as another factor that binds the cohesion of the party. The potential regeneration of PDI-P leadership also presents a question over the ability of the next generation of leaders in representing the party's ideology. As a result, the next PDI-P leadership must own the capability of both ensuring the unity of the party and translating party ideology into practical and sensible policies.

Conclusion

Implementing moderation strategy to overcome the abovementioned three challenges might help PDI-P to keep a fair distance from the power circle. However, the approach requires sacrifice of certain ideals, such as primacy of political ideology and cadre-first nomination policy. Furthermore, the appearance of political figures from outside the party's cadre system might be an inevitable consequence. This indicates the need for crafting a party mechanism that can maintain the party's internal cohesion without overly depending on the personalistic charisma of the party's leadership. This is PDI-P's next homework.

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