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*Run-up to Indonesia's 2024 Elections*

## **Jokowi's Latest Reshuffle: Stabilising the Ruling Coalition?**

*By Alexander R Arifianto*

### **SYNOPSIS**

*Two years ahead of the 2024 simultaneous parliamentary and presidential elections, Indonesian President Joko Widodo once again reshuffled his cabinet. These latest changes are designed to retain the cohesiveness of his ruling rainbow coalition and minimise potential political disruptions prior to the elections.*

### **COMMENTARY**

ON 16 JUNE 2022, President Joko Widodo reshuffled his cabinet for the seventh time, replacing his trade minister, Muhammad Lutfi, amid a growing corruption scandal in his ministry over the awarding of palm oil export licences.

The scandal has resulted in the [indictment](#) of several current and former trade ministry officials, including its director-general of international trade. The attorney-general's office [has summoned](#) Lutfi for questioning, rendering him untenable to continue in the cabinet. Most importantly, the reshuffle is motivated by the president's desire to reward members of his large ruling coalition that have so far not been given cabinet positions.

### **Reshuffle Amid Party Political Manoeuvres**

This can be seen from his appointment of Zulkifli Hasan as the new trade minister to replace Lutfi. Zulkifli is the current chairman of the National Mandate Party (PAN), an Islamist party linked to Muhammadiyah – Indonesia's second largest Islamic organisation. Previously, he served as the minister of the environment and forestry from 2009 to 2014 under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

PAN is one of the few political parties in the coalition of President Joko (also known as Jokowi) that until now has not been represented in the cabinet despite its support for Jokowi.

More ominously for Jokowi, PAN in recent weeks has formed a new coalition arrangement called [the United Indonesia Coalition \(KIB\)](#) with another Islamist party the United Development Party (PPP) and the nationalist Golkar – the second largest political entity in the House of Representatives (DPR).

By forming KIB, the three parties have strengthened their common bargaining power as they positioned themselves for the 2024 simultaneous elections for the presidency and for representatives to the national and regional parliaments as well as the senate.

KIB also deliberately made their future political allegiance vague, as they indicated they are [open to be coalition partners](#) with any of the leading presidential candidates – including DPR speaker Puan Maharani, Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto, Central Java governor Ganjar Pranowo, and Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan.

As a coalition of three parties, KIB altogether command about 24 per cent of votes cast in the last general election in 2019. This is not insignificant. Jokowi's decision to appoint Zulkifli as the new trade minister could help sway his coalition partners to back the presidential candidate whom Jokowi endorses.

### **Rewarding a Trusted Ally**

Another significant new appointment in the latest cabinet reshuffle is the appointment of former Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) commander-in-chief Hadi Tjahjanto, who retired in November 2021.

Hadi became the new minister of agrarian affairs and spatial planning, which has the authority to issue land title certificates to individual and corporate landowners throughout Indonesia. He replaced Sofyan Djalil, who held the portfolio from the time Jokowi assumed office in October 2014.

Hadi was the commander of the [Solo Air Force Base](#) between 2010 and 2011, at the same time Jokowi served as the city's mayor. The two men have developed good personal ties ever since. Jokowi supposedly selected Hadi as TNI chief over other prospective nominees since Hadi is widely considered to be a loyal officer [without any political ambition of his own](#).

It is common for former Indonesian armed forces chiefs to start a political career after they have retired from active service. Given their extensive networks they have developed both within and outside of the military, a former TNI chief could easily gather significant followers and financial resources upon entering politics.

Gatot Nurmantyo, a former armed forces chief from 2015 to 2017, became [a strong critic](#) of the president and ended up [supporting](#) Prabowo Subianto's presidential candidacy against Jokowi in 2019.

With this appointment, Jokowi wished to ensure that Hadi would remain loyal to him

and would not campaign on behalf of any presidential candidate not endorsed by him when the 2024 election campaign season begins.

### **Can Jokowi Keep the Ruling Coalition Intact?**

Jokowi also appointed three politicians from his coalition partners as deputy ministers. They are respectively Raja Juli Antoni from the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) for agrarian affairs/spatial planning, Afriansyah Noor from the Crescent Star Party (PBB) for manpower, and John Wempi Watipo from the ruling Indonesian Democratic Party Struggle (PDI-P) for home affairs.

Zulkifli and Raja Juli are also [Muhammadiyah members](#). By appointing them into the cabinet, Jokowi wishes to address a [long-time concern](#) expressed by Muhammadiyah activists that he favoured Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) – the country’s largest Muslim organisation – over the former. Currently NU is represented by five individuals – Vice President Ma’ruf Amin and four additional ministers – in the president’s cabinet.

The president hoped that by accommodating each member of his political coalition, this would minimise any potential disruptions from these parties so that he may continue to work on his priorities – chiefly the construction of Nusantara – [Indonesia’s new capital](#) – over the remaining two years of his presidency.

However, this may prove even more difficult to achieve as the 2024 simultaneous elections approach. As indicated by the formation of KIB – some members of the president’s coalition are already planning ahead for a post-Jokowi presidency.

They – along with other coalition members – eventually will form their own political alignments – as the list of the prospective 2024 presidential candidates become clearer over the next few months.

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*Alexander R Arifianto is a Research Fellow in the Indonesia Programme at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore.*

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