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PDIP and the 2024 General Elections: Generational Shift and Party Consolidation

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SYNOPSIS

*The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, better known as PDIP, is eyeing a potential third consecutive win in the presidential and legislative elections of 2024. **ADHI PRIAMARIZKI** discusses the party's electoral strategy as it faces a generational shift and the challenge of ensuring internal consolidation.*

COMMENTARY

In April 2023, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) announced Ganjar Pranowo, the current Central Java governor and a former member of parliament, as the party's candidate for the 2024 presidential election. Since the party commands more than 20% of the seats in the national parliament, it is not obliged to form a coalition with any other party in order to exercise the right to nominate a presidential candidate. PDIP is optimistic that it will once again emerge the winner in the next legislative elections, also scheduled to take place in 2024. This victory, if it comes to pass, will make the PDIP the first political party in the post-1998 reform period to win three consecutive legislative elections. This confidence is in line with various survey results that consistently show the PDIP to be the top runner among the various political parties.

The 2024 presidential elections will be the third time that the PDIP's presidential nominee is not its party chief. Joko Widodo (Jokowi), who won the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections, was nominated by the PDIP but he is not from the party's top echelons. Prior to the 2014 general elections, the party's chair, Megawati

Soekarnoputri, was the party's ultimate presidential candidate. Although she is no longer PDIP's presidential candidate, Megawati's leadership, charisma, and influence remain irreplaceable within the party. Nevertheless, the party is undergoing a generational shift, with younger party figures such as Megawati's daughter, Puan Maharani, gearing up to take bigger roles in the party. How is the PDIP consolidating itself amid the generational shift and in view of the upcoming elections?

Passing the Leadership Baton

The 2024 general elections provide momentum for Megawati to provide larger party roles for her children, Puan Maharani and Prananda Prabowo. Puan acts as the day-to-day operational leader, while Prananda holds responsibility for crafting PDIP's electoral strategy and translating the party's ideology into action. In June 2023, Puan met with Agus Yudhoyono, chairman of the Democratic Party (PD), to discuss various issues, including the possibility of [political reconciliation between PDIP and PD](#). Megawati previously [mandated](#) Puan to embark on a political safari (*safari politik*) to meet various political party leaders. The safari not only deepened communications between PDIP and other political parties but also served as an opportunity for Puan to show and implement her own leadership and communication style. Meanwhile, [Prananda](#) monitors national political dynamics and plans the party's electoral strategy, including the strategy for the 2024 presidential and legislative elections. Both Puan and Prananda have been often perceived as potential successors to their mother given their Soekarno bloodline and crucial roles in the party.

But the PDIP's next generation leadership does not only revolve around the Soekarno family. The party has managed to produce party cadres who are capable of rising to the national political stage, such as Ganjar and Jokowi. PDIP cadres come from various backgrounds; some are even former members of other political parties. The party in general consists of former activists, bureaucrats, and professionals, including retired military and police officers. Despite being known as a national-secularist party, PDIP includes a handful of cadres with strong Islamic backgrounds. The party even has an Islamic wing, the Baitul Muslimin Indonesia (BAMUSI), which was formed in 2007.

PDIP has been characterised as a party with a strong organisation and emphasis on ideology. But the diversity in the backgrounds of its cadres, while showcasing the party's inclusivity, poses a challenge to the party's organisation and ideology. This is especially the case when the party's cadres acquire power and their own interests as they attain legislative positions or positions as regional heads. Ensuring a smooth transfer of power and preservation of party ideology among the cadres thus requires building a good cadreisation system. It also requires a strong unifying figure to maintain party cohesion.

Party Consolidation and Preparation for Presidential Elections

Party consolidation has thus become an important item on the PDIP's agenda as it faces the 2024 general elections. The party's recent grand event, ["Month of Bung Karno"](#), which culminated on 24 June 2023 at Gelora Bung Karno stadium in Jakarta, did not only serve as a show of power but also as a means of ensuring party

consolidation. The mobilisation of a massive number of PDIP cadres indicated the readiness of PDIP's political machinery.



The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) recently held the Month of Bung Karno commemoration on 24 June 2023. Video screens in the stadium feature Governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo, who had been put forward as a presidential candidate for the upcoming 2024 elections. The event was not only a show of the party's power but was also a means of ensuring party consolidation. *Image from Wikimedia Commons.*

Control over the party's mass base has emerged as a hot topic within the party, notably after the rise of Jokowi to the presidency. Volunteers had played a significant role in helping Jokowi secure the presidency both in 2014 and 2019. Interestingly, Jokowi never disbanded his network of volunteers and even held meetings with them at Gelora Bung Karno stadium in November 2022 and more recently in May 2023. The political power provided by this network of volunteers has been undermining the chain of command between the president, as a PDIP cadre, and his party. PDIP thus has been trying to avoid a repetition of such insubordination by strengthening its control over the party's masses and its presidential candidate's network of volunteers. By doing so, PDIP hopes to exert greater control not only over its presidential candidates but also holders of other executive positions and ensure that these players adhere to the party's ideology, norms and values. In short, the party leadership must be the one that controls the entire political machinery.

The Month of Bung Karno celebration also witnessed former [TNI Chief Gen \(Ret\) Andika Perkasa joining Ganjar's campaign team](#). The inclusion of Andika to the team is crucial as it indicates PDIP's intention to improve relations with the military by accommodating more retired officers into the party's cadre circle. Andika represents the younger generation of military officers who formed good relations with the party and its chair. Megawati herself is no stranger in terms of having military officers as her close confidants or party cadres. Some of them include former State Intelligence Agency (BIN) Chief A. M. Hendropriyono, Tubagus Hasanuddin, and the late Theo Syafei.

Such moves show that the 2024 general elections not only serve as an electoral battleground but also as a test case for younger PDIP figures as well as an opportunity to consolidate the party. Taking full control over the party's masses and its network of volunteers will be the key means for the party to achieve internal cohesion. Taking

such control can significantly curb the primacy of volunteers in political campaigns and ensure a more stable relationship between the party and its presidential candidate while also curtailing potential challenges to the party leadership. A strong party cadre system will allow party cadres who may not lead the party to rise to top positions in Indonesia's national politics while ensuring they do not become power centres independent of the party.

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