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## **The Indonesian Solidarity Party and Jokowi's Post-2024 Game Plan**

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### **SYNOPSIS**

*The Indonesian Solidarity Party is shaping up as a key component of President Jokowi's strategy to retain his political influence after he steps down in 2024. **JEFFERSON NG** analyses the president's end game and the likely PDIP response.*

### **COMMENTARY**

The Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) is a small political party that recently made headlines as a result of the appointment of incumbent President Jokowi's youngest son, Kaesang Pangarep, as the new party chairman, barely two days after he had joined the party. It currently does not have seats in the national parliament as it failed to cross the 4% vote threshold in the 2019 parliamentary elections.

However, PSI has become a significant political player at the regional level, with its MPs present in many major cities in Indonesia. The party has also developed a reputation for its stringent anti-corruption and anti-intolerance stance, as well as high quality constituency work.

Under Kaesang's leadership, the party is expected to draw significant support from Jokowi volunteer groups and make a push to enter the national parliament during the 2024 legislative elections. Given the party's special relationship with Jokowi and with his son now helming it, PSI is well-placed to influence the trajectory of the national legislative elections and the post-Jokowi political settlement.



During his first speech as Chairman of the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI), Jokowi's youngest son, Kaesang Pangarep, called for the PSI to embrace a style of politics that is more polite (*santun*) and relaxed (*santuy*), in marked contrast to its previous confrontational approach with other political parties. *Image from author.*

## PSI's Origins and Development

PSI was formed in late 2014 by a group of Jokowi supporters and volunteers. They include former journalist and pollster Grace Natalie, former model and journalist Isyana Bagoes Oka, current vice-minister for Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning Raja Juli Antoni, and investor cum party funder Jeffrie Geovanie.

Consciously styling itself as a youth/millennial party (*partai anak muda*), PSI successfully made inroads into the Jakarta regional legislature in 2019, with eight MPs performing best in urban areas with large numbers of educated, middle-class youths who are frequent social media users.

The party has pioneered various initiatives that have been broadly popular. These include recruitment of the party's legislative candidates through a public debate and panel review process, rejecting potential candidates convicted of corruption, hiring professional and full-time party employees, encouraging greater transparency in the budget process, and promoting the interests of vulnerable groups, such as the disabled community and victims of sexual assault.

Yet, as a small party in Indonesia seeking to swim against the political current, PSI in late 2022 and early 2023 faced a significant exodus of members who were pessimistic about the party's future prospects. Finding a political patron who is able to protect it from attacks by other political parties was key. This imperative has influenced the party's special relationship with Jokowi.

## PSI's Relationship with Jokowi

PSI's close relationship with Jokowi is borne out of mutual admiration and necessity. The party's semi-official ideology is "[Jokowism](#)", which seeks to realise Jokowi's dream of making Indonesia a developed country by 2045 and calls for leaders to be close to

the people and to actively serve the public interest. At the same time, the PSI national leadership calculated that latching on to Jokowi (through Kaesang) presents them with their best shot of entering national politics.

PSI's need for political protection from a powerful politician is best exemplified by the fact that it nearly failed the party verification exercise required by the Election Commission to contest in the 2024 election. At one point, many of PSI's regional offices in Central Java failed the verification exercise because some of the regional Election Commission offices were staffed by political party members hostile to PSI. It was only through high-level political intervention that PSI was able to clear these administrative obstacles.

On the other side of things, Jokowi has praised PSI for being a political "[unicorn](#)" that disrupted Indonesian politics and upended the old ways of doing things. Indirectly supporting PSI benefits Jokowi because after he steps down from power, he will be an ordinary cadre of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) without influence in the party. In that regard, with so many PSI members being Jokowi fans, PSI offers a readymade vehicle for Jokowi to influence the political scene post 2024.

### **PSI's Electoral Impact**

Based on PSI's anti-corruption and anti-intolerance electoral platform, the party is a good ideological fit for many educated and urban middle-class young voters across Indonesia, especially in major cities. At the same time, PSI is expected to pull support from PDIP voters who are disappointed with its performance in government (especially on the issue of corruption) and would prefer a political alternative to PDIP matriarch Megawati Sukarnoputri.

As a significant number of PDIP voters come from minority groups (Chinese, Christian, Hindu, etc) that have traditionally voted for PDIP's inclusive nationalist platform, PSI provides an alternative for such groups and centrist voters who are disappointed with PDIP but still want to see a more religiously inclusive Indonesia. Finally, the appointment of Kaesang as chairman is likely to have a demonstrable electoral impact. A recent [survey simulation](#) showed that the proportion of PSI voters increased from 1.1% to 3.5% when Kaesang was mentioned as the PSI chairman.

If PSI is able to cross the threshold, it is then likely to pare down PDIP's current dominance in the national parliament. This prospect explains why the Gerindra party (the second largest Indonesian party) has been very friendly towards and welcoming of PSI.

### **Jokowi's End Game and his Relationship with PDIP**

Jokowi's recent political manoeuvres to place his family members in key political positions look unfriendly, if not hostile, to PDIP's interests. Kaesang's leadership of PSI has led a flood of Jokowi volunteers (many of whom are PDIP voters) to join the party – [some 13,000 new members](#) joined the party in the one week following Kaesang's assumption of the chairmanship. The largest Jokowi volunteer group ProJo and PSI have now declared their support for the presidency of Prabowo Subianto. This means that the bulk of Jokowi volunteers have joined Prabowo's camp.

At the same time, Jokowi's eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, is now Prabowo's vice-presidential candidate and is expected to be parachuted into the Golkar party's leadership board. This turn of events has upended PDIP's hopes that Jokowi, as a PDIP cadre, will at least stay neutral between the competing candidates or ideally endorse the candidacy of the PDIP's Ganjar Pranowo. Instead, Jokowi will support Prabowo through proxies, avoiding an explicit endorsement or burning bridges with the PDIP.

Jokowi's indirect endorsement of Prabowo puts Ganjar and PDIP in a deeply awkward position. Ganjar has long referred to Jokowi as a mentor and wants to position himself as Jokowi's successor. However, the deepening rift between PDIP and Jokowi has torpedoed those hopes. PDIP's appointment of Mahfud MD as Ganjar's running mate without consulting with Jokowi indicates that the party has confidence in its internal party machinery and that it is moving decisively towards a post-Jokowi era.

Thus far, PDIP seems content to carry on the charade that all is well between itself and the president, and that it is focused on Ganjar's campaign. However, it is clear that with Jokowi's support thrown behind Prabowo, PDIP will face an uphill struggle. The party will need to run a politically savvy campaign that takes advantage of its internal cohesion and discipline to win against the far better resourced but also unwieldy coalition supporting Prabowo.

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