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CAPTURING ANTI-JOKOWI SENTIMENT AND ISLAMIC CONSERVATIVE MASSES
PKS 2019 STRATEGY

ADHI PRIAMARIZKI AND DEDI DINARTO

S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES SINGAPORE

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Abstract

This paper examines the Prosperous and Justice Party (PKS)'s strategy in the 2019 Indonesian general elections. Among the Islamic-based political parties, PKS gained the most significant increase in votes. We aspire to understand the breakthrough by looking at the party's strategy. On the one hand, our findings confirm the existing studies that correctly noted the moving of Indonesian political parties towards a "catch-all" direction by which they aim to garner wider support beyond a specific type of voter base. On the other hand, our research notes that PKS has started to exploit the phenomenon of rising Islamic conservatism in Indonesia. Despite solely maintaining an inclusive electoral strategy, this research asserts that the party has adjusted its campaign strategy to fit in with the trend of rising Islamic conservatism while concurrently exploiting the anti-incumbent president (Joko Widodo) sentiment. This paper aims to enhance discussion on Indonesian politics as well as Indonesia's political parties, particularly the PKS.

Keywords: PKS, Indonesian politics, political parties.

Introduction

A study from Greg Fealy (2008) noted the changing patterns of Islamic behaviour in Indonesia which has gained a greater presence in social, cultural, and political life compared to the 1960s. These new patterns of behaviour are evident, for example, changes in the way of dressing, increase in the number of mosques and congregations, and regular appearances of *dakwah* (preaching) talk shows in national television channels as well as social media platforms. Cases of religious intolerance, notably hate speech and repeated attacks against Indonesian Christians and Muslim minority sects (e.g., Ahmadiyya and Shia communities) started appearing regularly in the country, particularly in the later years of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's presidency (2004–2014) (Njoto-Feillard, 2015).[1] These phenomena displayed how deeply Islam has penetrated into the many elements of Indonesian society, and has even spread into the political sphere.

A series of demonstrations called the *Aksi Bela Islam* (Action to Defend Islam), which took place in Jakarta demanding the prosecution of former Governor of Jakarta Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or Ahok (2014–2017) for his perceived blasphemy of Islam, became an example of religious conservatism extending to politics. Ahok's statement on Quran's Al-Maidah 51, that instructs Muslims to avoid choosing non-Muslim leaders, caused a stir among a large portion of Indonesian Muslims. Many members of Islamic organisations, including the two mainstream Islamic organisations of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, joined the rallies. The 4 November 2016 (411) and 2 December 2016 (212) demonstrations drew a huge crowd at Jakarta's Monas (National Monument). Ahok was repeatedly labelled as a *kafir asing* or foreign infidel, and was subsequently sentenced to two years in prison for his comments. Ahok's identity as a Chinese Indonesian was also being used against him, thereby continuing the practice of racial and identity politics in Indonesian politics. Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi (2017) studied the political consequence of such phenomena. Their survey-based study revealed a correlation between religious devoutness and voting behaviour. Many of those who identified themselves as devout Muslims opted to vote against Ahok, despite being satisfied with his performance.

The people behind the demonstrations later called themselves the 212 Movement (*Gerakan* 212) with the founder of Islamic Defenders Front (FPI),[2] Rizieq Shihab as its leader. The group also aimed to replicate the success of 212 in toppling Ahok at the national level by ousting Jokowi in the

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[1] A study from Setara Institute, a CSO focusing on human rights issue in Indonesia, showed 220 cases of violent attacks on religious minorities in 2013. Gwenaël Njoto-Feillard, "Religious Pluralism and Tolerance in Jokowi's Indonesia," *ISEAS Perspective* 10 (2015), https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2015_10.pdf

[2] FPI has been notorious for its extortion, racket, and violent activities, covered by religious justification, though recently the group tried to appear more humane through involvement in social activities. The group was allegedly formed by military elites to supress pro-democratic movement in the early days of reform era. For further study on thug organisations in Indonesia, see Ian Douglas Wilson, *The Politics of Protection Rackets in Post-New Order Indonesia* (Oxon and NY: Routledge, 2015).

2019 presidential elections (IPAC, 2018).[3] The continued smear campaigns, particularly to delegitimise Jokowi's Islamic credentials, seemed targeted towards the incumbent. The trend of conservatism did not show any deterioration following the 2019 general elections. The battle between Jokowi and Prabowo Subianto was marred by rampant use of identity politics, particularly among the Muslim population. Rising conservatism of Indonesian Muslims became one of the enabling factors for the flourishing identity politics. The continued attacks on his Islamic background gave a strong reason for Jokowi to pick Kyai Haji Ma'ruf Amin — a seasoned Islamic cleric and the head of Indonesia Ulama Council (2015–Present) — as his running mate, who is perceived to be able to shield, at least partially, the incumbent president from smear campaigns.[4]

While the rise of Islamic conservatism appears significantly on the political scene, Islamic-based political parties in the 2019 parliamentary election — held simultaneously with the presidential race — failed to translate the phenomenon into a satisfying result (See Table 1). Only the Prosperous and Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* / PKS) grasped more than 1 per cent vote increase (1.83 per cent). The National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* / PKB), a party closely affiliated to the largest Indonesian Muslim organisation, NU, could only raise its vote by 0.23 per cent. Other Islamic-based parties saw their vote base depreciate miserably. For instance, the United Development Party (PPP), an Islamic party that has been around since the New Order era, lost almost 2 per cent. National Mandate Party (*Partai Amanat Nasional* / PAN), which enjoyed a close affiliation with Muhammadiyah, another major Indonesian Muslim institution, squandered about 1 per cent. Former Minister of Law (1999–2001 and 2001–2004) and Minister of State Secretary (2004–2007), Yusril Ihza Mahendra's Crescent Star Party (*Partai Bulan Bintang* / PBB) gained less than 1 per cent in 2019.

Table 1: 2014 and 2019 Islamic parties' vote percentage

Political Party	2014 Election	2019 Election	Differences
PKS	6,79	8,62	1,83
PKB	9,04	9,27	0,23
PAN	7,59	6,62	-0,97
PPP	6,53	4,60	-1,93
PBB	1,46	0,75	-0,71

Source: Kontan.co.id

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[3] Later Mardani Ali Sera, an elite member of PKS, admitted to the media that his party used the 212 movement to win the Jakarta's 2017 Gubernatorial Elections. He suggested Anies Baswedan and Sandiaga Uno, winning pair of the 2017 Jakarta elections, to appear more Islamic by using *peci* (Indonesian traditional cap, identical with Muslims), and meet Rizieq Shihab to get his blessings. Bintoro Agung, "Mardani Akui Manfaatkan Aksi 212 untuk Menangkan Anies-Sandi," *CNN Indonesia*, July 12, 2018, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20180712200852-32-313676/mardani-akui-manfaatkan-aksi-212-untuk-menangkan-anies-sandi

[4] The selection of Amin as Jokowi's running mate is seen as the key factor of the incumbent gaining significant votes in Central and East Java provinces. Raymundus Rikang, "Abang-Ijo Di Kandang Banteng," *Tempo*, April 20, 2019, https://majalah.tempo.co/read/157527/abang-ijo-di-kandang-banteng

While the 2019 parliamentary election displayed rising Islamic conservatism, it did not translate into numerical gains for Islamic parties. However, Muslim voters have the tendency to vote for party, legislative candidates, or a presidential candidate with stronger Muslim identity (Mujani, Liddle, & Ambardi, 2019, p. 113). Islamic parties might be able to exploit this circumstance only when they can offer better economic policy credentials than secular parties (Pepinsky, Liddle, & Mujani, 2018, p. 101). Despite the general acceptance of the miserable election results for the Islamic parties', PKS drew public attention by gaining almost 2 per cent in total votes from the previous election. In fact, the party gained the highest increase of vote percentage compared to other contestants, including the secular parties.[5] Given this background, this paper aims to shed some lights on PKS's achievement in boosting its votes. How did PKS manage to perform better than its Islamic party counterparts?

One possible way to answer the question is to look at PKS's electoral strategy. This paper employed desktop research, literature review, and interviews with several members of PKS who were involved in the campaign in order to define and understand the party's electoral strategy. Reflecting on the findings from these approaches, our argument hinges on the notion that the party has been targeting anti-Jokowi masses while at the same time adjusting its campaign plan to fit in with the rising Islamic conservatism trend. While targeting the two specific voter pools, PKS also kept its populist approach, expecting to attract wider audiences beyond the two groups. On the one hand, our findings confirmed the existing studies that noted the adoption of a "catch-all" strategy which enabled Indonesian political parties to attract wider support beyond a specific type of voter base. On the other hand, this research revealed that PKS has begun exploiting the phenomenon of rising Islamic conservatism in Indonesia. To provide context to the reader, the next section discusses the electoral strategy of PKS in the run up to the 2019 election.

PKS's 2019 Strategy

The failure to improve its vote percentage in the 2014 general elections[6] served as a lesson-learned for PKS to construct a better strategy for the 2019 general elections. As one of the most institutionalised parties in Indonesia, PKS has been well known for its militant cadres and disciplined party machinery (Hamayotsu, 2011a). The party also requires its parliament member candidates to garner potential votes outside their usual base.[7] Such a policy could mean that these candidates propose an inclusive campaign strategy to reach out to the general audience.

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[5] About a year prior to the 2019 elections, PKS experienced an internal dispute following the formation of Indonesia's New Direction Movement (*Gerakan Arah Baru Indonesia* / GARBI) by the party's former president Anis Matta (2013–2015). Nevertheless, there was no sign of negative impact or maybe not yet, towards PKS's voter turnout. GARBI leadership in July 2019 announced the plan to transform the organisation into a political party. Karina M. Tehusijarana, "Mass organization led by PKS black sheep to become party," The Jakarta Post, July 11, 2019, https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/07/10/mass-organization-led-by-pks-black-sheep-to-become-party.html

[6] PKS gained 7.88 per cent in the 2009 parliamentary election. The number nonetheless fell to 6.79 per cent in the 2014 legislative elections.

[7] Authors' interview with Suhud Aliyudin, PKS's Politics, Law, and Security Division Secretary, Jakarta, 26 June 2019.

This phenomenon, according to a handful of scholars, has shown that PKS is characterised more as a "catch-all" party rather than a pure Islamic-based party (Hamayotsu, 2011b; Muhtadi, 2012; Mujani, Liddle, & Ambardi, 2019). The findings from authors' field observation during Prabowo's campaign (*kampanye akbar*) on 7 April 2019 at Jakarta's Gelora Bung Karno Stadium strengthened the perception of PKS being a "catch-all" party. During the campaign, a member of the party was seen distributing a flyer containing "8 reasons to vote for PKS" (see Photo 1). The English version of the flyer is as follows:

(i)   Islamic party that is close to the cleric and Islamic community (*ulama* and *Ummah*);
(ii)   Actively involved in disaster relief;
(iii)   Preserving unity and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*;
(iv)   Supporting young people;
(v)   Public information transparency;
(vi)   Safeguarding the poor;
(vii)   Best financial report; and
(viii) Anti-corruption commitment.

Among the eight clauses, only the first clause strongly indicated the Islamic nuance of PKS.
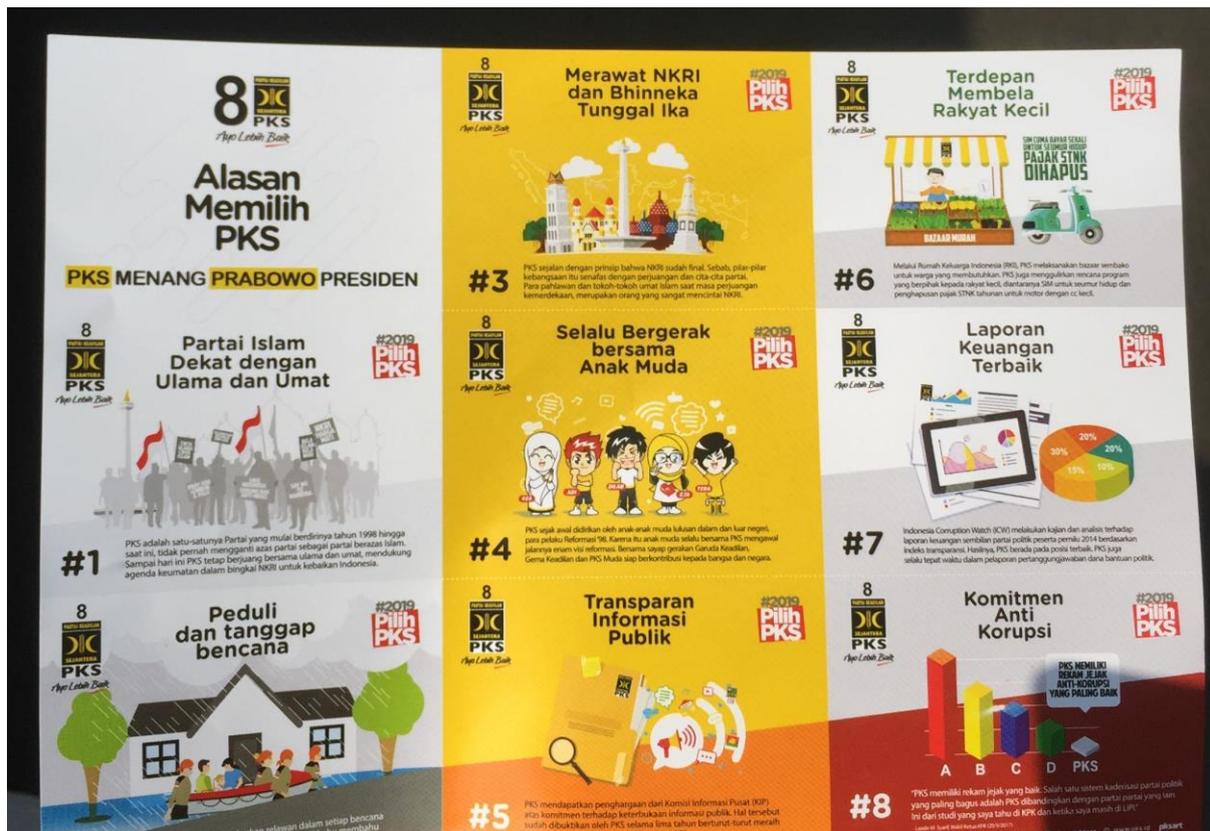
Source: Adhi Priamarizki

Another evidence of PKS being a "catch-all" party was reflected in the way PKS supported non-Muslim candidates, predominantly in the eastern provinces of Indonesia. For instance, PKS, together with Prabowo's political party, Gerindra (*Gerakan Indonesia Raya*/Great Indonesia Movement), nominated non-Muslim candidates in both the 2017 regional elections and 2019 general elections. In the 2017 regional elections, the two parties nominated Herman Yosef Loli Wutun-Yohanes Viany K. Burin from Lembata, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Meanwhile, Gerindra and PKS registered non-Muslims regional parliament member candidates for some eastern Indonesia regions in the 2019 general elections.[8] PKS's Head of Politics Department, Pipin Sopian explained to the authors that his party adopted the *sikap proporsionalitas* (proportionality stance) for this issue.[9] It means the party will choose a leader who represents the vast majority of the society. In that case, PKS is seemingly similar to other political parties in Indonesia which have become mainstream in the democratic political system.

PKS and the anti-Jokowi sentiment

PKS exploited the anti-Jokowi sentiment to achieve its political objective. As PKS's voter base is largely urban Muslim middle-class, many of them are not supportive of Jokowi,[10] according to a PKS elite. This made with the supporting of Jokowi's presidential candidacy less probable, although an alliance with the President's party, PDI-P, was formed in various regional elections.[11] In addition, PKS felt the party has similarities with Prabowo who the party saw as a nationalist figure without being anti-Islam.[12] Having militant cadres as its strongest advantage, PKS has proven itself as the most institutionalised and disciplined political party in Indonesia to campaign for Prabowo's presidency through wide-ranging means and strategies.[13]

While PKS's approach on anti-Jokowi sentiment seems to provide a signal of targetting a specific voter base, the purpose of such an approach shows PKS's intention as a "catch-all" party to broaden its voters base. In the 2019 presidential elections, PKS capitalised on Sandiaga Uno's popularity, particularly to attract millenials and people outside PKS's base.[14] A short video uploaded on PKS's Youtube Channel (PKS TV) and social media platforms of the party's cadres, portrayed Sandi with millenial voters (see Photo 2). Two young ladies in the picture did not wear hijab which is unlike the typical PKS's cadres. It was actually intended to attract more inclusive audiences.[15] PKS also attempted to be the most active member of Prabowo's supporters by initiating Prabowo-Sandi flash mob campaigns in some big cities in Indonesia, notably in Jakarta, the country's capital, and Bandung, the capital of West Java Province.

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[8] This strategy, however, is not exclusive to PKS as other Islamic-based parties did the same.
[9] Authors' interview with Pipin Sopian, PKS's Head of Politics Department, Jakarta, 21 June 2019.
[10] Authors' interview with Umar Salim, Head of Advisory Board of PKS Muda (PKS Youth), Jakarta, 16 July 2019.
[11] In 2018 Simultaneous Regional Elections (*Pilkada*), PDIP and PKS formed a coalition in 33 elections (3 gubernatorial, 24 municipals, and 6 city elections). See Erwin Dariyanto, "PDIP-Gerindra Koalisi di 48 Daerah, PDIP-PKS di 33 Daerah," *detikNews*, June 26, 2018, https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4083401/pdip-gerindra-koalisi-di-48-daerah-pdip-pks-di-33-daerah
[12] Authors' interview with Ledia Hanifa.
[13] Authors' interview with Pipin Sopian.
[14] Authors' interview with Suhud Aliyudin.
[15] Ibid.

Screenshot of Sandi's Video Campaign (Source: PKS TV)

The next strategy of the PKS was the introduction of *politik gagasan* (idea politics) in the run up to the 2019 elections to attract voters who were opposed to the Jokowi administration's socio-economic policy. In general, two approaches were orchestrated under this strategy. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood-inspired party[16] attempted to exploit populist issues, accommodating lower middle-class society. PKS proposed the elimination of vehicle registration certificate (*Surat Tanda Kendaraan Bermotor*/STNK) and driver licence (*Surat Izin Mengemudi*/SIM) fees for motorcyclists. Furthermore, the party suggested tax annulment for income below Rp 8 million (US$570). PKS framed these ideas in stark contrast to the Jokowi administration's policies, which have been known for its enthralling infrastructure development, particularly toll roads for four-wheeled transportations. The party, however, argued that the development has failed to accommodate the needs of lower middle-class population by citing people in rural areas mostly using motorcycles as their primary transportation.[17] Meanwhile, the tax alleviation proposal was directed against Jokowi's tax amnesty programme that targeted entrepreneurs and conglomorates.

To broaden its support base, PKS organised a nationwide social media-based movement under the hashtag *#2019GantiPresiden* or #2019ChangePresident, which became considerably active. PKS's President Sohibul Iman gave a public statement clarifying that this movement is part of PKS's programme to provide political education to the public (*VIVA*, 2018). It was initiated by the party's secretary-general, Mardani Ali Sera, in March 2018 through a series of tweets and the promotion of a t-shirt and wristband with the #2019GantiPresiden label during a TV session. According to Mardani, the

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[16] See Yon Machmudi, *Islamising Indonesia: The Rise of Jemaah Tarbiyah and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008); M. Imdadun Rahmat, *Ideologi Politik PKS: Dari Masjid Kampus ke Gedung Parlemen* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2008).

[17] Ibid.

movement was an anti-thesis from Jokowi's social media-based activism, such as #JokowiDuaPeriode (Jokowi for Two Terms) and #2019TetapJokowi (2019 Still for Jokowi). Despite the claim from Mardani that the movement had gathered significant steam on Twitter, a survey conducted by Roda Tiga Konsultan (RTK) reported that the movement received less attention on the platform. However, it did gain strong support on Facebook and Whatsapp (*CNN Indonesia*, 2018b). Either way, this online-based political movement pionereed by PKS demonstrated a repetition of the party's utilisation of digital media in the conduct of Indonesian electoral politics (Purbo, 2002).

PKS's social media-based movement subsequently gained traction in several cities, including Batam, Jakarta, Makassar, Medan, Surabaya, and Surakarta where a considerable number of people took to the streets to declare their support for the movement. Despite the absence of precise information regarding the number of people at the rallies, the #2019GantiPresiden movement had captured both public and media attention. For instance, the rallies in Makassar and Surabaya resulted in disarray with clashes between Jokowi and Prabowo supporters. In Surakarta, the rally occurred in front of Gibran Rakabuming's business stall (Jokowi's eldest son), albeit the mass proclaimed that it happened coincidentally (*Kompas*, 2018). In short, a combination of both online and offline activism from the supporters had amplified PKS in the public's eyes.

Although public opinion had predominantly perceived this movement as an attempt to support Prabowo's presidential campaign, there had been no public statement from PKS members providing a clear clarification about the intention. Mardani himself declared that the social media-based movement was more about spreading anti-Jokowi sentiment rather than supporting Prabowo to become the Indonesian president (Ibrahim, 2018). The movement exploited a mixture of economic and religious issues, including Jokowi's persecution of ulama (Muslim religious leaders) and discrimination against Muslims, and the increasing price of staple food due to ineffective economic policies. This stance, however, was proven wrong four months after the 2019 general elections had ended when Mardani dismissed the movement and declared it as "haram" or "forbidden", yet maintained intact relationships with other pro-Prabowo coalition parties (*CNN Indonesia*, 2019b). The circumstances showed that PKS had exploited the #2019GantiPresiden movement as part of its inclusive strategy to boost the party's electoral numbers.

Being a "catch-all" party notwithstanding, some early signals provided an initial step of deviation from such trends. Some PKS members half-heartedly rejected the "catch-all" identification because PKS remains a party based on Islamic mass, but not limited to a certain segment of mass base.[18] In addition, PKS has used identity politics as a pragmatic political strategy to encourage Jakartan Muslims to vote for Muslim leaders in the 2017 Jakarta Governor elections, demonstrating its emphasis as a Islamic-based political party. During the #2019ChangePresident campaign where PKS is interpreted to expand its voters base, it forged relationships with a handful of key figures in the targeted cities who

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[18] Authors' interview with Ledia Hanifa, PKS's Head of Public Relations, Jakarta, 3 May 2019; Author's interview with Pipin Sopian; Author's interview with Suhud Aliyudin.

are affiliated with the 411 and 212 movements. In Batam, PKS worked closely with Ustadz Erwin Abu Gaza, the leader of *Aliansi Umat Islam Batam Bersatu* (United Batam Islamic Alliance), who also participated in both the 411 and 212 Movements in Jakarta. In South Sulawesi, PKS had a close collaboration with local Islamic conservative groups, including *Laskar Pemburu Aliran Sesat*, Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), Islamist Committee for the Preparation of Shariah Enactment (KPPSI), Arimatea Forum, Anti Syiah National Alliance (ANNAS) for South Sulawesi, and *Syabab* (Youth) Hidayatullah (Kurniawan, 2018). Such paradoxical actions of the PKS has been interpreted as both "catch-all" and Islamic-based political party. However, it has also led to confusion over PKS's identity. Our findings elucidate that the PKS has in fact adjusted its campaign plan to fit in with the rising conservatism trend in Indonesian politics following the 2019 election, and showing a tendency to concentrate on a specific group of voters.

PKS and Rising Conservatism in Indonesia

The previous section noted how PKS implemented an inclusive strategy in the 2019 general elections. However, it did not exclusively depend on the "catch-all" strategy. The appearance of both the 411 and 212 movements in 2016 was a critical juncture in the rise of conservatism in Indonesia, and from which PKS had benefited politically. Both events produced an unprecedented environment for Indonesian politics, whereby several clerics (*ulama*) outside mainstream Islamic organisations like NU and Muhammadiyah received prominence. These series of demonstrations helped PKS identify potential new voters from urban middle-class Muslims who could now express their aspiration more openly than before.[19]

Based on interviews with some PKS members, the party intentionally associates itself with the Islamist groups linked to the 411 and 212 movements. PKS had its first attempt to grow relationships with the Islamist groups by facilitating its cadres and sympathisers, and even the general population to join the demonstrations back in 2016. During an interview with the authors, Mrs Ledia Hanifa, PKS's Head of Public Relations and a member of parliament, mentioned that PKS facilitated and supported its cadres and sympathisers, who wanted to join the 411 and 212 marches, albeit without carrying any party attributes.[20] While PKS overtly declared its association with the movements, other Islamic parties such as PKB and PAN were hesitant to support the 411 and 212 movements. While PKB pledged its support towards Jokowi's presidential candidacy, PAN was divided internally on whether to support the Islamist groups.

Another strategy was of PKS forging a close alignment to the 411 and 212 movements, particularly with its *ulama* and key figures. Involving itself in the process of the so-called *ijtima ulama*, a meeting of "conservative" clerics across Indonesia masterminded by Bachtiar Nasir and Yusuf

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[19] Authors' interview with Mrs Ledia Hanifa.
[20] Ibid.

Muhammad Martak, was part of this strategy.[21] The meeting intended to offer recommendations for Prabowo's vice presidential candidacy. The first *ijtima ulama*, announced on 29 July 2018, called out Ustadz Abdul Somad Batubara, Indonesia's most followed cleric on social media, and Salim Segaf Al-Jufri or Habib Salim, PKS's Head of Syariah Council. An article on PKS's website claimed that 600 clerics and national figures attented the meeting (*PKS*, 2018).

PKS cadres had been actively promoting the result of the meeting to boost the popularity of their party and, at that time, presidential candidate Prabowo.[22] Intriguingly, Prabowo's decision to choose Sandiaga Uno (Sandi Uno) as his running mate did not cause those conservatives to turn their back.[23] Instead of doing so, they formed the second *ijtima ulama*, held on 16 September 2018, to acknowledge Uno's nomination. Although, in the beginning, PKS insisted on the use of the first *ijtima ulama*'s recommendation, the party finally accepted Sandiaga's vice-presidential candidacy (*Tribunnews,* 2019). Eventhough the party perceived *ijtima ulama* as a representation of *ummah* voice which is the core constituent of PKS,[24] it opted to support Uno's nomination without reservation. The inability to join the Jokowi camp obliged PKS to support Prabowo unequivocally, including his decision over Uno's candidacy.

The party believed that Prabowo could represent *ummah*'s agenda. Besides the first and second *ijtima ulama*, there was also a third convention that was organised after the 2019 general elections. The third *ijtima ulama* (1 May 2019) demanded the annulment of the Jokowi-Amin candidacy for rigging the elections (*Kumparan*, 2019). However, the recommendation lost its legitimacy when the constitutional court did not find any evidence of fraud (Sapiie, 2019). At this point, PKS adopted a passive stance towards the May 2019 *ijtima ulama* given the fact that the party had already gained a considerable vote share during the 2019 general elections.

In addition to the aforementioned approaches, PKS also provided a window of opportunity to accommodate the Islamic conservative aspirations due to its position as a party in the parliament with the privilege of involving in laws- and regulations-making in the country. The exploitation was reflected

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[21] An Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) report noted that Bachtiar Nasir was part of a Salafi-inspired activist network that strives for a greater public role for *ulama*, shari'a-inspired public policies, Muslim majority rule, and Muslim control of the economy. Bachtiar was the first head of the National Movement to Defend the Indonesian Ulama Council's Fatwa (GNPF-MUI), an alliance that organised a series of demonstrations related to the 212 Movement. The organisation changed its name into GNPF-Ulama in October 2018. Later, Bachtiar resigned from GNPF-MUI and was replaced by Yusuf Martak. The latter is an entrepreneur turned cleric. See IPAC, *After Ahok: The Islamist Agenda in Indonesia* (Jakarta: IPAC, 2018); Iswara N Raditya, "Sejarah Hidup Yusuf Martak: dari Isu Lapindo ke Ijtima Ulama III," *tirto.id*, May 4, 2019, https://tirto.id/sejarah-hidup-yusuf-martak-dari-isu-lapindo-ke-ijtima-ulama-iii-dnBk

[22] Authors' interview with Ledia Hanifa.

[23] Prabowo had approached the two figures to ask them as his running mate, of which Somad and Segaf turned down the offer. Here we can see that the former general actually adhered to the *ijitima ulama*'s recommendations, at least formally. A Jakarta based political Islam observer, Mr Andar Nubowo in an interview mentioned that Sandi Uno himself has a close relationship with Bachtiar Nasir's group since he became Vice Governor of Jakarta (2017–2018). Andar also pointed out that Prabowo's desire of keeping the support from the 212-affiliated clerics was a major reason for him complying with the *Ijtima Ulama*. Authors' interview with Andar Nubowo, Jakarta, 23 July 2019.

[24] Authors' interview with Suhud Aliyudin

in the party's legislative formulation of Islamists-inspired bills in order to gain trust and support from the proponents of the 411 and 212 movements. PKS's proposal of the Clerics and Religious Figures Protection Bill is one of the most blatant examples of such political accommodation. PKS's President Sohibul Iman (2015–now) has cited on several occasions how clerics have been the victims of persecution and criminalisation (*CNN Indonesia*, 2019a). Sohibul believes that clerics are vulnerable today as law enforcement officers can criminalise them because of their *dakwah* (preach). Another instance of accommodating the Islamist ideology is the party's criticism of the Protection against Sexual Violence Bill. PKS deemed the bill too liberal and against Islamic values (*Kompas*, 2019). The party is the most ardent challenger and uses Islam as a basis to reject the law. Meanwhile, the other two Islamic parties, PAN and PKB, together with nationalist-secularist party PDI-P (*Partai Indonesia Demokrasi – Perjuangan/Indonesian Democracy Party – Struggle*) proposed the law to be included in the priority list or "prolegnas" (National Legislation Project) (Primastika, 2019). However, the other Islamic party, PPP, did not clearly state its position on the law. Despite the interest from both Islamic and nationalist parties, PKS was considered the main proponent of accommodating the aspiration of the Islamic conservative groups.

In this regard, we can see that the efforts to forge a closer relationship with the pioneers of the 411 and 212 movements, as well as participating in a series of *ijtima ulama* became a primary justification for such enthusiastic political activity. PKS perceived that the recommendations of *ijtima ulama* encapsulates the aspirations of the party's captive market.[25] The series of demonstrations against Ahok had given a golden opportunity to PKS to identify potential voters and craft suitable strategies to garner their votes. When PKS seized this political momentum, other Islamic parties displayed little empathy towards the Islamic conservative groups. Such circumstances might have resulted from other Islamic parties' close affiliation to already established Islamic organisations, such as PKB and PPP with NU, and PAN with Muhammadiyah. Meanwhile, PKS is relatively free from that kind of relationship which gave the party flexibility to align itself with the 212 movement. Furthermore, PKB and PPP, as well as Yusril's PBB, later supported Jokowi that practically closed these parties' chance to attract the 212 proponents – as many of them loathed the incumbent president.

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[25] Ibid.

Hypothesis and Potential Implications

What can we gauge from the above findings? How did PKS manage to increase its vote percentage? Based on the above discussion, first, we can see the continuation of the party's pragmatic electoral strategy that was implemented in the run up to the 2004 elections. Burhanuddin Muhtadi (2012) noted that PKS's electoral success in the 2004 legislative elections through targeting universal issues became the basis for the party to continue the moderation strategy. Nonetheless, the 2019 elections offered a different style of pragmatic electoral strategy. PKS's position as an opposition party since 2014 significantly shaped the way the party constructed its campaign ideas up until 2019. Adding the antithesis of Jokowi's policy became the additional ingredient of PKS's populist promises. This certainly intended to attract voters with a strong anti-Jokowi sentiment and was executed by smear campaigns against the president being against Islam and a non-devout Muslim. The continuation of the rising conservatism trend, as well as the emergence of the 212 movement caught the attention of PKS and was reflected in the way this cadre-based party forged a close relation with the conservative group's figures. Proposing regulations that reflected the interests of those *ulama* was another important tool that PKS used to form a close-knit tie with them. Therefore, we can argue that the party had adjusted its campaign plan to fit in with the rising conservatism trend, while at the same time maintaining an inclusive electoral strategy. The moderation strategy of PKS, however, had been tilted to accommodate Islamic conservative crowds rather than dominantly pursue the moderate mass as previous studies (Hamayotsu, 2011b; Muhtadi, 2012; Mujani, Liddle, & Ambardi, 2019) argued.

We can see that PKS tried to fit in with the latest political and social environment. The appearance and wide spread of Islamic conservatism, particularly in politics, and emergence of anti-Jokowi masses evolved into a favourable momentum for PKS to increase its votes. The party also attempted to cultivate the issue via social media presence by launching the #2019GantiPresiden campaign on various social media platforms, which displayed an unprecedented strategy that had never been politically used by other political parties. Although social media has played a significant role in the context of Indonesian electoral politics, especially since the 2014 presidential elections, this political event set a new outlook where a political party can also benefit from using social media platforms for its political survival.

There are two ways to test this research's hypothesis to make it a solid argument. A survey method is one way to test the hypothesis. The survey method can reveal whether PKS voters identified themselves as pious Muslims, or were labelled as conservatives who opted for the party because it offered platforms that accommodate their aspirations. The second way to test the hypothesis is to wait and see if PKS's increasing vote percentage continues in the 2024 elections, while rising conservatism persists and the same electoral strategy is applied by the party. In addition, findings of this paper have the potential to enhance studies on Indonesian democracy if the hypothesis can pass one of the abovementioned assessments. Existing literatures emphasise the domination of patronage and political clientelism within Indonesian democracy (Aspinall, 2013; Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Muhtadi, 2019).

Moreover, this paper's discoveries suggest that populist and religious-based approaches play a greater role in attracting voters. Nonetheless, we should notice that PKS has a specific captive market which is urban Muslim middle-class. The characteristics of this class of people are different from the majority of Indonesians, at least in terms of their education level and piousness. As a result, a special caveat must be applied in order to produce a more accurate understanding.

Then we can draw at least three potential scenarios based on the observation. First, catching Islamic conservative masses would potentially become a prevalent strategy. Other political parties may follow suit if the approach is proven to increase votes. As mentioned above, Jokowi also attempted to captivate the conservative mass by choosing Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate, arguably to reduce the attacks against the president's Islamic credentials. Accommodating the conservative audience might be replicated by other parties, if such a strategy repeatedly produces fruitful outcomes. Second, while the individual factor is still essential in drawing voters, it also produces an anti-thesis as shown in the emergence of anti-Jokowi masses. Political parties can consider this trend in crafting a strategy to garner votes in the elections. The issue, however, requires further research to answer some questions, such as what conditions enable its emergence and what types of political candidate should they field. Third, the case of the #2019GantiPresiden movement has demonstrated the extent to which social media presence affects real-world politics. Despite the view that social media is perceived as an "echo chamber" where political aspiration and expression is thrown out, such virtual platforms have proved to directly impact how politics is carried out. In the context of Indonesian politics, such platforms will potentially be utilised to garner votes, possibly by other political parties that need to increase their votes.

About the Authors

Adhi Priamarizki is a Visiting Fellow at the Indonesia Programme, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University. He holds a PhD in International Relations from Ritsumeikan University, Japan and a MSc in Strategic Studies from RSIS. Adhi wrote a doctoral dissertation on civil-military relations in Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand. His research interests include Indonesia's military transformation, civil-military relations in Southeast Asia, and Indonesian politics. His publications have appeared in East Asia Forum, The Jakarta Post, New Mandala, Analisis CSIS, and Contemporary Southeast Asia.

Dedi Dinarto is a Research Analyst at the Indonesia Programme. He joined the Indonesia Programme in November 2019 after obtaining his MSc degree in International Relations in 2019 at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University. He was a research associate at the Indonesia Programme from 2017-2019 while concurrently studying full-time at RSIS under the Research Analyst Award. He obtained his B.A degree in International Relations in 2016 at Department of International Relations, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia. His research covers Indonesia's foreign policy, Indonesian politics, and local dynamics in the Riau Archipelago. He is also in charge of the Riau Bulletin publication, a monthly newsletter covering key local developments in the Riau Islands. His publications have appeared in *East Asia Forum*, *The Diplomat*, and *The Jakarta Post*.

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