

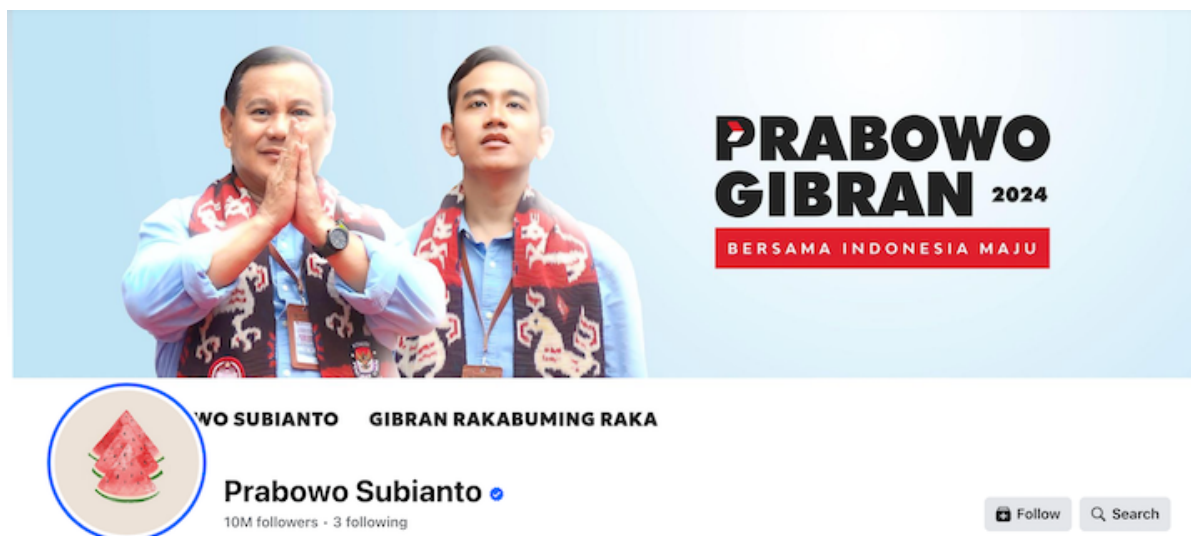
PERSPECTIVE

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The Prabowo-Gibran Pairing: Wise or Foolish?

*Burhanuddin Muhtadi and Kennedy Muslim**



Facebook Page of Prabowo Subianto. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/PrabowoSubianto>. Accessed 6 December 2023.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Prabowo Subianto has officially picked Gibran Rakabuming Raka, President Jokowi's son, as his running mate for the 2024 Presidential Election. While this has generated controversies regarding a Constitutional Court (MK) ruling to facilitate this initiative and the issue of dynastic politics, the electoral benefits for the Prabowo-Gibran team appear substantive.
- President Jokowi's endorsement of the move seems to have already severely harmed the prospects for Ganjar Pranowo, PDIP's candidate. The growing rift between Jokowi and PDIP/Megawati has become more evident, and some of Jokowi's non-PDIP supporters are switching over to the Prabowo-Gibran camp. Prabowo's electability should rise substantially once Gibran is officially confirmed as his running mate.
- The latest Indikator poll shows a significant increase in support for Prabowo among youth voters (Gen-Z and millennials), after the announcement and registration of the Prabowo-Gibran presidential ticket at the General Elections Commission (KPU).
- Anies Baswedan was initially trailing last, but is now emerging as Prabowo's main rival. Anies seems to have benefited from Prabowo's selection of Gibran as his running mate, because some of Prabowo's traditional supporters in the previous two elections are unhappy with Prabowo's teaming up with Jokowi's son.

INTRODUCTION

The decision of the coalition of parties supporting Prabowo Subianto (Gerindra, Golkar, Demokrat, PAN and others) made on October 22 to advance Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the son of President Jokowi, as Prabowo's running mate is an electoral gamble that has captured much media attention. The dramatic process at the Constitutional Court (Mahkamah Konstitusi or MK), which issued its ruling to pave the way for Gibran to run as a vice-presidential candidate has created controversy. The MK ruling triggered nationwide criticism on TV and social media, and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) alleged that there was intervention by powerful actors to influence MK's decision. This storm of criticisms led the Constitutional Court Honorary Assembly (MKMK) to dismiss Anwar Usman, President Jokowi's brother-in-law, from his position as the Chief Justice of MK.

But from the point of view of Prabowo's coalition, Gibran is an asset in the upcoming 2024 presidential election. This essay shows the competitive electoral landscape among the three presidential contenders, based on the most recent poll after the MK ruling and the official registration of the Prabowo-Gibran pair at the General Elections Commission (KPU).

Gibran is like a double-edged sword for Prabowo's coalition. On the one hand, many parties believe that Gibran will boost support for Prabowo in Central Java and East Java. Prabowo lost badly in 2014 and 2019 in these two big provinces, which are Jokowi's stronghold electoral bases. Prabowo has calculated that by running with Gibran, Jokowi's support base would shift to his camp in the 2024 elections. Moreover, Prabowo's coalition of parties assumes that Gibran represents the young generation, thus having the potential to attract the support of voters aged under 40 years old. According to the 2020 BPS census, Generation Z, born in the 1997-2012 period, reached 75.49 million people, equivalent to 27.94% of the total population. The millennial generation born in the 1981-1996 period reached 69.90 million people or 25.87% of the general population.¹ Taken together, young voters (Gen-Z and millennials) will make up around 52% of the whole electorate in the 2024 elections.²

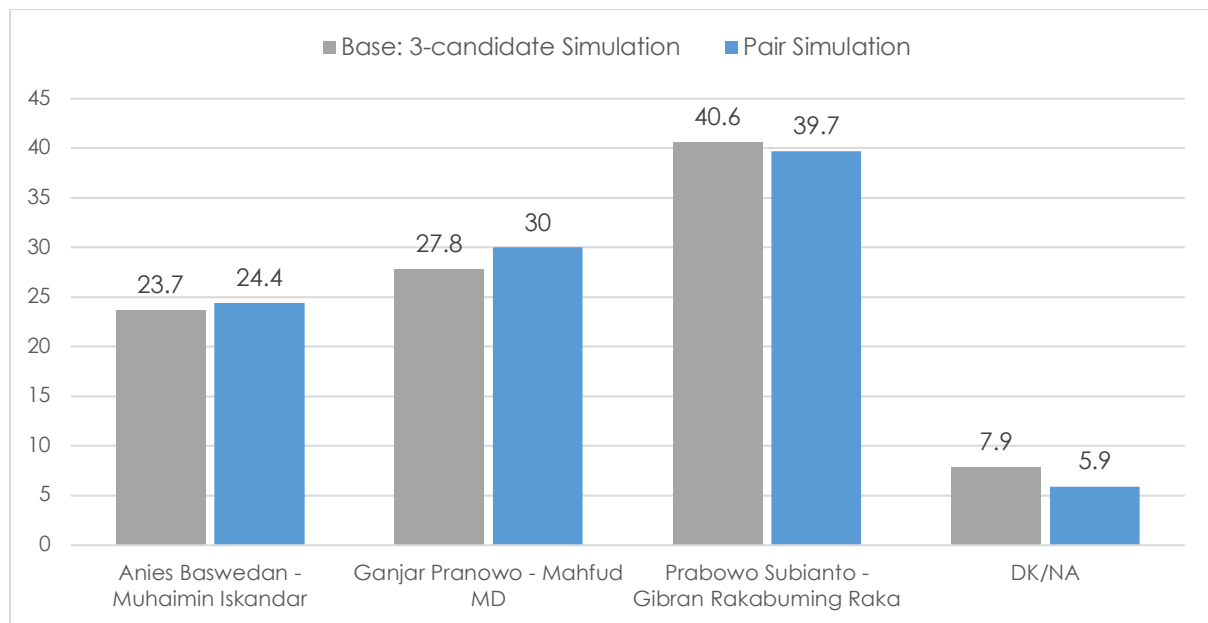
Another driving factor is the fact that the Indonesian public still shows a high level of support for Jokowi's government. At the elite level, there are expectations that Gibran's appointment as Prabowo's running mate will secure President Jokowi's full support and lead to the mobilization of the state apparatus under the President's control in support of Prabowo. Some prominent civil society activists have already sounded the alarm on the lack of neutrality in the national army and police (TNI-Polri)³ apparatus and among over 271 acting regional heads (at the level of district head, mayor, and governor) directly appointed by the Ministry of Interior. There is a further counter argument that instead of being an asset, Gibran could actually become a liability for Prabowo's coalition. The issue of political dynasty and nepotism emanating from the MK's ruling to allow Gibran to run has been widely echoed by civil society coalitions both in mainstream mass media and on social media. However, past surveys show that presidential votes are driven mainly by presidential candidate figures, not their vice-presidential candidate. Moreover, Gibran is not Jokowi. Jokowi rose to the apex of power from the bottom. Meanwhile, Gibran has only been mayor of Solo for two years. His father served two terms as mayor in the same city. Before entering the presidential election arena, Jokowi had also served as Governor of DKI Jakarta.

The public also believes in the argument that Gibran is not experienced enough for the position, and is too young. This was confirmed in the Indikator’s survey in early October (47% agreed with this statement vs 29% who disagreed. The rest did not answer). The controversial MK ruling, along with the political dynasty issue, were seen by many observers to have the potential to be an election matter for the anti-establishment movement. The net effect on Prabowo-Gibran electability will depend on future turns of events.

THE POLLING SIMULATION DATA SO FAR

Below are details from the latest electability poll done by Indikator after the MK’s controversial ruling and after the registration of the Prabowo-Gibran pair at the General Election Commission (KPU). The data presented are consistent with many other credible pollsters’ findings conducted during similar survey periods, such as Poltracking⁴ and Populi Center.⁵

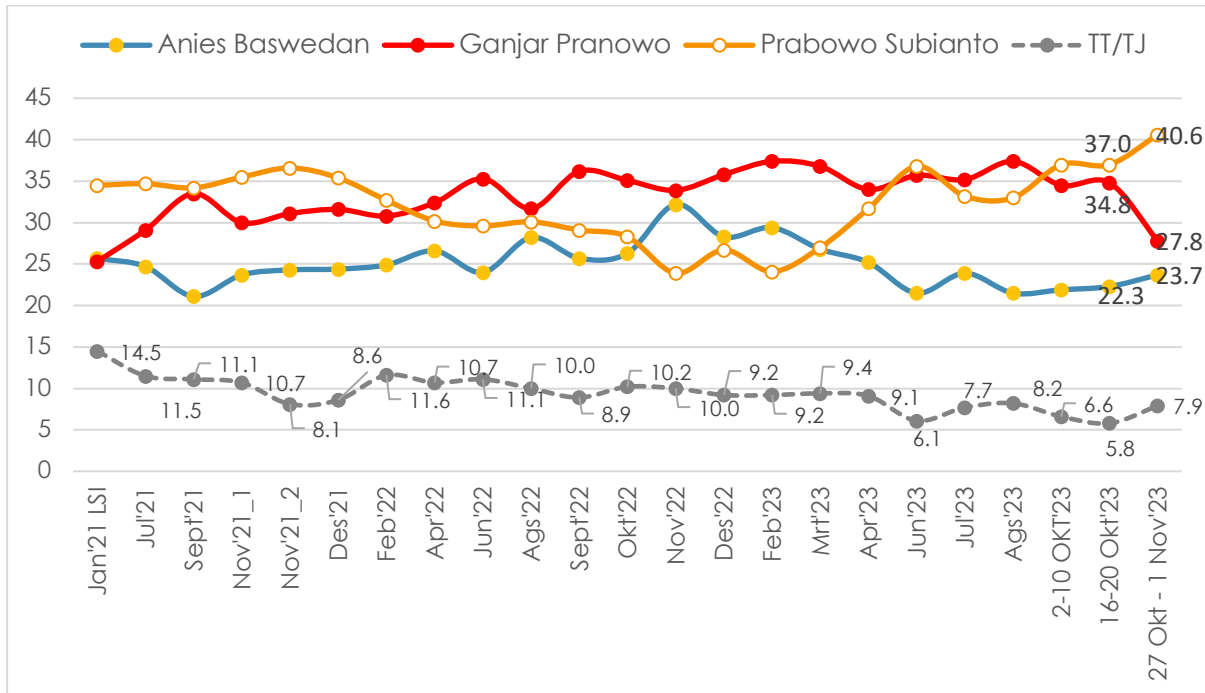
Figure 1: Three Presidential Contenders Simulation



Source: Indikator Survey October 2023

A nationally representative survey conducted from October 27 till November 1, 2023,⁶ covering 1,220 respondents, found that support for Prabowo Subianto was at 40.6% while that for Ganjar Pranowo was at 27.8%, showing a difference of 12.2%. Anies Baswedan came last with 23.7%, 4.1% after Ganjar Pranowo.⁷ Prabowo’s electability slipped somewhat, although not significantly, after his pairing with Gibran. Conversely, the electability of Ganjar-Mahfud pair had increased after Mahfud MD was chosen.

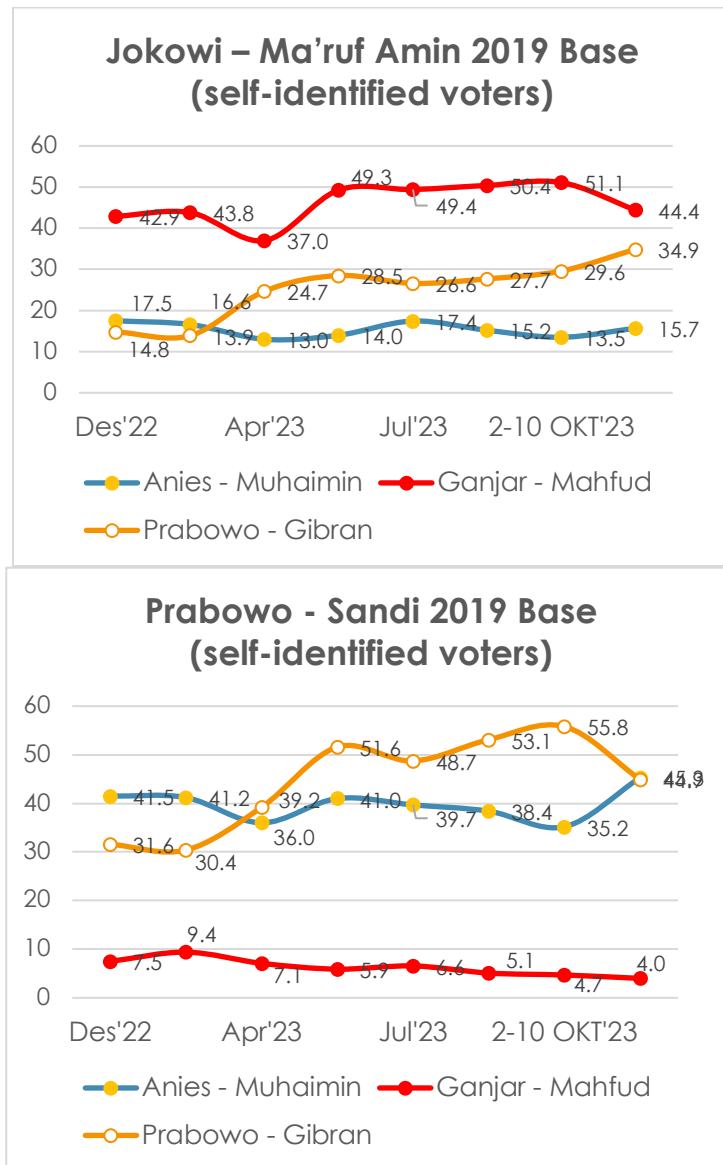
Figure 2: Electability Trends of the Three Presidential Candidates



Source: Indikator Survey October 2023

Interestingly, after the registration of the Prabowo-Gibran as Presidential-Vice Presidential candidates, the poll shows a sharp drop in support for Ganjar by around 7%, from 34.8% to 27.8%. Some voters switched to Prabowo, while some remained indecisive. Meanwhile, some of Prabowo’s supporters shifted to Anies when they learned that Gibran would be Prabowo’s running mate.

Figure 3: Three-way Presidential Pair Electability Trends among 2019 Presidential Election Self-identified Voter Base



Source: Indikator Survey October 2023

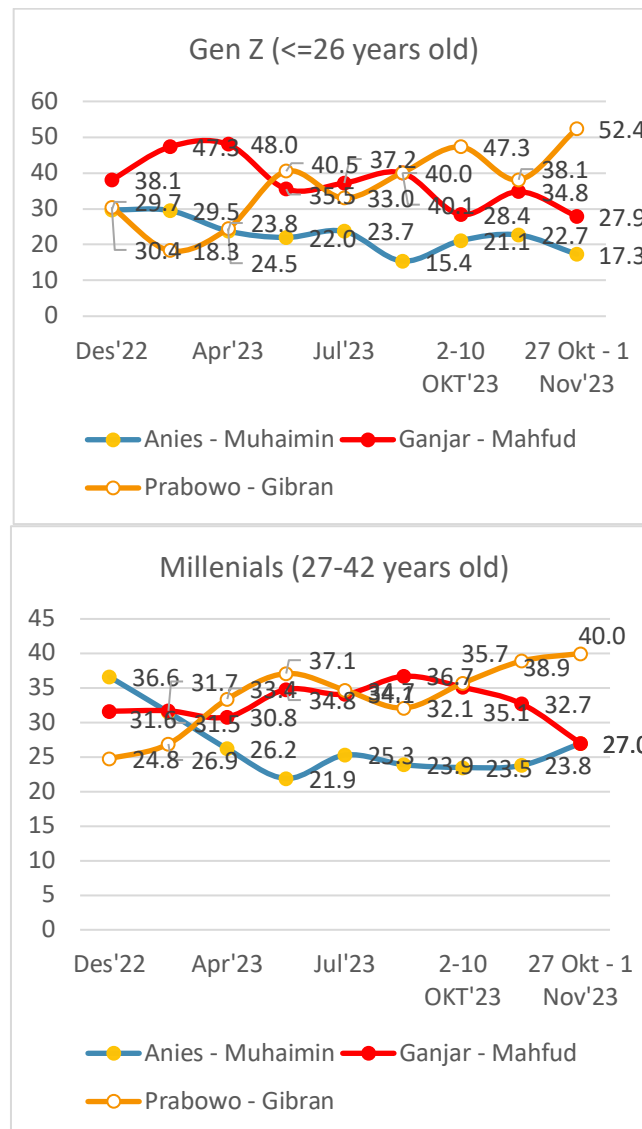
Previously, surveys had shown that the majority of Prabowo’s voters had lower approval for Jokowi’s performance. This was because Prabowo was Jokowi’s main rival in the last two presidential elections.⁸ When Gibran became Prabowo’s running mate, some of them decided to switch their votes to Anies, who is ideologically closer to them. Prabowo’s supporters from 2019 shifted away after the Prabowo-Gibran official registration. Meanwhile, the support for Anies increased significantly among Prabowo’s traditional voter base. The potential additional votes for Anies can be greater if Prabowo cannot exploit Gibran to solidify support in Jokowi’s stronghold voter bases.

Be that as it may, Prabowo's declining support among his traditional voter base is more than compensated for by the significant increase in support from among Jokowi-Maruf Amin's 2019 supporters. The number increased from 29.6% to 34.9%. In contrast, Ganjar's support from the same set of voter groups declined from 51.1% to 44.4% compared to the previous poll. An initial assumption had been that Gibran would not instantly become an electoral asset because of the issue of political dynasty, but the latest poll seems to contradict this. Interestingly, Gibran has instead accelerated the shift of Jokowi's 2019 supporter base to Prabowo's camp.

GIBRAN EFFECT ON YOUNG VOTERS

In various media publications and appearances, Prabowo's coalition campaigners have been drumming up the potential of winning the majority of young voters (Gen-Z and millennials) given their decision to pick Gibran as his running mate. But what do the latest poll data tell us about this assumption?

Figure 4: Presidential Poll Trend among Gen-Z and Millennials

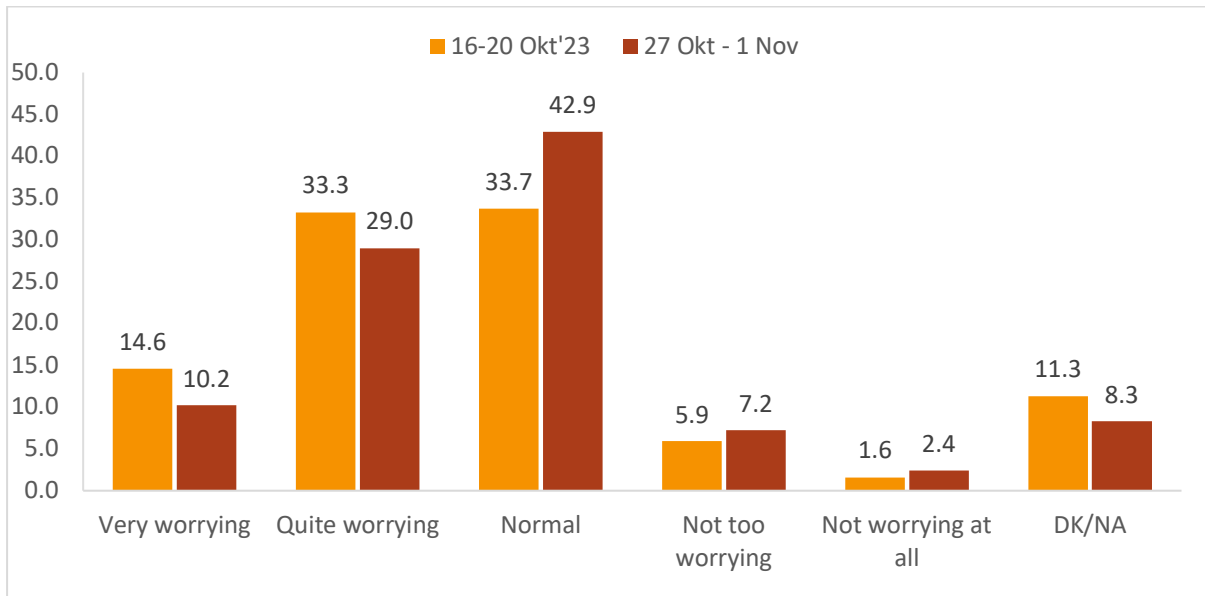


Source: Indikator Survey October 2023

A few days after Prabowo-Gibran registered at KPU, Indikator’s late October poll found a significant boost in support for them, especially among Gen-Z (under 26 years old). Interestingly, Prabowo already has a solid support base among young voters, especially Gen-Z and millennials. The negative campaign in the media and social media portraying Gibran as an inexperienced and privileged son of President Jokowi seems not to bother young voters. Prabowo-Gibran’s support jumped from 38.1% to 52.4% (see Figure 4) among Gen-Z voters within a week after officially registering at KPU.

Figure 5: How Potent is the Issue of Political Dynasty?

In general, how do you perceive political dynasty phenomenon in Indonesia, is it very worrying, quite worrying, normal, not very worrying or not worrying at all?



Source: Indikator Survey October 2023

Table 1: Three-Candidate Vote Choices Based on Perception of Political Dynasty

	Base	Anies Baswedan – Muhaimin Iskandar	Ganjar Pranowo – Mahfud MD	Prabowo Subianto – Gibran Rakabuming Raka	TT/TJ
Dynasty Politics in Indonesia					
Worrying	39.2	35.4	26.9	32.7	5.0
Normal	42.9	19.4	32.2	43.2	5.2
Not worrying	9.6	5.2	34.1	57.5	3.2
DK/NA	8.3	21.0	28.2	34.0	16.9

Source: Indikator Survey October 2023

The Indikator poll in October found that around 39.2% of respondents worried about political dynasties. This number dropped from 47.6% in the previous poll. At the same time, 42.9% of respondents perceived political dynasties as normal, and 9.6% were not worried. Concerns about political dynasties seemed to have waned within a few weeks. Ganjar and Prabowo’s supporter bases dominate among respondents who perceive political dynasties as normal or not

worried about it. This is especially true for Prabowo-Gibran's supporters. In contrast, Anies' supporter base is dominated by respondents concerned about political dynasties.

CONCLUSION

Prabowo's electoral strategy from the beginning has mainly rested on getting Jokowi's full endorsement. This climaxed in his decision to choose Gibran as running mate. This strategy has lots of upside from an electoral standpoint as Jokowi's approval is still very high, hovering around 75% in various polls and at one point even reaching 82%.⁹ But this strategy also has its downside since Prabowo's 2019 voter base is prone to switch to Anies' camp over his decision to choose Gibran. This is important to note because the increase in Gerindra and Prabowo's votes in the early October survey correlates with decreased votes for PDIP, Ganjar, and President Jokowi's approval rating.¹⁰ This may indicate that Prabowo inadvertently maintained his old electoral posture as a vessel for some anti-Jokowi votes. The latest Indikator poll has clearly shown the tendency in Prabowo's traditional support base to shift towards Anies' camp. At the same time, Gibran holds positive potential since non-PDI-P Jokowi supporters are likely to switch their votes to Prabowo-Gibran pair due to the growing rift between Jokowi and PDIP.

Based on our latest poll, Gibran has been an electoral asset for Prabowo. Gibran's decision to run with Prabowo has weakened Ganjar's support base across different segments of voters, especially among young voters and Jokowi's non-PDIP 2019 voters. The benefits for Prabowo in picking Gibran to attract Jokowi's supporters has been substantive so far. This presents a challenge for Ganjar to reverse the decline in support that he enjoys, and made evident in the latest poll; this drop was due to the exodus of Jokowi's non-PDIP supporters. Ganjar, along with PDIP and its political patron Megawati, have triggered a democratic movement similar to the Reformasi movement of 1998 to challenge the MK's decision. The goal is to question Gibran's nomination process as well as the lack of neutrality among state actors, including President Jokowi, in the next election.

Perhaps it is too early to conclude that Gibran is an electoral asset. Central Java and East Java will be the testing ground. So far, according to the latest poll, Prabowo is still trailing far behind Ganjar in Central Java; he has however overtaken Ganjar in East Java. In Central Java, the PDIP is still dominant, despite fierce contestation between the party and Jokowi's supporters. In East Java, Jokowi's own popularity and his closeness to NU elites will give Prabowo a boost in this second most populated province after West Java. Even if Gibran succeeds in eroding Ganjar's support base in these two provinces, Prabowo is still not guaranteed to win the presidential election in the first round. A run-off scenario is more likely to transpire, judging from the current poll. This is because the influx of new supporters from Jokowi's base has been counteracted by the departure of Prabowo's traditional support bases in West Java, Banten and Sumatra; Gibran is disliked as vice presidential candidate in these places.

Anies seems to be the beneficiary of the recent announcement of Gibran as Prabowo's running mate. Some of Prabowo's supports who disapprove of a Jokowi dynasty tend to shift to Anies' camp. If this pattern continues, Anies and Prabowo could advance to the second round of the presidential election, after defeating Ganjar. Should PDIP then blame Jokowi and Gibran for their failure, that will open up the opportunity for groups opposing Jokowi-Prabowo to unite in

the second round (involving embittered PDIP supporters and elites and the rank and file of coalition groups supporting Anies).

Ultimately, the decision to choose Gibran as running mate remains debatable. Ganjar might be the candidate who will suffer the most setbacks due to the growing rivalry between his PDIP party and Jokowi. It may mean that non-PDIP diehard supporters of Jokowi will flock to the Prabowo-Gibran pair. Anies, meanwhile, will benefit if Prabowo fails to stop his old support based, which tends to be anti-Jokowi, from switching to the opposing camp.

ENDNOTES

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⁹ Detiknews, "Survei LSI: Kepuasan Jokowi 82%, Capaian Tertinggi Kinerja Presiden", 3 Mei 2023, at <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-6702223/survei-lsi-kepuasan-jokowi-82-capaian-tertinggi-kinerja-presiden>

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¹⁰ Indikator Politik Indonesia, "Pergeseran Dukungan Partai dan Capres Jelang Pendaftaran Capres dan Cawapres 2024."

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