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The 2020 Makassar Mayoral Election: Replay of an Unresolved Political Feud

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Election Banner of Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto (right) and Fatmawati Rushdi (Left), the pair popularly known as ADAMA. Source: Facebook of Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto, https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=383342259681641&set=a.110650660284137

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The 2020 Makassar mayoral election was a rematch of a controversial contest between Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto and Munafri Arifuddin in the 2018 mayoral election, which had been greatly complicated by fierce competition between local political clans and political elites from Jakarta. In that round, Munafri stood as the sole candidate with staunch backing from the Jusuf Kalla clan, while the popular incumbent mayor Pomanto was barred by the local election commission from contesting. However, Munafri won less than the 50% endorsement required for sole candidates. Pomanto then served out his term till May 2019, after which the post was passed on to a series of interim mayors.

- In the December 2020 election, Pomanto won with 41.7% of votes (with Munafri trailing at 34%), to begin his second term as Makassar Mayor. Pomanto’s recent victory (and his success at blocking a walkover victory for Munafri in 2018) is often attributed to his adroit political manoeuvres and his ability to navigate between local and national patrons for protection and resources.

- While all the candidates had relied on some degree of political patronage, it would appear that the majority of voters preferred candidates with a proven record in delivering effective governance, instead of candidates who merely relied on patronage. Pomanto had gained much credibility from implementing popular programmes in his first term as Makassar’s Mayor.

- Pomanto also received significant support from minority groups, who saw him as a more inclusive leader compared to his rivals who were identified with the rise of conservatism and increased pressures on minority groups in the constituency.
On the afternoon of 9 December 2020, the day of Indonesia’s 2020 simultaneous local elections, the quick-count results for the Makassar Mayor Election were issued by survey institutions to announce the gaining of the most votes by Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto-Fatmawati Rusdi (the pair popularly known as ADAMA, a local slang word for ‘I’m back’) than three other pairs of candidates in the election. Pomanto’s victory paves his way to a second term as Makassar Mayor. He won his first term already in 2013, and the 2020 election was actually a rerun of a no-winner election in 2018 in which he failed to participate.

Lembaga Survey Indonesia (LSI) Denny JA, one of the survey institutions, announced that the pair won 41.7 percent of the votes. Their strongest competitor, Munafri Arifuddin and Rahman Bando (Appi-Rahman) obtained 34.37 percent, while the candidate pairs of Syamzu Rizal and Fadli Ananda (Dilan) and Irman Yasin Limpo-Andi Zunnun NH (IMUN) came in third and fourth position respectively with 19.23 percent and 4.73 percent.

This election was not only a rerun of the mayoral election in 2018 which ended without a winner, but it also showcased the fierce competition between local political clans and political elites from Jakarta.

THE EMPTY BALLOT IN 2018

Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto, the reelected Makassar Mayor, is a technocrat turned politician and is known for smart political maneuvers. He is of Gorontalo origin, and was born and raised in Makassar.¹

His ability to win the 2013 election despite his non-Makassar ethnic background was associated back then with the patronage of Ilham Arief Sirajuddin whom he succeeded as Makassar Mayor. He was a close ally of Ilham and served as a spatial planning consultant in Ilham’s administration.

In his first term, Pomanto was a non-party politician² and relied on his personal popularity as an administrator, running various popular programmes and rearranging his organisational structure to gain a firm grip on the city bureaucracy. He also established ties with various patrons not only in the province but also at the national level, which allowed him room to maneuver and afforded him protection against his competitors.

In 2018, he was disqualified by the general election commission for breaching election laws. The Makassar mayoral election that year was therefore a sole-candidate affair where only the pair of Munafri Arifuddin-Andi Rahmatika Dewi (who went by the name Appi-Cicu) was eligible to run.

Munafri, popularly called Appi is the son-in-law of Aksa Mahmud, a local tycoon who owns Bosowa Corporindo, an eastern Indonesia-based conglomerate. Aksa is the brother-in-law of Jusuf Kalla, the former Vice President of Indonesia, and owner of the Kalla Group business emporium.

Appi ran in the 2018 mayoral election with support from 10 political parties representing 43 of the 50 seats in the city council. By controlling the support of the political parties in the city
council, Appi left little room for any other hopeful candidate, including Pomanto. Pomanto finally moved to register as an independent candidate by collecting 117,492 copies of ID cards – almost double the required minimum number. His running mate was Indira Mulyasari Paramastuti, a deputy speaker of the city council from Nasdem Party. The pair campaigned using the tagline of DIAmi (a local slang for ‘It’s Him’).³

Pomanto continued to face serious obstacles in his process to join the election that year. He was investigated for two corruption cases before being later declared clean by the investigator.⁴ However, in April 2018, KPU Makassar issued a decision to disqualify Pomanto from the election after the supreme court found him guilty of abusing his power to gain advantage in the race. This made the election that year an uncontested one.⁵

Appi-Cici thus appeared on the ballot next to an empty box. Unexpectedly to everyone, as many as 53.23 percent of the voters (300,795) chose the empty ballot over the pair.⁶ This unanticipated result made them to be the only sole candidate of the 16 sole candidates who ran in the 2018 local elections who failed to win.

According to local election law, if an unopposed pair of candidates loses in an election (by getting less than 50% of the vote), then the election will be repeated in the next applicable election period (which in this case was in 2020), with the losing pair allowed to compete once more. In the meantime, the local governor appoints a senior provincial level official to temporarily fill the position. In the case of Makassar in 2018, Pomanto was reinstalled as mayor despite having been disqualified from the election. He officially finished his term in May 2019, after which the interim mayor position was successively filled by three appointees. The first was Iqbal Suhaeb, who assumed the position for one year, to then be replaced by Yusran Jusuf who served for 44 days only. He in turn passed the baton in June 2020 to Rudi Jamaluddin.

LOCAL POLITICAL DYNAMICS

The Makassar mayoral election in 2020 saw Pomanto and Appi pitted against each other, alongside two other candidate pairs.⁷ Pomanto ran with the support of two political parties with seats in the city council, namely Nasdem and Gerindra. He signed up a member of Gerindra while his running mate Fatmawaty Rusdi was vice treasurer at the Nasdem national office
Appi in this year’s election ran with support from three parties – Demokrat, PPP and Perindo. To improve his electability, he chose Abdul Rahman Bando, a senior city bureaucrat, as his running mate. The same strategy was evident as well in the forming of the other candidate pairs—Pomanto-Fatmawaty, Rizal-Ananda, and Irman-Zunnun. In all cases, administrative experience, personal popularity, and money were the main ingredients in their composition. The representation of political dynasties in this election was also a prominent feature.8

The 2020 mayoral election was Makassar’s fourth direct election. The first such elected mayor was Ilham Arief Sirajuddin when he won his second term as mayor in 2009. This accomplishment, together with his success in becoming provincial chairman of Golkar and later, of the Demokrat Party in South Sulawesi made him a senior political patron in the province. Ilham ran for the governorship in 2013 but lost to the incumbent Syahrul Yasin Limpo.

Ilham was succeeded as mayor of Makassar by Pomanto, his close ally. However, the relationship between the two deteriorated. In 2015, Ilham was arrested and sentenced to four years in prison for a graft case in the city’s water utility company. The supporters of Ilham blamed Pomanto for doing nothing to protect Ilham. Furthermore, severe friction between Pomanto and his deputy, Syamsu Rizal, throughout his first term further widened the gap between him with Ilham.9

Following his deteriorating relationship with Ilham, Pomanto strengthened ties with other political clans in South Sulawesi, including those with Syahrul Yasin Limpo, the head of the Yasin Limpo clan. In the 2018 mayoral election, Ilham mobilized his followers to support Appi. In 2020, he became political patron to Syamsu Rizal.

For the 2020 mayoral election, Pomanto secured support from Nasdem and Gerindra. In specific terms, he partnered Fatmawaty, the wife of Rusdi Masse, provincial chairman of Nasdem Party in South Sulawesi.

Political rumors circulated in Makassar prior the 2020 mayoral election that Pomanto had used his links to key figures in Nasdem to influence the appointment by the Minister of Home

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**Table 1: 2020 Makassar Mayoral Election Candidate Pairs with Respective Supporting Political Parties and the Parties’ Voter Size.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>Political Parties</th>
<th>Accumulation of votes in the 2019 Makassar City legislative elections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto – Fatmawaty Rusdi</td>
<td>Nasdem, Gerindra</td>
<td>160,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Munafri Arifuddin – Abd Rahman Bando</td>
<td>Demokrat, PPP, Perindo</td>
<td>147,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Syamsu Rizal – Fadli Ananda</td>
<td>PDI Perjuangan, Hanura, PKB</td>
<td>104,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Irman Yasin Limpo – Andi Zunnun Armin NH</td>
<td>Golkar, PKS, PAN, Berkarya</td>
<td>185,875</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Affairs of the temporary mayor appointees. Rumors had it that the endorsement of Yusran Jusuf as second mayor appointee was due to intervention of Nasdem elites over the names of candidates submitted by Governor Nurdin Abdullah. This had upset the governor, who decided to replace Yusran after 44 days.\(^\text{10}\)

Previously, the governor had cancelled 40 decrees issued by Pomanto regarding the rotation of 1,228 Makassar government staff members in the last one year of his first term. Six hundred of them were rotated in his last week, in May 2019.\(^\text{11}\) The series of staff rotation were seen as a political move by Pomanto. Upon his return to office as interim mayor, Pomanto proceeded to suspend a number of city officials who he accused of having sided with Appi and also to replace some officials promoted in his absence by his deputy, Rizal. The last-minute rotations ordered by Pomanto, before he ended his first term in May 2019, was suspected by some to be his preparation for the 2020 election.

Prior to the official period of 2020 mayoral election starting in September, a series of popularity surveys indicated Pomanto to be enjoying high electability. Both he and Appi were listed as most likely to win, and to have the potential to gather above 40 percent of the votes. The other two candidate pairs had vote potentials below 20 percent. The final results did indeed show strong accuracy in the surveys.

The big gap in votes gained by the four candidates pairs shows that although they were all supported by parties which collectively had almost equal voter size (see Table 1), this factor became irrelevant because the election was actually a rematch between Pomanto and Appi. Most of the financial sponsorships and voters’ attention were directed at the two, leaving little opportunities for the other two candidates to attract voter support and financial resources.

THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL ELITES IN THE ELECTION

As discussed above, the 2018 election had presented serious challenges to Pomanto. The competition with Appi that year was really a struggle with the Kalla clan.\(^\text{12}\) Various obstacles put in Pomanto’s way were in fact effective interventions by the clan.

As a newcomer in politics and with zero experience in public administration, Appi’s wish to become mayor raised public concerns that he was a proxy for the clan to gain access to city resources.\(^\text{13}\) In addition, the disqualification of Pomanto in the 2018 election had created wide public perception that he was a victim of backstage power play by the Kalla clan. It was this that provoked many voters to choose the empty ballot in order to deny victory to Appi-Cicu, the sole candidate pair. Their sympathy lay with Pomanto and much antipathy was felt against the clan and its perceived vicious power play.

In 2020, the same sentiments came into play again in response to smear campaigns launched against Pomanto. One week before election day, a voice record of Pomanto mentioning Jusuf Kalla as the mastermind behind the arrest of the Minister of Fishery and Marine by KPK went viral. The case became big and both sides filed police reports.\(^\text{14}\)

Since the incident emerged in the final week before voting day, it was used by Appi-Rahman as their last-ditch attempt to corner Pomanto. Various statements made by the team, including the inner circle of Jusuf Kalla, emphasised that Pomanto had no respect for Jusuf Kalla as a
respectful senior figure, and thus he did not hold the values of Bugis-Makassar enough to be elected leader.

Despite this last bout, Pomanto managed to capitalise on the attacks against him by turning them to his advantage. The tension between the two candidates secured the loyalty of militant supporters and also drew voters away from the other two candidates.\textsuperscript{15}

**IDENTITY POLITICS IN 2020**

Aside from the negative public opinion on his heavy reliance on the patronage of Jusuf Kalla in his nomination, a crucial factor that limited chances for Appi in the 2020 mayoral election was ethno-religious sentiments. Such sentiments play a significant role in Makassar politics and social life, especially among the minority ethnic Chinese in the city.

There are around 40,000 ethnic Chinese in Makassar, a city of 2.5 million people. Ethnic and religious minority groups, including the ethnic Chinese make up almost 10 percent of the population. The city has experienced a series of anti-Chinese incidents and also attacks against religious minorities. The growing conservatism in Indonesia’s political and social landscape have also had an impact on the perspectives and the political participation of minority groups. Minority groups in Makassar tend to vote for candidates they consider to be pluralists and whom they think can guarantee them protection.

In the 2020 Makassar mayoral election, pluralism was indeed a sensitive issue for all the candidates. At the beginning of the official campaign period, a video went viral. It showed a man claiming himself to be a campaigner for Appi-Rahman talking provocatively about ethnic Chinese to a group of people. This came to be used as the ammunition by the other candidates to discredit Appi-Rahman.\textsuperscript{16} Appi-Rahman made a public clarification and also reported the case to the police.\textsuperscript{17}

Pomanto had a significant advantage in having the support of minority groups. In his first term, he had managed to establish a public image as an inclusive leader. This was an advantage that Rizal, Pomanto’s deputy back then, also had. They are both popular among minority groups, and maintain good ties with prominent ethnic Chinese and leaders of other minority groups in Makassar. Why many chose Pomanto over Rizal in the end, it has been suggested, was because it was considered that Pomanto had a much bigger chance than Rizal at winning the election. This consideration also affected sponsorships, and Pomanto was favoured even on that front before Rizal.\textsuperscript{18}

**CONCLUSION**

Pomanto’s success in winning the 2020 mayoral election in Makassar, and in managing 2018 to cancel the chance for Appi to win the sole candidate election in 2018 are attributed to his smart political maneuvers navigating between local and national political patrons for protection and resources. Appi was furthermore a candidate with heavy weight political connections and abundant financial resources.

Being able to run in this year’s election enabled Pomanto to combine resources he gained from political patrons with the strong influence he had acquired as an incumbent. His incumbency status gave him substantial influence in the city bureaucracy and also in the community.
could also attract voters by showcasing his first term’s performance; in administering city development and sharing the ‘fruits’ with his loyalists, and in maintaining order, especially in the protection of minority groups.

Pomanto capitalised on the ethno-religious sentiments of the minority groups. In the series of mayoral elections, the minority groups were sensitive about rumors and strategically favoured pluralist candidate(s).

Lastly, while all candidates relied on the political support of their patrons, most voters still went for candidates who also had a proven record.

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1 Before becoming Makassar Mayor, Pomanto tried to join the Gorontalo gubernatorial election in 2011 but failed to reach the required minimum support from 15% of parliamentarians: https://makassar.tribunnews.com/2011/09/24/kpu-gorontalo-tak-loloskan-danny-pomanto, accessed on 2 December 2020.

2 This was prior to him joining Nasdem in 2018. He move to Gerindra in 2020.

3 Pomanto later received support from the Demokrat Party, then the only party represented in the City Council. Additional support came from Perindo and PSI, which were then newly established parties.


5 In February 2018, Appi-Cicu requested of the local KPU to cancel Pomanto’s candidacy, citing the allegation that Pomanto as mayor had distributed more than 5,971 smartphones to community chiefs (RT/RW) in December 2017, ahead of the campaign season. The smartphones were allegedly for the chiefs to monitor the Appi-Cicu campaign for Pomanto’s benefit. The State Administrative Court of South Sulawesi followed up by ordering KPU Makassar to cancel Pomanto’s candidacy. The order was reinforced by the Supreme Court.

6 Law No. 10/2016 on Local Elections allows voters in uncontested races to vote against the sole candidate pair by ticking an empty box.

7 All mayor candidates had participated in the previous elections. Syamsu Rizal was the running mate of Pomanto in 2013 election, while Irman Yasin Limpo was their competitor and came in as runner-up.

8 The candidate pair of Irman Yasin Limpo-Zunnun Nurdin Halid was an anomaly in that each of them represented a powerful political dynasty in South Sulawesi, but failed to gain significant votes in the election. Irman was a former senior bureaucrat and younger brother to Syahrul Yasin Limpo. The election was his second effort to become mayor. In this election, he ran together with Zunnun, the son of Nurdin Halid, a senior Golkar politician. The two deciding to pair up was a surprise since there has been a long rivalry between the two clans. Syahrul and Nurdin had been competitors in gubernatorial elections since 2003. In the 2020 election, their outreach to voters turned out to be weak. This was due to a lack of financial sponsorship, which was reflective of limited support from their own clans. In fact, Syahrul was considered to be supportive of Pomanto. Furthermore, the clan as such seemed to be more focused on working with Adnan Purichta Ichsan Yasin Limpo, the third generation of the Limpo clan, who was running for his second term in Gowa. Adnan went on to win with 91% votes.

9 Rizal is known as an Ilham loyalist, and even as deputy to Mayor Pomanto was considered a proxy for Ilham.
Since the 2018 mayoral election, Appi received strong support from minority groups in Makassar. This was apparently due to the involvement of the Kalla clan in supporting Anies Baswedan in the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2017. It was suggested that Appi lost many votes from minority groups in both elections due to the association of his family to the smear campaign in the Jakarta election and to their links to conservative groups.

The strong support for Pomanto from minority groups can be seen in the results for districts where the population of the Chinese is dominant, such as Wajo and Ujung Pandang where the number of votes for Pomanto were double those for Appi. In Wajo District, Pomanto won 5,315 votes while Appi collected 2,902 votes. In Ujung Pandang District, Pomanto had 5,228 votes against Appi’s 2,400 votes.

11 The decision of the governor was based on instructions from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the State Civil Apparatuses Commission. The rotation, which involved the promotion and demotion of more than a thousand Makassar civil apparatuses, was regarded as maladministration by Pomanto because he had not sought approval from the State Civil Apparatuses Commission: https://sulsel.idntimes.com/news/sulsel/aanpranata/40-sk-danny-pomanto-dianulir-mutasi-1228-pejabat-makassar-batal/3, accessed on 29 November 2020.
12 The nomination of Appi for mayor was the second attempt by the Kalla clan to win a political position in South Sulawesi. The first was by the brother-in-law of Jusuf Kalla, Mansyur Ramly, who ran as vice governor candidate partner to Amin Syam (then the incumbent governor) in the 2007 gubernatorial election. The pair was defeated by Syahrul Yasin Limpo-Agus Arifin Numang.
14 Pomanto admitted that the circulated voice record was his voice from an informal conversation with Laskar Merah Putih at his residence. He claimed that he should not be blamed for his personal opinion about the Minister of Fishery and Marine, especially because the conversation took place in his own residence. Pomanto claimed that he had been spied upon by Appi-Rahman, and that the record was made by that pair to discredit him: https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/12/08/16160011/menyoal-rekaman-suara-donny-pomanto-tuding-jk-di-balik-penangkapan-edhy?page=all accessed on 8 December 2020.
16 Since the 2018 mayoral election, Appi had been looked upon negatively by ethnic and religious minority groups in Makassar. This was apparently due to the involvement of the Kalla clan in supporting Anies Baswedan in the Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2017. It was suggested that Appi lost many votes from minority groups in both elections due to the association of his family to the smear campaign in the Jakarta election and to their links to conservative groups.
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