

# PERSPECTIVE

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## The Solo 2020 Election: Jokowi's Dynasty Begins?

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Gibran Rakabuming Raka (centre), the son of Indonesia's President Joko Widodo, rides a bicycle to meet supporters after declaring victory in the mayoral election in Solo on December 9, 2020. Photo: Anwar Mustafa, AFP .

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- The regional elections in Solo held on 9 December 2020 attracted much attention because President Jokowi's first son, Gibran Rakabuming, ran for mayor with the support of PDIP, which controls 60% of the seats in the local parliament.
- In nominating Gibran, PDIP sacrificed its local candidate Achmad Purnomo, the incumbent vice mayor who had long served the party's grassroots. Initially, Gibran faced resistance from the local party apparatus, but clinched the nomination with endorsement from party chief Megawati Sukarnoputri and provincial party officials. Gibran rallied a large coalition and secured support from all political parties in the local parliament (40 out of 45 seats) except for the Islamist party, PKS.
- Following Gibran's nomination, an independent candidate pair, Bagyo Wahyono and FX Suparjo, emerged to challenge him. These two were largely unfamiliar faces in Solo, with little prospect of withstanding Gibran's political machine, backed as it was by Indonesia's most powerful politician.
- Gibran eventually won by a landslide, amidst conspiracy theories that the challengers were token candidates put up to avoid a possible avalanche of protest votes which could negate Gibran's victory.
- Gibran's victory signals President Jokowi becoming the head of a political family more than it is about the impressive achievement of a newcomer politician. It also suggests that regional politics is now more about having social capital than it is about inter-party competition. This threatens to undermine Indonesian democracy.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important races, and one that received the most attention, during the 2020 regional head elections in Indonesia, was the mayoral race in Solo, or Surakarta city.<sup>1</sup> The reason for that was because the race involved the son of President Joko Widodo (affectionately known as Jokowi), Gibran Rakabuming. Solo is President Jokowi's hometown. He started his political career in this city 15 years ago and rose meteorically to the national level. Jokowi built an image as a self-made businessman, and his down-to-earth approach to politics, called *blusukan* (impromptu visits to lower class residences), captured the imagination of many Indonesians. He rose to prominence due to his populist rhetoric and his background as an outsider to Indonesia's mainstream politics.<sup>2</sup> The rise of Gibran, however, is at odds with the whole image projected about his father. Gibran is seen more as a product of dynastic politics rather than as a self-made politician. Without his father's big name, many believe that it would not have been possible for him to have become mayor of Solo.

A dynastic politician can be defined as someone who runs for public office with the advantage of being related by blood and/or marriage to politicians who are in power. Studies in India<sup>3</sup> and Japan<sup>4</sup> have found that dynasty is as much related to democracy as it is to an authoritarian system. In a democracy, a political dynasty can dominate politics through elections. The number of candidates of this type is on the rise in Indonesia, and this situation has been called the "new normal".<sup>5</sup>

President Jokowi is being accused of building a political dynasty<sup>6</sup> because both his son and son-in-law ran for mayoral positions—in Solo and Medan respectively. This is a drastic reversal from his previous position. Before his reelection in 2019, Jokowi boasted about how proud he was that his children stayed away from politics, and instead focused on cultivating their businesses.<sup>7</sup> His children also then expressed disinterest in joining their father to pursue a career in politics. All this changed in the few months that followed Jokowi's reelection.

This Perspective aims to elucidate some aspects of the regional election in Solo. Why did Gibran decide to run for office in Solo after denying that he had political ambitions? What were the dynamics like during the election and what led to Gibran's landslide victory? And, most importantly, what are the consequences of Gibran's victory on national politics and on Jokowi's political future?

## GIBRAN RAKABUMING: A SUDDEN CANDIDATE

Since Jokowi became president, Gibran Rakabuming had often said that he had no interest in politics. During Jokowi's re-election campaign, Gibran claimed that he was not involved in any way.<sup>8</sup> That was in September 2018. A year later, Gibran was seen visiting FX Hadi Rudyatmo (Rudy), the Mayor of Solo who is also the local chairman of PDIP, and disclosed to Rudy his intention to run in the upcoming Solo mayoral election.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, things were politically complicated. By that time, the Solo branch of PDIP had already decided on a candidate pair for the election. This was then-deputy mayor Achmad Purnomo for mayor and Teguh Prakosa, a local PDIP man, for vice-mayor. Gibran, however, would not give up that easily.

He went to the provincial PDIP to asked to be the party's candidate for Solo mayor. They complied,<sup>10</sup> overruling the Solo branch decision to back Achmad Purnomo.

The decision outraged PDIP cadres and activists in Solo. The PDIP bylaw states that the regency or city level branch has the right to nominate a candidate for regional head (*bupati*) or mayoral (*walikota*) elections.<sup>11</sup> Rudy, the mayor and the local chairman of PDIP, aired his frustration over the blatant violation of the party's regulations.<sup>12</sup>

Gibran gained the upper hand, however, when Megawati Sukarnoputri, the party chairwoman, agreed to his nomination. Achmad Purnomo retracted his candidacy while Teguh Prakosa, his candidate for vice-mayor, became Gibran's running mate. In July 2020, Jokowi invited Achmad Purnomo to the palace to offer him a government position at the national level. Purnomo refused the offer and chose instead to stay in Solo to run his businesses.

Gibran met almost no challenge in garnering support from the political parties in Solo. According to election rules, a candidate must be supported by parties that control at least 20% of the DPRD seats or that represent 25% of the votes obtained in the 2019 legislative elections. PDIP is the largest political party in Solo with 60% seats in the local parliament, which put Gibran easily pass that criterion.

Gibran did not even need support from other political parties since PDIP's backing was already enough to ensure his candidacy. He chose however to fortify his position by embracing the six parties in the city parliament. All lined up behind him except the Islamist PKS, giving him support from 40 of 45 seats (88.9%).<sup>13</sup>

Overwhelming support from the parties did not automatically mean victory for Gibran. His team understood the lesson from the 2018 mayoral election in Makassar, South Sulawesi, in which a political dynasty candidate who was supported overwhelmingly by the parties in the local parliament, lost nevertheless to the ballot's empty box, a protest option for Indonesian voters.<sup>14</sup>

To be sure, Gibran seemed overawed by his own political strength and the overwhelming size of his coalition. His hegemonic coalition was hindering his team from understanding grassroots electoral dynamics, and it worried about resistance from within PDIP since his nomination had resulted from party elite support rather than grassroots popularity. Having the ballot's empty box as an opponent was a risk Gibran did not wish to take. More importantly, a loss to the empty box by him would embarrass President Jokowi and damage his political stature nationally.

And then, unexpectedly, the election commission quite late in the day validated an independent candidate pair to run against Gibran.

## **BAJO: AN UNLIKELY OPPONENT**

Indonesia's election law stipulates that independent candidates must have the support of at least 8.5% of registered voters in the 2019 election and these are to be spread over more than 50% of the subdistricts (*kecamatan*). In Solo, it means that the candidates must show support from at least 35,870 registered voters residing in three subdistricts.

As of January 2020, there were two independent candidate pairs in the Solo election: Muhammad Ali Achmad-Abu Jazid (Alam), and Bagyo Wahyono-FX. Supardjo (Bajo). A third pair, Muhammad Ali Achmad-Abu Jazid (Alam), dropped out after failing to meet the requirements.

On 21 February 2020, Bagyo Wahyono-FX Supardjo (Bajo) submitted 41,425 ID cards as proof of support to the local general election commission. The commission performed administrative and factual verifications and found that only 36,006 of these ID cards met requirements. On 26 July 2020, a month after Gibran-Teguh had been declared as candidates, Bajo added a further 21,603 ID cards. The election commission all in all verified 38,831 of the total ID cards, and this qualified Bajo to bid for the mayoral position.

Bagyo Wahyono and FX Supardjo are newcomers to Solo politics. Bagyo works as a tailor in Pasar Gede, a traditional market in downtown Solo, and FX Supardjo is a retiree from a job training centre and is chairman of the neighbourhood association (*Rukun Warga*). The pair claimed they were supported by a grassroots organisation called *Tikus Pitih Hanata Baris*.<sup>15</sup>

Bajo was thus an unexpected candidate, and many questions were asked about the pair: Were they in the race for real or were they just puppet candidates to ensure that Gibran did not compete against the empty box on the ballot? Who was behind Bajo's candidacy? How would they run their campaign operations and who would finance them?

## THE CAMPAIGN

Bajo proved no match for Gibran in all respects. The pair could not afford to have a proper campaign organisation, nor could they afford to campaign online, something necessary during the Covid-19 pandemic, when there were no mass rallies or face-to-face meetings.

The huge disparity between the two campaigns could be seen in the funds involved. Gibran spent IDR 3.2 billion (S\$3.2 million) against Bajo's IDR 152 million (S\$152K). Gibran's campaign was technologically savvy and he conducted virtual campaigns by setting up virtual station boxes that enabled him to talk directly to voters. He called this virtual *blusukan*—referring to the impromptu visits to lower-class settlements, which had characterised his father's campaign style.

Gibran talked about making Solo a creative hub for millennials and frequently mentioned 'Industrial Revolution 4.0'.<sup>16</sup> He appealed to young people and tried to project himself as a business-friendly candidate by virtue of being a businessman himself.

Bajo, on the other hand, campaigned by offering plans that even they themselves were not certain about delivering. They planned to transform Solo into a 'megapolitan' city but rarely mentioned what kind of city they actually envisioned. They also promised to solve traffic congestion by building subways, and to deal with frequent flooding. Unlike Gibran, Bajo did not offer a vision to make Solo a sophisticated tech-based city. They tried to appeal to lower class voters but did not address the specific issues that usually attract them, such as housing, welfare, healthcare or education.

Bajo countered Gibran's virtual *blusukan* with a traditional campaign method. They called it *sekasur*, *serumah*, dan *sesumur* (one bed, one house, and one well). This sought to influence

the electorate in a slow manner through the cultivation of personal relationships with the women in the household, then with families at large, and finally with the whole community.<sup>17</sup> This was a method used under the New Order, by Golkar and the military to mobilise voters.

As the campaign approached the finish line, there were reports in the media about how exactly Bajo had managed to qualify as independent candidates, particularly in how ID cards were collected. The report said that people who were certified by the election commission as Bajo supporters never actually endorsed them.<sup>18</sup> This raised suspicions that Bajo's candidacy was actually a sham.

A few days before the election, a corroborative report provided further details about Bajo. It found that a third party had been contracted by a police intelligence officer to collect ID cards for Bajo, and IDR 1.5 billion (S\$1.5 million) were transferred to an operative in Solo to collect the ID cards. The funds had come from a police general.<sup>19</sup> While it remains unclear whether or not that police general provided supported for Bajo under orders from a higher ranking official, suspicions grew ever stronger that there indeed was a scheme to prevent Gibran from having to compete against the empty box (*kotak kosong*).

### **A LANDSLIDE VICTORY**

A poll released two days before the election (7 December) by IndoBarometer showed that Gibran-Teguh would get 67.8% of the vote, against only 4% for Bajo. The rest of the respondents said: As yet decided (19.8%); Keeping their vote secret (6.3%); Don't know (1.3%); Will not vote (1%).<sup>20</sup> It seemed pretty clear that Gibran would win by a landslide.

The final count showed Gibran winning 86.5% (225,419) of the votes while Bajo only got 11.4% (35,133). Gibran won in all sub-districts (*kecamatan*) in Solo while Bajo won less votes than the number of IDs that they had needed to collect during the process to become an independent candidate.

**Table 1. 2020 Solo Mayoral Election Result**

<b>Sub-districts</b>	<b>Gibran-Teguh</b>	<b>Bajo</b>
Laweyan	35,581	6,762
Serengan	20,564	3,241
Pasar Kliwon	31,793	5,259
Jebres	64,770	8,448
Banjarsari	72,711	11,403
<b>Total</b>	<b>225,419</b>	<b>35,113</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>86.5%</b>	<b>13.5%</b>

The voters turnout was 70.4%, lower than in the 2019 presidential election (85.92%) and the 2015 mayoral election (73.5%). There were 419,347 registered voters for the 2020 mayoral election, but only 295,112 voted. As many as 33,488 votes were declared invalid.<sup>21</sup>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Gibran's victory in Solo (and also his brother-in-law Bobby Nasution's victory in Medan) reveals more about President Jokowi's political stature than Gibran's impressiveness as a newcomer politician. It also marks a new stage in Jokowi's political life, as he shifts from his populist image towards becoming a more normal Indonesian politician.

He is no longer the Jokowi whose image was that of an outsider to Indonesian politics—he did not spring from Indonesia's established political elites, and he did rise to power from humble beginnings. Indeed, Jokowi is the first president to win with a “personal brand”. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, another president directly elected by the people, relied on his credentials as a military man being able to manage a government. Furthermore, Yudhoyono also created political parties to support him in power.

Jokowi had had none of that. Instead he relied primarily on his ability to do deals with the political elites instead of challenging them, while carefully crafting an image of himself as part of the common people.

With Gibran's victory, Jokowi becomes a professional politician in the Indonesian manner. Now he is part of the elite, and more than that, he now heads a political dynasty. The ascendance of Gibran (and Bobby Nasution) as mayor will certainly be assessed as part of Jokowi's success as well.

Gibran's success also reinforces what has been pointed out by Meitzner (2013 and 2020), that elections in Indonesia are “personalized elections.”<sup>22</sup> Parties in Indonesia are increasingly experiencing setbacks and the failure of PDIP cadre Achmad Purnomo to be candidate for mayor after serving the party for so long proves this. Gibran had joined the PDIP for only a few months before he became its candidate for mayor; and his candidacy was decided by party elites in dismissal of the internal dynamics of party at the local level.

Weak party institutionalisation strengthens patronage and personal networks. This is not strange to democratic dynasties. Chandra (2015) argues that a democratic dynasty emerges because it is a way for creating more effective loyalties between leaders and followers.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The formal name of the city is Surakarta, but the informal and more affectionate name is Solo. This Perspective will use Solo instead of Surakarta.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Marcus Mietzner, “How Jokowi Won and Democracy Survived,” *Journal of Democracy*, 25 no. 4, 2014, pp. 111-125.

<sup>3</sup> Kanchan Chandra, *Democratic Dynasties: State, Party, and Family in Contemporary Indian Politics*, London: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel M. Smith, *Dynasties and Democracy: The Inherited Incumbency Advantage in Japan*, Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Yoes C. Kenawas, “Dynastic Politics: Indonesia’s New Normal” <https://electionwatch.unimelb.edu.au/articles/dynastic-politics-indonesias-new-normal> Retrieved in December 29, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Editorial: “Dynasty in the Making,” The Jakarta Post, July 20, 2020.

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2020/07/20/dynasty-in-the-making.html>

<sup>7</sup> “Jokowi Bangga Anak-anaknya Jualan Martabak dan Pisang Goreng,” *Tempo.co.id*

<https://bisnis.tempo.co/read/1153702/jokowi-bangga-anak-anaknya-jualan-martabak-dan-pisang-goreng>

<sup>8</sup> <https://mediaindonesia.com/politik-dan-hukum/182308/gibran-tak-tertarik-masuk-politik-maupun-timses>

<sup>9</sup> “Gibran Tanyakan Mekanisme Pencalonan Walikota, Isyarat Terjun ke Politik?”, *Solopos.com*, 18 September 2020 (<https://www.solopos.com/gibran-tanyakan-mekanisme-pencalonan-wali-kota-solo-isyarat-terjun-ke-politik-1019250>, Retrieved 20 December 2020).

<sup>10</sup> “Rekomendasi DPP PDIP Untuk Pilkada Solo Jatuh Ke Gibran”, *Solopos.com*, 18 June 2020

(<https://www.solopos.com/rekomendasi-dpp-pdip-untuk-pilkada-solo-jatuh-ke-gibran-1066553>,

Retrieved 20 December 2020). In December 2018, Gibran claimed that the business he owned was built on his own name without intervention from his father, President Jokowi. Gibran also claimed that he proposed to be Surakarta’s Mayor by his own efforts and without parental intervention. On several occasions, Gibran stated that his decision to nominate himself as candidate in the mayor election was not motivated by Jokowi, but on his own will.

<sup>11</sup> Article 10 of PDIP Regulation Number 24/2017 states that the nomination process sits within the ranks of the PDIP. In this case, it means that the DPC (the party’s branch at the city/regency level) has the power to nominate a regional leader.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.merdeka.com/politik/fx-rudy-dukung-purnomo-mundur-pilkada-biar-diurus-dpp-dan-dpd-pdip.html>

<sup>13</sup> The Democrat Party - which won the 2009 presidential election in Surakarta – has no seat in the 2019-2024 Surakarta DPRD.

<sup>14</sup> See Hengky Widjaya, “The 2020 Makassar Mayoral Election: Replay of an Unresolved Political Feud”, *ISEAS Perspective* No. 14, Feb. 17, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> *Tikus Pithi Hanata Baris* means mice marching in disciplined manner. It claims to represent ‘small people’ (working class people). There are however many dubious things about the organisation. It was registered in 2014. Its chairman, Tuntas Subagyo, was involved in a financial scandal, however. He claimed that he had discovered Indonesian treasures worth several billion US dollars hidden in some banks in Switzerland, and sought donations to enable him to file a lawsuit to retrieve those treasures. For the 2019 presidential election, *Tikus Pithi* asked the election commission to open opportunities for independent presidential candidates, but the party would not nominate anyone other than its chairman to be the candidate. The commission rejected this request as unconstitutional. In 2020, *Tikus Pithi* claimed that it had nominated several independent candidates for regional heads in Central Java and Yogyakarta. However, only Bajo in Solo met the requirements to run as an independent candidate. See, “Rekam Jejak Tikus Pithi, Getol Suarakan Calon Independen Sejak Pilpres 2019”, *Solopos.com*, 5 August 2020 (<https://www.solopos.com/rekam-jejak-tikus-pithi-getol-suarakan-calon-independen-sejak-pilpres-2019-1074246>, downloaded 20 December 2020)

<sup>16</sup> The “Industry 4.0” revolution has become a buzzword in President Jokowi’s administration. This term was introduced by Klaus Schwab, Executive Chair of the World Economic Forum, and became the theme of the Annual WEF Meeting in Davos in 2016. President Jokowi’s administration launched what is known as 4IR (Industrial Revolution 4.0) which is a road map to make Indonesia’s economy the 10<sup>th</sup> largest world economy based on GDP. See, Ministry of Industry of Indonesia, “Making Indonesia 4.0” n.d. <https://bit.ly/39inCuR>

<sup>17</sup> In simple terms, it could mean that their followers would influence their spouses to vote for him, and these spouses would in turn persuade the whole family (house) to do the same, and finally the



family would influence their community. In the past, a well (*sumur*) was usually shared by the whole community.

<sup>18</sup> See “Sekeluarga Di Setebelan Kaget Dicatut Sebagai Pendukung Paslon Bajo Di Pilkada Solo”, *Solopos.com*, 7 July 2020 (<https://www.solopos.com/sekeluarga-di-setebelan-kaget-dicatut-sebagai-pendukung-paslon-bajo-di-pilkada-solo-1069495>, downloaded 20 December 2020); “Gakkumdu Solo Setop Penanganan Kasus Dugaan Pemalsuan Dukungan Paslon Bajo”, *Solopos.com*, 18 August 2020 (<https://www.solopos.com/gakkumdu-solo-setop-penanganan-kasus-dugaan-pemalsuan-dukkungan-paslon-bajo-1076400>, downloaded 20 December 2020) “Pilkada Solo: Dugaan Makelar KTP a`gar Gibran Tak Lawan Kotak Kosong”, *Tirto.id*, 8 December 2020 (<https://tirto.id/pilkada-Surakarta-dugaan-makelar-ktp-agar-gibran-tak-lawan-kotak-kosong-f7Ty>, downloaded 20 December 2020).

<sup>19</sup> “Pilkada Solo: Dugaan Makelar KTP agar Gibran Tak Lawan Kotak Kosong”, *Tirto.id*, 8 December 2020 (<https://tirto.id/pilkada-Surakarta-dugaan-makelar-ktp-agar-gibran-tak-lawan-kotak-kosong-f7Ty>, downloaded 20 December 2020)

<sup>20</sup> <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5285060/survei-pilkada-solo-indo-barometer-gibran-teguh-678-bajo-cuma-4>

<sup>21</sup> Tirto.id made a point when they noticed that if we add up Bajo’s voters with voters that were not exercising their rights and invalid votes, the total votes for Gibran-Tegush is only 56%.

<https://tirto.id/memaknai-kemenangan-gibran-saat-46-persen-dpt-solo-tak-memilihnya-f77C>

<sup>22</sup> Marcus Mietzner, *Money, Power, and Ideology: Political Parties in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia*, Singapore: NUS Press (2013); and “Indonesian Parties Revisited: Systemic Exclusivism, Electoral Personalisation and Declining Intraparty Democracy,” in Thomas Power and Eve Warburton eds., *Democracy in Indonesia: From Stagnation to Regression?*, Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, (2020), 191-209.

<sup>23</sup> Chandra (2016), *Democratic Dynasties*.

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