

PERSPECTIVE

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Medan's 2020 Mayoral Election: Dynastic Politics Versus Underperforming Incumbency

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In this picture, Bobby Nasution (centre), son-in-law of Indonesia's President Joko Widodo, and his wife Kahiyang Ayu (left) cast their votes in Medan on December 9, 2020, as Indonesia held its nationwide elections. Bobby Nasution, won Medan's 2020 mayoral election. Picture: Albert Ivan Damanik, AFP.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- President Joko Widodo’s son-in-law, businessman Bobby Nasution, won Medan’s 2020 mayoral election on 9 December 2020. Meanwhile, the President’s son Gibran Rakabuming Raka won Solo’s mayoral election in Central Java. In South Tangerang, Banten, all three mayoral candidates have family ties with established elites. Many observers have therefore deemed these local elections as a perpetuation of “dynastic politics”.
- Bobby’s victory in Medan is especially interesting since President Jokowi did not win here in the 2019 presidential election. A key factor could be the rapprochement between Jokowi and Prabowo after the 2019 election, resulting in Bobby’s candidacy being backed by parties in the governing coalition at the national level, while his rival was aligned with the weaker and fragmented opposition parties. Voters who previously supported Prabowo’s cause became less averse to voting for Bobby.
- Bobby’s campaign clearly benefited from his personal link to the President’s family. The higher voter turnout in Medan in 2020 reflected the prestige arising from this link, considering that he was an outsider. Moreover, Bobby’s camp encouraged the perception that Bobby would have easier access to resources and policy attention from the central government.
- Furthermore, voters in Medan have lost faith in the incumbent mayor who represented an underperforming and corrupt bureaucracy, and are thus less concerned about contributing to “dynastic politics” in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

On 9 December 2020, Medan, the capital city of North Sumatra, held its mayoral election. It was one of the country's 270 simultaneously held regional elections, comprising 9 gubernatorial, 224 district heads' and 36 mayoral, elections. Some voters demanded the postponement of these elections due to the ever-exacerbating Covid-19 pandemic,¹ deeming that health considerations must be prioritised over elite political interests. However, the government went ahead with the elections, stating the "cruciality of upholding people's rights to vote and be voted for" and that "nobody knows when the pandemic would be over."²

The grave pandemic aside, the 2020 Medan mayoral election exhibited an interesting feature shared with a few other high-profile elections, such as in Solo and South Tangerang, namely "dynastic politics".³ A political dynasty can be defined as a network of family politicians who come to power in an election-based regime.⁴ Kanchan Chandra writes that dynastic politics involve family members who are "active in politics", referring to those who hold office in an elected body, whether directly or indirectly elected, or is a candidate for an election, whether direct or indirect, or holding any office in a political party.⁵

The Medan election was won by President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's son-in-law, Bobby Nasution, a newly recruited PDIP cadre and Muslim-Batak young entrepreneur. Bobby Nasution and his running-mate Aulia Rachman won 53% of the total votes, while the incumbent pair Akhyar Nasution and Salman Alfarisi gained 46.5%. Bobby-Aulia's ticket won 393,533 votes (15 districts) while Akhyar-Salman's won only 342,380 (6 districts).

Bobby-Aulia's ticket was supported by eight political parties, namely his father-in-law's party Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (PDIP); the former opposition party, Prabowo's Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra); National Mandate Party (PAN); Golkar Party; National Democrat Party (Nasdem); People's Conscience Party (Hanura); United Development Party (PPP) and Indonesian Solidary Party (PSI). The incumbent Akhyar Nasution and his running-mate Salman Alfarisi were supported by the Islamist-oriented Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's party Democrat Party (PD).

This was Medan's fourth direct mayoral election since the implementation of direct elections in Indonesia in 2005. That year, Medan and other North Sumatra's districts such as Karo and Toba-Samosir were among the first cities to hold direct elections. In 2020, Medan had 1,601,000 registered voters scattered across its 21 sub-districts and 4,303 voting booths. Muslims comprise 61.21% of Medan's population, Christians 29.99%, Buddhists 8.02%, Confucianists 0.41% and Hindus 0.34%. Medan is a multi-ethnic city, with Batak groups comprising 35.2% of the population, Javanese 33%, Chinese 9.7%, Malays 6.9% and others 15.2%. Medan's main political parties are PDIP with 10 seats in the city parliament, Gerindra with 10 seats, PKS with 7 seats, PAN with 6 seats, Golkar with 4 seats, Nasdem with 4 seats, PD with 4 seats, Hanura with 2 seats, PSI with 2 seats and PPP with 1 seat.

During the 2019 Presidential election, Medan was among the cities where Prabowo Subianto, President Joko Widodo's former rival, won. Prabowo was backed by the coalition of the Islamist-inspired PKS and the nationalist Gerindra parties. Back then, the presidential election exhibited a religion-based voter polarisation, with predominantly Muslim regions in the East

Coast voting overwhelmingly for Prabowo, while the Christian regions in the West Coast supported Jokowi, who was backed by PDIP.⁶

Similarly, in the North Sumatra gubernatorial election in 2018, Medan was among the regions where the candidate backed by the PKS-Gerindra coalition won. This gubernatorial election also exhibited religion-based polarisation, with predominantly Muslim regions voting overwhelmingly for the all-Muslim ticket supported by PKS-Gerindra, and the Christian regions voting for the religiously mixed ticket supported by PDIP.⁷ This means, in addition to being inclined towards candidates possessing Islamist credentials, Medan also tended to support the Gerindra-PKS coalition.

Therefore, the fact that Bobby Nasution, a PDIP cadre with family ties to President Jokowi – who was not popular among Medan voters – could in 2020 win the city’s election, is interesting. How have his family ties with the President helped him in mobilising votes? How did the elements of “dynastic politics” play a role in Medan? What are the key takeaways of this election and what is the outlook for “dynastic politics” vis-à-vis the more familiar religious politics, in the future of Indonesia’s mainstream politics?

CANDIDATES AND CAMPAIGNS

The backgrounds of both contenders in the Medan election are worthy of note, partly because they also reflect the political contestation on the national level. The incumbent Mayor, Akhyar Nasution, a 54-year-old Batak-Muslim, was Vice Mayor under Dzulmi Eldin who won the election in 2015, but who is now in jail for corruption. Akhyar was a PDIP cadre before, yet was dismissed by the party’s Chairman Megawati Sukarnoputri for several reasons: first, it was reported that Akhyar was “upset” with her decision to not endorse his candidacy in Medan’s 2020 election and to support Jokowi’s son-in-law Bobby Nasution instead;⁸ second, due to his disgruntlement with PDIP, Akhyar decided to approach Democrat Party, which in the end supported his candidacy together with PKS, whose cadre Salman Alfarisi became Akhyar’s running-mate.⁹ Because Akhyar became a member of the Democrat party, PDIP then considered him “disloyal” and decided to dismiss him. It is also important to note that on the national level, the Democrat party and PKS were the only opposition left, since Gerindra had joined the government. The competition between Bobby and Akhyar thus reflects the national level contest between the ruling coalition and the opposition.

Akhyar’s “disloyalty” to PDIP aside, it is worthy of note that the Democrat Party, due to its founding history, is considered by many as PDIP’s long-time rival. The party was established as a vehicle for Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), who was then-President Megawati’s Coordinating Minister for Politics, Legal and Security Affairs, to run for the presidency in 2004. This alliance turned rivalry between SBY and Megawati became deep-seated and was extended into a long-term contention between these political parties.¹⁰

Although for other regions, being incumbent may at times boost a candidate’s popularity, being incumbent in Medan impacted negatively on Akhyar’s popularity. It is worth mentioning the “special” trait of Medan’s local politics: all elected mayors since 2005 have been convicted for corruption. The first directly elected mayor, Abdillah, who took office in 2005, was convicted in 2008. The second mayor, Rahudman Harahap, was Abdillah’s former Vice Mayor; he was elected Mayor in 2010, and was convicted in 2014. The third mayor, Dzulmi Eldin, Rahudman’s former Vice Mayor, who was himself elected as mayor in 2015, was convicted in

2020. The fact that all Medan's mayors have been involved with corruption had played a role in the city voters' political apathy, resulting in a low turnout of 25-35% in the 2010 and 2015 elections. In the 2020 election, most likely due to the candidacy of newcomer Bobby Nasution, who is not connected to the presumably corrupt bureaucracy and who is instead connected to the central government in Jakarta, Medan's voter turnout reached 55%, almost doubling those of the previous two elections.

Bobby's business accomplishments were not unknown to his potential voters. The fact that he is a successful young entrepreneur might have appealed to millennial voters. Like all election candidates across the country, Bobby reported his wealth to the Electoral Commission. His total wealth amounted to IDR 54.8 billion (USD 3.82 million);¹¹ his property assets are worth IDR 34.2 billion (USD 2.38 million) and consist of 3 plots of land in Medan, 1 plot in Solo, Central Java, 3 houses in Jakarta, and 1 house in Deli Serdang, North Sumatra. As the President Commissioner of a company called PT Wirasena Cipta Reswara, Bobby's main business is in the property sector although he also ventured into agriculture and mining. In the rice sector, Wirasena's daughter company, PT Pilar Wirasena Sinergi, is connected to the son of the district head of Binjai, North Sumatra, Muhammad Adri Alfisah, whose mother ran in the Binjai 2020 mayoral election but lost. Another affiliated company was PT Sambas Mineral Mining, headquartered in Southeast Sulawesi. Since 2016, Bobby has been also the marketing director of Takke Group, a property business owning various properties in Jakarta. He admitted that he got to know the founder of Takke through his father, who was the director of the state-owned enterprise, PT Perkebunan IV in North Sumatra.¹² As such, Bobby and his family were not unknown in the said province.

The fact that Bobby did not reside in Medan prior to his candidacy¹³ – thus making him not a “real” Medan resident – was at first considered not helpful for his campaign.¹⁴ However, the fact that all past mayors of Medan, all real residents of the city, had turned out to be involved in corruption, enabled him, as an outsider, to offer himself as a fresh alternative to the presumably corrupt city bureaucracy. Bobby-Aulia's official cues thus included “change”, referring to the need for bureaucratic reforms towards clean governance.¹⁵ In addition, they also promised a revitalisation of education institutions, strengthened rule-of-law, promotion of creative economy and small-scale businesses as well as religious harmony and tolerance.¹⁶ Meanwhile, in line with the ideological platform of the PKS party which backed him, some of Akhyar's promises focused on the interests of Muslim voters, for example, the establishment of an Islamic Centre within three years and a budget for fardhu kifayah, or the Islamic regulations for the preparation for the dead body for funeral, for poor people.¹⁷

In addition to the above official cues, there were several “unofficial” cues. In some of his speeches, emphasising his ties with the central government, Bobby portrayed himself as a sort of “mediator” between Medan and the government in Jakarta. Seemingly promising easy access to the central government, he said “I dare to make phone calls to Ministers in Jakarta, in order to take care of Medan”.¹⁸ Hearing this, the Akhyar camp sneered, saying that the Indonesian government has structures and regulations in place, and that local governments cannot “just make phone calls to ministers” to get the central government's attention. Moreover, Bobby's statement seemed to imply that if Akhyar won the election, the central government would be reluctant to pay attention to Medan. This, according to them, could be considered as unethical campaigning.¹⁹

Bobby's campaign did seem to be more "prestigious". He took his wife, Jokowi's daughter Kahiyang Ayu, on a number of campaign activities, emphasising in public his family ties with the President. In addition, many well-known national-level political figures supported him by coming to North Sumatra. Among these were Gandjar Pranowo, Central Java's governor who is a PDIP cadre, and Sandiaga Uno, a Gerindra cadre who was Prabowo Subianto's vice-presidential candidate in the 2019 election. President Joko Widodo's own visit to North Sumatra's Tapanuli region, though not to Medan and not for supporting Bobby, but yet so close to his son-in-law's Pilkada contestation no doubt helped Bobby's campaign, since it showed that the President was paying more attention to North Sumatra.

Akhyar's camp's "unofficial" cues included the prioritising of Islamic voters' interest. Akhyar-Salman pledged a "pact" with the popular Islamist preacher Abdul Somad to prioritise Islamic interests and values. Promises made include involving Islamic religious leaders (ulama), local intellectuals and cultural figures in policy-making, supporting Qur'an recitation activities and to include these in the regional laws, encouraging Islamic alms-giving to finance non-permanent teachers, Qur'an recitation teachers, grave-diggers, mortuary, and other Islamic-related activities and to include these in the regional laws.²⁰ Denoting that these would be included in the regional laws meant that the incumbent was willing to make Medan officially more "Islamic". In addition to the pledge, getting the preacher Abdul Somad to support them was itself a supportive signal to the conservative Islamic voters in Medan. This strategy was successful in North Sumatra's 2018 gubernatorial election, where the pair supported by Abdul Somad won.

DYNASTIC POLITICS AND THE RELATIVE INCONSEQUENCE OF RELIGIOUS MOBILISATION

The fact that Bobby is a wealthy young entrepreneur attracted voters, especially millennials who aspire to learn from his business success. It was also reported that his campaign team used this to emphasize that although he was wealthy and had lucrative businesses and "networks", he still chose to turn to politics to "dedicate himself" to developing Medan instead.²¹

Medan's 2020 mayoral election thus exhibited interesting aspects. Firstly, Bobby's camp benefitted from the fact that he is the son-in-law of the President and that there might be an assumption among voters that Bobby can offer easy access to central resources.

Secondly, unlike during the 2010 Medan election when ethno-religious identities were voters' political preference,²² ethnic politics did not take place in 2020 as both candidates were Bataks, and were even from the same Batak clan, Nasution. Similarly, religious identity-politics did not matter as much because both tickets were all-Muslim – although the Akhyar camp tried to promote programmes which directly focused on Islamic interests. This was different from the 2018 gubernatorial election, where one candidate pair was an all-Muslim ticket and the other was a mixed-ticket, and this made religious-based mobilisation more effective.

Thirdly, the fact that Prabowo Subianto, the chairman of Gerindra, has now joined the Jokowi government seemed to have made Medan voters – who voted overwhelmingly for Prabowo in 2019 – less averse to Jokowi's government. Bobby-Aulia's (PDIP-Gerindra) pairing also reflected the current closeness between Jokowi and Prabowo at the national level as well as epitomized the reconciliation of the two major nationalist parties which had been political

rivals. In contrast, Akhyar-Salman was backed by the Islamist PKS and Democratic Party, which at the national level represented the weak and fragmented opposition camp.

Fourthly, the pandemic significantly reduced the chances of mass mobilisation. This also meant that Abdul Somad, the young firebrand Islamic preacher who is popular in Medan and who was supporting Akhyar-Salman, could not mobilize the masses, which had been his political strength. The figure of Abdul Somad did not therefore influence voters as much as it had during the 2018 gubernatorial election, when the young preacher intensively campaigned for the Gerindra-PKS candidate who eventually won.

Fifthly, in relation to the reduced opportunity for Islamic mobilisation, the Islamist party PKS' strength has been divided with the birth of PKS's splinter party Gelora. PKS used to have a very strong party machinery in North Sumatra. In the Medan election, while PKS supported Akhyar-Salman, the splinter party Gelora supported Bobby-Aulia. Gelora national leader Fahri Hamzah even campaigned for the "proximity" of Medan to the central government.²³

Lastly, the massive flooding which ruined many residential areas in Medan several days before the election became the "nail in the coffin" for Akhyar's camp, as it accentuated the incumbent local government's incapacity to deal with this municipal problem.²⁴

KEY TAKEAWAYS AND RELATIONS TO THE NATIONAL POLITICS

Bobby Nasution's electoral triumph in Medan might have been surprising for some, especially considering that President Jokowi, his father-in-law, was not popular with Medan residents in 2019 and did not win the 2019 presidential election in the city. Two factors may explain Bobby's popularity among Medan's residents: firstly, there has been a reconciliation between President Jokowi and Prabowo at the national level, which also meant that the Gerindra party had joined the government camp. This might have rendered Medan's residents less averse to Jokowi's government, and by proxy, to the candidacy of his family member. Secondly, there might indeed be an assumption that Bobby can provide easier access to central resources. This logic of "patronage" is certainly not unfamiliar to Medan, where clientelism and corruption are known to be rampant.

Aside from factors pertaining to Bobby's popularity, the 2020 Medan election portrays several interesting features that reflect a general trend in Indonesia's current politics. Firstly, "dynastic politics" is considered "not unethical" with the excuse that every citizen has the political right to run in elections. This is not a good sign for Indonesia's democracy, as family-run political machineries perpetuate patronage politics and clientelism which in turn impedes good governance. Moreover, dynastic politics actually shrinks the space for non-dynastic aspiring individuals running in the election, creating an unlevel playing field that undermines democracy. Nevertheless, dynastic politics is also inevitable in Indonesia where decades of authoritarian governance had consolidated power among a few old entrenched (oligarch) elite groups and influenced the rise of new groups. Unfortunately, not many Indonesians would flinch when prominent families assume a hereditary political role.

Secondly, while "dynastic politics" may perpetuate binary politics and polarisation in Indonesia, it does not do that between hardline vs moderate Islam, but between local elites with local roots and new local elites with connection to the central government. The congruence of interests between local elites and central government elites might foster patronage networks

and therefore extend the political (and business) clout of the central-based oligarchs to the local level.

Thirdly, the Medan mayoral election portrays national-level political contestation as both camps represented polarisation at the national level. Bobby-Aulia's candidacy represented the consolidation of PDIP and Gerindra, which was also evident at the national level. Meanwhile, Akhyar-Salman's candidacy, which was backed by PKS and Democratic Party, reflected the weak and divided opposition camp at the national level.

Fourthly, in this election, voters seemed to have "penalised" the incumbent for "under-performing". Voters had witnessed how three mayors who were related to the local bureaucracy had been involved in corruption, therefore a newcomer not connected to the local government was a welcomed change. Moreover, Bobby is also Jokowi's son-in-law, the fact which made him more popular than the incumbent. Excitement pertaining to Bobby's candidacy might partly explain the unusually high voter turnout in 2020 compared to past elections. It is noteworthy that non-incumbent contenders who were not as popular as Bobby in the past had not attracted as large a turnout.

Lastly, with Bobby's triumph, Medan residents might be anticipating a more proximate relationship with the central government and easier access to central resources and public goods. Whether this will bring welfare to the people, as Bobby has promised, remains to be seen.

¹ Indonesia has the worst pandemic situation across Southeast Asia, with more than 1.3 million total cases, more than 32,000 deaths and numbers of daily new cases which could reach up to more than 14,000.

² "Ini alasan Pilkada tetap dilaksanakan" ("These are the reasons why Regional Elections would still be held"), *Republika*, 24 September 2020, <https://republika.co.id/berita/qh5ssl467/ini-alasan-pilkada-tetap-dilaksanakan> (accessed 25/02/2021).

³ President Joko Widodo's son Gibran Rakabuming Raka won the mayoral election in Solo, Central Java. In South Tangerang, Banten province, all three mayoral candidates have political ties with established elites; one was a family member of Prabowo Subianto's, the current Minister of Defence and Jokowi's former presidential rival, one was a family member of Ma'ruf Amin, the current Vice President of Indonesia, and the last one was a member of a local political family who holds power in almost all districts and cities of Banten. See A. Harimurti and Made Supriatma, "The Solo 2020 Election: Jokowi's Dynasty begins?", *ISEAS Perspective* 18, 2021, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2021-18-the-solo-2020-election-jokowis-dynasty-begins-by-a-harimurti-and-made-supriatma/> and Syafiq Hasyim, "Dynastic politics in Indonesia's Tangerang Selatan Triumphs," *ISEAS Perspective* 16, 2021, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/iseas-perspective-2021-16-dynastic-politics-in-indonesias-tangerang-selatan-triumphs-by-syafiq-hasyim/>

⁴ Ayesha Ali, "Do political dynasties hinder development?" in *International Growth Centre*, 3 July 2017, <https://www.theigc.org/project/do-political-dynasties-hinder-development/> (accessed 8/3/2021).

⁵ Chandra, Kanchan. "Hardly the end of dynastic rule." *Economic and Political Weekly* (2014): 25-28.

⁶ Deasy Simandjuntak, "Jokowi's defeat in Sumatra and the future of religiously charged binary politics", *ISEAS Perspective* 70, 2019, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_70.pdf

- ⁷ Deasy Simandjuntak, “North Sumatra 2018 election: Identity politics ruled the day”, *ISEAS Perspective* 60, 2018, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2018_60@50.pdf
- ⁸ “Ngamuk tak diberi rekomendasi, Akhyar Nasution dipecat Megawati sebagai kader PDIP” (“Upset for not getting a recommendation, Akhyar Nasution was dismissed by Megawati from being PDIP cadre”), *Kompas TV*, 27 August 2020, <https://www.kompas.tv/article/104392/ngamuk-tak-diberi-rekomendasi-akhyar-nasution-dipecat-megawati-sebagai-kader-pdip> (accessed 3/3/2021).
- ⁹ “PDI Perjuangan pecat Akhyar Nasution” (“The Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle dismissed Akhyar Nasution”), *CNN Indonesia*, 9 August 2020, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20200809210723-32-533847/pdi-perjuangan-pecat-akhyar-nasution> (accessed 3/3/2021).
- ¹⁰ “Luka lama Mega-SBY dibongkar picu ketegangan Demokrat & PDIP” (“Mega-SBY’s old wounds are opened triggering tension between Democrat and PDIP”), *CNN Indonesia*, 18 February 2021, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20210218081407-32-607679/luka-lama-mega-sby-dibongkar-picu-ketegangan-demokrat-pdip> (accessed 3/3/2021).
- ¹¹ “Menilik kekayaan Bobby Nasution, mantu Jokowi dan cawalkot Medan” (“Looking at Bobby’s wealth, son-in-law of Jokowi’s and Medan’s mayoral candidate”), *Kompas*, 27 September, <https://money.kompas.com/read/2020/09/27/071200126/menilik-kekayaan-bobby-nasution-mantu-jokowi-dan-cawalkot-medan?page=all> (accessed 5/3/2021).
- ¹² Aulia Adam, “Jejak bisnis Bobby Nasution, menantu Presiden Jokowi” (“The business traces of Bobby Nasution, President Jokowi’s son-in-law”) *Tirto*, 8 December 2020, <https://tirto.id/jejak-bisnis-bobby-nasution-menantu-presiden-jokowi-f7So> (accessed 5/3/2021).
- ¹³ Bobby’s family had lived in several cities. Bobby went to the Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB) for his bachelor’s and master’s education. He has a house in Jakarta, as well as properties in Medan and Deli Serdang (North Sumatra).
- ¹⁴ “Bobby Nasution: banyak yang bilang Bobby bukan orang Medan, tidak pernah tinggal di Medan” (“Bobby Nasution: many people say that Bobby is not a real Medan resident because I never reside in Medan”), *Kompas*, 16 February 2020, <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/02/16/08034431/bobby-nasution-banyak-yang-bilang-bobby-bukan-orang-medan-tidak-pernah?page=all#page2> (accessed 4/3/2021).
- ¹⁵ “Bobby Nasution – Aulia Rachman tawarkan reformasi birokrasi di kota Medan” (“Bobby Nasution – Aulia Rachman offer bureaucratic reforms in Medan city”) *Sumutnews* 22 November 2020, <https://kumparan.com/sumutnews/bobby-nasution-aulia-rachman-tawarkan-reformasi-birokrasi-di-kota-medan-1udgy4vmid6/full> (accessed 4/3/2021).
- ¹⁶ Janji Akhyar vs Bobby di pilkada: sekolah gratis hingga Medan bebas korupsi” (“Akhyar’s vs Bobby’s promises in the mayoral election: free education to corruption-free Medan”) *Detik*, 21 October 2020, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5222278/janji-akhyar-vs-bobby-di-pilkada-sekolah-gratis-hingga-medan-bebas-korupsi> (accessed 4/3/2021).
- ¹⁷ “Akhyar siapkan jurus menangkan pilkada Medan, ada pembiayaan Fardhu Kifayah” (“Akhyar prepares strategies to win the Medan election, there is budget for Fardhu Kifayah”) *Tribunnews*, 6 November 2020, <https://www.tribunnews.com/pilkada-2020/2020/11/06/akhyar-siapkan-jurus-menangkan-pilkada-medan-ada-pembiayaan-fardhu-kifayah?page=2> (accessed 4/3/2021).
- ¹⁸ “Bobby: saya nggak bakal malu telpon menteri untuk masyarakat Medan” (“Bobby: I will not be shy to call Ministers for Medan residents”) *Detik*, 29 September 2020, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5193305/bobby-saya-nggak-bakal-malu-telepon-menteri-untuk-masyarakat-medan> (accessed 4/3/2021).
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ “Aman buat 9 komitmen dengan Ustadz Somad di atas materai, begini isinya” (“Akhyar-Salman pledged 9 commitments with Preacher Somad on sealed document, this is the content”) *Sindonews*, 7 December 2020, <https://daerah.sindonews.com/read/259264/717/aman-buat-9-komitmen-dengan-ustadz-somad-di-atas-materai-begini-isinya-1607321535> (accessed 8/3/2021).

²¹ “Bobby tak malu telepon Menteri dibalas kubu Akhyar baru belajar” (“Bobby is not shy to call ministers, Akhyar’s camp’s response: he’s still learning [to become politician]”) *Detik*, 1 October 2020, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-5196532/bobby-tak-malu-telepon-menteri-dibalas-kubu-akhyar-baru-belajar> (accessed 5/3/2021)

²² In the Medan election’s second round in 2010, the two pairs of contenders represented different ethno-religious identities. The first pair, Rahudman Harahap and Dzulmi Eldin, represented an all-Muslim ticket (Harahap is Muslim-Batak while Eldin is Muslim-Malay). Meanwhile, their contenders, Sofyan Tan and Nelly Armayanti, represented a mixed-ticket; Tan is a Chinese-Buddhist and Armayanti is Muslim. Identity-politics unsurprisingly ruled the day, with Muslim voters being mobilized to vote for candidates “of the same faith”.

²³ “Fahri Hamzah yakin mantu Jokowi bawa Medan ke level dunia” (“Fahri Hamzah is convinced Jokowi’s son-in-law brings Medan to the world level”) *CNN Indonesia*, 31 October 2020, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20201030235741-32-564299/fahri-hamzah-yakin-mantu-jokowi-bawa-medan-ke-level-dunia> (accessed 9/3/2021).

²⁴ “Debat pilkada Medan, bencana banjir jadi amunisi menyerang” (“Medan mayoral election debate, flooding became ammunition to attack”) *Bisnis Sumatra*, 5 December 2021, <https://sumatra.bisnis.com/read/20201205/533/1326878/debat-pilkada-medan-bencana-banjir-jadi-amunisi-menyerang> (accessed 5/3/2021).

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