



Populism and Crisis in Indonesia: Politicization of Economy, Identity, and Personalistic Leadership

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ABSTRACT

While the COVID-19 pandemic plunged Indonesia's economy into its worst recession in the post-1998 Asian financial crisis, the health crisis forced the government to accelerate national economic recovery by initiating contradictory policies and problematic law, the omnibus law on job creation. These efforts boost investment, national competitiveness, and economic growth amid the pandemic. However, the government's efforts have led to the deterioration of democracy and democratic accountability fueled by technocratic-populist rhetoric and authoritarian measures that repress activists, civil societies, and dissenters toward state policies. Politicizing crisis for the state's agenda is not unique in Indonesian politics. The ruling governments tended to exploit hyper-nationalist narratives, religion-ideological divide, and pro-people rhetoric in legitimizing undemocratic policies. This article seeks to explain how populism is being exploited to use crises to gain political prominence or dominance in Indonesia. It elaborates on a series of economic shocks in Indonesian history from post-independence to democratic regimes in understanding the pattern and role of populist politics in the crises. By adopting the populist-crisis linkage and populist cycles theory as analytical frameworks, this article argues that strong and charismatic leaders politicize crises to gain mass support or votes for state-centric populist agendas. It is by adjusting anti-democratic politics to popular demands for alternative political change. Populist actors reproduce the politicization of three key domains, namely economic recession, identity-based polarization, and personalistic leadership. It is to match social-economic grievances and distrust of people in established elite and formal institutions. The politicization is strategically aimed to promote the political relevance of populist leaders in times of crisis.

Keywords: *Populism, Crisis, Political Polarization, Indonesia's Democracy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

While the COVID-19 pandemic plunges Indonesia's economy into its worst recession in the post-1998 Asian financial crisis, the health crisis forced the government to accelerate national economic recovery by initiating contradictory policies and problematic law, the omnibus law on job creation. These efforts are claimed to boost economic recovery through unemployment reduction, investment, social security, national competitiveness, and growth amid the pandemic [1].

However, Such a government's efforts have led to the deterioration of democracy and democratic accountability fueled by technocratic-populist rhetoric and authoritarian measures that repress activists, civil societies, and dissenters toward the state policies [2],[3]. Politicizing crisis for the state's agenda is not unique in Indonesian politics. The ruling governments tended to exploit hyper-nationalist narratives, religion-ideological divide, and pro-people rhetoric. It legitimizes

undemocratic and untransparent policies [4], [5]. It is important to underline that populist-authoritarian regimes have historically practiced such politicization of crisis in imposing state policies and agendas. Such undemocratic politics is seemingly continued in the Indonesian democratic system nowadays.

To understand the populist tendency, it is crucial to explain why and how populism persists after several crises and remains an appealing form of politics in contemporary democracy. This article seeks to explain how populism is being exploited to use the crisis to gain political prominence or dominance in Indonesia. It argues that most of the crises in Indonesia have paved the way for populism to gain public support by adjusting its anti-democratic politics to popular demand for political change. Populist actors reproduce the politicization of three key domains: economic decline, identity-based polarization, and personalistic leadership. The idea is to match social-economic grievances and distrust of people in elite institutions. The politicization is strategically

aimed to promote the political relevance of populist leaders in times of crisis.

The following section will discuss the role of crisis for populism and cycles of crisis as the analytical framework. The third section will elaborate on a series of economic shocks in Indonesian history from post-independence to democratic regimes and show how populists use the crisis to achieve political dominance. The following section explains the change and continuity of populism in politicizing crises in the context of democratic politics before reaffirming the argument in the concluding section.

2. CRISIS AS THE INTERNAL FEATURE OF POPULISM

Various approaches are used to analyze populism; ideational, discursive, strategic, and logical. However, it underlines the antagonistic relationship between the 'pure people against the 'elite,' the establishment, or the other, emphasizing the will and sovereignty of the people as the core of politics [6]. The people are seen as holders of moral virtue and true sovereignty. Populism shares some common elements in democratic politics, which refers to the centrality of the people, uniformity, anti-elitism or anti-establishment, as well as opposition to the status quo or the ruling system, creation of a common enemy, amplification of crisis, direct communication & leader-voter bond, simplifying complexity, polarization of politics, reference to personalistic leadership, an image of an outsider [7].

Regarding crisis, contemporary populist works of literature acknowledge the relationship between crisis and populism, despite different extents and impacts. Most political scientists, working within both discursive and strategic approaches, view crisis as a prerequisite for the emergence of populism historically triggered by the crisis of hegemonic ideological discourse, political representation, economics, or security. They see that populism is very likely to rise strongly when authorities and institutions cannot manage political behaviors or accommodate the aspiration and identities of the masses. Such a social or political dysfunction paves the way for populist leaders to exercise their power, charismatic leadership, and anti-establishment rhetoric. Indeed, populism also radically simplified solutions for mobilizing unmediated and institutionalized support from unorganized proponents based on their idealized social order.

Moreover, those adopting an ideological approach are skeptical about the populism-crisis linkage but still recognize its relationship. The role of crisis is significant to the political successes of European ring-wing populists in elections. However, the concept of the crisis remains

vague and unspecific, where it can be found in contemporary politics [8].

In this respect, the crisis is understood as an external feature that plays a vital role in triggering populism to rise. It is mostly associated with an objective condition and problem where a great danger, difficulty, or doubt threatens stability or establishment of order or system. This objective condition tends to be linked to systemic failure in many domains, such as the financial system, the widening gap between political representatives and citizens, or social and economic issues. It also narrates the economic difficulties, perceived injustice, military threat, and cultural or social change, which urge to be corrected by decisive action or sound policy.

However, considering the crisis as an external trigger of populism would limit it as a common political phenomenon that only emerges at specific times. It is important to think about how populism attempts to act as a trigger for the crisis. As an internal feature of populism, "crisis only becomes a crisis when it is perceived as a crisis—when a failure gains wider salience through its mediation into the political or cultural spheres and is commonly accepted as symptomatic of a wider problem." The role of the populist actor matters in this definition as the actor exercises its political ability to leverage failures into the level of crisis through spectacularization, dramatization, performing or politicization of failures and those impacts heavily related to the grievances and the popular demands for political change [8].

Populism gets impetus from the perception of crisis, breakdown, or threat while simultaneously intending to cause crisis through dramatization and performance. It leads to the demand for immediate and decisive action bypassing representation or authorities where elites' dominance is entrenched in established institutions [9]. While the elite or establishment is blamed as a source of crisis or breakdown, the performance of crisis is associated with a general distrust of complex governance and complicated policy solutions implemented by established elites. Populist prefers short-term, simple, and rapid action to slow politics of deliberation and negotiation as in liberal democratic tradition.

To understand whether the crisis is spectacularized or politically mediated by specific populist agenda, populism should be defined in terms of political style. Political style is defined as "the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that comprise the political, stretching from the domain of government through to everyday life." In short, the repertoires of performance that are used to create and affect political relations, specifically between the populist leader and 'the people'/their followers, and vice

versa. Features of populism as a political style; (1) appeal to 'the people versus 'the elite'; (2) 'bad manners'; and (3) Crisis, breakdown, or threat [7], [8]. This approach allows us not only who the populist is and why it rises but rather how populists do in claiming to speak for and embody the people, along with the audiences and stage of populist performance and the actual mechanism of representation crisis [8].

Moreover, the theory of populist cycles also helps us to deeply comprehend how populists' spectacularize of failures and leverage them as a perceived systemic crisis. The populist cycles theory argues that populists exploit the systemic shocks or crises underpinning the extreme vote cycles to match their political platform with popular demands. The crisis that arguably derives from three interrelated socioeconomic demands comprising of economic crisis emerges from recessions. Identity crisis is caused by anti-foreign sentiment and inequality dynamics, and fairness crisis is dependent on perceived substantive and procedural fairness in a certain society. These shocks on the economy, identity, and fairness ultimately reinforce populist performance and spectacularization of failure to trigger a profound political change. It assumes that greater shocks in one domain will spill over into other domains, thereby substantiating the impacts of respective shocks on electoral support to populists. [10].

3. CRISIS AND WAVES OF POPULISM IN INDONESIAN POLITICS

Indonesian history has shown that popular radicalism became one of the driving forces that invigorated Indonesian independence movements against Dutch colonialism with its physical violence, repression, exploitation, exile, discrimination, and military oppression [11]. There is no doubt that populism and populist rhetoric have become central to the anti-colonial struggle and effective political tools to mobilize nationwide resistance as well as solidarity and support of native and foreign-root residents to achieve national independence [12]. In this sense, populism has been on par with people-centered and progressive political discourse in Indonesian politics, which was once impactful in uniting the support of Indonesian citizens. Since then, the populist tendency has been exploited by key figures to legitimize politico-ideological projects and state agendas.

This section highlights a series of major crises in post-independence politics that reshaped the face of populism in Indonesian history. It also explicates that populist politics emerges in various forms that adapt its main concern and narratives to popular demands in a certain period. This strategy was used to gain public

support for a political transformation and to achieve power dominance.

3.1. Political Crisis and Radical Nationalism

The rise of anti-colonial and radical nationalist populism can be traced back to political crises and instability under the system of parliamentary democracy. The instability was exacerbated by PRRI/Permesta Insurgency, the West Irian Dispute, and the inability of The Constitutional Assembly (*Konstituante*) to set a permanent constitution for the republic. After a series of internal conflicts and political crises were overcome, President Sukarno continued to masterly develop populism in his leadership approach by harnessing presidential power to establish the "Guided Democracy" via a decree issued on July 5 1959.

Under the Guided Democracy regime, Sukarno's populism had been based on organic or integralist ideas regarding the state-society relationship. These ideas were subsequently deciphered into the guiding principle for the "Guided Democracy" system, including the "Guided Economy," to legitimize stronger presidential authority. It also ensures the state-political project of the "dysfunction" in state institutions, with the active support of the military, bureaucratic institutions, and loyalist non-governmental organizations and movements [5]. Emphasizing an ideological goal, Returning to the Way of Revolution, this regime shaped the national guidelines of state policy governing not only executive but also legislative and judicative institutions. It is based on *Manipol-USDEK* doctrine, which stands for Political Manifesto - the 1945 constitution, Indonesian Socialism, Guided Democracy, Guided Economy, and Indonesian personality.

Sukarno deemed the government system and its doctrine the most compatible alternative for achieving common goods for the Indonesian people in an independent or self-reliable manner. The "Guided Democracy" was claimed to prioritize the state's interests beyond vested interests, in contrast to a destructive system advocated by free-fight liberalism, individualism, cosmopolitanism, and reformism [13].

The establishment of the Guided Democracy was aimed to cope with several crises and political instability under the system of parliamentary democracy. The centralistic political system was merely being used to legitimize the full extension of the presidential power and authority in running the government office. The exercise of power tended to use authoritarian measures, which provided the president with a greater space to control individual political preferences, neutralize opposition, and co-opt political power or interests of independent groups outside the circle of state power. The

authoritarianism of the Guided Democracy regime is very evident in the dissolution of representative democracy and the establishment of a representative board, in which the latter replaced the former. The newly created board had been occupied by members that the president directly appointed based on his consideration [13], [14]—the dissolution of the Indonesian Socialist Party (PSI), Masyumi, and jailed dissenters and prominent oppositional leaders.

In the exercise of his power, President Sukarno was very good at playing a populist approach to garner solid support from the lower-middle people to materialize the efforts and political interests of the regime at the grassroots and the elite level. Populist politics under the Guided Democracy system was constructed in a more complex way that combined revolutionary ideas, patriotic rhetoric, and political jargon, which were in turn, performed in important public events. For instance, during the commemoration of Independence Day, August 17, 1963, at Gelora Bung Karno Stadium, Jakarta, President Sukarno made a patriotic oration entitled “*Genta Suara Revolusi Indonesia/the Resounding Voice of Indonesian Revolution*. In his speech, he passionately addressed the issue of Neo-colonialism, the confrontation policies with Malaysia, and the improvement of the national economy to maintain the nation's autonomy. Sukarno echoed that his body was not Sukarno in person but as the extension of the tongue of the people, the main bearer of the Mandate of the People's Suffering, and the great leader of the Indonesian revolution. Sukarno constructed a narrative that his physical body was united with the people, owned by the people, and what he was talking about was the voice of the people who could not speak for themselves [15].

The construction of the narrative by Sukarno was a manifestation of a united people, coupled with the services of his struggle for independence, which was the beginning of the development of populism in modern Indonesian politics, especially in the pre-Reformation era. The reproduction of popular ideas in Sukarno's political jargon gave him room to establish political domination in public discourse at this time through official teachings of the President, NASAKOM (Nationalism, Religion, and Communism), and RESOPIM (Revolution, Indonesian Socialism, and National Leadership). The practice of the president's teachings is certainly inseparable from the international context at that time of fears of the intervention of foreign powers, the United States and the Allies, in influencing national and socio-economic-political stability supported by the power of capitalism and its compradors. Based on the perception of the threat of neo-colonialism, it began to undermine the nationality of the Indonesian people to regulate themselves. Sukarno also promoted the rhetoric of progressive nationalism reinforced by anti-foreign or

anti-Western sentiments referring to opposing the domination of the forces of imperialism and global capitalism. It compradors in the country of water, but not xenophobic and racist sentiments that attack the socio-cultural entities of certain groups of people [16].

3.2. *Economic Crisis and Developmentalism*

Due to the crisis of Economic slowdown, Hyperinflation (650% in 1966), and the G30S Movement, the Sukarno's Old Order (*Orde Lama*) as the established government failed to overcome the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). PKI then led to rebellion, and New Order Regime saw underdevelopment as the main threat. The authoritarian developmental regime claimed to protect the nation from communist threat and belief that the only way to materialize Pancasila was the development and open market. Any opposition was regarded as a threat to the national interest.

The established radical populism of Sukarno's leadership had started to dilute in the wake of the G30S/PKI tragedy until General Suharto's *Orde Baru* (New Order) overthrew the declarator's regime in the wake of G30S/PKI. The *Orde Baru* (New Order) regime began under the other authoritarian president, General Suharto. New Order adopted an organic state [17]. The New Order regime has been constructed within the idea of the organic state that purely promotes harmony, hierarchy, the restructuring of state-society relations, the Pancasila ideology, and the 1945 constitution. The practice of Pancasila ideology as a single principle that prioritizes state interests not only functioned as a depoliticization instrument of social activities but rather a political tool to eliminate the existence of communism and other critical groups deemed involved in extreme and subversive activities. Those oppositional forces or any major threats to New Order institutions had been blamed as the fundamental problems to the nation's life and the legitimate government.

Institutionalization of the New Order regime aimed to sustain the power and political structure of the New Order regime. President Suharto adopted "bureaucratic populism". It is also becoming a symbolic legitimation for the institutionalization of the New Order system. The bureaucratic populist idea originates from local ideologies of pre-colonial Dutch East Indies devoted to glorifying hierarchical culture and deference to a class of rulers. These ideas shaped the traditional attitude of Indonesians to obey authority, the ruling power, and bureaucratic elites since the colonial era as hierarchy and deference had been legitimized as a form of the fourth pillar of *Pancasila*, a state ideology. Suharto's regime linked these ideas to the people's sovereignty led by state and bureaucratic authorities to gain partisan support from

a majority of the middle and upper classes, specifically whose subsistence mostly relied on the state [18].

In this respect, Suharto augmented the militant constitutionalism and the dual functions doctrine (*dwifungsi*) as subset ideas to the bureaucratic populist ideology to reinforce his power and the New Order institutions. The former attempted to provide a constitutional foundation for strengthening the institutional framework of the regime and infusing democracy and nationalism conceived the 1945 constitution to the personal legitimacy and central role of the president in the whole political system. Meanwhile, the latter aimed to justify the military superiority over civilians within the New Order system that legalized the direct involvement of active military personnel in the government, parliaments, bureaucracy, and other civilian offices to save the nation. Notwithstanding fear, coercion, and apathy, the combination of two ideas made the ideology of bureaucratic populism widely accepted by civilians as a part of the New Order rules. To these ends, Suharto augmented two important aspects of bureaucratic populism to reinforce his power: the militant constitutionalism to the 1945 constitution and the *dwi-fungsi* (twin function) doctrine that pushes the military roles in defense and socio-politics [18].

Moreover, Suharto's rule was exercised authoritatively and coercively. It has been done by exploiting political economy propaganda under the integral support of military power and the network of corporate oligarchs. Strategies that legitimized the suppression of regime dissidents attempted to brutally delegitimize government policies, including ideological movements and socio-political opposition. That were deemed to threaten the realization of the New Order Development Trilogy, political stability, development, and equity [14], [19]. Suharto adopted the idea of developmentalism that intimately endorsed the legitimacy of global financial institutions (IMF and World Bank) and the US and western hegemony. Bureaucratic populism that replaced Sukarno's anti-colonialist and imperialist nationalist populism was used to attract grassroots sympathy to the New Order's apolitical developmentalism. It is also through the formation of public perceptions that the development program and the national economy were a tangible manifestation of President Suharto's concern for the common good and interests. Economic growth and rapid growth confirm the government's commitment to prosper the people and build the Indonesian economy from the downturn inherited from the elite of the Old Order regime. Inevitably the title "Father of Development" was assigned to the president through the support of state media propagandists and regime loyalists, which indicates Suharto's technocratic populism worked well and was effective in manipulating satisfaction and

spreading positive sentiment toward the rule of the New Order [5], [14], [20]. The 32 years of New Order establishment, patronage politics, and clientelism have rampantly forged Indonesian politics and state institutions.

3.3. Asian Financial Crisis and Reformism

Ideological spectrum in Indonesia before nationalist socialism, communism, and Islam, and after 1965 nationalism and Islam shape the ideological path in contemporary Indonesia. However, in post-authoritarian democracy, populism depends on past political culture and structure of patronage and clientelistic politics to reinforce its appeal to the support of unorganized ordinary people.

The fall of Suharto's New Order brought about democratization, and institutional reform has provided reformist political parties and movements with a decent space to reconfigure a just and equal political order. Democratic reform was seemingly constraining the revert of ruthless authoritarianism to Indonesian politics. In the earlier regime, reformist groups had long struggled to generate a radical political transformation in undermining the legitimacy of the New Order regime through formal political opposition and mass mobilization by using populist appeals to gain massive public sympathy. The emergence of Megawati Sukarnoputri as a key political figure in the 1990s epitomized the revival of populism that enabled influence grassroots support and resistance against the confinement and repression of the governments. After Suharto was overthrown, Megawati's populist politics was proven effective in triumphing in the 1999 elections. The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) successfully outperformed the New Order's party, Golkar, and delivered her as Indonesia's first female vice president and president [20].

Following that period, the growing influence of Megawati in national politics was inextricably linked to the jargon of "*wong cilik*" (little people) and pro-people nationalist rhetoric as the principal means of attracting popular support. The PDI-P's political view and concern toward the interests of the lower class, who had been marginalized in politics and development goals under the New Order regime, became the basis of her narrative about a political struggle. Such a view was fundamental to constructing a direct relationship to reciprocally support a base of unorganized followers and voters. The strategy was built to present Megawati and PDI-P's political image and rhetoric as authentic catalysts of people's voices and aspirations being oppressed. The negative view of the cruelty and atrocity of Suharto's rule greatly impacted the emotions and perceptions of individuals victimized by the regime, particularly in

shaping their political decision and voting preference. Invigorating that political prowess, her biological relations with President Sukarno, attributed to the Marhaenism doctrine, energized Megawati's populist appeals remarkably [20]. This social capital played an important role in expanding her electoral mobilization and party identification at the grassroots level, including Sukarno loyalist and sympathizer groups.

However, the 2004 Presidential elections symbolized the SBY path to power and less relevant party-political machinery and patronage networks [21].

Despite two consecutive failures in the 2004 and 2009 presidential elections, the influential Megawati continued to use nationalist populism in her role as the opposition leader to the term of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) presidency, manifested in the PDI-P's political position as well. In exercising oppositional power, Megawati emphasized popular nationalism as her ideological position, within which the PDI-P party political narratives built around the value of *Pancasila* on June 1 1945 and the preamble of the 1945 Constitution as President Sukarno practiced during in power. In this regard, such a stance shaped the PDI-P's ideological discourses in criticizing the SBY (-Jusuf Kalla and -Boediono) administrations. For the PDI-P elites, SBY's government had strongly inclined to adopt market-oriented and neo-liberal policies that were contradictory to the interests of the common people and hence popular nationalism. Consequently, seemingly neo-liberal programs and policies became the main target of populist critiques, which vigorously urged the ruling power to adjust its policy orientation to the interests of the common people. The PDI-P's oppositional stance can be seen from several policies denounced as policies representing foreign or capitalist interests. Namely the increase of fuel prices and food imports, ExxonMobil as the leading operator in the Cepu Block, the position of the Indonesian government towards Malaysia, the Direct Cash Transfer (BLT) program, the Aceh Peace Agreement/the Helsinki Agreement, and the raising tariffs for other necessities [22].

It was interesting to note that populist critiques of the PDI-P against the SBY government were responded to by the introduction of several social policies deemed populist, such as the cash transfer program, health insurance, free education, and rural development. The populist policies were positively welcomed by the nationwide poor following the 2008 global financial crisis and stable national growth [23]. However, SBY's populist economy can be interpreted as the populism referred to in this paper because political strategies that use the narrative of "the will of the people" and the opposition of certain elite groups in mobilizing electoral support are not the main instruments in achieving power.

The political constellation above showed the return of nationalist populism that Megawati displayed traditionally (pure people-vs-corrupted elites). She also still prioritizes extras and the discourse on siding with the little people, popular nationalism, and anti-foreign attitudes (read: anti-neocolonialist-capitalist) in its political rhetoric. Despite acting as a government opposition for a long period, it must be acknowledged that Megawati's populist politics and PDIP have significantly influenced maturing politics and democracy in contemporary Indonesia. Many differences of opinion, the use of political rights, and sharp criticism of the ruling regime were dynamic and free compared to the period. Previous. This progress has been recorded in the assessment of Freedom House for 20 years. Indonesia in 1998-2004 was categorized as Partly Free and increased to Free in 2006-2013 but returned to Partly Free until 2018 [24]. In this phase, the existence of populist politics shows the exact condition that influences the promotion of democracy, different from the experience of the West, such as America and Europe.

However, during this period of democratic transition, political party elites began to build a network of strength, establishment, and political domination in Indonesia through rampant practices of political clientelism. Strengthening the hegemony of political parties and political party elites is carried out by tightening the rules regarding the parliamentary threshold, which continues to increase and presidential nominations by 20-25 percent. This is an attempt to control the political system that continues to benefit established political parties' political agendas [25]. Although there are indications of restrictions on citizens' political rights [26], this attempt is made to close the opportunity for the penetration of populist political movements. Also, to shape actors into electoral struggles via independent channels that have the potential to reduce the status quo and even delegitimize the role of political parties.

The end of the SBY presidency had raised new hope for the emergence of a reformist leader that led the next government. The reformer was expected to be capable of deepening political reform in the stagnated democracy. Specifically, such a political figure can strengthen anti-corruption measures, embody accountable and good governance, improve public service quality, eliminate vested interests in policymaking, and achieve broader equitable development and prosperity of the entire population. These aspired conditions that the predecessor administration is considered failed to address became basic referrals for the populist rhetoric through which prospective candidates competed to construct an image as the people's champion in the subsequent election.

4. CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN POLITICIZATION OF CRISIS

The aftermath of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis is slow growth, rising Inequality, rampant corruption, several structural shortcomings, rampant corruption anti-democratic politics. Indeed Elite-led Democratic governance in contemporary Indonesia led to many analyses that face significant democratic regression. The corrupt, elitist, or oligarchic system/Repressive pluralist, anti-democratic chauvinist, or anti-pluralist Islamist are the threats.

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The 2014 presidential election has become a turning point for the populist revival in Indonesian politics since the competing candidates were represented by major populist politicians, Prabowo Subianto and Joko Widodo. Both populists aim to fix the existing political system with typical political strategies that foster nationalism, developmentalism, and anti-foreign sentiment in their populist rhetoric. Nevertheless, they used a significantly different approach to gain popular support with their distinctive features.

Prabowo continued to display a traditional nationalist populism, as that of Megawati, his running mate in the 2009 election. Adopting Sukarno's anti-neocolonialist nationalism and Suharto state-developmentalism, Prabowo's populism emphasized the pro-people development agenda and the strong opposition to the common enemies of the people; exploitative foreign actors and their local compradors, and corrupt elites who served these interests. In contrast, Jokowi showed a distinctively new feature of populism. He did not offer a democratic transformation or disentanglement of the status quo through a direct attack on Jakarta's ruling elites. Instead, he emphasizes developmentalism and technocratic agendas involving efficiency and problem-solving programs. The agenda is to improve public services and bureaucracy. The so-called technocratic populism utilizes Jokowi's

personalistic leadership. He is popularly known for his bureaucratic capability and experience successfully dealing with plenty of technical problems with businesses, stakeholders, and grassroots during his services as the Mayor of Solo and the Governor of Jakarta [27].

Government performance becomes a factor of dissatisfaction with the performance of the predecessor government in overcoming critical problems. Such discontent originated from complex bureaucracy and public services, continuing unresolved internal conflicts, and rising unequal development across the country, which continued to surge from 34 points in 2004 to 41 points in 2014 based on Indonesia's Gini Coefficient Ratio [28]. The disappointment was reflected in public discourse about SBY's failure in eradicating corruption scandals involving key elites in his Cabinet, Democratic Party, and family members. The scandal includes the inhibition of the Bank Century case and other corruption cases allegedly related to law enforcement institutions [29]. The series of unresolved corruption case problems that generated public disappointment was subsequently converted into distrust towards candidates or parties associated with networks of political elites and oligarchs.

The public or voters are skeptical of election as a process to select reliable leaders and representatives that can embody their voice and substantially impact systemic reforms and people-centered development. Such a skeptical attitude has arisen of blatant clientelistic politics that is a rampant practice in every level of electoral contestation. Clientelism is seen as the underlying cause of the dysfunction of state institutions and ineffective policies, particularly related to socioeconomic development and welfare At the grassroots level. It is commonly known that most politicians offer prospective constituents forms of transactional politics, such as patronage-based linkage, money politics, and vote-buying. It is also coming up with programmatic politics prioritizing impactful solutions to important issues and promoting their voters' civic engagement and political participation. Because of the rampant clientelism, political brokers or opportunistic voters have greater bargaining power over those candidates in mobilizing electoral support due to their understanding of residents' voting behavior. Clientelistic politics as such, in turn, has made informally patron-client relationships entrenched in the political behavior of laypeople, including well-educated persons, in Indonesia that increasingly treat the election as a "mere process" of exchange of material interests. This tendency is effectual in regions with a high level of Inequality and concentration of economic control, which has been proven by the Clientelism Perception Index scores [30]. Therefore, the emerging populist who is perceived as detached from clientelistic

practice is likely to be symbolized and endorsed as a "clean" politician by the public or voters.

In this regard, populist appeals are effective instruments to attract the electoral support of diverse and unorganized constituents as those shape voters' perception of the ideal leader to represent the will of ordinary people, including debilitating political branding of the rival candidate, by either targeting emotional ties and personal sentiments of certain masses or uncovering critical problems of previous government or political system. The 2014 presidential election showed how populism based on technocratic and inclusive approaches trumps traditional populism relied on ultranationalist and confrontational approaches. Exploiting instability and crisis worked well to be a catalyst for populist victories in Indonesian politics, contrary to populist phenomena around the World [31]. Due to a moderate perception of political stability and economic situation, Indonesia's citizens were likely to elect an aspiring leader prioritizing rational, technical, and measurable action in making tangible change and substantial reform of governance without echoing much resistance and agitation towards certain groups. The failure of Prabowo's populism was caused by the ineffective mobilization of conservative Muslim votes and his support base. In contrast, Jokowi's Populism was a remarkable success in securing the support of rural poor, moderate Muslim, and non-Muslim votes [32].

In terms of Identity Politics and polarization, it is argued that a consequence of the identity politicization phenomenon. It is based on religious sentiments in the subnational elections. It has successfully changed contesting candidates' political styles in the national elections. The transformation can be seen from the exploitation of Islamic rhetoric and symbols demonstrated and performed in the political campaigns of two candidates, ranging from Islamic jargon to superficial practices marking Muslim obedience. Both populism, Jokowi's technocratic-inclusive populism, and Prabowo's ultranationalist-confrontational populism, absorbed the Islamic elements as their electoral strategies and political mobilization, including a constructed narrative of "alignments of the people" to attract Muslim constituents through their distinctive the modes of interaction. Thus, the mutual efforts to spread the image of piety and listen to Muslim aspirations emerged in the political actions of both candidates. They make Islamic symbolism a new instrument in Indonesia's populist competition, particularly ahead of the elections [27].

5. CONCLUSION

In the explanation above, it is argued that populism tends to be an effective political strategy for pursuing power rather than maintaining power. Mass mobilization

and social base are two elements of the strategy that worked effectively in securing the legitimacy of the common people due to the absence of public perception toward populist attachment or affiliation to the political establishment, which was deemed as the roots of political problems.

The rise of populism in contemporary Indonesia has demonstrated a striking change where charismatic leaders become a determinant factor in dominating political contestation. Specifically, a leader emerged from common people or reverberated pro-people rhetoric. The use of populist appeals targeting grassroots disillusionment and discontent in the elites' political strategy and machinery seems to be a new "normal" political practice. The practice has increasingly become common in Indonesian electoral politics because it has proven effective in winning elections at many levels. The flexibility of such an elite-driven populism shows how populist politics invariably adapt to recent social change and political context within a country. Despite fundamental contradictions between ideologies, discourses, and political realities, political actors blatantly performed such problematic practices to adapt to "the people's taste" of ideal politics for the sake of electoral threshold or even domination. Populist politics and deepening illiberal democracy in Indonesia paved the way for oligarchy, clientelism, and patronage to sustain its dominant power and ideas in reshaping the political landscape. The trajectory of populism in Indonesia has been shaped by illiberal democracy. Populism is also the legacy of authoritarianism (ideological factors; anti-colonialism/imperialism and state-organicist ideology) that perpetuates the patronage of democracy today.

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