

RSIS presents the following policy report, *The Road to 2014: Corruption, the Media and Parties' Electability*. It is also available online at this link. (Please click on the link for the printable version).

“The Road to 2014: Corruption, the Media and Parties' Electability”

Executive Summary

Corruption has become a perennial issue that has shackled political parties to a groundswell of unpopularity in Indonesia. In the run up towards the 2014 General Elections, it is envisaged that such an issue may jeopardise the electability of certain political parties. This report explores the influence of corruption cases on the elections by first highlighting the current status of competing political parties in the 2014 elections. The report then looks at the notable corruption cases that have an adverse effect on the political parties. The report concludes with four points. First, how utilising the “corruption-card” has become the new weapon of choice among political parties. Second, how the acute problem of corruption signifies that Indonesia’s democratic consolidation process is far from over. Third, how shadowy affairs between political parties, their elites and the media can and should be constantly monitored. Lastly, the need to strengthen and continuous evaluation of the Corruption Eradication Committee (KPK) to prevent unnecessary interventions by political parties in the future.

The Road to 2014: Corruption, the Media and Parties' Electability

The highly dramaturgical aspects of Indonesian politics and how it will play out subsequently looked set to make its presence felt in the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) bureau of Kuningan, South Jakarta. The KPK office has, in recent weeks, steadily evolved into the new battleground where competing political parties gravitate to and leverage for political cachet. These bickering factions have a specific mission – political finger-pointing aimed at discrediting competitors via claims of corruption.

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Few parties have escaped from the onslaught of accusations of corruption. Based on the Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), a leading NGO dealing with corrupt practices in Indonesia, eight out of nine political parties in the current parliament were implicated in various corruption cases in 2012. The year 2013 saw even more prominent parties falling by the wayside to the scourge of corruption. Such ubiquity however did not discourage parties from pursuing the game of “the pot calling the kettle black”. Despite charges mounting against them, almost all political parties have resorted to the tactical use of the “corruption card” when launching political attacks on their competitors. It is envisaged that issues surrounding corruption charges amongst political parties will once again steal the limelight in the upcoming legislative elections. On the other hand, with the current Indonesian voters having low party identification (Party-ID) and tending to vote based on personalistic appeals, the 2014 elections are singularly focused on party individuals and aspects of personalism. In fact, it could be said that the main contending issues surrounding the elections will no longer revolve around ideology, political programmes or visions of the nation’s future.

Such a situation carries several implications. Firstly, almost all political parties in the next elections [except for new contenders in the race such as the Moon and Star Party (PBB), the National Democrat Party (Nasdem) and the Indonesia Justice and United Party (PKPI)] cannot claim to be unscathed by corrupt practices. The same applies to other prominent incumbent parties. This sober fact includes the current rising star, the

Indonesian Democratic Party Struggle (PDI-P). The ruling party, the Democratic Party (PD) and its allies, including the Golkar Party (Golkar), the National Mandate Party (PAN) and the Justice and Prosperous Party (PKS) have an even higher number of politicians involved or implicated in various corruption cases. Secondly, one can anticipate more revelation of corruption cases involving politicians as the election approaches, with parties engaging in political one-upmanship in order to disparage their competitors. Finally, following the politicisation of corruption, the KPK may succumb to the pressure of scapegoat politics with accusations of taking sides from disgruntled factions.

This report seeks to illuminate how negative imageries of political parties in Indonesia due to corruption, affect voters' sentiments, shifting outcomes of the upcoming elections in the process. This report also attempts to provide an account of the myriad ways corruption had affected the fortunes of each individual political party contesting in GE2014. In the process, the report analyses why parties like President Yudhoyono's PD will inevitably suffer more than others. The report also elucidates the pivotal role the media plays.

PD: The Biggest Loser

PD was the hardest hit among all political parties by various corruption scandals. Based on a survey by *Kompas*, the nation's leading newspaper, PD's electability rate dropped precipitously from 21 percent in 2009 to 11.1 percent in December 2012 and finally to 7.2 percent by the end of 2013. Observers have predicted that the PD would even revert to its meagre 2004 result, when the party was only able to secure a total of 7.45 percent of the total votes or even lower. Constant media coverage of the party's corruption scandals has had an indisputable role in contributing to PD's decreased popularity.

PD's corruption scandals receive the highest media attention in the nation with most of their reports being construed in a negative light. Based on a survey of the media by Pol-Tracking Institute in December 2013, the corruption cases implicating PD party members dominated media coverage on TV, print media and online media.

Based on a survey by Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting (SMRC) in December 2012, 44.8 percent of respondents viewed PD as the party with the most party members involved in corruption cases. Another survey by the National Survey

Institute (LSN) in March 2013 revealed that 70.4 percent of respondents viewed PD as most corrupt, followed by Golkar and PKS.

The media spotlight on PD's corruption scandals had been turned on since 2011. It was sparked when Muhammad Nazaruddin (the former treasurer of PD) testified in court on a number of corruption charges, implicating a number of high-ranking elites within PD in the process. Big names involved included Angelina Sondakh (former PD legislator), Andi Mallarangeng (former Minister of Sports and Youth) and Anas Urbaningrum (former Chairman of PD). Such cases had also covered the fiasco over the SEA Games Athletes Dormitory in Palembang (South Sumatra), infrastructure procurements in several public hospitals and the Hambalang Sports Complex mega-corruption scandal that dragged prominent party elites such as Anas Urbaningrum and Andi Mallarangeng into a whirlpool of controversies. According to reports, fraudulent money derived from these cases was used in the party's congress in 2010 for various budgetary items as well as for the explicit purpose of bribing the party's voting members. Nazaruddin was then part of Anas Urbaningrum's campaign team.

PD's corruption scandals receive the highest media attention in the nation with most of their reports being construed in a negative light. Based on a survey of the media by Pol-Tracking Institute in December 2013, the corruption cases implicating PD party members dominated media coverage on TV, print media and online media. 20.5 percent of the coverage had been related to party law issues. Amongst the various media coverage that had a purported negative effect on political parties, PD received 20.53 percent of the share. This situation had in turn generated a widespread negative publicity of PD. There had been rumours that some media outlets deliberately sought to tarnish PD's reputation because their owners are rivals of the incumbents. They include Aburizal Bakrie's (Golkar) TV One, Surya Paloh's (Nasdem) Metro TV and Hary Tanoesudibjo's (Hanura) MNC Group. Minor political parties Nasdem and Hanura, supported by the patronage of Surya Paloh's Metro TV and Hary Tanoesudibjo's MNC Group respectively, were the recipient of much more positive news coverage than the other parties. PD however did not possess the requisite media outlets to counter the negative publicity.

To make matters worse, factionalism following corruption charges within PD has also contributed to the unfavourable media coverage. Based on the same survey by Pol-

Tracking Institute, 16.2 percent of the media coverage on PD had also been linked to issues of internal conflict within the party. PD's internal conflict thus cannot be separated from the corruption scandals that plagued the party. The subsequent factionalism have since split the party into three cliques, namely the Yudhoyono faction, the Anas Urbaningrum faction and those who neither belong to Yudhoyono's nor Anas Urbaningrum's clique. Internal battles between the two prior factions had received the greatest media mileage, making headline stories in the Indonesian media.

The conflicts surrounding corruption cases associated with PD's elites are still far from finished however. It is perhaps inevitable that with its rising unpopularity, PD's electability rate will see its worst performance come elections day.

PKS: From Hero to Zero

One of the other parties badly affected by corruption issues is PKS. Representing one of the post-*Reformasi* Islamic-student (*santri*) streams, PKS was seen as a promising party early in 2009, thanks to the cultivation of a clean party image complete with a strong grassroots organisation in Indonesia. In the 2009 elections, PKS was able to secure a respectable 7.9 percent of the total vote-count, a slight increase from the 2004 elections result. Based on the latest survey by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in November 2013, support for PKS had declined to 3.3 percent. Another survey by *Kompas* in December 2013 placed PKS's electability at a meagre 2.3 percent. If current trends persist, PKS may not be able to meet the minimum parliamentary threshold.

Declining support towards PKS cannot be separated from the ongoing corruption cases involving the party's elites, in particular former president Luthfi Hasan Ishaq. Mr. Ishaq had been convicted on charges of fraud for his involvement in the government's procurement of imported beef in 2013. He was proven guilty of facilitating a meeting between the Minister of Agriculture Suswono (who is also one of PKS's cadre members) and a few of the members of related companies that had a stake in raising the overall import quota of beef. He was also found guilty of money laundering while still a member of the House of Representatives (DPR). Last December, the Court sentenced him to 16 years in prison. Luthfi's case implicated the

Chief Patron of PKS Hilmi Aminuddin, pulling him into the vortex of controversy – although the latter never became a suspect. The case was a major blow for a party well-known for its puritanic Islamic agenda. PKS’s corruption dominated 46.7 percent of total media coverage on the party in 2013. It was estimated that 23.7 percent of total “negative-tone” news coverage on political parties in 2013 converged upon PKS.

Negative coverage of the party increased especially after “side-stories” of Luthfi’s polygamous and irresponsible behaviour surfaced, including that Luthfi’s youngest wife was believed to be a high school student. Luthfi’s associate in the imported-beef scandal Mr. Ahmad Fathanah, was also caught by KPK investigators in a hotel room with an unknown woman. Luthfi’s and his associate’s scandalous behaviour totally shattered the image of PKS as a puritanic Islamic party. Cynicism from the public towards PKS increased because PKS had previously relied on its clean image and high morals among its cadres. PKS also did not own a strong media outlet that can counter such negative publicity –and it is questionable how much PKS can rely on the few Islamic-leaning media outlets such as *Republika* and the party’s social media outfit. It would be extremely difficult for PKS to restore its clean Islamic image in the next election. Voters in turn might be persuaded to divert their votes to other “Islamic” parties such as the PBB, PPP or PKB.

Golkar: Surviving the Turbulence

At the start of 2013, the Golkar party came under the media spotlight due to its involvement in the corruption case mounted against Riau Governor and prominent member of Golkar, Rusli Zaenal. Golkar members were also implicated in the Quran book-printing scandal involving Zulkarnaen Djabar, one of Golkar’s legislators. The Quran book-printing scandal allegedly involved Priyo Budi Santoso, a prominent Golkar elite, although he was never charged. In the latter half of 2013, a number of Golkar’s party members were implicated in the Constitutional Court Chief Justice bribery case, as well as several other corruption cases in Banten Province involving Banten Governor Ratu Atut Choisyah (Atut) and her brother Tubagus Chaeri Wardhana (Wawan).

The KPK caught former Chief Justice Akil Mochtar red-handed in his own house. He was a former Golkar legislator for two terms before assuming position as justice in the Indonesian Constitutional Court in 2009. The case also involved Chairun Nisa, another Golkar lawmaker in the current parliament, who was caught alongside Akil Mochtar. The KPK arrested Tubagus Chaeri Wardhana, brother of Ratu Atut Choisyah, for his involvement in an attempt to bribe Akil Mochtar in rescheduling the regional election of Lebak District, Banten Province. The KPK eventually arrested Ratu Atut Choisyah for her involvement in the bribery scandal. Following the arrest, other corruption scandals in Banten province surfaced one by one.

Ratu Atut and her family were prominent Golkar figures and patrons in Banten. Their political dominance in Banten, also known as the Choisyah Dynasty, had been utilised to generate votes for the Golkar party. Ratu Atut's arrest is seen as a major blow for Golkar because she and her family were the essential link in securing Golkar's votes in the upcoming elections. Atut's late husband, Hikmat Tomet, was a Golkar legislator and the Head of Golkar's Provincial Board. Her son, Andika Hazrumy, is listed as one of Golkar's candidates in the Banten I elections district. Several members of Ratu Atut's relatives are also Golkar cadres holding public office positions or employed as local lawmakers in several districts within Banten.

How did recent corruption cases affect Golkar's electability? According to a survey by Pol-Tracking, there had been a dip in Golkar's electability rate from 16.9 percent in October 2013 to 15.93 percent in December 2013. Compared with PD and PKS, Golkar's popularity did not waver much, although based on the survey 31.9 percent of total news coverage on the party had been related to its legal issues, including corruption. How did Golkar survive the wave of negative onslaught of events? First, Golkar had a strong institutionalisation record with a solid base of voter's support at the grassroots level. Golkar had been the strongest and most well-institutionalised party since the New Order regime. This fact had been proven in 2004, when Golkar won the elections securing 21.6 percent of the total votes, despite corruption scandals involving its then chairman Akbar Tandjung. Second, corruption scandals that hit PD and PKS received more media attention and negative coverage due to the involvement of elites of the highest rank. For Golkar, although Zulkarnaen Djabar and Chairun Nisa were unpopular names to the public, only Ratu Atut and Akil Mochtar were considered "famous" in the public's mind. Third, Golkar's Chairman Aburizal

Bakrie's rein over media outlets such as TV One (one of the leading Indonesian news channels), ANTV and Vivaneews could have shielded more negative news from spiraling.

PDIP: Saved by Jokowi

Based on the latest survey by *Kompas* that was conducted in December 2013, PDIP emerged as the party with the largest support base, garnering 21.8 percent of the total votes. Other surveys done by CSIS in November 2013 and Pol-Tracking Institute in December 2013 also showed that PDIP currently leads the polls at 17.6 percent and 22.44 percent respectively. PDIP had been consistent in maintaining its reputation as the *de jure* opposition party. According to Pol-Tracking Institute, PDIP's political policies dominated much of the media in 2013.

The "Jokowi effect" is an indubitable proof of the party's resilience amidst controversies, serving to bolster the party's electability rate. Based on a CSIS survey, if PDIP were to nominate Jokowi as its presidential candidate, it would get 29.9 percent of the vote. Indonesian voters see Jokowi as a humble, down-to-earth and action-oriented man. Jokowi is also a media-darling. The media covers every aspect of the Jakarta governor. Based on Pol-Tracking Institute, the issue of a presidential nominee in PDIP is second only to the party's policy in the media. With declining support of the ruling PD, more support had now been shifted towards the opposition PDIP. Voters view PDIP as a viable alternative in the upcoming elections. The "Jokowi effect" appealed to the personalistic tendency of Indonesian voters. PDIP also indirectly benefited from PD's corruption scandals. PDIP has a solid grassroots support base in a number of provinces such as Central Java, Bali and Central Kalimantan. It would be relatively easy for the party to reclaim some of its seats in the parliament that was lost to PD during the 2009 elections.

PDIP is not completely free from corrupt practices however. 2013 featured the prominent arrest of Emir Moeis, a PDI-P legislator and one of the party's senior members by the KPK in July 2013 for a bribery allegation. The KPK accused Emir of allegedly accepting USD 300,000 as bribes for a coal-fired power project in Lampung in 2004. Emir's lawyer Yanuar Wasesa said that his client's case was classic

politicisation of corruption cases that may bring down PDIP's electability in the 2014 elections.

Another PDIP cadre involved in corruption is Olly Dondokambey. Olly is a PDIP legislator and the party's treasurer. Although he is not yet officially charged, the KPK had already searched his house in Minahasa, North Sulawesi, and called him for questioning in relation to his alleged involvement in the Hambalang mega-corruption scandal. Muhammad Nazaruddin, the former treasurer of PD, said that Olly also siphoned off some money from another corruption case.

Media coverage of Emir and Olly's case was nonetheless relatively minimal. It did not have the effect of implicating PDIP's electability. The Indonesian media was more interested in covering PDIP's political take on national issues and its presidential nominee. A survey by the Pol-Tracking Institute found that the party's legal issues (including corruption cases) only covered 7.3 percent of total media coverage of PDIP in 2013. It is still relatively small compared with media coverage on the party that drew attention to its political stand (26.7 percent) and whether Jokowi will be nominated as its presidential nominee (20.5 percent). The party's current standing with Jokowi in the line-up has been quite sufficient in attracting positive to neutral media coverage of the party.

Gerindra, PPP, PKB, PAN, and Hanura

In 2013, smaller political parties, namely the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra), the United Development Party (PPP), the National Awakening Party (PKB), the People's Conscience Party (Hanura) and PAN received less media attention compared with PD, PKS, Golkar and PDIP. They had also been relatively free from corruption cases that involved top-level elites, although it must be mentioned that they are not completely corrupt-free if one includes previous cases in 2009 to 2012.

For instance in 2012, PAN's legislator Wa Ode Nurhayati was found guilty of fraudulent involvement in the Regional Infrastructure Adjustment Funds's case in which the court sentenced her to six years imprisonment under bribery and money laundering charges. In 2012, the Chairman of PKB who is also the Minister of

Manpower and Transmigration Muhaimin Iskandar was alleged to have been involved in a corruption case involving his ministry. However such an allegation had never been proven.

For the case of Gerindra, the party had been relatively free from corruption although one of its cadres Pius Lustrilanang was reported to have received money belonging to the new parliament building tender. As for Hanura, the KPK placed a travel ban on one of its cadres, Bambang W. Soeharto, for his connection to a case of land certificate fraud in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara in 2013. This case however did not generate high media coverage or attention. For PPP, there had been a case where former legislator Sofyan Usman was sentenced to jail by the Anti-Corruption Court (Tipikor) in January 2012.

In summary, these parties are relatively small and they receive less attention compared with bigger and more influential ones. A survey from Pol-Tracking Institute showed that small parties receive 4.5 percent (Hanura), 3.8 percent (PKB), 3.7 percent (Gerindra), 3.4 percent (PAN) and 2.9 percent (PPP) of total media coverage from February to December 2013. Three of them (PPP, PKB, and PAN) were part of the ruling-coalition. Hanura had the backing of media tycoon Hary Tanoesudibjo that went a long way in minimising the negative media buzz associated with the party.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There are strong indications that corruption and finger-pointing over corruption cases had become the latest currency to dominate Indonesia's political dynamics, influencing voter's support towards a particular party. The media played an important role to the extent of framing corruption issues. Personalistic features such as the "Jokowi effect" may play a decisive role in overriding

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negative sentiments. Nonetheless, it is important to take into account the dynamic interaction between corruption cases and media coverage when analysing why one party gets more negative coverage than others.

In the context of the upcoming 2014 elections, there are four important points worth taking into account. Firstly, with the “corruption-card” as the new currency in taking down the electability of a rival party, we can expect the surfacing of more corruption cases and its politicisation, in particular cases related to dominant parties. Investigations over the Hambalang scandal are still proceeding. More names, including politicians from different parties may appear. This may potentially split PD even further. Second, the KPK has started the investigation process surrounding the scandal within the Upstream Oil and Gas Regulatory Special Task Force (SKK Migas), with several prominent politicians from the ruling parties involved. Third, investigation of the Constitutional Court Chief Justice bribery scandal is still underway. Cases that have been handled by Akil Mochtar, especially during the local elections (Pemilukada) will be questioned. Even more politicians at the local and national level may be implicated during the trial.

Secondly, the acute problem of corruption and the fact that it encompasses individuals from almost all parties at the national and local levels show that Indonesia’s democratic consolidation process is far from over. More specifically, institutionalisation of political parties in Indonesia deserves special concern. Political parties have to evaluate their own institutional mechanisms to prevent and deter their respective members from corrupt practices.

The legislative, electoral and party systems that created the scenario for high-cost, high-stakes politics must be carefully re-evaluated to improve the quality of Indonesia’s democracy as well as to prevent anti-democratic forces from having a strong argument to turn the country into another authoritarian regime.

Thirdly, shadowy affairs between political parties, their elites and the media should be monitored. The media in Indonesia often acts as the fourth pillar of democracy; therefore it has a responsibility in appearing neutral and unbiased. Associated stakeholders such as the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) and the Press Council (*Dewan Pers*) can take a more aggressive action towards media outlets that violate regulations and serve the political interests of its owners. There should also be

a clear regulation in supervising the quality of impartiality of the press coverage. This recommendation however must be carefully examined in order to prevent the passing of draconian press laws. Civil society will play a crucial role in achieving such an objective.

Finally, the KPK have to be strengthened and evaluated continuously by the public so as to prevent unnecessary interventions by political parties in the future. As corruption becomes the latest political weapon of choice, there is a possibility that the KPK may be infiltrated by political parties with an agenda in implementing a “selective” law enforcement policy based on the parties’ preference. So far the KPK has done a great job in bringing corruptors to the court. This should be maintained and preserved for time to come.

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