Ambiguity in Indonesian Cartelized Democracy: An Analysis on the Political Communication

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Abstract
This paper describes and analyzes political parties in Indonesia’s democratic transition from their political communication patterns in ambiguity of cartelized democracy, where political parties work together to enjoy the state’s resources and conflict simultaneously. Three conceptions are being used to explain the patterns of political communication occur among coalition parties: first is the output of political process, which contains political impression management and substantive action; secondly, the definition of the situation; and finally the cartel party. The conclusion shows that of political communication among coalition parties tend to be most stable when there is an entity that could dominate the popularity and public support. The pattern changed to be in conflict when there is no one could dominate the popularity and political structure.

Keywords
political communication; cartel party; party’s coalition; democracy; political freedom

Introduction
The global economy crisis in 1997 brought a new wave of democracy in Southeast Asia. Indonesia has experienced radical political change due to the effects of the crisis. Per capita GDP had risen from $70 in 1965 to over $1,000 in 1996, the rupiah was stable and foreign capital was pouring into the country. After the crisis, and by mid-1998, per capita GDP had dropped to $450 and foreign capital had fled.1 Annual inflation was running at an estimated 80 percent which shows the price increases for food and other necessities. This severe

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economic condition had escalated people’s grievances; mass demonstration occurred throughout the country in early January 1998 and turned violent by February 14. The Suharto regime, who had ruling for thirty-two years, resigned as president in May 1998. These events conceived as a point when a new democratic transition in Indonesia had been started.

There are three aspects that shape Indonesian democratic transition. First is the development of multiparty government in Indonesia. In early democratic transition, Indonesian political reforms began with the revision of political acts in 1999 regarding the permissibility of new political party establishment, direct legislative elections, government decentralization, and the central and local financial balance system. Establishing forty-five new parties has followed the changing of the political acts. This led to drastically increased numbers compared to previous periods, where as few as three political parties existed. Since this time, numerous political parties contested power and because there was no more single hegemonic party, no one could dominate the vote. When a direct presidential election system applied in 2004, the president might not truly attain power due to the parliamentary power imbalance. Thus, the president should have enough parliament support, otherwise the government would not get along very well. The winning party then shared the power or other resources as a trade off to their counterparts. Consequently, after the reform, the government coalition always consists of numerous parties.

The second aspect regards the use of state funds for political parties. In the early periods of democratic transition, political parties benefited from state-provided subsidies because the problem of party financing became an issue of immediate urgency for all parties. After 1999, the government under President Wahid issued a “Government Regulation on Financial Assistance to Political Parties” (PP 51/2001), through which the central board of each party would annually receive Rp. 1,000 (around 10 US cents) per vote obtained in 1999 election. The state subsidy was significant income for the parties. PDI-P, for example, received Rp. 35.7 billion (around US$3.8 million) each year for its central office. Because the subsidy was viewed as too much burden to the state, in 2002, the subsidy then given based on seat-based proportion but the law did not specify concrete monetary figures for remuneration per seat. In 2005, the government under Yudhoyono issued Government Regulation 20 of 2005 stated that political parties were to receive each year Rp. 21 million (US$2,300) per seat won in 2004 elections, with local government mandated to issue their own decrees. The implementation of the new seat-based funding formula

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led to a drastic income for the major parties. PID-P, for instance, witnessed a decrease of its central state funding from the annual 35.7 billion Rupiah in 2004 to only 2.3 billion Rupiah in January 2006. The abolishing state’s subsidies for political party are one way to cleanse the parties of rent-seeking elements.4

In direct electoral system, candidates are very concerned to lead voters to him. This make political parties race to make their central figures on the top of popularity. Campaigning itself has changed radically, previously candidate-centered politics were known most prominently, but this new style of campaigning emphasizes media usage, especially television commercials, to the exclusion of more traditional mobilization techniques.5 The media has become a vital means for political party and candidates. Although it is truly effective to convey political messages to the public, it is not efficient in terms of cost. It is proven, from 2004 to 2008, the political advertisement revenue has risen from US$100 billion to US$220 billion, only in television coverage.6 The statistic also illustrates the raising amount of money that political party should spend for their campaigns.

With political costs rising and the state subsidy declining since 2005, political parties faced a serious financial problem. However, there are several ways political parties continue to seek indirect state’s subsidies, such as collecting contributions from their legislator’s income, using alternative state resources, and selling nominees of public offices to affluent nonparty member.7 Among those modus, the state provides most ample resources for the parties. Thus, in order to get access to state’s resources, the parties should approach the central of power or join a coalition.8 The parties have a strong dependency on state’s money, which Katz and Mair called characteristic of cartel party.9 The coalition is shaped by the interests of resource pursuit, and this cartelized democracy made the bond between government coalition parties are weak and based strongly on political transactions.

Thirdly, I discuss the rise of new popular regime which shaped by a strong tendency of electoral elite party characteristic. When multidimensional crisis

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since 1997 brought the failure of existing social political institutions to confine and regulate political subjects into alternatively stable social order, the practice of populism emerged in which new political parties emphasized leaders having a nationalist agenda and anti-status-quo.\textsuperscript{10} Almost all major parties have their own particular leader, such as PDIP with Megawati, daughter to Indonesia’s first president, Sukarno, PAN with Amien Rais as a prominent reformer, and PKB with Abdurrahman Wahid, a prominent religious group with millions of followers. All of their ideas and spirits were considered anti-Suharto. After the reform in Indonesia, Wahid (1999-2001) and Megawati (2001-2004) however, were not successful in maintaining their power. Wahid resigned in 2001, having failed to overcome the parliament resistance, and his successor, Megawati, failed to win the 2004 election. Popular regimes emerged since 2004 when a new popular figure, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono won two election periods in 2004 and 2009.

However, the Yudhoyono administration is inseparable from the challenges that come from characteristics of multi-party and cartelized government coalition. President Wahid’s impeachment in 2001 by the People’s Consultative Assembly reflects the vulnerability of “numerous” multi-party political systems. His firmness against cartelized politics led to him being overthrown by parliamentary powers.\textsuperscript{11} This also describes that the power balance between government supporting party and oppositions in legislative is crucially important. Yudhoyono should face the same problem. Interestingly Yudhoyono was able to bring his government in 2004-2009 periods and continue to reign the second period from 2009-2014. However, after the year of 2009, the government showed signs of instability. Several conflicts between government coalition parties were overwhelming and stole the media spotlight. One major conflict, known by some as “Centurygate”, was an alleged corruption case which took almost two years of disputes between coalition parties. In 2011, the conflicting parties began reconsolidating and agreed to avoid conflicts in the future. Actually, the conflicts has never vanished; in fact, political disputes reappeared whenever “sexy” issues emerged, like the raising fuel price plan in early 2012 just after Centurygate faded away. However, after all the conflicts had never been destroyed coalitions.

This article describes the relationship between the characteristics of multi-party governance, the characteristics of cartelized democracy, and the dynamics of government in popular regimes. This article will answer the questions of: (1) how the popular regime faces the challenges posed by the complexity


\textsuperscript{11} Slater, “Indonesia’s Accountability Trap,” 68.
of multiparty government; and (2) to what extent the characteristics of cartel-ized democracy-directing parties maintain the coalition. This article will analyze the political communication between the government coalition parties; because the dynamics that describe the competitive relationship between those parties could be seen from the way they convey political messages that framed their image and their competitors.

**Literature Review**

Three conceptions have been used to explain the patterns of political communication among coalition member parties: first is about the output of political process which used to explain how the parties engaged the actions to gain their popular support; second, concept of defining the situation, information flow control, and symbolic movement support from symbolic interactions perspective to explain how parties attempt to frame situations to the public that intended to attract public sympathy; third, the conception of a cartel party to explain how the parties are still holds coalition in highly competitive condition.

In democratic system, political parties attempt to seize power by gaining massive votes. Impression management is an important strategy in the process. This dimension of politics is concerned with image making, conjuring myths and hype, directed at a mass audience who are frequently only marginally interested in politics and often, passive citizen. Hype involves simulating an atmosphere of excitement or enthusiasm which its activity is carried out by politicians. It contains attempts to deliberately deceive audiences to advantage themselves or their employers. In politics, such ‘false belief’ might be myth and ideology, celebrity, or it could be simply distraction. The hype making process tries to put the candidate or his political party to very top of popularity. A voter who knows a lot about the candidates will likely choose him or her rather than the candidate they do not know.

Impression management itself is not enough to carry on a successful ruler. It must be balanced with the policy advancement that already stated in their political platform as well as to meet the aspirations of their constituents. So it can be said that the political process is geared toward two cores: impression management and output policy. The image-making process includes selling

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politicians, propagating beliefs, myths, ideologies and identities while policy work is deemed to be the political process substantive dimension.\textsuperscript{15}

This concept relates to how the democratic competition in Indonesia is characterized by promoting the myths, beliefs, and image making process among political parties. This takes place in the arena in which political parties seek to impose their perceptions of situations to the public. This is accomplished by acting in such a way that creates an image of the actor that leads others to voluntarily act as he wishes them to act.\textsuperscript{16}

On the other side of the competition involves basic element of politics, talk, which constitutes the transformation of physical confrontations into verbal ones, and on the other, the resolution or accommodation of these confrontations contain the use of political rhetoric. Hall\textsuperscript{17} added that this effort could be divided into controlling the flow of information and symbolic mobilization of support. The former refers primarily to backstage behaviors involving insulation, concealment, secrecy, and planning while the latter involves public performances of persuasion. In order to know to act in a problematic situation, the actor has to assess the situation. He has to gather data about all these objects which he defines as relevant. The calculation of appropriate action on his part depends on knowing the expectations and intentions of others in the situations.\textsuperscript{18}

This tight rivalry makes the candidates certainly required more than preparing the messages that can attract public attention or sympathy to them,\textsuperscript{19} but also be ready for verbal battles with their competitors. This relates to analysis of symbolic mobilization of support where symbols, verbal and non-verbal, are used to strengthen or maintain the position of the political actor(s). Analysis of this process considers the nature of the audience; strong and partial supporters, undecided, neutrals, and know-nothings, and partial and strong opponents. The kinds of symbols intended for one segment of the audience if heard by another would probably not have the same effect and might, in fact, be damaging. Generally, the primary concern of the opposition is to neutralize or isolate it and use it as a strategic weapon. The mobilization of support has two sides of the coin which involve creates positive images of own side position and negative images to opposition.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{15} Louw, \textit{The Media and Political Process}, 20.
\textsuperscript{17} Hall, “Symbolic Interactionist,” 52.
\textsuperscript{18} Hall, “Symbolic Interactionist,” 54-55.
\textsuperscript{19} Simon, \textit{The Winning Message: Candidate Behavior}, 35.
\textsuperscript{20} Hall, “Symbolic Interactionist,” 59.
In a high-pressure competition, parties often engage battle each other in the media. The electoral battle tends to be fought at the margins with each candidate hoping to sway a relatively small portion of the electorate. Candidates rely on the transmission of information by buying, advertising or attracting news coverage to achieve this goal. At this level, the campaign is a straightforward communication process, and message creation is the essence of candidate strategy.\textsuperscript{21}

Battles and conflict among political parties in media coverage has positive effects on citizens’ political attitudes and participation. Citizens may, for example, come to the conclusion that democracy functions well, be activated to talk about political affairs or feel a greater incentive to vote. Moreover, conflict is a feature that pervades news. Contrary to what much of the pessimistic literature tells us, in the intersection between media and politics, conflict is a feature that should be celebrated for its democratic potential.\textsuperscript{22}

The cartelized multi-party government would likely still hold coalition, even while undermined by conflicting situations. Cartel party is a term that refers to the emergence of a new trend that made the political parties colludes to ensure their collective survival. In the most advanced forms of the evolutionary process, political parties have grown more independent in managing their resources from membership and became dependent on the state that they control.\textsuperscript{23} The emergence of the cartel party is a reaction to a change in the principle of democratic competition which is characterized, for example, by the rapidly rising costs of election campaigns. This financial problem make all major parties collude and turn to state for resources and political parties become more reliant on state resources.\textsuperscript{24}

The collusion base on the interests brings to the formation of the cartelized politics which led by a major party in the political system. The growing dependency of parties to the state can be read as a response to the vulnerability of the cartel party. Many organizations from the other party model require resources from outside to generate internal support for the strengthening organization or for the selective benefit (i.e. patronage). This vulnerability has its roots in the tension between efforts to increase the range of the voters by opening

\textsuperscript{21} Simon, \textit{the Winning Message: Candidate Behavior}, 35.


membership boundaries while keeping candidate selection for public to main-
tain party unity.25

From various arguments above, the cartel party can be understood as a form
of political attitudes of political parties in response to socio-political change
in which people no longer have loyalty to the parties and their financial prob-
lems. However, in Indonesia’s case, this concept requires some modifications.
Players of the cartel party did not grow on the low level of competition among
political parties. Contrary, competition remains high despite the cooperation
agreement or coalition being established. On the other side, dependency of
political parties to the state cannot be viewed solely from the legal-formal
perspective, such as using public funding as a subsidy to political party, but
also how the parties get access to state resources indirectly;26 for example:
through government infrastructure projects which controlled by politician’s
enterprise.

Methodology

In order to analyze the patterns of political communication among politicians
or political parties, textual analysis has been conducted on the comments
gathered from politicians of major parties such as the Democrat Party, Golkar
Party, PKS, PKB, PPP, and PAN, all of whom shared different views about
Centurygate, the rising fuel price plan, and other influential cases. The tex-
tual analysis method is relevant as an analysis tool to comprehend statements,
published written material, or transcribed interviews about political situations
is coincide with generally question: “who says what, to whom, why, how, and
with what effect?”27 Interpreting textual data is also useful in examining it as
a medium of expression that reflects a people’s culture and practices so it can
be used to make inferences about public or group attitudes.28 News coverage
of Centurygate and some influential cases around it from 2009 to early 2012
from several major national media outlets have been examined to reveal a
large portion from national political news such as Kompas.com, Detik.com,
Vivanews.com, Tempo.co, Inilah.com, and Pelitaonline.com. This almost two
years span that includes the origins and the contemporary debate beginning in
2009 when the government issued a bailout to Century Bank, followed by the

25 Nicole Bolleyer, “Inside The Cartel Party: Party Organization in Government and Opposi-
27 Emily Stier Adler and Roger Clark. An Invitation to Social Research: How It’s Done (Australia:
quarrels among politicians and complicated by some other corruption cases which involved conflicting parties, until eventually reconciled in early 2011. The rising fuel price case during early 2012, just after Centurygate concluded also showed that there’s a reconciled coalition turned into conflicts again. These cases are ideal issues to examine how each major party framed situations and used them to support their own interests and illustrated the patterns political communication in a flow of maintaining coalition and conflict.

Discussion

The first part of discussion will describe how political popularity has taken the importance in the political strategy as popular regimes emerged in 2004. This section looks at the ability of the winning party to gain superior popularity, making the coalition relationship relatively stable. The second part will discuss when the popular regimes were no longer dominant in popularity, and the challenges from their counterparts who take advantage on it. This makes the coalition involved in conflict and in unstable circumstances: even the parties eventually hold reconciliation, but they are still fragile when certain issues came up and became political commodities.


Since 2004, Indonesian people vote directly on presidential elections. The result was quite striking because it was won by a figure previously less known, a former general army, Yudhoyono. He served as minister since 1999 in Abdurrahman Wahid’s cabinet. After President Wahid fell from power, Yudhoyono appointed as a top security minister in Megawati’s cabinet in 2001. In a 2003 poll, Yudhoyono’s popularity was only fifth as Megawati’s vice, under Hamengkubuwono, Jusuf-Kalla, Wiranto, and Megawati.29 His popularity then skyrocketed after he was fired by President Megawati on March 2004 due to his intention to advance on upcoming presidential election: his dismissal had mobilized broad public sympathy afterward.30

Yudhoyono then officially joined the Democrat Party, which he and his colleagues had prepared several years before and established in 2002.31

Its political ideology to unite nationalist-religious view, have a love of motherland, and uphold morality and religious values resulted in his support from nationalist parties, several Islamic parties and Muslim communities. In May 2004, the Democrat Party, PKPI and PBB officially nominated him as president candidate with Jusuf Kalla as his vice.32

Facing the 2004 presidential election, there were five pairs of candidates; Megawati-Hasyim, Amien Rais-Siswono, Yudhoyono-Jusuf Kalla, Wiranto-Salahudin Wahid, and Hamzah Haz-Agum Gumelar. In the first round, Yudhoyono-Kalla led with a 33.7 percent vote, followed by Megawati-Hasyim’s 26 percent and Wiranto’s 25 percent. In the second round, Yudhoyono-Kalla backed by several other parties who declared themselves Koalisi Kerakyatan (People’s Coalition), consisting of PKS, PBB, PKPI, and other small parties. Meanwhile, Megawati-Hasyim received Koalisi Kebangsaan (National Coalition) backing, which consisted of Golkar Party, PDIP, PPP, and PDS.33 In the second round Yudhoyono-Kalla defeated Megawati-Hasyim with a 60.62 percent vote.34

Despite Yudhoyono’s superior popularity, Democratic Party got only 10 percent seats in the parliament, which would become increasingly unstable in the next five year government. So they affiliated with other major parties from People’s Coalition: PKS PAN, and PBB, and from National Coalition: Golkar Party, PKB, and PPP. Of course, the cabinet then consisted of numerous major parties. From 35 cabinet seats, 20 ministers were from coalition members’ parties and the rest were professionals.35 Through this strategy, the Democrat Party tried to broaden legislative support to balance the government’s power with legislatures.

Yudhoyono’s success was contingent upon his excellence in framing himself as a figure that being expected by the people.36 Since 1998, traditional or charismatic leaders have been conceived as less successful in terms of overcoming poverty, corruption and other crisis. This only helped Yudhoyono, as people felt dissatisfied with Megawati’s leadership.37 Yudhoyono performed as a promising

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32 Jusuf Kalla is a Golkar Party cadre, but the party did not officially nominate him as Yudhoyono’s vice in candidacy.
figure to bring about change and end slum conditions with his powerful slogan, “Together We Can!” He also recognized that people were already exasperated from corruption. Thus, he and his party intensely declared a commitment to battle against political corruption by reviewing all corruption cases, managing law enforcement and personally leading the anti-corruption program.\(^{38,39}\)

The message was very convincing because as a new comer of Democrat Party, he had never been tainted by the previous administration, and Jusuf Kalla also known as a clean figure. Other parties were less fortunate; they faced public criticism about corruption cases involving some of their cadres.

The Democrat Party and Yudhoyono were also prominent in terms of celebrifications. They embraced some public figures, and Yudhoyono often appear with them in the entertainment scene. Yudhoyono cleverly portrayed himself as a charming person who enjoyed arts and music, even occasionally singing, playing guitar, and writing songs. In this way, he wiped out public fears of an indifferent military “iron-hand” figure that would occur in an authoritarian regime. He also gave the impression of firmness, often talking about his prominent role in bringing bloody, and long lasting conflict to resolution in Aceh when he was appointed as top security minister.\(^{40}\) All of his impression efforts resulted in amassing high percentages of voters – on average, about 82 percent – who believed that Yudhoyono would get things done, with a decisive, charismatic, inspiring, caring, honest, likable, and smart disposition.\(^{41}\) The winning of the 2004 presidential election was owed to Yudhoyono’s personal popularity.

After Yudhoyono-Kalla won the office, they affirmed their credibility through substantive policies, particularly combating corruption. Early into his presidency, Yudhoyono fulfilled his promise by establishing an independent working unit for eradicating corruption, KPK (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, Commission to Abolish Corruption). Since then, many corruption cases were processed in courts and the offender prosecuted.\(^{42}\) The public was impressed when KPK sentenced brother-in-law to Yudhoyono’s son in November 2008, which caused public approval of the government’s crusade to skyrocket from

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38 Liddle and Mujani, “Indonesia in 2005,” 137.
41 Liddle and Mujani, “Indonesia in 2004,” 123.
45 percent in September 2007 to 80 percent in February 2009.\textsuperscript{43} Its effort also lifted the country to rank 17th in Transparency International's 2008 Corruption Perception Index.\textsuperscript{44} He was also conceived as having successfully reigned in national security by fighting terrorism: several national threats were prevented and their would-be perpetrators were being sentenced and executed during his period. Although Yudhoyono was facing heavy economic obstacles in his early period, he was considered successful in bringing Indonesia to a more stable state than it has been in the mid-1990s.\textsuperscript{45}

Yudhoyono accomplishments in substantive work complement his success in political impression management, which has brought him on the top of popularity and garnered public support. However, this does not speak to his popularity rating. His public opinion fluctuated in 2008, due to unpopular policies such as cutting fuel subsidy. However, he managed to regain his popularity through compensation payments when the fuel price was raised, through methods such as offering cash grants, health insurance and micro-credit programs for the poor, with approximately USD2 billion spent by government.\textsuperscript{46} Despite his opponents critically portrayed the president as vague and ineffectual, but they have limited success in presenting themselves as credible alternatives.\textsuperscript{47} Thus, Yudhoyono's popularity was still unchallenged, and he remained the favorite president for 2009 election, as I discuss later.

Yudhoyono's strong popularity made him able to overcome the coalition fragility in this period. Indeed, he was getting some interference due to the problem of a multi-party government: the bond between the president and all the legislative parties except his own Democrat Party was tentative and weak. This was evident when Golkar Party, which turned into a coalition, asked for more portions in the cabinet considering their dominant parliament power which held 23 percent seats. Golkar Party's political maneuver made Yudhoyono forced to reshuffle his cabinet twice.\textsuperscript{48} However, that interference did not hamper the government stability. This explain that if a coalition led by the leader who has control over popularity, which means they were successful running political impression management and substantive policy, the competition between coalition parties would be in stable condition, or at least the challenge on the leader would have less of a significant impact.

\textsuperscript{44} Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesia in 2008: Yudhoyono's Struggle for Reelection," \textit{Asian Survey} 49, no. 1 (2009): 146.
\textsuperscript{46} Mietzner, "Indonesia's 2009 Elections," 4.
\textsuperscript{47} Mietzner, "Indonesia in 2008," 154.
\textsuperscript{48} Liddle and Mujani, "Indonesia in 2005," 134.
The Challenge on Popular Regime After 2009

Yudhoyono’s superior popularity was proven once again in the 2009 presidential election. His firmness in combating corruption was stronger this time, as evidenced from his famous slogan, “Say No to Corruption!” which appeared on television and other media constantly time during campaign period. During 2009 elections, his personal popularity was boosted to 85 percent in a poll.\(^{49}\) The Democrat Party, already in line with his image, obtained outstanding results in 2009 legislative elections with a 20 percent vote. This made Yudhoyono so confident that he decided to pick a non-politician figure, Budiono, as his running mate.

There were three candidates in 2009 presidential election: Yudhoyono-Budiono, backed by PKS, PAN, PPP, and PKB; Megawati-Prabowo, backed by PDIP and Gerindra; and Jusuf KallaWiranto, backed by Golkar Party and Hanura. The result was no surprise, with Yudhoyono winning easily in just one round with 60.8 percent of the vote.\(^{50}\) As in the previous term, the Democrat Party should make an appropriate coalition in order to make government work for five years. There was no change in coalition’s composition; it still consisted of the Democrat Party, Golkar Party, PKS, PKB, PPP, and PAN.

After Yudhoyono ensured the 2009-2014 period, in fact the toughest challenges lay ahead. First, it was realized that in the 2014 election season Democrat Party lacks candidates for Yudhoyono’s immediate succession, since the Democrat Party’s performance is highly influenced by Yudhoyono’s popularity.\(^{51}\) Second, the Democrat Party’s image suffered from insistently being accused of masterminding Centurygate.\(^{52}\) Third, the public trust to Yudhoyono’s anti-corruption commitment began to erode as many Democrat Party cadres were involved in corruption cases. Yudhoyono’s capabilities to overcome these challenges will determine the government’s stability. However, all that will be useless if Yudhoyono loses popularity and public support.

In the post-2009 period, Yudhoyono had difficulty in maintaining his excellence in popularity and public support. This is indicated by the declining of his popularity amidst Centurygate accusations. It was government policy to deal with Century Bank by giving bailouts of 6.7 trillion Rupiahs (US$716 million) to avoid larger systemic dysfunctions.\(^{53}\) However, Finance Audit Agency


(BPK) in the initial report stated there were allegations of manipulation in giving bailouts. There was growing suspicion of conspiracies to steal state money that went to certain political parties for winning the 2009 election. The party in question is none other than Democrat Party. In March 2010, the legislature passed a resounding vote of no confidence on the bailout and called for legal action against the government.

When public opinion of the Democrat Party and Yudhoyono waned, other competitors strived for popularity dominance by empathizing people’s interest in the Democrat Party’s involvement in corruption. Disputes about Centurygate began to adorn the headlines of newspapers. Abu Rizal Bakrie, General Chairman of the Golkar Party, gave instruction that the Golkar Party should push investigation to Centurygate. Another Golkar politician, Nudirman Munir said Golkar’s representation in parliament will engage KPK to investigate the case thoroughly. Yet another politician from the Golkar Party, Bambang Soesatyo accused Yudhoyono’s regime of protecting Centurygate from the public eye, which upset the Democrat Party. Its Deputy Secretary General, Ramadan Pohan, challenged back the Golkar Party, believing the actions of Golkar’s had gone too far, and stated, “…finally they sell, we bought them all!”

PKS also considered Centurygate robbers of state funds. The Democrat Party was also furious about the PKS attitude and accused them of overambition and selfishness by use Centurygate issue as a platform for their own image, all the while undermining the Democrat Party’s image. PKS responded by stating that anyone who was not complicit in Centurygate did not need to be worried or feel cornered. Other close partners of the Democrat Party, PKB who previously eager to reveals the case, finally stated their loyalty. Meanwhile PAN,
who also supports Yudhoyono, stated their decision could be changed if one day it was judicially revealed that Centurygate was a corruption case. The way PAN conveyed their decision seems ambiguous political rhetoric: on one hand they show loyalty, but on the other hand they do not want to lose their image public.

Those cases had destroyed the image of the party who are known by their commitment to combat corruption. A series of polls revealed that the level of people’s satisfaction about Yudhoyono government was 70 percent in January 2010, 62 percent in October 2010, and fell further to 53.2 percent in October 2011. The declining popularity is also parallel with people’s political judgment and critical examination that withdraw loyalty to parties and its leaders based on rational calculations are affected by heightened anxiety. Yudhoyono’s inability to maintain its high popularity and public support has increased the challenges both from the opponents and partners in coalition. Every major party looks to benefit from this issue, as they accentuate the positive, hide the bad side, and undermine other party’s image. The Democrat Party during the first period did not have sufficient parliamentary strength, approximately 7 percent, but excelled in the popularity of the president, but in the second period their positions were contrary, as the Democrat Party have a majority seats in parliament but the popularity of Yudhoyono was dropping. Therefore, competitors attempting to make political maneuvers against Democrat Party are more common than in the previous period. It can be viewed from comments from counterpart politicians regarding Centurygate which tend to marginalize and destroy the credibility of the Democrat Party to the public. However, because Democrat Party has sufficient parliamentary strength, they take the fight, for example, by uncovering cases that hampered Golkar Party’s chairman.

Bakrie was troubled over issues of unpaid state royalties and tax evasion on the part of Bakrie-affiliated firms, as well as the role and responsibility of Bakrie enterprises in the 2006 Lapindo mudflow disaster. Sri Mulyani, minister of finance and a professional in Yudhoyono’s cabinet, forced Bakrie to settle his debts. This made open conflict between Mulyani and Bakrie, which would be

exposed in media.\textsuperscript{64} Some observers believe that the action deliberately gave rise to compensate political attacks on Democrat Party over Centurygate.\textsuperscript{65}

Even though the parties had been involved in conflict, the multi-party coalition government was not deterred. In May 2011, the coalition parties signed a code of conduct for government effectiveness. It essentially contains an agreement to maintain unity and encourage the performance of the government in 2009-2014 periods.\textsuperscript{66} Since then, the Democrat Party and Golkar Party began to reconcile their conflict. Ramadan (Democrat) urged Bambang (Golkar) to stop the act of attacking each other in media. The chairman of Golkar, Abu Rizal Bakrie, has circulated a message to stop the disputes concerning Centurygate. Idrus Marham from Golkar justified the instructions to all cadres to return to the polite political language.\textsuperscript{67} A year earlier, rumors spreading about Bakrie’s foe, Mulyani would be dismissed by Yudhoyono after the two had a meeting.\textsuperscript{68} Although Bakrie and Yudhoyono denied the rumor, in May 2010 Yudhoyono approved Mulyani’s leave from the cabinet due to IMF offering her a position as director. The central issues of public concern oddly lost in the news coverage as reconciliation conducted by the parties. Centurygate issue has never been news anymore, as well as the tax case of Bakrie companies. Not surprisingly, this invited public suspicion, and some observers view the Centurygate as having been brought into the political realm as a venue for contestation of the parties for the sake of winning the 2014 election.\textsuperscript{69}

However, this reconsolidate agreement gave little impact, as political disputes re-emerged when fuel price plan would be taken in early 2012.\textsuperscript{70} This plan has ignited another political dispute among coalition members. In early

time, the parties who rejected the plan include Golkar Party and PKS. They believed that the government still has other options to cover the deficit rather than torment the poor. The Democrat Party felt cornered and framed as negative to the public by their counterparts, Golkar Party and PKS, Yudhoyono feeling that his counterparts gained public sympathy for their own benefit in 2014 by politicized this issue. Some Democrat Party politicians proposed reshuffling cabinet to dismiss ministers from Golkar Party and PKS. In early April 2012, when the fuel price plan should have been finally decided, the Golkar Party changed their direction in elegant maneuvering: they refused fuel prices plan but also admitted that it is fully government’s authority.71 Golkar Party’s movement seemed to consider the public sympathy which started to sway to the government decision.

In early April 2012, President Yudhoyono decided to postpone the fuel price plan within six months ahead. While the Golkar Party remained neutral, PKS consistently stood against the policy. PKS' decision was scorned by other coalition parties, who asked PKS to resign from coalition because the party had violated the coalition’s code of conduct. Some Democrat Party’s politicians openly admitted that they had asked President Yudhoyono to immediately ban PKS from the coalition. The demand to kick PKS out of coalition intensified throughout April 2012. After all, there were no signs at all that President Yudhoyono would dismiss PKS ministers from his cabinet. It was believed that Yudhoyono was afraid that PKS would gain abundant public sympathy if he fired them.

When Yudhoyono and the Democrat Party proved less capable to retain their popularity, they used other powers to meet the challenges. The number of Democrat Party cadres involved in corruption case post-2009 has increased. The core cadres who became suspects include: Muhammad Nazaruddin, Angelina Sondakh, Amrun Daulay, Murman Effendi, and several others which the case is still being processed.72 This fact is contrary to the commitment of the Democrat Party with their famous slogan, “Say No to Corruption!” and worsened Democrat Party’s image, making them an easy target for competitors. In response to this unfortunate situation, cabinet secretary, Dipo Alam, announced the list of most corrupt parties in which Golkar Party was on top with a 36 percent corruption rate.73 Shortly thereafter, a public opinion survey

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about corrupt parties by LSN released had the Democrat Party at a 51 percent vote. It is likely that the announcement of the poll results were intended to drop their rival images to the public.

Such patterns are likely to continue and even heat up ahead of 2014 elections. The government will run in an ambiguous path: on the one hand, they have to compete by conflicting in political communication, which is done to gain public sympathy by building a positive image of them and simultaneously destructing their rivals’, while on the other hand they still hold the coalition since it will require plentiful funds, and the cabinet’s chairs provides valuable resources and benefits, such as controlling government projects and policies, mobilizing supports by using government facilities, showing experience in government affairs during campaigns. This is typical of cartelized politics where every major party has a strong attachment to coalition in order to maintain their access to valuable resources and others benefits from the state.

Conclusion

Looking at Yudhoyono’s government in 2004-2009 periods, the popularity dominance evidently determines government stability. Yudhoyono has proved that his capability to dominate popularity enables him to establish a stable government with two ways, be successful in running impression management and substantive policy. On the other hand, a multi-party government renders a particular problematic dimension. Yudhoyono had to figure out how to accommodate the interests of many supporting parties, coalition’s bond based over materialism and pragmatism rather than platform similarities, and how to restrain the turmoil of competition among coalition parties so it would not impede governmental affairs. In the first period of his reign, Yudhoyono was relatively able to overcome those challenges using his excellence in dominating popularity and political compromise.

Yudhoyono’s second period provides another perspective about the role of public opinion and support in maintaining the government stability. At this period, Yudhoyono had the strength of the Democrat Party in parliament, but his popularity declined due to the cases that had been linked with him, such as Centurygate and corruption cases involving Democrat cadres. When Yudhoyono began to lose control over popularity, public support and the chal-

lenges faced by the party machine, the government looked less stable. It was proven from the rising fuel price plan case, in which the government's policy had been undermined and thwarted by his coalition partner. In addition, the conflict among the government parties that overwhelmed the news coverage reflects the instability of government and weak leadership credibility of Yudhoyono. Interestingly, the great conflict did not destroy government coalition. This is because the parties are still bound by a common interest, maximizing the state resources for winning the 2014 elections.

Multi-party government system which characterized by cartelization has given rise to ambiguity in Indonesian democracy. The government coalition has never stopped the competition among supporting parties, or competition and conflict has destroyed coalition. Yudhoyono government has shown that government stability in cartelized democracy is more determined by the success of a regime to control over popularity and public support.

References


**Other Sources**


