



INDONESIA
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Context

Indonesia's political dynamics toward 2029 are beginning to show signs that they may not **always move linearly according to the electoral calendar**. For that reason, a statement by Budi Arie Setiadi, Chairman of Projo, in a video clip circulating publicly—that national political dynamics could unfold “faster than 2029”—deserves close attention. The statement becomes significant when read alongside three developments: **economic pressures and public anxiety, the growing mobilization of student and citizen demonstrations, and the consolidation and repositioning of political forces toward 2029**.

The statement is sensitive because Budi Arie is the Chairman of Jokowi's main volunteer organization and a former minister who was reshuffled from Prabowo's government. The statement was also made at a gathering of Jokowi volunteers while he was sitting alongside Indonesia's 7th President, Joko Widodo (Jokowi). **The speaker's political position, the forum in which the statement was made, and Jokowi's presence make the message about “acceleration” difficult to regard merely as personal speculation.**

The constitutional context makes the statement even more sensitive. Article 8 of the 1945 Constitution stipulates that if the President dies, resigns, is removed from office, or is unable to perform his duties during his term, the President shall be replaced by the Vice President until the end of the term. The current Vice President is **Gibran Rakabuming Raka, Jokowi's son**. It is therefore understandable that a political interpretation has emerged that discussions about change before 2029 directly intersect with the issue of presidential succession.

However, “acceleration” is not synonymous with impeachment. Impeachment is only one constitutional possibility and is subject to a

strict mechanism. More important than Budi Arie's statement itself is the indication that **political scenarios outside the normal 2029 cycle are beginning to be discussed within Jokowi's political circle and among his volunteer networks.**

Reformasi, Demonstrations, and Economic Pressures

Budi Arie compared the current situation with his experience in the period leading up to Reformasi. He referred to the 1997 election, which as followed within a relatively short period by the 1999 election, and saw similarities between some of today's mass dynamics and the signs that emerged in the run-up to 1998. Nevertheless, **Indonesia today is different from Indonesia in 1998.** At that time, the economy contracted by around 13 percent, inflation surged above 70 percent, the banking sector suffered a systemic crisis, and Indonesia entered an IMF program.

But being different does not mean there is no pressure. **The cost of living, difficulties in finding employment, pressure on purchasing power, economic uncertainty, and global turbulence are directly felt by the public.** In politics, the danger lies not only in poor economic figures, but in the point at which economic hardship turns into a perception that life is becoming increasingly difficult and the government is not sufficiently capable of responding. **At that point, economic dissatisfaction begins to turn into political dissatisfaction.**

Therefore, what needs to be watched is not one demonstration or one economic indicator in isolation, but rather the **convergence of multiple pressures.** The demonstrations by residents of Pati, plans by groups of citizens from several regions to come to Jakarta on August 27, 2026, as well as student mobilizations, indicate that dissatisfaction is beginning to find an outlet in the public sphere. If different local

issues begin to find a common narrative, protests that were initially scattered could generate a **demonstration effect** and develop into national political pressure.

More sensitive still is the emergence of **counter-mobilization**. Pro-MBG (*Makan Bergizi Gratis* or Free Nutritious Meals)—President Prabowo’s flagship program—actions become important to watch when they confront groups criticizing government policies. The problem arises when this pattern develops into **masses confronting masses**: groups criticizing government policies directly facing groups mobilized to defend them.

This is where the potential for horizontal conflict emerges. The analogy with Pam Swakarsa in 1998, which was once formed by Armed Forces Commander General Wiranto ahead of Reformasi, is relevant not because today’s situation is identical to 1998, but because of the mechanism of **counter-mobilization**, which can shift what was originally a vertical conflict— **society versus government policy**—into a horizontal conflict— **society versus society**. Once politics enters a phase of masses confronting masses, the risks of provocation, physical clashes, casualties, and a *trigger event* rise sharply. **A single clash—especially if it results in casualties among students—could transform a policy protest into a political crisis.**

This would become even more serious if the **“hidden conflict” or friction among security institutions**—as reflected in the case involving Jampidsus Febrie Adriansyah—were to move into the open. At that point, the problem would no longer be limited to horizontal clashes among groups in society, but could intersect with vertical fragmentation within state institutions. The combination of polarized masses in the streets and friction among security elites would constitute a far more serious variable, as it could blur chains

of command, produce differing responses to demonstrations, and increase the possibility of a trigger event.

This is where the risk of a “**historical rupture**” becomes more concrete: economic pressure from below, masses confronting masses in the middle, while institutions of power begin to show fractures at the top.

The experience of 1998 shows that a political crisis is determined not only by the scale of demonstrations, but by the moment when public pressure converges with weakening cohesion among the political elite and state apparatus. The chain of risk becomes clear:

Economic pressure → public anxiety → student and citizen demonstrations → counter-mobilization → horizontal polarization → clashes/casualties (trigger event) → fragmentation of elites and state institutions → crisis of confidence → political escalation → potential “historical rupture.”

To this must be added another key factor – the responses of the major Indonesian business families. They have faced unprecedented pressures from the Prabowo administration – demands for financial support to government entities at below-market rates, investigations for misdemeanours or transgressions which are either spurious or committed a long time ago, restrictions on their travel, confiscation of land and so on. The initial reaction of the business families was to accept these demands passively. After all, these families have been in the country for decades and have experienced the ups and downs of running prominent business activities in Indonesia. Their approach was thus to accept the demands and wait for the eventual change of government or policies which was the usual case in the history of post-independence Indonesia.

A turning point would come if the big businesses felt that such a passive approach would not work and that they needed to adopt a more risky strategy of supporting the opposition and/or working within the system to destabilise Prabowo.

In the meantime, they are already doing things that could aggravate the economic situation. They are finding ways to move money abroad, adding to downward pressures on the Rupiah. They have also dialled back on big investments quietly while outwardly claiming that they are committing to big projects.

PSI and the Strengthening of Jokowi's Political Position

However, the streets alone do not create a “historical rupture.” The determining variable is **division at the elite level**. As long as the government, political coalition, state institutions, and security apparatus remain solid, there is still room to manage social pressures. The situation changes when pressure from below meets **fragmentation, conflicts of interest, or elite repositioning at the top**. History shows that major political changes usually occur not simply because society mobilizes, but when **those in power begin to lose cohesion at the very moment society is mobilizing**.

At the same time, the strengthening of PSI (*Partai Solidaritas Indonesia* or Indonesian Solidarity Party), led by Kaesang Pangarep, can be read as an effort to transform Jokowi's personal influence into a **more organized and institutionalized political force**. Jokowi's political tours, PSI's consolidation, and the target of bringing the party into the House of Representatives (DPR) have strategic implications. If PSI gains parliamentary representation, Jokowi's network will have a formal political vehicle through which to maintain its bargaining position in the political configuration toward 2029.

The stakes are not merely about PSI's electability. More important is the **institutionalization of political influence**: transforming popularity, volunteer networks, and personal networks into a party structure and parliamentary power.

Thus, Jokowi's political circle and family can be read as preparing **two political tracks that may operate simultaneously**. The first is the conventional scenario: building PSI, consolidating volunteer and grassroots networks, strengthening bargaining power, and preparing Gibran for the 2029 election. The second is a contingency scenario: ensuring that the political network remains prepared should socioeconomic pressures produce a change in the configuration of power before 2029.

The Gibran Scenario: With or Without Prabowo

The continuity of Gibran's political position is one of the important variables in this calculation. The **primary scenario** is to maintain the Prabowo–Gibran ticket for the next term, as long as their political relationship remains intact and Jokowi's political strength can continue to provide additional electoral support.

However, if Gibran's relationship with Prabowo's circle changes, the need for an **alternative option** becomes relevant. One possibility beginning to enter the calculation is a Gibran–Dedi Mulyadi (KDM) or KDM–Gibran ticket.

This is where Budi Arie's statement becomes important. **The question is not whether he is predicting that Prabowo will fall before 2029. The question is why the possibility of political change before 2029 is beginning to be discussed within a circle that has a direct stake in the next configuration of power.** The "historical rupture" described by Budi Arie is a risk scenario.

Four variables will determine it: **economic pressure from below, social mobilization in the streets, the potential for horizontal clashes within society, and elite fragmentation at the top.** If these four variables move independently, the political system and the Prabowo government still have room to manage the pressure. But if all four converge at a single moment, the **electoral political calendar could lose its relevance.**

A historical rupture does not occur merely when demonstrations grow larger, but when **pressure from below, clashes in the middle, and fractures at the top occur simultaneously.** It is at that point that politics can move faster than 2029.

What are the triggers that could crystallize a crisis?

There is a confluence of negatives and the tinder is dry on the ground. What could be the spark that could ignite all this into a full-blown crisis? There are some flash points to look out for:

First, a currency market shock. Indonesians, long used to occasional bouts of inflation and bank failures have watched currency market pressures carefully as an early warning sign of things going wrong. The Rupiah's prolonged weakness this year has not gone unnoticed and there is already concern among businessmen, foreign investors and the ordinary folks – contrary to what Prabowo has said, the ordinary folks do watch the currency carefully because they have seen historically how currency weakness quite often leads to financial shocks which then cause bank failures and the loss of their savings.

Currently, the global financial markets are fragile and showing signs of strain. A major stress episode resulting in sharp increases in risk

aversion would lead to a further outflow of capital from Indonesia and precipitate just such a currency shock. The weakness of Prabowo's economic team and the diminished credibility of the central bank leave Indonesia particularly exposed. If the currency fell and inflation shot up, then dissent among the common man would increase and give the opportunity for Prabowo's opponents to mobilise people for protests and to undertake other measures to oust him.

Second, if the regime responds to protests with brutal repression or misjudged violence, that could trigger an escalation of protest activities. As we saw in August 2025 when the unintended killing of a Gojek driver led to nationwide violence, this scenario is plausible.

Third, a super El Nino weather event is increasingly likely. Even under current conditions, hot dry weather is causing wild fires and smoke haze. If these conditions worsen, and depress food production around the world, food prices would rise sharply and that could also trigger unrest.

Bottom Line

The Pati residents' demonstrations, student demonstrations, the pros and cons surrounding MBG, the strengthening of PSI, the consolidation of political volunteer networks, Gibran's position, and Budi Arie's statement regarding a "historical rupture" must be read as risk indicators shaping political scenarios.

The greatest risk is not getting wrong who will win in 2029. The greatest risk is continuing to use the 2029 calendar when political dynamics are moving according to an electoral calendar in which electability will determine who has the upper hand.

Meanwhile, amid political turbulence, preparedness determines who is capable of seizing the momentum. As a former president who is believed by many to still wield influence within the current government, **Jokowi certainly has accurate information regarding developments in Prabowo's health from one moment to the next.**

In this context, Budi Arie's statement finds its relevance: a "historical rupture" could occur sooner, before 2029, not because of a coup or massive demonstrations, but because of Prabowo's health. Under such circumstances, **Jokowi is already prepared with various political scenarios:** bringing Prabowo's power into the hands of his son Gibran midway before 2029; competing against Prabowo or another candidate in 2029; or continuing the Prabowo–Gibran ticket for another term.

The quintessential politician Jokowi - as seen sitting beside Budi Arie in the circulating video - chooses to remain silent and expressionless, allowing the heated political issue to develop into media discourse and public conversation. Jokowi prefers to monitor which way the wind is blowing, observe the movements of the elites, and read the public response, while continuing to consolidate his political network. Because in politics, not every move has to be announced. Sometimes, what is needed is simply to read the changes early, prepare one's forces, and then wait for the momentum to arrive. If that "historical rupture" does indeed occur, Jokowi is already **prepared to reconsolidate his political forces to back Gibran as president, while simultaneously ensuring the continuation of his political dynasty.**

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