

Prabowo, SBY 'grow closer' as Jokowi looms large over govt transition

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Presumptive election winner Prabowo Subianto's meeting with former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), the second since voting ended earlier this month, has sparked speculation about the birth of a new strategic alliance aimed at balancing President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's influence over the impending transition of government.

The two former Army generals met on Friday in Cikeas, West Java, where they had a private conversation about the nation's

"future economic outlook" and how to build on Jokowi's achievements, said Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono, the current Democratic Party chairman, and son of SBY.

Prior to that, Prabowo flew out to SBY's hometown of Pacitan in East Java to thank him for his support in the election. This was three days after the Feb. 14 balloting.

Analysts are convinced that the meetings between the two political bigwigs are not just another case of *silaturahmi* (maintaining social ties), but an indication of a power struggle between Prabowo and the in-

cumbent Jokowi.

Jokowi's two-time election rival Prabowo looks to have won the presidential race on his third attempt, and by a wide margin, according to the latest official election returns and results from earlier quick count surveys.

He was backed by a 10-way alliance, with his Gerindra Party, the Golkar Party, the Democratic Party (PAN) collectively looking to command 43 percent of the 580 seats at the House of Representatives.

However, many argue that the "Jokowi effect" has also left an

indelible mark on the outcome of the 2024 elections.

Jokowi, who is barred from a third term but continues to retain high approval ratings, stands accused of mobilizing state resources in support of his defense minister, all without explicitly saying so. But he has a clear stake in his son Gibran Rakabuming Raka, who, as Prabowo's running mate, could potentially run the country if the presumptive leader becomes incapacitated.

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Furthermore, his idea of deploying a big-tent coalition has won him admiration across political platforms.

"There has been an impression that two parties supporting Prabowo, namely Golkar and PAN, are more loyal to Jokowi," said Adi Prayitno, executive director of the Parameter Politik Indonesia pollster, on Tuesday.

"Prabowo requires a party that can demonstrate unwavering loyalty exclusively to him," he continued, "and the only party [...] whose loyalty to Jokowi remains unclear is the Democratic Party, which has spent nine years as the opposition and only just recently joined Jokowi's cabinet."

Adi told *The Jakarta Post* that Prabowo would need a true partner in the transition of government, "particularly to discuss political strategy and cabinet composition in the lead-up to the beginning of his presidency".

Politicians from Gerindra and

the Democratic Party declined to comment.

The official election results will be announced next month.

Outsize influence

Jokowi has been widely touted as playing an active role in helping shape a government run by Prabowo.

PAN politician Dradjad Wibowo, a senior aide in the Prabowo-Gibran campaign, told local media that Prabowo would involve Jokowi in selecting members of the new government, claiming that the vision of the new cabinet was tied to that shaped by the outgoing leader.

Sources familiar with the coalition-building dynamics have said that he has even asked Prabowo to give him a say in up to four cabinet posts in the next government.

Jokowi himself kicked off the postelection maneuvering just days after the quick counts declared Prabowo the 2024 presidential election winner, by inviting NasDem Party chairman

Surya Paloh, the main sponsor of a rival presidential ticket, for dinner at the Presidential Palace.

Jokowi told the press afterward that he was playing the role of "bridge builder" among political parties.

In a report published on Sunday, *Tempo* magazine cited several unnamed sources who claimed that the inner circle of parties backing the Prabowo-Gibran ticket had become wary that "Jokowi may intervene too far" in the next government, and expressed hope that he would instead retire after stepping down in October.

The report claimed that not only did Jokowi seek to bring elements of the opposition into a Prabowo-led "Indonesia Onward" coalition, he was also planning to directly take command of the big-tent coalition to "oversee the running of the incoming government".

State Secretary Pratikno declined to comment when asked about Jokowi's perceived overreach in the transition of power,

saying only that the formation of a new cabinet was "the prerogative of the incoming president".

Analysts maintain that the game of power between Prabowo and Jokowi could potentially divide the next ruling coalition if the latter manages to become part of the ruling elite of a political party, especially one that holds sway in the incoming legislature.

"It will depend on whether Jokowi will have found his new political vehicle before he steps down," said Agung Baskoro, the executive director of the Trias Politika Strategis think tank, on Tuesday.

"Should he manage to gain a strategic post in a party such as Golkar, he would have more room to maneuver [...] and put pressure on Prabowo," Agung told the *Post*.

Jokowi initially rose to the presidency with the backing of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), but they ended up on opposing sides in the 2024 elections.