

Ideology, institutions, political actions: Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia

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Summary

This article studies the political behavior of an Indonesian Islamist party, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). Critics have argued that there are undemocratic elements in the PKS ideology – such as mixing religion with politics and its perceptions on gender equality and religious pluralism – and thus its participation in democratic politics seems to be neither serious nor sustainable. Applying North's theory of new institutionalism, this research found that ideology is dominant as a guideline for party behavior whenever the formal institutions are ineffective, and it will be less so when the formal rules of the game function properly.

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1 Introduction

This article discusses the political actions of an Indonesian Islamist party named Prosperous Justice Party (or *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, PKS). The case is theoretically significant in two respects: firstly, the PKS has been in the limelight of the media and scholarship after it increased its electoral gain by 450% – from 1.7% in 1999 to 7.3% of the national votes in 2004 – and became a coalition member of the government. Yet this success triggered massive criticism and scepticism about the party's commitment toward democracy because it upholds an Islamist ideology, which is not entirely – some even say definitely not – in line with democracy. The critics maintained that if the PKS had the opportunity to take power, it would eventually replace the existing democratic system. Secondly, scepticism about the democratic commitment of Islamist parties participating in democratic politics has also become a hot academic issue. Students of party studies call the fact that Islamist parties participate in a democratic system a „democratic dilemma“, because they tend to be successful in mobilizing democratic support, yet their ideology contains elements incompatible with democratic values.

Drawing on the data from my doctoral thesis, I aim to show that a party's political actions are not only driven by its ideology, but also by the influences of the political institutions in which it operates. In this perspective, the democratic commitment of an Islamist party is not only determined by its ideological orientations, but also –

and perhaps more significantly – by the degree of stability of the existing democratic institutions. If the institutions are weak and unstable, the party tends to act ideologically. If, however, the institutions are strong and stable, the party tends to act pragmatically.

2 Islamist party as democratic dilemma

Scholars have qualified Islamist parties as a „democratic dilemma“ because such parties adopt a strictly religious political ideology, elements of which--such as their approaches to gender equality and religious pluralism--are incompatible with democratic values. Yet they are gaining popularity in many Muslim countries when they participate in democratic politics and have a presence in elections (Jonasson, 2004). It presents a dilemma because banning Islamist parties would obviously be an undemocratic option that would disenfranchise Muslim groups. Yet allowing parties with undemocratic objectives to compete and eventually win elections, some would argue, would amount to democratic suicide, as it risks giving such parties opportunities to turn the democratic system upside down and establish their preferred undemocratic political systems.

Charges of creating a 'democratic dilemma' were also launched against the PKS in Indonesia. Critics are suspicious about the real motives of the PKS. They argue that the PKS's democratic participation is just a political trick to mask their real Islamist agendas, which is to replace the democratic system by an undemocratic Islamist system. With the PKS targeted to win 20% of the vote in the 2009 election, and with some polls confirming the PKS's growing popularity, concerns about the PKS's real motives are also mounting. A commentator even expressed his fear by saying that a ballot for the PKS is more or less what is a bullet for the *Jama'ah Islamiyah* terrorist organization (Dumme, 2005).

Indeed, there is research that gives food to such suspicions. Ann-Kristin Jonasson compared Islamist parties in Jordan, Turkey, and Pakistan. The three parties operated in countries with very different societal backgrounds, electoral systems, and regime types, yet they behaved quite similarly. Jonasson concludes that what united them were their Islamist ideologies. In this way, she attributes to their ideology an overwhelming importance as it is capable of overcoming institutional constraints (Jonasson, 2004). Her conclusion about the encompassing influence of ideology on the Islamist parties' political behavior seems to confirm the suspicion that Islamist parties are ideological by default and their democratic participation is merely a camouflage.

3 Ideological drives vs. institutional constraints

Jonasson's study enables us to understand the unique pattern of behavior of Islamist political parties. However, her conclusion about the encompassing role of ideology in party behavior is problematic if we consider the contexts in which such parties

operate. Students of democratization processes characterize the degree of institutionalization of a given political system as a fundamental factor when measuring the degree of democracy (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995). The three countries explored by Jonasson exhibit strong characteristics of authoritarianism, paternalism and clientelism, which indicate a low degree of institutionalization of their political systems. This implies that Jonasson's findings may well be interpreted from the opposite angle: the fact that the behavior of the Islamist parties appears as strongly ideological is not because their ideology is of all-encompassing importance, but rather because the existing institutions are weakly developed and ineffective. In the context of the political institutions in Indonesia, which have undergone progressive reform and institutionalization in the last decade, we may therefore expect a different impact upon the Islamist party behavior.

Douglass C. North develops a theory that specifically discusses the influence of ideology on political behavior in the context of changing institutions (Hall and Rose, 1996; Steinmo 2003; Peters, 2005). He defines institutions as „humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction“ (North, 1990, 3). At the core of this theory is his argument that institutions play two fundamental roles: as *rules of the game* and as a *system of incentive distribution*. The former means that institutions regulate actors' behavior, specifying what they can and cannot do. In this way, institutions promote cooperative behavior. The system of incentive distributions refers to the ability of institutions to provide actors with a fair and equal opportunity to apply strategies in pursuing their interests. In this way, institutions promote long-term (i.e. sustainable) cooperation (North, 1990: 6-9).

Furthermore, North distinguishes institutions in formal and informal categories. The former have well-defined rules with various scopes and specifications, ranging from constitutions, statutes and common laws, to specific bylaws and individual contracts (North, 1990: 47). Informal institutions are conventions, codes of conduct, norms of behavior, and so on, which have arisen to coordinate "repeated human interaction" (North 1990: 40). These two dimensions of institutions are also complementary in their functions. On the one hand, formal institutions may develop from informal practices in order to make them more effective and reliable by reducing the cost of information, monitoring and enforcement (North 1990: 46ff). Informal institutions, on the other hand, have the capacity to substitute the formal rules of the game whenever the latter become too rigid and are unable to guarantee regularity and sustainability of interactions and transactions (North & Denzeu, 1994).

4 The history and ideology of PKS

PKS developed from a semi-political organization, named Tarbiyah Movement (*Gerakan Tarbiyah*), a loosely organized Islamic movement popular among younger Muslims – especially university students – in Indonesia in 1970s-1980s. It called itself – and was known as – a *dakwah* (religious propagation) movement (Azis *et al.*,

1996). The movement was initiated at the height of the government's effort to contain Islamic radicalism and political activism among university students. The Government banned political activities on university campuses (Schwarz, 1999: 33-35; Kingsbury, 2002: 84-86), and simultaneously launched operations to strengthen their power by discrediting Islamic politics. In such a situation, as Muslim activists and as university students the students were under a double threat from the regime. It appears that this situation has led to the creation of an organization for Muslim students that would avoid government repressions but was still capable of focusing its Muslim political aspirations. The movement was reportedly initiated by graduates of the Middle East universities who had returned to Indonesia in the early 1980s, among them Hilmy Aminuddin, Salim Segaf Aljufri, Abdullah Said Baharmus, and Acep Abdul Syukur (Salman, 2006: 189-190).

The Tarbiyah movement developed into more synchronized networks with loose organizational structures, avowing the ideology of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers (*Ikhwanul Muslimin*), a religious-political organization founded by Hassan Al-Banna in Egypt in 1928. It has unique organizational features. These include military-like hierarchical structures, a chain of command, a Sufi-Order type of secretive networks as well as an absolute obedience to the leader (Lia, 1998: 76-79).

The Tarbiyah movement adopted Al-Banna's concept of gradual Islamization moving from the individual to the family, to the society, and to the polity (Machmudi, 2005: 207 Damanik, 2002: 190-193; Salman, 2006: 122-139). In fact, the Muslim Brothers did not develop a specific concept of a political system. Its political doctrines focused more on the process of developing an Islamic political system in gradual steps, known as Orbits (Arabic: *Mihwar*). The first is *Ta'sisi*, the formation stage or orbit of *dakwah*, which refers to the initial process of the formation of the *dakwah* movement. The second step is *Tandzimi*, the foundation stage, referring to the establishment of organizations, including the recruitment of cadres as well as the development of organizational networks. The third is *Sya'bi*, the socialization stage, in which the *dakwah* movement starts to introduce its activities to the wider public and to openly recruit members. The fourth step is *Muasasi*, the penetration stage, which consists of the participation of the *dakwah* movement in institutional political processes, such as joining elections. The last stage is *Dauli*, the government phase, in which *dakwah* actors eventually take governmental positions. These stages are successive, so that the initial ones are the preparations for the subsequent ones (Sembiring, 2005).

With such a political program, the Tarbiyah movement succeeded in attracting followers, especially among university students. During the 1980s, the movement was largely clandestine, yet by the 1990s, it began to take its activities into the open. Firstly, they founded educational institutions to introduce their programs to the wider audience and to attract new recruits. They founded 'Nurul Fikri' in Jakarta, an organization for providing tutorial assistance (*bimbingan belajar*) to high school

students in preparation of their enrollment into university. This organization also became a recruitment post for new members. Tarbiyah activists also founded an Islamic boarding school, Al-Hikmah, in South Jakarta, which provided the facilities for their members to study religious subjects such as Arabic, Islamic theology and law more intensively, as well as being a center of excellence for the training and indoctrination of Tarbiyah members. They also set up 'Khairu Ummah', an organization that provided the preachers for delivering religious speeches and propagation (*lembaga dakwah*). Initially, they sent their preachers in and around Jakarta, but when many Tarbiyah activists finished their university studies and worked in various jobs across the country – from Aceh in Sumatra to Lombok in eastern Indonesia – it also sent preachers to deliver sermons in those areas (Damanik, 2002: 152-157).

In the mid-1990s, the Tarbiyah network flourished in various university campuses in Indonesia, especially in the major cities. In line with their political strategy, they started to expand their influence on formal structures by systematically taking over student-parliaments in universities at faculty and departmental levels. They did this quite smoothly, because their network was solid and better organized than those of other communities. In the second half of the 1990s, student activists in major universities were often associated with mosques, since the Tarbiyah activists whose bases were the mosque now dominated the structures. When the Asian monetary crisis severely hit Indonesia in mid-1997 and students across the country mobilized demonstrations and rallied demanding democratization, the Tarbiyah network founded the Action Union for Indonesian Muslim Students (KAMMI, *Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia*) in March 1998 (Siddiq, 2003).

When the democratic transition eventually took place and Suharto stepped down from his thirty-two years in power, Tarbiyah activists propagated the idea to establish a political party as a vehicle to further their political mission. However, two decades of experience under the repressive regime induced some of them to resist the proposal since they perceived politics as a 'dirty business'. When the controversy about the question whether to form a party could not be resolved in deliberations – something that was very unusual by their standards – the community conducted a voting survey to ask the opinion of the members of their networks. No less than 6,000 questionnaires were distributed to Tarbiyah activists across the country and abroad; more than ninety percent of the questionnaires were answered, out of which 68% agreed to create a party (Damanik, 2002: 233).

As a result, the *Partai Keadilan* (Justice Party) was created in Jakarta on July 20, 1998. An interesting fact was that the party did not use „Islam“ in its name to identify its ideological orientation. There were many new parties, which explicitly adopted the word Islam or Muslim as part of their names to that end. According to PKS leaders, however, as mentioned in its manifesto, 'justice' embodies the highest value of Islamic politics in its universal form. The Indonesian word for 'just',

'righteous' (*adil*) was adopted from the Arabic language; it is a Qur'anic key term, the meaning of which may be glossed as 'to put a thing in its proper place'. On the one hand, this term refers to moral values, implying that the party should and will follow the Islamic rules and values; on the other hand, it refers to the natural realm, where God has created the universe in a perfect balance and where nature constantly follows God's laws (see The Manifesto of the Justice Party, 1998).

In June 1999 the PK participated in the first democratic elections since 1955 but with disappointing results. It advocated an „Islamic moral reform“ following Islamic teachings in order to guide the country out of the economic crisis. However, it only collected 1.7% of the national votes. The PK failed even to pass the minimum electoral threshold of 2% votes, and was thus unable to compete in the next elections.

Following this electoral failure the Tarbiyah community on April 20, 2002 founded a new party named Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Jakarta. The smoothness of the merging process indicated that the PKS was carefully being prepared to function as a new political vehicle for the Tarbiyah community after the first party established – the PK – had proved unable to continue the journey. Having learned from the failure of the PK, the PKS leadership implemented radical reforms in their organization. Two different forms of consolidation were made, namely, organizational and programmatic. As for the organizational aspect, the PKS reformulated its leadership structure by giving more power and control over the organization to the *Majelis Syuro* (Deliberation Assembly). This enabled the party to work more efficiently, to take decisions in a simpler manner, and to implement programs more effectively.

Another organizational improvement was the creation of auxiliary institutions, the most important being the Electoral Victory Body (*Badan Pemenangan Pemilu*, Bapilu) the tasks of which are to manage the party campaigns and mobilize support for elections. Another important auxiliary body is the Board of Experts (*Dewan Pakar*), comprised of professionals with various expertises who are to advise the party according to their special vocation (*Republika*, March 9, 2004).

PKS also revised its political programs. The first step was to articulate its image as a 'clean and caring' party. The 'clean image' refers to the PKS's programs to fight corruption. And it was quite successful not only to talk the talks, but also to walk the walk of the jargon. In fact, the attitude of anti-corruption was also the main characteristic of its political career during PK. The 'caring image' of the PKS was manifest in its social services programs, implemented mostly during the natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes that occur frequently in the country. The media was also keen to report sensational actions of PKS politicians and parliamentarians in refusing illegal money or rejecting bribes.

At the same time, the PKS still exhibited its original Islamist character, such as evident from its concern about international Muslim politics. It repeatedly organized rallies and demonstrations condemning Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories.

It promoted support for the Palestinians and initiated demonstration rallies against the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. The PKS issued a number of official statements on these matters, sent a letter to the UN Secretary-General protesting against Israel's massacre of civilian Palestinians in the Janine refugee camps, and released in collaboration with other Muslim organizations and NGOs a statement protesting against the US invasion to Iraq (PKS, 2006: 157-159).

The program bore fruit in 2004. In the parliamentary elections held on April 24, it surprisingly won 7.35 percent of national votes and with 45 seats became the sixth largest party in the parliament.

5 The democratization of political institutions

At first glance, the development of the Tarbiyah movement into a political party seemed to be guided by its ideology of gradual Islamization, that is, of establishing a political Islamic system through the Islamization of the individuals and the society. Looking at the wider picture, however, reveals that the institutional context had changed significantly during the 1980s and 1990s. And this change facilitated the development of the organization.

Until 1985, Indonesia was under full control of the New Order regime of President Suharto. That this was an authoritarian government was indicated by three major features. Firstly, there was the dominant role of the military in national politics. Under the banner of the so-called 'dual function', the Indonesian armed forces gained a dominant position of influence in every major national enterprise, from security to the economy and from politics to the governmental administrations. By 1980, almost 50 percent of the cabinet positions, 75 percent of the posts of secretary-general, 80 percent of the posts of director-general, 84 percent of the posts of ministerial secretary, and 75 percent of provincial governors' posts were taken up by military officers (Koekebakker, 1994). Secondly, the organization of Golkar was established as the regime's political vehicle. Golkar (*Golongan Karya*, or Functionary Group) was originally established by a number of military officers in 1964 as an association of anti-communist organizations. In the course of its development, Golkar evolved into a tool by which the regime accommodated, structured and exploited major elements in the Indonesian political system (Antlov and Coderoth, 2004: 7). Thirdly, the New Order's political manufacturing deeply influenced the rules of the political game. In 1973, it engineered the party system by forcefully merging ten political parties present in the 1971 elections into two political parties. The government officials had been also notorious in their interventions into parties' internal affairs by endorsing cooperative politicians to lead the parties and hindering unwanted politicians in taking strategic positions (Liddle, 1978, Weatherbee, 2002).

By the mid 1980s, a number of senior military officers under the leadership of the chief commander General L. B. Murdany began to question Suharto's politics, which they perceived as hindering the development of a professional Indonesian

military. Murdany criticized what he saw as the excessive expansion of Suharto's children's business. He even tried to bring Suharto's corrupt policies to international attention (Kingsbury, 2002: 92, Jenkins, 1986). Dissatisfied with this development, Suharto took a surprising political maneuver by moving closer toward the Muslim community. In 1988, he removed the Catholic Murdany from the post of chief commander of the armed forces, and replaced him with the pious Muslim Try Sutrisno. Suharto also appointed other Muslim generals to strategic positions. Even personally he changed his public image from an earnest follower of Javanese mysticism into a pious Muslim when in 1993 he took his family and closest aides on a Royal pilgrimage to Mecca.

The most substantial evidence of Suharto's political swing to cooperate with Muslims was his approval of his closest aide Habibie, then minister of Science and Technology, to head the Association of Indonesian Muslim Scholars (ICMI, *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*), founded in 1990. ICMI was a loosely organized hybrid association whose members came from different segments in the Muslim community, each of which with their own agenda (Hefner, 1993).

On March 21, 1998, Suharto stepped down under the double pressure from various political oppositions and the monetary and economic crises that severely hit the country for several months. He transferred the power to the Vice President Habibie. The accepted interpretation was that this was intended as a transitional government whose main task was to institutionalize reforms and prepare the elections for the new government. In only one year it managed to implement the fundamental institutional reforms that paved the way for the democratization process: (a) a reform of the party system by providing freedom to organize political parties and the removal of ideological constraints; (b) reforms of the electoral system, especially by setting up an independent election committee and by ensuring the neutrality of public servants; and (c) reforms of the legislature system by adding new chambers and decreasing the number of unelected legislative members, especially from the military (Stockmann, 2004).

In spite of this significant progress, the democratic reforms were far from complete. Dwight King has called it a „half-hearted reform“ because of the reformers' unwillingness or inability – or both – to carry out the reform thoroughly and to start a genuinely new phase of Indonesian politics. The reformed institutions were barely effective in producing democratic politics, since the playing field was still populated by the old players from the previous regimes who desperately protected their interests (King, 2003: 52-55). In North's institutionalist terms, although the barrier of authoritarianism was eventually lifted and the democratic arena for political competition was set up, political actors entered into this arena in a very tense atmosphere because they hardly knew who the main players were, who were one's friends and who one's opponents. Although the rules of the game were set, no one really knew with whom they were going to compete. In such a situation – exactly as

described by the institutionalist theory – the politicians relied on the informal system of information and rules of the game, i.e. on the ideology.

Indeed, in the aftermath of the 1999 elections, ideological frictions came to the fore when Islamic parties and Muslim politicians formed a coalition, named 'Central Axis' (*Poros Tengah*) and led by Amien Rais. The initial objective of the coalition was to provide an alternative presidential candidate, amidst the growing competition between Habibie and Megawati. The Muslim politicians and party leaders perceived these two candidates as unsuitable. Although Habibie he had close relations with Muslim politics as the patron of the Muslim Intellectual Association (ICMI), due to his reputation as Suharto's protégée he was perceived as obstructing the democratic reform. Megawati, on the other hand, belonged to the reformers' side, yet Muslim politicians saw her as representing secular politics. The Muslim coalition then nominated Abdurrahman Wahid as their candidate, and after Habibie had withdrawn his candidacy he won the presidency in a tight voting against Megawati.

The process of democratic reform in Indonesia was progressing, however, from a democratic transition into a consolidation. The first results were amendments to the constitution, especially on the issue of direct presidential election, on preventing the president to dissolve the parliament, and on the abolishment of the unelected military faction in the parliament. The second significant institutional development was the ratification of a new Law No 21/2002 on Political Parties that was designed to make party competition more balanced by limiting the financial gaps between small and big parties. Further reforms were implemented concerning the procedures of electing legislatures (Law No 12/2003) and president (No 23/2003). The law also regulated campaign funding to guarantee its transparency. Perhaps the most significant element in institutional reform was the provision to make the electoral committee (KPU) an independent and permanent body.

The 2004 legislative and presidential elections marked the new pattern of competition as the result of further institutional engineering and democratic consolidation. Firstly, the rivalry between civilians and the military was significantly reduced as the new system diminished the political roles of the military, and the new leaders in the armed forces endorsed professionalism of their institutions (Rabasa, 2005, Walters 1999). Secondly, the ideological rivalry between the Islamist and the secular parties was also diluted by the stability of interests-based competition. By 2004, the members of the Central Axis coalition, which solidly and enthusiastically promoted primordial ideological programs against the secularists, had dispersed, each pursuing their own political interests (Ananta *et al*, 2005: Chapter 1). Lastly, the rivalries between the reformers and the supporters and sympathizers of the status quo had also disappeared, because democracy had become the only viable choice for most Indonesian citizens and for the majority of the political actors. A number of opinion surveys that recorded the preferences of both the public and the elite convincingly showed that the Indonesian public and the elite have a strong

confidence not only in the idea of democracy as the best political system, but also in the process through which democratic programs were carried out (IFES 1999, 2002, 2004 (I-XVIII); TAF 2002, 2004, LP3ES 2004).

6 PKS actions in government

Looking at the wider contexts of Indonesian politics, it will be clear that the development of the Tarbiyah movement with its ideology of gradual Islamization into a political party was not only driven by its ideological orientations, but also structured by the evolving democratic reforms. During the 1980s, the movement was by and large a clandestine organization because of the hostile political environment caused by repressive policies toward Muslim organizations under the New Order regime. In fact, the Tarbiyah movement was not the only one. There were many Islamic groups and organizations that went underground to avoid the regime's iron hand, especially the Law No 8/1985 that stipulated that all mass-organizations should adopt the state ideology Pancasila as their sole foundation. During the 1990s, when Suharto shifted his political alliance toward Muslims as his relations with the military turned sour, the regime developed more accommodative policies toward Muslim interests. This gave Muslim activists greater confidence to express themselves in public discourse and activism more openly. It was during this time that the Tarbiyah movement started to organize its activities in public. Finally, the political crises that brought about regime change and a democratic transition opened up opportunities for Indonesians to organize political parties and participate in the democratic process. It was this democratic reform that enabled the Tarbiyah movement to establish the PK, and then the PKS.

A closer inspection of the political actions of the PKS further confirms North's theoretical formula. The party acted ideologically in the aftermath of the 1999 elections, when the formal democratic institutions were still in the making. At this time the institutions had not been able to function properly in providing certainty and regularity to political interactions and transactions. However, after the democratization processes had evolved from transition to consolidation and major institutions had been further reformed so that they functioned more effectively, the PKS started to act less ideologically and more pragmatically.

In the first year of democratic reforms, the political actions of the PKS (under the name of the PK) were undeniably ideologically steered. The party carried out its political programs based on information and networking with other Islamic groups and parties. The first political move taken by the PK as a political organization was the formation of the Communication Forum of Islamic Parties (FSPPI, *Forum Silaturahmi Partai-Partai Islam*) in mid-1998. The Forum requested the government to call off Laws No. 3 and 8/1985 that required mass and political organizations to adopt the Pancasila as the sole foundation. Thereupon, fully realizing their insignificant size and impact, eight of the ten members of the Forum

agreed to join their remaining votes in the election to get additional seats, the so called *Stembus Accord*, but without success as the rule was cancelled (IFES, 2002: 5-7).

The next ideological action of the party was to join the Central Axis coalition. Against the widely held belief that the coalition had been initiated by Amien Rais in order to mobilize support from Muslim politicians, closer observation reveals that the opposite was the case: the forum was initiated by a number of senior Muslim politicians to bring Rais back into his proper habitat of Islamic politics. It was triggered by Rais's agreement to join forces with Megawati to further reform agendas. To this move Islamic politicians responded with anxiety. They associated Megawati and her PDI-P with secular and Christian politics (Suharsono, 1989: 86-88, Eep Syaifullah Fatah, *detik.com* 12.05.1999). The Central Axis grew into a more solid coalition and attracted major Islamic parties such as PPP and PBB to formally join in, and eventually it won the presidential race (Wahono, 2003: 115).

When Wahid was elected president, the PK received one cabinet portfolio as member of the coalition. The party's president – Nur Machmudi Ismail – became the Minister of Forestry and Horticulture. At this period, the party was idealistic. And it was a very tough situation for the party that pledged to promote moral politics because the department of forestry was among the most corrupt departments, especially with regard to illegal deforestations and embezzlements of plantation (*reboisasi*) projects (Environmental Investigation Agency, 2007). To back up his mission, Nur Machmudi Ismail appointed Suripto – a former intelligence officer – as the department's General Secretary. Suripto eagerly ran after suspects of illegal loggings and brought more than a dozen of major names to the persecutor (*Jakarta Post*, 16.05.2001). However, the policy brought him and the ministry in conflict with the president who had close relations with the big logging companies – and after less than ten months in office they were sacked (*Tempo Interaktif*, 27.03.2001).

In 2001, President Wahid was impeached by the parliament in a severe political crisis, which resulted in an excessive political antagonism caused by the unstable institutional settings, and the vice-president Megawati took up the position. She offered a cabinet position to the PK but it refused to join the government. The official version of the decision to stay aloof was that it wanted to focus its attention on organizational reforms. However, the action was also ideologically motivated, since the party refused to join a cabinet led by a woman. According to the conservative Islamic interpretation – to which the party subscribes – leadership is the privilege of men. Thus, it was inappropriate to elect a woman as president when there were many capable men available. During this period, the party issued several religious edicts (*fatwa*) advising that the participation of women in politics is not recommended, as the proper tasks of women are as wives and mothers.

However, in line with the democratic consolidation that produced more stable and more effective political institutions, the political actions of the PKS have turned

more pragmatic. During the 2004 general elections, it changed its rhetoric from promoting moral and religious reforms to democratic agendas of clean government and anti-corruption. The shift of image from an Islamist into a democratic party enabled the PKS to attract support from the wider Muslim community, so that it managed to increase its votes by 450% as against the previous elections.

In the aftermath of the 2004 elections, the pragmatic character of the PKS political actions became more apparent. During the first presidential election later that year, the party did not nominate its own candidate, and there were heated debates inside the PKS as to whether to abstain from the race or to support a candidate and join the government. Eventually, it decided to participate in the government and consequently support the candidate of the other party. The argument was that the PKS need to collect real experience in running the government, as part of the preparation to become a ruling party. And such experiences can only be gained through participation in the government administration. But which candidate should it support? This proved to be an uneasy choice for the party. Younger PKS politicians preferred to support Amien Rais because of his Islamic as well as reformist credentials, in addition to the increasing pressure from its supporters to back up Rais (*Kompas*, 17.04.2004). However, other groups led by the more senior leaders highlighted more pragmatic elements, i.e. the chance to win the race, and they found that the former military chief commander General Wiranto was preferable to Rais, because he was most likely to win. In addition, another line of argument suggested that the PKS's main concern was not winning the election but rather stopping Megawati, hence Wiranto was the choice (See, Syu'bah Asa, *Tempo* 5-11 July 2004).

Eventually, the PKS gave its support to Rais. However, the internal debate had gone on for weeks. When the party finally decided to support Rais's candidacy, there were less than two weeks time left before the Election Day, and Rais' strategists complained that this last minute back-up contributed little because most voters would have already made up their minds.

In the first round of the presidential election on July 26, 2005, no candidate won absolute majority, and thus a second round was needed. The two pairs of candidates who collected most of the votes were Yudhoyono-Kalla with 33.57% and Megawati-Muzadi with 26.61%. Thus, the PKS candidate failed to reach the next round. The PKS was quick in making up its mind to stand behind Yudhoyono-Kalla (PKS *Bayanat*, 26.08.2004). When on September 20, 2005 Yudhoyono won the second round convincingly with 60.62%, the PKS automatically became a governing party. Initially, Yudhoyono offered four cabinet positions to the PKS, to which the party responded by nominating four candidates: Soeripto as Attorney General, Adhyaksa Dault as Minister of Youth and Sport, Anton Apriyantono as Minister of Agriculture, and Yusuf Asyari as Minister of Housing. But when he announced his 'United Indonesia Cabinet' (*Kabinet Indonesia Bersatu*) in late October 2004

(www.pks-jakarta.com [accessed, March 8, 2008]) Yudhoyono had only accepted the last three nominees.

Consequently, as part of the government, the PKS has almost no other option than supporting the president's policies. It had 45 MPs in parliament and it formed its own Prosperous Justice Party Fraction (F-PKS). The first major political action of the new PKS fraction concerned the government plan to increase the oil price by 30% in March 2005. Under widely publicized pressure from its supporters and regional branches, the PKS politicians told the media that they strongly opposed the plan, and convinced its constituents that the party was on their side (*Tempo*, 04/XXXIV/21 – March 27, 2005). However, after its chairman Tifatul Sembiring met with president Yudhoyono to discuss the topic, the PKS changed its side again by endorsing the government plan to increase the oil price (*Tempo*, 04/XXXIV/21 – March 27, 2005). This decision created resentment and drew protests from the PKS supporters, and some local branches in Yogyakarta and West Nusatenggara provinces even demanded that the party withdraw from the government coalition (see, *Tempo Interaktif*, October 18 and 19, 2005; and November 28, 2008).

The PKS took another pragmatic and power oriented political action in the case of the controversial government policy of October 2005 to import 500 tons of rice per year from Vietnam from 2005 to 2007. This was controversial because the Minister of Agriculture – from the PKS – had previously declared that national stock was enough and that the country in 2004-2005 in fact had produced a surplus of rice (*Tempo Interaktif*, January 24, 2006).

It was because of, rather than despite of, the fact that the Minister of Agriculture was a member of the party who had been bypassed by the president, that made the PKS insist on investigating the rice import policy and on forming an independent committee together with the PDIP fraction. By mid-February, the coordinator of the PKS independent committee, Tamsil Linrung, reported that there were striking irregularities in the government project. Firstly, the government's decision to import rice was based on a report, with manipulated data from the Central Bureau of Statistic (BPS), suggesting that the national rice stock was deficient, whereas the Minister of Agriculture had confirmed it was sufficient. Secondly, the price of 280.5 USD per ton set by the government was too high, while PKS investigators received information from the Vietnamese Farmer Association that their standard price was 247 USD per ton. Thirdly, the government report was inconsistent: it reported a price of 281 USD/ton when in fact it paid 280.5 USD/ton (*Sinar Harapan*, February 16, 2006). Based upon its findings of the unaccountable irregularities in rice import programs, the PKS fraction suggested that the chairman of National Logistic Board (Bulog) should resign (fpks-dpr-ri.com).

Lastly, the PKS's pragmatic actions bore fruit in the regional elections. Until 2008, the PKS won in 92 regional elections, 8 of which were a provincial and the other 84 at district level. It is of interest that in the regional elections the PKS joined

coalitions not only with Islamic parties (60%) but also with secular ones (40%), and even with a Christian party – although in this latter case they did not win. Of the 86 coalitions which it joined, 33 were with the PAN (Muslim-based party), 29 were with the Golkar (secular party), 24 were with the PPP (Islamic party), 22 were with the PD (secular), 20 were with the PKB (Muslim-based party), 17 were with the PBB (Islamic party), 14 were with the PDIP (secular party) – and one lost coalition with the PDS (Christian party).

7 Conclusion

It is evident that although the Prosperous Justice Party adopted a typical Islamist ideology, its political actions have reflected the impact of the democratizing political institutions in Indonesia. The history of the party, which evolved from the Tarbiyah movement, has also been structured by the dynamics of political situations in the country during the 1980s and 1990s. It was the regime change and the democratic reforms that created the opportunity for the Tarbiyah community to establish a political party. In the same vein, during the period of democratic transition – in the aftermath of 1999 election – when democratic institutions had not functioned properly in structuring political competition, the PKS acted ideologically by cooperating exclusively with Islamic parties and showed a strong anti-secular sentiment. However, when the democratization process started to consolidate and the institutions functioned more effectively in providing an arena for political interactions and transactions, the party's actions turned more pragmatic. The party joined the government and supported its unpopular policies even though it had to confront protests from its own constituents. And in contrast with its actions of just a few years before, the PKS is now keen to join coalitions with secular, even Christian, parties in regional elections. The changing political actions of the PKS are thus in line with Douglass North's theory: it behaved ideologically when the formal institutions were dysfunctional, but since the formal institutions have begun to function effectively the party behaves pragmatically.

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