

The Dual Lacunae of Urban Areas and Electoral Support for an Islamic Party: Prosperous Justice Party, Depok City, Indonesia

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Abstract. Among the Islamic parties in Indonesia, one that is considered successful in gaining electoral support compared to others in the last two decades is the Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS). Previous studies concluded that this success was determined by ideology, organization, social service and leadership of the PKS. While I agree that these factors have contributed to sustaining electoral successes, given that the PKS has only received significant support in a few regions, these factors appear to be only capable of working effectively in certain local socio-political contexts. In order to enrich the previous studies, I argue that this success is related to the phenomenon of dual lacunae that occurs in urban areas. The first lacuna is the absence of dominant socio-political organizations or fragmented or dysfunctioning organizations. The second is the social ties of citizens, especially the educated Muslim middle class, which is significant in number, most of whom are migrants, with their varied traditional organizations fading or even disappearing due to the effects of migration and dysfunction of these organizations. With its ideology, organization, social service and leadership, PKS has succeeded in filling these dual lacunae and convert them into electoral support. The tool of analysis of this study is a critical political economy approach. This study used a qualitative approach i.e. a case study of PKS in Depok City. The data collection technique in this study is an in-depth interview of those varied source persons, a document study, and a literature study.

Keywords: *Depok City, electoral support, Islamic party, Prosperous Justice Party, urban area.*

Introduction

Among the Islamic parties that have participated in the elections for members of the national and local parliaments - commonly referred to as *pileg* (legislative elections) - after the fall of the New Order regime (1965-1998) in Indonesia, one that can be considered successful is the Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*). The indicators of this success include the number of seats that PKS has won in five national legislative elections, which are quite significant, although slightly fluctuating. In addition, at least from 2004 to 2019, PKS has also won significant numbers of seats in local *pilegs* in several provinces, such as Jakarta Special Region, West Java, West Sumatra, Banten and West Nusa Tenggara (for data, see Asian Elections 1999-2014, no year).

In addition, at least from 2004 to 2019, PKS has also won significant numbers of seats in local *pilegs* in several provinces and districts/cities. These provinces include Jakarta Special Region, West Java, West Sumatra, Banten and West Nusa Tenggara (for data, see Asian Elections 1999-2014, no year). PKS won the 2004 Jakarta Regional Election, obtaining 18 seats

or around 24% of the total seats (detikNews, 17 April 2004). Meanwhile, PKS also gained the plurality of seats in the following districts/cities: Depok, Bandung, Bekasi, Tangerang, Tangerang District, Bogor, Medan, Padang and Banda Aceh. With the exception of Bogor City, PKS won the 2004 legislative elections in these cities (see Asian Elections, no year). PKS also won the 2019 *Pileg* in Bandung, winning 13 seats (26%) (Kompas.com, 23 July 2019); 12 seats (24%) in Depok (Kompas.com, 29 July 2019) and Bekasi (Kompas.com, 15 May 2019),¹ respectively.

Why did PKS achieve this electoral success? Referred to the case of PKS in Depok City, in my argument, the success is connected to the phenomenon of dual lacunae that occurs in the city. The nonexistence of dominant socio-political organizations or fragmented or dysfunctioning organizations is the first lacuna. The second is the social ties of citizens, especially the educated Muslim middle class, which is significant in number, most of whom are migrants, with their varied traditional organizations fading or even disappearing due to the effects of migration and dysfunction of these organizations. PKS has succeeded in filling these dual lacunae and convert them into electoral support with its ideology, organization, social service and leadership.

The success of PKS is not uniquely Indonesian.² In the approximately same time frame and context (post-Asian monetary crisis, Arab Spring), a similar phenomenon has occurred in a number of countries with Muslim-majority populations. Examples are the Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) in Malaysia (Noor, 2014, 2003), *Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party [JDP]) in Turkey (Hale & Özbudun, 2010; Cizre, 2007), *Hizb al-Hurriyyah wa al-'Adala* (Freedom and Justice Party [PJF]) in Egypt (Milton-Edwards, 2016; al-Anani 2015; Wickham, 2013), *Hizbu Harakatu n-Nahdah* (Ennahdha Party [EP]) in Tunisia (Filali-Ansary, 2016; Ayari 2015, Cavatorta and Merone, 2015), and *Hizb al-'Adala wa-l-Tanmiyya* (Party of Justice and Development [PJD]) in Morocco (Pellicer & Wegner, 2015, 2014; Kirdiş, 2015).

Literature Review

Several studies have attempted to answer the same question, and their arguments can be mapped into three perspectives. The first consists of studies that see that the success of PKS as due to its Islamist ideology (Hasan, 2012; Norma-Permata, 2008; Bubalo et al., 2008; Machmudi, 2008; Rachmat, 2008), or a more moderate version of the ideology (Hwang, 2010; Shihab & Nugroho, 2008), which attracted a large number of voters. The second consists of studies that place social organization and services (Hamayotsu, 2011), grassroots organizing and leadership, including when the party was facing problems (Kramer, 2014), as factors that determine PKS' success.

My position diverges from these studies for two reasons. *First*, this party only received significant support in certain areas, especially urban locations, but lacked support in others, especially those with a rural character, even when PKS modified its Islamist ideology to be more moderate. Why has PKS been less successful in general, for example, in Central and East Java, as well as in the north coast of West Java? *Second*, following up on the first reason mentioned above, my observation is that these studies tend to ignore the local socio-political contexts that plays an important role in sustaining the success or failure of PKS in gaining

¹ PKS gained the same number of seats in the DPRD as the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), however, it gained a larger number of popular votes (267,330) compared to PDI-P (240,728) (Kompas, 15 May 2019).

² There have been several studies that attempt to compare PKS with some of these Islamic parties, with various topics, such as moderation in PKS, JDP/AKP, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (Berland, 2017), moderation in PKS and PAS (Hwang, 2010), economic-political conditions that hinder the development of PKS compared to JDP (Hadiz, 2011), and PKS' and PAS' participation in democratic political systems (Nuridin, 2009).

significant electoral support. I agree that PKS' ideology, organization, social services and leadership contributed to its electoral success. However, these factors are secondary in nature, meaning that they are not sufficient conditions, but highly dependent on the local socio-political context the party exists in, which can make it easier or more difficult for PKS to build a voter base and consolidate in order to gain electoral support.

Based on the critical review above, this study uses a critical political economy approach (see Hadiz, 2011a, 2011b; Hadiz and Teik, 2011; Hadiz, 2008) with slight modifications. Using this approach, electoral support for political parties is seen as a structural phenomenon. This phenomenon is also positioned as a reflection of the dynamics of power relations between various socio-political forces in a region, from political parties, business organizations, religious groups, labor unions, and so on. The forces themselves are the product of social transformation, for example in the form of modernization and industrialization, that has taken place in a region.

Research Methods

This study used a qualitative approach i.e. a case study of PKS in Depok City, West Java. The selection of this city as the research location has two reasons. First, politically, the PKS branch in this city has received significant electoral support, as can be seen in the vote/seat acquisition in the 2004 to 2019 *Pilegs*. Second, it is also in this city that PKS succeeded in having its cadres elected to the mayoralty for three consecutive periods, namely Nur Mahmudi Ismail (2006-2011 and 2011-2016) and Muhammad Idris (2016-2021).

This study uses three data collection techniques, namely literature study, document study, and interviews. The three are used in parallel to obtain data relevant to this study, both regarding the macro aspect, such as social changes and urbanization in Depok City, and the meso aspect, for example PKS' strategy in building a voter base, and PKS' electoral performance in Depok City. The use of the three data collection techniques simultaneously takes into account the appropriateness of the characteristics of the data to be obtained, with the data collection technique used.

Findings and Discussion

As has been stated above, one of the locations where PKS has received significant electoral support is the city of Depok in West Java. In each election of local parliamentarians (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah or DPRD), except in 1999 (the first democratic elections after the collapse of New Order authoritarianism, as well as the first time the party, which at that time was named the Justice Party [PK] participated in electoral competitions), the PKS has always been listed among the top three positions in the DPRD Depok (see Table 1). In the 2004 and 2019 *pilegs*, the PKS even gained the largest number of votes.

Table 1
The Number of PKS Seats in the DPRD Depok

Pileg	Number of seats
1999	3
2004	12
2009	11
2014	6
2019	12

Source: BPS Kota Depok 2020, 2018, 2013, 2008. For the data of Pileg 1999, see Asian Election (no year).

The electoral success of PKS in Depok City is inseparable from the ability of the Islamic party to fill what I conceptualized as the problem of dual lacunae that occurs in the city. The first of the dual lacunae is the lack of dominant social organizations or political parties, whether based on Islam or not, and that existing organizations tend to be fragmented or not rooted in society (interview with a local researcher, February 2021). Although various socio-political organizations exist in Depok, none of them are culturally, socially, and politically dominant. These organizations tend to be fragmented and not rooted in society. As a result, not any of the organizations can drive the socio-political dynamics of the city.

That local condition is different, for example, from the case of Surabaya or Solo where there are one or two dominant socio-political organizations, namely NU and nationalist organizations in Surabaya, nationalist organizations in Solo. Such characteristics of Depok was shaped by its own social history in the form of the power of Dutch landlord in the colonial era until the late 40s, the strength of state's administration in the Sukarno era, and New Order authoritarianism (see Irsyam, 2017; Suryana, 2004, 2020, especially pp. 26-41). The lack of socio-political organization made it easier for the PKS to consolidate its power and convert it into significant electoral support in the city (interview with a regional board officials and a member of PKS in Depok, February 2021).

The second lacuna is the lack of social ties of citizens, particularly the educated middle class Muslims whose numbers are significant (interview with a regional board officials and a member of PKS in Depok, February 2021), most of whom are migrants, whose ties with various organizations both in their hometowns and their new residences, fading or even disappearing, either due to the impact of migration or the dysfunction of these organizations. These migrants were the product of the modernization and industrialization project carried out by the New Order regime, especially in the early 70-90s (see Irsyam, 2017; Suryana, 2004, 2020, especially pp. 26-41). Modernization and industrialization centered in Jakarta and surrounding cities (Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi) attracted migrants to come to these cities. The main reason they migrate was to find work and continue their education.

Depok is one of the cities chosen by migrants for two reasons. First, housing that is affordable and relatively close to the workplace. This is usually done by those who work in Jakarta. The construction of the Depok National Housing complex (Perumnas) in the 70s was a manifestation of this first reason (interview with a local researcher, February 2021). In subsequent developments, there are many housing complexes in this city which are mostly inhabited by migrants. The second is to continue education to university. This was marked by the move of UI from Rawamangun to Depok in 1987, followed by the construction of the Gunadarma Campus and other campuses. Most of these migrants are either total or permanent migrants. Their ties to the socio-political organizations in their hometowns, including those of a religious nature, tend to weaken. On the other hand, the organizations in the city of Depok are not sufficient to channel their aspirations, whether politically, socially, and culturally or religiously (interview with a local researcher and a member of PKS in Depok, February 2021). It was at this point that PKS was present as the choice they made.

With its Islamist ideology, disciplined organizational management, various forms of social services, and strong leadership, PKS in Depok City found itself able to fill the dual lacunae. For the educated middle class Muslims longing to satisfy their feeling of emptiness, in the midst of a complex urban life, and when there are no other reliable organizations, this Islamic party can become a channel for various aspirations, whether political, sociological or psychological. This is the condition that made it easier for the PKS to consolidate its power, and convert it into significant electoral support in the city.

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