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Electoral Authoritarianism in Indonesia: The Legal and Political Machinery Behind Indonesia's 2024 Election

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the phenomenon of electoral authoritarianism in Indonesia through the lens of the 2024 presidential election victory of the Prabowo-Gibran ticket. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this research analyzes data from mass media and NGO reports to uncover how state power was strategically deployed to benefit one candidate. The findings reveal three core manifestations of electoral authoritarianism: (1) presidential intervention through policies, statements, and political actions in favor of Prabowo-Gibran; (2) active involvement of government officials—including ministers and regional leaders—in campaign activities; and (3) repression -0,01 chof opposition candidates via administrative obstructions and permit cancellations. These practices, although formally legal, violate democratic ethics and principles of electoral fairness, illustrating how legal frameworks were manipulated to maintain regime power while maintaining a façade of democratic legitimacy. The study concludes that Indonesia is experiencing democratic backsliding, marked by executive aggrandizement and strategic manipulation of elections—hallmarks of competitive authoritarian regimes that undermine the democratic process while preserving its superficial mechanisms.

KEYWORDS: electoral authoritarianism; democracy backsliding; Indonesia presidential election; political ethics; regime manipulation

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I. INTRODUCTION

The victory of the presidential/vice-presidential ticket of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka (Prabowo-Gibran) in the 2024 presidential election indicates the presence of electoral authoritarianism in Indonesia. The couple managed to secure 58.6% of the votes, equivalent to 96 million voter ballots, thus surpassing other candidates, which only garnered 24.9% (Anies-Muhaimin) and 16.5% (Ganjar-Mahfud) of the votes.[1] The victory of the Prabowo-Gibran ticket has received a lot of attention because it took place in an atmosphere of unfair and insufficiently free elections, as the government intervened in the electoral process. The government's involvement in influencing the election process began to be evident from the presidential/vice-presidential nomination stage, when the Constitutional Court issued a ruling lowering the minimum age requirement for presidential and vice-presidential candidates, thus allowing Gibran, the son of President Jokowi, to run for vice president.[2] This phenomenon strengthens indications of electoral authoritarianism, where elections are procedurally conducted, but the practice is controlled by regime power to maintain political dominance. These electoral legal issues not only concern potential violations of the constitution and political ethics, but also lead to the decline of democracy through the strengthening of dynastic politics, the narrowing of opposition space, and the weakening of protections for civil liberties.

Studies on electoral authoritarianism in presidential elections in Indonesia have indeed attracted the interest of researchers. These various studies can be categorized into at least three groups. First, studies on electoral authoritarianism within the framework of political regulations of elections that aim to uphold the sovereignty of the people and examine various challenges.[3] Second, Indonesia's authoritarian innovations that undermine democratic quality in three areas, namely the narrowing of electoral competitiveness, the use of identity politics by political elites, and the government's response to the

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[1] Antara, "Hasil rekapitulasi suara: Prabowo-Gibran pemenang Pilpres 2024 - Infografik ANTARA News", online: *Antara News* <https://www.antaranews.com/infografik/4020384/hasil-rekapitulasi-suara-prabowo-gibran-pemenang-pilpres-2024>.

[2] Vitorio Mantalean & Icha Rastika, ""Karpet Merah" dari Sang Paman untuk Putra Mahkota Presiden" (17 October 2023), online: *KOMPAS.com* <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2023/10/17/07051601/karpet-merah-dari-sang-paman-untuk-putra-mahkota-presiden>.

[3] Herlambang P Wiratraman, *Pemilu dan Neo-Otoritarianisme* (Padang, 2019).

opposition.[4] Third, the efforts of activists who built an authoritarian populist narrative to win the 2019 presidential election.[5] Thus, various existing studies have emphasized three aspects of electoral authoritarianism in Indonesia, namely the framework of political law, authoritarian innovation in the conduct of elections, and the role of activists. So far, studies regarding authoritarianism in relation to the victory of Prabowo-Gibran in the 2024 presidential election have not received attention from researchers.

This study aims to address the shortcomings of previous studies in the discourse of electoral authoritarianism. The phenomenon of electoral authoritarianism has indeed become a form of dictatorship in the contemporary world. There are two questions to be answered, namely: (1) what is the form of electoral authoritarianism in the victory of Prabowo-Gibran in the 2024 presidential election; and (2) what are the causes of the ongoing practices of electoral authoritarianism in the 2024 presidential election and their impact on democracy? This research is based on the argument that electoral authoritarianism has occurred in the implementation of the 2024 Indonesian presidential election; it can even be described as an election that does not meet democratic standards. The 2024 presidential election was designed to favor certain candidates in order to protect the interests of political elites. The 2024 presidential election was indeed inclusive and competitive, but the use of regime power caused the election to fall into a pit of discrimination, violations of civil liberties, and repression of the opposition.

This research is expected to contribute to the discourse on the implementation of democracy in Indonesia through the results of the 2024 presidential election. Various studies indicate that the trend of democracy in Indonesia has fallen into a non-liberal democracy,[6] a return to authoritarianism,[7] dynastic politics, and even repressive pluralism.[8] The trend that initially affected single-

[4] Marcus Mietzner, "Authoritarian innovations in Indonesia: electoral narrowing, identity politics and executive illiberalism" (2020) 27:6 Democratization 1021–1036.
[5] Inaya Rakhmani & Muninggar Sri Saraswati, "Authoritarian Populism in Indonesia: The Role of the Political Campaign Industry in Engineering Consent and Coercion" (2021) 40:3 Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs 436–460.
[6] Vedi R Hadiz, "Indonesia's Year of Democratic Setbacks: Towards a New Phase of Deepening Illiberalism?" (2017) 53:3 Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies 261–278.
[7] Thomas P Power, "Jokowi's Authoritarian Turn and Indonesia's Democratic Decline" (2018) 54:3 Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies 307–338.
[8] Greg Fealy, "Jokowi in the Covid-19 Era: Repressive Pluralism, Dynasticism and the Overbearing State" (2020) 56:3 Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies 301–323.

party autocratic countries, such as Cuba, China, Laos, North Korea, Vietnam, Libya, Syria, Pakistan, Myanmar, Sudan, Arab countries, and several Sub-Saharan African nations, is now gradually entering various democratic countries.[9] In principle, the current state of democracy in Indonesia is characterized by the strengthening of authoritarian politics.[10] Thus, using the same framework as previous studies, this research aims to explain the continuity of democracy in Indonesia in relation to authoritarianism observed in the victory of the Prabowo-Gibran presidential and vice-presidential ticket in the 2024 election.

II. METHODS

This research aims to provide a descriptive analysis of the phenomenon of electoral authoritarianism in Indonesia during the 2024 presidential election, using the victory of Prabowo-Gibran as a case study. The selection of the Prabowo-Gibran candidacy in the 2024 election as the subject of research is based on two factors. First, the government's involvement in influencing election outcomes was evident even before the presidential election processes began, as it exerted influence on the Constitutional Court to decide on the legal review that allowed President Jokowi's biological child to run as vice president. Second, the government's involvement was also apparent in the steps taken to influence law enforcement through various law enforcement agencies to ensure that government policies could effectively influence election results. These considerations underpin the focus of this research, serving as the basis for examining the phenomenon of electoral authoritarianism in the victory of Prabowo-Gibran in the 2024 presidential election.

This research uses qualitative data collection methods. Data were obtained through various online news reports and reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that highlighted the existence of unfair and unfree electoral practices due to the control and manipulation of power by ruling authorities. Various reports from reputable national media outlets, such as Tempo, Kompas, and Jakarta Post indicate the involvement of the president,

[9] Andreas Schedler, "The Logic of Electoral Authoritarianism" in Andreas Schedler, ed, *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006) 1.
[10] Herlambang P Wiratraman, "Constitutional Struggles and the Court in Indonesia's Turn to Authoritarian Politics" (2022) 50:3 Federal Law Review 314–330.

ministers, regional heads, and law enforcement officials in securing the victory of the Prabowo-Gibran presidential candidate pair. Likewise, reports from non-governmental organizations, such as the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute (Fulcrum) and Perludem. News articles and NGO reports published during the period of October to April 2024 were tracked, reviewed, and analysed. This analysis resulted in three general themes related to government intervention in the Prabowo-Gibran victory, namely, news and reports on the cases, processes, and impacts of government intervention in Prabowo-Gibran's election campaign.

The data analysis in this study follows a three-stage process previously conducted by Fernando et al.[11] First, data reduction, which is the reorganization of data into a more systematic format, classified according to its characteristics, conditions, and implications of data trends. Second, data verification, which involves summarizing the systematically reduced data. Third, data description, which is the presentation of data in a table format containing verified online news text. Data interpretation was also carried out, as previously done by Fernando et al., which includes restating and testing the consistency of the existing data.[12] By using three stages of analysis followed by interpretation of the data, conclusions can be drawn regarding the forms, factors, and implications of electoral authoritarianism in the victory of Prabowo-Gibran in the 2024 presidential election.

III. DISCUSSION

A. Electoral Authoritarianism

Electoral authoritarianism has indeed become a new form of dictatorship in the contemporary world.[13] It lies in the conceptual space between non-electoral authoritarianism and actual democracy.[14] This term, according to Miller, refers to a condition where the conduct of elections takes place in an unfair and insufficiently free competition due to the control and manipulation of the

[11] Henky Fernando et al, "The de-existence of Islamic political parties in general elections: A case study of Indonesia as a Muslim-majority country" (2023) 9:1 Cogent Social Sciences 2225838.
[12] Gratianus Prikasetya Putra, Sulistyowati Irianto & E Fernando M Manullang, "Legal Pluralism in the Special District Province of Yogyakarta, Indonesia" (2023) 19:1 IJAPS 1–22.
[13] Matthijs Bogaards, "How to classify hybrid regimes? Defective democracy and electoral authoritarianism" (2009) 16:2 Democratization 399–423.
[14] Yonatan L Morse, "The Era of Electoral Authoritarianism" (2012) 64:1 World Politics 161–198.

ruling regime.[15] In electoral authoritarianism, according to Schedler, elections are still held regularly to choose the head of the executive and the national legislative council. However, the election violates the principles of liberal democracy regarding freedom and justice in a profound and systematic manner, so instead of being an instrument of democracy, the election becomes a means to legitimize an authoritarian government.[16] In electoral authoritarianism, the conduct of elections is merely ceremonial; opposition parties are allowed to recruit candidates, open offices, and run campaigns.[17] Through electoral authoritarianism, the incumbent has turned the electoral commission and the judiciary into part of their support system, restricted the opposition's access to the media, diverted public funds for partisan use, and, at times, committed electoral fraud.[18]

Authoritarian regimes conduct elections with various objectives. Miller explains two such objectives: to gain benefits from international institutions, and to anticipate the risks associated with manipulative elections by pre-emptively adopting competitive elections.[19] First, elections are expected to gain the sympathy of international institutions through increased aid, trade, and military alliances. Second, because manipulative elections are still seen as a threat, autocratic regimes adopt competitive elections. In this way, the regime is able to co-opt poor voters through clientelism and state assistance. Magaloni identifies four goals of electoral authoritarianism, namely, to establish a systematic method for distributing power among the ruling party's politicians, to disseminate public information about the regime's strength that will prevent potential divisions within the ruling party, to provide information about the regime's supporters and opponents, and to trap the opposition, so that they invest in existing autocratic institutions rather than challenging them through violent means.[20]

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[15] Michael K Miller, "The Strategic Origins of Electoral Authoritarianism" (2020) 50:1 British Journal of Political Science 17–44.

[16] Andreas Schedler, "The Politics of Uncertainty" in Andreas Schedler, ed, *The Politics of Uncertainty: Sustaining and Subverting Electoral Authoritarianism* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

[17] Steven Levitsky & Lucan A Way, "Elections Without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism" (2002) 13:2 Journal of Democracy 51–65.

[18] Berker Kavasoglu, "Opposition party organizational features, ideological orientations, and elite co-optation in electoral autocracies" (2022) 29:4 Democratization 634–654.

[19] Miller, *supra* note 15.

[20] Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics.

B. Prabowo-Gibran as President and Vice President

Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka (Prabowo-Gibran) emerged as a strong presidential/vice-presidential ticket for the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia. They were officially announced as winners by the General Election Commission (KPU) on March 20, 2024. According to the KPU, the pair successfully won in 34 out of 36 provinces.[21] This candidate ticket has sparked controversy because Gibran, who is the son of President Jokowi, was paired with Prabowo, who is the current Minister of Defense and has previously lost two presidential elections against Jokowi.[22] Another controversy revolves around the Constitutional Court ruling led by Gibran's uncle, Anwar Usman, which lowered the minimum age requirement for presidential and vice-presidential candidates to 35 years, thereby allowing Gibran to run for vice president.[23]

According to Muhtadi and Muslim, Prabowo's electoral strategy from the beginning has indeed relied on efforts to gain full support from President Jokowi.[24] The peak was his decision to choose Gibran as his vice-presidential running mate. This strategy had many electoral advantages because public support for Jokowi remained very high, around 75% in various surveys and even reaching 82% at one point.[25] Gibran's decision to become Prabowo's vice-presidential running mate also weakened the support base for the other presidential and vice-presidential candidates, namely Ganjar-Mahfud, especially among young voters and non-PDIP Jokowi supporters. Gibran was able to attract a large number of Jokowi's supporters amid the exodus of non-

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[21] CNN Indonesia, "Prabowo-Gibran Sapu Kemenangan Pilpres 2024 di 34 Provinsi" (20 March 2024), online: *nasional* <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20240320064858-617-1076426/prabowo-gibran-sapu-kemenangan-pilpres-2024-di-34-provinsi>.

[22] Irman G Lanti, "Indonesia's presidential debates: the score midway through" (2024) RSIS Commentaries 09–24.

[23] Mantalean & Rastika, *supra* note 2.

[24] Burhanuddin Muhtadi & Kennedy Muslim, "2023/95 "The Prabowo-Gibran Pairing: Wise or Foolish?" by Burhanuddin Muhtadi and Kennedy Muslim" (2023) 2023:No. 95, online: <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2023-95-the-prabowo-gibran-pairing-wise-or-foolish-by-burhanuddin-muhtadi-and-kennedy-muslim/>.

[25] Irfan Kamil & Krisiandi, "Survei Indikator: Kepuasan terhadap Kinerja Jokowi Capai 75,8 Persen, Turun Dibanding Juli" (12 November 2023), online: *KOMPAS.com* <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2023/11/12/17513401/survei-indikator-kepuasan-terhadap-kinerja-jokowi-capai-758-persen-turun>.

PDIP Jokowi backers.[26] On the other hand, the Anies-Muhaimin presidential and vice-presidential ticket benefited from Gibran being Prabowo's vice-presidential candidate, as some of Prabowo's supporters who did not support the Jokowi dynasty tended to shift towards the Anies-Muhaimin camp.[27]

C. 2024 Presidential Election

The Indonesian presidential election had been held on February 14, 2024. The presidential election had been contested by three candidate pairs: Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar (Anies-Muhaimin), Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka (Prabowo-Gibran), and Ganjar Pranowo and Mafud MD. (Ganjar-Mahfud). Of the three pairs, according to Simandjuntak, only Ganjar and Anies had a strong political spectrum.[28] Ganjar had been a member of the PDI-P for a long time, had had experience as the Governor of Central Java, and had possessed leadership based on a minority religion. Meanwhile, Anies, the former Governor of Jakarta from 2017 to 2022, had capitalized on the wave of Islamic mobilization while holding the position of Governor of DKI Jakarta, had represented conservative Islamic aspirations and had sided with the opposition. Meanwhile, Prabowo had had the most flexible political persona. In the 2019 presidential election, he had received support from conservative religious groups and had launched the most intense sectarian electoral politics in the history of post-reform Indonesia. After losing the 2019 presidential election, he even had gladly accepted President Jokowi's offer to become the Minister of Defense, thus had establishing a very good relationship with the president.

The 2024 presidential election was also a battleground for three kingmakers: chairperson of the PDI-P, Megawati Sukarno Putri, the chairperson of the NasDem Party, Surya Paloh, and President Jokowi.[29] These three figures

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[26] Cokorda Yudistira M Putra, ""Jokowi Effect" Picu Jagoan PDI-P Terpuruk di Kandang Banteng" (16 February 2024), online: *Kompas.id* <https://www.kompas.id/baca/nusantara/2024/02/16/usungan-pdi-p-terpuruk-di-kandang-banteng>.

[27] Dian Erika Nugraheny & Dani Prabowo, "Survei Indikator: Sebagian Suara Pendukung Prabowo Beralih ke Anies Usai Putusan MK" (26 October 2023), online: *KOMPAS.com* <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2023/10/26/18564271/survei-indikator-sebagian-suara-pendukung-prabowo-beralih-ke-anies-usai>.

[28] Deasy Simandjuntak, "Indonesia's Upcoming 2024 Presidential Election: Political Binarism and its Impact on Democracy" in Gabriel Facal, ed, *Current Electoral Processes in Southeast Asia Regional Learnings* Carnets de l'Irasec (Bangkok: Institut de recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est contemporaine, 2023) 69.

[29] Ade Rosman, "Pilpres 2024 Disebut Pertarungan 3 King Maker: Jokowi, Megawati, Paloh - Nasional Katadata.co.id" (2 December 2023), online: <https://katadata.co.id/berita/nasional/656b1dd30bb50/pilpres-2024-disebut-pertarungan-3-king-maker-jokowi-megawati-paloh>.

played a crucial role behind the nomination of the three presidential candidates in the 2024 presidential election. As the chairperson of the PDI-P, Megawati had the mission of winning the election for the third time and sending her party's cadres to occupy the presidential position, replacing the previous PDI-P member, Joko Widodo.[30] Similarly, Surya Paloh nominated Anies to attract more votes from the militant conservative Islamic group.[31] Meanwhile, Jokowi, with a public satisfaction rate of 76.8% along with support from the ruling party, also influenced the dynamics of the election, especially among his own supporters.[32] Jokowi aimed to instill his influence on the next president to continue several national strategic policies he had initiated in order to protect the interests of the political and economic elite.[33]

D. Presidential Intervention in the 2024 Presidential Election

One form of electoral authoritarianism evident in the victory of Prabowo-Gibran is the intervention of President Jokowi in the 2024 presidential election. In May 2023, President Jokowi invited several party chairpersons to the Presidential Palace to influence the direction of support for specific presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the election.[34] His position on the presidential election was reinforced at the end of May when he held a meeting with national media leaders and several podcasters at the Presidential Palace.[35] On that occasion, the president expressed that he would intervene or get involved in the 2024 election. There are several reasons that he mentioned for getting involved in the election. First, for the interests of the state. Second,

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[30] CNN, "Perintahkan Menangkan Pemilu, Megawati 3 Kali Minta Kader Disiplin", online: *nasional* <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20230421142219-32-940589/perintahkan-menangkan-pemilu-megawati-3-kali-minta-kader-disiplin>.

[31] Nurhadi Sucahyo, "Pencalonan Anies Baswedan: NasDem Untung atau Buntung?" (8 October 2022), online: *VOA Indonesia* <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/pencalonan-anies-baswedan-nasdem-untung-atau-buntung-/6781539.html>.

[32] Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Jokowi's High Approval Ratings Make Him Potential Kingmaker" (2023) 2023:38 ISEAS, online: <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2023-38-jokowis-high-approval-ratings-make-him-potential-kingmaker-by-burhanuddin-muhtadi/>.

[33] Ari Santoso Widodo & Rendro Dani, "When the President Endorses the Nation's Next Leader: Detecting the Concept of Power in Javanese Culture Through Presidential Communication" (2023) 6:1 Warta Ikatan Sarjana Komunikasi Indonesia 94–106.

[34] NIkolaus Harbowo & Cyprianus Anto Saptowalono, "Pertemuan Presiden Jokowi dengan Enam Ketum Parpol Diyakini Hasilkan Dua Kemungkinan" (2 May 2023), online: *Kompas.id* <https://www.kompas.id/baca/polhuk/2023/05/02/pertemuan-presiden-jokowi-dengan-enam-ketum-parpol-diyakini-bisa-hasilkan-dua-kemungkinan>.

[35] Marlinda Oktavia Erwanti, "Istana Ungkap Presiden Jokowi Tak Mau Ada Polarisasi di Pemilu 2024" (05 2023), online: *detiknews* <https://news.detik.com/pemilu/d-6746595/istana-ungkap-presiden-jokowi-tak-mau-ada-polarisasi-di-pemilu-2024>.

for the interests of a democratic election that is good and safe, without causing polarization in society. Third, to present national leaders who can oversee and continue strategic policies such as the development of the new capital city, downstreaming, and the transition to clean energy.

President Jokowi's bias was increasingly evident through the distribution of social assistance *(bansos)* to various regions wrapped in work visits. Among the several areas visited by President Jokowi to distribute social assistance were Serang, Labuan Bajo, Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), Pekalongan, Central Java, Banyuwangi, and East Java. In particular, President Jokowi visited Central Java three times between December 2023 and January 2024.[36] This sparked speculation that the president was trying to secure the candidacy of Prabowo-Gibran by cutting support for the PDI-P candidate pair, Ganjar-Mahfud. The strong support for the PDI-P in Central Java was evident in the 2019 election, where the PDI-P achieved the highest electability in the province with a total of 29.71% of the votes. Out of 35 regencies and cities in Central Java, the PDI-P controls 28 of them.

Table 1: President Jokowi's Interventions in the Presidential Campaign for Prabowo-Gibran

The President's Actions	Description	Source
Jokowi distributed social assistance ahead of the presidential election	Occurred in several areas: Serang, Labuan Bajo, NTT, Pekalongan, Central Java, Banyuwangi, and East Java.	https://fulcrum.sg/the-jokowi-factor-how-joko-widodo-helped-prabowo-to-win-indonesias-presidency/
Jokowi's stated that the president is allowed to campaign and take sides in the elections.	Occurred during the Akmil event in Magelang	https://perludem.org/2024/04/03/perludem-nyatakan-telah-terjadi-malapraktik-di-pemilu-2024-regulasi-diubah-sesuai-kepentingan/

[36] Nina Susilo et al, "Berkali-kali Berkunjung ke Jateng, Jokowi Memotong Basis Ganjar-Mahfud?" (23 January 2024), online: *Kompas.id* <https://www.kompas.id/baca/polhuk/2024/01/22/berkali-kali-berkunjung-ke-jateng-jokowi-gembosi-kandang-banteng>.

Jokowi met with the chairmen of various political parties (PSI, Demokrat, PAN, Golkar, Gerindra)	Discussed the winning strategy for Prabowo-Gibran	https://mediaindonesia.com/politik-dan-hukum/642500/bertemu-3-pimpinan-partai-kim-netralitas-presiden-kembali-dipertanyakan

Source: Processed from various NGO's reports

The data in Table 1 maps three patterns of intervention that demonstrate President Jokowi's bias in the presidential election towards the Prabowo-Gibran candidacy. First is through policy, as evidenced by the president's policy of distributing social assistance to communities in several regions. Central Java became the most frequently visited region by the president in an effort to boost the vote count for Prabowo-Gibran.[37] Second is through statements, which was evident in President Jokowi's statement affirming that a president is allowed to campaign and support certain candidates in the presidential election. Third is through political actions, as demonstrated by President Jokowi's meetings with the supporting parties of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates on various occasions to discuss winning strategies for Prabowo and Gibran.

All of the data in Table 1 shows that there were efforts to take advantage of legal loopholes in the Election Law in the implementation of the 2024 presidential election campaign. In particular, the law does not regulate the prohibition of presidential involvement in the campaign, especially since President Jokowi was not a candidate in the 2024 presidential election. In fact, Article 304 of the Election Law gives the president the right to carry out a campaign in his personal capacity as a citizen, not his position as president. However, his involvement through a number of policies, actions, and statements influenced voters in ways that may be qualified as abuse of power, according to its context and intensity. This was also recognized by Constitutional Court Judge Saldi Isra, who, in the Constitutional Court decision regarding the dispute over the results of the 2024 presidential

[37] Theofilus Ifan Sucipto, "Jokowi Sering Bagi Bansos di Jateng, Ini Kata Muhadjir Effendy" (5 April 2024), online: <https://mediaindonesia.com/politik-dan-hukum/663590/jokowi-sering-bagi-bansos-di-jateng-ini-kata-muhadjir-effendy>.

election, explained that the president's partisanship in the 2024 presidential election campaign occurred, among other ways, because of a legal loophole in the electoral rules that the president had taken advantage of.

From the point of view of political ethics, President Jokowi's involvement in any form that gives the impression of favoritism can also be considered damaging to a healthy democratic climate. This is contrary to the principle of neutrality of the executive in elections as regulated in several regulations, such as the Election Law. The ASN (State Civil Servant) Law, and Bawaslu Regulations regarding technical guidelines for the neutrality of public officials during the campaign period, including supervision of the misuse of state facilities. Another damage caused is also the principle of justice and equality in political contestation, which refers to the principle that all election participants have the same rights and opportunities to compete fairly. This principle in principle aims to ensure that elections take place fairly, equally, and free from discrimination or structural favoritism. As a result, when public officials violate this principle by using their positions, state facilities, and making policies that support one candidate pair, justice is disrupted and equality is violated because one party gets an unfair advantage. The impact can lead to the legitimacy of the election results being questioned and a decline in public confidence in democracy.

E. Involvement of Government Officials in the Presidential Campaign

Another form of electoral authoritarianism in the 2024 presidential election is the involvement of the government apparatus to support the presidential and vice-presidential candidates, Prabowo and Gibran. Various elements of the government apparatus consist of active ministers and regional heads. Ministers and regional officials are involved in the campaigns of presidential and vice-presidential candidates, whether as campaign leaders, volunteers, or by attending campaign events of presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Table 2 below details the forms of involvement by various ministers and regional heads in the 2024 presidential campaign to support the Prabowo-Gibran candidacy.

Table 2: Involvement of Ministers and Regional Heads in the Prabowo-Gibran Campaign in the 2024 Presidential Election

Name of the Minister	Position	Involvement in the Campaign
Airlangga Hartarto	Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs	Chairman of the TKN Steering Committee
Zulkifli Hasan	Minister of Trade	Vice Chairman of the TKN Steering Committee
Bahlil Lahadalia	Minister of Investment	Chairman of the Advisory Board of the National Young Entrepreneurs Volunteers supporting Prabowo-Gibran
Arie Setiadi	Minister of Communication and Information	Present at the grand campaign of Prabowo-Gibran
Erick Thohir	Minister of State-Owned Enterprises	Present at the vice-presidential candidate debate with the Prabowo-Gibran campaign team
Ario Bimo Nandito Aritedjo	Minister of Youth and Sports	Present at the grand campaign of Prabowo-Gibran and the vice presidential candidate debate
Agus Gumiwang Kartasasmita	Minister of Industry	Founder of the Prabowo-Gibran Voting Post (Pagi)
Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan	Coordinating Minister for Maritime and Investment	Provided information on various news media and social media platforms that support Prabowo-Gibran
Yaqut Cholil Qoumas	Minister of Religious Affairs	Made a statement ready to provide an additional 4% of votes and mobilize religious counselors to approach the community in support of Prabowo-Gibran
Raja Juli Antoni	Deputy Minister of the National Land Agency (ATR/BPN)	Shared PTSL and waqf certifications with the community by providing support "Congratulations Prabowo-Gibran"

Zahir	Batu Bara Regency Office	Directed to allocate village funds as campaign funds for Prabowo-Gibran
Bobby Nasution	Mayor of Medan	Uploaded a TikTok video with his wife wearing blue outfits and doing a "gemoy" dance
Ahmad Muhdlor	Sidoarjo Regent	Declared support for Prabowo-Gibran and gave a speech at the Nderek Kiai Prabowo-Gibran Declaration event

Source: Processed from various online news sources

Based on the data in Table 2, the involvement of government officials, both ministers and regional heads, in the winning campaign of Prabowo-Gibran shows several patterns. First, the government apparatus acted as the official campaign team for Prabowo and Gibran. This pattern is evident in the presence of ministers involved in the campaign team, such as the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs and the Minister of Trade. The two are recorded as holding the positions of Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Advisory Council in the National Campaign Team (TKN) of Prabowo-Gibran. Secondly, members of the government apparatus volunteered for presidential candidates. In this pattern, the involvement of ministers is through forming volunteer teams or holding specific positions within them. This was done by Bahlil Lahadalia, who serves as the Chairman of the Advisory Board of the National Young Entrepreneurs Volunteers, and Agus Gumiwang, who established the Prabowo-Gibran Voter Post (Pagi). Third, the government apparatus was involved beyond the campaign team in non-formal ways. These ministers were generally involved by attending several campaign activities, as done by the Minister of Communication and Information, the Minister of State-Owned Enterprises, the Minister of Youth and Sports, the Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment, the Minister of Religious Affairs, and the Deputy Minister of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning/National Land Agency (ATR/BPN). This pattern was also carried out by regional heads who were not directly involved in the campaign team, but were actively campaigning for the Prabowo-Gibran presidential ticket. In addition to direct campaigning, this pattern was also carried out by directing structural support, as demonstrated by the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Head of the Batu Bara District in North Sumatra, and by producing social

media content that showed support for the presidential candidate pair, as demonstrated by the Mayor of Medan, Bobby Nasution.

The overall data in Table 2 shows the involvement of the state apparatus, both at the national and regional levels, who were directed to support the Prabowo-Gibran campaign. In Jun's view, this strategy aimed to dismantle the support base for the Ganjar-Mahfud pair, whereas Anies-Muhaimin supporters had a strong anti-Jokowi mindset, making it difficult to reduce their numbers.[38] Ganjar-Mahfud's supporters, especially PDI-P members, overlap with Jokowi's supporters, hence the direction of the state apparatus, both at the central and regional levels, in order to reassure voters, especially villagers, that support for their livelihoods will continue if Prabowo is elected as Jokowi's successor.

The police also played a central role by visiting village heads in various places and issuing village financial reports, implying possible accounting irregularities and proposing corruption investigations. They then whispered that if the election was settled in the first round, then the investigation would be stopped, and offered cooperation to achieve more than 50% of the vote for Prabowo. There are many reports of this kind of manipulation. The combination of reward and punishment created a kind of effect that served to boost support for Prabowo before the election, which resulted in him receiving 58% of the votes on polling day.

F. Repression of Government Apparatus Against Opposing Presidential Candidates

Another form of electoral authoritarianism that occurred was the repressive actions of the government apparatus at the regional level against other presidential candidate pairs, namely Anies-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfud. Anies and Muhaimin were supported by Nasdem, PKB, and PKS, while Ganjar and Mahfud were backed by PDI-P and PPP. The most frequent form of repression was experienced by Anies-Muhaimin, where in their campaign, they offered ideas for change regarding various government policies that have been in place. Meanwhile, Ganjar-Mahfud did not seem to face similar issues, except for in the grand campaign, which is the final campaign held at the GBK

[38] Honna Jun, "2024 Indonesian Presidential Election: How Prabowo Won" (2024) 31:2 Asia-Pacific Review 105–116.

Main Stadium.[39] During the campaign event, the campaign team faced difficulties in renting a bus to transport the supporters. There are strong suspicions that certain individuals obstructed the departure of Ganjar-Mahfud supporters. Various types of pressures during the 2024 presidential campaign are outlined in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Forms of Repression during the 2024 Presidential Election Campaign

Presidential/VP Candidates	Location	Types of Pressure
Anies-Muhaimin	Lombok	Cancellation of the permit by the cultural park management
Anies-Muhaimin	Bandung	Cancellation of the permit by the Department of Tourism and Culture
Anies-Muhaimin	Pasuruan	Cancellation of the venue permit by the local village government
Anies-Muhaimin	Jakarta	Cancellation of bus bookings for the grand campaign
Anies-Muhaimin	Yogyakarta	Cancellation of the permit by the management of the Diponegoro Sasana Wiratma Museum
Anies-Muhaimin	Aceh	Cancellation of the permit for the use of the Sultanah Safiatuddin Queen's Park
Anies-Muhaimin	Bekasi	Cancellation of the permit for the use of the Patriot Candrabana Stadium

Source: Processed from various online news sources

The data in Table 3 shows that various forms of repression experienced by presidential and vice-presidential candidates during the 2024 presidential campaign can be categorized into several patterns. First is the type of pressure, in which the data shows that the type of pressure experienced by Anies-Muhaimin is in the form of unilateral cancellation of permits by the management of the campaign venue. As a result, their campaign had to be moved to a completely unplanned location. Second is the location or venue

[39] Surya Dua Artha Simanjuntak, "Sulit Dapat Bus Kampanye, TPN Ganjar-Mahfud Duga Ada Upaya Penghalangan" (30 January 2024), online: *Bisnis.com* <https://kabar24.bisnis.com/read/20240130/15/1736850/sulit-dapat-bus-kampanye-tpn-ganjar-mahfud-duga-ada-upaya-penghalangan>.

where the campaign pressure took place. Various locations show that the facilities used are state-owned, such as museums, parks, and stadiums. Third is the perpetrator of the pressure. The parties exerting pressure for the cancellation of the permits were government officials, whether at the provincial, district, or village level. In fact, in the case of Jakarta, private parties also became actors as they faced pressure to cancel the rental of transportation buses that were to be used for the campaign.[40]

The phenomenon of electoral authoritarianism in the victory of Prabowo-Gibran in the 2024 presidential election can be observed in three important findings in this study. First, the president intervened in the 2024 presidential election by indirectly directing support to Prabowo-Gibran through policies, statements, and political actions. Second, government officials, namely ministers and regional heads, were involved as campaign teams and supporters, including as part of the official campaign team for Prabowo-Gibran, volunteers, or informal campaign teams. Third, repression by government officials against rival presidential candidates was carried out through various forms of pressure in different locations by actors affiliated with the ruling regime. In other words, these various findings indicate that authoritarianism occurred in the effort to elect Prabowo-Gibran in the 2024 presidential election.

The findings of this study indicate that electoral authoritarianism in the government's efforts to support the victory of Prabowo-Gibran occurred due to several factors. First, legal loopholes in election regulations were utilized. This action was taken by President Jokowi to indirectly campaign for the Prabowo-Gibran presidential candidacy. A president can exercise their political rights as long as they do not violate the law, use state facilities, or engage in matters related to state finances. In the election regulations, there is indeed no prohibition for the president to campaign. However, as the head of state, the president is also bound by the ethics of governance to uphold the principle of fair elections, which means being neutral and not favoring any of

[40] Reyhan Fernanda Fajarihza, "Bus Kampanye Akbar Anies-Muhaimin Dibatalkan Sepihak, Timnas Duga Ada Tekanan ke Vendor" (27 January 2024), online: *Bisnis.com* <https://kabar24.bisnis.com/read/20240127/15/1735963/bus-kampanye-akbar-anies-muhaimin-dibatalkan-sepihak-timnas-duga-ada-tekanan-ke-vendor>.

the election participants.[41] In Fahmi's view, the principle of electoral justice represents the values of social justice in Pancasila, where all citizens must be guaranteed equality of their rights, especially the right to vote as their political right.[42] Violations of ethics do not always result in legal consequences, but theoretically, the consequences that arise are more severe because ethics holds a position above the law.[43]

The effort to exploit legal loopholes in the Election Law was acknowledged by Constitutional Court Judge Saldi Isra. Through the Constitutional Court's ruling regarding the dispute over the results of the 2024 presidential election, Saldi explained that the president's bias in the 2024 presidential campaign occurred, among other reasons, due to the legal loopholes in the election regulations (Election Law) that the president has the opportunity to take advantage of. Although President Jokowi is not a candidate in the 2024 presidential election, he has the opportunity to campaign in order to influence voters to cast their votes for the candidates he supports. As a result, election candidates are not playing on the same field of contestation. In other words, the president's bias, even if it appears indirectly towards one of the election candidates, has caused an inequality among candidates in the contest for the people's votes. One way to realize fairness in elections is to ensure that all election candidates are in an equal position.

Secondly, the strengthening of President Jokowi's power to influence and utilize the state apparatus was evident through the involvement of ministers and regional heads. In this regard, according to Power, one form of strengthening Jokowi's power was the partisan manipulation of key state institutions, including law enforcement and electoral bodies, as well as security agencies, to weaken and suppress the opposition in a democratic manner.[44] Meanwhile, according to Mujani and Liddle, the strengthening of Jokowi's power has sidelined democracy with the threat to free elections.[45] His commitment to transparent and accountable governance, as well as the anti-

[41] J O Olatoke, D A Ariyoosu & M T Adekilekun, "Examining the Concept of Electoral Justice: Challenges and the Rule of the Judiciary" in *Elect Process Law Justice* (India: Akinik Publication, 2020); Alexey Szydlowski, "The Brasilian Electoral Justice" (2021) 4 LC 77–82.
[42] Khairul Fahmi, "Menelusuri Konsep Keadilan Pemilihan Umum Menurut UUD 1945" (2016) 4:2 Jurnal Cita Hukum 167–186.
[43] John Rohr, *Ethics for Bureaucrats: An Essay on Law and Values*, second ed (Routledge, 2017).
[44] Power, *supra* note 7.
[45] Saiful Mujani & R William Liddle, "Indonesia: Jokowi Sidelines Democracy" (2021) 32:4 Journal of Democracy 72–86.

corruption agenda, has been very questionable. As a result, democracy has become unbalanced, limiting democratic choices and reducing government accountability. In the 2024 presidential campaign, Jokowi's bias and intervention aimed to strengthen coalition networks to safeguard the economic and political interests of the oligarchs.[46] This is because of Jokowi's prioritization of economic development over democracy. This is evidenced by the formation of a coalition supporting Prabowo-Gibran to perpetuate the regime's policies that align with the interests of political and economic elites.

Third, the pragmatism of political actors drove them to increase the vote share for their political parties and to advance their political careers. This encouraged politicians to weaponize the law, that is, to mobilize legal frameworks with bad intentions to gain power and enhance one's position in the political competition in the short term.[47] Political actors regularly work hard to disguise their motives in taking certain actions and are reluctant to appear power-hungry. In this situation, it is difficult to reveal direct evidence of the intent of "the weapon maker." For politicians who use the law as a weapon, they may not have authoritarian ambitions because they are ideologically committed to democracy or are aware of the limitations of power. Thus, the actors involved in the creation of legalistic weapons only have short-term and limited goals to misuse the law for immediate political gain. This is what distinguishes between the legalism that is presented and autocratic legalism, as explained by Schepple and Corrales.[48]

Election authoritarianism, as demonstrated by the three factors above, has created an environment where elections are no longer a tool for democratically selecting leaders, but have become an instrument for the government to maintain its power. This condition makes the implementation of elections in Indonesia increasingly deviate from the principle of fairness in elections. As a result, the implementation of the elections is no longer within a level playing field. The party that receives support from the ruling regime has unlimited access to resources; on the other hand, those who do not receive support must struggle to compete, including fighting against the regime's intervention in

[46] Asrinaldi & Mohammad Agus Yusoff, "Power consolidation and its impact on the decline of democracy in Indonesia under President Jokowi" (2023) 9:1 Cogent Social Sciences 2232579.
[47] Maria Popova & Christine Rothmayr Allison, "Politicization of courts in European democracies" in *Research Handbook on Law and Political Systems* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023) 169.
[48] Javier Corrales, "The Authoritarian Resurgence: Autocratic Legalism in Venezuela" (2015) 26:2 Journal of Democracy 37–51.

elections. According to Levitsky & Way, this is indeed a characteristic of competitive authoritarian regimes that seek to ensure that the competitive nature does not manifest in elections.[49] In many competitive authoritarian regimes, democratic competition is not undermined by fraud and repression, but rather by unequal access to resources, media, and state institutions. Through this method, according to Morse, the ruling regime seeks to demonstrate its capacity to dictate social choices and generate a large number of votes consistently.[50]

From a legal perspective, electoral authoritarianism has weakened the rule of law, in that the actions of the ruling regime may not have directly violated positive law, either statutes or other legal rules, but they have subverted the spirit of the law, particularly the constitutional principles of free, fair, and impartial elections. Similarly, the intervention of the president and government apparatus in elections, although it can be said that there is no legal prohibition, has violated the ethical norms of government neutrality, which is the foundational practice in democracy. In Dworkin's view, the law is not only an interpretation of technical rules, but also based on principles of justice, fairness, and equality.[51] Thus, while the actions of the president and state apparatus complied with applicable electoral laws, they violated the constitutional ethic of equal political competition, reinforcing the idea that ethics, in government, can be above positive law.

The use of legal loopholes in the electoral rules demonstrated in this study also shows that the government regime has used legal instruments and constitutional mechanisms to consolidate power while maintaining legality. This is also known as the abuse of legal formalism, where the law is followed to subvert its intent. In such cases, legality becomes a pretense for authoritarian consolidation where the rule of law is weaponized not to protect democratic norms, but to legitimize actions that erode them. By doing so, the regime cloaks its undemocratic actions in the language of law and procedure, thereby neutralizing public criticsm. This form of legal manipulation is particularly dangerous in electoral contexts, as its distorts the playing field, privileges incumbents, and undermines the core democratic value of fair and equal

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[49] Steven Levitsky & Lucan A Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) Problems of International Politics.
[50] Morse, *supra* note 14.
[51] Ronald M Dworkin, "Social Rules and Legal Theory" (1972) 81:5 The Yale Law Journal 855–890.

competition. Ultimately, while the actions may appear lawful on paper, they represent a profound betrayel of constitusional democracy and the public trus it is meant to serve.[52]

This study has contributed to explaining the current state of democracy in Indonesia, which is currently in decline (i.e., democracy backsliding). There are two characteristics that indicate this condition, as described by Bermeo, namely, the increasing power of the executive (executive aggrandizement) and the strategic manipulation of elections.[53] According to Bermeo, these two characteristics are developments from the decline of classical democracy in the form of a coup. The increasing power of the executive is marked by the actions of that institution weakening oversight of other executive powers and implementing a series of institutional changes that hinder the strength of the opposition against executive preferences. Meanwhile, manipulating elections is demonstrated through a series of actions to tilt the electoral game in favor of the incumbent, including using government funds for the incumbent's campaign, sidelining opposition candidates from the ballot, and changing election rules to benefit the incumbent, all carried out in such a way that the elections do not appear fraudulent.

Various findings in this research indicate that the election in Indonesia has reflected the character of competitive authoritarianism, where the electoral arena has become the most important contestation space for the ruling regime to perpetuate its power. Competitive authoritarianism, as explained by Levitsky & Way, is marked by the formal conduct of elections, but the process is manipulated by the incumbents.[54] As a result, instead of producing leaders who bring about the welfare of the people, elections have become a key element in legitimizing the power of political elites.[55] In the 2024 presidential election, this condition was evident in the efforts of those in power to favor certain presidential candidates in order to maintain their political and economic interests. This is considered very dangerous for Indonesian democracy, which has been in place for two decades, because democratic norms and laws that are very flexible are not enforced consistently. Moreover,

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[52] Levitsky & Way, *supra* note 49.
[53] Nancy Bermeo, "On Democratic Backsliding" (2016) 27:1 Journal of Democracy 5–19.
[54] Levitsky & Way, "Elections Without Democracy", *supra* note 17.
[55] Mietzner, "Authoritarian innovations in Indonesia", *supra* note 4.

this practice is also supported by authorities who act coercively and are subordinate to those in executive positions.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study identifies electoral authoritarianism in Prabowo-Gibran's 2024 presidential victory through three key findings: presidential intervention in favor of their campaign, active involvement of government officials as supporters or campaigners, and repression against rival candidates by state-affiliated actors. These findings collectively indicate authoritarian practices were employed to secure their electoral win.

This electoral authoritarianism occurred due to the utilization of legal loopholes in electoral regulations, the enforcement of executive power that ignored the principles of neutrality and fairness in elections, and the pragmatism of political elites who abused the law for short-term interests. While these actions may not have explicitly violated the law, ethically and principally, they have undermined the spirit of democracy and the constitution. This condition causes elections to no longer be a democratic means of electing leaders, but rather a tool for the ruling regime to maintain power through legal but manipulative means. This practice aligns with the characteristics of competitive authoritarian regimes, where political competition appears to be taking place, but is actually controlled to give an advantage to the ruling party. Overall, this study highlights democracy backsliding in Indonesia, particularly through two main features: executive aggrandizement and strategic manipulation of elections. This poses a serious threat to the viability of the democracy that has been built over the past two decades in Indonesia.

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