



The Hegemony of Capitalism in the 2024 Indonesia General Election

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ABSTRACT

This article explains how the operation of hegemonic power of capitalism works in the 2024 election in Indonesia, both in the presidential and legislative elections. The hegemonic power refers to the third-dimensional power introduced by Lukes, namely power in the ideological realm. This article argues that capitalism hegemony “grasps” all dominant narratives that emerged during the 2024 elections, both from election participants and civil societies. By using the concept of ideological cynicism introduced by Žižek, this article explains that capitalism in the ideological realm can be so effective because it appears not as an ideology, but as a kind of truth believed by everyone.

Keywords: power, capitalism hegemony, ideological cynicism, 2024 general election

ABSTRAK

Tulisan ini menjelaskan bagaimana operasi kekuasaan hegemonik kapitalisme bekerja dalam kontestasi elektoral di Indonesia tahun 2024, baik dalam pemilihan presiden maupun pemilihan legislatif. Kekuasaan hegemonik yang dimaksud merujuk pada kekuasaan dimensi ketiga yang dikenalkan oleh Lukes, yaitu kekuasaan di ranah ideologis. Tulisan ini berargumen bahwa hegemoni kapitalisme “menyengkram” seluruh narasi dominan yang muncul selama pemilu 2024, baik dari peserta pemilu maupun dari kelompok masyarakat sipil. Dengan menggunakan konsep *ideological cynicism* yang dikenalkan oleh Žižek, tulisan ini menjelaskan bahwa kapitalisme di ranah ideologis ini bisa begitu berkuasa, karena ia tampil bukan sebagai ideologi tetapi menjadi semacam kebenaran yang dipercayai oleh semua orang.

Kata kunci: kekuasaan, hegemoni kapitalisme, sinisme ideologi, pemilihan umum tahun 2024



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1. Introduction

This paper explains how the hegemonic power operations of capitalism work in the electoral contest in Indonesia in 2024, both in the presidential and legislative elections. This hegemony of capitalism can be seen through the proposed programmes and policies of candidates, both presidential candidates and political parties, the debates that arise in the public space during campaigns, the dominant narratives that emerge from civil and intellectual groups to the election results. Furthermore, this paper also elaborates on why capitalism has become so hegemonic and how it impacts a wide range of issues such as poverty, environmental damage, inequality, human rights, and so on.

The hegemonic power referred to in this writing refers to the three-dimensional power developed by Lukes (Lukes, 1974). In his seminal work, Lukes classified three dimensions that become the focus when observing power. These three dimensions are decision-making dimension, non-decision-making dimension,

and ideological dimension. In the first dimension, the analysis is usually directed at the operations of power at the moment of decision-making. Behavioral and institutional approaches typically fall into this category. While in the second dimension, the analysis is focused on power relations between the decision-making and non-decision-making realms. Here, there is a non-decision-making realm whose actions are not concrete but have a significant influence on the decision-making realm. Sometimes studies with a structuralist approach discuss this second dimension. As for the third dimension, there are ideological aspects at the structural level that have the ability to determine the other two realms.

Studies that examine power dynamics in elections have primarily concentrated on the first and second dimensions, which involve decision-making and non-decision-making realms. Research focusing on the first dimension can be found in the works of Baker (Baker, 2023) examining the deterioration of competition quality leading up to the 2024 elections due to policies that criminalize political adversaries, the halt in anti-corruption efforts, reduced judicial activism, political centralization, and diminishing public protests or publications, or in the Mietzner & Honna (Mietzner & Honna, 2023) analyzing the failure of the president to extend the term of office or postpone elections due to rejection from the elite or political parties. Studies focusing on the second dimension, for example, are found in the works of (Dewi et al., 2023) analyzing the role of non-governmental organizations in promoting the candidacy of female legislative members in the 2024 elections and the work of (Mar'iyah, 2023) arguing that alliance between big corporation and the president in producing controversial policies such as the Capital City of Nusantara Law, Job Creation Law, and Health Omnibus Law.

This paper will enrich the studies of power operating in elections using the third dimension of Lukes' power, the ideological realm. Unlike the first and second dimensions of power which are manifest and empirically observable, the realm of ideology is latent and what can be observed is its traces and consequences. The third dimension of power assumes that any normality that occurs in a political phenomenon is not something natural or given, but a result of the operation of a certain power. The dominant ideology referred to in this article is capitalism. This paper argues that the 2024 elections in Indonesia show that the hegemonic power of capitalism is "gripping" the whole narrative that is emerging.

2. Literature Review

When did capitalism become hegemonic as it is today? In 1989, Fukuyama declared the "end of history" to signify the collapse of the Soviet Union. The argument of this "end of history" thesis is that the world has embraced liberalism as an ideology, after alternative ideologies like socialism-communism collapsed following the Soviet Union's bankruptcy and fascism which was 'defeated' in World War II. For Fukuyama, liberalism, which is a combination of the capitalist economic system and the democratic political system, is a system that humanity ultimately accepted as the one most likely to bring progress (Fukuyama, 1989). In 1991, American President George Bush Sr introduced the idea of a 'new world order' as the era post-Cold War following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In a speech, Bush revealed that the new world order is "new ways of working with other nations to deter aggression and to achieve stability, to achieve

prosperity and, above all, to achieve peace" (Oberdorfer, 1991). Fukuyama, Bush, and many other scholars or politicians at that time believed that there was no longer an ideological contestation to determine the best political regime.

How does capitalism become hegemonic? To answer this, we can quote Marx's views on ideology. According to him, ideology is related to the relationship between knowledge and reality. If we view capitalism as an ideology, we must see it supported by a kind of false consciousness towards reality, so what appears is an illusion. For example, when labors work for eight hours a day, the false consciousness at play interprets it as a noble duty to earn a living, dedicate knowledge, and so forth. This false consciousness is merely a facade to cover up that exploitation occurs in the working process, between the labors and the employer or bourgeois and proletarian (Eyerman, 1981). This idea then inspired Gramsci, who argued that capitalism can last a long time because our knowledge is delusional or manipulated (Femia, 1987). In short, capitalism can become hegemonic because it presents itself as an ideology that manipulates us.

Nevertheless, Žižek rejects the view of manipulating ideologies. According to him, we currently live in the era of late capitalism or post-modern consumerism, where people are aware that capitalism is in operation, but do not feel manipulated by it. Žižek terms the situation in the early days of capitalism as "they do not know it, but they are doing it," while in the present era, it becomes "they do know, but still they do it." Žižek believes that we all realize how much capitalism causes many problems, but we behave cynically or pretend not to know. Žižek introduces the concept of *ideological cynicism* to describe this attitude. This concept of *ideological cynicism* illustrates a situation where manipulation in the era of capitalism still exists but takes a different form, so it does not make humans feel manipulated. Žižek argues that capitalism does not survive by creating false consciousness but false belief. In this case, capitalism does not appear as an ideology but as truth (Žižek, 2008). Therefore, we are witnessing the people who behave as capitalists despite knowing that capitalism is oppressive, because they believe in this capitalism, and do not imagine alternatives beyond it. The belief in capitalism is what keeps capitalism hegemonically in power. This is what makes Žižek think that "it is easier to imagine the end of the world, than the end of the capitalism".

3. Method

This article is a result of qualitative research. As qualitative research, this writing is conducted to discover something, not to test variables. The aspect to be discovered is how capitalism becomes a hegemonic power that plays a role during the 2024 election process. This research is supported by the method of collecting secondary data in the form of literature studies. The secondary data in question comes from articles in journals, books, news in mass media, and online media related to the 2024 Indonesia general election.

4. Result and Discussion

Elections are the minimum indicator in a democratic regime. Through elections, what Mosca and Pareto called elite circulation is possible. In the election process, there is a contestation between candidates

regarding offers of programs to prosper the voters. These offers are used to convince voters to cast their votes on election day. Typically, candidates will inventory all the problems faced by the citizens and devise strategies to address all these problems if elected. The problems and strategies proposed by the candidates are usually represented through the vision and mission they uphold. In the 2024 presidential election, the vision and mission of the three competing candidate pairs can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Vision and Mission of the Candidate Pair for President and Vice President in the Indonesian Presidential Election of 2024

	Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar	Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka	Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD
Vission	Indonesia Fair Prosperous for All Ensure the availability of basic needs and low cost of living through food self-sufficiency, energy security, and water sovereignty. Alleviate poverty by expanding business opportunities and creating jobs, realizing fair wages, ensuring economic progress based on independence and equity, and supporting Indonesian corporations to succeed in their own country and grow in the global arena. Realizing sustainable ecological justice for future generations	Together Indonesia Goes Forward Towards a Golden Indonesia 2045 Strengthening the ideology of Pancasila, democracy, and human rights Strengthening the national security defense system and encouraging national independence through self-sufficiency in food, energy, water, sharia economy, digital economy, green economy, and blue economy. Continue infrastructure development and increase quality employment, encourage entrepreneurship, develop creative industries and develop agro-maritime industries in production centers through the active role of cooperatives.	Moving Fast Toward Indonesia Excellence Healthy, educated and prosperous Indonesians Indonesia excels in innovation and technology A resilient and self-sufficient economy
Mission	Building cities and villages based on human, justice, and mutually advancing areas Building regional-based cities and villages that are humane, equitable, and mutually advancing Realizing a prosperous and happy Indonesian family as the root of the nation's strength Strengthen the country's defense and security system, and enhance Indonesia's role and leadership in the global arena to realize national interests and world peace. Restoring the quality of democracy, upholding the law and human rights, eradicating corruption without discrimination, and organizing a government that is in favor of the people.	Strengthening the development of human resources, science, technology, education, health, sports achievements, gender equality, as well as strengthening the role of women, youth (millennial generation and generation Z), and people with disabilities. Continuing downstream and developing natural resource-based industries to increase domestic added value Building from villages and from below for economic growth, economic equity, and poverty eradication Strengthen political, legal, and bureaucratic reforms, and strengthen the prevention and eradication of corruption, drugs, gambling, and smuggling. Strengthening harmonious life with the environment, nature and culture, as well as increasing tolerance between religious communities to achieve a just and prosperous society.	The elimination of poverty and regional inequality from its roots A digital ecosystem that prioritizes fast and affordable internet access Economic development that takes into account environmental sustainability Democracy safeguarded through corruption eradication and inclusive governance based on the rule of law Indonesia is a respected nation in the international arena, as well as a resilient and modern defense

In the visions and missions of the three pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates above, poverty alleviation is one of the missions listed. In the second mission of the Anies-Muhaimin pair, it is stated that they want to "alleviate poverty by expanding business opportunities and creating jobs", in the sixth mission of Prabowo-Gibran it is stated that they want to "build from the village and from below for poverty eradication", and the fourth mission of Ganjar-Mahfud sounds "the disappearance of poverty and inequality between regions from its roots". Elaboration on the issue of poverty can be observed in the fifth

debate that took place on February 4, 2024. In the debate, each presidential candidate offered similar priority programs to alleviate poverty, namely the expansion of social security recipients such as the Family Hope Programme (*Program Keluarga Harapan*). Each candidate also offered specific programs, for instance, the Anies-Muhaimin candidate offered the development of a food-bank ecosystem, the Prabowo-Gibran candidate offered the provision of social care services, and the Ganjar-Mahfud candidate offered a one poor family, one university graduate program (Sujoko, 2024).

The next issue addressed by the three candidates in their missions is environmental issues. The third mission of the Anies-Muhaimin candidate pair describes "realizing sustainable ecological justice", the eighth mission of Prabowo-Gibran includes "harmonious life alignment with the environment", and the sixth mission of Ganjar-Mahfud mentions "economic development that pays attention to environmental sustainability". Elaboration on environmental issues can be seen in the vice presidential candidate debate held on January 21, 2024. Muhaimin mentioned that his camp offers the promotion of new and renewable energy as an effort to overcome the climate crisis. Gibran offered a plan for the continuation and expansion of downstream programs in various sectors ranging from mining, agriculture, maritime and digital. The offer is based on Indonesia's abundant reserves of nickel, tin, and new and renewable energy. Meanwhile, Mahfud presented a policy formulation plan based on four benchmarks of consideration for environmental sustainability, namely utilization, equity, community participation, and respect for rights inherited from generation to generation (BBC News Indonesia, 2024).

Meanwhile, the issue of inequality is not explicitly mentioned in the candidates' missions. The Anies-Muhaimin and Prabowo-Gibran pairs chose the word "economic equality" in one of their missions, while the Ganjar-Mahfud pair, as mentioned earlier, mentioned inequality between regions in their missions. However, in several debates, the issue of inequality came up. At the presidential candidate debate on February 4, 2024, Anies mentioned that Indonesia's biggest problem is inequality, inequality and injustice, which occurs between Jakarta and Java Island and outside Java Island, between the rich and the poor, in education, and in the control of economic resources. (Ulya & Rastika, 2024). Anies also mentioned the inequality of land tenure in Indonesia and his competitor Prabowo as one of the people who enjoy the inequality that occurs because he controls hundreds of thousands of hectares of land in Indonesia. However, Prabowo responded that the land belongs to the state because it is a right to cultivate and he is ready to return it to the state if asked. Furthermore, Prabowo revealed that it would be better for him to manage the land than for it to fall into the hands of foreigners. (Mantalean & Prabowo, 2024).

Based on the data above, all the candidate pairs for president and vice president recognize that poverty, environmental damage, and inequality are problems that still occur in Indonesia. Each also offers policy programs that are considered appropriate to overcome these problems. However, none of them talked about the capitalist economic system that is operating as the cause of all these problems. Therefore, the debate has become non-ideological. The presidential and vice-presidential candidates, as well as their success teams that developed the visions, missions and policy programs, viewed problems such as poverty,

environmental degradation and inequality as neutral problems, not ideological problems caused by capitalism. The political competition that takes place during the 2024 presidential election, therefore, is a competition at the level of management techniques and leadership styles, not at the ideological level. It is as if there is a consensus that all accept capitalism as an ideology that does not need to be challenged. This is a concise example of what Žižek conceptualizes as *ideological cynicism*. From the debates on environmental issues and climate change, there is a kind of concern to imagine the ecological damage that will occur if development is not carried out carefully. However, there is no discussion at all about the prospect of regime change in capitalism and liberal democracy.

Presidential candidate Prabowo in a forum expressed his distrust of neoliberal capitalism. He believes that neoliberal capitalism has led to Indonesia's wealth flowing overseas. He prefers a combination of the economic system ideas of capitalism and socialism or what he calls the Pancasila economy. This Pancasila system, according to him, can eliminate poverty and corruption, bring high economic growth, and bring prosperity to all (Putri, 2024). The other presidential candidates, Anies and Ganjar, did not explicitly mention the capitalism system during the 2024 presidential election campaign. Still, criticism of capitalism emerged if traced from the statements of the heads of their supporting parties. For example, the Chairman of the National Democratic Party, Surya Paloh, who endorsed Anies, once said that Indonesia is a liberal capitalist country but has not dared to admit it. However, for him capitalism is not a problem if Indonesia has national values and expertise instead of being individualistic and materialistic. (Ramadhan, 2019). Meanwhile, the Chairperson of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, Megawati Soekarnoputri, who endorses Ganjar, often reveals that imperialism and capitalism are the root causes of poverty in countries like Indonesia (PDIP Jawa Timur, 2017). The statements of political elites who criticize capitalism above are contradictory because in practice they enjoy the benefits of the existing capitalist system. They do not commit to their words, as there is no praxis action to propose, or indeed realize, alternatives to capitalism.

The same is found in the proposals from political parties competing in the legislative elections. None of the eighteen parties participating in the 2024 elections have the courage to evaluate the existing liberal democratic political regime and capitalist economic regime in Indonesia. Just like the proposition of the presidential candidates, what they "sell" to the voters are specific programs or rhetorical identities. In fact, some political parties choose narratives that show the defense of the current political and economic regime and avoid debates at the ideological level. (see Table 2).

Table 2. Manifesto/Identity/Vision and Mission of Political Parties Participating in the 2024 Elections

No	Partai Politik	Manifesto, Identitas, Visi dan Misi
1	Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (National Awakening Party)	People whose human rights are guaranteed
2	Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Greater Indonesia Movement)	Awareness of the Pancasila economic and democratic system to make Indonesia a strong, honorable and prosperous nation.
3	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (Indonesian Democratic Party Struggle)	Striving to realize a prosperous Indonesia with social justice that is politically sovereign, economically self-sufficient, and culturally strong.
4	Golongan Karya (Functional Group Party)	The doctrine of works that are dynamic according to the times, not ideology-oriented

5	Partai Nasional Demokrat (National Democrat Party)	Indonesia that is independent as a nation state, economically sovereign, and culturally dignified
6	Partai Buruh (Labor Party)	Workers' welfare to support the realization of a welfare state
7	Partai Gelora Indonesia (Indonesian People's Wave Party)	A strong and massive people's wave movement to determine its own future and historical course
8	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous and Justice Party)	The realization of a just and prosperous civil society that is blessed by Allah SWT
9	Partai Kebangkitan Nusantara (Archipelago Revival Party)	Maintain and develop all the potential and wealth of the Nusantara (archipelago)
10	Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat (The People's Conscience Party)	Prioritizing conscience in every political action and movement carried out
11	Partai Garda Republik Indonesia (Indonesian Republic Guard Party)	Moves to realize change, strengthen nationalism and realize fair and equitable welfare and provide peace.
12	Partai Amanat Nasional (National Mandate Party)	Fight for people's sovereignty, democracy, progress and social justice
13	Partai Bulan Bintang (The Crescent Star Party)	To make Indonesia a developed and modern country based on ethics and democracy, while promoting behavior that upholds religious values.
14	Partai Demokrat (Democrat Party)	A future Indonesia that is advanced, strong, and an emerging economy
15	Partai Solidaritas Indonesia (Indonesia Solidarity Party)	Bringing politics back to its noble values
16	Partai Persatuan Indonesia (The Indonesian Unity Party)	Realizing a progressive, united, just, prosperous, sovereign, dignified, and cultured Indonesia
17	Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party)	Green economy issues with the tagline "low price, easy work, blessed life"
18	Partai Ummat (The Ummah Party)	Fight injustice and uphold justice (<i>amar ma'ruf nahi munkar</i>)

The only political party that addresses the issue caused by capitalism, both directly and indirectly, in various campaigns and release of its party's position to various issues is Partai Buruh (Labor Party). Partai Buruh was founded as an organization to seize state power in order to change the quality of life of the working class. This party wants to change the pattern of distribution of national resources through a change in political relations. The relationship is the dominance of the ruling class so strongly without the representation of the working class in the state (Ridha, 2023). However, Partai Buruh's vote gain in the 2024 elections was only 972.910 or 0,64%. While the number of voters from the working class reached almost 70%. Thus, this working class's choice seems to be politically pragmatic and opportunistic (Hendarto, 2024). It shows that the working class in Indonesia is also dominated by the hegemonic power of capitalism so that they do not realize and believe that the vulnerability and marginalization of life experienced is caused by capitalism.

The hegemonic power of capitalism in the 2024 elections is also visible at the level of civil society (especially intellectual groups). Towards the voting day, dozens of campuses in various cities issued petitions of concern about the political situation ahead of the 2024 elections. The petition, represented by professors and leaders of these campuses, expressed concern about the fraud of state officials and the false neutrality shown, and argued that democracy was getting worse (Kompas, 2024). Meanwhile, three days before the voting, civil society groups released a documentary film entitled *Dirty Vote* which described all

forms of fraud attempts made by state officials during the 2024 election process (Dirty Vote, 2024). Here, it appears that no party has pointed a finger of criticism at capitalism as a structure that shapes the actions of political actors and the dynamics of this highly controversial election.

5. Conclusion

Based on the data outlined above, this article summarizes that the 2024 elections in Indonesia show that the hegemonic power of capitalism 'grips' all the narratives that emerge. Both election contestants, namely presidential and vice presidential candidates and political parties, as well as civil society groups, are more preoccupied with policy programs to address existing problems and controversies surrounding fraud committed by state officials during the election process. In fact, the cause of many problems such as poverty, environmental damage, and inequality is the excesses of the exploitative capitalist system. The dynamics of the 2024 elections taking place in Indonesia also seem to show that liberal democracy has become something final and does not need to be debated, as Fukuyama said thirty-five years ago.

This article has also demonstrated the application of the third dimension of power theory developed by Steven Lukes. Instead of focusing on the first dimension such as the actions and strategies of election participants or focusing on the second dimension of power such as analyzing business relations with election participants, this paper goes further by looking at a more subtle but effective aspect of power, namely ideology. This research, by borrowing Žižek's concept of *ideological cynicism*, shows how capitalism can become a hegemonic power during the electoral process. Capitalism does not appear to be a form of ideology, but appears in the form of truth that makes the sides in the electoral process believe in it. Furthermore, this paper emphasizes the importance of uncovering power that works in this third dimension because according to Haryatmoko (Haryatmoko, 2019) that "social science must be able to analyze the mechanisms of domination in order to become an instrument of emancipation for those who are dominated".

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