



## Analysis of the National Democratic Party's Refusal Joining the Prabowo-Gibran Coalition Government

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the political dynamics related to the refusal of the National Democratic Party to join the Prabowo-Gibran Government Coalition after the victory of the 2024 Presidential/Vice Presidential Election. The focus of analysis in the research is directed at explaining the political dynamics both internal to the party and external to the Nasdem party after receiving the invitation of president elect Prabowo Subianto to join the Red-White Cabinet. This research method uses a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews with Nasdem cadres and elites, political observers, literature studies and documentation. Laver & Schofield's (1998) coalition politics theory and Frans Magnis Suseno's (1991) concept of Political Ethics were used to answer the research problems. The results of this study show that the refusal of the National Democratic Party to join the Prabowo-Gibran government coalition is because this party does not have a strong political bargaining power both from the aspect of coalition politics and political ethics. The political implications of this party's political decision have impacted on the absence of opposition politics in the party system and the formation of a grand coalition government as a political consequence of the contestation of the 2024 presidential / vice presidential election and the weak culture of opposition parties in Indonesia since the Reformation era.*

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## Introduction

Political parties have a central role in creating a democratic government system. With their functions and authority, political parties or coalitions of political parties can form a government coalition. The coalition of political parties forms a cabinet and proposes ministerial positions to political leaders elected in elections, known as party government (Budge & Keman, 1990). The formation of this political party coalition is done both before and after the general election. The purpose of forming a coalition of political parties is to influence government policy (Dhillon, 2005). Political parties or a combination of political parties that successfully win the general election will usually form a multi-party government in both parliamentary and presidential systems (Laver & Schofield, 1998). The formation of coalition governments in parliamentary systems is a consequence of the proportional electoral system based on competing political parties. In this electoral system, the political party that wins the most seats in parliament has the right to propose the position of prime minister. The political party that gets the most seats in parliament will invite other parties to form a coalition government (Dodd, 2015). Meanwhile, the formation of a coalition government in a presidential government system with a multiparty system is a political necessity to maintain the balance of power in the parliament (Chaisty et al., 2018).

Political dynamics in the formation of coalition governments have occurred in several parliamentary and presidential democratic countries as a consequence of the electoral system and party system with many parties (Budge, & Keman, 1990). Political parties in democratic countries utilize the formation of party coalitions in elections as part of the party's strategy to gain access to political power (Switky, 2004). The practice of forming a coalition government has become a contemporary political phenomenon in several developed and developing countries. The formation of a coalition government has been carried out in European countries with parliamentary, presidential and semi-presidential government systems that are based on both minority coalitions and large or majority coalitions with single-party, two-party and multi-party systems (Bergman et al., 2019; Bergman et al., 2021). The practice of coalition government is also applied in several Asian countries with parliamentary or presidential systems of government. India has the dynamics of forming a coalition government that is quite successful and effective (Ahmad, 2022; Gautam, 2018). Coalition government formation in South Korea became a political phenomenon where the winning political party formed the Kim Dae-jung minority government that experienced a political deadlock in parliament (Kim, 2008). In the Southeast Asian region, Malaysia and Thailand are two countries that have political traditions and practices of coalition government formation. Malaysia's multiparty political system requires a coalition of several parties to form a government (Wong, 2023). While the formation of coalition government in Thailand is characterized by political turmoil of political parties and factions within parties that are unstable and lead to a vote of no confidence in the coalition of political parties of the ruling government (Chambers, 2008).

Since the reform era, Indonesia has adopted a multi-party system as a result of the proportional representation election system implemented from the 1955 election to the 2024 election. (Okthariza, 2023). The impact of the proportional representation electoral system in Indonesia has resulted in coalition and opposition parties in government formation (Anwar, 2024). The political practice of forming a coalition government in Indonesia began in the era of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, with ministerial positions filled by elites, businessmen, politicians, non-political businessmen and professionals (Wasisto, 2023). The formation of coalition governments in Indonesia strengthened during the Joko Widodo administration in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections. The coalition government supported by political parties supporting President Joko Widodo has created political oligarchic power in the political system in Indonesia which has implications for the weak functioning of the Legislative body (Asrinaldi et al., 2022; Mietzner, 2023).

The formation of a coalition government in the Prabowo-Gibran government era is still dominated by the politics of allocating ministerial portfolios in the cabinet to supporting parties in the 2024 presidential election. This political practice is commonly carried out by presidents elected in democratic elections. The president elected in the election will form a cabinet filled by coalition political parties. The number of ministerial allocations will be adjusted to the size of the support of the political parties that will fill positions in the coalition government (Bäck et al., 2009). In a political perspective, the allocation of ministerial positions to the coalition of supporting parties becomes a political strategy for the elected president to secure majority support in parliament (Palotti & Cavalcante, 2018). The elected president utilizes and uses portfolio allocation to be able to control and manage the support of coalition parties in both government and parliament (Camerlo & Martínez-Gallardo, 2017). After being declared the winner in the 2024 presidential election by the General Election Commission, President Prabowo Subianto began rhetoric of forming a permanent coalition government. The offer to form a coalition government was addressed to the Koalisi Indonesia Maju (Developed Indonesia Coalition) consisting of Gerindra, Golkar, PAN, Demokrat, Golkar, PSI, PBB, Gelora, Prima and new supporting parties namely NasDem, PKS and PKB. PKB accepted the

coalition's invitation to join President Prabowo's government, but PKS and NasDem refused to join the Indonesia Merah Putih cabinet (cnnindonesia, 2025).

NasDem's refusal to join Prabowo's coalition government has created an interesting political phenomenon to study and research. Since its founding in 2011 and gaining power in parliament in the 2014 Election, NasDem has always been a party supporting the government. The NasDem Party is one of the coalition parties that supported the Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla pair in the 2014 Presidential Election contest. NasDem's strategy was carried out again by becoming part of the coalition party that supported the presidential candidacy of Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin (Moento et al., 2020). Thus, NasDem is one of the political parties that has always joined the coalition government in the era of the Joko Widodo administration for 10 years (Permana, 2023). NasDem's failure to enter and place cadres in the Prabowo-Gibran government has become a political polemic. NasDem's political dynamics are influenced by both internal and external party interests. The internal dynamics of the party are largely determined by the political decisions of chairman Surya Paloh (20.detik.com, 2025). While the external dynamics of the party are dynamic by considering the political ethics of power because it is not a political party that struggles to win the Prabowo-Gibran pair in the 2024 presidential election (Meiliana, 2025). The assumption of political ethics became the initial justification that became the basis for NasDem's thinking to remain outside the government even though the political decision supported the Prabowo-Gibran government (Suseno, 1991).

Based on the problems that have been explained, the research question that will be analyzed is how the National Democrat party refused to join the Prabowo-Gibran government and what factors encouraged the party to support the government even though there were no party elites included in the Red and White cabinet. The purpose of this study is to analyze the political dynamics of the National Democrat party not to enter and join President Prabowo's coalition government by focusing on the dynamics that occur both internally and externally in the NasDem party and the electoral interest strategy of the NasDem party in the 2029 general election.

## Methods

This research uses a qualitative method based on natural research. Qualitative research will produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people or observable behavior (Moleong 2007). The research method was conducted with a case study analysis approach. Case studies are used to focus on a single phenomenon, either a specific event or event related to the object to be researched, studied and analyzed and to produce conclusions that can be generalized (Ragin et al., 1996; Gomm et al., 2000). The data collection process is carried out through empirical facts related to the political dynamics of the NasDem party not to enter and join the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government from various sources in the form of documentation such as online media both textual and visual, and content analysis in several mass media (Pennings, et al., 2005). The data collection techniques were obtained through interviews, literature studies, and observation (Johnson et al., 2015). The sources and types of data in this research consist of primary data in the form of in-depth interviews. While supporting or secondary data comes from written records such as books, journal articles and official documents, photographs, and statistical data (Moleong, 2007). The primary data collection process was carried out through interviews with predetermined informants, namely the elites and cadres of the National Democratic Party and political academics. To reinforce transparency, the study should detail that eight in-depth interviews were conducted: five with NasDem elites, one with a party strategist, and two with political science academics. Informants were selected via purposive sampling based on their seniority and involvement in NasDem's 2024 electoral campaign decisions. This ensures the perspectives reflect strategic

decision-making circles. Secondary data was sourced from books and journal articles relevant to the research study related to coalition politics and the ethics of power politics. This method with a qualitative approach is used by researchers to find out, analyze and answer the problems of political dynamics and political decisions of the National Democratic Party after the Prabowo-Gibran victory in the 2024 presidential election.

## Results and Discussion

### Coalition Politics and the Ethics of Political Power

#### Coalition Politics

Coalition politics in both parliamentary and presidential systems have logical political justifications. Coalition politics is a consequence of the proportional electoral system that produces a multiparty system. A coalition of parties supporting a pair of leaders competing in a general election or presidential candidate will result in the formation of a multiparty government (Laver & Schofield, 1998). Coalition politics is one of the most fundamental concepts in game theory. William Riker (1962) in the book *Theory of Political Coalitions* explains that coalition politics is a constant sum game played for a fixed prize of office (Laver & Schofield, 1998). Laver & Schofield (1998) explain several concepts and indicators in measuring coalition politics in the formation of multiparty coalition governments (for more detail see tabel 1 below).

Tabel 1. Theory of Coalition Government Formation Laver, & Schofield, 1998

Cocept/Indicator	Coalition Game	Coalition Government
Players	Part leader or cabinet minister People who want to become party leaders or cabinet ministers Legislative members Famous former politicians Candidates for Member of Parliament Members of Parliament Party Professionals Voluntary Party Activists	Any or all of these actors can influence the coalition process Party as a unitary actor that is independent in determining coalition decisions Party as a coalition of factions that are not independent and vulnerable to conflict with other coalition parties
Bergaining	The motivation for parties to form coalitions is to gain political office in government Parties will try to bargain their resources into the cabinet Parties offer policies to improve electoral politics	Parties maximize seats in the legislature Parties use their number of legislative seats as a resource to increase bargaining power Parties can dictate policies to the cabinet from a prominent position in the legislative
Winning Strategy	Coalition parties strengthen support for the executive Coalition parties in the legislature form a majority to support executive policies	Coalition parties in government/executive strengthen support for legislature Coalition parties maintain political support from legislature

Coalition Cabinet Stability	Multiparty system makes coalitions more difficult Coalition parties make political bargains based on electoral politics Anti-system parties or other extreme parties have destabilizing effects Level of ideological polarization or divisive conflict Level of policy influence open to the opposition	Coalition parties maintain majority status in the legislature and executive President/Prime Minister stability of coalition parties in coalition government President/Prime Minister and party leaders choose the sustainability of coalition government
Coalition Government Membership and Outcomes	Political actors from several coalition parties negotiate over coalition membership Coalition parties bargain for positions and policies in government Coalition party leaders distribute positions to parties in the coalition government	Political parties consider political bargaining in exchange for the positions and policies they will obtain Political actors bargain with each other-that the outcome of the coalition is the product of a bargaining process between the parties in the coalition.

Source: (Laver & Schofield, 1998)

### ***Political Ethics and Power***

Political ethics towards power is the basis for thinking in maintaining moral legitimacy for humans both as individuals and groups. Suseno calls political ethics the political dimension of human life. The political dimension is related to the morals inherent in human nature and behavior. Political ethics is a form of responsibility as a human citizen towards the state. As a citizen with good morality, of course, he has the obligation to make a good country. Thus, political ethics must consider humans in the social and political dimensions. The social dimension as a human being as an individual who is socially bound in the structure of society (Suseno, 1991).

Meanwhile, the political dimension of human life includes the circle of law and state institutions and value systems and ideologies that give legitimacy to human beings. A simple understanding of the political dimension of human life is defined by the dimension of society as a whole. Political decisions and actions must be decided by taking into account the interests of society as a whole. Politicians as part of society make political decisions based on the interests of society. Thus a politician behaves and performs political actions and decisions on the basis of morality that is concerned with the good of society as a whole (Suseno, 1991).

Political ethics in the practice of state and government administration is carried out in accordance with sociological legitimacy, legality, and ethical legality. Sociological legitimacy is a form of community acceptance of the power of a leader or government so that the community must obey. While legality is a power that is exercised in accordance with applicable law. Ethical legality refers to state power or policy that is legitimate because power is obtained based on morality and in accordance with the law so that it can be accepted by the community (Suseno, 1991). These three principles of morality should be the foundation or basis in the administration of the state to be obeyed by both the ruling political rulers or groups in political

society such as political parties and community organizations. Thus, between political rulers who win political leadership contestation and political parties and groups that have not been able to come to power become moral rules that must be respected.

While the ethical framing follows Suseno (1991) quite closely, the analysis would benefit from a stronger engagement with how this case complicates or extends existing theory. For instance, the NasDem case challenges the assumption in classical coalition theory that all rational actors will seek office (Riker, 1962). Instead, NasDem’s “strategic abstention” suggests a reputational rationality that values long-term party branding over immediate political gain—a variant that could be termed ethical opportunism. This complement emerging research showing how parties sometimes opt out of coalitions to preserve ideological integrity or rebuild post-defeat (Strøm & Müller, 1999; Debus, 2008). Thus, this paper adds nuance to coalition theory by showing how normative political ethics can intersect with rationalist calculations.

### **Coalition Government Formation After the Prabowo-Gibran Victory in the 2024 Presidential Election**

The Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka presidential candidates won the 2024 Presidential/Vice Presidential Election by obtaining 96,214,692 votes (58.59%) and nationally had fulfilled the quota of winning votes of around 20% in all 38 provinces in Indonesia (KPU RI, 2024). The victory of the Prabowo-Gibran candidates in the 2024 President/Vice President election has strengthened grand coalition politics. President Prabowo as the leader of the coalition rhetorically formed a coalition government which he called the Merah Putih Cabinet. The rhetoric of an offer to form a coalition government by the president-elect is an important part of political bargaining prior to cabinet formation. The coalition agreement is an important policy platform that binds all parties supporting the elected government to support government stability (Klüver & Bäck, 2019).

Table 2. Political Parties Supporting the Prabowo-Gibran Government, 2024-2029

<b>Political Parties</b>	<b>Number of Seats in Parliaments</b>	<b>Number of Proposed Cadres</b>	<b>Number of Cadres Entering the Cabinet</b>
Gerindra	86 (14,83%)	11 persons	6 Minister and 9 Deputy Ministers
PAN	48 (8,28%)	4 persons	6 Ministers and 2 Deputy Ministers
PKB	68 (11,72%)	3 persons	3 Ministers and 1 Deputy Minister
Demokrat	44 (7,59%)	4 persons	4 Ministers and 1 Deputy Minister
PBB	-	1 person	1 Minister
PKS	53 (9,14%)	1 person	-
Golkar	102 (17,59%)	11 persons	8 Ministers and 3 Deputy Ministers
Gelora	-	2 persons	2 Deputy Ministers
PSI	-	3 persons	1 Minister, 1 Deputy Minister and 1 Deputy Head of State Agency
Prima	-	1 person	1 Deputy Minister
NasDem	69 (11,90%)	-	-
PPI	-	1 person	1 Deputy Minister
PKP	-	1 persons	1 Deputy Minister
<b>Total Amount</b>	<b>470 (81,05%)</b>	<b>43 persons</b>	<b>52 Ministers/Deputy Ministers</b>

Source: Media Online, 2025

President-elect Prabowo Subianto managed to convince 13 political parties both in parliament (DPR RI) and outside parliament to form a coalition government. President Prabowo

desperately needs political support in parliament to be able to fulfill his political promises. In addition, parliamentary support is needed to support the president's political and economic stability during his five years in office. The formation of President Prabowo's coalition government is an interesting political phenomenon. This is because President Prabowo not only included the core party coalition consisting of Gerindra, Golkar, PAN, Demokrat, PSI, PBB, Gelora, Prima, and Garuda, but also invited the coalition parties of the Anies-Muhamimin pair, namely NasDem, PKB and PKS to join the Red and White coalition government. President Prabowo's political offer became a coalition strategy to combine coalition players in a coalition government. In quantity, the coalition parties supporting President Prabowo can form a majority in the parliament (DPR RI) with 470 seats (81.05%). Thus, the composition of the seats of the parties supporting the Red and White coalition is politically very strong because only PDI-P is the opposition party in the DPR RI with 110 seats (18.97%). The formation of President Prabowo's coalition government supported by additional coalition parties NasDem, PKB and PKS is a political support that affects the guarantee of government stability for 5 years (for more details, see table 1 above).

In theory, the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government is dominated by the party with the most seats in the DPR RI. This can be analyzed from the allocation of ministerial and deputy ministerial positions obtained by each party supporting the coalition. Gerindra Party is an important player in coalition politics due to its position as coalition leader and is represented by the president-elect with an allocation of 15 ministers and deputy ministers. The allocation of ministerial/deputy ministerial positions contested by coalition parties can be analyzed by how much they bargained with the coalition leader or the president-elect. Golkar (11 ministers/deputy ministers), PAN (8 ministers/deputy ministers), and Demokrat (5 ministers/deputy ministers), and non-parliamentary parties as many as 9 ministers/deputy ministers (for more details see table 2 above). The distribution of political positions in the coalition government takes into account the political support and bargaining in terms of political parties as the main actors that play a role in the composition of political positions. The more a political party is allocated political positions, the greater the party's bargaining power towards the stability of the coalition government in President Prabowo-Gibran's Red and White cabinet.

### **Analysis of the Political Dynamics And Political Decision of Nasdem Not to Join the Prabowo-Gibran Coalition Government**

#### **NasDem's Internal Political Dynamics: Refusal of President Prabowo's Coalition Offer**

The NasDem Party was one of the coalition parties that supported Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla in the 2014 presidential election. NasDem's strategy was carried out again by becoming part of the coalition party supporting the Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin pair. Thus, NasDem became one of the political parties that always joined the coalition government in the era of Joko Widodo's administration for 10 years (Permana, 2023). NasDem's refusal to join the Red and White coalition government is interesting to analyze from the perspective of internal party dynamics. In public statements recorded by several online media, several statements by NasDem party elites can be analyzed (for more details, see table 3 below).

Tablel 3. NasDem Elite Dynamics After the Coalition Offer

<b>Name Elite</b>	<b>Position in the Nasdem Party</b>	<b>Refusal Statement</b>	<b>Aspects of coalition Theory</b>
Surya Paloh	Chairman of the NasDem Party	NasDem has no role in winning Prabowo in the	NasDem is not a player in coalition formation

		2024 presidential election	NasDem does not have the power to bargain for political positions Surya Paloh represents a party political actor who determines political decisions
Hermawi Taslim	NasDem Party Secretary General	NasDem can contribute to Prabowo's government through ideas and political support	NasDem Party will support Prabowo's government through political support in parliament. The NasDem Party supports the stability of the coalition government even though it is not part of the Red and White cabinet.
Saan Mustopa	Vice Chairman of NasDem	NasDem chose to refuse to enter the coalition cabinet because of the ethics of political power	NasDem does not want the stability of the Prabowo coalition government to be divided if it enters the cabinet NasDem offers a coalition in the form of political policies, not positions in the coalition government.

In the theory of coalition politics, NasDem is in a dilemmatic position between practical opportunities and ethical political appropriateness. NasDem is politically not entitled to get a political position in the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government after the defeat of the AniesMuhaimin pair in the 2024 presidential election. Ideally, NasDem should position itself as a balancing party for the government to foster a healthy democratic culture. NasDem as a party that lost the presidential election contestation should behave politically based on democratic principles as an opposition party that oversees the government (Wojtasik, 2013). The dynamics of NasDem's refusal to join the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government have led to political assumptions. First, NasDem is politically unfavorable to the coalition supporting parties in the Red and White Cabinet. The coalition parties that have won Prabowo-Gibran do not want to share or reduce positions in the government. Second, NasDem's Refusal can be analyzed as a form of political strategy by the party elite to protect the party's political and economic interests and the existence of the party from internal conflicts that threaten party dualism or the establishment of a new party as a splinter of NasDem.

NasDem's political decision also reflects the party's dilemmatic and pragmatic side towards both the government and potential voters. NasDem is seen as playing an unclear political decision. NasDem plays a strategy as a gray decision and see and wait position which benefits NasDem because this strategy is a hanging position (position of restraint, look around strategy). Nasdem wants to protect itself from criticism from the government and voters, when people want to criticize the government directly, all levels in the government are affected. Then because Nasdem is not part of the government NasDem can be protected and this hanging position is a good position because it can provide an image to the public that the Nasdem party is not a "flea jumping" party like PKB and PKS. So that the public gets the image that Nasdem is a good party (Interview with Executive Director of Populi Center and Academician Afrimadona, Ph.D, March 11, 2025).

NasDem's political decision not to be part of the Red and White coalition government can be analyzed from the perspective of Laver, & Schofield's coalition politics. In coalition politics theory, the process of forming a coalition government will be determined based on 5 (five) aspects, namely players, bargaining, winning strategies, coalition stability, and coalition government membership and results (for more details, see table 3 below).

Table 3. Analysis of NasDem's Refusal Based on Laver, & Schofield's Coalition Political Theory

Aspects	Political Activity	Coalition Game
Player	NasDem is not a key player in the coalition of parties supporting President Prabowo-Gibran.	NasDem cannot influence the distribution of political positions in the coalition government because it is a new player in the coalition.
Bergaining	NasDem does not have a strong political bargaining position with the PrabowoGibran coalition of supporting parties due to being the party that lost the 2024 presidential election contestation.	NasDem chooses to work with the coalition government without having to enter the Red and White cabinet.
Winning Strategy	NasDem was not part of the winning coalition in the 2024 presidential election, so NasDem was not taken into account in the formation of the coalition from the beginning.	NasDem's support in parliament allows it to join the cabinet in the event of coalition party instability.
Coalition Cabinet Stability	NasDem is not part of the coalition supporting the Prabowo-Gibran presidential candidates in the 2024 presidential election	NasDem can strengthen the coalition government politically but may reduce the allocation of positions for other coalition parties in the Red and White cabinet.
Coalition Government Membership and Outcomes	NasDem became part of the supporting parties of the Red and White Coalition Government	NasDem refused to join the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government on the grounds that it did not play a role in the Prabowo-Gibran victory of 2024 presidential election

When analyzed using coalition political theory, NasDem's refusal to join the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government is appropriate. Of the 5 indicators in coalition theory, NasDem does not fulfill all the required elements. NasDem is not a player in the coalition game theory because its position is next to the coalition parties in the 2024 presidential election. Therefore, NasDem does not have a strong political bargaining position to obtain political positions in the PrabowoGibran coalition government. However, NasDem can enter the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government if there is coalition instability in the government. Thus, NasDem's position is temporary depending on the dynamics of power politics between the President and the parties supporting the coalition. If there is conflict and dissatisfaction with the performance of ministers from supporting political parties, it will be an opportunity for NasDem to change its political decision (see table 3 above).

### **Analysis of NasDem's Refusal in the Perspective of Political Ethics and Power**

In several public statements, the chairman of the NasDem Party stated that NasDem did not enter the Red and White coalition government based on moral legitimacy thoughts and views. The analysis of NasDem's Refusal can be explained in 3 (three) indicators based on Franz Magnis Suseno's concept of political ethics and power. The concept of political ethics and power can explain the justifications and arguments for NasDem's refusal to join the Red and White Cabinet of the Prabowo-Gibran government.

To avoid overly abstract theorization, this section explicitly links Suseno's moral legitimacy framework with NasDem's empirical Refusal decision. Rather than reciting normative principles, it analyzes how those principles manifest in concrete party strategy—e.g., refusal to demand political portfolios or framing refusal as ethical decorum (Meiliana, 2025). This blend of ethics and strategy illustrates what Schmitt (2004) called the “fusion of legality and legitimacy” in modern party conduct.

### ***Sociological Legitimacy***

Legitimacy refers to the concept of power that is legitimate and recognized and in accordance with legal principles. Power is considered legitimate and correct if it is in accordance with applicable rules or has an accountable basis (Suseno, 1991: 63). NasDem recognizes the power of the Prabowo-Gibran government based on sociological legitimacy. NasDem politically ethically supports the Prabowo-Gibran government that has won the 2024 pilpes. NasDem believes that this legitimacy is because politically the public has elected the Prabowo-Gibran pair as president and vice president for a 5-year term.

NasDem's refusal to join the Red and White Cabinet in political ethics is based on sociological values. NasDem's refusal is also associated with NasDem's political ethics as a "No Dowry Party". This political decision can maintain the positive image of the NasDem party as always stated by Surya Paloh in every party political statement in public. The slogan "No Dowry Politics" not only represents the image of a clean party, but in political ethics it explains that NasDem will always position itself as different from other parties. NasDem joined the coalition not expecting to be rewarded for the results of the party's political decisions. The refusal to join the Prabowo-Gibran presidential coalition government is to avoid negative public perceptions of NasDem wanting political positions in the government. So that NasDem's appropriateness in political ethics is questioned and this becomes NasDem's political decision to refuse to enter the Red and White Cabinet. NasDem in political ethics views sociological legitimacy as the party's political footing which views that there is no legitimacy for NasDem to join the cabinet. NasDem is aware of political values and ethics because it is not part of the coalition that has won Prabowo-Gibran in the 2024 Presidential Election (Interview with Fernando PMT Tambunan, S.E, M.Si, Deputy Chairperson of the Nasdem Membership Cadre Organization of the DKI Jakarta DPRD, January 9, 2025).

### ***Legality***

Legality describes actions or powers that are carried out in accordance with applicable law. Legality is a source of legitimate power guaranteed by legislation because it contains values and norms that bind the entire nation and state. Political power is born from political competition based on legal norms, thus the success of a group in society such as a political party in seizing and maintaining power is an effort of legality (Suseno, 1991: 72). This view is reinforced by Habermas' concept of legality, which states that legality must be based on the substance of legal-rational legitimacy as a manifestation of citizen participation in the formulation of legal norms and constitutions (Schmitt, 2004).

NasDem's refusal to join the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government is a form of legality of political parties guaranteed by law. NasDem believes that ethical values in society are the basis for parties to respect whoever is democratically elected through honest and fair elections. NasDem also believes that the legality of power must be based on the norms and values of justice for every citizen in society. Whatever is best for the community will be the basis of legality for political parties that were originally part of the community. Thus legality is one of the basic principles in modern state administration that NasDem practices in the Indonesian political system. NasDem's refusal to join the coalition government can explain that NasDem

emphasizes the values of political party morality rather than participating in the government where the party does not work for political power supported in the election (Muliantari, 2025).

### ***Ethical/Moral Legitimacy***

Ethical legality or moral legitimacy is an assessment of the appropriateness of state power or policy that is legitimate and correct or appropriate from a moral point of view and is considered valid because it is in accordance with the law or acceptable to society. In ethical legality, the assessment is not only seen from the applicable law and set into a policy, but also whether the law or policy is really good or fair for everyone. Moral principles must be based on justice and respect for human rights. Thus, political power must be responsible not only legally but also ethically or morally (Suseno, 1991).

The Nasdem party's decision not to join the Prabowo-Gibran cabinet is based primarily on ethics and political propriety. The NasDem party's refusal to join the coalition government is not the main goal in supporting the Prabowo coalition government. NasDem believes that the Prabowo coalition government is already large or filled with many early supporting parties. So that NasDem positions itself as a supporting party that is outside the coalition government. NasDem views that morally it has no rights in the Prabowo coalition government because NasDem is not part of the Prabowo-Gibran winning team in the 2024 Presidential Election (Interview with Fernando PMT Tambunan, S.E, M.Si, Deputy Chair of the Nasdem Membership Cadre Organization of the DKI Jakarta DPRD, January 9, 2025).

Gerindra as the leader of the coalition of parties supporting the Prabowo-Gibran pair in the 2024 presidential election respects this decision because it is Nasdem's political right. Gerindra views that this political decision shows the political maturity of the Nasdem chairman who remains committed to supporting the Prabowo-Gibran government despite being outside the government. To maintain this political harmony, Gerindra Party will not close the political communication that has been well established between Prabowo and Surya Paloh. The coalition agreement between Gerindra and NasDem despite not being in the coalition government is based on strategic political considerations due to Nasdem having a significant number of legislative members in parliament. Gerindra will communicate the policy-making of the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government with NasDem as part of the coalition agreement. Gerindra appreciates the role and political position of NasDem, which is committed to overseeing the government and supporting policies that are fair to the community (Interview with Setyoko, S.T. Chairman of the Gerindra Party faction in the DKI Jakarta DPRD, January 9, 2025).

### **Theoretical Implications of Nasdem's Refusal and the Future of Coalition Government in Indonesia**

The theoretical implications of NasDem's refusal to join the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government are the development of two political phenomena in the contemporary Indonesian political system. First, the absence of an opposition party to balance executive power in Indonesia's national legislature. Second, the grand coalition government in Indonesia's political system where the President has distributed political positions to a coalition of supporting parties in the 2024 presidential election.

#### **Absence of Opposition in Parliament**

NasDem's refusal to join the Prabowo-Gibran Coalition Government is a political process that shows the short- and long-term interests in party politics in Indonesia. NasDem's decision to support the Prabowo-Gibran Coalition Government despite not getting a political position in the government strengthens the empirical evidence that opposition politics in the party system

in Indonesia cannot develop. Opposition politics or political parties that position themselves as balancing parties outside the government in Indonesia only developed in the era of parliamentary rule such as Masyumi, PSI, and Murba in the Old Order era (Madinier, 2015; Mietzner, 2008), PDI and PPP in the New Order era (Slater, 2014). In the Reformation era, opposition politics and culture weakened in Indonesia's party system. In the era of the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono-Yusuf Kalla administration, PDIP became the only opposition party in parliament (Kristiyanto et al., 2023). The weakening of opposition politics in Indonesia's party system reached its lowest point during the Joko Widodo administration (2014-2024). The only opposition parties that perform a balancing function in parliament are Genrinda and PKS (Prasetyo, 2018; Rachman & Wardhani, 2020; Noor et al., 2022).

The party system in Indonesia should be able to learn how political contestation in presidential elections will have an impact on improving democracy in a country characterized by strengthening opposition politics. In a majority electoral system, the presidential/vicepresidential candidate pair that wins the election will apply the principle of the winner gaining legitimacy of political power including regulating the allocation of ministers and political positions in the government. The elected president/vice president will form a coalition government from coalition parties both before and after the general election (Kellam, 2017). In a comparative perspective, the United States and South Korea can be a reference in analyzing the impact of the presidential electoral system on the formation of coalition governments and the development of opposition parties that lose elections. The United States is empirical evidence of how the party system and the electoral system have fostered a culture of opposition to losing parties and the hegemony of political power for parties and elected presidents in presidential elections in forming governments (Hofstadter, 1969). The formation of government in South Korea has shown how the balance of power between the executive and the legislature has fostered a democratic culture between the winning party who has the right to form the government and the losing party positioned as an opposition party in parliament (Heo & Stockton, 2005).

This trend toward "total coalitionism" echoes cases like Hungary and Turkey, where opposition parties have become structurally marginalized (Levitsky & Way, 2020). By comparison, the institutional design in the U.S. and South Korea prevents such absorption, maintaining functional oppositional checks even in ideologically polarized environments (Heo & Stockton, 2005). Indonesia risks democratic backsliding if critical opposition is replaced by symbolic dissent from nominally independent parties.

### **Grand Coalition Government**

The formation of a coalition government will result in a government controlled by a minority or majority party (Vowles, 2010). The joining of NasDem in the coalition of parties supporting the Prabowo Government has implications for strengthening the grand coalition government. Although NasDem is outside the government, NasDem's position can still be included in the Red and White cabinet in the future. With the addition of NasDem's seats in parliament, this government is supported by a majority of political parties with a strength of 470 (81.05%) seats or members in the national legislature. The political consequence of President Prabowo's policy is the proliferation of ministries and state institutions in the formation of the coalition government. President Prabowo distributed a very large number of ministerial/ministerial-level political positions in 48 ministries/state institutions. The formation of the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government is a political phenomenon in the history of government in Indonesia since the Reformation era. This problem can be analyzed from the institutional dynamics of ministries and state institutions (K/L) in the governments of President BJ. Habibie (39 K/L),

President Abdurrahman Wahid (37 K/L), President Megawati Sukarnoputri (34 K/L), President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (37 K/L), President Joko Widodo (34 K/L).

The formation of a grand coalition government by President Prabowo shows the dynamics of coalition politics built on the basis of political agreements between loyalists of President Joko Widodo and President Prabowo. The influence of direct presidential elections has had a major impact on the formation of coalition governments since the administrations of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Joko Widodo (Wasisto, 2023). The presidential nomination threshold, which must be supported by 20% of political parties in parliament, has contributed to the development of political party interest politics in the formation of coalition governments in Indonesia (Nugroho, 2024). The future of coalition government in Indonesia is highly dependent on the dynamics of a democratic party system that allows the growth of opposition parties as a counterweight to the government. Democratic countries such as the United States and Europe can serve as a reference for how to form a lean and efficient cabinet (Golder, 2015; Cutler et al., 2016).

## Conclusion

NasDem's refusal to join the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government reflects the dynamics of political parties that lost the 2024 Presidential/Vice Presidential Election. NasDem's internal dynamics both through the chairman and the party elite decided to support but refused to join the coalition government and chose to be outside the government. NasDem's strategic non-participation reflects a rational adaptation to the structure of post-election coalitional politics in Indonesia, where entry without prior alliance offers little institutional gain and significant reputational cost. NasDem's position and existence in the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government is seen as weak because the party is inconsistent in politics as part of the supporting party for the losing presidential / vice presidential candidate pair in the 2024 presidential election contest. In the perspective of coalition politics, NasDem does not have an important role in the coalition of parties supporting the presidential / vice presidential candidate pair in the 2024 presidential election. The essence of coalition politics either before or after the presidential / vice presidential election is how the parties in the coalition bargain politically to obtain political positions after completing the winning strategy. NasDem's entry into the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government is seen as destabilizing the coalition by the parties that supported it earlier. In addition, NasDem's refusal to join is a rational choice in a political game based on a zero sum game. NasDem as a competing and losing party should remain outside the coalition government. NasDem's decision to continue supporting the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government is based more on the assumption of moral legitimacy and NasDem's image to the public. NasDem should position itself as an opposition party and not be tempted to enter the Red and White cabinet for five years until the 2029 elections.

NasDem's decision to support the Prabowo-Gibran coalition government but refuse to enter the Red and White cabinet theoretically has implications for the political system in Indonesia. There are two theoretical assumptions, namely the absence of opposition politics in the party system in Indonesia for the next five years until the 2029 election. All parliamentary political parties other than PDIP have expressed political support for the Prabowo-Gibran government. The uncritical position of PDIP, PKS and NasDem in the policy-making process will perfectly negate opposition politics and culture in Indonesia. The absence of parties that explicitly state their opposition to the government will have implications for the proliferation of coalition politics in the struggle for political power in Indonesia. The President, with his prerogative, will be very powerful in determining the number of ministries/state institutions with the support of the majority of parties in parliament. Theoretically, the president's prerogative power in determining the cabinet is directly proportional to how much the presidential / vice-presidential

candidate pair is supported by a coalition of parties either before or after the general election. Of course, this coalition politics is not healthy in the perspective of democracy and good governance because it will have an impact on the state budget and the Indonesian people. The case of NasDem introduces a hybrid model of political participation—support without incorporation—which merits further theoretical development in studies of coalition government formation, especially in presidential systems with dominant-party tendencies.

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