

# The 'Reborn' Phenomenon of a Former President: Navigating Leadership Legacy and Political Shadows in a New Era

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## Abstract

The "reborn" phenomenon of former President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) following the conclusion of his term has introduced a new dynamic into Indonesian politics. Unlike most former leaders who opt to retreat from the public eye to focus on personal or spiritual pursuits, Jokowi remains actively engaged in various public activities. His consistent presence, warmly received by the public, has sparked speculation about the motivations behind his involvement and its implications for the new administration under President Prabowo Subianto. Jokowi's continued visibility in the public sphere raises concerns about the potential blurring of authority between the new leadership and the perception that his political influence remains significant even after stepping down.

This article seeks to analyse the motivations and impacts of Jokowi's post-presidency engagement from social, political, and psychological perspectives. Additionally, it explores Javanese cultural traditions, such as the concept of "lengser keprabon madeg pandito ratu," which underscores the importance of spiritual reflection for former leaders. By understanding this historical and cultural context, this study aims to provide insights into how a former leader can maintain relevance in modern Indonesian politics and the implications for political stability and power consolidation during the transition to a new administration.

## Keywords:

Reborn of former leader; leadership transition; Joko Widodo; Political stability, Lengser keprabon

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The phenomenon of a former leader's "reborn," such as that of Joko Widodo (Jokowi), has become a new focus of attention in Indonesia. Typically, once their terms end, former public officials tend to reduce their public

activities and rarely make appearances in public spaces (Strategics, 2024). They often choose to focus on their personal or spiritual lives, distancing themselves from the spotlight. This aligns with societal traditions and expectations for leaders who have completed their service, as reflected in the statement made by former President Soeharto upon his resignation in 1998. At that time, he declared he would "lengser keprabon madeg pandito ratu" (Hans, 2005), a Javanese phrase that implies a leader who has stepped down is expected to dedicate more time to worship and seek closeness with God for self-purification and repentance.

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Historically, this attitude is not new. Many past leaders, after relinquishing power, opted to withdraw from public life and delve into spiritual matters (Laura, 2005). This retreat was often driven by a desire for inner peace after years of dealing with conflicts, competing interests, and difficult decision-making, which may have resulted in significant consequences for individuals or groups (Kelly & F. Burton, 2020). Therefore, this period of "seclusion" is seen as a way to purify oneself from any mistakes or wrongdoings that may have occurred during their time in power.

However, the phenomenon surrounding Jokowi after his presidency reveals a different pattern. Instead of withdrawing from public life (Panigrahi, 2004), Jokowi has remained actively engaged and has continued to appear at various public events, often receiving an enthusiastic reception from the public. His presence in these spaces, frequently accompanied by activities such as distributing gifts or assistance, reflects a markedly different approach compared to former leaders who chose the path of "lengser keprabon."

This divergence from traditional expectations raises several important questions: Why does Jokowi continue to maintain such an active public profile? What are the motivations behind his actions, and how are they perceived by the public? More importantly, what implications does this phenomenon hold for the political culture in Indonesia, particularly during the leadership transition to President Prabowo Subianto?

While previous studies have explored the post-leadership lives of former leaders in Indonesia and other cultural contexts, limited attention has been given to the case of a former leader remaining highly visible and active in public life. This research aims to address this gap by connecting Jokowi's actions to historical, cultural, and political dimensions, providing insights into its broader impact on political stability and leadership dynamics.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This article examines the phenomenon of former leaders, such as Joko Widodo (Jokowi), re-entering the public sphere post-presidency and being warmly received by the public. The study has three main objectives:

**Understanding Motivation and Implications:** Investigate the motivations behind Jokowi's post-presidency activities and assess their social, political, and psychological impacts on Indonesia's socio-political dynamics, including effects on his supporters, the opposition, and political stability during the leadership transition.

**Tracing History and Culture:** Analyze this phenomenon through the Javanese cultural lens of "lengser keprabon madeg pandito ratu," which highlights a leader's transition to a reflective, spiritual life. The study will explore whether Jokowi follows this tradition or adopts a different approach and compare it with global leader transitions to civilian roles post-presidency.

**Exploring the Impact on New Leadership:** Assess the impact of

Jokowi's continued presence on President Prabowo Subianto's legitimacy and popularity, examining potential challenges such as the lingering perception of influence from the former leader.

By exploring these dimensions, the article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of post-leadership political dynamics in Indonesia and the role of historical, cultural, and political factors in shaping the behavior of former leaders.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Historical Review

#### 1. The Leadership of Indonesian Presidents: Political Transitions from Soekarno to Joko Widodo

The transitions of Indonesian presidents are often dramatic and politically significant. While some leaders step down after completing their terms, others leave office under pressure. Presidents Soekarno, Soeharto, BJ Habibie, and Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) faced unusual exits, while Megawati Soekarnoputri, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and Joko Widodo completed their terms in accordance with the constitutional two-term limit.

Soekarno's removal from office was linked to the controversial Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret (Supersemar) on March 11, 1966, which granted Soeharto authority to ensure national security (Dewi, 2015). The letter followed the assassination of Army generals during the G30S/PKI movement on October 1,

1965. Supersemar was interpreted as transferring power to Soeharto, leading to the suppression of communism and political purges. Ministers and officials with communist ties were arrested or replaced, shifting Indonesia toward pro-Western policies and rejoining the United Nations (Abdullah, 2015).

Soeharto officially became president on March 21, 1968, after being appointed by the MPRS. His regime was characterized by political stability and economic growth, supported by Western powers through the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia (IGGI), which coordinated foreign aid (Hofman, 2004). The Broad Outlines of State Policy (GBHN), set every five years, provided administrative guidelines to achieve national prosperity (Matsumoto, 2006).

Disagreements with IGGI in 1992 led to its replacement by the Consultative Group on Indonesia (CGI) (Takashi, 2006). However, Indonesia remained dependent on foreign aid. The 1998 Asian financial crisis, marked by a sharp devaluation of the Rupiah from Rp 2,200 to Rp 17,000, triggered severe economic and political instability. Emergency IMF assistance was required to stabilize the currency. The crisis escalated, leading to Soeharto's resignation and BJ Habibie's succession (Nasution, 2002).

BJ Habibie served during a time of internal political conflict and public dissatisfaction. His main challenge was stabilizing the Rupiah against the US Dollar. His economic policies successfully strengthened the Rupiah from Rp 16,800 per dollar in May 1998 to

Rp 7,385 in October 1999, though it briefly reached Rp 6,550 in June 1999 (HILL & SHIRAISHI, 2007). However, in order to maintain global competitiveness, the exchange rate stabilized at Rp 16,450 per dollar in June 2024, close to the 1998 crisis level.

Habibie, the third president of Indonesia, served from May 1998 to October 1999 after Soeharto's resignation. Although he managed to stabilize the Rupiah and the stock market, he struggled to gain support from the DPR (Marks, 2009). Public and parliamentary pressure to end the New Order legacy led him to hold elections in June 1999, which eventually transferred power to Abdurrahman Wahid.

Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), the fourth president, served for 19 months from October 1999 to July 2001. His administration began with optimism, as he was seen as a figure capable of bringing change after the New Order. Gus Dur was known as an inclusive leader who advocated for human rights and religious freedom (Azra, 2003). However, his controversial leadership style often conflicted with the DPR and political parties (Dwipayana et al., 2023).

Some of his radical policies, such as dissolving the Ministry of Information and lifting the ban on the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), sparked controversy. Political tensions escalated with allegations of the Buloggate and Bruneigate scandals (Slater, 2004), although they were not legally proven. Ultimately, Gus Dur issued a decree to dissolve the DPR and MPR, which was deemed unconstitutional. In July 2001, the MPR held an Extraordinary Session

and removed Gus Dur (Feillard, 2002), leading to the succession of Megawati Soekarnoputri, the vice president at the time.

The 1999 Presidential Election became a historic moment full of political intrigue (Slater, 2004). The PDIP, led by Megawati, won the most votes in the 1999 election (Lanti, 2002), but not enough to secure a majority in the MPR. Major parties like Golkar, PPP, and PKB formed a coalition to support Gus Dur as president, while Megawati became vice president as a compromise. Despite accepting the position, Megawati's supporters were disappointed, feeling "cheated."

After Gus Dur's impeachment, Megawati led Indonesia until 2004. Her leadership marked a new phase in post-reform politics. Megawati's government (2001–2004) focused on economic recovery following the 1997 crisis. Her key policy was raising salaries for civil servants, the military, and the police to improve the welfare of government officials and reduce corruption (Crouch, 2010).

Although this policy helped boost the economy, Megawati was also criticized for the privatization of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to pay off foreign debts (Soesastro et al., 2003). The sale of state companies to foreign investors raised concerns about Indonesia's economic sovereignty. Critics argued that privatization benefited certain elites rather than the general public (Aspinall, 2005), causing tensions as it was perceived to sacrifice national interests for short-term gains.

During Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's (SBY) administration, which began in 2004, Indonesia achieved several significant economic milestones. One key move was the settlement of Indonesia's debt to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2006, reflecting success in managing the national economy (Crouch, 2010). The policy of periodic salary increases for civil servants, military personnel, and police also boosted purchasing power and stimulated the domestic market. Under his leadership, Indonesia's economy grew steadily, with an average growth rate of more than 5% per year.

However, SBY's main challenge was high inflation. Despite periodic salary increases providing an economic boost, it was not enough to overcome inflation, which reached 17.11% in 2005, even though the government had implemented strict monetary and fiscal policies (Howes & Davies, 2014). Additionally, widespread corruption at various levels of government, including among ministers and members of parliament, became a serious challenge (Mufti & Kanumayoso, 2016). The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) became increasingly active in exposing major corruption cases, drawing public attention and eroding trust in the government (Kurniawan, 2012).

Although the economy grew, social inequality and pervasive corruption hindered the effectiveness of policies and caused public dissatisfaction. Corruption scandals involving high-ranking officials and

political parties disrupted political stability, despite efforts to address the issue. Corruption involving key members of his cabinet weakened public support for SBY's government and created the impression that the government could not control such practices (Davidson, 2018).

SBY's efforts to regenerate political cadres, including appointing Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono to a key role in the Democratic Party, were ineffective. Agus's limited age and political experience, along with intense political competition, hindered efforts to build strong support, resulting in defeat in the next election.

SBY's presidency ended in 2014, and he was succeeded by Joko Widodo, the former Governor of Jakarta. Joko Widodo used mass media and social media to shape his public image (Pentasari, 2023). Infrastructure development programs and the national car project became media highlights. His simple demeanour, far from elitist, enhanced his popularity among low-income communities, despite criticisms regarding his unfulfilled political promises (Prasodjo & Tim, 2021).

Although Joko Widodo received broad support, criticisms also emerged, accusing him of often making unfulfilled cliché promises (O'Connor, 2021). Some argued that there was a mismatch between his political promises and actual achievements during his tenure, leading to perceptions of empty rhetoric (Prasodjo & Tim, 2021; Warburton, 2016; Fearly, 2024). Nonetheless, many

supporters remained loyal due to feeling represented by his displayed simplicity.

Jokowi's popularity grew, especially in Java and the central and eastern parts of Indonesia, which were often associated with poverty (Warburton, 2016). His simple appearance became a symbol of the marginalized common people (Andres, 2016). This strategy effectively built an emotional connection with the public, strengthening his appeal during elections (GUILD, 2019). Even after his term ended, his political legacy continued to attract political parties.

Jokowi's administration maximized the role of the private sector in economic development, inviting foreign investment and supporting state-owned enterprises in large projects (Verico et al., 2023; Cahyaningtyas, 2021). The primary focus was infrastructure development, such as toll road projects, most of which were carried out by private companies. The government claimed these successes, despite the projects being funded and managed by the private sector (Djajawinata et al., 2023).

Another example is the palm oil plantation sector involving foreign investors. Although foreign companies dominate plantation management, the government still claimed the contribution as a success in boosting exports and state revenue through taxes (Dwi Astuti1 & Muhamad Fathun, 2020). This highlights the important role of the private sector in supporting the government's agenda to drive economic growth.

Since independence, every Indonesian president has faced challenges that reflect the socio-political dynamics of their era. Soekarno led with nationalism to defend sovereignty. Suharto, through the New Order, emphasized stability and economic development, though marked by tight political control and human rights violations. BJ Habibie paved the way for democratization, although his tenure was short.

Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) introduced an inclusive approach, though he faced political tensions that led to his resignation. Megawati Soekarnoputri maintained economic stability amid criticism of privatization. SBY focused on economic growth, but his administration was marred by corruption scandals. Jokowi, with a focus on infrastructure development and the private sector's role, faced challenges in fulfilling political promises and addressing social inequality.

Overall, each president has played a crucial role in shaping Indonesia's journey, with policies influenced by the socio-political and economic context. Despite facing various challenges, Indonesia continues to progress through a democratic process that supports the national development agenda.

## 2. Reflections on Abdication by Kings and Leaders

The transfer of power often involves self-isolation as a transition from leadership to a spiritual life. This is reflected in President Soeharto's resignation in 1998 with the phrase "lengser keprabon madeg pandito ratu,"

signifying a leader's shift toward simplicity and spirituality.

Historically, many leaders have chosen a religious life after relinquishing power, demonstrating the universal human return to spiritual reflection.

King Ashoka of India (304–232 BCE): Ashoka, ruler of the Maurya Empire, transformed after the devastating Kalinga War. He embraced Buddhism, promoting non-violence, compassion, and ethical governance. His reign shifted from conquest to welfare, building stupas, promoting religious tolerance, and spreading messages of peace (Kumar Upadhyay, 2020; San, 2024). Ashoka's leadership illustrated that true power lies in service and moral conduct.

Emperor Diocletian of Rome (284–305 CE): Diocletian, known for stabilizing the Roman Empire, voluntarily abdicated in 305 CE. His reforms reshaped Roman governance through the Tetrarchy, improving administrative efficiency (Vuškovi, 2016; Doležal, 2022). Retreating to his estate in Dalmatia, Diocletian refused to return to power, exemplifying humility and prioritizing stability over personal ambition (Williams, 2015). His legacy underscores the importance of relinquishing power with dignity.

King Henry II of England (1133–1189): Henry II expanded royal authority but faced conflicts, including with Archbishop Thomas Becket, whose murder led to Henry's public penance (Kemp, 2018). Betrayals by his sons marked his later years with introspection and spiritual reconciliation (Strickland,

2016). His story highlights the necessity of balancing power with moral responsibility and the pursuit of redemption.

King Brawijaya V of Majapahit: Brawijaya V, the last ruler of Majapahit, faced internal conflicts and the rise of the Demak Sultanate. Rather than clinging to power, he chose asceticism as an act of repentance and spiritual devotion, emphasizing the impermanence of power and the pursuit of inner peace (Umar Akashi, 2024).

Emperor Akihito of Japan (1926–present): In 2019, Emperor Akihito abdicated the Chrysanthemum Throne due to age and health concerns, the first such abdication in over two centuries. He modernized the monarchy, making it more accessible, and after stepping down, embraced a quiet life dedicated to Shinto rituals and cultural reflection (Hendry, 2019; Murai et al., 2022). His abdication exemplified humility, acknowledging human limitations while continuing to serve symbolically (Kimizuka, 2024).

These leaders demonstrate that true greatness lies not only in their achievements but in their ability to relinquish power gracefully and embrace a life of reflection and humility.

### 3. Transition from Power: "Lengser ke Prabon Mandeg Pandito Ratu"

The concept of "Lengser Keprabon Madeg Pandito Ratu" in Javanese culture holds profound philosophical meaning. This philosophy teaches that after reaching the pinnacle of power, a leader should willingly relinquish worldly

authority and dedicate the remainder of their life to spirituality, self-reflection, and devotion to God (Harimurti, 2017). It emphasizes the notion that power is temporary and must be accompanied by the wisdom to recognize when it is time to step down (Endraswara, 2013).

When President Soeharto stepped down in 1998, he expressed his intention to “*lengser keprabon madeg pandito ratu*,” indicating his desire to withdraw from political life and focus on worship and drawing closer to God. However, in reality, Soeharto's actions did not fully align with this ideal, as he continued to be involved in various behind-the-scenes political dynamics for several years after his resignation (Magnis-Suseno, 1999; Fortuna Anwar, 1999).

In the modern context, it is challenging for former leaders to fully disappear from the public sphere, especially in the age of digital media and social networks. For instance, as we see with Joko Widodo (Jokowi), even after completing his term, his popularity remains high among the public (Tirtosudarmo & B.R. Carey, 2024; Fealy, 2024). This could be seen as a form of adaptation to the “*lengser keprabon*” concept that is more relevant in today's context. Rather than fully retreating into a religious life, former leaders like Jokowi opt to remain engaged with the public, albeit without holding formal power.

However, some argue that a former leader's continued presence in the public eye with significant popular support can impact the stability of a new administration. This is particularly true if the former leader maintains considerable

influence over the public, potentially being perceived as a “shadow president.”

The resurgence of a former leader in the public domain is part of the evolving political dynamics, both in Indonesia and globally. While the concept of “*lengser keprabon madeg pandito ratu*” reflects the Javanese ideal of a leader's retirement, the reality of modern politics shows that the role of a former leader often does not simply end with their formal departure from office.

### **The Reborn Phenomenon of Joko Widodo**

President Joko Widodo ends his term on October 21, 2024, following the inauguration of President Prabowo Subianto at the MPR in Jakarta. Earlier, on October 20, 2024, Prabowo held a farewell event for Jokowi at the State Palace (Setpres, 2024). Although their administrative relationship ended at that time, communication between the two continued. On November 4, 2024, Prabowo visited Jokowi in Solo to discuss various government issues, albeit without a specific agenda (Wasita, 2024).

Jokowi's presence in the public sphere is still felt, especially through his support for candidates in regional elections (Wahyu NV, 2024a). Jokowi endorsed regent, mayor, and governor candidates in various regions, including candidates for Governor of Jakarta, with his participation widely covered on social media. This open political support is an unusual activity for a former leader. On November 14, 2024, Jokowi was seen shopping at a traditional market in Solo, and on November 16, 2024, he attended Ahmad Lutfi-Taj Yasin's campaign in

Purwokerto, addressing the public from an open car while distributing t-shirts with Lutfi's image and highlighting Jokowi's achievements during his presidency (Abdun Nashr, 2024).

Coordinating Minister for Food Zulkifli Hasan also visited Jokowi in Solo on November 13, 2024, reportedly out of "nostalgia" (Wahyu NV, 2024b). Zulkifli, who previously served as Minister of Trade in Jokowi's administration, now holds an important position in Prabowo's government. Although the exact reason for his visit was not mentioned, it shows the continuing relationship between members of Jokowi's cabinet and Prabowo's administration.

The transfer of power from Jokowi to Prabowo on October 21, 2024 marked the end of Jokowi's second term, but his influence was still felt among the public and even in Prabowo's government (Strategics, 2024). Prabowo's visit to Jokowi on November 4, 2024 shows that even though the two no longer hold official positions, they still communicate about government issues, albeit without a formal agenda.

After stepping down from office, Jokowi remained active in the public sphere, particularly through his endorsement of local election candidates, which was visible on social media. His involvement in public activities such as visits to markets or direct involvement in local election campaigns in Solo attracted public attention. The meeting with Coordinating Minister for Food Zulkifli Hasan also shows the continuing

relationship between Jokowi's cabinet and the Prabowo administration.

Jokowi's post-presidency engagement reflects the evolving dynamics of Indonesian politics. Although his official status has changed, his influence remains strong. This phenomenon highlights the flexible nature of Indonesian politics, where former leaders can retain influence and visibility despite having stepped down from formal positions of power.

### **Joko Widodo's Involvement in Post-Presidency Politics**

#### **1. Motivation Behind Jokowi's Political Involvement**

After completing his term on October 20, 2024, Joko Widodo (Jokowi) remains active in public affairs, engaging with government officials and supporting candidates in regional elections. His continued involvement reflects efforts to maintain political influence, supported by a large voter base, particularly in regions where his loyal followers are prominent. By endorsing candidates and attending social events, Jokowi seeks to preserve his influence within national and regional political coalitions, positioning himself as a key figure in post-presidency politics.

This involvement also serves as a strategy to consolidate networks. Jokowi's backing of candidates and efforts to form a "shadow coalition" aim to secure political loyalty that could shape local policies aligned with his vision. This network expansion strengthens his influence across local and national governance, potentially

affecting regional policy directions in line with his political agenda.

Moreover, Jokowi's actions may stem from a sense of moral responsibility or public expectation. His ongoing activities reflect a response to widespread public support and a personal commitment to national development. As a respected leader, he may feel compelled to continue contributing to the country's progress, even without holding formal office.

## 2. Social and Political Implications of Jokowi's Involvement

Jokowi's post-presidency involvement has significant implications for Indonesia's political landscape. It could impact political stability in two ways: on one hand, it may show support for the new government, fostering continuity; on the other, it may be seen as interference, provoking tensions if groups feel he is challenging President Prabowo's policies. Jokowi could be viewed as a stabilizing force or a rival, potentially exacerbating political polarization if his actions are perceived as threatening Prabowo's agenda.

Moreover, Jokowi's backing of candidates in regional elections may mobilize support, influencing outcomes, especially in areas with loyal followers. This could deepen political polarization if seen as interference in local politics, leading to regional tensions.

Psychologically, his involvement offers hope to supporters, reinforcing his role in Indonesian politics. However, for the opposition or Prabowo's supporters, it may undermine the new government's legitimacy and increase tensions.

## 3. A Planned Strategy or an Organic Response?

Jokowi's continued presence in the public sphere raises the question of whether his involvement is part of a planned political strategy or a spontaneous response to social circumstances. Both possibilities may be at play.

Indications of a Planned Strategy: The meeting between Jokowi and Prabowo in Solo in November 2024, though without an official agenda, suggests Jokowi's efforts to stay relevant in politics. Support from figures like Zulkifli Hasan, now a minister in Prabowo's cabinet, reflects Jokowi's strategy to maintain and strengthen his political network.

An Organic Response to Public Support: Jokowi's popularity, especially among the middle and lower classes, makes him responsive to public expectations. Spontaneous visits to markets, like Klitikan Market in Solo, show his desire to remain connected with the people. These gestures reflect a natural response to public affection.

Regardless of the interpretation, Jokowi's activities indicate his continued influence in Indonesian politics, whether through political strategies or his connection to the people. Both approaches help maintain his relevance.

If viewed as a strategy, the effects likely relate to long-term political goals, potentially shaping policy or supporting political figures, which could raise concerns among opponents. If seen as an organic response, it reinforces Jokowi's image as a leader who cares for the

people, boosting his popularity without provoking political controversy.

Thus, the impact depends on how his involvement is interpreted by stakeholders like politicians, the media, and the public.

#### 4. Conspiracy in Politics: Jokowi's Potential Influence

Jokowi's role in managing a "shadow coalition" is a possible dynamic. In Indonesia's politically charged environment, leaders like him may influence policy through indirect channels. His continued engagement with officials from new parties or administrations suggests he may be crafting a complex political narrative. While his actions appear to respond to public support, Jokowi may be planning strategic moves to maintain control over Indonesia's political future.

As a former president without party ties or formal political structures, Jokowi's strategy is subtle and harder to detect. Though not overt, his influence could significantly impact the political scene through less visible, but powerful, mechanisms.

#### 5. How Jokowi Can Play a "Political Conspiracy" Role Without a Formal Structure

**Influence Through Informal Relations and Social Networks:** Though lacking structural power, Jokowi has strong social capital. During his presidency, he built ties with influential figures across sectors. These relationships can help him influence policies without being formally tied to a party.

**Shadow Coalitions and Indirect Influence:** Jokowi can utilize shadow coalitions, offering moral or public support to candidates who align with his vision. This allows him to influence the political landscape without being directly affiliated with any political group.

**Moral Figure as a Strategic Mask:** Jokowi's image as a down-to-earth leader can mask his political involvement. Public visits can appear purely moral, while behind the scenes, he communicates strategically with various stakeholders.

**Selective Support for Policies or Candidates:** Even without executive power, Jokowi can influence policies through symbolic support for national and local officials. Meetings with Prabowo and other figures after his presidency may help maintain his influence, creating the impression of control without direct engagement.

These actions could be seen as part of a conspiracy strategy, though not necessarily to retain power. His continued political discourse might aim to influence policy without party affiliation. However, political conspiracy is not always negative; Jokowi may simply want to ensure his vision and policies endure.

In conclusion, Jokowi's post-presidency involvement suggests a more dynamic political phase. His role could balance political stability or worsen polarization. By maintaining political networks and influencing local dynamics, Jokowi remains influential in

shaping Indonesia's political future, regardless of formal position.

#### 6. Potential Future Impacts

The political dynamics in Indonesia after Jokowi's transition to Prabowo mark a new phase filled with challenges. Jokowi's post-presidency activities, such as market visits and informal meetings with political figures, suggest his desire to maintain influence, not just out of nostalgia but as a balancing force for the new administration.

For Prabowo, Jokowi's continued involvement could influence policy decisions. While Jokowi no longer holds formal power, he maintains influence through support for local candidates and the networks he built during his presidency. This may challenge the dominance of the new government at the national level.

Jokowi's actions also affect the broader public. For his supporters, his continued activity provides a sense of security, especially among the middle and lower classes, who see him as a leader close to the people. For the opposition, his ongoing presence may be concerning, as it could signal political instability or act as a shadow opposition to obstruct the government's agenda.

Jokowi's future role remains uncertain. If he continues supporting candidates aligned with his vision, he could create a new power axis. Alternatively, his constructive support for the government could help Prabowo maintain stability and advance his programs.

This dynamic reflects the complexity of post-Jokowi Indonesian politics. While a former leader's involvement can be both a blessing and a challenge, it depends on how Jokowi and Prabowo manage their roles. If handled well, Jokowi's influence could enrich democracy by offering an alternative voice. However, if tensions arise, political polarization could disrupt the stability built over the years.

#### **History and Culture: The Javanese Concept of "Lengser Keprabon Madeg Pandito Ratu"**

Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) post-presidency activities provide an interesting perspective when viewed through the Javanese cultural lens, particularly the concept of "lengser keprabon madeg pandito ratu." Traditionally, this concept expects a leader to step away from politics and lead a more spiritual life as a respected figure, the "pandito." However, Jokowi's actions appear to challenge this tradition. This analysis examines this phenomenon within Javanese culture and through a cross-cultural comparison.

"Lengser keprabon" means stepping down from the throne, while "madeg pandito ratu" refers to becoming a revered spiritual figure. This tradition emphasizes that a retired leader should focus on spirituality and service to society, shedding their ego. Examples include King Pakubuwono X and Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX, who distanced themselves from politics after retirement, dedicating themselves to spiritual and social duties.

After his presidency, Jokowi has remained active in public life, supporting local candidates and engaging with the community, such as through market visits in Solo. This seems to contradict the traditional expectation of withdrawing from worldly matters. Jokowi may reinterpret "madeg pandito ratu" by staying engaged in public service, continuing to contribute to the nation without holding an official position. His "blusukan" approach, maintaining closeness to the people, could be seen as a form of devotion not tied to office.

Jokowi's continued presence may provide political stability and strengthen his respect among the people, especially during a government transition. However, it could also be viewed as an attempt to influence politics indirectly, potentially causing resistance from opposition groups. If Jokowi navigates his role without conflict with the new administration, he could set a precedent for future leaders on how to remain relevant without violating traditional norms.

This phenomenon shows how traditional concepts, such as "lengser keprabon," adapt to modern times. While Jokowi doesn't fully retreat into a spiritual life, he remains a figure of public service, reflecting an evolution of "madeg pandito ratu" that is relevant to today's socio-political context. By comparing this with traditions in other cultures, we see that a former leader's post-presidency role is influenced by culture and context, whether as a

spiritual figure, adviser, or active participant in society and politics.

### **Impact on New Leadership: The Leadership of President Prabowo Subianto**

Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) continued activity after his presidency could significantly impact the leadership of President Prabowo Subianto. Given Jokowi's popularity, his ongoing public presence may influence Prabowo's efforts to establish his own legitimacy, creating potential challenges in power dynamics and public perception.

Prabowo needs time to solidify his position and leadership image. Jokowi's ongoing public activities, such as visiting markets or supporting regional candidates, could create the perception that his influence remains strong. This could overshadow Prabowo, particularly if Jokowi is viewed as a "defender of the people." Comparisons between Prabowo's leadership and Jokowi's may arise, especially during Prabowo's early years in office.

One of Prabowo's challenges is avoiding the perception that Jokowi still holds political influence. Public meetings, such as the one after Jokowi's term, could fuel speculations about Jokowi's continued sway over decision-making. If Jokowi offers opinions on policies, this might be seen as interference, undermining Prabowo's independence and complicating his efforts to gain support from groups that opposed Jokowi.

Jokowi's active involvement could also create tensions between their

supporters. If not managed well, this could fragment the political elite and destabilize Prabowo's efforts to implement his agenda. Jokowi's continued popularity gives him the ability to mobilize public support, which could either help or hinder Prabowo, depending on their relationship. Jokowi's public support could enhance Prabowo's credibility, while criticism could undermine his authority.

The "halo effect" from Jokowi's presidency could complicate Prabowo's leadership, with his policies being compared to Jokowi's era. Prabowo must demonstrate independence by focusing on distinct policy priorities and making bold decisions.

Rather than viewing Jokowi's presence as a threat, Prabowo could leverage it strategically to strengthen shared policies, such as food security. However, he must avoid becoming overly reliant on Jokowi's support to maintain his own vision. By building support from groups not aligned with Jokowi, Prabowo can operate more freely from his predecessor's shadow.

Jokowi's ongoing presence is a double-edged sword for Prabowo. It could provide political stability or create the perception of incomplete power transition, hindering Prabowo's leadership development. By focusing on his policy priorities and demonstrating independence, Prabowo can turn this situation into an opportunity to prove his leadership.

## CONCLUSION

### 1. Summary

This article examined the dynamics of former President Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) active involvement in the public sphere post-presidency. This shift in former leaders' behaviour in Indonesia can influence social, political, and cultural contexts.

Jokowi's engagement is driven by his enduring popularity and a strategy to maintain influence over the public and political elites, giving the impression that he still plays a significant political role. Culturally, this contrasts with the Javanese tradition of "lengser keprabon madeg pandito ratu," where former leaders transition to a more reflective life. Jokowi's active public role blends tradition and modernity in post-office leadership.

Politically, Jokowi's continued prominence challenges President Prabowo Subianto's administration by creating the perception that political influence has not fully shifted, complicating efforts to establish legitimacy and independence.

This article sheds light on the complexities of power transitions in Indonesia, highlighting the impact of cultural, historical, and political strategies. Understanding this phenomenon offers valuable lessons for other countries facing similar leadership changes.

### 2. Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are made to address the active involvement of former leaders in the public sphere:

- a. Inclusive Communication: President Prabowo's administration should foster communication with Jokowi to ensure a smooth transition. Collaboration on non-political issues can strengthen the new government's legitimacy and stability.
- b. Advisory Roles: Former leaders like Jokowi could serve as consultants on strategic policies, using their experience without creating power conflicts. Formal mechanisms should ensure their involvement supports the current leadership's authority.
- c. Cultural Integration: Leaders should integrate values such as "lengser keprabon madeg pandito ratu" into leadership approaches. Further research could explore applying these values in modern political transitions.
- d. Clear Policy Framework: The government and DPR should create clear, flexible policies on the role of former presidents in public life to avoid instability and clarify leadership authority.
- e. Political Literacy: The government, civil society, and media should enhance political literacy through campaigns that emphasize peaceful transitions and the role of former leaders.

By adopting these recommendations, Indonesia can address the challenges of former leaders' involvement while leveraging their influence for national development.

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