

## Politician trojan horse issue: The challenge of developing a priority political strategy for facing the 2024 simultaneous elections

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### Article Info

#### Article History

##### Submitted:

24 October 2024

##### Revised:

21 January 2025

##### Accepted:

5 June 2025

#### Keywords:

*Bonum commune*; election in Indonesia; political strategy; Trojan Horse.

### Abstract

This article examines the concept of "Trojan Horse politics" and the challenges associated with priority-based political development in the context of the 2024 simultaneous elections, using an ethical Trojan Horse strategy from a political philosophy perspective. The research is based on a comprehensive literature review of priority-based political frameworks. Data on moral virtues were gathered from various journal articles, academic papers, government reports, social media, online sources, and expert writings, particularly those of Thomas Aquinas. The data analysis employs philosophical hermeneutics, including verstehen, translation, and interpretation techniques. The study, conducted over three months, reveals that prioritisation is critical in selecting potential political leaders and representatives. Virtue should motivate all competencies, guiding prospective leaders in recognising their calling to address societal issues, crafting a vision, setting political agendas, formulating policy programs, and taking bold actions. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of resilience, the ability to inspire risk-taking, and the stimulation of social capital, charisma, and collective potential in fostering national sustainability and achieving social welfare. In preparation for the 2024 elections, political parties must undertake thorough vetting processes and disclose the histories of their candidates to ensure that elected leaders prioritise the public good.

Article Link: <https://jurnal.uny.ac.id/index.php/civics/article/view/85587>

## Introduction

A key political event that requires critical contemplation on the nation's leadership orientation, the fulfilment of state goals, and the choosing of leaders who will decide the future wealth and welfare of the people is the simultaneous elections Indonesia will confront in 2024.



These elections will take place simultaneously. As a core strategy for handling these approaching elections, this paper investigates the significance of placing ethical ideals at the forefront of political decision-making as a foundational consideration.

As stated in the Preamble of the Constitution of 1945, which emphasises the state's responsibility to defend the whole country and provide social welfare, the quality of leadership plays an essential role in the accomplishment of these goals. Throughout history, national leaders' moral fibre and leadership abilities have tremendously impacted the nation's ability to continue existing and thrive economically. According to Rawanoko et al. (2023), ineffective leadership can result in a nation's fragmentation, poverty, and collapse. Considering this, leadership decisions should not be made just based on short-term political rewards or populist promises; instead, they should be formed on a solid ethical foundation that prioritises the nation's long-term health.

Several political dramas have characterised the political scene in the years running up to the elections in 2024. Several candidates have been competing for leadership positions. Anies Baswedan and Muhamin Iskandar are two of the candidates who have proposed a vision of change. On the other hand, Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming have advocated for continuity under the banner of sustainable development. Ganjar Pranowo and Ma'ruf Amin, on the other hand, are attempting to find a middle ground (Ali, 2022). Nevertheless, the political climate has become even more convoluted because of recent political manoeuvring. One example of this is President Joko Widodo's surprising nomination of Gibran as a candidate for vice president. This candidacy has caused controversy and raised doubts about the actual political affiliations that are at play.

The growth of these political actors reflects the complicated nature of modern Indonesian politics, which is characterised by frequently fluid coalitions and the quest for power that may overwhelm the moral ideals that ought to drive administration. In this context, the ethics of political tactics, which include the utilisation of power for the benefit of the group, are becoming an increasingly essential consideration. As a poignant example of how political strategies can blur the lines between loyalty and manipulation, Trojan Horse politics serves as both a strategy for political survival and a potential threat to democratic integrity. This is especially true concerning Prabowo Subianto's alignment with President Joko Widodo, even though they had previously opposed each other.

The current situation makes the potential for "Trojan Horse politics" to impact the political discourse even more relevant (Choi, 2004; Suaib et al., 2017). The notion of subtle infiltration of opposing political forces is the foundation of this strategy based on political analysis (Hasani et al., 2022). The goal of this approach is to acquire support from inside rivals or to weaken them from within. The legitimacy of political allegiance and the ethical repercussions of such manoeuvres are questioned due to this significant development. When making judgments that align with the nation's long-term interests, it is becoming increasingly important for voters to be aware of the ethical implications associated with these tactics.

This essay examines the role of ethical priorities in political strategy, specifically regarding the Trojan Horse tactic. This study aims to emphasise the relevance of ethical concerns in picking a suitable leader for the nation by investigating the interplay between leadership ethics and political manoeuvring. Specifically, the study will focus on the relationship between the two components. The debate will not go into the technical components of national leadership; instead, it will concentrate on the ethical framework that ought to serve as the foundation for political decision-making in the next election (Chalik, 2021; Suaib et al., 2017; Ufen, 2008), which will take place in 2024. Considering this perspective, the purpose of this essay is to provide a critical analysis of the priorities that ought to direct the political decisions that the electorate of Indonesia makes in these trying times (Apandie et al., 2022).

When the possible repercussions of a leadership not founded on ethical principles are considered, the necessity of this examination becomes even more apparent. Voters in a democracy must not only select candidates based on their programs or popularity but also

critically evaluate the candidates' integrity and ethical conformity with the values crucial to the nation. This is an essential component of the democratic process. This essay serves as a call to action for a more considered and contemplative approach to election choices, urging voters to prioritise the ethical elements of leadership in their votes. Consequently, this post serves as a call to action.

## Method

In this study, a philosophical framework is utilised in conjunction with a qualitative research technique. This strategy was selected after considering that the research's primary focus is text interpretation. Between 2004 and 2023, data were collected from various sources, including research documents, papers, journal articles, government reports, social media, and internet sources. The timing of direct presidential and parliamentary elections in Indonesia, which reflects the political dynamics that are important to the study issue, was the driving force for the selection of this period.

The research uses a literature review, which serves not only as a tool for collecting data but also as a means of determining the current state of the art (Hecker & Kalpokas, n.d.; Snyder, 2019), in connection with priority-based political strategies and the phenomenon of Trojan Horse politics in Indonesian politics. This analysis incorporates a wide range of materials relevant to comprehending the circumstances and changes in Indonesian political affairs, as well as the leadership methods that are being utilised in the elections that will take place in 2024.

The research technique begins with the initial step of collecting data from the sources stated above, which is then followed by the interpretation of the data using a philosophical hermeneutic approach. Gadamer's hermeneutic circle serves as the foundation for the study, with a special emphasis on the merging of perspectives between the author and the reader. According to Teichert (2020), the reader, who is also the researcher, tries to interpret the text by considering both the context in which the author wrote the text and the viewpoints the reader may hold. Understanding, translation, and interpretation are the three components that make up the data analysis approach. These three components work together to comprehensively comprehend the meanings included within the texts (Snyder, 2019).

The instrument utilised in this investigation was textual analysis, which was developed through the critical reading of the pertinent literature. A detailed literature study is carried out to gather information concerning the ongoing political phenomena as part of the data collection process. The information that has been obtained is then subjected to hermeneutic analysis to unearth concealed meanings and build links between the texts and the political environment that is pertinent to an investigation.

## Results and Discussion

### Exploring the Politics of the Trojan Horse Model

The Trojan Horse is often applied to cunning and deceitful political strategies (Spitaleri et al., 2019). The Trojan Horse is synonymous with the political strategy of pretending to be a good human being. The term Trojan Horse originally came from Greek mythology about the war against the Trojan Kingdom. It is said that, according to ancient Greek legend, Greek soldiers once fought to conquer the *Trojan Kingdom*. For about ten years, the Greek army besieged the city of Troy but always failed to conquer the Trojan army. The sturdy Trojan gates could not be breached; in fact, the sudden retaliation of the Trojan army resulted in many deaths on the Greek side (Stenzel, 2021). The Greeks once thought about giving in to Troy. Odysseus, a Greek strategist, devised a new pattern by infiltrating several enemies. Odysseus asked the Greek soldiers to make a giant horse statue out of wood. The body of the horse statue is hollow. After the horse statue was finished, a small group of elite Greek troops were put into the cavity of the horse statue. The horse statue was left abandoned in front of the city gates of Troy while other soldiers hid (Li et al., 2020).

In the morning, the Trojans saw that the Greek army camp was empty and only found a giant horse statue in front of the city gates. In an instant, the people of Troy gathered around a

giant horse statue (Khanfar & Al Qaroot, 2020). At the same time, Sinon appears, who claims to be a Greek fugitive because she will be made a sacrifice to the goddess Athena. According to Sinon's story, Athena was furious because of the theft of the Palladium. Athena's anger must be atoned for with human blood. Based on paranormal clues, Sinon is the right person to be sacrificed to Athena. Sinon said he escaped at night and was determined to renounce his Greek citizenship (Xue et al., 2018).

Sinon's play succeeded in deceiving the people of Troy. According to Sinon, the Greek soldiers hoped that the horse statue would be burned so that it would anger the goddess Athena against Troy (Stenzel, 2021). The people of Troy then decided to take the statue into the city to be cared for and avoid the wrath of the goddess Athena. The people of Troy celebrated the victory with great joy. Late at night, when all the city's inhabitants were fast asleep, a squad of Greek soldiers emerged from the horse statue's cavity, opening the city gates to pave the way for another army to invade Troy. The sudden attack killed the ruler and the entire population of Troy.

### **Cunning Politics of Pretending to be Good**

The story of the Trojan Horse is often used as a symbol of the political strategy of disguise and espionage activities. A Trojan horse resembles an infiltration strategy of pretending to be nice to gain sympathy. Trojan horses are synonymous with trickery to find out weaknesses, deceive and dominate opponents (Bragaglia & Rossignolo, 2021). The Trojan Horse strategy has been raised again before the 2024 simultaneous elections. Political observers use the term Trojan Horse to describe the change in appearance of Prabowo Subianto, President Joko Widodo's political rival, in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections. Prabowo, previously a political rival, changed and entered Joko Widodo's government cabinet. Prabowo became the defence minister and showed friendliness, patience, closeness and loyalty to the president.

Several observers suspect Prabowo's changes do not reflect the general's authenticity. His appearance in office was very different from the general's original character, who tended to be passionate and emotional and speak openly (Meiranti, 2019). Some observers believe that the difference in the general's appearance is only a camouflage to deceive the president and his supporters (Roosinda & Alfraita, 2019). Observers (as seen on Deni Siregar's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xh240zfpjcs>) consider this difference part of the general's Trojan horse strategy. Many people believe that Prabowo succeeded in playing a political Trojan horse strategy when he saw the president repeatedly endorsing the general. The Trojan horse strategy became increasingly visible when the president launched his eldest son, Gibran Raka Bumi Raka, as a vice-presidential candidate paired with Prabowo in the 2024 presidential election. This step caused the president to experience relational tension with the party he grew up with, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P). He was accused of building a political dynasty and abusing the Constitutional Court (MK).

Suspensions grew stronger when rumours emerged that the general had deliberately put the brakes on the missionary-leaning party so that it would not appear too obvious that he was taking sides in the presidential election battle constellation. This step was intended to prevent the general's movements from being read by political opponents. This situation raises several fundamental questions. Apart from the certainty regarding the use of the Trojan horse strategy played by Prabowo and the parties participating in this game, the story of the Trojan horse and the general's political movements is a challenge for all parties to find a healthy and dignified political strategy, as well as the correct figure to lead the nation.

### **Trojan Horses and the Corruption Phenomenon**

The issue of a political Trojan horse strategy is related to Prabowo Subianto and to all prospective leaders and representatives of the people who use deceptive techniques by pretending to be good people to gain people's support. Apart from figures suspected by the public and observers, Trojan horse politics colour many Indonesian politicians to varying degrees. The phenomenon of increasing public officials and people's representatives being involved in cases of corruption, collusion, and nepotism contradicts the behaviour and sweet promises made during the campaign (Eliezar, 2020). The corruption case involving two



ministers from the National Democratic Party (Partai NasDem) cabinet in Joko Widodo's cabinet has shocked many people. The government coalition party, which is now raising the issue of this change, has repeatedly emphasised that politics is without dowries and is free from corruption. The party leader, Surya Paloh, even threatened to disband the party if the cadres were involved in corruption (Sahroni et al., 2020). The involvement of the two ministers in corruption cases has further reduced the public's trust in the anti-corruption commitment of President Joko Widodo's government. Corruption cases involving the National Democratic Party do occur now. Long before the disclosure of these two cases, the secretary general of the Nasdem party, Rio Capela, had become a criminal due to accepting bribes from the inactive former governor of North Sumatra, Gatot Puji Nugroho. This makes many parties consider that the National Democratic Party political slogan of no dowry and anti-corruption is just an empty expression, aka a trick to trick the people (Sahroni et al., 2020).

The corruption case in Joko Widodo's cabinet also involved the major parties in the government coalition. The former Minister of Social Affairs from the PDI-P, Juliari Batubara, also had to resign from his position and was in prison due to being involved in a corruption case in social assistance for victims of the COVID-19 pandemic (Putri et al., 2023). Apart from Juliari Batubara, the social minister for the previous period, Idrus Marham was also caught in the Steam-Electric Power Station (*Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Uap*) case. Imam Nahrawi, minister of sports from the National Awakening Party (PKB), is also involved in the corruption case of grant funds from the Indonesian National Sports Committee (KONI). Another minister involved in corruption is Edhy Prabowo. The minister of fisheries and maritime affairs from the Gerindra party resigned because he was involved in a bribery case for lobster seed export permits. It can be said that the corruption case of the 4G *Base Transceiver Station* (BTS) mega project involving Joni Plate and the alleged corruption of the Minister of Agriculture, Yasin Limbo, is only the tip of the iceberg of the corrupt behaviour of state officials in Indonesia. The disclosure of corruption cases involving government officials shows a lack of harmony with their behaviour, appearance and sweet promises when they wanted to take office.

The question arises as to what good behaviour, impressive appearance, and sweet promises mean before the person concerned takes office? Some parties indicated that all this was a camouflage or a mere pretence to deceive the people and convince superiors and influential parties. The good behaviour, appearance, and promises are not the official's true character but are part of a drama that is acted out to obtain a position. Such behaviour only lasts for a short time and has sinister motives. Such kindness and impressions automatically disappear after the candidate obtains the desired position. The drama played is another political strategy for the Trojan horse in Greek mythology. Such a political strategy is almost identical to the ancient parable of the "wolf in sheep's clothing." The wolf, disguised in the sheep's clothing, will be accepted and assimilated into the flock; however, once it infiltrates and gains control, it quickly reveals its predatory nature, posing not just a threat but also bringing destruction to the sheep (Ndona et al., 2021).

### **Prioritising Rational over Emotion**

The Trojan horse strategy does not only occur in the political field. The same strategy is also used in various areas of life, such as business, education, and other fields. Business manoeuvres are often characterised by cunning, such as infiltration and Trojan horse-style deception. The same happens in social organisations, the world of education, etc. The Trojan Horse strategy is the most common in the world of politics. The ancient story of the Mahabharata, which features the character Senkuni, looks like Sinon in the story of the Trojan horse (Endraswara, 2019). Infiltration strategies are common in political competition and the world of intelligence from time to time. The fighting strategy often used by Western imperialism also resembles Trojan Horse politics. What is the connection between the political Trojan horse strategy and Indonesian political life, including the simultaneous elections of 2024? The Indonesian people, in the 2024 elections, as in previous periods, have voting rights in determining the leadership candidates and their representatives in the House of Representatives (DPR). The Indonesian people, as in most democratic countries, have the

freedom to make choices. This freedom, on the one hand, indicates the people's sovereignty. However, on the other hand, if a wrong choice occurs, it can plunge the country into chaos and bring it to the brink of destruction. Democracy is like a double-edged sword. Freedom of choice, if exercised correctly, can produce leaders and representatives of the people of good quality, whereas if carried out incorrectly, it can produce leaders and representatives of the people who are tyrannical and of poor quality.

A direct election cannot guarantee that the quality of leaders will be better. Many observers point out that political choices, including the presidential and regional elections in Indonesia, are dominated by emotions rather than rational considerations (Safitri et al., 2023). The victory of Susilo Bambang Yudoyono in the 2004 presidential election was most likely based more on the public's longing for a leader with a dashing posture (Dahlia & Permana, 2022). The same thing happened with the victory of the PDIP in the first election after the collapse of the New Order, which was dominated by the figure of Megawati Soekarno Putri, who represented the Sukarno clan. PDIP's victory was most likely due more to the people's love for Soekarno than to the leadership competence of Megawati and the legislative candidates from this party (Dahlia & Permana, 2022). A similar pattern continued in the 2009 presidential election. The 2014 and 2019 presidential elections also still show similar traces. Most of Joko Widodo's voters come from the *Soekarnoism* and Nahdatul Ulama.

In contrast, Prabowo Subianto's voters mostly come from Islamic Muhammadiyah circles and parties at odds with the PDIP (Terorisme, 2016). Emotional tendencies can be seen in supporters' slogans: "What is important is not Jokowi" or, conversely, "What is important is Prabowo." The simultaneous elections in 2024 will still show a similar phenomenon. Observers predict that voters for president and vice president will likely be polarised based on emotional ties. The first group, prospective voters Ganjar Pranowo and Mafud MD, will likely inherit most of Joko Widodo's voters, such as Central Java, East Java, the Nahdatul Ulama congregation and non-Muslim communities. The second group, voters of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Raka Bumi Raka, will inherit most of Prabowo's voters in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections. The third group, Anis Baswedan and Muhaiman Iskadar voters, will most likely come from Islamic parties.

Choices based on emotional relationships tend to be subjective, not objective and sometimes even blind to the absolute truth. Such a choice becomes uncritical of the candidate's leadership competence. This can be seen from the slogans echoed: "basically this one" and "not that one." Choices based on emotions will easily be incited by various issues and dramas played by politicians. Most political issues are just drama and do not represent the objective truth. Getting caught up in political issues and drama carries the risk of choosing the wrong leaders and representatives of the people. The risk of making the wrong choice is quite considerable in the simultaneous elections 2024. Voters are now faced with many politicians, potential leaders, and representatives of the people who, to the naked eye, look good, have impressive appearances, and are competent. This situation is made more complicated by the presence of many candidates who are suddenly generous, care about people's problems, and make sweet promises (Putri et al., 2023).

The question that arises is what people should consider when choosing. What should be the basis for people's considerations in giving trust and making choices about the leader and his representatives? In most democratic countries, the candidate's victory is determined by the people's trust and aspects of financial capital and social capital (Kreuter & Lezin, 2002). Reality shows that financial and social capital largely influence people's trust. These two aspects, although not always categorised as buying, have a significant influence on conditioning people's trust. Financial strength and social capital often determine the candidate's image. The majority of people do not have direct relations with the candidates. The introduction of candidates is very dependent on publications carried out by the media and social networks. This situation causes control over media and social networks to determine the candidate's image. A candidate's victory is relatively determined by their control or favouring of media and social

networks (Dahlia & Permana, 2022). Since the New Order era, these two capitals have influenced people's trust and the leader's survival.

The decline in control over the media and social organisations, mainly student and Islamic communities, played a significant role in the downfall of the Soeharto government in 1998. The development of private television in the 1990s, student openness and Islamic revivalism have exposed many of the bad sides of the New Order government. Suharto's image as the father of development began to fade. At the same time, the image of the president as a dictator and the implementation of practices of collusion, corruption, and nepotism are getting stronger. The same phenomenon occurred after the reformation. As moderate Islamic figures, media and social capital were important in building public trust, which helped President Abdulrahman Wahid. Media partiality and support from various social organisations determined the victory of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Joko Widodo.

This reality requires people to have a critical attitude towards various information regarding potential leaders and people's representatives. People's beliefs should not be based solely on images constructed by various media or emotions conditioned by various social forces. Trust must be based on a rational, objective assessment of the candidate's self and competence. Solving national problems and development requires leaders who are not the product of emotional choices but the fruit of objective, rational considerations due to the candidate's adequate character and competence. Media reports and the views of influential parties are never value-free. Every media report and argument always starts with a particular horizon, often containing interests (Dostal, 2021). Faced with the diversity of information, views and situations of uncertainty, people must have a critical attitude to evaluate the candidates rationally and objectively.

#### **Based on Priority**

Regardless of allegations against specific figures who use it, the political Trojan horse strategy must be rejected in principle. A Trojan horse not only points to strategy but also bad intentions. Trojan horses are oriented towards mastering and destroying opponents. This certainly goes against the principles of a democratic country, which respect human rights and the need to conduct politics with dignity. One could argue that good ends justify bad means (Setyani et al., 2023). However, it must be emphasised that good ends cannot justify all means. Reasonable goals must always use good methods (Chukwuma & Ngwoke, 2022).

The Trojan Horse issue must challenge all parties to develop a good political orientation and strategy. This issue should stimulate the search for an appropriate basis for determining the suitability of potential leaders and representatives of the people. The people certainly do not want leaders who pretend to be good and who, when in power, will become wolves who rob, oppress and destroy. The Trojan Horse strategy is the opposite of priority-based politics. The term virtue refers to the words *virtus* (Latin) and *arete* (Greek), meaning moral excellence (Elders, 2019). As stated by many experts, Virtue is a character disposition that allows someone to behave morally well (Statman, 2019). The word disposition refers to habits or tendencies that are permanent. This word, in psychology, is often called character (Bilalia, 2019). Virtue may be closer to moral qualities that are persistent and behaviour that tends to be consistent (Elders, 2019). Maturity in a democracy is measured by the people's ability to elect priority leadership candidates. Priority leadership, as stated by philosophers, at least Peterson and Seligman, is seen in wisdom, courage, having concern for humanity, siding with justice, living in temperance, and transcendence and various other advantages (Nitisari et al., 2022).

#### **The Need for Prospective Historical Research**

Virtue presupposes habits; *habitus* (Elders, 2019). Good qualities that are a priority must become character, inherent in the prospective leader or representative of the people. History shows that democracy, openness, and tolerance were not only carried out by Abdurahman Wahid when he approached the 1999 election, but had become personal, becoming habits, character and *habits* in question long before his candidacy for president. Abdurahman Wahid's *track record* shows that from a young age, he struggled with issues of humanity and democracy and took sides with the small people. The consistency of the president's attitude has led many

to call him the father of Indonesian democracy and tolerance (Sari & Dozan, 2021). The same thing happens to world figures with *a track record* of defending humanity. Mother Theresa of Calcutta is considered a defender of people experiencing poverty because of her *track record* and consistency in serving Calcutta's poor and neglected people for a long time. Nelson Mandela is also known as the father of reconciliation because of his courage to forgive South Africa's apartheid rulers, who discriminated against black people, even imprisoning the president for more than two decades (Magu, 2020). Virtue always refers to habits and consistency in good behaviour. This requires an investigation into the history of prospective leaders and representatives of the people.

An investigation into history will prove whether the candidate has merit or is just pretending to be nice, aka carrying out a Trojan horse political strategy. Since the direct elections of 2004, the social phenomenon has shown that many candidates suddenly appear as good and caring people as the elections approach. Most of them will disappear after the end of this five-year democratic party and return before the next five years. Such politicians or candidates come only to deceive the people by pretending to be good and making sweet promises like liberator heroes and guarantors of prosperity. Investigating the history of the candidates will prevent people from getting caught up in the candidates' various political issues and theatrics (Wahab, 2022).

A well-behaved candidate can turn evil after taking office, just as a bad person can be good. There is no guarantee that a good candidate will remain good. However, goodness that has become *a habit* or character will last longer. This is different from the goodness that is portrayed in a campaign drama. Good behaviour that has not yet become a habit or character can easily turn bad. The goodness of the candidates is not necessarily a political drama. There is a possibility that kindness is motivated by good intentions and goals. Still, if it has not become a habit, it can be changed because they were drawn into the temptation of power and facilities. Indonesian people still remember the Jakarta thug figure, John Key, who, according to testimony at the Kick Andy event on April 16, 2019, had repented and become a good person. Still, after leaving prison, he returned to being a godfather in the thug community (Syahputra, 2022). The same thing often happens to drug addicts who have just come out of rehabilitation. The former addict has indeed changed for the better, but his goodness cannot be said to be *habitual*. The former addict still needs quite a long time to ensure that he is entirely free from narcotics (Ahmad et al., 2022). This reality means that every political choice requires an examination of the candidate's history. The investigation is not intended to judge or "revenge history," but to ensure the candidate has the virtues and competencies to lead. This step will prevent people from making the wrong choice. Investigating the history of candidates can minimise risks and ensure that the elected leaders and representatives of the people are servants of the people's interests. Every public position is always accompanied by power and facilities. Leaders who do not prioritise will easily abuse authority and facilities, risking destroying the nation's integrity and plunging the people into suffering.

### **Departing from Concern about National Problems**

A further question is how to assess a candidate's merit. What are the characteristics of an excellent candidate? The main characteristic of a candidate with excellence lies in their leadership motive. The candidacy of a priority person is not based on ambition for power but on concern for national problems. Leader candidates have priorities, just like other candidates. You need power, but not to enjoy honour, facilities and wealth. The motives of candidates who prioritise are directed at the nation's progress towards a more complete, *unified* and prosperous condition. Potential leaders who prioritise finding their calling for leadership in bad situations that befall society, such as poverty, social injustice, threats of disintegration, intolerance and so on. In such a situation, for prospective leaders, virtue is a divine voice calling them to struggle to recover and build the nation towards integrity, solidity and prosperity. The nation's problems with all the social realities of life, as Karl Theodore Jaspers said, are the original language of transcendence (Ndona et al., 2019), issues for prospective leaders whose priority is a divine voice. Leadership steps, therefore, must start with deep reflection and



contemplation of the nation's reality. A prospective leader who prioritises himself is a reflectionist. Reflection will bring the prospective leader not only to understand the nation's problems but also to understand, have social concerns, empathise with people's suffering, and, through contemplation, discover and formulate a vision for the nation's development. Reflection alone makes the candidate a visionary. Concern and vision will give the candidate the charisma to communicate expertly and convince many people. Such prospective leaders will appreciate themselves as servants of the people, have clarity in their direction, the courage to take steps and take risks, perseverance in work, and steadfastness in their stance (Spears & Horsman, 2021).

#### **For the Existence of the Nation and *Bonum Commune***

A further question is, in what direction does a prospective leader with priority lead? The answer to this question must refer to the introductory constitutional statement about the purpose of the state. The Indonesian state refers to the opening statement of the 1945 Constitution as being aimed at "protecting the entire Indonesian nation and all of Indonesia's bloodshed; promoting general welfare; enriching the life of a nation; and participating in implementing world order based on independence, eternal peace and social justice." (Fitriana, 2018) Referring to this statement, prospective leaders who are superior must have a character and vision directed at maintaining existence and achieving *the bonum commune*.

*First*, care for the existence of the nation. Existence is related to the survival and sustainability of the nation (Ndonga, 2019). Sustainability requires maintaining the integrity, *unity* and safety of the nation (Magnis-Suseno, 2016). Maintenance of integrity occupies a significant part in ensuring the existence of the nation, and the struggle to save the nation provides the most significant possibility for the nation's sustainability. Every rift can threaten existence and sustainability. Cracks can hamper development and erode community welfare. History proves that countries hit by conflict experience obstacles to development and the erosion of prosperity (Damanik & Ndonga, 2022).

National leaders and people's representatives have the main task of maintaining the nation's integrity. The leading indicator of a prospective leader's excellence lies in their ability to maintain integrity and unite all elements of the nation. Integrity can be maintained with peace (Damanik & Ndonga, 2020). Unity can only be built if society lives peacefully. Prospective leaders, therefore, are obliged to have the virtue of conciliation. This character assumes the character of respecting differences, tolerance and embracing opposing parties, minority and marginalised groups, as well as upholding human rights. The prospective leader must naturally can communicate skilfully and inspire many people to accept each other and uphold peace (Philpott, 2022). Prospective leaders who prioritise having a spirit of service. Such a prospective leader, as Robert K. Greenleaf said, can knit together the brotherhood of the warring parties, return them to the right path, heal historical wounds, touch the isolated so that they find meaning in togetherness, become caring, and constructively fight for a prosperous society (Tran & Spears, 2020).

*Second, bonum commune*. The basic constitution emphasises that the state's goals are directed at the general welfare. This statement aligns with the thoughts of Thomas Aquinas, the great medieval philosopher on politics. According to Thomas, politics is aimed at the general welfare of the *bonum commune* (Hamilton-Bleakley, 2020). The term *bonum commune* can be interpreted as suitable for all. The goodness that is meant is not just goodness but what everyone desires. *Bonum est quod omnia appetunt*. Goodness is desired, sought, and even pursued by everyone because it is perfection (Hamilton-Bleakley, 2020).

Perfect goodness is not subjective. Subjective goodness only benefits or pleases specific individuals or groups. Perfect goodness is objective (Harris, 2021). Such goodness does not depend on the desires or subjective feelings of certain people, groups, classes, or parties. Perfect goodness is also not what utilitarianism says, which is aimed at utility for most people (Siagian & Ndonga, 2023). Goodness is said to be perfect, not because it is desired by the authorities or most of the society. Goodness for the majority sometimes comes at the expense of the interests of the minority. Objective goodness must answer the searches and needs of all parties (Ndonga,

201.8). *Bonum commune*, therefore, presupposes the realisation of social justice as stated in the fifth principle of Pancasila.

The concept of *bonum commune*, according to Aquinas, is derived from the image of God (Elders, 2019). God is perfect goodness. God, for Aquinas and the *deist* philosophers, not only has existence but also underlies and is the foundation of all existence (Damanik & Ndona, 2020). Aquinas, with a transcendental hierarchical thinking pattern, places the state and the world as images, *imagoes* of the perfection of God's goodness (Ndona, 2021). The state and the world, because they originate from God, share in the perfection of God's goodness. In Augustine's thought, the state must be the city of God, *civitas dei* (Varacalli, 2018) The country must resemble heaven on earth. This condition can occur if politics is aimed at the good of all (Amerini, 2023). The same pattern must also be applied to the concepts of truth and law. God has absolute truth because it underlies all decrees or laws (*lex aeterna*), including natural or natural law (*lex natura*), civil law or other human rules God has absolute truth because it underlies all decrees or laws (*lex aeterna*), including natural or natural law (*lex natura*), civil law, or other human rules (*lex humana*) (Elders, 2019).

Will an orientation towards *the bonum commune* sacrifice the good of the individual, *bonum privatum*? In many countries, the emphasis on general welfare is often an excuse for sacrificing personal welfare. Criticism of community states is mostly about curtailing individual rights (Szulecki, 2019). Communism, referring to Karl Max's basic idea, emphasises shared prosperity and *communio* (Heinrich, 2019). Max did not mean to ignore individual welfare. However, in practice, many communist countries sacrifice individual rights for collective welfare. Records of human rights violations and curtailment of individual rights in communist countries show little concern for individual welfare.

The emphasis on *bonum commune* is not intended to neglect individual well-being. The common good requires goodness for all individuals. The principle of justice in *the bonum commune* shows that fulfilling individual rights is a prerequisite for achieving collective prosperity (Harris, 2021). Collective welfare that ignores individual rights is contrary to the principle of justice and, in itself, is contrary to the principle of *bonum commune*. Prospective leaders who prioritise, on the one hand, must have a strong vision of shared prosperity and, on the other hand, see and love every citizen as an independent and dignified personal subject. Prospective leaders must have a collective spirit of nationalism, high passion, and a strong commitment to individual empowerment.

### **Priorities Underlying Practical Competencies**

Prospective leaders need adequate competence in practical areas of statehood, such as economics, social, political, technological, cultural, etc. Society needs economic sufficiency, availability of facilities and infrastructure, technological capabilities and social comfort. Many observers say that the roots of crime lie in poverty and ignorance. The primary source of national disintegration lies in economic factors. The people hope elected leaders can bring liberation from poverty and oppressive social systems. However, it must be realised that practical competence without virtue only makes a worker, professional or expert in a particular field (Annas, 2011; Schuster, 2023). Prospective leaders need practical competence, but no one has sufficient practical competence. Practical areas are always partial and can be handled by practitioners and professionals. Virtue must be a prerequisite for prospective leaders who have sharp intuition towards the reality of society, build a vision, dare to take steps, give spirit, convince, mobilise and orient many people and all their potential in the struggle to maintain the existence of the nation and the welfare of society.

### **Critical Reflection**

Approaching the 2024 simultaneous elections, political parties and party coalitions are offering political promises and leading figures as potential leaders or representatives of the people. The people will celebrate sovereignty by choosing between nominated figures, who automatically agree to the candidate's political promises. The question should be whether the people have sovereignty over their choices. Will the people's choice fall on candidates who are superior and competent? Reflections on the previous period's elections and the resulting

products of leaders and representatives of the people show that priority and competence have not been the primary considerations in the election. High-cost elections mean that political parties and party coalitions tend to nominate figures with financial and social capital rather than those who are superior and competent. People, on the other hand, also have limitations in understanding candidates. This limitation means that people often get caught up in the candidates' various political issues and dramas. This reality shows that the Indonesian people are not truly sovereign in their political choices.

Popular sovereignty presupposes full awareness and free will in choosing. The awareness aspect presupposes adequate understanding of the candidate's self and political orientation, and free will requires alternatives, freedom from determination, and appreciation of universal moral principles. Celebrating people's sovereignty requires an adequate understanding of the candidates' self and political orientation. This aspect requires adequate rational power, depth of understanding and sharpness of judgment. Reality shows that most Indonesians are relatively limited in understanding and assessing the real conditions, track records and political orientation of candidates. Candidates' appearances in public are often more a product of their image.

The candidates' truths are hidden behind the scenes and are often far different from their public appearances. This requires election organisers, scholars, and social media activists to investigate, analyse and publish widely to the public. An investigation of life behind the scenes will prove the consistency and sustainability of the good behaviour of candidates and charming appearance, regarding track records, and risks exposing candidates to shame. This is indeed a risk for candidates for public office in democratic countries. Every candidate for public office must be willing to facilitate the investigation and publication of life histories. Aspects of privacy are automatically eroded and slipped into the public realm. Respect for the people's sovereignty requires that every prospective leader be willing to be naked.

Democracy cannot be separated from openness. Investigating and publishing the candidate's history will be valuable to upholding popular sovereignty. The investigation does not only concern the history of the candidates. The people also need an adequate understanding of the candidates' vision, political orientation, work programs and social capital. People need rational truth regarding what the candidates convey. Investigations are needed to ensure that the vision, political direction, and work program will guarantee the unity and achievement of the *bonum commune*. The people need assurance that the candidates do not have a hidden agenda that could destroy the nation's integrity and hinder the achievement of general prosperity. The 2024 simultaneous elections, which are just around the corner, still leave much homework for the general election commission, scholars and social media activists to reveal the truth about the candidates honestly, objectively and transparently.

## Conclusion

The sustained existence of the nation and the achievement of social welfare require priority leadership. The state does need various practical competencies, but virtue is the leader's most basic need. Virtue will move the leader's intuition to find a calling in various societal problems, build a vision, determine political direction, and develop programs that support the sustainability of existence and achieve social welfare. Making a leader can stimulate many people to develop various potentials and charisma, as well as all social capital, in fighting for the continued existence and achievement of social welfare. Ahead of the 2004 simultaneous elections, parties and coalitions of political parties must have the courage to produce candidates for leaders and representatives of the people who are superior. The people in sovereignty, with rational considerations, must have the courage to choose a leader candidate with priorities. Election organisers, intellectuals and social media activists are obliged to contribute by investigating and publishing the history of the candidates and rationally and objectively dissecting their vision, political direction and programs. All of this will be the most valuable contribution to society to elect prospective leaders who are superior and prevent the country from disaster due to bad leadership.

### Disclosure Statement

The authors does not have any potential conflict of interest to disclose.

### Funding Statement

This work does not receive funding.

### Ethics Approval

No ethics approval is needed.

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