

The Failure of the Zulkifli Nurdin Dynasty in the Case of Ratu Munawaroh's Defeat in the 2020 Jambi Gubernatorial Election

Giyanti Elsa Seprini¹, Sri Budi Eko Wardani²

Ilmu Politik, FISIP, Universitas Indonesia

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Abstract

This research explains the phenomenon of the failure of Zulkifli Nurdin's political dynasty, who had held power in Jambi Province since 1999. More specifically this research aims to analyze the reasons behind the defeat of Ratu Munawaroh (Zulkifli Nurdin's wife) in the 2020 Jambi gubernatorial election. Researchers used a qualitative study and boundary control theory from Edward L. Gibson (2012) with two frameworks, namely: boundary strengthening by political dynasties to maintain power in an area and boundary opening by the opposition to open the boundaries of political dynasty power. This research found that; in the case of Ratu Munawaroh's defeat, boundary strengthening did not take place (passive family support, difficulty in getting PAN support, and economic problems) which led to the strengthening of boundary opening (Al Haris-Abdullah Sani won PAN support, Ratu Munawaroh was the target of negative and anti-dynasty campaigns)

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Corresponding Author:

Giyanti Elsa Seprini

Ilmu Politik, FISIP, Universitas Indonesia

Email: giyantielsas@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

A portrait of political dynasties in Indonesia interpreted from the emergence of “Cendanaization”, a term referring to the sandalwood family of President Soeharto as the rulers of strategic posts, especially in the political-economic field for 32 years. Meanwhile, in the era of decentralization, political dynasties have become more massive with a shift in the distribution pattern from the presence of small kings who control the regions. According to data, since the direct Pilkada was implemented in 2005, there has been an increase in the number of candidates from political dynasties. For example, in 2005-2014 there were 59 candidates and continues to increase by 86 candidates after the Constitutional Court Decision No. 33/PUU-XIII/2015 which annulled the regulation on dynasty politics (Nagara Institute, 2018), in the 2020 regional elections it increased to 124 candidates and in the 2024 regional elections As many as 26.6% or 155 of the total 582 candidates are affiliated with political dynasties (ICW, 2024).

Basically, candidates from political dynasties have the advantage of monopolizing power and resources. However, several challenges have been found that will hinder the survival of local political families such as; changes in public opinion, increasing power among local competitors and other political families, and inadequate human resources of the family or poor successor capabilities (Aspinall and As'ad 2016; Savirani 2016). In addition, Nankyung Choi (2009) saw the defeat of political dynasties due to the limited authority of the ruling elite in maintaining office and being involved in legal problems (Meliala, 2019).

The defeat of political dynasties reached its highest point in the 2020 regional elections, reaching 50.3%, which was previously 42% in the 2015-2018 regional elections (Perludem 2020). In the 2024 regional elections, the defeat case befell 3 out of 4 Ratu Atut's family Chosiyah (Airin Rachmi Diany in the Banten gubernatorial election, Andika Hazrumy in Serang Regency Regional Election, Ratu Ria Maryana in Serang City Pilkada) which has been known for a long time as a symbol of the largest political dynasty in Indonesia (Dita, I. F., & Ruliana, P. 2022). Defeat the political dynasty also befell the Zulkifli Nurdin dynasty in Jambi Province, which not only experienced defeat by Ratu Munawaroh (Wife) in the 2020 Jambi Gubernatorial Election.

Post New Order, local political power in Jambi Influenced Four figures who hold important positions such as: Nasrun Arbain, Agneta Singedekane, Zulkifli Nurdin and Zoerman Manap. However, in his journey only Zulkifli Nurdin succeeded in developing political power to the maximum by building a political dynasty in the form of placing his family and cronies in government and political parties.

Table 1 Members of the Zulkifli Nurdin Political Dynasty

No	Family Status	Political Department
Zulkifli Nurdin	Head of family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treasurer of the Jambi Golkar Party 1996 Member of the Indonesian House of Representatives 1998 Chairman of the PAN Regional Executive Board of Jambi Province 1999 Governor of Jambi Period 1999-2004 and 2005-2010
Ratu Munawaroh	Zulkifli Nurdin's wife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member of the Indonesian House of Representatives for the 2009-2014 period Deputy Chairman of the PDIP DPD Jambi Province 2021-present
Hazrin Nurdin	Zulkifli Nurdin's younger brother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman of the PAN DPW Jambi Province in 2015
Zumi Zola	The first child The Story of Zulkifli Nurdin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman of the DPW PAN Jambi Province 2015-2018 Regent of East Tanjung Jabung for the 2011-2016 period Governor of Jambi 2016-2018
Zumi Laza	Zulkifli Nurdin's Fourth Child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman of the PAN DPD for Jambi City in 2016 Chairman of the PAN DPD East Tanjung Jabung in 2024
Sum Indra	Nephew Zulkifli Nurdin (Son of Dewi Nurdin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deputy Mayor of Jambi for the 2008-2013 period Member of the DPD RI of Jambi Province for the 2019-2024 Period and the 2024-2029 Period

Diza Hazra Aljosha	Nephew Zulkifli Nurdin (Son of Hazrin Nurdin)	Deputy Mayor of Jambi for the 2025-2030 Period
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(Source: Researcher Processing, 2025)

The success of the Zulkifli Nurdin Dynasty came from the control of economic capital from the family business, reputation capital with the image of a generous family and a patronage network that formed Zulkifli Nurdin's supporting networks during his tenure as Governor of Jambi from 1999-2010. According to Jafar Ahmad's dissertation (2018) ""Local Strongman's Strategy in Maintaining Power (A Study of Zulkifli Nurdin's Role in the Process and Post-Implementation of the Pilkada in Jambi Province 2014-2018)", The resilience of the political dynasty built by Zulkifli Nurdin was destroyed in 2018 when Zumi Zola was involved in a criminal act of corruption in the form of gratification and bribery in the ratification of the Draft Regional Revenue Budget (RAPBD) for Jambi Province for the 2017-2018 Fiscal Year and Death of Zulkifli Nurdin. This political regeneration only leaves Sum Indra (nephew) who has a conflict with Zulkifli Nurdin.

The 2020 Jambi Gubernatorial Election is the first step of Ratu Munawaroh to restore the glory of the political dynasty after the corruption case of Zumi Zola and the death of Zulkifli Nurdin. Ratu Munawaroh Proceed as a candidate for Deputy Governor of Jambi paired with Cek Endra (Regent of Sarolangun 2010-2022). Thus, Ratu Munawaroh plays a role as a successor who determines the sustainability Zulkifli Nurdin's political dynasty in Jambi.

The challenges of Ratu Munawaroh's political journey in the 2020 Jambi gubernatorial election are different compared to when she was accompanied by Zulkifli Nurdin in the 2009 Indonesian House of Representatives Legislative Election. Apart from losing her main role *local strongmen* English: Zulkifli Nurdin, failure Succession of Ratu Munawaroh Also cannot be separated from the inability to maintain what Gibson (2013) calls "*boundary strengthening*" as the strategy of strengthening control of political areas carried out by political dynasty actors and on the one hand also becomes an opportunity for boundary-opening agents or opposing parties to carry out "*boundary opening*" which is a challenge to the sustainability of political dynasties.

This study is relevant not only because it continues the studies conducted by Melvin Perjuangan Hutabarat (2012) and Jafar Ahmad (2020) regarding the role of Zulkifli Nurdin in maintaining power in Jambi Province, but also because it empirically tests whether the challenges that have been revealed in previous studies (Kenawas, 2015; Aspinall & As'ad, 2016; Meliala, 2019 & 2023; Ichwan, R. K., 2022) are determinant factors for the failure of political dynasties to maintain their power. More specifically, this study also aims to close the gap in previous literature that has not examined the fact that although only one of the two dynasty candidates is able to do *boundary strengthening through* political connectedness (*political linkage*) with the central elite, but still experienced defeat. In addition, this study also highlights the occurrence of *boundary opening characterized* by intense competition between candidates, which encourages justification of informal practices.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research approach is used to answer the research problem. This study uses a qualitative research approach that aims to explore subjective experiences and the meanings they relate to research experiences (David Marsh and Gerry Stoker, 1995). As Cresswell (2014), who sees qualitative research as aiming to explore or understand social problems

and examine the condition of objects naturally (Sugiyono, 2019). Meanwhile, Moloeng (2018) uses this research to understand the phenomena of what is experienced by participants such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions and others. The data collection technique used in the qualitative approach is through in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews (*in depth interview*) are to listen to people talk in order to gain insight into their outlook on life and how they see things as they are.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Ratu Munawaroh's Defeat in the 2020 Jambi Gubernatorial Election

The Jambi Provincial KPU through the Plenary Meeting for the Determination of the Recapitulation of the Results of the 2020 Jambi Provincial Election Re-vote (PSU), determined that Al Haris-Abdullah Sani won the most votes reaching 600,733 votes with an additional 4,112 votes, while the Cek Endra-Ratu Munawaroh pair won 587,918 votes or an increase of 2,715 votes, meanwhile, the Fachrori Umar-Syafril Nursal pair won 381,634 votes or a decrease of 3,754 votes.

Table 3.1 Vote Acquisition Before and After the 2020 Jambi Gubernatorial Election PSU

And Mas sage	Candidate Pair	Before PSU	After PSU
1	Check Endra-Ratu Munawaroh	585,203 votes	587,918 votes
2	Fachrori Umar-Syafril Nursal	385,388 votes	381,634 votes
3	Al Haris-Abdullah Sani	596,621 votes	600,733 votes

(Source: Author's processing from KPU, 2020)

After the 2020 Jambi gubernatorial election re-election, the difference in votes between the candidate pairs Al Haris-Abdullah Sani towards the couple Check Endra-Ratu Munawaroh Reaching 12,815 votes, whereas before the PSU for the Jambi gubernatorial election the difference in votes was 11,418 votes. The narrow margin of votes indicates a fierce competition between the candidates of partner Al Haris-Abdullah Sani with a partner Check out Endra-Ratu Munawaroh.

The cause of Ratu Munawaroh's defeat is explained using the theory *Boundary Control* from Gibson (2013) from the inability to maintain what Gibson calls "*boundary strengthening*" strategy of strengthening control of political areas carried out by political dynasty actors and indicating success "*boundary opening*" carried out by Ratu Munawaroh's political opponents, thus becoming a challenge to the continuation of the political dynasty.

3.2 Ratu Munawaroh's Inability to Perform *Boundary Strengthening*

In case of defeat Ratu Munarawoh in the 2020 Jambi gubernatorial election is reviewed from the inability of Ratu Munarawoh inrun *boundary strengthening* such as: passive family support, difficulty in getting PAN support and economic problems.

3.2.1 Weakening of Kinship Networks: Lack of Support from Zulkifli Nurdin's Nuclear Family

Ratu Munawaroh married Zulkifli Nurdin in 1997 after separating from Harmina Djohar (his first wife) in 1994. Zulkifli Nurdin and Harmina Djohar's marriage was blessed with four children, namely: Zumi Zola, Zumi Laza, Zumi Zoftan, Zumisha Nadia Zaquita, while from his marriage to Ratu Munawaroh he was blessed with two children, namely: Amalia Shaslika Maharani and Amalia

Azra Maharani, of the six children, only Zumi Zola and Zumi Laza became successors to Zulkifli Nurdin's political career. The relationship between Ratu Munawaroh and the children of Zulkifli Nurdin's first wife (Zumi Zola, Zumi Laza, Zumi Zoftan, Zumisha Nadia Zaquita) does not show closeness. In the public sphere, Zumi Zola and Ratu Munawaroh once appeared together accompanying a working visit when Zulkifli Nurdin was still the Governor of Jambi, but after Zulkifli Nurdin's death in 2018 there has never been any interaction, let alone support.

"Emotionally, there is indeed a distance between my aunt Ratu Munawaroh and Zumi Zola and Zumi Laza, because how can I put it? Mrs. Ratu is the second wife of the late Mr. Zul while their biological mother is still alive, besides that, Zola has been schooled in Jakarta since she was little and went to college in London so they have rarely met since then." (Interview with Firdaus, Zulkifli Nurdin's family and Zumi Laza's successful team in the 2024 East Tanjung Jabung Regent Election, February 25, 2024).

The matter was the main reason for the strained relationship between Ratu Munawaroh and the children of Zulkifli Nurdin's first wife, even when Ratu Munawaroh left PAN and ran for the 2020 Jambi gubernatorial election, there was no support from Zulkifli Nurdin's immediate family. Ratu Munawaroh actually received support from Sum Indra and Hazrin Nurdin who previously had a conflict with Zulkifli Nurdin. Hazrin Nurdin together with Haji Hasan (Father of Romi Hariyanto, Regent of East Tanjung Jabung for the 2016-2024 period) helped win Ratu Munawaroh. Meanwhile, Sum Indra's loyalty was proven by following in Ratu Munawaroh's footsteps to leave PAN and get a PDIP Membership Card (KTA), even though Zumi Laza was still registered as a PAN cadre.

3.2.2 Change in Direction of PAN Support: Weakening Loyalty to the Zulkifli Nurdin Political Dynasty

Zumi Zola's corruption case resulted in his dismissal from the position of Chairman of the PAN DPW. Then Replaced by H. Bakri. Under H. Bakri's leadership, Zulkifli Nurdin's family was not very active in PAN, there was even a conflict of interest between H. Bakri and Ratu Munawaroh desire them to advance in the 2020 Jambi gubernatorial election.

"...If I have to resign as a member of the Indonesian House of Representatives, that is...risk that must be born...with that, it is also certain that the people really want us to run as Governor of Jambi for the next period."

H. Bakri's seriousness in running for the 2020 Jambi gubernatorial election was proven by taking the Jambi gubernatorial candidate registration form to the Democratic Party and PKB, even H. Bakri claimed to have a team ready to go down for socialization. H. Bakri stopped Ratu Munawaroh's steps in getting support from the PAN DPW of Jambi Province, so Ratu Munawaroh negotiated with the top brass of the PAN DPP such as; Zulkifli Hasan (Chairman of the PAN DPP), Hatta Rajasa (Chairman of the PAN MPP) and Sutrisno Bachir (Chairman of the PAN Honorary Council). However, Ratu Munawaroh's negotiations were considered to have failed because ahead of the 2020 Jambi Gubernatorial Election, H. Bakri changed the system for granting PAN recommendation decrees to be open. In fact, under the leadership of Zulkifli Nurdin, PAN recommendation decrees were only given to his relatives and cronies.

“...Just follow the mechanism, there is no special treatment including for Mrs. Ratu. All those registered are treated equally”

Ratu Munawaroh accompanied by Sum Indra returned the registration form at the DPW PAN Jambi. Interestingly, although H. Bakri did not advance, which made Ratu Munawaroh the only PAN cadre who participated in the selection, until July 2020 PAN had not issued a recommendation decree for Ratu Munawaroh. In the end, PAN actually gave support to the Al Haris and Abdullah Sani pair. Meanwhile, Ratu Munawaroh's internal team implicitly stated that the reason for not issuing the recommendation decree from PAN was because Ratu Munawaroh refused the cost of issuing the PAN decree, which is known to be the most expensive of all political parties in Jambi.

“...If he chooses PAN, how many tens of billions will he ask for?...for a regent candidate alone, it is 250 million per seat, multiplied by how many PAN members there are in the Regency/City DPRD. That is why he is very disappointed, that is the difference between PDI and PAN...” (Interview with Cecep Suryana, Ratu Munawaroh's Success Team and Chair of Baguna DPD PDIP Jambi Province, February 15, 2025).

Ratu Munawaroh left PAN amidst uncertainty in the recruitment process which had become open. PAN gave a strong signal to Al Haris who had approached him Secretary General of the DPP PAN Eddy Soeparno and Mumtaz Amin Raiz, it was only at the end of August that PAN officially nominated Al Haris, a former Golkar Party cadre, instead of Ratu Munawaroh, a pure PAN cadre.

"Yes, I think we have implemented the mechanism, this is not personal but this is a mechanism that is running but in the middle of the road when we were still in the process, she (Ratu Munawaroh) had made a decision to move to one of the parties. This means that if she has moved to one of the parties then we cannot hope for the Ratu Mother. So after going through the process, finally the process fell on the pair Al Haris and Abdullah Sani"

PAN's recommendation for Al Haris was given directly by PAN General Chairman Zulkifli Hasan right after PAN's 22nd anniversary. In addition, Al Haris received a position in the PAN structure management DPW PAN as the Party Advisory Council (MPP) of DPW PAN Jambi Province.

3.2.3 Economic Vulnerability of Zulkifli Nurdin's Political Dynasty After the Zumi Zola Corruption Case

Basically, economic capital is one of the main strengths of the Zulkifli Nurdin Dynasty in gaining and maintaining political power at the local level in Jambi. The Zumi Zola corruption case was the beginning of the turmoil in the economy. Even Zulkifli Nurdin is willing to sell hundreds of hectares of palm oil plantation to bribe witnesses to lighten Zumi Zola's sentence. In the arrest of Zumi Zola, the KPK confiscated several family assets which made Zumi Zola in his defense note (*plea*) conveying the decline in the family's economic condition. After Zumi Zola was caught in a corruption case, the remaining inheritance of the Zulkifli Nurdin Dynasty's wealth decreased.

Based on the State Administration Wealth Report (LHKPN), in 2010 property riches Ratu Munawaroh Amounting to Rp. 92,127,362,602. However, ahead of the 2020 Jambi gubernatorial election, this amount decreased to Rp. 30,036,303,682. Thus, within a period of 10 years (2010-2020), Ratu Munawaroh's wealth experienced a drastic decline reaching Rp. 62,091,058,920.

Even though Ratu Munawaroh is the richest candidate and has the largest campaign funds reaching Rp.3,451,006,495 with Expenditure of Rp.3,449,195,973. Interestingly, almost all of the campaign costs were fundraising or contributions (especially from PDIP and Golkar). Ratu Munawaroh only spent money on operational activities of the campaign team.

"If you win or lose the regional election, it's all the same, maybe also the political funding that the Ratu Mother did not spend at all, because we offered to our party coalition, namely Golkar at that time that these are our cadres, our cadres that everyone even admits that our cadres are the best, but from the beginning we have stated that financially we will not spend any funding other than campaign operations, we have even proven that it is so." (Interview with Cecep Suryana, Ratu Munawaroh's Success Team and Chair of the Baguna DPD PDIP Jambi Province, February 15, 2025).

The decline in wealth became the main basis for PDIP cadres to work together to finance Ratu Munawaroh's campaign. Given the source of Zulkifli Nurdin's wealth, which left many immovable assets in the form of land and buildings, it will take a long time when it will be sold.

3.3 Strategy Success *Boundary Opening* towards Ratu Munawaroh

Ratu Munawaroh's political opponents succeeded in doing so. *boundary opening* which can be seen from: the fierce competition that made Ratu Munawaroh the target of negative and anti-dynasty campaigns and comparison of social capital ownership between competitors and members of political dynasties.

3.3.1 Delegitimization of Dynasty Candidates through *Black Campaign* and the Anti-Dynasty Movement

Ratu Munarawoh has a bad record due to 100% absence which resulted in her dismissal and replacement by Chairul Naim M. Anik (the second circle of people close to Zulkifli Nurdin). This negative image was then used as a loophole by the campaign team. Fachrori Umar-Syafril Nursal who crowned Ratu Munarawoh as the "Ratu of Bolos". In addition, the stigma of "Janda Bolong" was rampant on social media and the figure of Ratu Munarawoh was linked to the Zumi Zola corruption case.

Munarawoh as a target *black campaign*, the term negative labeling or stigma that is done openly is done to bring down (*downgrade*) the good name of Ratu Munawaroh. Interestingly, for the first time an anti-dynasty campaign emerged from the Legal Care Community Alliance (AMPUH).

"So far, the people of Jambi have been shown the entry of Jambi's name in the national arena, namely the arrest of Zumi Zola in the KPK's sting operation case last year. This is the right moment for the people of Jambi to make themselves famous again. How could it not be, the gubernatorial election is just around the corner, will the people of Jambi choose a leader from the Corrupt Dynasty? I think the people have begun to realize this. In principle, we invite the people to choose a leader who is not in the circle of dynasty corruption in Jambi Province. We strongly support gubernatorial candidates who dare to eradicate corruption in Jambi Province and can increase Jambi's APBD."

As a political force supporting Zulkifli Nurdin, activists in Jambi received monetary compensation through various means proposal the activities they do teach. Even personally, several leaders of the 98 movement in Jambi were made personal staff of Zulkifli Nurdin. The existence of criticism from activists indicates a progress in awareness in the community that has not been educated

and still considers Zulkifli Nurdin's services as a justification for the Zumi Zola corruption case.

3.3.2 Ownership of Social Capital: Between Inheritance and Innovation

The Al Haris-Abdullah Sani pair launched a flagship program that is familiar among the Jambi community, namely "DUMISAKE"(Two Billion One Sub-district) who want to continue the success of the SAMISAKE (One Billion One Sub-district) program from Hasan Basri Agus (Governor of Jambi 2010-2015). In general, this program targets three groups, namely: Muslims, millennials and the lower middle class. The Al Haris-Abdullah Sani pair received support from the majority of Muslims and attracted the attention of young voters because they aggressively campaigned on social media.

Meanwhile, the Cek Endra-Ratu Munawaroh Pair also has a program similar to the "Dumisake" owned by the Al Haris-Abdullah Sani Pair, namely "Village Ambassador" (two hundred million rupiah/village) based on labor-intensive and other programs. The program also targets young voters but has limited socialization and does not optimize social media. In fact, Based on the 2020 Jambi Pilkada DPT, there are around 2,415,862 voters and 1,486,653 of them or almost half of the DPT are Gen Y and Gen Z.

Table 3.2 Number of Gen Y and Z Voters in Jambi in 2020

No	Voter Age Group	Number of Voters
1	17-19 years old	302.566
2	20-24 years	304.715
3	25-29 years old	300.237
4	30-34 years	297.271
5	35-39 years	281.864
Total		1.486.653

(Source: Processed by Researchers from BPS Jambi, 2020)

Basically, not all young voters in Jambi Province know the figure of Zulkifli Nurdin. This is further exacerbated by the intensity of Ratu Munawaroh's presence which is relatively short in Jambi. Thus, Ratu Munawaroh did not optimize socialization to young voters.

"...but indeed, not many of the younger generation know the figure of Ibu Ratu, because Ibu Ratu left Jambi in 2010, in 2010 Ibu Ratu was no longer in Jambi, she was in Jakarta. She returned to Jambi in 2019, meaning she left Jambi for 9 years, the younger voters were 17 years old, Ibu Ratu was not in Jambi for 9 years. This means that Ibu Ratu left Jambi, the younger voters would not know, but the older voters all know." (Interview with Cecep Suryana, Ratu Munawaroh's Success Team and Chair of the Baguna DPD PDIP Jambi Province, February 15, 2025)

The campaign carried out by Ratu Munawaroh also targeted the segmentation of old voters know figure and services of Zulkifli Nurdin. This is what then made many young voters in Jambi who are still not familiar with the name Ratu Munawaroh.

4. CONCLUSION

Ratu Munawaroh's defeat in the 2020 Jambi gubernatorial election indicates the vulnerability of Zulkifli Nurdin's political dynasty, which is in line with Yoshinori Nishizaki's opinion (2018) that the most important thing is not the length of the term of office, but the ability to win elections as proof of the political resilience of the family or dynasty. Ratu Munawaroh faces major challenges, especially after losing the main role of

the local strongman, Zulkifli Nurdin. The failure of this succession was also caused by Ratu Munawaroh's inability to maintain the strategy boundary *strengthening* (Gibson, 2012) as an effort to strengthen control of the political region by political dynasty actors. This inability is seen from the weakness of the kinship network, the failure to obtain support from the PAN party, and the economic problems faced by the dynasty family. This condition opens up opportunities for the opposing party to carry out boundary *opening*, which was manifested through fierce competition and negative campaigns targeting the profile of Ratu Munawaroh, such as the stigma of "Ratu Bolos" and "Janda Bolong". Meanwhile, competitors who had stronger social capital and innovative strategies managed to take advantage of the situation to outperform the political dynasty. This case shows that even though the political dynasty is stable, the continuity of their power remains vulnerable to local political dynamics, changes in public opinion, and internal challenges of the family and political parties, especially in the era of decentralization.

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