

The Coalitional Presidentialism and Presidential Toolbox in the Philippines and Indonesia

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Abstract

The research examined the contrasting experiences of the Philippines and Indonesia, two countries with multiparty presidential systems, in managing executive-legislative relations. While the presidentialism framework warns of institutional gridlock, the analysis reveals that Rodrigo Duterte and Joko Widodo effectively navigated these dynamics through the strategic use of presidential powers. The qualitative comparative analysis examines how the respective leaders leveraged coalition-building, patronage, and budgetary powers in divergent ways by applying a presidential toolbox framework. Duterte heavily relied on pork-barrel allocations and patronage to secure legislative support in the Philippines, while Jokowi pursued broad coalition-building, integrating opposition parties into the Indonesian cabinet. The findings suggest that the successful application of presidential toolboxes, rather than institutional design alone, plays a critical role in ensuring political stability within fragmented party systems. This challenges deterministic assumptions about the perils of presidentialism, offering a more nuanced understanding of executive adaptability in Southeast Asia. The research contributes to the comparative literature by refining the coalitional presidentialism model in emerging democracies, illustrating how distinct leadership styles, institutional arrangements, and informal practices influence the viability of multiparty presidential systems.

Keywords: presidential toolbox; executive-legislative relations; coalition-building; Southeast Asia; multiparty presidentialism

Introduction

Multiparty presidential systems can face challenges to political stability due to the complex relationship between the executive and legislative branches. Scholars have suggested that presidential systems generally face challenges in maintaining political stability (Abofarha & Nasreldein, 2022; Cheeseman, 2024; Lijphart, 2023). This is mainly due to the higher potential for gridlock between the executive and legislative branches and the risk of misusing presidential authority. The separate selection processes for the legislative and executive branches in a multiparty presidential system often result in a situation where the legislative branch is dominated by a different party or coalition than the executive. Consequently, this can lead to a lack of cooperation between the two branches, hindering effective governance (Borges & Ribeiro, 2023). Ultimately, the coexistence of a multiparty system and presidentialism creates a complex and potentially unstable political environment marked by fragmented power structures and persistent difficulties in achieving consensus and cooperation.

In several Latin American countries, such as Brazil, Argentina, and Ecuador, implementing multiparty presidential systems has often led to significant political instability (Abofarha & Nasreldein, 2022). Moreover, Abofarha and Nasreldein (2022) discover the challenges inherent in multiparty presidential systems and experienced periods of political instability. For instance, they found Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay cases where conflicts between the executive and legislative branches resulted in military interventions. These interventions are often sparked by the executive's inability to effectively control the legislative majority, leading to gridlock and political paralysis. Additionally, Akarçay (2020) has highlighted the fundamental weakness of the presidential system in Latin America, which is the high potential for gridlock. This occurs when the executive branch lacks the necessary control or influence over the legislative branch to advance its agenda. Consequently, decision-making processes are impeded, hindering effective governance and contributing to political instability.

The dynamics between the executive and legislative branches can create governance challenges in multiparty systems. A key concern is political instability, as the elected president may lack sufficient support from the parliamentary majority (Mainwaring & Shugart, 1997). Without a cooperative legislature, the president's ability to govern effectively and implement their agenda is hindered. Passing legislation, enacting policies, and making important decisions become increasingly difficult. To address these challenges, scholars suggest pursuing political stability through various strategies. One proposed solution is forming political party coalitions where parties agree to long-term collaboration and establish stable alliances to support the government consistently (Martin & Vanberg, 2020). By building such coalitions, presidents can secure the backing needed to govern effectively, even in a multiparty system.

In a multiparty presidential system, the executive and legislative branches often have a divided government (Chaisty & Power, 2023). This occurs when different political parties or coalitions control the executive and legislative branches. As a result, both branches may claim authority, since each is elected by the public. The executive may struggle to control the

legislative majority, leading to gridlock and difficulties in passing laws and making decisions (Borges & Ribeiro, 2023). Such gridlock can paralyze the government and hinder effective governance. To address these challenges, cooperation and coalition-building become crucial (Santos, 2023). Then, presidents must build coalitions with legislative actors to overcome institutional gridlock. Forming alliances in a multiparty system can help the president advance their agenda. This has been observed in countries like the Philippines under Rodrigo Duterte (2016-2022) and Indonesia under Joko Widodo (Jokowi) (2014-2024).

The strategic use of coalition-building tools is essential for presidentialism in countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia. Through the effective application of these instruments, minority presidents can navigate the complexities of multiparty politics, form durable coalitions, and establish functional administrations that support political stability and effective governance.

Political coalitions play a vital role in achieving government efficiency, maintaining control over the decision-making process, and ensuring the stability and security of the ruling regime (Mietzner, 2023). Parties or factions with common interests and objectives form these coalitions. They enhance efficiency by combining resources, expertise, and support to govern effectively and implement policies. Through collaboration, coalition partners can overcome legislative gridlock, streamline decision-making, and achieve their goals. Moreover, coalitions allow political actors to maintain their influence and authority. By forging alliances with other parties or factions, they can consolidate their power and safeguard their position within the political system (Horne, 2024).

In the context of leaders such as Duterte and Jokowi, who face the complexities of multiparty systems, preventing crises between the executive and legislative branches is crucial. As conceptualized by Chaisty et al. (2018), the presidential toolbox refers to the president's formal and informal institutional arrangements to maintain coalition stability and government support amid party system fragmentation. These tools include negotiation, consensus-building, distribution of political appointments and resources to coalition partners, and strategies for managing inter-party conflicts (Junior & Pereira, 2020).

This research examines the dynamics of multiparty presidential systems, focusing on the leadership of President Duterte and President Jokowi. It explores how these leaders navigated the complex relationship between the executive and legislative branches while ensuring political stability and effective governance. The study analyzes the formation of presidential coalitions during their administrations and the strategies they employed to manage coalition politics and mitigate tensions between government branches. Central to this analysis is the concept of the presidential toolbox, which encompasses various mechanisms and techniques used by the presidents to maintain coalition stability and secure parliamentary support. Furthermore, the research challenges the assumption of perilous multiparty systems by highlighting the presidents' ability to overcome difficulties and conflicts in executive-legislative relations.

Literature Review

Multiparty Presidential System

The academic literature has extensively examined the dynamics of multiparty presidential systems since Juan Linz's seminal work *The Perils of Presidentialism* (1990). Linz argued that presidential systems face a heightened risk of political instability, particularly in newly democratic countries. It is because of the potential for governance gridlock and abuse of executive authority (Abofarha & Nasreldein, 2022). Linz (1990) and Mainwaring (1993) have examined the weaknesses of multiparty systems, particularly the challenges in achieving political stability, as observed in Latin America. The frequent conflict between the executive and legislative branches is a key factor contributing to instability, leading to prolonged crises.

Linz (1990) and Mainwaring (1993) have argued that multiparty presidential systems can be politically unstable, as seen in several Latin American countries. These countries have experienced political crises and even military interventions due to conflicts between the executive and legislative branches (Abofarha & Nasreldein, 2022; De Micheli et al., 2022; Llanos & Pérez-Liñán, 2021). However, some countries have resolved these issues by fostering cooperation and building coalitions led by the president (Santos, 2023). Subsequent research on multiparty presidentialism has focused on the role of coalitions in mitigating institutional crises caused by presidents facing fragmented legislatures (Kerevel & Bárcena Juárez, 2022).

Additionally, Linz (1990) and Mainwaring (1993) suggest that multiparty presidential systems are inherently unstable due to the potential for conflict between the executive and legislative branches. This instability is manifested in the dual legitimacy of both branches (Mainwaring & Shugart, 1997), the fragmented political landscape (Llanos & Pérez-Liñán, 2021), and difficulties with coalition discipline in policy implementation (De Micheli et al., 2022). However, research suggests that presidents can address these challenges by leveraging coalition-building mechanisms within the presidential system (Chaisty et al., 2018).

Coalitional Presidentialism

The research on coalitions in multiparty presidential systems examines efforts to manage coalitions in parliament. Doyle (2020) finds that a cycle of cooperation and gridlock among political actors is common in Latin America. The coalition formation is influenced by various factors, such as ideological proximity between the president's faction and other groups, public trust in the president, a faction's affiliation with the president's party, proximity to elections, and the fairness of coalition agreements (Doyle, 2020).

Taylor (2020) examines the complexities of coalition management in Brazil's multiparty legislative landscape. The research highlights the significance of understanding coalition dynamics, including conflicts within a single coalition and conflicts between different coalitions. These conflicts, along with coalition management, indirectly influence policymaking and the functioning of the executive branch. The research underscores various

dimensions of legislative bottlenecks in Brazil. It also emphasizes the importance of internal cohesion and effective coalition management in the lawmaking process. Understanding the dynamics of coalition politics is crucial for policymakers and executives to navigate legislative hurdles and advance their agendas effectively.

Chaisty et al. (2018) find that minority presidents can build coalitions with legislators to maintain political stability. This strategy is common in Brazil, Mexico, and Latin America, where presidents use ministerial appointments and patronage to secure legislative cooperation (Doyle, 2020; Pereira et al., 2023). Similarly, Southeast Asian countries have used broad coalition-building to mitigate resistance from legislatures and stabilize governance (Mietzner, 2023; Ufen, 2023). Therefore, the primary objective of coalition-building is political negotiation, in which the president engages with parties to secure legislative support (Martin & Vanberg, 2020), to achieve stability (Kerevel & Juárez, 2022), and facilitate political bargaining (Müller et al., 2024). It ensures an exchange of benefits between the executive and legislative branches.

The Presidential Toolbox

Successful coalition formation requires certain conditions (Raile et al., 2011). Coalitions are accommodative political efforts to regulate coalition partners in the parliament under executive control. Pereira et al. (2012) emphasize the President's pivotal role in building coalitions and managing executive-legislative relations within multiparty presidential systems. This framework allows the President flexibility in cabinet appointments and policy development strategies. A coalition-based multiparty presidential regime can succeed and be stable if it meets three criteria: 1) the President is constitutionally strong, with legal protection from impeachment; 2) the President has political incentives to offer coalition partners, such as cabinet positions, to attract and retain them; and 3) there is institutionalized and effective oversight of the President's actions. Furthermore, a strong executive is necessary in a multiparty presidential system, as the President can act as a perpetual coalition builder, uniting diverse coalitions to support important policy initiatives. Therefore, the executive can employ particularistic benefits and political transfers to gather maximum political support.

Meanwhile, Chaisty et al. (2018) have analyzed presidential coalitions in the multiparty system without a parliamentary majority. They describe how elected presidents in many countries, lacking a legislative majority, strategically build and maintain coalitions in fragmented legislatures. As the number of directly elected presidents and legislative fragmentation has increased globally, more executives often need to form coalitions beyond their parties to implement policies and programs. Chaisty et al. (2018) present a cross-regional analysis of presidential coalitions, focusing on the presidential toolbox of power in nine democratizing and hybrid regimes in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and post-Soviet Eurasia. These cases use different strategies to build and manage parliamentary coalitions.

At the core of coalitional presidentialism is the presidential toolbox, which consists of five key instruments (Chaisty et al., 2018). First, legislative powers refer to the formal legislative prerogatives of the executive branch, which enhance the president's influence over

the legislative agenda. The president can shape the legislative process and advance their policy priorities by leveraging these powers. Second, partisan powers involve the control a president typically exercises over their political party. By rallying party members and allies behind their agenda, the president can strengthen their position within the legislature and build coalitions of support. Third, cabinet authority grants the president the power to appoint ministers and agency heads, allowing them to reward allies, consolidate support, and ensure loyalty within the government. Fourth, budgetary authority allows the president to formulate and execute public spending priorities. The president can incentivize cooperation from potential coalition partners and secure their support for key initiatives by allocating resources strategically. Finally, the exchange of favors involves offering financial or material inducements to attract coalition partners, helping the president cultivate relationships and forge alliances that contribute to political stability and governance effectiveness.

The research examines how the presidents of the Philippines and Indonesia used different coalition-building strategies. Duterte relies on pork barrel politics and patronage, providing budget incentives to secure legislators' loyalty (Thompson, 2023). In contrast, Jokowi pursues a broad coalition, incorporating opposition parties to reduce legislative resistance (Mietzner, 2017; Wasisto, 2021). Then, the presidential toolbox framework is used to assess the effectiveness of these presidential strategies in addressing executive-legislative gridlock and promoting political stability.

Furthermore, this research examines the challenges of governing in multiparty presidential systems, where executive and legislative branches are separately elected, often leading to gridlock and instability (Linz, 1990; Mainwaring, 1993). Studies from Latin America demonstrate how fragmented legislatures make it difficult for presidents to enforce party discipline and advance policy agendas. The research applies these insights to Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines and Indonesia. To address legislative resistance, presidents in multiparty systems rely on coalition-building. The research on coalitional presidentialism (Doyle, 2020; Taylor, 2020) explains how presidents negotiate with different factions, offering incentives like cabinet positions or policy concessions. In Indonesia, Jokowi formed broad coalitions to reduce opposition (Mietzner, 2017), while Duterte in the Philippines relied more on pork barrel politics and patronage to ensure legislative support (Thompson, 2022, 2023). The 'presidential toolbox' (Chaisty et al., 2018) conceptualizes the mechanisms presidents use to maintain coalitions, including legislative powers, cabinet control, partisan influence, budgetary authority, and political exchanges. This framework helps explain how Jokowi and Duterte navigated legislative challenges—Jokowi through inclusivity and Duterte through budgetary incentives.

This research also evaluates the impact of different coalition strategies on governance effectiveness in Indonesia and the Philippines. It compares the relative effectiveness of Jokowi's broad coalition model with Duterte's patronage-based strategy in mitigating executive-legislative conflicts and promoting political stability. Therefore, the research contributes to broader discussions on governability in multiparty presidential systems, particularly in Southeast Asia, by comparative analysis of how leaders manage coalitional governance and the risks of deadlock between the executive and legislature.

Research Method

The research applies a qualitative comparative case study to analyze the political strategies of Duterte and Jokowi in managing executive-legislative relations. The qualitative approach is used to explore and understand the various meanings within certain groups and individuals within the context of social or humanitarian issues (Creswell, 2017). Through this method, the research examines the implications of the coalition dynamics following the elections at the start of each administration. Also, this method allows an examination of the meaning behind the use of the presidential toolbox in response to these observed dynamics.

The research uses literature research as the data collection approach. This approach collects and analyzes relevant academic sources, policy documents, government reports, and news articles on multiparty presidentialism, coalition management, and executive-legislative relations in the Philippines and Indonesia. It focuses on the post-election periods of Duterte (2016-2022) and Jokowi (2014-2024) administration, examining how each leader formed, maintained, or adjusted their coalitions using available political tools.

The research applies conceptual and theoretical frameworks to interpret coalition dynamics. Multiparty presidentialism is to analyze executive-legislative relations (Linz & Mainwaring, 1993). Then, coalitional presidentialism and presidential toolbox are to examine how presidents use strategies like cabinet appointments, budget allocations, and legislative maneuvers to maintain coalitions (Chaisty et al., 2018). Then, a comparative analysis highlights similarities and differences in coalition management between Duterte and Jokowi. The findings are interpreted based on the political strategies, challenges, and outcomes observed in each case. The research concludes by identifying key patterns in coalition governance and their implications for democratic stability and executive-legislative relations in multiparty presidential systems.

Analysis

Rodrigo Duterte and Executive-Legislative Relations in the Philippines

The Philippine political system presents a unique challenge to the perilous presidentialism argument. While the Philippines is a clear example of presidentialism with a distinct separation of powers between the executive and legislature, the dynamics within the legislative branch are more nuanced. Senators, serving six-year terms, are less susceptible to presidential pressure compared to members of the lower house, who are elected for shorter two-year terms and have a more local constituency (Yusingco et al, 2023). This suggests that, while the overall framework of presidentialism persists, the legislative branch—particularly the Senate—may exhibit varying degrees of responsiveness to presidential influence and patronage. Nevertheless, informal political aspects of the Philippines often prevent significant gridlock between the executive and legislative branches.

The weakness of political parties in the Philippines helps prevent gridlock between the executive and legislative branches (Thompson, 2022). Philippine political parties are notably lacking in external and internal institutionalization. Externally, interparty competition is fluid, and voters or social groups do not see parties as essential to the political system. Internally, political parties in the Philippines suffer from a lack of strong societal roots and well-defined platforms, often resorting to vague statements (Fernandez, 2021). These parties are structurally weak, marked by factionalism, short-lived alliances, and dominance by the political elite, with a focus on personalities over cohesive programs or ideologies (Thompson, 2022). Political parties primarily function as electoral vehicles for candidates relying on client networks, with little incentive to invest in party organization or comprehensive platforms (Ufen, 2022). Party-switching is common, and multiple memberships are widespread, reflecting the parties' ephemeral and manipulable nature. This instability undermines the foundational role of political parties in a functioning democracy.

While often seen as a weakness for democratic accountability, the nature of political parties in the Philippines offers a potential advantage in addressing the challenges of presidentialism. Unlike many other presidential systems where gridlock between the executive and legislative branches is common, such gridlock is relatively rare in the Philippines owing to its fragmented party system. Political analysts have observed the ease with which politicians can shift allegiances or change party affiliations in the Philippine context (Thompson, 2022). This phenomenon explains why each presidential election since the Marcos era has secured a legislative majority, even when elected from a minor party.

After Duterte became president in 2016, party-switching became more evident. Despite his victory with a small party, the Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP Laban), which had limited legislative representation, politicians quickly joined his coalition. Through post-election party-switching, Duterte assembled a large legislative majority to support his ally Pantaleon 'Bebot' Alvarez's bid for House speaker, and the sole PDP-Laban senator, Aquilino 'Koko' Pimentel Jr., was elected Senate President (Thompson, 2022). This mass defection occurred despite warnings from the once-dominant Liberal Party that Duterte intended to establish a dictatorship. It demonstrated how political parties, even those claiming programmatic agendas, yield to members' demands to benefit from presidential patronage in Congress (Teehankee, 2023).

The president can form a coalition of legislators by providing access to discretionary funds, such as pork barrel and special budgetary allocations. Kenny (2020) notes that the president's influence stems from controlling the disbursement of critical budgetary funds, including those allocated to individual legislators in Congress. The control over the distribution of funds gives the presidency significant leverage over both the Senate and House of Representatives, making them responsive to the president's initiatives and agenda. By controlling the budget, the president can incentivize legislators to support their policies and priorities, thereby consolidating power and influence within the legislative branch.

Although 'pork barreling' may raise ethical concerns, it does not explain why presidentialism is problematic in the Philippines (Thompson, 2022). Unlike other presidential

systems where gridlock between the executive and legislative branches leads to governance challenges, the Philippines experiences a different dynamic. The legislature and Congress are often perceived as working too closely with the executive branch, blurring the lines of checks and balances. Critics argue that Congress fails to adequately oversee executive authority, while the president is accused of using pork barrel allocations as legalized bribery to gain legislative support (Teehankee, 2023; Thompson, 2022).

While influenced by the United States, the Philippines has also adopted a strong presidential model similar to those in Latin American countries. This divergence is primarily due to the significant fiscal and coercive powers vested in the Philippine president (Kreuzer, 2020). Unlike the United States, Philippine presidents have substantial formal authority, particularly in budgetary decision-making. Presidents also have the authority to suspend habeas corpus and declare martial law. However, these actions are subject to judicial and congressional oversight, especially after the fall of the Marcos regime. Moreover, Philippine presidents often bypass legislative and judicial checks on their power, exerting influence over nominally independent regulatory bodies.

Journalists characterize the Philippine political system as "hyperpresidentialism," highlighting the immense concentration of executive power in the presidency (Kenes, 2023). This view is supported by researchers who argue that the Philippine president stands out among presidential democracies for the unparalleled extent of their executive authority. Within the framework proposed by Mainwaring and Shugart (1997), the Philippines represents a prime example of the least functional form of presidentialism—characterized by strong presidential legislative powers combined with disorganized and undisciplined political parties, which undermines effective checks and balances within a presidential system.

Critiques argued that Philippine presidents wield overwhelming power, allowing them to sideline other branches of government, including the legislature, judiciary, and independent agencies. The president's ability to encroach on the authority of other government bodies undermines horizontal accountability, the system of checks and balances between different branches (Yusingco et al., 2022). As a result of their hegemonic authority, Philippine presidents can diminish the autonomy and influence of these constitutionally mandated bodies, despite their intended co-equal status. In practice, the president's dominance erodes the system of checks and balances established by the constitution.

The Philippine president's control over patronage resources is a significant factor enabling potential abuses of power. This concentration positions the president as the primary distributor of patronage, becoming the patron-in-chief (Thompson, 2022). Given the president's extensive authority over the national budget and the prevalence of clientelistic networks in Philippine politics, the ability to allocate patronage is a crucial tool for influencing legislative decision-making. The power derived from controlling patronage resources undermines public trust in government, as it often prioritizes private interests over the public good. This erosion of trust arises from the perception that government actions serve personal or factional gain rather than the public good (Ronas, 2016).

Furthermore, the weak system of checks and balances in the Philippine presidential system exacerbates this issue. Presidents often appear to operate above the law, facing minimal oversight and rarely being held accountable through impeachment, even in cases of misconduct. The president's influence extends to the military, which can be mobilized to enforce emergency rule or martial law, further consolidating presidential authority. Ultimately, the broad scope of authority wielded by the Philippine president permeates the entire state apparatus, raising concerns about accountability, transparency, and equitable resource distribution.

Philippine presidents frequently consolidate extraordinary power due to various factors. A key factor is the expectation among influential political oligarchs supporting a presidential campaign that they will be rewarded with patronage once the presidential candidate assumes office (Teehankee, 2023). These oligarchs, who wield significant influence in local and regional politics, provide crucial support to presidential candidates during elections, anticipating favors and benefits. Consequently, the president feels compelled to fulfill these expectations by allocating patronage resources to their supporters, solidifying political alliances, and ensuring continued backing.

Moreover, the strength of the presidency is justified by the fragmented and particularistic nature of Philippine politics, which is characterized by the influence of diverse local elites and interest groups. In this complex political landscape, the president assumes the role of the patron-in-chief, serving as a unifying figure capable of bridging divides and forging alliances across disparate factions. The president becomes crucial in consolidating support from diverse quarters, utilizing patronage to reward existing allies and enticing potential collaborators.

For newly elected presidents, the imperative to repay their chief supporters while simultaneously expanding their support base through patronage is a paramount concern. This dual role, acting as a debtor to loyal backers and a unifier seeking to expand their political coalition, underscores the intricate dynamics of Philippine presidential politics. It highlights the complex interplay between personal loyalty, political indebtedness, and the pragmatic pursuit of power and influence in a fragmented political landscape. As a result, Philippine presidents are often tempted to exert their informal authority in ways that challenge democratic principles and potentially undermine democratic institutions. Some presidents have notably sought to wield power in an authoritarian or illiberal manner, disregarding the rule of law and threatening those who oppose their ambitions.

Rodrigo Duterte's presidency has raised significant concerns about the state of democracy in the Philippines. While democratically elected, Duterte has exhibited authoritarian tendencies (Fernandez, 2021), including disregard for legal norms, human rights violations, and extrajudicial killings in his controversial anti-drug campaign. Even before his presidency, Duterte was rumored to have enlisted individuals to eliminate lawbreakers and political opponents while serving as the mayor of Davao City (Alami et al., 2022).

Additionally, Duterte has declared martial law in certain regions and threatened to expand it nationally, raising concerns about the erosion of civil liberties (Thompson, 2022).

Comparisons have been drawn between Duterte's leadership style and the martial law regime of Ferdinand Marcos, which led to a deterioration of Philippine democracy. Many observers view Duterte's presidency as the most serious threat to Philippine democracy since the country's transition to democracy in the late 20th century. The consolidation of power in Duterte's hands and his willingness to circumvent legal constraints have raised alarms about the future of democratic governance in the Philippines.

Duterte's presidency has extended his influence beyond the legislative branch to the judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, which has been pressured to align with his agenda. In one case, the Supreme Court acquiesced to Duterte's demands during a confrontation over a list of judges allegedly involved in drugs, despite the list was later proven to be erroneous. Duterte's threat to declare martial law if the court opposed his drug war further underscored his willingness to assert authority over the judiciary (Jerusalem & Ramos, 2016).

Despite being democratically elected in 2016 and adhering to most political liberties, Duterte's administration has raised concerns about the erosion of liberal values through its widespread extrajudicial killings of alleged drug offenders. While Duterte maintains constitutional legitimacy, his illiberal governance, including the encouragement of extrajudicial violence, presents a paradox in his rule. Although democratically elected, his administration is characterized by open illiberalism, challenging traditional notions of democratic governance (Thompson, 2022).

Duterte's presidency in the Philippines exemplifies the risks of a powerful executive in a multiparty presidential system lacking robust checks and balances. This case demonstrates how the presidency's substantial authority can enable patronage networks and authoritarian abuses. Duterte's administration exploited the Philippine political system's institutional weaknesses, leveraging the presidency's extensive powers to consolidate control and pursue illiberal policies. This serves as a cautionary example regarding the dangers of unchecked presidential power within a multiparty framework, underscoring the necessity of strong checks and balances to prevent the erosion of democratic norms and the concentration of power in a single individual or institution.

Joko Widodo and Executive-Legislative Relations in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the relationship between the president and legislature has not posed a significant threat to political stability (Hanan, 2012). Since the post-Suharto era, presidents have relied on broad coalitions with limited opposition to secure legislative cooperation. However, critics argue Indonesia's political system is an informal cartel of key parties, creating an exclusive system that undermines electoral accountability (Tambunan, 2023), as voters struggle to distinguish between aligned parties. Like the Philippines, the executive's distribution of patronage to the legislature has contributed to system stability. This patronage mitigates political tensions and promotes stability, ensuring electoral losers receive a share of power and resources.

Moreover, Hanan (2012) suggests that the presidential system can function effectively. By acknowledging potential conflicts between the executive and legislative branches, some challenges can be addressed through formal and informal institutions that link the political bodies. However, Hanan's (2012) analysis does not explore the pragmatic behavior of political parties. Additionally, Mietzner and Honna (2023) highlight the emergence of catch-all parties in pragmatic environments. Their findings suggest coalition formations in parliament may not endure, as political parties in opposition or support remain flexible, driven by the pursuit of benefits. In such environments, compromises and accommodations among involved parties are common.

Asrinaldi and Yusoff's (2023) analysis of Indonesian political party coalitions during the 2014 presidential election found that ideology was not a significant factor. Instead, coalitions were mainly driven by political interests and the pursuit of power and resources, a phenomenon known as "office-seeking" behavior. The authors identify two key reasons for this tendency. First, many Indonesian parties lack the financial resources to sustain themselves independently, making coalitions a practical necessity to pool resources and enhance electoral prospects. Second, parties are reluctant to remain in opposition, as they desire access to power, state resources, and opportunities for patronage.

The Indonesian political landscape is shaped by the pragmatism of political parties, particularly after the 2014 presidential election (Wasisto, 2021). Unlike in some countries where ideological divergences drive political tensions, Indonesian parties are primarily driven by their own interests and positions within the legislature. This case illustrates how party pragmatism can shape the dynamics of political conflicts and coalition formations, underscoring the significance of comprehending the specific motivations of political actors. Despite Jokowi's attempts to form a cooperative coalition in the early of his administration year, many parties are reluctant to commit unconditionally. Instead, they sought to maximize their influence and benefits. As a result, Jokowi had to accommodate opposition parties such as the United Development Party (PPP), National Mandate Party (PAN), and the Party of Functional Groups (Golkar). This pragmatic strategy is essential to manage the complex political environment in which parties prioritize immediate interests over broader ideological goals.

Ufen (2023) examines the dynamics between the President and the House of Representatives, focusing on coalition management. The analysis highlights Jokowi's challenges in forming a cohesive, programmatic coalition. The political instability in the early years of his administration complicated efforts to maintain a coalition based on shared ideology and policy objectives. These perspectives underscore the complexities of Indonesia's multiparty system, which often requires strong presidential leadership to navigate diverse political interests and alliances. The need for the President to have dominant political power becomes evident in this context, as it enables effective governance amidst the fluidity of the political landscape.

Meanwhile, Mietzner (2017) and Beso and Rahmawati (2021) offer insights into the challenges confronted by Jokowi during the initial years of his administration. He sought to

achieve political stability amid legislative opposition pressure. Consequently, Jokowi's primary strategy was to integrate opposition groups into the government. Although this approach assisted Jokowi in securing legislative backing, it raised concerns about the potential weakening of effective opposition oversight within Indonesia's democratic system.

The 2014 presidential election in Indonesia was a critical moment that tested the resilience of the country's democracy. Prabowo Subianto's candidacy, marked by his controversial background and authoritarian tendencies, posed a significant challenge to Indonesia's democratic trajectory. However, Jokowi's victory helped maintain democratic stability despite Prabowo Subianto's populist appeal (Lee, 2021).

Following his election, Jokowi faced challenges in navigating Indonesia's multiparty political landscape. Despite opposition within his party and the legislature, Jokowi demonstrated adeptness in building coalitions and overcoming gridlock. By leveraging his outsider status and focusing on economic reforms, particularly infrastructure development and deregulation, Jokowi consolidated his authority and maintain high approval ratings by mid-2016. In contrast to some other presidential systems, Indonesia avoids political gridlock through effective leadership, building coalitions, and prioritizing tangible policy results. Jokowi's successful navigation of Indonesia's political terrain underscores the importance of pragmatic governance and consensus-building in sustaining democratic norms and institutions (Power & Warburton, 2020).

Jokowi's early presidency faced internal conflicts within his party, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), as well as challenges from political opponents. Megawati Soekarnoputri, former president and PDIP chairperson, expected Jokowi to follow her terms, with noncompliance risking a rift in their relationship. PDIP's initial support for Jokowi's candidacy was lukewarm, with Puan Maharani, Megawati's daughter and a key party figure, endorsing him only towards the end of the campaign. This internal discord within PDIP significantly contributed to the difficulties Jokowi encountered during the early phase of his presidency. Additionally, Jokowi's populist program, focused on addressing poverty and inequality, was not fully aligned with PDIP's internal agenda.

Despite these internal tensions, Jokowi also faced opposition from political opponents. His pro-poor policy did not receive full support from parliament, with only 37% backing. This discrepancy between Jokowi's priorities and PDIP's plans led to demand to align with the party's agenda. Nevertheless, Jokowi employed strategic maneuvers behind the scenes to regain political control, such as leveraging his prerogative right to intervene in internal conflicts within other parties like PPP and Golkar, to bolster his support base and consolidate his authority (Mietzner, 2017). Jokowi overcame internal opposition and strengthened his political position through strategic maneuvers. His sharp political approach allowed him to assert leadership and advance his agenda despite initial challenges.

Jokowi's strategic use of presidential powers—often referred to as the presidential toolbox—facilitated the defection of major opposition parties such as PPP, Golkar, and PAN into his governing coalition. This involved Jokowi engaging in political outreach and communication with opposition party leaders, fostering dialogue, and building rapport to

create an environment conducive to political realignments (Wasisto, 2021). Jokowi likely offered incentives and concessions, such as promises of ministerial positions, access to resources and patronage networks, or policy concessions, to persuade these parties to join the government coalition. By leveraging his presidential authority and employing these tools, Jokowi successfully orchestrated the realignment of key political forces, strengthening his administration and consolidating his political position.

Jokowi's strategic use of presidential powers led major parties like PPP, Golkar, and PAN to support his administration. This relationship is mutually beneficial, as Jokowi and the parties gained political advantages. This dynamic aligns with theories proposed by Chaisty et al. (2018), which suggest that distributive politics in parliaments involve cabinet authority, exchange of favors, and pork-barrel politics to secure support. The shifting of parties to support Jokowi can be understood as strategic political exchanges between the executive and legislative branches. By utilizing the presidential toolbox, Jokowi sought to gain parliamentary support for his agenda. In return, the parties likely received concessions and benefits such as access to resources, patronage opportunities, or policy concessions aligning with their interests. This arrangement allowed Jokowi and the supporting parties to gain power.

Jokowi's strategic outreach and negotiations with opposition parties are crucial for building a coalition to support his presidential agenda. By offering these parties key positions in his administration, Jokowi attracted parties that had previously backed his opponent, Prabowo, during the 2014 election. This process of political realignment, involving parties like PAN, Golkar, and PPP, demonstrates Jokowi's adept use of the 'presidential toolbox' to navigate the complex multiparty system in Indonesia. The distribution of cabinet positions and other resources was a key aspect of Jokowi's efforts to maintain harmony and secure political support within the coalition. These actions exemplify the intricate dynamics of coalition politics in a presidential system, where the president must strategically leverage executive power and distribute political resources to strengthen the government's position and ensure its stability and effectiveness (Chaisty et al., 2018)

Jokowi's strategic use of the presidential toolbox, such as offering ministerial positions to opposition parties, aligns with the concept of cabinet authority proposed by Chaisty et al. (2018). This approach transforms coalition benefits into tangible roles within the administration. By appointing ministers from opposition parties, Jokowi aimed to solidify government support and promote political stability. This utilization of the presidential toolbox reflects the pragmatic efforts required to maintain stability in a complex political landscape. In practice, the presidential toolbox is often employed to allocate coalition benefits, such as ministerial roles, to members of opposition parties that join the government. Jokowi offered ministerial positions to representatives from parties like PPP, PAN, and Golkar, who then supported his administration. This strategy underscores the importance of coalition-building in presidential systems, where the president must navigate diverse interests and forge alliances to govern effectively. Through the strategic allocation of cabinet positions, Jokowi fostered cooperation and consensus among political factions, thereby enhancing the stability and functionality of his government.

Indonesia's multiparty presidential system necessitates coalition-building for effective governance. In this political landscape, no single party holds a dominant position. Consequently, the president must negotiate and compromise with parliament, particularly when policy decisions diverge from the president's party preferences. This dynamic was evident early in Jokowi's presidency. The executive branch wields significant power, especially over the state budget and financial resources, making these positions highly coveted by political parties seeking to influence policy and resource allocation. Jokowi's administration strategically leveraged its bargaining power to attract opposition parties to join the government coalition. The shifting parties sought positions in key ministries to manage the state budget. This case shows how Indonesia's multiparty presidential system shapes political dynamics. Cooperation and compromise between the executive and legislature are crucial as parties position themselves to maximize influence and access resources.

Comparative Discussion: The Presidential Toolbox in Practice

The Philippines and Indonesia offer insightful case studies of presidentialism, characterized by a clear separation between the executive and legislative branches. This separation aligns with early theories on presidentialism, which argue that presidential rule tends to be more unstable than parliamentary systems. However, the concept of the presidential toolbox sheds light on the dominant position of presidents in both countries (see Table 1). Despite weakened checks and balances, presidents in the Philippines and Indonesia wield significant political leverage. Populist leaders such as Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines and Joko Widodo (Jokowi) in Indonesia have effectively used this leverage to advance their respective agendas. While there are similarities, notable differences exist between Duterte and Jokowi. Duterte has heavily relied on pork barrel politics and patronage to maintain his political dominance, using discretionary funds to secure support from legislators and other actors. In contrast, Jokowi prioritizes a coalition-building strategy, forming a broad alliance with opposition parties in parliament. This strategy allows Jokowi to consolidate power and navigate Indonesia's complex multiparty system. As part of this strategy, Jokowi has also allocated pork barrel funds to parliament members, reinforcing support for his administration and advancing his policy agenda.

Duterte and Jokowi each utilize executive powers to address the political dynamics in their countries. Duterte's approach in the Philippines involves distributing pork barrel funds and offering patronage to members of parliament. By allocating resources and favors to legislators, Duterte secures support for his policies and a majority in the legislature. This practice of pork barrel politics allows him to manage the ongoing needs and demands of the legislative branch, reducing potential conflicts and gridlock. In contrast, Jokowi's administration in Indonesia has adopted a strategy of appointing members of opposing parties to key ministerial positions in the government. By accommodating these parties within his cabinet, Jokowi expands his coalition and garners support from a broader political spectrum. This approach strengthens his legislative support and facilitates the passage of his policy agenda by fostering a cooperative parliamentary environment. Duterte and Jokowi use

coalition advantages and pork barrel politics to mitigate political tensions within the parliament. Through these tactics, both leaders create a symbiotic relationship between the executive and legislative branches, exchanging resources and political positions for support and cooperation. These practices contribute to the overall political stability and enable the smooth functioning of the government and policy implementation.

Table 1 The Presidential Executive Toolbox between Philippines and Indonesia

No	Key differentiation elements of Presidential Toolbox	Philippines (Duterte)	Indonesia (Jokowi)
1	Legislative power	Direct influence	Coalition building
2	Powers over the cabinet	Appointed loyalists	Shared cabinet positions among coalition partners
3	Partisan power	Exploited the weak of party system	Negotiated with an institutionalized system; limited partisan control
4	Budget authority	Used pork barrel politics extensively	Used budget allocation strategically
5	Exchange of favors	Relied coercions and patronage	Relied more on political bargaining

Source: Author's compilation

This research shows that the effective use of the presidential toolbox allows leaders to manage coalitions and prevent legislative gridlock, despite the "perils of presidentialism" argument. The findings indicate that presidents can use tools like patronage, pork barrel politics, and coalition-building to maintain stability, challenging the view that presidentialism necessarily weakens democracy. The success of presidentialism depends on the president's strategic use of political tools, rather than being inherently problematic.

Furthermore, this research moves beyond the traditional "perils of presidentialism" framework, showing how leaders can actively mitigate instability through strategic coalition-building and patronage politics. While previous research has explored coalitional presidentialism in Latin America and Africa, this research applies the framework to Southeast Asia—specifically through a comparative analysis of Indonesia and the Philippines—thus addressing a notable regional gap in the literature. Unlike prior research that characterized Indonesia's coalition-building as a structural feature, this research compares it to the Philippines, where Duterte relied more on pork barrel politics and patronage than broad coalitions. By highlighting these differences, the research refines existing analytical frameworks, showing different applications of the presidential toolbox; Duterte used coercion and patronage, while Jokowi used coalition incentives. This research expands the coalitional presidentialism literature by demonstrating how different presidents employ varied strategies from the presidential toolbox to achieve stability.

Conclusions

The research examines multiparty presidentialism in the Philippines and Indonesia. Both countries have complex political landscapes, with multiple parties vying for power within a presidential system. The differences in party structures between the two countries suggest further study on how they shape executive-legislative relations in a multiparty system. This could lead to institutional reforms to enhance the president's control and accountability within their governance frameworks. In such systems, the president's party may differ from the legislative majority, potentially causing gridlock and policy implementation challenges. However, Duterte and Jokowi have successfully navigated these complexities by using the presidential toolbox to manage political relationships and build coalitions. By leveraging this toolbox, they forged alliances with various parties, avoiding divided government and enabling smooth governance and policy implementation. Their leadership and coalition-building skills are crucial in mitigating the risks of multiparty presidentialism and enabling effective governance despite fragmented political landscapes.

Presidents Duterte and Jokowi rely on the presidential toolbox to build broad political coalitions. This allows them to navigate the complexities of coalition politics and manage relationships with various political actors. These coalitions play a critical role in shaping decision-making and governance within multiparty presidential systems, as evidenced by the cases of the Philippines and Indonesia. Moreover, these coalitions help bridge the gap between the executive and legislative branches, facilitate cooperation, and enable policy implementation.

Furthermore, this research highlights the importance of effective coalition-building frameworks in fragmented political environments. The ability of Duterte and Jokowi to govern effectively demonstrates the value of flexible political strategies and tools that facilitate collaboration between the executive and legislative branches. Policymakers in multiparty presidential systems aim to strengthen coalition management, reduce legislative gridlocks, and enhance governance stability.

The research also underscores the importance of adaptable leadership in managing the risks of multiparty governance. Future leaders may benefit from similar strategies but should ensure coalition-building practices do not compromise democratic accountability and transparency. A balance between executive power and legislative oversight is important to prevent unchecked presidential power and democratic backsliding. Future research should examine additional factors that impact the success of coalition-building in multiparty presidential frameworks, such as public perceptions of presidential coalitions and their effect on public confidence in the government.

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