

OPINION **ACADEMIA**

# What could happen to Prabowo's continuity narrative

*Businesses cannot afford to be taken in by the continuity narrative that contributed greatly to Prabowo's landslide win in February, and instead carefully consider adaptive, agile strategies to seize the challenges and opportunities of the inherent uncertainty surrounding a change of government.*

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**PREMIUM**

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Old and new: President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo (left) speaks with Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto before the inauguration of the National Defense Centre Jakarta on Feb. 19, 2024. Prabowo will succeed Jokowi on Oct. 20. (AFP/Bay Ismoyo)

**T**ime marches on and soon, the results of Indonesia's democratic process will become evident on Oct. 20, when [Prabowo Subianto](#) and [Gibran Rakabuming Raka](#) will be sworn in as president and vice president, respectively, for the next five years.

Their victory as the elected successors to President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo and Vice President Ma’ruf Amin was influenced by various factors, notably the continuity narrative that the Prabowo-Gibran pair campaigned on to carry on with the strategic programs of the Jokowi administration.

It is no wonder that many voters were drawn to this narrative. Indirectly, this continuity narrative positioned Prabowo as “Jokowi 3.0”, and he was seen as the best candidate to sustain the legacy of Jokowi, who has consistently boasted a public approval rating of above 75 percent this year.

The continuity narrative also reassured the business community of minimal changes, providing stability for businesses that thrived over the past decade.

However, will Prabowo truly adhere to his continuity narrative once he is inaugurated?

First of all, the continuity slogan often seems overrated. Development programs in democratic countries usually continue those of their predecessors, despite new leaders emphasizing their signature programs.

For instance, even though Jokowi never publicly stated that he would continue his predecessor's policies, his infrastructure drive continued the infrastructure development program of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), albeit with different focuses and scales. SBY's infrastructure development program primarily centered on electricity infrastructure, with significant developments in power plant projects and a substantial increase in electricity supply.

It should also be considered that the bureaucratic processes in executing development programs are rigid and difficult to change.

During his administration, Jokowi largely continued the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2005-2025, with some adjustments, and various ministries are currently busy drafting the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2025-2029. This is a critical component of the RPJPN 2025-2045, which will provide Prabowo with a clean slate to shape the nation's development policy for the next 20 years.

Prabowo's pledge to continue Jokowi's policies does not necessarily mean he will replicate his predecessor's actions. Prabowo has his own agenda, notably a focus on human resource development, exemplified by his signature free meals program. This shift in emphasis from infrastructure to human resources could have significant implications for businesses, which may need to adapt their strategies to align with this new priority.

More than that, Prabowo's agenda will require substantial financial support from the government. Clearly there will be a significant financial burden and in the future, Prabowo will have to prioritize, as both infrastructure and human resource programs cannot proceed simultaneously with limited financial capacity.

One of Prabowo's notable programs advocating continuity and aligning with the strategic programs Jokowi implemented is the development of Nusantara Capital City (IKN), which is also mandated by a law passed during Jokowi's presidency.

Beyond the recent issues highlighted in the [Audit Summary Report for the Second Semester 2023](#) (IHPS) by the Supreme Audit Agency (BPK), it is clear that the development of IKN will significantly draw on government financial resources without substantial backing from private investors, which are currently absent.

With numerous challenges ahead, Prabowo must devise strategies to address all these issues. Given the substantial allocation for IKN in the state budget (APBN), which will compete with his own development agenda, Prabowo will likely reduce the IKN budget allocation while remaining committed to the project. Consequently, he will likely delay its completion beyond the timeline set during Jokowi's tenure.

Drawing from these points, it can be predicted that after his inauguration in October, Prabowo will not necessarily fully implement the continuity narrative as many people imagine. Some programs might face discontinuation or slower progress. This primarily stems from Prabowo's new programs, differing priorities and budget limitations.

Prabowo will undoubtedly realign his administration's focus and budget allocations proportionate to his strategic programs, potentially diverting funds away from continuity programs to prioritize others.

Of course, potential adjustments will introduce uncertainty and various stakeholders, especially business players, should scrutinize the continuity narrative. The uncertainty during Prabowo's impending inauguration can be likened to a goal scrimmage where many players are confused, observing what will unfold next.

At this crucial moment, the business as usual approach will be inadequate. Regardless of the narrative, businesses must understand that Prabowo is a brand-new president, so they must prepare for any dynamics. It is crucial for businesses to anticipate potential developments and step up their game to seize this opportunity effectively, akin to coming from behind in soccer to turn the chaos into a goal.

To ensure that businesses can effectively come from behind and create opportunities to score a goal, it is crucial for businesses to integrate an understanding of public affairs into daily operations. To cite Noke Kiroyan's book *Public Affairs Sebagai Penunjang Manajemen Strategis* (Public affairs as strategic management support), public affairs is a corporate function that addresses nonmarket issues by implementing various activities to build relationships with stakeholders in consideration of the political, social and cultural contexts.

Given the significant impact of public policies on businesses, it is crucial for them to stay informed and actively influence government decisions and public policy. This includes adapting to various policies and the agile nature of government. Understanding critical instruments like the state budget can provide valuable insights into future government policies, allowing

businesses to anticipate and prepare for potential changes.

In conclusion, while the continuity narrative is compelling, the future remains inherently uncertain. It should be noted that the challenges and opportunities present for all businesses before Prabowo's inauguration are vital. Businesses must adopt agile strategies, similar to maneuvering on a soccer field, to capitalize on evolving policies and shape their own success under the Prabowo administration.

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