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Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto (L) shakes hands with Indonesia's Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka (R) following Gibran’s resignation at the State Palace in Jakarta on 12 November 2026. (Photo by FATIH MUBAROK / AFP)

Consolidation Without Correction: President Prabowo’s Reshuffles, Gibran’s Exit and Indonesia’s Democracy

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Gibran Rakabuming Raka's resignation as vice-president is not an isolated event. Read alongside Prabowo's Cabinet reshuffles, it completes a pattern of consolidation that leaves fewer institutions able to balance presidential power.

Former Vice-President (VP) Gibran Rakabuming Raka's **resignation** on 12 November, after he came under threat of impeachment, has severed the most visible link between President Prabowo Subianto's government and his predecessor (and Gibran's father) Joko Widodo (Jokowi). It came six weeks after Prabowo **swore in** 44 officials, **replaced the police chief** and brought religious leaders and critics into a new Presidential Advisory Council (*Wantimpres*). These events should be analysed together: while Cabinet posts are the President's prerogative to give or take away, — and he has done so in multiple reshuffles — what is new is that this logic has now reached high offices meant to stand apart from the presidency and, more importantly, balance it. These include the national police, the moral voice and weight of religious leaders and a directly elected VP (Table 1).

The choice of Gibran's successor, which the Constitution **leaves largely to the president**, will show how far Prabowo's power consolidation can go. The president nominates two candidates within 14 days of the VP post going vacant, and the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) has 60 days to choose from the two nominees.

Table 1. From Reshuffle to Resignation: Six Weeks of Consolidation, October–November 2026

2026 Dates	Event	Significance and Implications
1 October	Reshuffle: Former police chief Listyo moved to be presidential chief of staff and installed Suyudi Ario Seto (new police chief); Former presidential chief of staff Dudung Abdurachman as Coordinating Minister, Political and Security Affairs; and Golkar Chair Bahlil Lahadalia in charge of new Coordinating Ministry for Downstreaming and Energy Transition.	Command of police and security coordination goes to presidential appointees; President's largest coalition partner tied in through access to Indonesia's extractive sectors.
2 October	26-member Wantimpres sworn in, chaired by Jokowi's former State Secretary Pratikno.	Religious, business and critical voices brought in; a Jokowi loyalist given an advisory rather than executive role.
3–4 November	Listyo named a wiretapping suspect and dismissed from KSP; Presidential palace uses the term "possible treason."	The last Jokowi-era security chief removed and prosecuted.
10–11 November	On 10 November, Gibran tells Prabowo he intends to resign; on 11 November, 120 lawmakers file a motion that could lead to impeachment.	The exit is settled by the executive; Parliament moves only afterwards.
12 November	Gibran formally resigns; Prabowo must nominate within 14 days two candidates for the MPR to elect within 60 days.	The president's prerogative to name two VP nominees for the MPR to elect further consolidates his control.

Source: Author's table using reports in Kompas, The Jakarta Post, Antara, IDN Times and Hukumonline.

Prabowo has been a powerful president since his inauguration in October 2024. First, his large ruling coalition holds **470 of 580** parliamentary (DPR) seats. What his Cabinet reshuffles and Gibran's exit signify is not how much more power Prabowo holds today, but that the capacity of institutions to correct this power, that is, to scrutinise, question and restrain the president, has been narrowed.

> **Arguably, Parliament moved against Gibran not as an overseer of presidential power, but as an extension of it.**

First, the country's coercive apparatus: the National Police, the Executive Office of the President (KSP) and the Coordinating Ministry for Politics and Security **are now led** by figures beholden to the president. The DPR **approved** the new police chief within a day, two months after **denying** any such plan while the outgoing chief, **a Jokowi loyalist**, was moved to the palace as presidential chief of staff.

Second, control over Indonesia's extractive economy has been formalised in a new Coordinating Ministry for Downstreaming and Energy Transition, which along with the energy ministry, **now sits with Golkar**, the largest coalition partner. The president handing the new coordinating ministry to Golkar chairman Bahlil Lahadalia, who **remains energy minister**, deepens what political scientist Dan Slater **calls** "party cartelisation": parties trading opposition for access to state resources.

Third, some religious leaders and figures from business, **retired generals and even critics** who were outside the state apparatus have been co-opted as paid advisers to the president. Each member reportedly **receives** IDR76.5 million (about USD4,200) a month, a modest price for consolidating support. While such appointments do not guarantee loyalty, and one advisor, Rocky Gerung, **vowed** to stay critical, acceptance of a *Wantimpres* position is a signal. For instance, **leaders of Nahdlatul Ulama and the Indonesian Ulema Council**, now sworn in by the president and paid by the state, are perhaps signaling to their millions of followers that they align with the government.

Fourth, a significant political succession now rests with the president. Arguably, Parliament moved against Gibran not as an overseer of presidential power, but as an extension of it. Now, as per the Constitution, Prabowo will **nominate** two candidates from which the MPR (dominated by his coalition) elects a new vice-president.

The likely consequence of all this is further democratic erosion in Indonesia through the quiet loss of corrective mechanisms on executive power. This lands on a democracy already in retreat. V-Dem now **classifies** Indonesia as an "electoral autocracy"; by some polls, Prabowo's approval **fell** from 81.2 to 51.1 per cent in eight months. As institutional channels narrow, correction has moved to the street, but police have **blocked** protests and **attacked** marchers. There are also signs within the political elite that all is not well. The wiretapping case, where a former police chief and accomplices **allegedly tapped** the sitting president and other politicians, as well as journalists and NGOs, has been **framed** by the presidential palace as possible treason. Yet neither the street nor elite infighting is a reliable form of correction for a democracy.

Looking Ahead

The contest to succeed Gibran shows who now competes for proximity to power. Prabowo has said he will **consult** coalition parties first. Four camps are in play. Coalition party chiefs, including the Democrats' Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono, may **see the post** as a springboard to 2029, but may threaten the president's electability in time if they are young and popular. Gerindra loyalists, like Deputy Speaker Sufmi Dasco Ahmad and former foreign minister Sugiono, **among those named** as potential candidates, offer loyalty. DPR Speaker Puan Maharani could bring in her mother's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), **the last large party holdout outside the coalition**. Finally, retired generals, whose **forum** demanded

Gibran's removal as early as April 2025, would welcome one of their own as Prabowo's new deputy.

Whoever prevails in the VP selection will owe their post to Prabowo rather than to voters. Choosing a person from any of the camps above would remove a different check against the president's power: a party chief could unsettle coalition bargaining as could a loyalist, Puan could end parliament's independence, and a former general would test civilian supremacy.

The last scenario deserves attention. A retired general as VP under Prabowo, himself an ex-general, would give Indonesia its first all-military presidential pair since Suharto and Try Sutrisno (1993–98) and crown a drift from civilian rule already visible. Security figures run **the president's staff**, **security coordination**, the police and even **the new agrarian reform agency**, while a **revised law** lets officers hold more civilian posts. What more, a deputy drawn from a command culture is unlikely to act as an internal check against his superior.

Sidelined parties may push back in the MPR vote, turning the issue of VP succession into elite bargaining rather than one of public interest — either way, the reform-era post-1998 settlement that took the military out of politics would be hollowed out further. Whoever Prabowo nominates, the real test is whether any institution can still tell him "No". As things stand, very few can.

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