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Indonesian Presidential Election 2019

Another Term for Jokowi: Some Significant Developments

By Barry Desker

SYNOPSIS

Joko Widodo is projected by 'quick counts' to win the presidency for a second term. However, the election results indicate that the abangan/santri cleavage in Javanese politics remains a key aspect in understanding Indonesian politics.

COMMENTARY

EARLIER PREDICTIONS of a double-digit landslide victory for incumbent President Joko Widodo ('Jokowi') and his vice-presidential nominee Ma'ruf Amin in Indonesia's presidential election on 17 April 2019 were not borne out. A 'quick count' of sample polling results by reputable pollsters indicated that the Jokowi-Ma'ruf combination had defeated the Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno pairing by 54 to 45 percent, a nine percent margin and close to the outcome when Jokowi and Prabowo faced one another in 2014.

Although Prabowo and his supporters have contested the pollsters' results, these quick count projections have been accurate in three previous elections. More significantly, the eight leading pollsters reached similar conclusions, with Jokowi obtaining winning margins of 8 to 10 percent.

Why Jokowi-Ma'ruf Won

Prabowo claimed victory with 62 percent support based on his own 'real count'. Sandiaga Uno ('Sandi') did not appear when Prabowo made these claims to the media and appeared uneasy, although he stood by Prabowo's side the next day when the claims were repeated. To Prabowo's credit, he has not provided public backing to calls

by some of his key supporters for 'people's power' demonstrations in Jakarta to prevent the 'stealing' of the election.

Although the official results are due only on 22 May 2019, Prabowo would have made a major contribution to the institutionalisation of Indonesian democracy and strengthened the electoral process if he acknowledged Jokowi's victory. This is unlikely to happen.

Jokowi's victory occurred because of his sweep of the populous *abangan* (syncretic Muslim) heartland in Central Java and East Java while Prabowo performed well in the regions of West Java, Sumatra and Sulawesi that are dominated by *santri* (devout Muslims). In areas with significant Christian minorities like North Sumatra, North Sulawesi and eastern Indonesia as well as Hindu-dominated Bali, Jokowi emerged victorious.

The quick count indicates that Jokowi won 21 out of 34 provinces compared to 23 of 33 provinces in 2014. Prabowo enjoyed larger victory margins in West Java, Banten and several Sumatran provinces in 2019. While Jokowi had won South Sulawesi in 2014, the home province of his running mate Jusuf Kalla, Prabowo carried the province in 2019.

Jokowi fared poorly in *santri*-dominated regions like Aceh and West Sumatra. Prabowo's confidence of his chances of victory would have increased when he saw the positive reaction to his campaign around the country.

Muslim Identity Politics

Although pre-election polls indicated that voters in these areas were satisfied with the government's performance, including its infrastructure construction programme and its development-focused agenda, it did not translate into support at the polls.

Instead, *santri* voters appeared to focus on identity politics – they perceived that Prabowo represented the interests of Muslims. These voters also responded negatively to claims on social media that his rival Jokowi was anti-Islam, had ties with the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party, PKI) and had facilitated the entry of a sharp increase in workers from China.

Prabowo also benefited from his economic nationalist stance during the campaign. He focused on the rising cost of living and the need to take back control of Indonesia's wealth from foreign control. His vote share was boosted by the growing religiosity of urban Indonesians and the active campaigning of the Islamist party Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party, PKS).

Particularly significant was the pro-Prabowo campaign by prominent Muslim preachers such as Abdullah Gymnastiar and Adi Hidayat with a strong base among millennials and an effective platform through social media. Prabowo also benefited from the support of leading members of the modernist Muhammadiyah, the second largest Muslim organisation in Indonesia.

Prabowo's strong *santri* support is ironic as he is a Muslim with an *abangan* Muslim

Javanese father and Menadonese Christian mother. His siblings include Christians and Catholics. Prabowo and Sandi are part of the cosmopolitan Jakarta elite but they tapped the rising sense of a Muslim identity among a younger generation of Indonesians.

Jokowi's Javanese Base

By contrast, Jokowi's selection of Ma'ruf Amin resulted in a strong appeal to the Javanese heartland of the *abangan* – nominal Muslims with syncretic beliefs, as well as Christian Javanese. With Ma'ruf Amin's leadership role in the traditionalist Muslim Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Muslim organisation in Indonesia, and the support of the Megawati Sukarnoputri-led Partai Demokrasi Perjuangan Indonesia (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, PDIP), Jokowi ensured that he had massive victories in the PDIP stronghold of Central Java and the NU base in East Java – the two provinces with the largest number of voters.

While Jokowi won 67 percent of the votes in Central Java in 2014, he secured 77 percent in 2019. Similarly, in East Java, Jokowi enjoyed a 33 percent margin over Prabowo in 2019 compared to six percent in 2014. The implication is that the *santri* influence in Prabowo's campaign resulted in a negative response in Central and East Java.

This resulted in strong support for the Jokowi-Ma'ruf ticket in the Javanese heartland. Identity politics therefore worked both ways. While in previous elections, the *abangan* vote split among several parties, in 2019, they backed the PDIP and the NU-affiliated Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (National Awakening Party, PKB), delivering Central and East Java to the Jokowi camp.

Decline of Golkar

PDIP emerged as the largest party in the House of Representatives (DPR) with 18.9 percent of the vote. Prabowo's electoral vehicle Gerindra overtook Golkar, the ruling party of the Suharto era, and emerged as the second largest party with 12.7 percent. Golkar diminished from 14.8 percent in 2014 to 11.8 percent in 2019, continuing its decline since the end of the Suharto era.

The interesting question is whether Gerindra will build on its support or fade away. Despite Prabowo's strong Islamist support, Gerindra mounted a secular nationalist campaign with candidates drawn from the spectrum of Indonesia's ethnic and religious groups, including active involvement of Prabowo's relatives. However, it is a highly personalised political vehicle and is likely to wither away if Prabowo leaves the scene.

The Jokowi-Ma'ruf coalition of parties will have a majority in the DPR, the Indonesian parliament. The challenge will be to ensure that these parties will continue to support Jokowi's policy agenda. While the coalition backing Prabowo focused on support for his campaign, the Jokowi-supporting alliance did not campaign actively for the presidency and concentrated on electing their own candidates at the provincial level.

This highlights the difficulties posed by the simultaneous presidential and legislative elections, which was the first time for Indonesia. The election authorities deserve credit

for the management of this complex process but some observers have already called for a re-think of this decision.

Jakarta Surprise

Jakarta provided an unexpected victory for Jokowi. Prabowo's ally Anies Baswedan defeated Jokowi's protégé Basuki Tjahaja Purnama ('Ahok') in the 2017 election for governor of Jakarta, with Anies securing 58 percent of the vote.

Prabowo's supporters were confident of a repeat in the 2019 election, as Sandi had been Anies' running mate. However, in the presidential election last week, Prabowo obtained 49 percent of the vote, losing narrowly to Jokowi.

This lessens the possibility that Prabowo's supporters will successfully replicate the 2 December 2016 massive rally that led to the *Aksi Bela Islam 212* (212 Defending Islam Movement), which played a significant role in Ahok's defeat in the 2017 governors' election and Ahok's subsequent court trial and incarceration for blasphemy.

Jokowi's Challenge?

As this will be Jokowi's final term, since the election laws prevent him from serving more than two consecutive terms, he could turn out to be a more decisive leader. Instead of distributing Cabinet seats to members of his coalition, he should select a Cabinet capable of executing his programmes, especially in the economic portfolios. His penchant for coalition building and testing the political waters will mean that he will reach out to win modernist Muslim support. He would be wary of strengthening the *santri* opposition to him.

However, there is also the expectation among his *abangan* base that Javanese concerns deserve attention, even as he tries to rule as the president of the whole archipelago. Despite growing assessments that the *santri/abangan* cleavage in Javanese politics is declining, the 2019 presidential election provides clear evidence that it remains a key aspect in the analysis of Indonesian politics.

Jokowi's task would be easier if Prabowo acknowledged that he had a historic opportunity to leave his mark by recognising the result of the presidential election and calling his supporters to respect the outcome.

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