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perspective

WATCHING THE INDONESIAN ELECTIONS 2014

EDITED BY
ULLA FIONNA





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INSTITUTE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
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The **Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)** was established as an autonomous organization in 1968. It is a regional centre dedicated to the study of socio-political, security and economic trends and developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geostrategic and economic environment. The Institute's research programmes are the Regional Economic Studies (RES, including ASEAN and APEC), Regional Strategic and Political Studies (RSPS), and Regional Social and Cultural Studies (RSCS).

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FOREWORD

ISEAS Perspective was quietly started in the middle of 2013. This series of analytical briefs on Southeast Asian current affairs thus came into being around the same time that the Indonesia Studies Programme was revamped at the Institute.

Already then, the signs were already clear that the Indonesian elections scheduled for 2014 were going to be very significant ones, as a window not only into how the country had been developing since the fall of Suharto in 1998 but also into how the democratization process in the country begun in all earnestness in 2008 had been faring.

In the weeks before, during and after the elections, Indonesia experts based at or otherwise affiliated to ISEAS, were sent out on fieldwork trips to sharpen their sense of what the most profound changes and the most significant trends occurring in Indonesia were; and to write reports on the current state of this giant archipelagic country.

Their findings were made public through *ISEAS Perspective*. A series of well-attended seminars were also arranged at the Institute throughout the period. Events were moving quickly though, and the publishing schedule could not always keep up with changes on the ground, nor with the number of articles submitted. Of the eighteen articles written, only fifteen saw immediate light of day.

This compilation allows for the remaining three to be published for the first time. As a collection, the articles provide anyone interested in Indonesia — and given the prominence of this country, that should include anyone interested in Southeast Asia and East Asia — with an effective introduction to the country's present social, economic and political situation.

The election of Joko Widodo as President in itself robustly challenges the status quo of established political parties and traditional power holders,

and how his term in office develops in the coming years will be closely watched by governments and international businesses — and by ISEAS.

OOI KEE BENG

Deputy Director, ISEAS

Founding editor of *ISEAS Perspective*

INTRODUCTION

The fourth democratic elections in post-*reformasi* Indonesia held in 2014 proved most exciting. The country showed that it had with great success institutionalized the policies and initiatives taken within the democratization process that got underway in 2008. Most notably, it is the decentralization and the implementation of direct local elections that had “given birth” to Indonesia’s seventh president, Joko Widodo or Jokowi.

But by the same token, the country continues to suffer from the dysfunctionality of the institutions and the persisting socio-economic problems. As such, Indonesia’s democratic progress remains a unique one, where although elections are free and civil society is vigilant in keeping government in check, many setbacks linger. Corruption is still rampant and parties continue neglecting formulating clear platforms and policies, and instead heavily on political figures to attract votes.

The collection of articles in this volume represent close-up snapshots of numerous actors and the many issues arising during the 2014 elections. Together, the contributions demonstrate various dynamics that Indonesian voters were faced with even before the real campaign had started.

To be sure, the election of Joko Widodo as governor of Jakarta in 2012 brought a profound change that clearly influenced the subsequent campaigning methods and mechanisms adopted by parties and by individual candidates.

Several articles show how political parties struggled to improve their standing in voters’ eyes, amidst the various scandals and leadership problems that embroiled many of them more than a year before the elections. Non-mainstream actors such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) also receive special attention with a contribution highlighting how these, despite their hostile stand against democracy, acted nevertheless, as vote brokers, through their manoeuvres.

Several shed light on the campaign dynamics at the grassroots level. The new trends and realities that parties and candidates faced that year were especially imperative to investigate — generally, parties took a much less determinant role while candidates occupied the centre stage. As was to be expected perhaps, old practices such as vote-buying became more sophisticated, and will most likely continue to be an important feature in Indonesian elections in years to come.

The votes cast for the various parties also revealed new developments that Indonesia enthusiasts should take note of. These are notably the endurance of the Islam-based parties, the “failure” of the Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle (PDI-P), and the influence on voting behaviour of charismatic leaders.

The presidential election took the form of rivalry between the old and new breeds of Indonesian leaders. On one hand, Jokowi represented the new breed that rose from the grassroots and that has few connections with the traditional elite, while his opponent, Prabowo Subianto, exemplified the old elite trying their best to retain control.

These articles also provide the assessment of the presidential campaign as one where the utilization of new and old-but-improved tactics to discredit the opponent created strong polarizing effects on voters. What transpired as a result is a divided government that now has to manage the heavy burden of high public expectations. The various multi-faceted problems and challenges that the Jokowi government faces are thoroughly discussed in these contributions.

In providing an assessment of the undercurrents and challenges that the 2014 Indonesian elections faced, this collection is crucial to an understanding of the contemporary issues that shaped the 2014 elections and that will challenge the government of President Jokowi. These dynamics suggest strongly that the future of Indonesian politics will see a strengthened role being played for individual candidates, and a continuing struggle by parties to find a role that goes beyond them being mere vehicles for candidates. Voting patterns will stay fluid and will remain vulnerable to socio-economic issues that could spell the rise and fall of leaders and parties.

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1

THE GUBERNATORIAL RACE IN JAKARTA Background and Implications

Hui Yew-Foong and Ikrar Nusa Bhakti

Of all the direct elections for local leaders (known in Indonesian as Pilkada) held in 2012, the gubernatorial race for Jakarta DKI was definitely the one to watch. As a contest for the most important posts for Indonesia's sprawling capital city with almost 7 million registered voters, the Jakarta election serves as a barometer for local elections throughout the Indonesian archipelago.

During the first round of the local election on 11 July 2012, the popular challenger, Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, led with almost 43 per cent of the votes, while the incumbent, Fauzi "Foke" Bowo, trailed with 34 per cent. As none of the candidates garnered more than 50 per cent of the votes, the two leading candidates went on to a second round run-off.

Hui Yew-Foong is an ISEAS Senior Fellow, and **Ikrar Nusa Bhakti** is Professor of Intermestic Affairs, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI). This article was first published on 1 November 2012 as *ISEAS Perspective* 2012/11.

And so, on 20 September 2012, Jakarta voters went to the polls a second time to elect their governor and deputy governor. Quick count estimates showed Jokowi winning with at least 53 per cent of the votes, and already that same day, Fauzi Bowo congratulated the new governor-elect. The Jakarta General Election Commission officially announced on 29 September that Jokowi had won 53.82 per cent of valid votes, winning the majority of the vote in all five municipalities of Jakarta. Fauzi Bowo had garnered 46.18 per cent of valid votes.

On 15 October, Joko Widodo and his running mate Basuki Tjahaja Purnama were installed as governor and deputy governor of Jakarta respectively, and became the second pair to be directly elected to two of the nation's most coveted offices.

DECENTRALIZATION AND DIRECT ELECTIONS FOR LOCAL LEADERS

In reaction to the over-centralization of state powers during the Suharto era, Indonesia embarked on a path of decentralization with legal reforms in 1999. Law No. 22/1999 and Law No. 25/1999 instituted the devolution of political authority and distribution of revenues respectively to districts and municipalities. This gave much greater power and autonomy to local leaders and local parliaments. With more at stake in terms of resources made available at the local level, political elites at that level lobbied for the proliferation of districts and municipalities. From a total of 341 in 1999, the number of districts and municipalities grew to 440 by 2004, and now stands at around 500.

When these decentralization laws were first promulgated in 2001, leaders at the provincial level (governor), the district level (district head or bupati) and municipal level (mayor) were elected by their respective local parliaments. In turn, this led to money politics where local parliamentarians gave their votes to the highest bidders, irrespective of party affiliations. To resolve such rent-seeking behaviour among the political elite and increase the legitimacy of local leaders, Law No. 32/2004 on Regional Government was introduced to institute the direct and popular election of governors, district heads and mayors. A role was retained for political parties at these elections as candidates have to be

nominated by a party or coalition that had won at least 15 per cent of the votes at the most recent local parliamentary election or controlled at least 15 per cent of the seats in the local parliament. Since April 2008, this requirement was no longer necessary as Law No. 12/2008 allowed independent candidates to run for local leadership positions. All these changes in electoral laws were meant to make regional leaders directly accountable to the people they govern, and as we shall see, candidates who were more responsive and adept at communicating with the electorate stood to gain.

THE CAMPAIGN

Although Jokowi and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, popularly known as "Ahok", were newcomers to the Jakarta political scene, they were not new to the Indonesian public eye. Jokowi, aged 51, had served as mayor of Surakarta since 2005, and was already well-known nationally for his success in running the city. He rebranded Surakarta (also known as Solo) with the motto "Solo: The Spirit of Java" and successfully applied for it to be a member of the Organization of World Heritage Cities. In a survey by the University of Indonesia and The Cyrus Network, he was found to be the most electable candidate for governor of Jakarta. Ahok, aged 46, had been bupati of East Belitung and a member of the People's Representative Council before running for deputy governor of Jakarta. Both men had also won awards for being non-corrupt. Thus, they entered the campaign scene with track records as young, effective leaders who were squeaky clean.

Fauzi "Foke" Bowo, aged 64, was very much part of the Jakarta establishment. As a Betawi or native of Jakarta, Foke had served as regional secretary of the Jakarta Government, deputy governor of Jakarta and then the first directly elected governor of Jakarta. Nachrowi "Nara" Ramli, aged 61, the deputy governor candidate, was also a Betawi and a former major general of the Indonesian Army. In contrast to the younger pair of Jokowi-Ahok, it was inevitable that Foke would seem rigid in his leadership style and distanced from the people. It also did not help that under his long watch, Jakarta's perennial problems, namely traffic jams and flooding, remained unresolved.

Targeting these longstanding problems faced by Jakartans, the Jokowi-Ahok pair promised effective policies that would bring about change in the Indonesian capital city. In particular, the younger pair seemed more willing to engage with the everyday problems of the average Jakartan, from affordable drinking water to the need to revitalize and revamp kampong and slum areas. Rather than investing in expensive campaign advertisements like the Foke camp, the Jokowi-Ahok team visited slum dwellers and gave them the sense that they were respected as human beings and not just the object of political infighting among elites.

With this approachable stance, Jokowi became a "media darling" in almost all print and electronic media. They reported positively on what he did and said and he became a media celebrity, such that even his signature checkered shirt became a sought-after item in Jakarta. The team was also able to appeal to young Jakartans through pop songs and music videos, and changing the lyrics to popular tunes to foster resonance. The slogan "Fokoke Jokowi" ("It must be Jokowi"), creatively playing on the names of the opponents, also struck a chord with those who were dissatisfied with the leadership style of Fauzi Bowo. These creative campaign messages were also disseminated through social media channels such as Facebook and Tweeter. In short, by using both traditional and new media, the Jokowi-Ahok pair was better able to connect with a broad spectrum of the Jakartan electorate, from the tech-savvy middle class to the urban poor.

THE IMPLICATIONS

First, this election showed that the personal appeal of candidates was more important than the support and endorsement of political parties in determining electability. In other words, electoral support for the respective parties did not necessarily translate into support for their official candidates. In the first round of the Jakarta election on 11 July, for example, the candidates Alex Noerdin and Nono Sampono, who were backed by major parties Golkar and the United Development Party (PPP), received only 4.67 per cent of the votes, which was less than the 4.98 per cent garnered by independent candidates Faisal Basri and Biem Benjamin. Another example was the pair Hidayat Nur Wahid and Didik Rachbini,

who received only 11.72 per cent of the votes, although they were supported by the Justice and Prosperity Party (PKS) that had won 17.8 per cent of votes from Jakarta in the 2009 legislative election.

The second round result is another case in point. The Jokowi-Ahok team won although they only had the backing of the Indonesian Democratic Party Struggle (PDI-P) and the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra). On the other hand, the Foke-Nara team lost even though they had the support of all other major parties, which included the Democratic Party (PD), Golkar, PPP, PKS and the National Mandate Party (PAN). While this did not mean that political parties had become insignificant institutions, it did mean that beyond the formal political arena where parties posture and seal their alliances, political parties have little traction, especially when it came to voting behavior.

Second, in pluralistic and cosmopolitan Jakarta, the politicization of SARA (ethnic, religious, race and inter-group) issues proved to be disingenuous. Be it the highlighting of Foke and Nara's native Betawi credentials, the undermining of Ahok because he was of the Chinese minority and a Christian (read non-Muslim), or the accusation that Jokowi's mother was non-Muslim (which proved to be untrue), all these did not have a definitive impact on the polls. What seemed to be more important was the ability of the candidates to embrace a pluralistic agenda that would benefit all sectors of the electorate. This was why, other than Ahok, Chinese had been moderately successful in other gubernatorial, district and mayoral elections since direct elections were introduced in 2005.

Third, the opinion polls that politicians and political pundits depended so much upon were blatantly inaccurate. Most of the opinion polls, conducted in April by institutions such as The Cyrus Network, the Lingkaran Survei Indonesia and Indo Barometer, predicted that the Foke-Nara pair would win handsomely. Only the survey by the Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information (LP3ES) put the Foke-Nara and Jokowi-Ahok teams neck to neck. This raised questions about the methodological rigor of the pollsters and the extent to which they were instruments for measuring or for swaying public opinion.

As Jakarta represents a good cross-section of Indonesia, the lessons from this recent gubernatorial election can be instructive, not only for other local elections, but also for the Presidential election due in 2014. Besides