

# Jokowi's election victory

## Prospects and challenges

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Above: A voting bulletin. Image reproduced under a Creative Commons license on Wikimedia.

As predicted by many polls, Joko Widodo (Jokowi) won the April 2019 presidential election, allowing him to serve the country for another five years. The 2019 election was a replay of the 2014 election where Jokowi defeated former military general Prabowo Subianto. In the 2019 election, Jokowi's margin of victory improved by a meagre 4.7 per cent despite the developmental policies introduced during his first term. What can Indonesians expect from Jokowi's second term? Will he be more aggressive in pushing for economic reforms and how will he handle greater political polarisation in the country?

The ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute's Indonesian Studies Programme presents the following three articles to highlight the challenges confronting the president. On the economic front, though Jokowi promised to improve Indonesia's business environment through deregulation and eradication of corrupt practices, the country's decentralised law-making process has slowed down his efforts. On the religious front, his choice

of conservative cleric Ma'ruf Amin as vice-president has raised questions as to what this would mean to pluralist and moderate voices in the country. Lastly, how will the Jokowi government manage the increased polarisation of Indonesian society? The election results show that while Jokowi remains popular in Java, he lost significant support in Aceh and West Sumatra. Uniting the nation will be Jokowi's biggest challenge.

## The 2019 Indonesian elections. Between the opinion polls and the polling booth.

Hui Yew-Foong



Above: Lists of candidates for Indonesia's 17 April 2019 elections. Image reproduced under a Creative Commons license on Wikimedia.

On 17 April 2019, 158 million Indonesian voters went to the polls to elect their president and vice president, as well as four different levels of legislative representatives. This proved to be one of the most challenging elections in Indonesian history, as it was the first time that Indonesia held the presidential and legislative elections simultaneously. As expected, the presidential election overshadowed the legislative elections.

The 2019 presidential election was seen as a replay of the 2014 presidential election because the same presidential candidates, namely, Joko Widodo (popularly known as Jokowi) and Prabowo Subianto (hereafter Prabowo), were facing off against each other again. What was different were the vice-presidential candidates. Under pressure from his coalition, Jokowi had selected the 76-year-old conservative Muslim cleric Ma'ruf Amin (hereafter Ma'ruf), who was chairman of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) and former supreme leader of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia. This was seen as a tactical move by Jokowi to combat the image that

he was anti-ulama (Islamic scholar) and not religious enough. On the other hand, Prabowo picked Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno (hereafter Sandiaga), former deputy governor of Jakarta. As one of Indonesia's most successful young entrepreneurs, the then 49-year-old Sandiaga was seen as having strong appeal to the 42 million millennial voters and someone who could speak authoritatively on the economy.

Another difference between the 2014 and 2019 elections was the fact that Jokowi ran in 2019 as the incumbent and part of the political establishment, with a coalition of 10 political parties behind him while Prabowo had only five parties supporting him. Whereas in 2014 he was a commoner and an outlier challenging

the Jakarta elite as a populist reformer, Jokowi had to justify his re-election in 2019 with his track record.

After the nominations for presidential candidates were formally announced on 10 August 2018, no less than 39 surveys conducted by 20 different institutions were conducted to find out how the electorate would vote. Most of the more reliable surveys found Jokowi-Ma'ruf's support rate to be between 50 and 60 per cent, while Prabowo-Sandiaga's support rate tended to range from 30 to 40 per cent, thus giving Jokowi-Ma'ruf a lead of about 20 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Opinion polls conducted about a month before the election by most reputable pollsters, such as the Center for Strategic

and International Studies (CSIS), Charta Politika, Indo Barometer and Lingkaran Survei Indonesia (LSI) Denny JA, all pointed to a comfortable win of 18-20 per cent for the Jokowi-Ma'ruf pair.

The surveys also suggested a 'coattail effect' on the electability of political parties. The parties of the presidential candidates, the Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P) and the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra), were expected to benefit from the popularity of the presidential candidates and lead the pack. The Golkar Party, National Awakening Party (PKB), Democratic Party (PD), Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), National Democratic Party