

# Indonesia elections: three observations on Jokowi's victory

Blog post by Senior Associate Brigitta Kinadi, 16 May 2019

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Although official results of the Indonesian presidential and parliamentary elections have not been released, quick count results suggest that incumbent president, Joko Widodo (Jokowi), has secured a second term. The latest projections show that Jokowi won with around 56% of the votes, while his opponent, Prabowo Subianto, received 44%. As Indonesia awaits official results and prepares for the inauguration of the next president in October, here are three thoughts on Jokowi's victory and implications for his second and final term.

*First, Prabowo's apparent refusal to accept the result may signal a period of volatility and uncertainty.* Although Jokowi appears to have won the presidential election with a 12% margin, he did not achieve the 60% level that would have marked an overwhelming victory. Prabowo performed better than expected, which has emboldened him to claim - somewhat bafflingly - that he collected 62% of the votes and is the rightful winner of the election. Prabowo's criticism of the General Election Commission (KPU) suggests that, just as he did in the last presidential election in 2014, he will likely contest the electoral results at the Constitutional Court.

The court rejected his petition in 2014. Yet his persistent refusal to concede could destabilise the post-election period as a whole - to the point of mobilising his hard-line Islamist support base to protest in Jakarta and cause disruptions in the capital. Prabowo may have taken this route to simply extend his political relevance in Indonesia; but more worrying is how mass demonstrations in Jakarta would likely lead to further divisions in a country already grappling with increasing polarisation.

*Second, if Indonesia can get through the immediate fallout, Jokowi is in a strong position to push his agenda.* Quick count results suggest that Indonesia's ten-party ruling coalition, which backs Jokowi, is set to win the most seats in parliament and retain its majority. Jokowi's main backer, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), will be the largest party with 21% of the votes. This means that Jokowi should face minimal opposition in passing his agenda. He will continue his signature infrastructure agenda and tackle the increasingly pressing issues of youth unemployment and underemployment.

The coalition's majority may even strengthen in the next few months. Indonesia's party system is extremely fluid and party allegiances often shift. Jokowi's renewed mandate may very well lead to parties in the Prabowo camp switching sides. In fact, there have been rumours that the Democratic Party is inching towards an alliance with Jokowi. The Democratic Party, which is led by former president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, may want to join the ruling coalition for a quid-pro-quo that likely involves a cabinet post for his son, Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono, in Jokowi's second administration.

*Third, Jokowi will have to deal with the rising tide of hard-line Islamism and identity politics.* This will be one of the most critical challenges for Jokowi in his second term. While Jokowi may use his renewed mandate to restore a more inclusive and moderate brand of Islam, his recent decisions point in the other direction - especially the decision to stand by while Jakarta governor (and Christian), Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, was sent to jail for blasphemy in a case with heavy political overtones. His selection

of controversial cleric Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate in the presidential election was also a clear strategy to court the conservative Muslim vote. More generally, Jokowi has largely failed to protect minority rights and has repeatedly shown that he is unwilling to risk losing the support of conservative Muslims. His lack of action on various cases of religious intolerance has already disillusioned some liberal segments of his support base. His stance on these issues means that divisions along ethnic and religious lines will likely increase in Indonesia, with conservative Islam strengthened as a political and social force in the country.