

The 2019 Indonesian Elections: An Overview

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Joko Widodo and Maruf Amin have been declared the winner in the 2019 Presidential elections, with a 11% lead over Prabowo and Sandiaga Uno. Prabowo is disputing the elections in the Constitutional Court. All the parties supporting Prabowo are accepting the results of the parliamentary elections.**
- Nine parties succeeded in winning seats in the national parliament. The parties supporting Widodo will have a clear majority.
- Despite expanding his coalition to include significant parties (GOLKAR, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan) and individuals that had supported Prabowo in 2014, plus winning the support of the large Islamic organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama, which was split back then, Widodo gained only 2.35% more votes.
- The results also manifest a new geo-cultural polarisation between Java and the “Outer Islands”, which may have arisen from different responses to the hardline Islamist banner associated with the Probowo camp, as well as different perceptions of payoffs from the Widodo government’s economic policies.
- Religious identity politics is likely to stay significant, while ideological and programmatic contestation remains shallow. Dynastic ambitions will continue to hinder unity among the non-Islamist parties.

INTRODUCTION

On May 21, the Indonesian Elections Commission (KPU - Komisi Pemilihan Umum) announced the results of the April Presidential and Parliamentary elections. [\[1\]](#) Table 1 sets out the results for the Presidential elections, with a comparison with the 2014 results.

Table 1

	2019	2014 [2]	Increases/decreases
Total Valid Votes	154,257,601	133,574,277	+20,683,324
Joko Widodo - Ma’ruh Amin	55.50 85,607,362	53.15 70.997,850	+2.35% +14,609,512
Prabowo Prabowo - Sandiago Uno	44.50 68,650,239	46.85 62.576.444	-2.35% +6,073,795
Differentials	11% 16,957,123	5.2% 8,421,406	

With regards to the Parliamentary elections, the KPU announced that nine parties participating passed the threshold of 4% to obtain seats in the parliament.

PARTIES SUPPORTING JOKO WIDODO

	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
PDIP	27.053.961	19.33
GOLKAR	17.229.789	12.31
PKB	13.570.097	9.69
Nasdem	12.661.792	9.05
PPP	6.323.147	4.52
Perindo	3.738.320	2.67
PSI	2.650.361	1.89
Hanura	2.161.507	1.54
PBB	1.099.848	0.79
PKPI	312.775	0.22
TOTAL	86,801,597	62.01
Widodo - Amin Presidential Vote	85,607,362	55.50

PARTIES SUPPORTING PRABOWO PRABOWO

	VOTES	PERCENTAGE
GERINDRA	17.594.839	12.57
PKS	11.493.663	8.21
DEMOKRAT	10.876.507	7.77
PAN	9.572.623	6.84
Berkarya	2.929.495	2.09
Garuda	702.536	0.05
TOTAL	53,169,663	37.53
Prabowo - Uno Presidential Vote	68,650,239	44.50

Before offering an initial interpretation of this outcome, it is necessary to briefly review the nature of the presidential campaigns, operating at three levels, and which framed the elections as a whole.

One level was the nationally televised debates and associated discourse. There was a rhetorical contestation regarding the state of the nation. [3] Widodo's campaign emphasised an "optimistic" – a word used by Widodo again and again – assessment of national development, downplaying or denying any negative phenomenon raised by Prabowo or other critics of the government. Widodo sought the opportunity to explicitly chastise Prabowo for being "pessimistic" about Indonesia's future. Widodo therefore offered a continuation of current programmes, with some expansion of social safety net provisions, such as an unemployment benefit.

Prabowo emphasised that a state of emergency existed. At one point, he stated that under current policies, Indonesian could "punah" ("collapse and disappear"). [4] He pointed to statistics, taken from authoritative sources, showing a widening gap between rich and poor, concentration of wealth

in the top 1%, extensive poverty, slow GDP growth compared to other Asian countries and large-scale outflow of wealth from Indonesia. Targets were set out but without details of how they would be met.

At this level, the contest remained essentially rhetorical: “Be optimistic, not pessimistic” versus “We need drastic change or else the country will collapse.” Widodo, of course, could refer to current programmes as examples of the kinds of future programmes he would implement.

Another level was that manifested by ground political and media activity, in particular on social media. All this activity operated parallel to the campaigning via the debates and their media coverage, but also enveloped it. Here the contestation also remained rhetorical, taking the form of a bidding war around religious identification, in particular aimed at specific sections of society who identify strongly as Muslims.

This level of campaigning was characterised by very significant contradictions. Widodo was nominated by the PDIP, considered the most secular of the major parties, usually described as “nationalist” in counter-position to “Islamic” or religious, yet Widodo took as his Vice-Presidential candidate a very conservative Islamic cleric, Ma’aruf Amin. [5] Amin was a leader of the Nahdatul Ulama, a very large traditionalist Islamic organisation, which then campaigned seriously for Widodo. Widodo began using more Islamic terms and sought out support from Islamic clerics.

The contradictions were also sharp on Prabowo’s side. Prabowo’s own speeches and explanations were fundamentally secular. He rarely, if ever, made promises relating to religious affairs. There was hardly a speech that he did not begin with pronouncing the greeting used by all the major religions, including Judaism. The same applied to his running mate, Sandiaga Uno, a young financier associated with the urban lifestyle of the moneyed “millennials” [6] However, a second component of Prabowo’s campaign was his public and very demonstrative alliance with the most militant and socially and politically conservative Islamic organisations, most clearly embodied in the 212 coalition that had mobilised in 2015 to remove the Chinese Christian governor of Jakarta at that time, Chahaya Purnama (Ahok). Prabowo had demonstratively associated with the 212 movement since its inception, in the lead up to and during the election campaign. Widodo’s running mate, Amin, had also been closely associated with 212 at its beginning, with Amin claiming that he was the main instigator of the movement; however he broke with 212 in the Presidential election campaign atmosphere.

Militant conservative Muslims were also very active in support of Prabowo on social media during the campaign, including launching many personal, black propaganda kinds of attacks against Widodo.

There remained a gap between Prabowo and Uno’s own high-profile campaigning emphasising economic issues, on the one hand, and the rampant “identity politics” and negative campaigning of supporters, such as the 212 and similar supporters of Prabowo’s candidacy, on the other. This gap, however, narrowed substantially at Prabowo’s final campaign event, which took on the character of a mass rally of the most militant and conservative segments of political Islam. Although an election rally to support his candidacy, only one segment of his supporters seemed to have been mobilised for the event. It appears that even his own party, Gerindra – which does not have an Islamist ideology – did not participate. Neither did the other coalition member, the Democrat Party (PD), of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Indeed, Yudhoyono even found it necessary to publicly distance himself and the PD from the rally, criticising it as being too “exclusive” – a code word for being only for hard-line political Islamists. [7] It was a massive rally which, without doubt, frightened many, being as demonstratively “Islam garis keras” (hard-line Islam) as it was.

Another level of activity was embedded in the differences in how Widodo and Prabowo formed their electoral coalitions. Widodo was able to assemble 10 parties within his coalition. Of the five parties that entered the pro-Prabowo coalition, two were creations of the highly monied Suharto family.

While Widodo's approach to coalition building is highly transactional, as exemplified by the prolonged negotiations on the Vice-Presidential candidate and his concession to the NU on Amin, Prabowo's approach was not that of building a coalition which would operate as a collective, but rather forming a bloc around himself as the determinant figure. Despite appeals from groups associated with the 212, who organised an assembly of Islamic clerics, to appoint a cleric as Vice-President, he did not do so, [8] and later boasted about that refusal. Another member of the pro-Prabowo coalition, the Islamist PKS, also put forward candidates who were ignored. [9] Despite the obvious hopes that AH Yudhoyono, the former President's son and a leading figure in the PD, would be made the running mate in return for PD support, Prabowo declined, much to the PD's obvious dissatisfaction. [10] In the end, Prabowo selected Sandiaga Uno, who had been the Gerindra nomination for Deputy Governor of Jakarta in elections the year before. Uno, as a successful financier, could bring a large amount of money to the campaign, but had no independent organised support base. Within the Indonesian social, business and political elite – defined as broadly as possible – Widodo's approach was seen as being more “democratic” as it is not oriented to any one faction of that elite which might seek to dictate. In this sense, the two sides had two differing approaches as to how to “unite” the very fragmented elite – an elite which has given birth to and is able to finance 20 parties, not to mention many other cliques.

UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS

An outcome of 55% vs 45% represents a substantial lead in most electoral systems. Widodo was able to increase his lead over Prabowo from 5.2% in 2014 to 11% this year. He was also able to attract the support of 70% of the 20 million new voters.

Widodo went into this campaign with the support of ten parties. This includes two important parties that did not support him in 2014: Golkar and PPP. In 2014, Golkar received 14.5% of the vote and PPP 6.53%. In 2019, they received 12.3% and 4.5%. In 2014, the NU was divided and lethargic in its support for Widodo. In 2019, they were united in an energetic campaign supporting him. Prominent figures such as jurist Mahfud MD and politician Yusril Ihza Mahendra, both of whom campaigned for Prabowo in 2014, supported Widodo in 2019. A new party, organising liberal-minded urban young people, the PSI, campaigned for Widodo. [11] The PSI did not exist in 2014. Despite this very substantial additional support, Widodo was only able to increase his vote share by 2.35%.

Thus it can be said that the support for Prabowo remained essentially solid, suffering only a small decrease, probably mainly due to weaker support among new young voters.

Another feature of the results was the accentuation of the tendency for political parties and national political figures to have their support centred in different geographic regions rather than more-or-less evenly spread throughout the country. In the 2019 election, Widodo received almost 77.2% of the votes in the highly populous Central Java Province, 67% in the equally populous East Java Province, 91% in Bali and 88.5% in Eastern Nusa Tenggara Province and 90% in Papua. Prabowo received 85.9% in West Sumatra Province, and had similar strengths in Aceh and high numbers of votes in other provinces outside Java as well as in West Java Province.

There is now much talk of a return to the situation in the 1950s when there was division between (ethnic) Java and “the Outer Islands”, including Sunda (West Java). The division does not exactly replicate the 1950s division, however Widodo's extremely high votes in ethnic Java and Bali and Prabowo's similarly high votes in West Sumatra and Aceh symbolise this geographic

polarization. [12] Analysis of this division in the 1950s pointed to both cultural as well as socio-economic differences. The mass poverty in post-Independence Java, it was argued, was one of the reasons the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) grew so rapidly on Java, especially Central and East Java. Initial responses to the re-emergence of this differentiation emphasise the Islamic religious factor. It is argued that the association of Prabowo with the hardline 212 Islamists scared off the less puritan Muslim Javanese (not to mention Balinese and Christian eastern Indonesians). This fear would have been heightened by the nature of Prabowo's final rally. The NU would also have been concerned as many of their religious practices would be forbidden under a puritanical application of Islam. On the other hand, Islamic culture in Sumatra and some parts of Sulawesi is more puritan. West Sumatra, where Prabowo won 85% of the vote, was the heartland of politically conservative Islam in the 1950s.

Following this outcome, however, it will also be necessary to revisit a comparison of the socio-economic differences between Sumatra and Sulawesi with Central and East Java. Before concluding that the "identity politics" bidding war was the primary factor, it is also necessary to assess whether the "social safety net" populism of Widodo, based around his education, health and promised unemployment benefit cards, had more appeal among the tens of millions of the precariously poor landless, casual labourers in Java than in the "Outer Islands" where the economy is based more on farmer smallholders alongside plantations and mines. Per capita incomes in some provinces are as low as in Java, but in others somewhat higher than in Java. West Java's socioeconomic situation will also need further research given its symbiotic-type relationship with the greater Jakarta area. Greater Jakarta and the north coast of West Java is where the core of Indonesia's factory manufacturing and assembly is based.

The very high vote for Widodo in populous Central and East Java no doubt contributed to his 55% vs 45% national win. In the national capital, of the Special District Of Jakarta (DKI) the vote is closer to 50-50—51.68% against 48.32%. This was a worse outcome for Prabowo than that which the PKS-Gerindra partnership of Anies Baswedan and Sandiaga Uno received in 2018 when they stood for the governorship. Then, they received 58%. Although a voting-booth-by-voting-booth analysis may provide a more precise understanding of this 50-50 capital city vote, it is symbolic perhaps of the real balance of forces between the two "sides".

The resilience of the vote for Prabowo despite the increased party and other support for Widodo during the campaign; the sharpening of the regionalisation of voter support; and the equal balance in the national capital, all point towards the stubbornness of the current differentiation.

UNDERPINNING THE DIFFERENTIATION

The contestation during the election campaign on all three levels was mostly shallow and rhetorical. Sharp and clear contrasts over possible future strategic economic programmes were not present. While the identity politics bidding war was very obvious, explicit policy promises relating to the place of religion were also not present. (There were, of course, demands to move in the direction of more Islamic syariah law from Islamist supporters of Prabowo, but Prabowo himself never emphasised this.) Why has such shallow contestation generated a sense of severe polarization? [13]

It appears that in a situation where all the political parties share the same outlook as regards socioeconomic, political and socio-cultural programmes, with only minor point-scoring differences existing, political competition must find other ways to differentiate players, especially at the national level. It is not surprising that "identity issues" get used. In contemporary political culture, where parties have their core support in different areas, geocultural identities, often involving religion, can come to the fore. With the last ten years of decentralisation, geo-cultural identity politics may have been given a boost. [14]

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GOLPUT

An important feature of this election campaign was the more pronounced advocacy for boycotting voting (GOLPUT) on the grounds that both sides were more-or-less equally bad. [15] Those arguing for GOLPUT had no serious access to the masses of voters. [16] There are two ways, however, in which the 2019 GOLPUT campaign was important, with implications for the next period. First, the campaign reflected a serious split in what can be called “civil society”; namely, the broad social milieu that emerged out of the anti-Suharto struggle with pro-democratic and critical ideas, or young people who have been mentored by this milieu.. In 2014, most from this milieu supported Widodo, some enthusiastically, some with reservations and some grudgingly. Some were also GOLPUT in 2014. In 2019, this milieu divided into hard-line supporters of Widodo or hard-line advocates for GOLPUT.

GOLPUT campaigners highlighted both the central presence of New Order era military figures in both camps as well as the presence of conglomerate capital, including big plantation and mining capital, behind both candidates. [17] They criticised Widodo’s insistence that all was well, rebutting his claims about socioeconomic improvements, the absence of land conflicts and many other social justice issues. They attacked Prabowo on his past human rights record, his own business practices, including non-payment of workers, his alliance with the Islamic right and the Suharto family and other similar issues. In the process, there was significant advance in policy discussions and a higher level of political debate within the GOLPUT milieu.

GOLPUT campaigners comprised not only individuals. Trade unions, political groups, human rights organisations, environmental groups, student organisations and others adopted this position. [18] There was a significant overlap with the organisations and milieu that participated in the April 2018 Indonesian Peoples Movement Conference. [19] The discussion around the need for a political alternative to what is on offer electorally has intensified. The emergence of a movement challenging the policies and values of the current elite is the only likely source for more programmatic and ideologically politics that could challenge the current political ecology.

WHAT NEXT?

Widodo has won with a 11% lead, and the pro-Widodo parties have a majority in the parliament. Parties that were in the Prabowo electoral coalition, such as the PD and PAN, may now seek some sort of accommodation with Widodo. Former President Yudhoyono has offered his congratulations to Widodo, [20] breaking with Prabowo who is planning to challenge the results in the Constitutional Court. [21] It is likely that Widodo will begin his second term in a strong position within Indonesia’s political institutions. The balance remains, however, more or less equal in the nation at large, reflecting also a sharpened geocultural differentiation. In the absence of serious differences within the elite in economic or general political strategy, the question to ask is, to what extent will “religious identity politics” issues (which will sharpen geo-cultural differentiation) continue to be used to differentiate contenders in any political contest. As long as well organised and committed Islamist political groups continue to agitate in this context, religious identity politics will retain a high profile.

There is, however, another factor that impacts directly on Indonesian politics, especially given the absence of substantial programmatic differences. This is dynastic politics. Two major parties currently in the “game” are the vehicles for potential political dynasties. Gerindra has been a vehicle for the presidential ambitions of Prabowo. His refusal to accept the validity of the results and his positioning himself as an aggrieved politician may indicate that he has not given up such ambitions, either for himself or for a family member or surrogate. At the same time, PD clearly wants to put forward Agus Yudhoyono as a future presidential candidate. Widodo’s second and final term finishes

in 2024, so the question of whom the PDIP will put forward already looms. At the press conference where Megawati Sukarnoputri claimed victory for Widodo, she was flanked on either side by her daughter Puan and her son Prananda. [22] [23]

Both Prabowo and Yudhoyono as of June 2019 are outside the government and are the figures most likely to emerge as central figures for an “opposition”. Their differences over the final Prabowo rally, which Yudhoyono criticised as exclusionist, and over how to approach coalitions, have become clearer. As long as a militant and conservative Islamist minority continues to campaign, which it will do through a range of organisations, to what extent religious identity politics issues are used to differentiate an opposition from the government may depend on the predilections of these two elite figures. Neither Sukarnoputri (nor Widodo), nor Yudhoyono, and not even Prabowo, come from the camp of hardline political Islam, but dynastic rivalry has, so far, prevented them from uniting on this front.

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https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_49.pdf

Footnotes

[1] All of the KPU’s election data can be found at <https://pemilu2019.kpu.go.id/>

[2] In 2014, Joko Widodo’s VP candidate was Yusuf Kalla and Prabowo Prabowo’s VP candidate was Hatta Rajasa.

[3] Max Lane, “Contending Rhetoric in Indonesia’s Presidential Elections: An Analysis”, *ISEAS Perspective*, January, 2019, ISSUE: 2019 No. 6.
https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_6.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0TRYriHuXA

[4] <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/12/18/19524351/ini-pidato-lengkap-prabowo-yangprediksi-indonesia-akan-punah?page=all> and for Joko Widodo,s response, here:
<http://www.tribunnews.com/pilpres-2019/2019/02/02/jokowi-ada-yang-bilang-indonesia-akanpunah-punah-saja-sendiri>

[5] See Norshahril Saat, “The Implications of a Ma’ruf Amin Vice-Presidency in Indonesia”, *ISEAS Perspective*, ISSUE: 2019 No. 11,
https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_11.pdf

[6] Hui Yew-Foong and Siwage Dharma Negara, "The 2019 Presidential Election as a Referendum on the Economy: An Interview with Sandiaga Uno", *ISEAS Perspective*, March, 2019 ISSUE: 2019 No. 12

[7] <https://www.beritasatu.com/politik/547291/sby-kritik-gaya-kampanye-prabowo>

[8] <https://www.merdeka.com/politik/bantah-tak-hormati-ulama-gerindra-sebut-prabowo-dalamposisi-sulit-pilih-cawapres.html>

[9] <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1113229/pks-ngotot-ajukan-cawapres-prabowo-versi-ijtimaulam-a-gnpf>

[10] <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4547552/poyuono-ngaku-batalkan-ahy-jadi-cawapres-pd-berartiprabowo-bisa-disetir>

[11] <https://tirto.id/grace-natalie-dukung-jokowi-tanpa-syarat-tapi-siap-diberi-jabatan-dnjd>

[12] For maps showing the geographic spread of votes see: <https://www.msn.com/id-id/berita/pemilu/nih-peta-sebaran-suarajokowi-dan-prabowo-di-tiap-provinsi/arc-BBW1SdZ>

[13] For a commentary on the polarisation issue, see Ross Tapsell, "The polarisation paradox in Indonesia's 2019 elections", in *New Mandala* at <https://www.newmandala.org/the-polarisationparadox-in-indonesias-2019-elections/> see also: Eve Warburton, "How polarised is Indonesia?" in *New Mandala* at <https://www.newmandala.org/how-polarised-is-indonesia/>

[14] For an interpretation that sees the rhetorical contestation around religious identity politics as a reflection of a return to ideological contestation, see Edward Aspinall, "Indonesia's election and the return of ideological competition", in *New Mandala* at <https://www.newmandala.org/indonesias-election-and-the-return-of-ideological-competition/>

[15] The political discussion generated by GOLPUT and a mapping of GOLPUT support will be the subject of a separate ISEAS Perspective. See also: <https://www.scmp.com/weekasia/opinion/article/2184317/indonesia-election-joko-widodos-latest-challenge-may-come-people>

[16] Anecdotal evidence also suggests that many individuals speaking out in support of GOLPUT, expressing critiques of both contenders, still voted for Widodo, as an anti-Prabowo act.

[17] In the last week of the campaign, a documentary film released by GreenPeace Indonesia, entitled *Sexy Killers*, was released which detailed the people who were involved in coal interests throughout the country and which showed that each candidate was being backed by some of these. See <https://www.eco-business.com/videos/documentary-film-sexy-killers-probes-indonesiandandidates-ties-to-big-coal/>

[18] See <https://tirto.id/membedah-potensi-gelombang-golput-di-pilpres-2019-cRYi>; see also <https://fsedar.org/posisi/pernyataan-sikap-komitmenmay-day-2018/> for one coalition's GOLPUT statement.

[19] Max Lane, Trade Unions' Initiative To Create Alternative Political Force in Indonesia, in ISEAS Perspective, August, 2018, ISSUE: 2018 No. 44.

https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2018_44@50.pdf

[20] <https://en.tempo.co/read/1208397/sby-congratulates-jokowi-maruf-i-fully-support>

[21] There were also both small peaceful protests against the election results and supporting Prabowo as well as separate physical clashes between street 'protesters' and police later in the day. These were suppressed by the police, with large number of arrests and injuries. It is reported seven people were killed. How the later protests were organised and by whom are not yet clear.

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2019/05/27/calls-raised-for-investigation-into-allegedpolice-violence-in-may-22-riots.html>

[22] <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/1196762/megawati-ucapkan-terima-kasih-kepada-prabowo-ata-spidadonya>

[23] The children of Yudhoyono and Megawati are not the only presidential hopefuls. Sandiaga Uno has built a higher profile for himself, as has Anies Baswedan. Other figures currently or recently holding governorships are also sometimes mentioned.