

Collaborative Colloquium

Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Freiburg

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Proceedings

Presidential Elections in Indonesia: Jokowi vs. Prabowo

The discussion starts after a brief look at the last presidential debate of Jokowi and Prabowo who have the following two positions.

Prabowo: When we talk about foreign policy, we have to talk about national security. He wants to strengthen the economy, secure natural resources and strengthen the police force. This way, we can expect to strengthen our national security and foreign policy.

Jokowi: Maritime Resources, Productivity and Economic Development and National Security. Jokowi also mentions Palestine and supports a two-state solution. He sets three priority for economic development and mentions global maritime access. He also talks about an increase in the military budget from 1.1 to 1.5% which is a considerable increase.

The discussion opens by a setting up of hypotheses on the Indonesian election and questions regarding its proceeding or outcome. Questions or Hypotheses are read out in the group afterwards.

General Discussion

How come the society is following this 'fascist' trend? Economic indicators are strong and people are better off. People who were once oppressed under Suharto appear to support this 'fascist' program by Prabowo. It is interesting to note that Prabowo has passed Jokowi in Survey results, according to an undisclosed survey (reliability is in question). Some survey houses (like LSE) still have Jokowi in front, but it appears that swing voters (urban middle class) is leaning towards Prabowo.

There questions arises whether there is a connection between Islamic Organizations and support for Prabowo. But this is questionable because then we would see more support towards Prabowo from Islamic groups like Mohamadiya(?). Still, most Islamic parties do support Prabowo and most Islamic groupings support Fascism.

Another point is the apparent Indonesian fascination with a strong political leadership. This was apparent in past elections (2004 and 2009) and appears to be a pervasive feature of Indonesian politics. Connected to this is the question of what the concept of strong leadership actually entails. Jokowi's legacy as a mayor appears to be one of strong leadership and results, but strength is sometimes framed as a way of public speaking and presenting ideas.

With regards to Prabowo, his political campaign is very multifaceted. He has essentially been campaigning for president since 2004 and in the meantime has achieved support from groups as different as the national farmer's association and groups related to natural resource exploitation. He stems from a rather unusual position for a person running for president, having been a party advisor previous to his run. In his co-campaign with Megawati in 2009, Prabowo championed rural grassroots economic development and used a sort of populist approach. Conversely, he does not appear to

address issues of the urban middle class, which contradicts the previous observation of the urban middle class giving him support.

Currently, there is a paradox as to Jokowi having strong support in rural areas while Prabowo has the mentioned support in urban areas. This supports the general hypothesis that urban middle classes are not necessarily revisionist and will oftentimes support a status-quo candidate. This has been a pervasive trend in past Indonesian and general Southeast Asian political development (e.g. Thailand) as revolutions have often been started by student movements as opposed to the middle class.

The problem of many people with Jokowi is that he is not yet ready to become president. He is overly focused on micro-level issues and does not have an overall vision. Prabowo is better at framing macro-issues that affect the nation as a whole ('Indonesia should be the next Asian tiger'). This goes well with a general trend in Indonesian politics towards a more nationalist view and the idea that Indonesia should claim leadership in the region and influence on a global level. Generally, there is a view of Indonesia being incapacitated politically by great power, economically incapacitated by the working of the global economy and being denied its legitimate role as a great power.

Another interesting point is that Jokowi's leadership is questioned while Prabowo's isn't. This is despite the fact that Jokowi has a good track record of leadership over the course of the past decade while Prabowo doesn't. In line with this, Prabowo's rethoric isn't actually concerned with inside-out Indonesian leadership, but with the enemies of Indonesia that lie outside the state.

Question and Answer Round:

What is the relevance of the headwear of Prabowo and Jokowi?

It is a general reference to the head of a group in Malay Indonesia, which used this headwear as a symbol. More specifically, it is also a reference to Sukarno, which is paradoxical as Prabowo's father fought Sukarno. It is also a Muslim symbol which is important because both Prabowo and Jokowi have a difficult position with regards to Islam. Prabowo is a recent convert (late 80's) and Jokowi's Muslim credentials are often questioned.

How stable is Indonesian democracy? Can Prabowo return to the 1945 constitution? Will the government become more democratic or autocratic? What does the election mean in the sphere of economy and politics.

One scenario is that Prabowo will try to play the anti-corruption card in his first year in office to try to get rid of enemies. Other parties will try to fight back, this will enable him to grab power in order to face his political opposition by framing the opposition as related to his corruption inquiries. There are precedents for this in the 70s, when martial law was declared.

It is questionable if the parliament would support Prabowo if he makes a grab for power. It does not seem like he will get a decisive influence in the early stages of his administration. For this, he would need a landslide victory giving him legitimacy for a wider range of influence. Also, civil society influence can work to hedge against his influence in society overall. Still, Prabowo could attempt to reduce the influence of watchdog organizations.

Maybe some lessons can be drawn from Thaksin Shinawatra's administration in Thailand. He was able to claim a landslide victory enabling him to reach a wide sphere of influence. A narrow majority for Prabowo or Jokowi could polarize Indonesian politics.

There is a more general point to be made about parliamentarians. As they feel controlled by watchdog organizations, they will also have an interest in reducing the power of organizations that observe the Indonesian political process, regardless of their political affiliation. This is a real danger

for Indonesian democracy going forward and again, has a comparative precedent in the Thaksin administration in Thailand.

What is the role of Islamic groups in the Indonesian political process?

If Jokowi wins, will he really be able to run the government without engaging in money politics?

How can Jokowi's vice-president's party support Prabowo's campaign? What is the role of Jusuf Kalla inside the Golkar party?

It seems to happen very often, especially at the local level, that parties and candidates switch groups in order to gain support. The cohesion of parties is not very strong, there is no party discipline. Parties are only vehicles for certain individuals to secure an election ticket and then win the election. This is a rather cynical way to use parties and voids the ideological function of political parties.

What are the real goals of Jokowi and Prabowo?

Indonesia will pursue a more protectionist policy, but more so under Prabowo. Indonesia will be less accommodative, but more so under Prabowo. There will be a larger influence of the military under Prabowo, first informally, but eventually formally.

Generally, is it a good thing to have direct presidential elections in Indonesia's current state?

What is the role of expertise in the election circuit? Why can't Jokowi translate his accomplishments into a platform of expert administration?