

Indonesia: Elections 2014

By Igor Dirgantara

Abstract

One of the fastest growing economies (over 6%), a forthcoming power in the world's top 10 economic club, as well as the largest Muslim (but secular, republican and non-Arab) country, Indonesia is heading towards its presidential elections. Mood, wisdom and passions of the strongly emerging Indonesian middle class will be decisive this time. Or by words of distinguish colleague of mine, professor Anis Bajrektarevic: "The middle class is like a dual-use technology, it can be deployed peacefully, but it also might be destructively weaponized, for at home or abroad."

Keywords :

Indonesia Election, Presidential Candidates, Political Programs, Prabowo Subianto, Jokowi

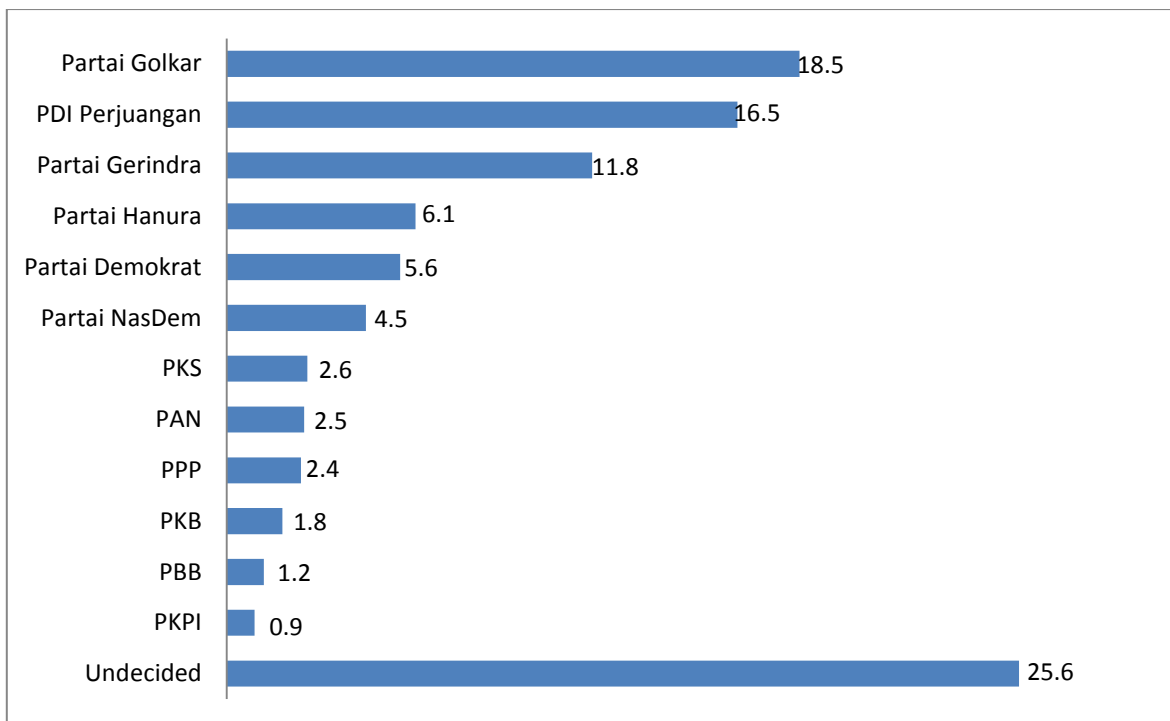
From November 2013 to January 2014, the Faculty of Social and Politics, University of Jayabaya (UJ), periodically conducted surveys related to the electability of the political parties and the presidential and vice-presidential candidates for the 2014 elections. The results show that the electability of the Democratic Party and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) have been decreasing following a series of corruption cases. The survey was conducted in 33 provinces by taking a sample of 1225 people which have the right to vote (aged 17 years and over. or not yet 17 years old but already married). The margin of error is + / - 2.8% and the confidence level is 95%. Population Data were collected through interviews with respondents using techniques based on the questionnaire.

When asked whether the respondents still believe that the PKS is a "clean party", about 66% said "not sure". Only 15.7% of respondents believe that the PKS is still a "clean party", the rest (18.3%) did not know. When asked whether the party of which the cadres are most involved in corruption cases, as many as 67.3% of respondents mentioned the Democratic Party. PKS came in as distant second at 5.8% and has taken over from Golkar Party, now in third place (5.2%). When I asked respondents, which party would be selected if elections were held today, only 6.9% would vote for the Democratic Party. Only 2.6% would vote for PKS, much lower than their result in 2009, which was 8%.

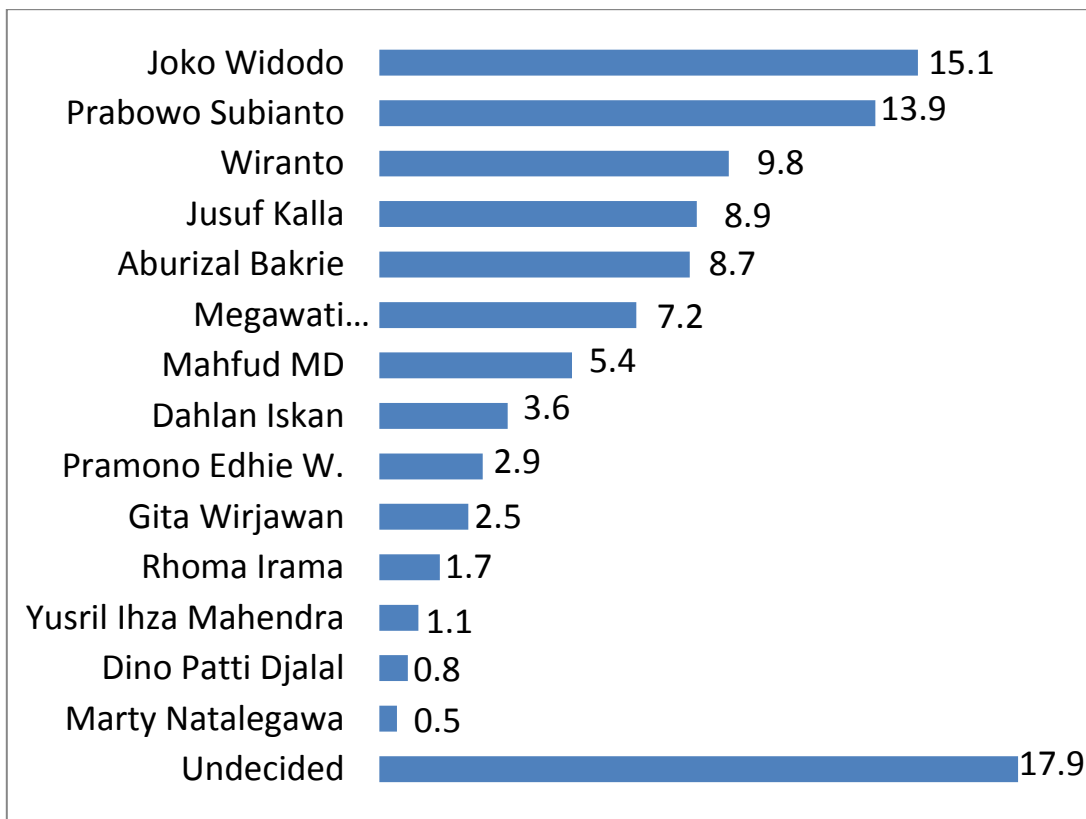
In terms of electability, the Golkar Party remained in the top position with 18.9%. When referring to the results of a survey of various other research institutions, Golkar's chance to

win the 2014 election seems pretty open. The Golkar Party is still being followed by PDI Perjuangan (PDI-P) with a rate of 16.8% electability. For the Partai Gerindra Party, which ended in eighth place in the 2009 elections, electability has now reached 10.3% and is in third place.

POLITICAL PARTIES ELECTABILITY



PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ELECTABILITY



The high electability of the Golkar Party is apparently inversely proportional to chairperson Aurizal Bakrie (ARB), who stands in fifth position as presidential candidate, at 8.7%. This is far below Joko Widodo (Jokowi) who ranks as the first public option among the most potential candidates (15.1 %).

Jokowi is a symbol of new hope for the people. He is simple, honest and populist. Jokowi is showing togetherness between the leaders and the led. Jokowi reaches out to the public and often visits slums in Jakarta. If in the United States people were disappointed with the war on terrorism during the Bush Administration and elected Barrack Obama, it is possible that if Jokowi steps forward as a 2014 presidential candidate, Indonesian people will chose him because of their disappointment over the war on corruption under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono during the second period from 2009 to now.

On average, respondents said they agree that if Jokowi would run for the presidency, they would not be concerned if Jokowi finished his term first as Jakarta Governor in 2017. Only 26% of respondents would not agree. Jokowi, who is a PDI-P cadre, also received support from other party voters. For example, 26% of Golkar voters would choose Jokowi, as would 33.5% of Democratic Party voters, 13.8% of Gerindra voters, 35.1% of Hanura voters, 35.1%, 26.7% of PAN voters, and 59.5% of PKS voters. The passing of MPR Chairman Taufik Kiemas of the PDI-P should open the possibilities for younger party cadre, such as Jokowi, to receive maximum support as opposed to proposing the older chairperson Megawati Soekarnoputri as candidate.

PRABOWO SUBIANTO VS JOKOWI

Jokowi's electability level surpasses its competitors. The nearest is only Prabowo Subianto (13.9%). But Prabowo Subianto and the Gerindra Party require extra effort to get support from other parties to form a coalition. For that he continued his guerrilla tactics to garner support and met with Hatta Rajasa (Chairman of the PAN) and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (Chairman of the Democratic Party (PD)). He was also diligent in communicating with a number of leaders of other parties, including the PDI-P. As a presidential candidate, Prabowo fits the bill on a number of levels. He was Megawati's running mate in her unsuccessful 2009 campaign, and he will have learned much from that. His reputation feeds the belief that Indonesia needs a return to assertive leadership, while his association with the former first family strikes a chord among the cross section of Indonesians who feel let down by democracy and who harbor a genuine nostalgia for the Suharto era.

It would be very interesting then if the two favored public figures do not get tickets in contestation. Other figures will pop up, among them: Megawati, Bakrie, Hatta Rajasa, Dahlan Iskan, Mahfud MD, Jusuf Kalla; and a new candidate will emerge. Those who follow the Partai Demokrat's convention will have opportunities: State Minister for State Owned Enterprises, Dahlan Iskan, still chairing the convention, followed by Pramono Edhi Wibowo, Gita Wirjawan, Anis Baswedan, and Dino Patti Djalal among them. It is very likely that Democratic Party will step down from their status of incumbent in the next general election of 2014. If they kept their position as the top third, there will still be a chance to nominate their convention winner as presidential candidate - even though they would need to do a coalition with other parties. If not, their candidate will only be feasible as a potential vice president candidate.

Currently, the candidates are not dealing with an incumbent or candidate supported by the ruling party. Even Jokowi and Prabowo come from the opposition party. These two figures represent the antithesis of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Jokowi is a rustic figure, representative of the common people, simple, and informal while Yudhoyono is elegant, charming, and formalistic. Prabowo represents nationalistic thinking, assertive, and pro-people. This is in contrast with the image of Yudhoyono who more interested in non-domestic issues and foreign investment, is closer to the elite, and too cautious in decision making.

All of this indirectly answers the two questions presented at the beginning of this piece. The 2014 presidential election is not as simple as one might imagine, especially as seen by the spread of electability numbers of various polls. The numbers are not fully pro Jokowi. Still, there is a possible rise of surprises.

- First, if the Court annulled the candidacy requirement of 20 per cent to three per cent.

- Second, if there is a mistake of Jokowi as governor and his supporters. The fanatical supporter's attitude as shown in the world of social media and the birth of Pro Jokowi movement has a weak point of its own.
- Third, if a figure exists that could encapsulate all the expectations of the voters. Prabowo Subianto, who has a handicap in the past, was accepted because he carries this message. This expectation is also reflected in the high popularity of Dahlan Iskan and Jusuf Kalla.

Still, the popularity of the President also shows that the public wants harmony, order, and decency. On the other hand, the public is still easily swept away by advertising and traditional loyalty. The color of pragmatism is a reality that remains in any society.

PROGRAM PARTY

Based on the findings in the survey, people crave the emergence of an alternative leadership figure. The people like leaders who have integrity, and who are honest, clean, populist, and have a strong commitment to the reform agenda that includes the eradication of corruption, and a good track record. The people would consider a candidate who has the ability to solve national problems, especially economic problems.

From results in various surveys, Prabowo Subianto is by far the strongest competitor for Jokowi in the elections. The public perceives Prabowo as a firm and bold figure. He is also considered to have the capability to solve Indonesia's chronic problems: corruption, poverty, and security. He is considered by many as the candidate with the clearest and definite vision and mission compared to others. Prabowo is clearly supported by Gerindra party as their 2014 Presidential Candidate, whereas Jokowi, who still leads other 2014 presidential candidates, is still waiting to be nominated by his party. Meanwhile, the main problem for Prabowo centers on whether Gerindra will be able to break through the 20 percent parliamentary threshold required, in order to avoid being forced to form a coalition with other parties and be able to nominate their own candidate(s). Moreover, nominating Prabowo Subianto as their presidential candidate is a must for them. If Gerindra is able to achieve 20 percent of legislative slots, then the next strategy for Prabowo is to choose at vice president candidate who would be able to widen the public's support for him.

In general, the results of the survey show several trends:

First, there is a real possibility that the Democratic Party will be replaced as the largest political party by Golkar or PDI-P. The apparently never ending internal conflicts regarding alleged involvement of some party leaders in a number of corruption cases is damaging the Democratic Party and this could last into next year. There is also the issue of dynastic politics, of which President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is often criticized. Therefore, the desire of the Democratic Party by President Yudhoyono to hold the Democratic convention later in July-August 2014 could be interpreted as an effort to increase the popularity and electability.

Second, the political map in the House of Representatives will likely become much simpler due to the decreasing number of political parties that will achieve national parliamentary seats, as the parliamentary threshold is increased from 2.5 to 3.5 percent.

Third, it is possible that the largest political party will not get more than 30 percent. Therefore, seats are more evenly distributed over all parties participating in the elections. There is an abundance of opportunities from swing voters for parties to target. Parties with a good image or with the ability to improve their image will be viewed positively by these voters. But parties whose image is not, will likely lose disproportionately. The PDI-P and Golkar Party tend to have a stable electorate.

Fourth, there is the possibility that Islamic and Islamic-based political parties (National Mandate Party - PAN, the National Awakening Party - PKB, the Prosperous Justice Party - PKS, the Crescent Star Party - PBB and the United Development Party-PPP) will be eliminated in the 2014 election. Factors for this include public policy mistakes made by these parties, and the absence of presidential candidates or high profile leaders. The declining electability of Islamic parties could bring about "poros tengah" (central axis) discourse for a coalition between Islamic parties, as there are still potential votes from the mostly Muslim Indonesian population.

Fifth, the 2014 election has the momentum of the transition generation. Currently, only the PDI-P and the Democratic Party give ample space for the emergence of young leaders in 2014. About 40-70% of the productive age group (18-40 years) who become potential voters wants change in 2014. The Democratic Candidates convention in November 2013-March 2014 has a chance to end the gerontocracy (rule led by the majority of the elderly) in Indonesia. In the 2014 general election, there will be the potential of novice voters; most of them internet users, as large as 40 percent of the total voters. Therefore, campaigns using social media could be effective to generate their votes.

Sixth, is the tendency of those who do not use their right to vote in the upcoming election (abstentions). This is also reflected in the considerable number of swing voters, i.e. those who do not or not yet provide a political choice (undecided voters). It is also visible in a floating mass who are disappointed in the current ruling political parties and in transactional politics (horse-trading). Young people are seen to have the ability and integrity, and candidates matter more than political parties.

Seventh, politics is always concerned with probabilities. Therefore, maneuvers, strategy, and the choice of political party elites will remain crucial in the 2014 election beyond the limits in the program and the issues or platforms of each party. In this context, the practice of money politics will still be used to expand support, followed by highly flexible political maneuvering to serve the needs and interests of the parties and their leaders.

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