

# The presidential elections in Indonesia, July and September 2004

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Indonesia's first ever direct presidential election marked another phase in the country's transition to democracy. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (known as SBY) was elected as Indonesia's sixth president. Despite claiming an overwhelming electoral triumph, the president is supported by medium-sized parties whereas the electorate had voted for the larger and more established parties in the 2004 parliamentary election. These parties have vowed to pose as "an extra-critical balance" to the president's leadership. Thus, whilst the President won the election, the battle in parliament (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, DPR) had just begun.

## 1. Reforms

In 2004, Indonesians finally got a say in who is to lead the country. Formerly, Indonesia's presidents were elected by the partially appointed and partially elected People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawarahan Rakyat*, MPR). In reality, elections brought little change in leaders. Sukarno secured his position by having himself appointed for life until he was eased out of power by Soeharto in 1966. Soeharto was re-elected unanimously by the MPR, which assured his position for three decades.

After Soeharto's downfall in 1998, the number of appointed members in the 700-seat MPR was reduced from one-half to 200. Further, the first post-Soeharto democratic election (1999) produced a multiparty parliament in which no party held a majority. These changes made the presidential elections less of a formality and more a horse-trading exercise. It was these backroom deals that outmanoeuvred Megawati, leader of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), which won the most votes (but not a clear majority) in the 1999 legislative election yet brought former President Abdurraman Wahid to power (see Mietzner, 2000).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The PDI-P won 34% of the vote and 153 seats in the DPR compared with Wahid's National Awakening Party (PKB) 13% and 51 seats.

In 2001, the MPR amended the constitution, paving the way for direct election of the president. The presidential and vice-presidential candidates stand for office as a team. Presidential pairs were nominated by parties or coalitions that either garnered 3% of the seats in the DPR or 5% of the popular vote in the April legislative election. The conditions were that the victorious pair must gain over 50% of the popular vote, of which 20% must come from at least half of the provinces.<sup>2</sup> However, no one seemed to be under the illusion that any contender could muster that level of support. Consequently, Indonesia prepared itself for two rounds of presidential elections: 5 July for the first round, with a run-off on 20 September. The run-off was a contest between the two finalists with the highest number of first-round votes.

## **2. The first round**

On 5 July, the election was contested by five presidential teams. These were the incumbent president Megawati Sukarnoputri and Hasyim Muzadi (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, PDI-P); Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla (Democratic Party, PD); Amien Rais and Siswono Yudho Husodo (National Mandate Party, PAN); former vice president Hamzah Haz and Agum Gumelar (United Development Party, PPP); and General Wiranto and Solahuddin Wahid (Golkar Party). The last pair were the most interesting: Wiranto is a retired general indicted for mass human rights violations in East Timor, and Wahid is former deputy chairman of the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM).

The front runners were clearly the Megawati–Hasyim and SBY–Kalla teams. Megawati was the incumbent president, having risen to popularity as a beacon of opposition to Soeharto’s repressive regime. Although the 1999 elections brought victory to her party, she became president only after the impeachment of former President Abdurraman Wahid.<sup>3</sup> Megawati, as the daughter of Indonesia’s first president, has always seen the top position as her birthright. Even so, she shies away from the media and rarely gives interviews. By contrast, despite serving under a number of unpopular governments, SBY was a familiar face on national television, and his recognition increased during the upsurge in violence in Aceh, West Papua, and Poso while serving as Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs in Megawati’s cabinet. His popularity rose further as the media and the public sided with him in a dispute with Megawati.<sup>4</sup>

The five presidential teams had just 1 month (1 June to 1 July) to publicize their agenda. One means of reaching electors was via televised debates, in which the five teams were divided into two groups who appeared on the same stage and had the opportunity to engage in debate. There was talk about resolving pressing issues such

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<sup>2</sup> International Crisis Group Asia Report 2004. Indonesia background: a guide to the 2004 elections, no. 71, p. 5. <http://www.crisisweb.org>.

<sup>3</sup> Time Asia, 23 July 2001. <http://www.time.com/time/asia/>.

<sup>4</sup> Far Eastern Economic Review, 22 April 2004, p. 13.

as unemployment, but the policy proposals were vague. Various groups engaged in negative campaigns to obstruct the chances of several candidates, aimed primarily at the three contenders leading in the opinion polls. Megawati was faced with an Islamic *fatwa* against Muslims voting for a woman as president. Footage of the bloody incidents in Trisakti and Senanggi in 1998 and 1999 were circulated in Java urging viewers not to vote for Wiranto.<sup>5</sup> And SBY was up against allegations of his involvement in the shootings (27 July 1996) of the Indonesian Democratic Party's supporters.

### 3. First-round results

Of the 155 million registered voters, more than 121 million cast their vote in the first round of the elections. Voter turnout was 78%, a drop from the 86% in the April legislative election. Some commentators have suggested that the drop in voter turnout was due to increasing cynicism about the electoral process and the inadequate performance of post-Soeharto governments.

As expected, the SBY–Kalla team led the field with 33.6% of the vote. However, one-third of the vote fell short of what was predicted in the opinion polls. A tracking survey had forecast SBY to win 43% of the vote, just slightly short of the percentage to win the first round outright.<sup>6</sup> The *fatwa* against women holding the presidency was not enough to stop voters from supporting Megawati. Her popularity had been waning over the years, and after 3 years in power, Indonesians had become increasingly disillusioned with her administration.<sup>7</sup> Even so, coming second with 26.6% of the vote, Megawati was assured of a place in the second round. Ironically, the two teams that were not subject to negative campaigning, Hamzah Haz-Agum Gumelar and Amien Rais-Siswono Yudho Husodo, fared the poorest (Table 1).

Faced with defeat, Wiranto challenged the results in the Constitution Court, alleging irregularities in vote counting. Wiranto's legal team claimed that he had lost some 5.4 million votes in 26 provinces, causing him to lag behind in third place.<sup>8</sup> These claims were based on the massive scale of double-punched ballots that were originally declared spoilt but were recounted.<sup>9</sup> A court ruling in favour of Wiranto would have given him a place in the second round, but his legal team failed to provide sufficient evidence. That left Megawati and SBY as the contenders in the second round run-off.

<sup>5</sup> The Jakarta Post, 11 June 2004. <http://www.thejakartapost.com>.

<sup>6</sup> Wave XIV of Tracking Surveys, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

<sup>7</sup> Postscript. Presidential Election Circus. Vol. I, No. 1, May 2004, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> The Jakarta Post, 3 August 2004. <http://www.thejakartapost.com>.

<sup>9</sup> Many voters failed to unfold the ballot papers before punching in their vote, so making two holes in their ballot. Instructions to count these ballot papers provided the extra holes were in blank spaces were not received by many polling stations.

Table 1

Results of the presidential election in Indonesia, first round, 5 July 2004

Party	Candidates	Vote (%)
Democratic Party (PD)	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla	33.6
Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P)	Megawati Sukarnoputri and Hasyim Muzadi	26.6
The Golkar Party	General Wiranto and Solahuddin Wahid	22.2
National Mandate Party (PAN)	Amien Rais and Siswono Yudho Husodo	14.7
United Development Party (PPP)	Hamzah Haz and Agum Gumelar	3.0

Source: Jakarta Post, <http://www.thejakartapost.com> (accessed July 2004).

#### 4. The second round

Political courting resumed immediately after the results were announced. On 19 August, a month before the second round, a coalition of four parties declared their support for Megawati. Known as the “National Coalition”, it consisted of Golkar, the PDI-P, the PPP, and the Prosperous Peace Party (PDS). The formation of this coalition shows that major parties commanding a widespread network, such as that enjoyed by Golkar, still believe that party machines can rally public support for their candidates.

While Megawati–Hasyim were convinced that the support of the National Coalition parties would lead them to victory, their opponents took a quite different approach. SBY–Kalla reached out directly to the electorate, notably by attending public functions such as mass prayers. In addition, supporters of the SBY–Kalla team created the People’s Coalition, consisting of the Democratic Party (PD), National Mandate Party (PAN), and the Justice Prosperity Party (PKS), which boasts the support of 99 grassroots organisations.<sup>10</sup>

In the lead-up to the second round, conventional campaigning activities were replaced by televised dialogues. As the Megawati camp refused to take part in a debate with SBY, the General Elections Commission (KPU) opted for choreographed dialogues where presidential pairs separately faced a board of four panellists. The panellists were selected by the KPU and approved by the candidates.

The pre-rehearsed discussions, held over 3 days (14–16 September), were an anticlimax after the lively parades and *dangdut* (local pop music) performances during the first-round campaign. Each of the discussions focussed on a different set of issues, ranging across political, economic, and religious matters.<sup>11</sup> This was a much diluted version of campaigning, differing sharply from the first-round campaign, so many doubted that the debates would have much impact on voters’ choice. According to the electoral regulations, the dialogues were the only chance the candidates had to reach the public, although the campaigning teams had secretly been campaigning for their candidates.

<sup>10</sup> Postsript, 2004. Indonesia mourns again. Vol. 1, No. 5, September 2004, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> The Jakarta Post, 11 September 2004. <http://www.thejakartapost.com>.

Table 2

Results of the presidential election in Indonesia, second round, 2 September 2004

Party	Candidates	Vote (%)
Democratic Party (PD)	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla	60.6
Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P)	Megawati Sukarnoputri and Hasyim Muzadi	39.9

Sources: The General Election Commission (KPU), <http://tnp.kpu.go.id/> (accessed October 2004); Jakarta Post, <http://www.thejakartapost.com> (accessed October 2004).

If the National Coalition had mustered the same level of support for Megawati as she received during the April legislative election, her victory would have been secured. With the vast network of bodies such as the bureaucracy and Golkar, Megawati had the resources to mobilise voters. Meanwhile, SBY relied on an informal relationship with NGOs, volunteers, and his newly established Democratic Party. But, as the incumbent president, Megawati had the upper hand. Taking full advantage of her position, Megawati adopted populist measures, such as giving the country's four million civil servants a month's bonus, not to mention the development projects in various parts of the archipelago and the low interest loans.

## 5. Second-round results

At 75%, turnout again fell.<sup>12</sup> There are suggestions that this further drop in turnout was due to electors who, in the first round, had supported a losing candidate. SBY won the second round by a landslide, with 69.27 million votes or 60.6% of the 114.26 million valid ballots. Unsurprising as the SBY–Kalla team had topped the polls in both rounds.<sup>13</sup> Megawati only managed to garner 39.4% of the vote, despite support from the National Coalition (Table 2).

Where did the National Coalition go wrong? Results from April's legislative election and the presidential elections indicate that party allegiance had little to do with voters' choice. Rather, personality seemed to play a bigger role.<sup>14</sup> Evidently, parties were no longer in command of voters' decisions, which is a significant development in voter maturity. This is in stark contrast to Soeharto's New Order when party machines were able to control voters' choices. Clearly, parties in the National Coalition had not come to terms with the greater independence of voters.

Despite the recent bombing outside the Australian embassy in Jakarta, the elections were conducted peacefully. Although some had expressed concern about the restrictive campaigning,<sup>15</sup> the elections won praise from international observers.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The Jakarta Post, 4 October, 2004. <http://www.thejakartapost.com>.

<sup>13</sup> The Jakarta Post, 22 September 2004. <http://www.thejakartapost.com>.

<sup>14</sup> Wave XIV of Tracking Surveys, IFES.

<sup>15</sup> See EUEOM Preliminary Statement and Statement of the Carter Center. <http://www.iorc-indonesia.org>.

<sup>16</sup> See International Observer Resource Center, <http://www.iorc-indonesia.org>.

No clashes broke out in the battleground of East Java where both teams have been competing furiously for support. Even in the war-torn provinces of Aceh and Papua where separatist sentiment runs high, the elections were relatively peaceful.<sup>17</sup>

## 6. Aftermath

The results of the legislative and presidential elections have highlighted the quandary of the Indonesian political system: parties lack discipline and representatives who act in a self-interested manner make it difficult for presidencies to function (Linz, 1994). In the legislative elections, the majority of votes had gone to larger and more established parties, but voters did not endorse the presidential candidates of those parties. Consequently, the DPR is divided between two coalitions: the People's Coalition, which supports the president but holds 232 (42%) of the 550 seats in Parliament; and the National Coalition which holds 264 seats (48%) and has proclaimed that it will be an 'extra-critical balance' to SBY's leadership as well as Former President Wahid's PKB with 52 seats (9%) refusing to join either coalition.<sup>18</sup> If the National Coalition was to remain united, it could be a significant obstacle to implementing SBY's policies or passing crucial bills.

That the National Coalition declared it would oppose the government when it was barely installed begs the question whether the continued existence of the Coalition is based on a political vendetta against SBY. However, the PPP has already withdrawn from the Coalition; internal factions are beginning to appear in the PDI-P; and a handful of defiant Golkar members are supporting the President. For the time being, however, the National Coalition has stayed together, so, despite the withdrawal of the PPP, the imbalance between the two coalitions in the DPR remains.

When just barely 1 month old, the House was paralysed by a power struggle over the leadership of the DPR commissions. The National Coalition had made it a mission to make a clean sweep of the positions whereas the People's Coalition proposed distributing the positions proportionally. With neither side willing to budge, the People's Coalition has boycotted the DPR meetings and created commissions of their own. This has disrupted the settling of other urgent matters such as the replacement of the Chief of the Indonesian Military. Whether the early disruptions define how the House will operate in the future is an open question.

Forming the cabinet was not entirely smooth sailing either. Originally, SBY said that 60% of the cabinet would consist of experts and 40% would be party appointees.<sup>19</sup> Before the cabinet was announced, there was much speculation about the contenders for ministerial posts, which caused controversy among the parties

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<sup>17</sup> The Jakarta Post, 21 September 2004. <http://www.thejakartapost.com>.

<sup>18</sup> Tempo Interactive, Controlling Senayan, But Not Fully. 5–10 October 2004, <http://www.tempointeractive.com>.

<sup>19</sup> The Jakarta Post, 19 October 2004. <http://www.thejakartapost.com>.

in the People's Coalition. In the event, SBY settled on a political compromise, giving the largest number of ministerial posts to the parties that supported him in the presidential election. One of the casualties of the political manoeuvring was Sri Mulyani Indrawati, director of the IMF representing Southeast Asian countries, who was tipped to be either Coordinating Minister for the Economy or Minister of Finance; instead she was appointed Minister for National Development Planning. The protest against free-market policies by PKS had undoubtedly made an impact.<sup>20</sup>

There are massive challenges ahead. Although Indonesia's macroeconomic position has improved, this does not necessarily mean there has been increased investment to create jobs. Indonesia's GDP is growing 4.5% annually, which is insufficient to ease unemployment and under-employment, estimated at 40 million of the workforce.<sup>21</sup> Political analysts often explain the drop in PDI-P's support by almost 45% to its failure to tackle slow growth, rising prices, massive unemployment, and widespread corruption.<sup>22</sup> Another pressing concern is internal security. The 9 September bombing outside the Australian embassy was the third attack in 2 years, which have claimed more than 200 hundred lives in all.<sup>23</sup> Indonesia also faces secessionist demands in Aceh and West Papua, which often flare into violence.

The 2004 elections may be over, but SBY's battles with the House and the multiplicity of problems facing the country have just begun. After decades of authoritarianism and 6 years of political bickering, along with problems such as corruption and a stagnant economy, the patience of Indonesian electors is wearing thin. SBY will be severely tested during his presidency.

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<sup>20</sup> Tempo Interactive, A Careful Cabinet, 26 October–1 November 2004, <http://www.tempointeractive.com>.

<sup>21</sup> The Economist, 9 July, 2004. <http://www.economist.com>.

<sup>22</sup> Following the investigation of 2000 cases for January 2002–April 2004, the Attorney-General Office's estimates that the state lost 22 trillion rupiah (\$2.34 billion) due to corruption. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 22 July 2004. p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> The Bali bombings in October 2002 claimed at least 202 lives; the JW Marriott hotel attack in August 2003 killed 12 people; the 9 September bombing killed at least 10 people.