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INDONESIA PROGRAMME  
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» The “Indonesia Election Watch 2009” is a weekly analysis of the key issues surrounding Indonesia’s 2009 Elections, from the parliamentary to the presidential elections.

» The analysis is produced by the Indonesia Programme of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

» The analysis would benefit leaders in the business, policy-making, media, and research community in Singapore and beyond.

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# Indonesia Election Watch

## 2009

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## Constant Changes:

### Latest Developments towards the Coming Presidential Election

On May 9, the Indonesian General Election Commission (KPU) announced the official result of last April’s parliamentary election. The announcement simultaneously marked the start of the race for the presidential/vice-presidential posts, commencing with the registration of candidates from May 10 to 16. This issue of the *Election Watch* attempts to examine the prospects of—as well as the strategies utilised by—each potential candidate for victory in the coming presidential election.

Some observers have predicted that the coming race will be a contest among four pairs of candidates. Thus far only Jusuf Kalla and Wiranto have officially declared their bid for the presidential/vice-presidential ticket (dubbed “JK-Win”). Their early declaration notwithstanding, they plan to register their candidacy on May 15, just a day before registration closes. Although incumbent President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is widely forecasted to win the coming race, when it comes to declaration of his running-mate, he prefers to follow his Javanese operating principle of *alon-alon asal kelakon* (literally meaning: slowly but sure). For the moment, former president Megawati Soekarnoputri—initially Yudhoyono’s strongest contender—seems uncertain with her candidacy. On the one hand, she is being pressured by the party elite to stand down while on the other hand, she wants to abide by the consensus from rank and file cadres urging her to run for president. Prabowo Subianto, leader of Gerindra Party, now prefers to be a presidential candidate rather than a supporting ticket as vice-president—a strategy many of his supporters have urged him to follow; making him possibly the fourth candidate to contest in the race.

#### Yudhoyono: is victory imminent?

Article 9 of Law No. 42 of 2008 on Presidential Election prescribes that political parties wanting to nominate presidential candidates are required obtain a minimum 20% of total parliamentary seats or 25% of total national votes. In other words, out of 560 total parliamentary seats available, parties or a group of parties must have a minimum of 112 seats before they can independently nominate presidential candidates of their own.

Official results show that with a haul of 148 seats, only Yudhoyono’s Partai Demokrat

(PD) passed the 20% parliamentary seat cap. Support for Yudhoyono's candidacy comes not only from PD but also from the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) who gained 59 seats. The PKS had confirmed its decision to support Yudhoyono for president even before KPU announced the official election results. The National Awakening's Party (PKB)—which obtained 26 seats—is also expected to support Yudhoyono.

Not long after the election results were announced by the KPU, the United Development Party's (PPP) Head of Central Advisory Council, Bachtiar Chamsyah, stated that the party will also join Yudhoyono's coalition, adding a further 39 seats to the coalition. Yudhoyono's popular image remains the determining factor for PD's electoral victory and its post-election coalition building strategies. Based on polling conducted in April, the Jakarta-based polling body Lembaga Survey Indonesia estimated that 80% of the people who voted for PD would in all likelihood vote for Yudhoyono again in the coming presidential election. His high electability rate notwithstanding, Yudhoyono cannot be complacent and needs a suitable running-mate—a factor that could determine just how decisive a victory and by that extension the mandate he will receive from the electorate. Yudhoyono has found it a challenge finding the right figure to enable a partnership with the perfect chemistry—someone who can personally work with him yet at the same time able to cover his weaknesses without overlapping his authority.

On May 12, State Secretary and PAN senior cadre Hatta Radjasa and Cabinet Secretary Sudi Silalahi met with some Islamic party leaders in Jakarta. The meeting consolidated support for Yudhoyono's choice for his running-mate, Governor of Indonesian Central Bank Boediono who for some time now has been touted as a candidate fulfilling almost all the requirements of a vice-presidential figure that Yudhoyono mentioned in a recent press conference. Moreover, since Boediono is not a member of any political party, by choosing him as his running-mate Yudhoyono could prevent occurrences of inter-party conflict within his coalition. That way the President sends a strong signal to all members of his coalition ensuring that he does not favor cadres of one particular party over another.

### **Prospects of other candidates**

The two parties that back the JK-Win candidacy, Golkar and Hanura, obtained 108 and 15 parliamentary seats, respectively. The sum of their vote gains allows JK-Win to proceed with their candidacy. Nevertheless from the perspective of the electorate, they remain the most unappealing pair compared to other prospective candidates. If they are to be competitive, the Golkar party machine needs to be utilised to its fullest, especially in areas outside Java where the party still has a relatively strong foothold. This is important as not all Golkar leaders support the pair.

PDI-P, who since September 2007 had nominated Megawati to run for president, finished in third place—after PD and Golkar—with 93 parliamentary seats. The fact that PDI-P does not meet the required parliamentary threshold has placed the party in a difficult situation. For the PDI-P to be able to nominate a presidential candidate, it has to depend on support from other political parties, but so far it has yet to set up a stable coalition.

A more likely scenario for the PDI-P is to join PD—a development that has been brewing lately. Yudhoyono himself has stated that PD's victory over PDI-P does not eliminate the possibility of the two parties building a coalition together. He could welcome PDI-P's officials to join his coming administration. As tempting as the offer is for PDI-P, it does not come without risks, considering that such a move may alienate grassroots party loyalists—something Megawati wants to avoid. PD's strategy to form a grand coalition by embracing the PDI-P is a smart strategy, although it also comes with the risk of some of the middle-ranking parties in PD's coalition being dissatisfied with the move. Nevertheless, should the coalition between the two parties materialise, the PDI-P's relationship with Gerindra would be irrevocably damaged; subsequently shattering Prabowo's ambition to run for president.

For Prabowo, the fact that his party Gerindra obtained only a modest 30 parliamentary seats would not necessarily hinder his aspiration to run for presidential office. With both Megawati and Prabowo wanting to run for president, communications between Gerindra and the PDI-P have reached a deadlock. Gerindra believes that it should now build its support based on the small parties that failed to pass the parliamentary threshold. Gerindra's chairperson Suhardi was quoted in Jakarta-based magazine *Gatra* as saying that some small parties have committed to joining Gerindra in nominating Prabowo. Many have argued that Gerindra's impressive financial power has become a magnet for small parties to join its ranks. If Gerindra could secure support from PAN—the only middle-ranking party yet to join a coalition due to internal dissensions—or if the PDI-P changes its strategy, perhaps Prabowo's dreams could yet materialise.

In the final analysis, party ideologies and history are no longer factors determining alliance patterns between parties. For the moment, the key issues in the run-up to the presidential contest are three-fold: The first is the need for Yudhoyono to find the right partner—a figure that could come from any party in his coalition, or even a non-partisan option. The second is that JK-Win must find the best strategy to increase their competitiveness *vis-à-vis* the other candidates. Lastly, both PDI-P and Gerindra must struggle hard to find allies in order to nominate their own presidential candidates.

## » INDONESIA PROGRAMME

A PROGRAMME OF THE S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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