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2019 Indonesian Presidential and Legislative Elections

The New Indonesian Parliament: Who Won and What It Means

By Alexander R. Arifianto

SYNOPSIS

Apart from electing the president, the recent Indonesian general election also voted in 575 members for the new parliament (DPR). Of the 16 political parties which contested the legislative elections, nine succeeded in getting into the new parliament.

COMMENTARY

INDONESIANS WENT to the polls on 17 April 2019 not just to elect their new president for the next five years. They also voted for candidates for the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR), House of Delegates (DPD), and provincial and regional legislative councils. A total of 575 lower house seats were contested in the recent legislative elections.

Sixteen political parties – including four new ones contested. Two of the four new ones are linked to the Suharto family: Working Party (Berkarya) chaired by Tommy Suharto – youngest son of Indonesia's late strongman; and Garuda Party, funded by Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana, Suharto's eldest daughter. The remaining are the Indonesian Unity Party (Perindo) founded by media tycoon Hary Tanoesoedibjo and the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) which specifically targeted young voters, women, Chinese Indonesians, and religious minorities. All four new parties, however, failed to enter the new parliament as they did not cross the four percent threshold of total votes.

'Coattail Effect'

Another rule change in this year's election law is that unlike previous general elections,

the legislative and presidential elections were held simultaneously on the same day this year.

As a result, during the eight-month long election campaign, the Indonesian media discussed that a number of political parties would benefit from the so-called 'coattail effect'. They were expected to receive a significant boost in their respective vote share, since these parties also nominated presidential or vice presidential candidates.

PDIP, the party of incumbent president Joko Widodo ('Jokowi'), and Gerindra, the party led by his opponent Prabowo Subianto, were expected to be the primary beneficiaries of this 'coattail effect.' In addition, the National Awakening Party (PKB) affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) – Indonesia's largest Islamic organisation – was also estimated to benefit from the 'coattail effect' as it is the party of Ma'ruf Amin – Jokowi's vice presidential running mate.

DPR Election Results: No Coattail Effect

The 'coattail effect' widely predicted by the media did not materialise. While both PDIP and Gerindra were expected to significantly increase their vote share in the legislative elections, each only made minimal gains compared to the 2014 legislative elections.

Contrary to expectations, that PKB did not also significantly increase its vote share, despite NU's former supreme leader (*rais am*) Ma'ruf Amin being appointed as Jokowi's vice-presidential running mate. In fact PKB's vote share of eight percent is a one-percent drop from 2014.

The party which is projected to make a significant gain in its vote share this year is nationalist-leaning National Democrat (Nasdem) Party. Now replacing Democrat as the fourth largest party in the DPR – Nasdem was greatly assisted by its recruitment of veteran politicians, religious leaders, and celebrities with significant name recognition as its legislative candidates.

Based on the preliminary results from votes already counted by the Indonesian Election Commission (KPU) as of 6 May 2019, nine parties will enter the new parliament: PDIP (with 20 percent of all votes cast), Golkar Party (13.4 percent), Gerindra Party (11.8 percent), Nasdem Party (9.8 percent), Democrat Party (8.2 percent), PKB (8 percent) Prosperous Justice Party (PKS, 7.3 percent), National Mandate Party (PAN, 7 percent) and United Development Party (PPP, 4.2 percent).

Implications of the DPR Election

Parties which are aligned with President Jokowi – respectively PDIP, Golkar, Nasdem, PKB, and PPP – are expected to control 65.5 percent of the new House. Those aligned to Prabowo – respectively Gerindra, Democrat, PKS, and PAN – are expected to control 34.5 percent of new DPR seats. This means unlike during his first term, Jokowi now has a stronger lead in the new DPR, which would enable him to pass legislations to support his agenda with relative ease.

Over the past week, both Democrat and PAN parties are widely reported to have engaged in discussions to join the Jokowi coalition. Should both parties decide to

switch their allegiances toward the president, this would bolster his parliamentary majority.

However, almost all parties which will be represented in the new DPR did not increase their vote share significantly compared to their 2014 legislative election results. This means the number of supporters who voted for these parties remained the same today compared to five years ago.

It also means that the Indonesian party system remains very competitive; despite new measures introduced to reduce the number of parties represented in the parliament, such as the electoral threshold and the simultaneous elections, nine parties will be represented when the new DPR convenes on 1 October 2019.

It also lent support to the argument that a new *aliran* ('stream') politics is taking root in contemporary Indonesian politics, as each party represented in the DPR – whether nationalist or Islamic-based – cannot seem to increase their vote share beyond their immediate constituencies of loyal supporters from one general election to the next.

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