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What Is Likely to Happen in Post-14 February Indonesia

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SYNOPSIS

*As Indonesia approaches its presidential and legislative elections on 14 February, **JEFFERSON NG** looks ahead to how the post-election landscape might unfold.*

COMMENTARY

Indonesia is slated to hold its simultaneous presidential and legislative elections on 14 February 2024. At this juncture, the most likely scenario is that Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto and his running mate Gibran Rakabuming narrowly clinch a victory in the low 50% range.

An alternative scenario is that the Prabowo–Gibran team will just fall short of the 50% mark, garnering votes in the high 40s, and this triggers a second round of elections that will be held on 26 June between the two best performing candidate pairs.

For the national legislative elections, current survey data indicates that Prabowo's political party, Gerindra, could dethrone the incumbent Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) to become the largest party in the national parliament. Alternatively, the PDIP could retain its leading status but the gap between the two largest parties could be significantly reduced.

Regardless of whether team Prabowo–Gibran wins on 14 February in the low 50% range or narrowly misses a single-round victory, there is a need to pay attention to three potential developments in the immediate post-election period – election fraud and the legitimacy of the elections, the need for national reconciliation, and the last-mile legislative agenda of incumbent president Jokowi's government.

Election Fraud and the Legitimacy of the Elections

There is a heightened possibility (especially if any candidate wins the presidency outright in the first round) that allegations of election fraud will surface, and detractors will claim that the elections are not legitimate. Such an outcome did occur in 2019, when Prabowo (who was then running against Jokowi) alleged that the presidential election was [marred by election fraud](#). Subsequently, unrest erupted in Central Jakarta as Prabowo supporters clashed with the police and military.

The possibility of election fraud allegations (leading to potential unrest) is low but not insignificant. First, the 2024 elections involve more than 800,000 voting booths countrywide, meaning that it is logistically impossible for each political party to be able to field election monitors for every single voting booth.

Second, the vote counting method remains opaque and easy to manipulate. Representatives from the regional Election Commissions manually count the votes at each voting booth, seal the ballot boxes, and submit official tabulations. These forms are aggregated at regional collection centres, moving up four levels of geographical divisions in closed plenary sessions before reaching the national Election Commission. Each of these closed-door sessions is susceptible to bribery and manipulation.

As a result of inherent inefficiencies in the vote counting system, it is relatively easy for those dissatisfied with the election results to claim election fraud.

In addition, circumstances surrounding the candidacy of 36-year-old Gibran, who is Jokowi's son, remain shrouded in controversy. Recently, the Election Organiser Honorary Board ruled that the seven commissioners in the Election Commission were guilty of ethical violations. They had accepted Gibran's nomination as vice-president candidate before the applicable Election Commission regulations were revised to comply with the Constitutional Court's October 2023 ruling to lower the minimum age for presidential and vice-presidential candidates from 40 to 35.

If allegations of electoral fraud and the legitimacy of the elections is questioned, open clashes are likely between pro and anti-Jokowi supporters and could frustrate a smooth transition to an incoming administration.

National Reconciliation

Regardless of which candidate eventually wins, a move to broker common ground and facilitate a national reconciliation will be needed post-14 February.

As the most likely winner today, Prabowo has spoken of the need to establish "a democracy of family members" (*demokrasi berkeluarga*) in Indonesia. He will most likely seek to offer cabinet positions to all parties represented in the national parliament but will disproportionately reward the parties that have supported him from the onset.

Although the three presidential and vice-presidential pairs have clashed publicly in the various national debates, there is no fundamental disagreement or ideological

differences between the candidates. As a result, it is conceivable that the losing candidates will be offered (and will accept) cabinet positions.

The main question is whether PDIP and other political parties – NasDem Party, National Awakening Party (PKB) and Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) – can be persuaded to join a Prabowo government or will choose to stay in opposition. If enough political parties choose to remain in opposition, then, in a replay of the gridlock in Jokowi's first term, gridlock will again gut the remainder of Jokowi's legislative agenda before he formally steps down from the presidency in October 2024.

A lot will depend on whether members of the political elite can find accommodation, such as between Jokowi and Surya Paloh of NasDem. Whether or not PDIP joins the cabinet depend largely on the dynamics between the current speaker of the House, Puan Maharani, and her mother, PDIP chair Megawati. While Puan seems to be in favour of accommodation and compromise, Megawati is likely to resent PDIP's sidelining. PKS' Syuro Council (consultative council) will deliberate on the matter but there is no inherent reason why the party must be in opposition.

Legislative Agenda

The remaining legislative agenda of Jokowi's final months in office will be crucial and could very well shape Indonesia's trajectory for years to come. The key outstanding bills include the new and renewable energy law, the maritime law, the Jakarta Special Region law, and the village's law.



The Presidential Palace in Bogor, West Java, was Indonesian President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's preferred place of residence in his two terms of office. President Jokowi will remain an influential figure post-14 February and will use his influence to broker a political settlement and ensure the continuity of his plans. *Image by author.*

Among the most important provisions of these bills are allowing the government to build a commercial nuclear reactor in Indonesia, creating an Indonesian Coast Guard through a merger between the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency and the Indonesian Sea and Coast Guard, creating a Jakarta Special Region and empowering

the president to appoint its governor and vice-governor, and strengthening the central government's control over village heads through the nationally allocated village fund.

The Jokowi administration is likely to seek to reach an accommodation with political parties in the national parliament to pass these bills. A lot could depend on the status of PDIP as the largest party in the national parliament (and therefore automatically eligible to occupy the House speakership) and the party's attitude towards Jokowi and the incoming government.

If PDIP can be persuaded to moderate its opposition, stay neutral, or join the incoming government, then it is possible that many of these outstanding legislative items could be resolved and passed before Jokowi's second term ends in October 2024. Furthermore, if the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI), currently helmed by Jokowi's second son Kaesang, successfully enters the national parliament, then this provides additional leverage for Jokowi to pass the remaining legislative agenda on his preferred terms.

Continuity and Indonesia 2045

President Jokowi plans to end his second term with a smooth and orderly transition from his government to an incoming administration, avoiding the tortured transition of his first term in 2014/2015. If Prabowo wins (as seems most likely now), then there will be a strong element of continuity.

While Prabowo undoubtedly will be his own man and will appoint his own advisers, he will rely heavily on Jokowi's advice and appoint Jokowi-era ministers to continue the state-led developmentalist model, with the goal of propelling Indonesia into the ranks of high-income countries by 2045.

Combined with a strong nationalist streak and a desire to strengthen Indonesia's defence capabilities and project Indonesia's leadership on the global stage, Prabowo will seek to build his own legacy while deepening and building on Jokowi's work in the past 10 years.

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