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Aliran in Indonesia's 2024 Elections

By Irman G. Lanti

SYNOPSIS

Indonesia's 2024 election has produced a result that most analysts had predicted, i.e., the election of Prabowo Subianto as the next president of Indonesia. With tacit support from President Joko Widodo, Prabowo was able to cut across the aliran line in the race, receiving significant support from Islamist, nationalist, and traditionalist voters. This, however, does not mean the end of aliran in Indonesian politics as the results from the legislative election indicated.

COMMENTARY

Indonesia concluded its presidential and legislative elections three weeks ago. The results of the polls indicate a huge win by the team comprising the Minister of Defence, Prabowo Subianto, and the Mayor of Solo, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the eldest son of President Joko Widodo (popularly known as Jokowi).

Exit polls by many reliable survey organisations indicated that Prabowo had won about 58 per cent of the votes, followed by Anies Baswedan with about 25 per cent, and Ganjar Pranowo with about 17 per cent. While many had predicted Prabowo's win before the polls, the large number of votes secured by him took many by surprise, even among members of his campaign team.

Less attention has been paid to the legislative elections. Here too, the results are somewhat surprising. Many analysts had predicted before the polls that the ruling party, Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (aka as PDI-P), will lose to Prabowo's party, Gerakan Indonesia Raya (aka Gerindra), and that the latter would take over as the country's ruling party. However, the exit polls indicated differently.

The PDI-P remains the party with the highest number of votes with about 17 per cent, even though this was a two per cent decline from 2019. While having a slight increase

from 2019, Gerindra not only failed to take over as the ruling party but was even beaten by Partai Golongan Karya (aka Golkar), which had increased its vote share from 12 per cent in 2019 to 15 per cent in 2024.

Although failing miserably in the presidential election, Anies Baswedan's proponent parties – Partai Nasional Demokrat (aka Nasdem), Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (aka PKB), and Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (aka PKS) – actually increased their vote share from 27 to 29 per cent.

***Aliran* in the Presidential and Legislative Elections**

These preliminary data indicate that the political divides, known among scholars of Indonesian politics as *aliran*, i.e., streams of political thinking, are alive and well despite Prabowo's huge win and appeal across political divides. The geographic distribution of the votes in the presidential election also suggests the *aliran* divides in Indonesia.

Anies ran his campaign as an Islamist candidate, but he also tried very hard to appeal beyond Islamist votes by having the traditionalist Muhaimin Iskandar as his running mate. Ganjar Pranowo was a nationalist candidate and had hoped to secure nationalist and some traditionalist support that had brought Jokowi the presidency in 2014 and 2019.

Prabowo was the candidate who attempted to cross the *aliran* divides and had been successful in many ways. In 2019, he ran a fiercely competitive race as an Islamist candidate against Jokowi. This had produced a positive lingering effect as Prabowo is still seen as a preferred candidate in many Islamist provinces. Furthermore, Prabowo's close alliance with Jokowi also burnished his image as a nationalist leader, which helped him to win some support in the nationalist and traditionalist bases.

Anies won in only two of Indonesia's 38 provinces, the Islamist strongholds of Aceh and West Sumatra, with 78 per cent and 57 per cent respectively; less than the 86 per cent who voted for Prabowo in both provinces, in 2019. Then again, as an indication of Prabowo's appeal, of the ten provinces in Sumatra, six had voted overwhelmingly for Prabowo in 2019 whereas Anies won only two in 2024.

More surprising perhaps was the depth of the loss Anies experienced in the two traditionally Islamist provinces of West Java (the province with the highest number of voters) and South Sulawesi (the largest province in East Indonesia). Anies only managed to garner 31 per cent compared to Prabowo's 59 per cent in West Java, and in South Sulawesi, his votes totalled 40 per cent compared to Prabowo's 55 per cent.

The decision of Anies to take Muhaimin Iskandar as his running mate also did not seem to pay off. The pair received only 18 per cent in the traditionalist region of East Java.

It is tempting to conclude that with Prabowo's huge win across different political divides, perhaps *aliran* does not really matter anymore in Indonesian politics. However, the figures from the legislative election, where there weren't many changes, suggest otherwise.

In West Java, the voting preferences for the parties did not change much from 2019. Prabowo's Gerindra had a reduced share of votes from 18 to 16 per cent, while the share of the three parties which nominated Anies increased from 26 per cent to 30 per cent.

In the nationalist stronghold of Central Java, while personally losing the contest in the presidential election to Prabowo, Ganjar's PDI-P still won the most votes with 28 per cent.

Gerindra also did not perform well in the nationalist and traditionalist bastions of East Java, where Prabowo led with a comfortable margin. Here, PDI-P led with 18 per cent, while PKB came in second with 17 per cent.

Inferences from the Voting Pattern

What can we infer from the voting patterns in this split-ticket system?

Firstly, Prabowo's alliance with President Jokowi had proven effective in getting him support from across the different *aliran*. Prabowo's lingering image as an Islamist figure secured for him significant support from Islamist regions while reducing that for Anies, the other Islamist candidate in the election. The advantage which Prabowo derived from Jokowi's appeal among the nationalist and traditionalist voters was significant enough to draw votes away from the nationalist Ganjar.

Secondly, the pan-Islamic experiment combining the Islamist Anies and the traditionalist Muhaimin had failed to win the support of traditionalist voters who preferred to vote for the Jokowi-supported Prabowo.

Thirdly, despite the strong support for Prabowo, the legislative voting pattern remains largely unchanged from that of previous elections. Most Indonesians continue to vote according to their *aliran* allegiance.

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