

Former general on top after first round of Indonesian presidential election

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With more than three quarters of the vote counted in the first round of the Indonesian presidential elections, no candidate has achieved an absolute majority. A run off on September 20 is now all but certain between the two leading candidates—Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, a retired army general, and the incumbent president Megawati Sukarnoputri.

While the count is yet to be finalised, Yudhoyono is the leading contender with 33.6 percent of the vote as against Megawati with 26.3 percent. Wiranto, another retired general and candidate for Golkar, has 21.2 percent. The two other tickets—Amien Rais's National Mandate Party (PAN) and Hamzah Haz's United Development Party (PPP)—were well behind with 14.89 and 3.06 percent of the vote respectively.

Yudhoyono's emergence as the leading candidate in the first round is significant for two reasons. Firstly his campaign's success is a measure of the popular dissatisfaction with Megawati, a dissatisfaction that the Yudhoyono team has fully exploited. Secondly, his candidacy has revealed the extent to which Megawati's policies have allowed the Indonesian armed forces (TNI) to again resume a central role in the country's politics, just six years after the collapse of the Suharto junta.

Following the downfall of Suharto in 1998, Megawati, along with Rais and former president Abdurrahman Wahid, postured as democratic reformers. In doing so, they stifled the mass movement against the dictatorship and blocked its demands for broad reforms, including an end to the military's involvement in political life.

In assuming office in 2001, Megawati closely allied herself with sections of the military and Golkar, the party of the Suharto junta. Her administration failed to prosecute those responsible for the crimes of the

dictatorship and bowed to the TNI's demands for the suppression of separatist movements, particularly in Aceh and Papua.

Megawati's claim to be a champion of the poor has all but collapsed. Under her administration, the economy has continued to stagnate following the Asian economic crisis of 1997-1998, resulting in widespread poverty and unemployment. The vote for her Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P) plunged to 18.5 percent in the April 5 parliamentary election as compared to 37.4 percent in the 1999 election. In opinion polls prior to the first round, her own standing slumped as low as 11 percent.

Megawati's campaign was dogged by a lack of support from her own party. A source inside the PDI-P cited by the *Laksamana.net* website, explained that party functionaries and members in East and Central Java had not campaigned fully for Megawati because of dissatisfaction with her presidency. Polling by the US-based National Democratic Institute indicated that 13 percent of the PDI-P voted for Yudhoyono.

Megawati's close collaboration with the military helped to revive the political fortunes of Golkar and discredited Suharto-era generals such as Yudhoyono and Wiranto. Up until March, Yudhoyono was Megawati's top security minister and mooted as a possible vice-presidential running mate. However, sensing the opposition to her administration, Yudhoyono quit his post, formed his own Democratic Party and declared himself as a presidential contender in his own right.

Yudhoyono's vice-presidential candidate Jusuf Kalla, a wealthy businessman and Golkar member, was Megawati's coordinating minister for social welfare, before resigning to join Yudhoyono. Yudhoyono's campaign manager is former Golkar secretary general

Rachmat Witoelar and his aides include two retired generals who were closely associated with Suharto—Mohammad Ma'ruf and T.B. Silalah.

Yudhoyono is a military man who is implicated in many of the Suharto regime's crimes. He served much of his career in the elite Kostrad airborne units, took part in the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975 and served several tours of duty there. As one of former TNI chief Wiranto's deputies, he was responsible for East Timor during the TNI-organised violence against independence supporters in 1999.

Unlike Wiranto, Yudhoyono has kept his distance, publicly at least, from the Suharto family and business cronies. He promotes himself as an honest political figure with no ties to the established parties. At the same time, he is seeking support from big business, in Indonesian and internationally, by presenting himself as a strongman who will deal with social unrest and, at the same time, implement economic restructuring policies aimed at attracting foreign investment.

In revealing comments to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Democratic Party chairman Subur Budhisantoso declared that democracy in Indonesia since Suharto's fall was "relative anarchy" and strongly hinted at a more authoritarian approach with the call for "collectively controlled democracy".

According to the *Jakarta Post*, Yudhoyono is the preferred candidate of business and foreign governments.

An editorial in the business newspaper, the *Australian Financial Review*, approvingly reported a speech made by Yudhoyono at Melbourne University. "He said... Indonesia had to move on from its focus on growth, towards broadening the base of economic activity, more clearly separating the executive, legislature and judiciary, dismantling the patterns of cronyism, and making the labour market more flexible."

The editorial noted that while Megawati had stabilised the "macro economy," cut the budget deficit and stabilised the currency, she "lacked the capacity—or the will—to make key institutions more responsive to modern needs," that is more suited to the requirements of globally-organised capital. Yudhoyono was right, it concluded, to "emphasise the diverse reform targets".

A program of austerity measures and economic reforms may please foreign capital but it will not guarantee popular support in the September 20 run off.

To shore up their positions, both Yudhoyono and Megawati are engaged in frantic behind-the-scenes deal-making with other political parties.

Yudhoyono's 35-man team for the September poll has as its one of its main aims securing the support of Golkar as well as PAN and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). Golkar with its extensive apparatus and large financial resources is a particular prize. Yudhoyono is anxious for its backing to counter the PDI-P machine and Megawati's control of government resources.

Megawati's team has likewise set out to win Golkar support and is also wooing Wahid, who at this stage has called for his supporters to abstain from voting for either candidate. Megawati's husband Taufik Kiemas has held a number of discussions with Golkar chairman Akbar Tandjung.

While not officially confirmed, Tandjung indicated in the *Koran Tempo* yesterday that his party may endorse Megawati. He said Golkar and the PDI-P enjoyed relations "like chemistry". Whether Golkar's backing would swing the vote behind Megawati is not clear. Surveys of Golkar supporters showed that 50 percent did not vote for the party's candidate, Wiranto, with 30 percent voting for Yudhoyono and 8 percent for Megawati in the first round.

Golkar itself is deeply divided. At the conference to decide its presidential candidate, a rift developed between supporters of Tandjung and those wanting Wiranto. Significant sections of the Golkar machine simply refused to work for Wiranto's election campaign and likewise may not actively campaign for Megawati.

Whatever the outcome of the political deal-making, whoever wins in September will face a restive population on the one hand, and, on the other, demands from sections of big business and foreign capital for drastic measures to improve the investment climate through budgetary restraint and cuts to state subsidies. In order to impose such a program, the next president will be compelled to rely heavily on the military and state apparatus created by the Suharto junta.



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