

Indonesian president's re-election disputed

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The official declaration on July 25 by Indonesia's General Electoral Commission (KPU) that incumbent President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono had been re-elected by a landslide has been disputed by losing candidates.

Runner up and former president Megawati Sukarnoputri did not turn up for the announcement. She and her running mate Prabowo Subianto, former commander of the notorious Kopassus special forces, sent along their lawyer who said the pair would challenge the outcome in the Constitutional Court.

Likewise, the third ticket—that of Jusuf Kalla, and his running mate Wiranto—filed suit in the court to challenge the result. Kalla, who is chairman of Golkar—the political machine of the Suharto dictatorship, was Yudhoyono's vice president since 2004. Wiranto is a former armed forces head.

According to the KPU figures, Yudhoyono and his vice presidential running mate, former Bank Indonesia (central bank) governor Boediono, gained 73,874,562 votes, or 60.80 percent of the total. The team also carried the July 8 ballot in 28 of the country's 33 provinces. Yudhoyono thus won the post on the first round, negating the need for a run-off election and paving the way for his inauguration in October for a second five-year term.

As a result of pre-election wheeling and dealing, Yudhoyono and his Democratic Party have the support, nominally at least, of the four major Islamic-based parties, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), the National Mandate Party (PAN), the United Development Party (PPP) and the National Awakening Party (PKB). Between them, these parties control 314 seats in the 560-seat Peoples Representative Council (DRP), the lower house of the parliament, putting Yudhoyono in a strong position to form a new cabinet.

In the presidential poll, the Megawati-Prabowo ticket

gained 32.584 million votes, or 26.79 percent. Two parties supporting the ticket—Megawati's Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P) and Prabowo's Greater Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra)—control 121 seats. The third ticket of Kalla and Wiranto won 15.081 million votes, or 12.41 percent. Together, Golkar and Wiranto's Peoples Conscience Party have 125 seats in the DRP.

The KPU reported that of the 176 million eligible voters, some 121 million cast valid votes. The Megawati team claims that there were 23 million duplicate names on voter lists and that millions of eligible voters were left off. The Constitutional Court will begin hearing the first complaint filed, that of Kalla, on August 4.

Behind the legal appeals are significant differences within the ruling elite on economic policy. Yudhoyono made clear with his selection of Boediono that he would continue a pro-market and pro-investment economic program. At the same time, aware of widespread hostility in the impoverished population, he promised that the poor would be compensated and not disadvantaged.

On July 25 Reuters published an article based on an unnamed source on Yudhoyono's staff that the president had ditched plans to move his finance minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati to the central bank and would retain her in the cabinet to reassure foreign investors. The report noted: "Investors would prefer Indrawati stay at the finance ministry so that she can use her control over the budget to push reforms of the inefficient civil service, police, and judiciary in Southeast Asia's biggest economy."

The international press has been full of praise for Yudhoyono's victory but wants more from his second administration. The *Australian*, for instance, carried an article by Greg Sheridan on July 25 praising the election results in April and July as reflecting "a

maturing, sensible Indonesian polity that is meeting the challenges of governance” but warned:

“The one weak spot in Indonesia’s economic story has been foreign direct investment. About \$US2 billion in FDI went into Indonesia last year. This is a piddling amount. If SBY [Yudhoyono] could liberalise investment rules, create greater legal certainty for foreign investors, reform specific sectors such as mining, improve infrastructure and maintain his overall sound macro-economic management, he could unleash a great deal of foreign investment. This in turn could lift Indonesia into truly Chinese and Indian levels of sustained high growth.”

By contrast, both Megawati and Kalla put forward populist and protectionist programs and declared that Yudhoyono’s choice of the central bank governor as his running mate made him the agent of foreign capital.

Prabowo’s campaign, which was financed by his billionaire brother Hashim Djojohadikusimo, promised to protect local retailers, farmers and small traders from foreign competition. While pitching their campaigns at the urban and rural middle classes, the primary concern of both Megawati and Kalla was to protect more vulnerable sections of business, including those run by the country’s military.

The internal conflict became more menacing when Yudhoyono claimed the July 17 bombing attacks on the Jakarta JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels were linked to a plot to prevent his inauguration and create a situation like that in Iran where the election result was challenged by mass opposition. Unlike Iran, however, the US and its allies have fully backed the incumbent president Yudhoyono as the best guarantor of their interests in Indonesia and South East Asia.

Yudhoyono’s claims do explain the massive security force mobilisation, including armoured vehicles in the streets around the KPU headquarters, when the final poll result was announced. The operation is also a warning that the government will utilise any terror attacks to boost its police and military apparatus for use against social unrest.

The presidential candidates in the 2009 elections were all products of the decades-long Suharto dictatorship. Constitutional and electoral law restrictions ensured that only well-financed parties could stand for parliamentary elections. Of the more than 100 parties that sought to stand in the April election, only 38 were

allowed to do so and of those only nine obtained the 2.5 percent national vote tally required to obtain seats in the DRP.

Presidential candidates had to either gain the support of 20 percent of DRP members or a party that gained 25 percent of the national vote. The KPU also ruled that no independent candidate selected outside of the party structures could stand.

Claims that the election represented another success for democracy in Indonesia ignore the fact that many eligible voters did not cast a ballot or deliberately spoiled it to register their dissatisfaction with the political establishment as a whole. Others simply voted for Yudhoyono as the lesser evil compared to his two rivals. As the economic crisis deepens and the new administration accelerates its pro-market agenda, indifference and alienation is likely to turn to anger and social unrest.



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