

Joko Widodo, Indonesia's New President

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On July 22, Indonesia announced the official results of its presidential election, declaring the governor of Jakarta, Joko Widodo the winner with 53.15 percent of the vote. Widodo, popularly known as Jokowi, defeated former general Prabowo Subianto who garnered 46.85 percent of the vote. A total of 133.5 million Indonesians went to the polls for a voter turnout of 70.2 percent. Jokowi led the polls in 22 out of 34 provinces. Among Indonesians, who voted abroad, he garnered 53.74 percent of the vote.

It was the fourth direct presidential election since the fall of President Suharto in 1998. The election campaign was fought tightly as it was the first time that only two presidential candidates and their running mates vied for the presidency. While Jokowi's victory did not come as a surprise, he is bound to run into major challenges during his upcoming rule because he failed to win an overwhelming majority. The election outcome is highly significant for the development of democratic politics in Indonesia. At the same time, it opens a new era for the nation's overall development. In the wake of the election, the Indonesians remained peaceful and went about their business as usual. Pluralism, rationality and tolerance have been cultural characteristics of Indonesian society that are rooted in its ancient history and political development. The presidential election showed even more that the Indonesian people have a civic political culture, which greatly boosted the national image. Jakarta and Palembang, the capital of South Sumatra province, both want to host the 2018 Asian Games. Indonesia last hosted the Asian Games

more than half a century ago in 1962. Over the past three years, the Indonesian economy has slowed down and foreign investment seems to draw back. The government deficit is on the rise, while trade in goods continues to lose competitiveness. The Jokowi administration will have to stand the test of the country's integration into the ASEAN Economic Community. It will have to figure out how to meet competition in a liberalized market and how to improve the education and skills of the domestic workforce. Other urgent tasks that must not be delayed include reforming the civil service, digitizing government procedures, increasing tax revenue, alleviating poverty and establishing medical care and education systems.

Since Indonesia became an independent nation in 1945, all its rulers treated Java or even Jakarta as the engine for national economic development. As a result, Java leads the nation in all fields ranging from banking to finance and trade. Jokowi, however, will put his emphasis on land resources and agriculture, issues concerning rural villages as well as regional development. In the future, other islands and local government leaders will be more vocal in demanding funding from the central government for infrastructure projects. Strictly speaking, the political platforms of the two candidate teams did not differ much. Jokowi comes from a humble background and the vast majority of his supporters are rural residents. Should Jokowi seek reelection in 2019 he will have to secure their continued support and approval. As Jokowi went on the campaign trail, he made it a point to make his first stop

in West Papua with wife and children in tow. As he made a last-ditch effort at the end of the campaign, he went there again, underlining that if elected he would give priority to regions that had been neglected in the past. In the final television debate, he demonstrated that he is a doer and walks his talk, noting that most people talk too much and do too little. Jokowi is not a skilled orator. When he announced his election victory, he read from a manuscript. Holding up three fingers to symbolize national unity, Jokowi declared that he would build ten airports, ten harbors and ten industrial zones during his upcoming five-year term. He made it clear that his government would focus on strengthening basic infrastructure and untangling the traffic congestion that affects logistics and transportation to boost the economy.

A very decisive factor in Jokowi's victory was his "approachable man of the people" image and charisma. He won voters' trust because he is untainted by the long-standing bad habits and abuses attributed to Indonesian politicians. Also crucial for his election win was that the electorate is fed up with shady deals and worried that strongman politics could make a comeback. Many scholars, civic groups, artists and first-time voters used online platforms and social media during the election and the vote counting process to mobilize people for monitoring purposes. Jokowi responded to this trend by inviting the public to participate in an online poll for the members of his cabinet. The poll also allows him to escape the typical booty sharing among political parties seeking cabinet posts. Jokowi is the first local leader who quickly rose to stardom in national politics since Indonesia decentralized power to hold direct election of district heads. In the future, other local politicians will likely emulate or repeat his smooth rise

to the presidential office. The main reason for political decentralization from 2005 was to boost national unity and to undermine the legitimacy of separatist movements. With deepening democracy and continued decentralization, it became easier for ambitious politicians from the districts to make it into the central government. It also helped balance regional and national development. It has also not been a feature of traditional politics that district heads are becoming younger. They come from a grassroots background and are familiar with local development. Once they have accumulated sufficient experience in local government, they will be good at exploiting the election strategies of modern politics, improving their chances to make it into the national government. If Taiwan wants to deepen its political and economic relations with Indonesia, it needs to attach importance to cultivating interpersonal networks with these newly emerging political talents. Taiwan should consider expand its experiences and share its values with Indonesia with regard to democratic deepening.

When Taiwanese investors establish factories in Indonesia they usually invest in labor-intensive industries and aquaculture, providing jobs for the Indonesian labor market. Taiwan and Indonesia enjoy strong ties in terms of bilateral trade and worker flows. Moreover, there is room for developing bilateral tourism. If Taiwan could plan in detail how to improve working conditions for foreign laborers in Taiwan, this would deepen bilateral relations and put them on a sound footing. **BT**

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