

USINDO Open Forum Series

Special Open Forum

**The Electability of Political Parties and Candidates:
The 2014 Indonesian Elections**



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Opening Remarks by USINDO President David Merrill

President Merrill said USINDO's 2014 Indonesian Elections Open Forum Series responds to the high interest of U.S. audiences in the upcoming Indonesian elections, by welcoming leaders or representatives equally from all political parties, as well as highly regarded political science academics such as Professor Liddle, up-and-coming election and academic experts, and pollsters, to present their views to a USINDO Washington-based audience.

As part of this series, he introduced Bill Liddle, legendary Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Ohio State and Indonesia expert, to present his and his associate's October 2013 survey results on the 2014 Indonesian elections and the participating political parties, which provides current findings on potential Indonesian voting patterns and election-day outcomes.

Summary of Remarks by Professor Liddle

Professor Bill Liddle said that he and Saiful Mujani, a noted Indonesian pollster, conducted a survey in mid-October 2013 examining Indonesians' voting behavior ahead of the 2014 legislative and presidential elections.

Note: Professor Liddle's slide show can be viewed [here](#).

View the photo gallery [here](#).

Liddle reported that the survey results showed that even though twelve parties are competing in the upcoming legislative elections in April 2014, a few parties are clear front-runners—particularly the PDI-P. He said the party's popularity does not stem from its appeal to ethnic, religious, or social groups, as may have been the case in the 1950s, during Indonesia's first democratic period; rather, it appears to be substantially attributable to the popularity among Indonesian voters of one of its politicians, Joko Widodo ('Jokowi').

Liddle explained that surveys which he and Saiful Mujani, a former student of his, have been conducting since 1999 show that the "personal factor" is driving the elections, meaning that a party's prominent politicians and their popularity are becoming the most important factors in a political party's success. For instance, in 1999, Megawati's popularity carried the PDI-P in the elections, according to Professor Liddle.

Liddle briefed that the current Mujani/Liddle survey therefore tested whether it continues to be shown by polls that the candidate affects the party, rather than the other way around. Included in that testing, he said, was examining the effect that Joko Widodo is having on the PDI-P party's electability, and comparing that with the effect of other candidates' names on their party's electability in the parliamentary election, as of the time of the survey.

Legislative Elections

The first group was asked generally which party or party candidate they would vote for in the upcoming legislative elections. 21% said PDI-P, with other parties receiving support ranging from 17.5% downward, but with a significant 20.3% as “don’t know.”

The second group was asked specifically if the PDI-P nominated Jokowi as its presidential candidate, which party or party candidate they would choose in the legislative elections. In response to that question, 37.8% said they would vote for the PDI-P, with other parties receiving from 14.6% downward, but still with a significant 21.2% as “don’t know.”

The third group was asked specifically, if the PDI-P did not nominate Jokowi as its presidential candidate which party or party candidate they would choose in the legislative elections. In that case, Golkar received the most support, 21.8%, followed by PDI-P at 14.4%, Gerindra at 11.1%, and “don’t know’s” at a still significant 20.5%.

Thus, said Professor Liddle, according to the October survey the nomination of Jokowi appears at this point to have a very significant effect on PDI-P’s electability in the legislative elections.

Presidential Elections

In response to a general question about whom a voter would choose in the presidential election if that election were held today, with no names provided, 18% named Jokowi, 6.9% named Prabowo, 5.7% said Bakrie, and 4.2% said Wiranto, while a huge 53.2% said they “don’t know.” Professor Liddle noted that on Election Day undecided voters typically cast their votes roughly along the same lines as the rest of the electorate.

However, when Liddle and Mujani showed respondents a list of the names of twenty-seven potential presidential candidates, and asked respondents whom they would select if the presidential election were held today, Jokowi received 35.9%, and Prabowo and Bakrie each received the same 11.4%. In this case, only 16.6% were “don’t know.”

In a third question, respondents were shown the names of only four presidential candidates (Jokowi, Prabowo, Bakrie, and Dahlan Iskan), and asked whom they would vote for if the presidential election were held today. With four names to choose from, 47.4% named Jokowi, 15.8% named Prabowo, 12.6% named Bakrie, and 3.7% named Dahlan Iskan. 20.5% of respondents still said “don’t know.”

Liddle and Mujani asked a fourth question, with the names of three presidential candidates, Prabowo, Bakrie, the PDI-P candidate (if Megawati), and the PDI-P candidate (if Jokowi).

In this question, if the presidential election were held today and Jokowi were PDI-P’s candidate, 49.1% of respondents would choose Jokowi, 17.5% would choose Prabowo, and 13.2% would choose Bakrie. A significant 20.2% of respondents still said “don’t know.” If this

scenario does, in fact, occur, Professor Liddle noted it could bring Jokowi the potential to win the election in the first round (which requires receiving more than 50% of the popular vote).

According to the survey, if the PDI-P candidate were Megawati, 17.7% would choose Megawati, 29.1% would choose Prabowo, and 23.8% would choose Bakrie. 29.4% were still listed as “don’t know.” Liddle said the survey result therefore showed that Prabowo would likely obtain the most votes in the first round, and have a high potential to win the presidential election in the second round.

The reasons for Jokowi’s popularity are an important question, Liddle said, and one that many of Jokowi’s competitors are asking. Liddle said many of them believe that the media is biased towards Jokowi — he is the most seen politician on television — and they are trying to find evidence that he is not the inspiring figure the media portrays him to be.

According to the surveys, Liddle said, Jokowi’s popularity is attributable to his appearing honest, and that is the most important characteristic in a leader for the majority of Indonesian voters: in a survey, 54% said that honesty is the most important quality for a leader. The next most important characteristic— named by 24%—is caring about the people. For 12%, being a capable leader is most important, and for 7%, firmness is. Jokowi, who, Liddle said, has the image of being honest and humble, is, according to the survey, liked by 93% of Indonesians who recognize him. That he also receives the most exposure in the mass media may also play an important role.

Question and Answer Session

Q: The surveys are nationwide. Is there any data on the individual provinces?

A: The sample is not large enough to examine voting behavior in individual provinces, so how each region will vote is difficult to determine. Maybe, in the future, other surveys will look at regional-level voting patterns.

Q: South Asian history shows that, if a candidate is democratically elected by a large percentage, he or she has a tendency to become more authoritarian. Is that a risk in Indonesia?

A: Indonesia is not nearly as polarized as many South Asian countries are. Indeed, Indonesia is less polarized, at least in terms of religion and class, now than it was in the past. In the 1955 elections, Masyumi and Nahdlatul Ulama, two Islamic parties, received large shares of the vote, and both wanted to do away with Pancasila. There is also no large leftist party today comparable to the Communist Party of the 1950s. More recently, the Islamist PKS was quite popular because of its anti-corruption platform. Yet, after doing well in the last elections, some of its members have been charged with corruption, and the party’s popularity, as a result, has declined. Two of Indonesia’s largest parties, PDI-P and Golkar—both of which are posed to do well in the upcoming 2014 elections—are not very open to Islamists.

To be nominated as a presidential candidate (which requires the nominating party to have received 25% of the vote in legislative elections or to receive 20% of the seats in parliament) Jokowi may not have to put together a coalition if our survey is accurate. However, if he does, he probably will not join an overtly Islamist party since that will undermine his platform.

Q: How much confidence does the public have in the election process?

A: Indonesian elections have gone quite well in the past, and so far there has not been a major scandal that has jeopardized the elections' image. At the district and municipality level, that may be different, but it is true at the national level.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems, IFES, is the best source of information on potential election irregularities. In the past, IFES has been concerned about the credibility of Indonesian elections, especially regarding the voter lists, but the organization seems more optimistic than usual about this upcoming election.

Q: Do you think Megawati will announce Jokowi as the PDI-P nominee before the legislative elections? Also, what are the chances that members of Golkar will oust Bakrie as party Chairman?

A: I believe Jokowi's candidacy will likely be announced a month or so before the legislative elections, to help the PDI-P candidates.

Some say Akbar Tandjung may be trying to organize a move against Bakrie within Golkar. Tandjung certainly is a good politician, but he does not have much money. Bakrie does, and he has an experienced campaign team.

Q: Jokowi is Central Javanese. What role will that play in his administration, if he is elected? What role will it play in what parties he forms a coalition with?

A: Even though he is Central Javanese, Jokowi is an anti-establishment figure. While his father was a successful small businessman—he was a cabinet maker—Jokowi is not from the traditional Javanese aristocracy.

While he may not form a coalition before the election, he almost certainly will after, in order to have a governing coalition in Parliament. It remains to be seen whom he will choose as coalition partners if he is elected. Previously, he partnered with Gerindra. He will probably not partner with Islamic parties, unlike SBY.

Q: Jokowi is often referred to as a man of the people. But what are his policies? Also, who would his Vice President be?

A: Jokowi has done well in Jakarta. He passed an ordinance pertaining to Jakarta's street peddlers, and he helped the flooding victims. However, he admits that during the upcoming rainy season flooding will occur yet again. One political observer mentioned that Akbar Tandjung would be a good Vice Presidential candidate, but others think he is too associated

with the New Order era. Jokowi's history as a businessman and government official suggests that he will be open to the business community and support a market economy, as all of his predecessors since Suharto, with the possible exception of Abdurrahman Wahid, have done.

Q: *If Jokowi is elected president, what role would Megawati play in his administration?*

A: Megawati has been in control of the PDI-P since the 1990s, and it has been a one-woman party as a result. Nevertheless, I believe she recognizes that PDI-P is not likely to win without Jokowi, and she will therefore probably support him, thereby ensuring herself a role, in whatever capacity, in Jokowi's government if he is elected.

Q: *Could Ahok (who is the Deputy Governor of Jakarta) become Governor if Jokowi leaves his post to run for president?*

A: Conventional wisdom says no, but he could. He is charismatic enough. He has all the resources of an incumbent, and he is a principled, strong leader. When there was an Islamist-generated controversy over *Lurah* Susan, a Protestant woman who heads an administrative district within Jakarta, he refused to reassign her.

Q: *What are some of the challenges Indonesian pollsters face? Are they trusted?*

A: Some, most often the politicians who lose elections, say there are conspiracies among pollsters, and without a doubt some pollsters have an agenda—not least those who are employed by Indonesian political parties. However, there are many reputable pollsters, such as LSI.

Q: *How do election observers monitor changing perceptions towards the upcoming elections and the candidates?*

A: Other surveys will be conducted and released before the legislative elections. Many people are undecided at the moment, but when Election Day arrives those undecided voters will most likely vote as the wider electorate does.

Attitudes towards the PDI-P probably will not change much before Election Day. For that to happen, there would need to be some big scandal. The PDI-P does not have enough people in power right now for that to be likely to happen.

Q: *What would Jokowi have to do or say to seriously hurt his possible presidential candidacy?*

A: There will be serious flooding in Jakarta soon, but he has already said that that will happen, so it will not have much of an impact.