

Indonesian Elections: Two Right-Wing Candidates Claiming Victory

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Asia-Pacific Research, May 03, 2019

Region: [South-East Asia](#)

Theme: [History](#)

In Indonesia, both presidential candidates have declared victory, just a few days after the elections that were held on 17th April, 2019. Both of them are pro-business, both Muslim, and both insist that the Communist Party should continue to be banned. Neither of them is even thinking about stopping their country from committing one of the bloodiest genocides on earth, that in West Papua; or ending the unbridled plunder and environmental disaster on the third largest island in the world, Borneo (in Indonesia known as Kalimantan).

Country is tense. The final results will be announced on May the 22nd, but anything could happen before that, including violence and clashes between the two camps.

If both candidates are pro-business and anti-Communist, then what is the fuss about, really? What makes these elections so different from the previous ones, and what makes the situation so volatile?

The explanation is simple: while the current president 'Jokowi' (his real name is **Joko Widodo**) is a former furniture-maker from a city in Central Java – Solo (also known as Surakarta) – who first became the relatively successful mayor of his city and then governor of the capital Jakarta, before being elected as Indonesian president in 2014, his rival **Prabowo Subianto** is the Indonesian answer to Bolsonaro: a man who was trained in the United States at Fort Benning, and who was deployed in East Timor in the early 90's, becoming the commander of *Kopassus* special forces, committing mass murder there, and using the notorious hooded "ninja" gangs, during the so-called operation "Eradicate". His murderous career did not end there: In 1996 he embarked on terrorizing villages in the occupied and plundered West Papua. Two years later, in 1998 his troops kidnapped and tortured at least nine anti-Suharto activists.

His military career ended there, after he publicly took responsibility for the kidnappings.

But in Indonesia, brutal deeds are hardly ever condemned or punished. The killers who participated in the 1965/66 US-backed coup and consequent mass murder of between 1 and 3 million leftists and intellectuals, are still proudly appearing on Indonesian television shows, bragging about committing monstrous assassinations, raping women and children, and about 'saving the country from the Communist menace'. They usually receive standing ovations, as documented in Oppenheimer's film the "*Art of Killing*".

Most likely, Jokowi won by approximately a 10% margin, but against him, there is an entire force of increasingly influential right-wing Islamist groups and movements. They want

extreme capitalism, they want strong conservative rule, they want a physical crackdown against the leftists (particularly 'hidden Communists'), some want Sharia Law and a Caliphate; in brief, they want Prabowo.

The election campaigns were dirty and low. Prabowo's people tried to accuse President Jokowi of being a closet Communist (and a secret sympathizer of the once powerful political party PKI, that was crushed in 1965 and banned until now), and of being a 'non-Muslim'.

In Indonesia, these are extremely dangerous accusations. People blamed of siding with the 'Communists' or even leftists, are often confronted by physical violence and could face prosecution in the courts, and then lengthy prison terms. Without exception, they are banned from participating in political life. Being 'non-Muslim' or even worse, being branded as 'anti-Islamic', means that a person has all doors slammed in his or her face. To illustrate the point: the extremely successful governor of Jakarta, 'Ahok', was both Chinese by blood, and progressive by political belief. As a result of his socialist reforms, he was thrown into jail after being accused of 'insulting Islam', a ridiculous and never proven charge.

The fact that Jokowi is interested in participating in China's BRI (Belt and Road Initiative), has gained him an avalanche of accusations from Prabowo's camp, that he is 'pro-China', and therefore a Communist.

In extremely racist Indonesia, which perpetrated three genocides and countless pogroms against its minorities in little more than half a century, being 'Chinese' is another 'crime'. Between the 1965 coup and the reign of President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) who lifted the ban, everything Chinese was forbidden: from spoken and written language, to films, names, traditional lamps and dragons, to cakes.

The West, of course, has been admiring and supporting all this, from 1965 until now. It cherishes fascist, anti-Chinese, extremely capitalist Indonesia, ruled by brutal military and increasingly radical (pro-Western) Wahhabi Islamists; a country that allows, even encourages the unrestrained plunder of its own natural resources; enriching North American, European and Australian companies, while impoverishing its own indoctrinated, uninformed religious and obedient population.

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President Jokowi is no hero. While pushing for some very moderate reforms in such areas as medical care and slowly although reluctantly improving Indonesian infrastructure, he is refusing to defend victims of Islamism and of regressive local culture, which brutally oppresses and intimidates both minorities and women, and which still bans both 'atheism' and many of the left-wing ideals as well as all Communist movements.

"He is Javanese," a local architect explained. "He never confronts his enemies directly."

But some are now beginning to question: "How much compromise becomes really 'too much'?"

Not long ago, Jokowi stepped back and let his friend and political ally, Ahok, be tried unfairly, consequently ending up in prison.

When a lady teacher got sexually harassed by her superior and publicly denounced abuse, demanding justice, she was arrested, tried and thrown into jail. Not her tormentor, but her!

Instead of stepping in and ordering her immediate release, Jokowi cowardly remained 'impartial', and even refused to 'pardon her'.

He also does absolutely nothing to stop the genocide and plunder of West Papua. Instead he is building new roads there, to help to move the loot extracted by the foreign and local mining and timber companies. The Papuan opposition and freedom fighters are hunted down, tortured and killed.

On the island of Kalimantan, unbridled plunder and the environmental destruction goes on and on, unchallenged and unquestioned.

In the meantime, draconic laws are curbing free flow of information and are now muzzling all potential left-wing opposition.

The extremely low level of education and knowledge (after the demise of the greatest Indonesian [Communist] writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer, the country does not count one single world-class thinker, writer or scientist) is happening to uphold the depressing *status quo*. It often looks like the country of 300 million is basically involved in only two major activities: the plunder of its minerals and timber, and the 'business' (selling all that is being looted).

It is important to repeat again: this is precisely where the West wants to have Indonesia, since 1965. And this is where it has it now.

So what is the response of Jokowi, when he is accused of being 'pro-Chinese', or a 'Communist', or 'non-Muslim'?

The response is shameful: Whenever attacked, he truly 'bends', and immediately begins officially distancing himself even further from left-wing ideals. He makes ridiculous gestures (like not going to the 2nd BRI Forum in Beijing, whereas both the Malaysian PM Mahathir and the president of the Philippines, Duterte, are proudly attending). Or, he goes to Mecca periodically, to show how devoted he is. He publicly leads prayers, and above all, he had chosen as his running mate Ma'ruf Amin, a former Indonesian Ulama Council leader.

Earlier, in 2016, Jokowi appointed General Wiranto (another murderous military cadre from the Suharto's era), a Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, an extremely powerful position. What next, 'appeasing' the Indonesian fascist, regressive forces? Nobody knows.

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Image on the right: Great Indonesian painter Djokopekik



In the past, perhaps the most important Indonesia's artist, 82-years old Djokopekik, had survived imprisonment, isolation and censorship. Now he lives with his wife and eleven dogs, on the outskirts of the historic Javanese city of Yogyakarta, on a vast compound, near, as he says, a 'ghost infested river'.

Political and 'red' to the core, Djokopekik appeared in my feature documentary, about the 1965 massacres. Now, predicting that Jokowi gained the majority of votes, he appears to be cautiously optimistic:

"Of course, the victims of this government's slowness are already mounting... but Jokowi never had it easy. You see, he used to be just a small businessman, and then a mayor of Solo. Only in Jakarta, after teaming up with Ahok, he learned about the politics. There and then, all that hate was thrown at him..."

"Jokowi was born in 1961, and in 1965 he was only 4 years old. Like others, he was greatly influenced by Suharto's 'New Order' propaganda. He is not yet a political animal; not savvy yet... But if he would be really brave and determined, chances are that there would be another 1965; another coup."

"Just to illustrate to you how bad are things here: If Prabowo would win, many of Jokowi's supporters would be gone; killed..."

So, what do the supporters of Prabowo say?



Mr. Reza Esfan Asjoedjir, former General Manager of a fertilizer producing company, *Pusri*, shared his thoughts for this essay:

“Maybe Prabowo is not the best candidate. But in more than 4 years, the performance of the government of Jokowi is far from good. Whether when it concerns economy, or good corporate governance... and they don’t care about the interests of the Muslims. I am sorry, but the indecisiveness towards the PKI (former Communist Party of Indonesia), is irritating, too. After all, we still have the laws that ban the Party, right? Also, Jokowi opted to be close to the People’s Republic of China. Other issues include his positive attitude towards LGBT (lesbian gay bisexual transgender). Also, he already broke many promises.”

Now in Indonesia, many families are bitterly divided over politics. Arif (not his real name), an up and coming filmmaker from Central Java, is not hiding his disgust with the present situation in Indonesia:

“I am ‘golput’ (against voting). But my family not only voted for Prabowo; they are actually actively campaigning for him.”

Prabowo secured a clear and decisive victory in Aceh, West Sumatra and West Java, the strongholds of Islamism, conservatism and backwardness.

In most of the villages of Central Java, including Plaosan (known for its ancient temple complexes), most of the local farmers are supporting Jokowi. However, the 'other side' often comes and intimidates them.

Ms. Rum, a small coffee and noodle stall owner:

"There were many visitors to the temple asking me whom I voted for, but I did not tell them. I just laughed, noncommittedly. But I voted for the candidate that has already proven to be able to rule, which is our current President. During the 2014 elections, there were many issues that were thrown in Jokowi's face, such as being anti-Muslim, or a member of the PKI, and many other things. But we were not convinced hearing such things. During these elections, they did not dare to use those issues anymore; at least not here. But they said that 'how come Jokowi who comes from such a humble background could become a mayor, then governor, and then president; that is, if he is not using 'black power'."

Ghosts; Indonesia is too obsessed with ghosts, with black magic and other irrational beliefs.

Now, many farmers at least get some help from the state; not much but at least some, and some food, if they are in need. And this goes a long way here, in a still desperately poor Indonesia.

Ms. Ponirah, craft-maker and seller:

"I voted for Jokowi. He is the best, especially for the 'little' people like us here. During the previous administration of SBY, what we received as aid for the poor people was only very bad-quality rice. We couldn't even eat it. Now we get good rice and also some other basic necessities. In this village, Jokowi won! Jokowi Yesss!"

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All this is still very far from 'real changes'; far from where other countries in Southeast Asia that have broken away from the traditional 'client states of the West mentality' are right now: Vietnam, and even the Philippines.

But it appears that the 'worst scenario' has been prevented: the 'Bolsonaro development', or worse still: a scenario that would take Indonesia back to the days of the military dictatorship of the murderous imbecile – General Suharto.

If his re-election is confirmed, Jokowi should toughen up and do what the deposed left-wing President Abdurrahman Wahid (a progressive Muslim cleric, a socialist, and until his death, my dear friend) tried to do on behalf of Indonesia; to apologize to the Communists, to tell the truth about the genocides of 1965 and in East Timor, to stop the on-going genocide in West Papua, to halt the plunder of natural resources all over archipelago, to curb savage capitalism, legalize both Communists and atheists, and thoroughly reform education, upholding the secular Constitution of Indonesia.

Like in South Africa, Chile, Argentina and elsewhere, those who collaborated with the West, murdering and torturing their own citizens, should be exposed, arrested, and tried for treason and violation of basic human rights, instead of being allowed to join the

government, or to run for office.

Image below: Indonesian voters



For Indonesia to prosper or at least to get out of the horrific state it is now in, it has to return to the pre-1965 era, and resume an independent, patriotic and socialist course, the sooner the better.

It is clear that Jokowi will not have guts to do all this. But at least he should create conditions for others to do what he, perhaps, does not even dare to dream about, yet.

In the meantime, the regressive forces have to be stopped. Indonesians should not allow themselves to be reduced to the level of Afghanistan, where the West has implanted and then supported the Wahhabi Mujahedin, in order to destroy socialism.

Right now, the two presidential candidates of Indonesia are claiming victory.

Polls are indicating that this time, again, Jokowi is the winner. However, at least 40%, and perhaps more, voted for a former fascist and murderous general.

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This article was originally published on [New Eastern Outlook](#).

Andre Vltchek is a philosopher, novelist, filmmaker and investigative journalist. He has covered wars and conflicts in dozens of countries. Four of his latest books are [China and Ecological Civilization](#) with John B. Cobb, Jr., [Revolutionary Optimism, Western Nihilism](#), a revolutionary novel ["Aurora"](#) and a bestselling work of political non-fiction: ["Exposing Lies Of The Empire"](#). View his other books [here](#). Watch [Rwanda Gambit](#), his groundbreaking documentary about Rwanda and DR Congo and his film/dialogue with Noam Chomsky ["On Western Terrorism"](#). Vltchek presently resides in East Asia and the Middle East, and continues to work around the world. He can be reached through his [website](#) and his [Twitter](#). His [Patreon](#).

All images in this article are from the author; featured image: prison in which Ahok was held

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