

CRS Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

Indonesian Elections

Bruce Vaughn
Analyst in Southeast and South Asian Affairs
Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division

Summary

On April 5, 2004, Indonesia successfully completed the first step of a multi-phase election process for 2004. The first phase elected the national legislature and the new regional representative council. The second phase, to be held on July 5, 2004, will seek to elect a President. There will be a run-off election on September 20, 2004, if no single candidate wins a majority in July. The April election was judged to be free and fair by most observers. This bodes well for evolution of democracy in Indonesia. Nationalist and secular parties were the most popular with voters. The Islamist parties limited appeal can be attributed more to their anti-corruption and good governance policies than to an overtly Islamist agenda. This report will be updated as events warrant.

April Parliamentary Elections

The Indonesian General Election Commission (KPU) registered 147 million Indonesians to take part in the April 5, 2004 poll in which 7,800 candidates from 24 political parties ran for 550 seats in the national legislature (DPRD).¹ One hundred and twenty eight individuals were also elected to the new Regional Representative Council (DPD). Analysis of the election attributed the decline in support for President Megawati's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), as compared with the 1999 parliamentary elections, to the lack of economic growth, Megawati's governing style, and continuing government corruption.² The vote was generally peaceful with the exception of limited fighting between Free Aceh Movement (GAM) forces and the Indonesian National Defense Forces in the region of Nanggroe, Aceh Darussalam.³ (See table below for election results.)

¹ Shoeb Kagda, "Indonesians Cast Votes," *The Business Times*, April 6, 2004.

² "Megawati's Bid for New Mandate in Doubt as Indonesians Vote for Change," *Agence France Presse*, April 11, 2004.

³ "Indonesia's Police Chief Says Clashes in Aceh No Disruption to Polling," *BBC Monitoring*, April 6, 2004.

Election Results

Party	Vote % 2004	Seats	% 1999
Golkar (Wiranto)	21.6	128	22.5
PDI-P Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (President Megawati)	18.5	109	33.7
PKB National Awakening Party (former President Wahid)	10.57	52	12.7
PPP United Development Party (Vice President Hamzah Haz)	8.15	58	10.7
PD Democratic Party (Former Security Minister Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono)	7.45	57	Did not run
PAN National Mandate Party (Speaker Amien Rais)	6.44	52	7.2
PKS Prosperous Justice Party (Islamic based)	7.34	45	1.0

The biggest surprise in the April 2004 election was the performance of the Democrat Party of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Yudhoyono was President Megawati's Security Minister until he quit the cabinet in the lead-up to the April elections. Early analysis attributed the party's better than expected performance to the popularity of Yudhoyono. In one pre-election poll Yudhoyono had a 21% approval rating. This has increased to a 46.6% approval rating. While the Democratic Party's percentage of the vote is significantly less than both the PDI-P's and Golkar's share, it is thought that the individual personalities of the leaders will be a more influential factor in the presidential vote in July.⁴ It has been reported that 58% of voters claimed no party affiliation prior to the April poll.⁵

According to most observers, the 2004 parliamentary election proceeded in a generally free and fair manner. They follow the 1999 election which was the first open election since 1955. During the past two years, Golkar has remained a potent political force. It did not suffer the significant loss of public support experienced by PDI-P in the 2004 parliamentary election. Seats formerly reserved for the military were eliminated prior to the 2004 elections. Islamist parties seeking to institute Sharia law and have Indonesia officially become an Islamic state exist but they have a relatively small

⁴ "Indonesian Presidential Favorite Surges in New Poll," *Reuters News*, 22 April, 2004.

⁵ "Count Down to 2004," *United States - Indonesia Society*, January 9, 2004.

following.⁶ The Islamist Justice Party is thought to have done well by downplaying its Islamic agenda and instead focusing on good governance issues.⁷ The moderate Islamic parties have drawn their support to a large extent, though not exclusively, from the moderate Islamic organizations Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. These two groups have extensive educational networks and approximately 60 million followers between them.⁸

H.Res. 666, which congratulates Indonesia on completing successful elections and praises the growing friendship between Indonesia and the United States, was sponsored by Representative Dan Burton and co-sponsored by Representatives Robert Wexler, Doug Bereuter and Earl Blumenauer. It has been referred to the House Committee on International Relations for further consideration.

Presidential Election

A presidential election will be held on July 5, 2004 and if a second round is needed, there will be a runoff election in September. Only parties that won 5% of the national vote, or won 3% of parliamentary seats are allowed to contest the July 5 presidential election. It is anticipated that no single candidate will win an outright first round victory, which requires a majority of the vote with the additional requirement of 20% of the vote being distributed among at least half of the provinces.⁹ This will most likely lead to a runoff election between the two most popular candidates on September 20, 2004.¹⁰ There is some concern that the elections may trigger violence in Java, Kalimantan, Poso, Central Sulawesi, Makasar, Bali, and Papua, though this was not the case in the April poll.¹¹ This will be the first election where Indonesians will have the opportunity directly to vote for the President. Some observers also note a focus on individual candidates and parties to a greater extent than on issues and accountability of politicians by the Indonesian public in 2004. In a recent poll, Indonesians rated unemployment, poverty and high prices as they key issues for the election. They also viewed Yudhoyono and Kalla as best suited to deal with these problems.¹²

Yudhoyono appears to be the most popular choice for President in the wake of the April election. Yudhoyono has been called the “thinking general.”¹³ Born in 1949 in East Java, he graduated from Indonesia’s military academy in 1973 and retired from the

⁶ “Historic Elections in Indonesia,” U.S.-Indonesia Society, April 19, 2004.

⁷ Devi Asmarani, “PKS Wins Votes by Downplaying Islamic Agenda,” *The Straits Times*, April 12, 2004.

⁸ Merle Ricklefs, “The Future of Indonesia,” *History Today*, December 1, 2003.

⁹ Andrew Ellis, “Indonesia’s New General Election Law,” *United States - Indonesia Society*, July 16, 2003.

¹⁰ John McBeth and Tom McCawley, “Bleak Prospects Ahead for the Front Runner,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 2, 2003.

¹¹ Sri Wahyuni, “15 Areas May See Violence in 2004 Elections,” *The Jakarta Post*, January 21, 2004.

¹² “New Poll Favors Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono,” US-Indonesia Society, June 15, 2004.

¹³ Rachael Harvey, “Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono,” *BBC News*, May 18, 2004.

military as a four star general in 2000 to join the government of Abdurrahman Wahid as Minister for Mines and later Chief Minister for Security and Political Affairs. He also served in President Megawati's government.¹⁴ It is thought that SBY, as Yudhoyono is also known, will take a firm stance against terrorism.¹⁵ His selection of Jusuf Kalla, who is from Sulawesi, as his Vice President is thought to strengthen his chances for the presidency.

Polling Data (6/15/04)

S.B. Yudhoyona & Jusuf Kall (PD)	46.6%
Amien Rais & S. Yudhousodo (PAN)	19.7%
Megawati Sukarnoputri & Hasyim Muzadi (PDI-P)	13.78%
Wiranto (Golkar) & Solahuddin Wahid	10.56%
Hamzah Haz & Agum Gumerlar (PPP)	2.34%

Source: U.S.-Indonesia Society, "New Poll Favors Yudhoyona," June 15, 2004.

Another surprise in the lead-up to the presidential elections is the selection of Wiranto to be the Golkar party presidential nominee. Wiranto defeated Golkar Chairman, and Speaker of the Parliament, Akbar Tandjung in a 315 to 227 vote of Golkar party delegates. Wiranto was indicted in February 2003 by United Nations prosecutors for his alleged role in crimes against humanity in East Timor in 1999. The lodging of the arrest warrant with interpol will mean that Wiranto could be arrested if he leaves the country.¹⁶ Bilateral relations with the United States could be greatly complicated should Wiranto become President given the history of Congressional concern over human rights abuses in East Timor. That said, U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia Ralph Boyce issued a statement that "we can work with anybody that comes out of a free [election] process."¹⁷ In 2000, then-President Wahid removed Wiranto from the cabinet after Indonesia's National Human Rights Commission held him responsible for the violence that was associated with the East Timor referendum.¹⁸

¹⁴ Tomi Soetjipto, "Indonesia Parties Manoeuver as Vote Count Drags on," *Reuters*, April 12, 2004.

¹⁵ Rachael Harvey, "Indonesia's Election Race Hots Up," *BBC News*, April 26, 2004.

¹⁶ "Arrest Warrant for Jakarta General," *BBC News*, May 10, 2004.

¹⁷ "U.S. Can Work with a Future President Wiranto," *Agence France Presse*, 22 April, 2004.

¹⁸ Harvey Demaine, "Indonesia: Physical and Social Geography," in *The Far East and Australasia*, (Surrey: Europa Publications, 2002), p. 502.

Wiranto has chosen former President Wahid's brother Salahuddin Wahid as his Vice President to attract the support of the National Awakening Party (PKB).¹⁹ Golkar has a strong organization that dates back to the era of President Suharto. Wiranto may attract support from the military. He also reportedly has good presence with the media and his running mate, Salahuddin Wahid may attract PKB votes as well as support from Nahdatul Ulama (NU). His chief liability is his record on human rights.²⁰ Akbar Tandjung, who Wiranto defeated for the Golkar nomination, has stated that "people don't know much about that issue. [Wiranto's record on human rights] It may be important to students and some of the elite, but it will not effect Wiranto's candidacy."²¹

A positive aspect of the post-Suharto period of reform has been the expansion of the political party system. The opening of Indonesia's democracy in the *reformasi* period witnessed the emergence of a plethora of political parties. The number has decreased from 48 in 1999 to 24 in 2004. The National Awakening Party (PKB), was established in 1998 by NU which is believed to have a membership of some 30 million "traditionalist" members -meaning pluralist and tolerant Muslims in the Indonesian context.²² NU rejects the goal of establishing an Islamic state under Sharia law and is open to non-Muslim members.²³ National Mandate Party's (PAN) support base is drawn from the "modernist" Islamic organization Muhammadiyah, which is headed by Amien Rais. Rais was a key leader of the *reformasi* era. Rais has attracted the support of the hardline Indonesia Mujahidin Council (MMI) and the Islamic Union Persis. This gives Rais support of groups favoring an Islamic state.²⁴

The United States government promotes democracy and good governance through its support of organizations such as the Asia Foundation. The Asia Foundation is involved with numerous programs designed to promote democratic political systems, non-violence and religious tolerance, legal reform, human rights, conflict management, women's political participation, local governance, and private sector reform.²⁵ In 2003, President Bush announced an initiative to support educational reform in Indonesia to promote secularism and good governance. Representative Dan Burton, discussing the objective of the recently formed Indonesia Caucus, stated that "The United States has the ability to support democratization in Indonesia by assisting in several key areas, including: education, internal security, economic governance, and strengthening the Parliament.

¹⁹ "Major Party Endorses Wiranto Bid," *BBC News*, May 26, 2004.

²⁰ "USINDO Election Countdown," *U.S. - Indonesia Society*, June 3, 2004.

²¹ Akbar Tandjung, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Republic of Indonesia, USINDO 10th Anniversary Lecture Series, May 14, 2004, Washington, DC.

²² Robert Hefner, "Islam and the State in the Post-Suharto Era," in Adam Schwartz and Jonathan Paris, *The Politics of Post-Suharto Indonesia*, (New York: The Council on Foreign Relations, 1999).

²³ "Indonesia Backgrounder: A Guide to the 2004 Elections," *International Crisis Group*, December, 2003.

²⁴ "Campaign Nuggets," *U.S. - Indonesia Society*, June 15, 2004.

²⁵ "Indonesia," *The Asia Foundation*, [www.asiafoundation.org].

Indonesia has the potential of becoming an example of what can be achieved in a newly democratized nation.”²⁶

Indonesia has been making progress on government reform and the expansion of democracy. Parliament passed legislation in 2003 to impose transparent accounting standards for government and to establish an independent commission to prosecute corruption.²⁷ One can also point to the functioning of the General Elections Commission in the lead up to the 2004 elections as a positive democratic development that helps reinforce civil society in Indonesia.²⁸ A vigorous and open media is another continuing success of the developing civil society in Indonesia. The process of decentralization currently underway also holds the prospect of greater say for average Indonesians in the affairs of their daily lives. Indonesians are planning to exercise their right to vote in significant numbers. In a 2003 poll, ninety three percent stated they planned to vote in the presidential election in 2004.²⁹

²⁶ Office of Congressman Dan Burton, “Burton Announces the Formation of the Indonesia Caucus,” February 12, 2004.

²⁷ John McBeth, “The Betrayal of Indonesia,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 26, 2003.

²⁸ Christine Tjhin, “Civil Society After Akbar’s Acquittal,” *The Jakarta Post*, February 17, 2004.

²⁹ Tim Meisburger, ed. *Democracy in Indonesia: A Survey of the Indonesian Electorate in 2003* (Jakarta: The Asia Foundation, 2003), p.55.