



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



POLICY BRIEF

Indonesia's 2024 Elections

Author

Jayantika Rao T.V.

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Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003

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Author

Jayantika Rao T. V., Research Associate, Delhi Policy Group

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Cover Photographs:

The three presidential candidates for Indonesia's 2024 elections, namely Prabowo Subianto, Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo, attending a press conference after meeting President Joko Widodo at the Merdeka Palace, Jakarta, on October 30, 2023. Source: [President of the Republic of Indonesia](#)

President Joko Widodo hosting the three presidential candidates who will participate in 2024 elections at the Merdaka Palace, Jakarta on October 30, 2023. Source: [President of the Republic of Indonesia](#)

Indonesia's presidential candidates and their running mates stand alongside during an event at the General Election Supervisory Agency in Jakarta, Indonesia on November 27, 2023. Source: [Prabowo Subianto Official](#)

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by

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Introduction

Indonesia is gearing up for its largest single-day election to elect its president, vice president, and almost 20,000 representatives to the national and provincial governments on February 14, 2024. This election in the world's third-largest democracy and fourth-most populous country is of strategic significance, as its outcome will determine Indonesia's future trajectory following two successful terms of President Joko Widodo, also known as "Jokowi", who will hand over power to his successor in October, 2024.

As great power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific escalates, Indonesia's importance has grown. Indonesia's strategic waterways have played a crucial role in cementing its position as a key player in both regional and international politics, which has been further bolstered by President Jokowi's proactive diplomatic engagement, having chaired the G20 (2022) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2023). The next Indonesian president's foreign policy will thus significantly impact the geo-political climate in Southeast Asia, and the wider Indo-Pacific.

Candidates

On November 13, Indonesia's Election Commission announced that all three candidates for the presidential and vice-presidential positions in February's election have been approved.¹ The commission stated that all the candidates have fulfilled the legal requirements, including the son of outgoing President Widodo - Gibran Rakabuming Raka. The Constitutional Court allowed him to run as a vice-presidential candidate, despite not meeting the minimum age requirement of 40 for presidential and vice-presidential candidates. This decision has been a subject of controversy.

The race for the top leadership position is on, shaping to be a three-way battle. The contenders are Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto; former Governor of Central Java, Ganjar Pranowo; and the former Governor of Jakarta, Anies

¹ "Indonesia announces candidates for presidential election." Al Jazeera. (November 13, 2023). Accessed from, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/13/indonesia>

Baswedan. In view of their diverse backgrounds, it is important to consider the values and policies of the candidates.

Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto is a former Special Forces commander and, most notably, the former son-in-law of the late Indonesian President Suharto. He has a blotched human rights record and has been defeated by President Widodo twice, during the 2014 and 2019 elections.² Prabowo is connected to a strong political dynasty as he is the son of Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, a minister in Indonesia's New Order era, and the grandson of Raden Mas Margono Djojohadikusumo, the founder of state lender BNI who also served in the government of Indonesia's founding father Soekarno.³

On October 22, Prabowo – once President Jokowi's opponent – announced Jokowi's son, Gibran Raka, as his choice for a running mate after the Constitutional Court ruling. Prabowo and Gibran, in their speeches, have promised to continue the foreign policy of Jokowi, heavily leaning on domestic prosperity to establish a more robust global presence.⁴ Prabowo outlined his foreign policy platform at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS Indonesia)⁵, pledging to continue the tradition of an independent foreign policy, guided by the "principles of non-membership to any geopolitical bloc," and dedicated to ensuring that this policy continues to serve Indonesia's national interests. As part of his vision, he seeks to implement a "good neighbour policy", which will showcase Indonesia as a beacon of cooperation in Southeast Asia and around the world. If elected, Prabowo pledges to maintain this policy as the defining feature of Indonesia's foreign and defence strategy, as it is in the country's best interest. He has stressed the importance of respecting all major players, including the United States and China, and emphasised the need for Indonesia to maintain strong relationships with every country, including India and Japan. As he put it, "1000 friends too few, one enemy is too many". Prabowo claims that under his leadership, Indonesia will become a leading player globally.

Indonesia's ruling party, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), boldly announced Mahfud MD as the running mate for the party's presidential

² Jaffrey, Sana. "Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election Could Be the Last Battle of the Titans". Carnegie. (October 5, 2023). Accessed from, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/10/05/indonesia->

³ Muthiariny, Dewi Elvia. "Prabowo Subianto Justifies Political Dynasty, Defends Jokowi". Tempo. (October 25, 2023). <https://en.tempo.co/read/1788291/prabowo-subianto-justifies-political-dynasty-defends-jokowi>

⁴ Tanamal, Yvette. "Prabowo Says He Will Continue Jokowi's Foreign Policy." The Jakarta Post. November 14, 2023. Accessed from, <https://asianews.network/prabowo-says-he-will-continue-jokowis-foreign-policy/>

⁵ Speech can be accessed from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpZdLC2tRRI>

candidate, Ganjar Pranowo. According to PDI-P's leader and former Indonesian President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, Ganjar and Mahfud are the perfect duo to lead the country towards a better future, given their unparalleled backgrounds in national and global issues, with the latter being the coordinating political, legal and security affairs minister in Jokowi's current cabinet.⁶ In their recently released manifesto, "Towards an Excellent Indonesia"⁷, Ganjar and Mahfud outlined their foreign policy, which is focused on Indonesia as a "sustainable archipelago maritime country". They acknowledged the growing number of global challenges, including geopolitical tensions, climate change, economic disparities between developed and developing nations, and injustices in the international system. However, they believe that Indonesia can play a crucial role in addressing these issues by maintaining a free and active foreign policy and reprioritising its strengths. Ganjar and Mahfud are also determined to capitalise on Indonesia's abundant natural resources and human capital to strengthen diplomatic initiatives to improve the current world order.

Anies Baswedan, a prominent opposition figure in Indonesia, announced his running mate, Muhaimain Iskandar, in September 2023 to gain more support from the country's large Muslim population. Unlike other candidates, Anies has been vocal about changing Indonesia's 'transactional foreign policy' in favour of a 'values-based foreign policy'. He believes that a values-based foreign policy is one in which a country takes a clear stance and upholds it, rather than prioritizing concerns such as investment and trade, as in a transactional policy.⁸ As a leader, he believes that Indonesia has a duty to criticise any country that invades another country, even if that country is a friend. He argues that territorial sovereignty is a core principle, and it is important to stand up and speak out against such invasions. Therefore, he has criticised the current administration's decision of not being more vocal about the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Recent Opinion Polls

A recent survey conducted by Indikator Politik Indonesia revealed that Prabowo is currently leading with 33.2% of the voters supporting his candidature, followed by Ganjar with 22.1% and Anies with 19.9%. However,

⁶ The Jakarta Post. "Analysis: Ganjar-Mahfud announcement amid Jokowi's wavering support". (October 23, 2023). Accessed from, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/>

⁷ "Vision and Mission of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD". Available from, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-olOvmrwXLJjlE9B_oTnCMRVQYSuse/view

⁸ Siregar, Kiki. "Presidential hopeful Anies Baswedan criticises Indonesia's 'transactional' foreign policy, pledges values-based approach". CAN. (August 31, 2023). Accessed from, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/>

when the respondents were asked to choose among the three candidates at present, Prabowo received 40.6%, Ganjar received 27.8%, and Anies received 23.7%. It is worth mentioning that while Indikator Politik Indonesia published the results on November 12, the survey was conducted between October 27 and November 1. The organisation revealed that there was a margin of error of 2.9%, as there was a shift in support towards Prabowo Subianto when he announced Gibran Raka as his running mate.⁹ This development has had a significant impact on the public's perception of the candidates, with Prabowo and Raka being the frontrunners.

Conclusion

Indonesia's foreign policy is at a crossroads, and the upcoming election offers a critical opportunity to shape its future on the world stage. After examining the foreign policy manifestos of all three candidates, it is evident that they all agree on maintaining Indonesia's tradition of non-alignment, while advocating a more substantial international role for the country.

However, the manifestos need greater clarity on how the candidates plan to deliver on their promises if elected. One crucial issue that has been left undiscussed is the candidates' respective approaches towards China. As global and regional security challenges increase and impact peace and stability in the region, whoever is elected must understand Indonesia's bargaining power and navigate the nation through the difficult times.

Prabowo, the frontrunner, sees China as a positive contributor to Indonesia's economy, and will continue to engage positively with that country. However, based on vice presidential candidate Mahfud's past of being more critical of China, and Anies' call for a 'values-based foreign policy', they might be expected to pursue a different line of engagement.

As the 75-day election campaign began on November 28, and will include five presidential debates, all eyes will be on Indonesia in search of clarity regarding its future strategic posture.

⁹ Tarigan, Edna. "All 3 candidates approved for Indonesia's presidential election in February". ABC News. Accessed from, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/>



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