

Jokowi poised for second presidential term; what face will he present?

He's been described as a liberal reformer, modern Javanese king and skilled pragmatist

By Simon Tay

IN Indonesia's fiercely contested elections, early exit polls show that incumbent Joko Widodo is headed for a clear victory. An official result may take some days, given the massive scale of the vote across the sprawling archipelago. But early signs seem to confirm polls that consistently showed Jokowi, as he is popularly known, leading by a significant margin.

If a Jokowi victory is confirmed, a question still remains however about which Jokowi won. Three quite distinct faces have been seen in this election, and affect what we can expect him to do in his second term.

The first is of Jokowi as the non-elite liberal reformer, carrying on with his promise of change from his previous election. Yes, the economy has been opened up, more than in past liberalisation efforts. But Indonesia still remains comparatively closed and some, especially the Western media, question the commitment towards deepening democracy.

Clear popularity

This feeds into a second image that is emerging of Jokowi as a modern Javanese king. Notably, as he went into the election, almost all of the mainstream parties and major business groups favoured him. Yet while this is a testimony to Jokowi's clear popularity, a potential flip side is that the "king" presides over the *status quo* and further reform will be compromised.

Which Jokowi will run Indonesia, and how? Much depends on two issues that have



Joko Widodo at a press conference on Thursday with his running mate, Ma'ruf Amin, on his left and former Indonesian president Megawati Sukarnoputri on his right and Ms Megawati's daughter, Puan Maharani.

PHOTO: EPA-EFE

been significant on the campaign trail and will likely echo into his second term: Nationalism and Islamisation.

Jokowi has welcomed foreign investment into Indonesia as a vital support for the financial system and a source of job creation. But his campaign also boasted about obtaining the controlling stake in Freeport Indonesia and the Grasberg gold and copper mine. There were also other instances touted as safeguarding the country's national resources, when lucrative oil and gas fields were acquired from US and French companies. Add to this the backtracking on fuel sub-

sidies, that had been removed in 2015, only to be reversed amid rising fuel prices in 2018.

Questions about the political force of Islam are also resurgent. While Jokowi was clearly moderate in his first campaign, he has now had to grapple with more conservative elements after the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, in which his former lieutenant, a Chinese Christian known as Ahok, was not only defeated but also jailed on charges of blasphemy. In response, the campaign has sought to bolster Islamic credentials by bringing in the conservative cleric and Nahd-

latul Ulama leader Ma'ruf Amin as the vice-presidential candidate.

Some explain that these signs of nationalist protectionism and Islamisation are merely campaign fodder and expect a period of economic opening and political moderation after this victory. The hope is that Jokowi can utilise forces such as nationalism and Islam without becoming captured by these interest groups – a third face for the re-elected President as a skilled pragmatist.

The campaign however has heated up the issues considerably, and the fear is that these issues will not cool off any time soon

and instead have emerged as permanent factors that constrain reform and opening.

Things to watch for

Signs of which face of Jokowi will emerge can be read in a number of developments. First, whether the electoral mandate will be used to push for further economic opening. To the Indonesian Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM), sectors such as infrastructure, manufacturing and energy production are priority industries. It remains to be seen if efforts to woo foreign investors are renewed and backed up by consistent policy implementation in the coming months.

Connected to this, as a new Cabinet is formed, watch for the presence of technocrats such as Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati and BKPM chairman Thomas Lembong who have been central to efforts to create a competitive and open economy. Conversely, watch for the administration management of the political and social discourse about Islam and the space and tone that is taken up by the incoming Vice President.

A third factor to watch will be the management of the different parties to form a workable coalition with sufficient numbers, and also with sufficient policy coherence to be effective.

Businesses, both within Indonesia and from the international community, have high hopes for Indonesia and expectations for a second Jokowi term are considerable after a clear win. But the exact face that the new presidency will present to Indonesia and the world remains to be seen.

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