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ELECTIONS IN JAKARTA

Robert Cribb

Indonesian elections are not generally expected to produce surprises. Not even in the relatively free poll of 1955 could elections be said to have contributed significantly to changing a government in Indonesia. All elections in the country's history, from the first limited franchise elections held by the Netherlands Indies government just after the turn of the century to the "festival of democracy" (pesta demokrasi) of May 4, 1982, in which over 75 million people voted, have been intended to serve an established regime. The purpose of elections has been twofold: to confer legitimacy on the regime; and to give the opportunity, through elected representatives, for public opinion to influence, take part in, and improve the performance of government without ever taking charge of it. Indonesian governments have not generally felt themselves threatened by the elections they have held.

When it comes to interpreting individual election results produced under these circumstances, it can be difficult to avoid the feeling that analysis is pointless. In the heat of the moment, a few percentage points difference in the performance of Golkar, the government electoral organization, may seem to reduce or enhance the government's legitimacy or the opposition's claim to influence. But in the cold light of day, with Golkar winning a steady sixty-odd percent of the national vote, it is clear that little is changed by mere percentage points.

Precisely because election results seemed so very predictable, it was a major event in the 1977 elections when Golkar lost the election in the capital territory (Daerah Khusus Ibukota) of Jakarta to the opposition Muslim PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, Unity Development Party). This defeat in the second general election held under President Suharto's New Order seemed to reflect a souring of the promise of the government that had replaced President Sukarno in 1966. In the years between the

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first and second New Order elections (1971-1977), the government had undergone a series of crises, ranging from the collapse of the state oil company Pertamina in 1975 to violent anti-Japanese (and implicitly antiregime) demonstrations in Jakarta (the so-called Malari Affair) in 1974 and a moral challenge to government legitimacy by the Javanese mystic Sawito Kartowibowo in 1976. The government’s reputation as a popular and effective national manager had begun to tarnish, and some former members of the so-called New Order coalition of students, Muslims, and technocrats began to pull away.

The government won the 1977 elections overall with a comfortable 62.1% of the votes. Only in Jakarta and the staunchly Muslim province of Aceh did the PPP defeat Golkar. The capital territory, moreover, returned only 12 of the 360 elected members of parliament, of which the PPP and Golakar each won 5, the remaining 2 going to the much smaller PDI (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, Indonesian Democratic Party). The voting in Jakarta, thus, has little bearing on the overall result. The significance of the Jakarta result stemmed from interpretations of the position and role of the capital in Indonesian politics. Campaigning and polling in Jakarta were probably more than in other areas. Throughout the country, considerable influence and pressure was brought to bear on voters during the campaign, both by the army and by Korpri, the government civil service organization, which is affiliated with Golkar. The army and Korpri each have permanent hierarchies extending down to the village level, whereas the parties and Golkar are not allowed branches below kabupaten (regency) level. Both, therefore, are well placed to influence voters in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. The difference in Jakarta is probably not so much the absence of subtle and unsubtle influence by Golkar supporters—the moderating influence of Jakarta’s thickly sprinkled expatriate community is probably overestimated in this respect—as it is the greater awareness of inhabitants of the capital city and the greater effectiveness of opposition campaigns, thanks to the population density of Jakarta.

Golkar’s defeat in Jakarta, however, raised questions about the security of the Suharto government. Losing in Jakarta clearly did not mean that Golkar might soon be defeated nationally, and it is difficult to argue that the strength of the opposition there reflects the depth of suppressed opposition elsewhere, though perhaps it is an indication of the depth of potential opposition that could be developed if restrictions imposed on opposition activites by the Suharto government were lifted. But the result definitely raised the specter of persistent mass urban opposition to the Suharto government. In the 1960s rural revolution seemed to many to present Southeast Asian governments with their greatest long-term security threat. Since that time, however, opposition politics in the capital
city have played an increasingly important role in the fate of governments in the region. The 1969 race riots in Kuala Lumpur triggered major political changes in Malaysia, while it was mass rallies in Bangkok in 1973 that helped topple the military government there. In 1978 it was Manila that turned against the Marcos government in the election campaign for an Interim National Assembly in the Philippines. Even in relatively tranquil Singapore, the first opposition member to sit in parliament since 1966 was elected in 1981 to represent an inner urban area seat.

As the 1982 elections approached, the Suharto government seemed hardly more popular than in 1977. The regime appeared listless and heavy-handed, showing few signs of the "renewal" that had been promised. The government had seemed to panic in 1978 with a massive devaluation of the rupiah. Stories of corruption and moral decay in ruling circles were widespread. The government, moreover, had faced a serious moral challenge in the so-called Petition of Fifty, signed in May 1980 by fifty prominent individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, most of whom had been strong supporters of the New Order when it was first installed. This petition called on parliament to "review" speeches by Suharto in which he described Marxism, socialism, nationalism, and religion, among others, as "value systems of the past." Suharto had urged the army to rally to the defense of the state ideology, Pancasila (which in fact includes both nationalism and religion), and by implication his government. The petitioners did not expect their call to be taken up, but they were effective in creating embarrassment and a sense of crisis in government circles.¹

The results of the elections held on May 4, 1982, however, showed that Golkar had not only improved its performance overall, but had won back Jakarta from the PPP. Given the significance attached to the 1977 election result in Jakarta, it is worth examining just what happened. Why did the swing to the government take place? And just what is the significance of electoral swings in Jakarta, whether toward or against the government?

One of the key factors in the Golkar victory was undoubtedly the appointment of the Minister of Information, Ali Murtopo, to head the Golkar electoral campaign. Murtopo, once one of Suharto's closest advisors, had earlier been in charge of the OPSUS (Special Operations) unit, which helped organize such events as the so-called Act of Free Choice in which Irian Jaya (West New Guinea) opted to join Indonesia in 1968.² One of the sharpest minds in the Suharto government, Murtopo

². See Hamish McDonald, Suharto's Indonesia (Blackburn, Australia: Collins, 1980), p. 66.
brought a formidable organizational expertise to the campaign. He also enjoyed the advantage of being a member of the electoral commission that organized the poll, and it was rumored at the time—incorrectly as it turned out—that Suharto had promised him the vice-presidency if he recovered Jakarta for Golkar.

As far as can be made out, there were at least two important elements in Ali Murtopo’s campaign. The first was a tightening of the Golkar electoral organization. In the 1977 poll, disappointing Golkar performances often coincided with disunity in the Satuan Karya, Golkar’s campaign units at the local level, where, for example, the head of the local neighborhood association (RW) was replaced by a more prominent individual who happened to be locally resident. In 1977, moreover, the governor of Jakarta, Ali Sadikin, had reportedly declined to use his position to favor Golkar and had kept the regional government and its officials somewhat removed from the campaign. In 1982, by contrast, the Satuan Karya organization was considerably tightened and, with the more pliable Tjokropranolo as governor, the Jakarta administration associated itself closely with Golkar. Voting for the opposition, therefore, did not simply represent disenchantment with Golkar but was given a tinge of disloyalty to the state.

The second element in Ali Murtopo’s campaign was a successful attempt to win “new” votes, that is, voters who had not before cast votes in a national election. In the otherwise high voting turnout of 1955, Jakarta was conspicuous for its low turnout—80.6%, the second lowest in the country and well below the national average of 87.6%. In 1971 the turnout in Jakarta rose to nearly 88%, but was by far the lowest in the country (national average 94%). The region remained below the national

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average in 1977 with 88.5%, but in 1982 it exceeded the national average for the first time, reaching 91.7% (national average 90.8%).

This shift is all the more important in view of the unofficial so-called Golput (Golongan Putih, White Group) campaign, which urged voters to cast blank ballots as a sign of dissatisfaction with the regulations and restrictions surrounding the elections. Golput was never likely to win more than a small following, and of course it is impossible to judge how many of the votes recorded as invalid were in fact deliberately cast as blank by Golput supporters and how many of those who did not vote did so for political reasons, but both the percentage and the absolute number of invalid and non-votes declined. This is particularly remarkable when one considers that the size of the electorate had greatly increased by the enfranchisement of the 18 to 20 year old group. As a result of this influx of new voters, all the contestants in Jakarta (except Golput) recorded significant increases in absolute numbers of votes. Thanks, however, to the efforts of Ali Murtopo, it was Golkar that won the lion’s share of these new electors.

Aside from Golkar’s targeting of specific problems, the public election campaign also contributed to the Golkar victory. Although there are numerous restrictions on many aspects of a campaign, from the selection of candidates to the choice of slogans, an election campaign in Jakarta can still be a lively and unpredictable affair. Campaigning began officially on March 15 and continued for six weeks until April 28 with a “quiet period” of seven days before the actual polling. Contestants were permitted to hold mass rallies and were given time on television and radio to put forth their points of view. They also plastered Jakarta with millions of campaign posters and distributed T-shirts to supporters bearing one of the approved campaign slogans, together with the appropriate party symbol. Golkar’s symbol features a waringin (banyan) tree, the PPP’s the Ka’bah (a principal object of Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca), and the PDI’s a banteng (wild bull).

The scope of the campaign was limited by the fact that contestants were not permitted to question the broad outlines of state policy, but could only discuss its implementation. The opposition parties, therefore, had to center their campaigns on style rather than on substance, while Golkar could expect that the substance of its achievements would speak for itself.

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5. Allegations have also been made of malpractice by the electoral commission, principally concerning failure to send voting invitations to known PPP supporters. Although this may well have occurred, it appears unlikely to have been a major element in the Golkar victory.
Golkar sought to portray itself as the safe candidate, promising in particular continued economic development. Golkar posters bore such slogans as “A Golkar victory means a continuation of development,” “With Golkar, education will improve,” and simply “Golkar brings prosperity.”

Against this, the PPP campaign stressed the party’s Muslim character. PPP posters read “Islam is my religion, the Ka’bah is my vote.” And it was religion that formed the basis of the party’s appeal in its rallies, though the presence of Rhoma Irama, the “King of Dangdut” (a style of popular music in Jakarta) at rallies no doubt helped to draw attention. Rhoma Irama also contributed to the campaign with a hit song called “Indonesia” featuring lyrics sharply critical of corruption and inequalities in the distribution of wealth, and a refrain that ran: “The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer.”

Golkar’s sense of vulnerability to the Muslim appeal was shown in its repeated claims that Golkar was a party for all, including Muslims. There were posters that read simply “Golkar: fortress of Pancasila,” referring to the five principles of the state, the first of which, *Ketuhanan* (Belief in God) is generally taken as a statement of religious belief and tolerance. But alongside these were others in Jakarta slang putting the point more explicitly: “Don’t get it wrong—the majority of Muslims are in Golkar.” The government organization also sought to make unofficial capital out of the fact that voting procedure involved punching a hole in the chosen party’s electoral symbol on the ballot paper, with the suggestion, spread by word of mouth, the punching a hole in the Ka’bah was an impious act.

While Golkar sought to push into the PPP’s home ground, the PPP attempted to draw support from the government’s principal voting base, the civil service. Since the 1977 elections, the government has enforced the principle of “monoloyalty,” under which civil servants are obliged through membership in the civil service corps, Korpri, to join the campaign on behalf of Golkar. Although voting itself is secret, the government’s expectation that civil servants will also vote for Golkar in the election is enforced by the fact that votes of government officials are cast and counted in their offices. The demand for monoloyalty has been made frequently and publicly by the Indonesian government, and in the course of the election campaign it was explicitly repeated. Ali Murtopo described any civil servant who failed to support Golkar as a “traitor.” The PPP’s counterattack could not take place openly, for monoloyalty was not one of the authorized issues of the campaign. The party nonethe-

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6. The conviction, after the election, of a student for writing “Hang Suharto” on his ballot paper (reported in *The Australian*, December 10, 1982) indicates the government’s willingness and ability to keep track of individual voting behavior, despite claims by the election’s organizers that the poll was “direct, general, free and secret.”
TABLE 2 Election Results by District, Compared with Number of Haji

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Total number of voters, 1982</th>
<th>PPP</th>
<th>Golkar</th>
<th>PDI</th>
<th>Number of haji per thousand voters, 1973–1976</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>710,032</td>
<td>37.39%</td>
<td>48.10%</td>
<td>14.51%</td>
<td>6.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>470,215</td>
<td>37.48</td>
<td>43.81</td>
<td>18.71</td>
<td>3.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>593,958</td>
<td>37.23</td>
<td>48.54</td>
<td>14.23</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>666,091</td>
<td>40.74</td>
<td>43.88</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>8.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>717,201</td>
<td>43.98</td>
<td>38.03</td>
<td>17.99</td>
<td>12.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Suara Karya (Jakarta), June 5, 1982; and Monografi Daerah Khumus Ibu Kota Jakarta I (Jakarta: Proyek Pengembangan Media Kebudayaan, Ditjen Kebudayaan, Departemen P & K, 1977?), pp. 79–80. NOTE: Given the disparity in years, these figures can give no more than a rough indication of the strength of religious adherence in different parts of the city. It is also true that the number of haji may reflect other factors as well as piety, notably wealth.

less put its point of view in unofficial slogans painted on walls around the city: “There is no law that says civil servants must support Golkar,” “PPP: the party for civil servants,” and “The duty of civil servants is to serve the state, not particular groups. Therefore, vote PPP.”

It was, however, the youth groups attached to all three parties that gave the campaign a sense of passion. There is a high, though undetermined, rate of unemployment and underemployment among Jakarta youth, and this provided each of the contestants with a large campaign team eager to try something more exciting than hanging around street corners. It was these youth presumably who painted three slogans on the edge of the road in Jalan Thamrin near the Hotel Indonesia roundabout, one of Jakarta’s busiest intersections: “PPP anti corruption,” “PPP anti force,” “PPP anti terror.” They were almost certainly responsible, too, for slogans such as “PPP, my sweet black darling” and “Jakarta boys who aren’t mad vote PDI.” At the local level, these youth groups played a key role in ensuring that the opposition message was heard, and they provided the driving force for the numerous election rallies.

Election rallies are the most exuberant exception to the otherwise rather restricted electoral atmosphere in Indonesia and recall the political turmoil of the Sukarno years. The contestants not only held numerous small election rallies in most districts, but also staged street parades and mass rallies, notably in Banteng Square in central Jakarta, one of the two or three open spaces in central Jakarta that can accommodate rallies.
drawing hundreds of thousands of people. It was there on March 18, three days after a PPP mass rally in the same place, that a Golkar rally erupted into violence in which an indeterminate number of people died, city buses were burned, and nearby shops looted. The violence was eventually pacified by army units. Although the disturbance allegedly began when individuals attending the rally shouted out “Long live the Ka'bah!,” the government announced that none of those responsible for the violence were connected with any of the contestants. They were, it was said, simply criminals. The government, however, blacked out much news of the rally and subsequently banned the news magazine Tempo for its coverage of the event.

The election rallies served, as they normally do, to strengthen the resolve of the party faithful and to draw the attention of the uncommitted, but the violence associated with the campaign probably worked primarily to the advantage of the government. Golkar, of course, is the party, if not of law and order, at least of security and order, and the liveliness of the election campaign almost certainly rallied Golkar supporters precisely because it recalled the insecurity and disorder of the Sukarno years. The government, moreover, has become adept at crisis management, to the point where crisis management has become an important weapon in its political arsenal. Like the airline pilot in a British comedy sketch long ago who assured his passengers in the middle of a peaceful flight, “There is absolutely no cause for alarm; the left wing is not on fire,” the government characteristically makes statements which create an undefined sense of crisis and portray the government as the only force capable of saving the day.

Given that the election was not intended to change the government, its role as a priori proof of Indonesia's democracy was emphasized. The description of the event as a “pesta demokrasi” (“festival of democracy”) and the curious phrase “Kita mensukseskan Pemilu 1982” (“We make a success of the 1982 elections”) reflected a strong ritual element in the poll. The impression was created that the election was not really a contest but a joint endeavor, an important ceremony that irresponsible elements were trying to disrupt, a time of trial after which everyone could get back to his or her proper work without distraction of politics. To the extent that this impression was successfully put across, the seriousness of the opposition challenge was denied.

Thus, it is possible to identify many of the factors that led to the Golkar victory. The 1982 election result, however, has to be seen in the light of the question of what percentage of the vote was ever in question. In every electorate there are voters who will support their party regardless of its policies or performance. In the 1982 elections, it was clear that the two principal contestants, Golkar and the PPP, depended on two
solid constituencies for the bulk of their votes: the civil service in the case of Golkar, and the more orthodox Islamic sections of the Muslim community in the case of the PPP.

As in many capital cities, there is in Jakarta a polarization of the government and nongovernment sectors of the population. As immigrants or the descendants of immigrants detached from their original societies, those inhabitants of Jakarta who do not work for the government have little of the traditional loyalty to the state that is found in, say, Central Java or among the Malays. Not only is this group not easily manipulated by governments, but it has loyalties of its own, especially to Jakarta's network of mosques, Islamic schools, and other Muslim institutions. The kyai and ulama (religious teachers and scholars) who run these institutions are well placed to deliver votes to the PPP. In every region where the PPP has performed well, this cadre of religious organization has been crucial. The PPP's constituency supports it largely out of religious rather than directly political conviction. Gauging religious conviction, of course, is difficult, but it is interesting that Southern Jakarta, the sole district in Jakarta where the PPP defeated Golkar, also consistently records each year the highest number of haji (pilgrims to Mecca) per thousand population of all districts in Jakarta.

The cadre of religious organization creates a stability and reliability in the PPP vote in Jakarta, and the stability of voting patterns, not only in Jakarta but throughout the country, is in fact more striking than the swings. Golkar has marginally increased its vote at each election since 1971 and the PDI has progressively lost support, but the general pattern suggests that Golkar is close to the limits of the support it can win without radically changing its tactics. Within this pattern there occur slightly sharper shifts from region to region. In 1982, for example, there was a swing of 4.3% to the PDI in West Java and of 4.2% against Golkar in Aceh, both comparable with the swing—4.26% against the PPP, 5.72% to Golkar—in Jakarta. It happens that a swing of these dimensions in Jakarta means the difference between a moral victory—a majority or at least a plurality of votes—and defeat for the PPP and Golkar, hence the enormous energy that went into the election campaign. The evidence is, however, that the contestants were fighting over a narrow range of percentage points that would be less important if they did not lie so close to 50%.

It is unlikely, therefore, that the moral victory of the PPP in 1977 or that of Golkar in 1982 has much bearing on the possibility of extraconstitutional, mass urban opposition to the Suharto government. Such opposition depends on many things—organization, awareness, a sense of momentum, and above all on the sense of being in a vast majority and on scenting fear and defeat on the breath of the opponent. The
Islamic community in Indonesia, as distinct from the more nominal Muslims, is and recognizes itself to be a minority in the country. It recognizes further that any attempt to impose an Islamic state on Indonesia would involve a long political and perhaps even military struggle against Christians and less fundamentalist Muslims. Very small groups of strongly fundamentalist Muslims have carried this conclusion to a logical end, launching an armed struggle against the institutions of the Republic in the name of an Islamic state. Most members of the Islamic community, however, have accepted this struggle as being too costly and too uncertain of success. And they have no special interest in working for any other radical change in the present system with which they have reached a kind of modus vivendi—acting as a prickly defender of Islamic interests (in the drafting of the Marriage Bill of 1973, for instance) without seriously trying to expand the frontiers of Islamic influence in national affairs. Victory in Jakarta, or anywhere else it can be had, strengthens the PPP in this role but does not mean that the party is likely to break out of the system.

Conclusion

The PPP victory in 1977 focused attention on electoral politics in the capital, in the search for clues to the direction of events in Indonesia. Attention was drawn in particular to the possibility of extraconstitutional mass opposition to the Suharto government. Golkar's recovery in 1982 suggested in turn that waves of opposition were either abating or being quelled. A closer investigation of the 1982 election suggests rather that Golkar and the government made skillful use of the election campaign to capture a plurality of votes in the city. It indicates, however, that voting patterns in the capital are relatively stable and reflect the existence of large communities with firm allegiances to one side or the other. This in turn suggests that a PPP victory in Jakarta, whether in 1977 or perhaps in the future, does not herald large-scale opposition to the government outside the institutions it has permitted.