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Fresh Wind or Business as Usual: What the Indonesian Elections Mean for Dutch-Indonesian Relations

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Key takeaways

After Jokowi's ten-year presidency, Indonesia will elect a new head of state on 14 February 2024. Due to Indonesia's potential as a crucial player in the Indo-Pacific, European states such as the Netherlands should pay attention to the election outcomes.

The new president is unlikely to shift the country's foreign policies in a radically new direction. All three candidates embrace an independent foreign policy for Indonesia under the long-standing slogan 'free and active'. That is, they want to carve out a strong regional position guided by Indonesian interests and not aligned with specific countries.

In regards to their support for democracy and human rights, the candidates differ more substantially. Prabowo Subianto notably has a patchy human rights record dating back to his role as an army general during the Suharto dictatorship. Whereas Anies Baswedan has also been criticised for past actions, Ganjar Pranowo displays the most support for democratic values.

Based on projections at the time of writing, it is most likely that Prabowo will become the next president who is set to take office in October 2024.

»Whether the new Indonesian president will facilitate **deeper ties with the Netherlands** depends less on his **stance on foreign policy**, and more on his **support for democracy and human rights**.«

1. Introduction

On 14 February 2024, Indonesia will elect a new president, as well as a parliament. Since the current president, Joko Widodo (Jokowi), has exhausted his two-term limit, political change is guaranteed. This could swing the country's domestic and foreign policies in several directions. The new president is set to take office in October 2024, with three contenders for the position: Prabowo Subianto, Ganjar Pranowo, and Anies Baswedan. Despite their geographical distance from Indonesia, European states, such as the Netherlands, should seriously consider the election outcomes. Indonesia has the potential to be a crucial player in the Indo-Pacific, and the emerging Sino-American tensions.

Cooperation with Indonesia is important for Europe for several reasons. The country is located at the centre of multiple chokepoints, including the Straits of Malacca, Ombai and Lombok, and close to the South China Sea. Furthermore, it is a major (and rising) economic force in the Indo-Pacific, and the fourth most populated country in the world.¹ Through its leading role in ASEAN, which dates back to the organisation's creation in 1967, Indonesia also shapes political developments in the region.² It is usually regarded as the "first among equals"³ within ASEAN, and thus viewed by Europe as a crucial partner. All three factors make close ties with Indonesia important for ensuring maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. Yet, cooperation is not certain. Indonesia so far refrains from clearly aligning itself with either China or the United States in the competition between the two powers. This makes it an ambiguous interlocutor for Europe.

The Netherlands and its European partners have high stakes in the Indo-Pacific as the majority of key maritime trade routes passes through the region. Transiting many narrow straits, including the ones mentioned above, this flow of goods can easily be disrupted and is currently at risk from, among others, piracy, terrorism, climate-related events, and, most urgently, the intensifying Sino-American competition.⁴ Like other European states, the Netherlands is heavily dependent on trade from the region, but has limited capabilities to protect its interests directly. As a result, it has to forge strategic partnerships with Indo-Pacific countries.

While the need for such partnerships is recognised by European policymakers and academics alike, they focus most of their attention on Europe's existing close partners in the Indo-Pacific such as Australia, Japan, and South Korea. These regional powers are obvious choices for collaboration

¹ Felix Heiduk, "Indonesia in ASEAN. Regional Leadership between Ambition and Ambiguity," SWP Research Paper (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, April 2016), 5, https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/research_papers/2016RP06_hdk.pdf; "Population, Total - Indonesia," World Bank Open Data, accessed January 3, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org>.

² Christopher B. Roberts and Erlina Widyaningsih, "Indonesian Leadership in ASEAN: Mediation, Agency and Extra-Regional Diplomacy," in *Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, and Regional Order*, ed. Christopher Roberts, Ahmad Habir, and Leonard Sebastian, Critical Studies of the Asia-Pacific (Houndsmill, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 264.

³ Heiduk, "Indonesia in ASEAN. Regional Leadership between Ambition and Ambiguity," 5; Roberts and Widyaningsih, "Indonesian Leadership in ASEAN: Mediation, Agency and Extra-Regional Diplomacy," 264.

⁴ Benedetta Girardi, Paul van Hooft, and Giovanni Cisco, "What the Indo-Pacific Means to Europe: Trade Value, Chokepoints, and Security Risks" (The Hague, Netherlands: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), November 2023), <https://hcss.nl/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/What-the-Indo-Pacific-means-to-Europe-Trade-Value-Chokepoints-and-Security-Risks-HCSS-2023.pdf>.

because they share core values with Europe as consolidated liberal democracies.⁵ Their support for these values is demonstrated by their solidarity with the US and Europe in the wake of the war in Ukraine.⁶

Many other Southeast Asian states, however, have the potential to be regional partners because of their capacities and shared interests with Europe. They are located along major sea lines of communication and critical chokepoints and thus have both influence over their security and a stake in maintaining their openness. Yet, they are not always aligned with European norms and beliefs and are thus not natural partners; they might actively support the regional order that Europe pursues together with other Indo-Pacific states – or withhold their support. As outlined above, Indonesia is key among this group of states, and it is hence in Europe's and the Netherlands' interest to pay attention to the country's political developments.

Current Dutch-Indonesian relations are relatively well-developed – especially in the area of infrastructure cooperation – and Indonesia is one of the Netherlands' most important partners in the Indo-Pacific. The Netherlands provides assistance to the Indonesian Supreme Court and previously had a rule of law programme in Indonesia.⁷ It also offers support on water management, and agriculture.⁸ Trade relations between the countries are slightly less developed, but remain relatively strong. The Netherlands is Indonesia's main European investor, and recognised it as one of its 25 priority markets.⁹ Moreover, the European Union and Indonesia are involved in negotiations for a free trade agreement.¹⁰ In the military domain, however, Dutch-Indonesian relations are generally weak. The only exception are arms sales: Indonesia was, until 2017, the Netherlands' second largest import market for arms, and the countries have a memorandum of understanding to cooperate on the production of defence technology.¹¹ Ties between Indonesia and the Netherlands thus already exist on several levels, but will be further shaped by the new president.

⁵ "Democracy Report 2023: Defiance in the Face of Autocratisation," Democracy Report (Gothenburg: Varieties of Democracy, 2023), 40–41, https://v-dem.net/documents/30/V-dem_democracyreport2023_highres.pdf.

⁶ "Australia's Provision of Military Assistance to Ukraine," Australian National Audit Office, June 29, 2023, <https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/australias-provision-military-assistance-to-ukraine/>; "Japan FM Says Tokyo 'Determined' to Support Ukraine," *Voice of America*, January 7, 2024, <https://www.voanews.com/a/japan-fm-says-tokyo-determined-to-support-ukraine/7430121.html>; "South Korea Increases Ukraine Aid to \$394 Mln for 2024," *Reuters*, August 29, 2023, sec. Europe, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/south-korea-increases-ukraine-aid-394-mln-2024-2023-08-29/>.

⁷ "Indonesia," Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed September 7, 2023, <https://dutchdevelopmentresults.nl/2019/countries/indonesia>.

⁸ "Indonesia and the Netherlands: Solving Global Challenges Together by Finding Smart Solutions for a Sustainable Future," Kingdom of the Netherlands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 29, 2020), <https://www.netherlandsandyou.nl/latest-news/news/2020/06/29/indonesia-and-the-netherlands-solving-global-challenges-together>; Mark Rutte, "Speech by Mark Rutte at the Indonesia-Netherlands Business Dinner," Government of the Netherlands (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, November 22, 2013), <https://www.government.nl/documents/speeches/2013/11/21/speech-by-mark-rutte-at-the-indonesia-netherlands-business-dinner>.

⁹ "Policy Document 2022: Do What We Do Best. A Strategy for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation" (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, June 2022); Rutte, "Speech by Mark Rutte at the Indonesia-Netherlands Business Dinner."

¹⁰ "EU-Indonesia Free Trade Agreement," European Commission, accessed January 5, 2024, https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/indonesia/eu-indonesia-agreement_en.

¹¹ "Dutch Arms Exports and SIPRI Ranking," Stop Wapenhandel, June 4, 2018, <https://stopwapenhandel.org/dutch-arms-exports-and-sipri-ranking/>; "Indonesia; Netherlands: Defense Cooperation Agreement Signed," web page, Library of Congress, February 7, 2014, <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2014-02-07/indonesia-netherlands-defense-cooperation-agreement-signed/>.

This snapshot will therefore examine each of the three candidates for the Indonesian presidential elections and outline (1) their support for democratic values, and (2) their vision for Indonesia's foreign policy and how this relates to Dutch-Indonesian ties. Subsequently, it will discuss the candidates' chance of winning the elections. The first criterion investigates how much the candidates' past behaviour and current stances converge with the support for democracy and human rights regarded as fundamental in the Netherlands. Arguably, bilateral collaboration would be more difficult to conduct and justify if Indonesia were led by a president at odds with such values. The sections on foreign policy then analyse how open each of the candidates is towards bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and where they plan to concentrate their efforts. This will show whether the approach is compatible with the Netherlands. For a candidate's likelihood of winning the elections, finally, the paper looks at the current ranking in election surveys, the resulting chance of passing the first election round, and the support that the candidate might receive in a run-off election.

Of course, in Indonesia, like most other countries, domestic issues typically dominate elections while foreign policy receives less attention.¹² This makes it significantly more difficult to find information that can be related to bilateral ties with the Netherlands. Furthermore, this policy brief does not analyse the potential result of the parliamentary elections that will be held at the same time. As the composition of the legislature will constrain or empower the new president in making policies, it will also determine Indonesian-Dutch relations going forward. It is therefore all the more important that Dutch policymakers follow internal developments in Indonesia to be aware of the strategic direction and priorities of the country.

The next sections will elaborate on the three candidates and their stances on democratic values and foreign policy.

¹² Noto Suoneto, "Where Does Ganjar Pranowo Stand on Indonesia's Foreign Policy?," *The Diplomat*, November 20, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/11/where-does-ganjar-pranowo-stand-on-indonesias-foreign-policy/>.

2. Prabowo Subianto: Tough decisions ahead for the Netherlands

This section looks at the first candidate in the presidential elections, Prabowo Subianto. He is the current Minister of Defence in Jokowi's second government, and chairman of the nationalist Gerindra party.¹³ Before his political career, he was a general in the Indonesian armed forces.¹⁴ Prabowo's vice presidential candidate is Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the 36-year-old son of the current president, and mayor of Surakarta city.¹⁵ The next two sections will analyse the candidate pair's support for democratic values and foreign policy preferences.

2.1. Support for democratic values

Of the three candidates, Prabowo Subianto's stance on human rights and democracy seems the least compatible with the Dutch government's approach. This is due to both his actions under the Suharto dictatorship, and his more recent behaviour. During the dictatorship, the candidate was the leader of Indonesia's Special Forces Command, Kopassus.¹⁶ Relating to this role, several accusations of human rights violations have been levelled at him.¹⁷ In 1976, he was stationed in what was then East Timor to "quell the secessionist movement;"¹⁸ he is also alleged to have played a role in the 1983 Kraras massacre there. From 1997 to 1998, Prabowo is furthermore said to have been "involved in the forced disappearance of pro-democracy activists."¹⁹ His actions in Timor-Leste resulted in a travel ban to the United States, which was only lifted in 2022 so that he could travel to the United States as Indonesian Minister of Defence.²⁰ Furthermore, Prabowo was eventually dishonourably discharged from the armed forces following accusations that he had planned a coup in 1998.²¹

¹³ Nadia Bulkin, "Indonesia's Political Parties," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 24, 2013, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/10/24/indonesia-s-political-parties-pub-53414>; Julia Lau and Made Supriatma, "The Race Is On! Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Candidates Assessed," Fulcrum, November 9, 2023, <https://fulcrum.sg/the-race-is-on-indonesias-2024-presidential-candidates-assessed/>.

¹⁴ Lau and Supriatma, "The Race Is On! Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Candidates Assessed."

¹⁵ "Prabowo-Gibran Ticket Register 2024 Candidacy," *The Jakarta Post*, October 25, 2023, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2023/10/25/prabowo-gibran-ticket-register-2024-candidacy.html>.

¹⁶ Aswin Lin and Deasy Simandjuntak, "Prabowo as Defence Minister: From Problematic Purchases to Provocative Proposals," Fulcrum, September 12, 2023, <https://fulcrum.sg/prabowo-as-defence-minister-from-problematic-purchases-to-provocative-proposals/>.

¹⁷ "Candidate Profile: Prabowo Subianto," *The Jakarta Post*, accessed December 21, 2023, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2023/11/24/candidate-profile-prabowo-subianto.html>.

¹⁸ "Candidate Profile: Prabowo Subianto."

¹⁹ "Candidate Profile: Prabowo Subianto."

²⁰ "Candidate Profile: Prabowo Subianto."

²¹ "Candidate Profile: Prabowo Subianto."

More recently, the candidate has used controversial tactics in his political campaigns: in the presidential elections in 2014, he appeared as a “rabble-rousing nationalist”²² before seeking the “support of some hard-line Muslim groups,”²³ and polarising the election climate in 2019. Eventually, his failure to acknowledge his defeat in 2019 incited protests and riots, in which people were killed.²⁴ In the current elections, Prabowo’s choice of president Jokowi’s son as his running mate is controversial. Next to allegations that this creates a new political dynasty around the outgoing president, it is criticised that a dubious court case adjudicated by Jokowi’s brother-in-law allowed Gibran’s appointment despite age regulations that state he is too young.²⁵ All these factors cast a shadow on Prabowo’s commitment to democratic values, and human rights. To the Dutch political system and foreign policy, the protection of these two elements is, however, crucial. Prabowo’s past tendencies might thus complicate cooperation with the Netherlands under his presidency.

At the same time, several points in Prabowo’s party programme are directed towards strengthening human rights and democracy, and fighting corruption. For instance, he advocates for the “protection of and respect for the rights of each individual,”²⁶ especially those of disadvantaged population groups, and the strengthening of press freedom, and aims to advance gender equality. It remains to be seen to what extent Prabowo would turn these promises into reality as president.

2.2. Foreign policy

When it comes to foreign policy, Prabowo’s track record as defence minister is equally ambiguous. On the one hand, he seems interested in expanding Indonesia’s ties with European countries. For instance, he “signed an MoU [Memorandum of Understanding] on technology transfer”²⁷ with France, and purchased Dassault Rafale fighter jets. On the other hand, he seemingly took the side of Russia in the war in Ukraine; in 2023, Prabowo proposed a “peace plan”²⁸ for Ukraine at the Shangri-La Dialogue, under which both sides would withdraw from the conflict zone. This proposal was heavily criticised by European representatives at the conference.²⁹

Leading up to the elections, Prabowo has supported Indonesia’s ‘free and active’ foreign policy, and advocated for an independent position in the region. In his election programme, he pledges to maintain bilateral relations with other countries, as well as engagement in multilateral fora.³⁰ This likely bodes well for Indonesian-Dutch relations. However, while he also states that ties should be

²² Sana Jaffrey, “Indonesia’s 2024 Presidential Election Could Be the Last Battle of the Titans,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 5, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/10/05/indonesia-s-2024-presidential-election-could-be-last-battle-of-titans-pub-90711>.

²³ “Candidate Profile: Prabowo Subianto.”

²⁴ “Gerindra Party,” *The Jakarta Post*, accessed December 21, 2023, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/party-central/gerindra>.

²⁵ Lau and Supriatma, “The Race Is On! Indonesia’s 2024 Presidential Candidates Assessed”; “Prabowo-Gibran Ticket Register 2024 Candidacy.”

²⁶ Translated from Indonesian: “perlindungan dan penghargaan terhadap hak setiap individu”; “Visi, Misi Dan Program. Calon Presiden Dan Wakil Presiden 2024-2029: H. Prabowo Subianto Gibran Rakabuming Raka,” 2023, 34, 39, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vrZZSqRZwi4MBLRFwswX9IRgWqTdqstM/view?usp=embed_facebook.

²⁷ Lin and Simandjuntak, “Prabowo as Defence Minister.”

²⁸ Lin and Simandjuntak.

²⁹ Lin and Simandjuntak.

³⁰ “Visi, Misi Dan Program. Calon Presiden Dan Wakil Presiden 2024-2029: H. Prabowo Subianto Gibran Rakabuming Raka,” 43.

established “with all major powers”³¹ with a view to furthering Indonesian interests, Prabowo does not clearly align with either the United States or China.³² Additionally, he places strong emphasis on the need for Indonesia to gain full independence and self-sufficiency in the international community.³³ Although this does not necessarily imply that the candidate would reject further international cooperation, it might become more difficult for the Netherlands to strengthen its ties with Indonesia as the latter pursues a broad range of partnerships. Prabowo furthermore takes a hard power approach in the Indo-Pacific, and focuses mainly on upscaling Indonesia’s defence equipment.³⁴ While this could further Dutch-Indonesian cooperation on defence technology, Indonesia’s pool of defence partners is varied. Finally, in a speech he gave in September, Prabowo discussed Indonesia’s colonial history, warning that the country should never again be dominated by a foreign power.³⁵ Relations with the Netherlands – Indonesia’s former colonising power – might thus not receive much further attention.

³¹ Resty Woro Yuniar, “Indonesia Election: Where Joko Widodo’s Would-Be Successors Stand on US-China Ties, Defence and the Economy,” *South China Morning Post*, October 28, 2023, sec. This Week in Asia, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3239472/indonesia-election-where-joko-widodos-would-be-successors-stand-us-china-ties-defence-and-economy>.

³² Yuniar.

³³ “Visi, Misi Dan Program. Calon Presiden Dan Wakil Presiden 2024-2029: H. Prabowo Subianto Gibran Rakabuming Raka,” 41.

³⁴ The Jakarta Post, “A Defensive Debate,” *The Jakarta Post*, January 8, 2024, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2024/01/08/a-defensive-debate.html>.

³⁵ Yuniar, “Indonesia Election: Where Joko Widodo’s Would-Be Successors Stand on US-China Ties, Defence and the Economy.”

3. Ganjar Pranowo: Potential for enhancing cooperation based on shared values

Following Prabowo Subianto in the polls is Ganjar Pranowo whose support for democratic values and foreign policy preferences will be discussed in the next sections. Until 2023, Ganjar was the governor of Central Java.³⁶ He was nominated for the presidential elections by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle. Although this is Jokowi's party, the candidate has not received substantial support from the current president. Ganjar's running mate is Mahfud MD, a former academic, Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court, and minister in different portfolios, most recently for Political, Legal and Security Affairs under Jokowi.³⁷

3.1. Support for democratic values

Of the three candidates, Ganjar seems most aligned with the Netherlands in terms of his stance on democracy and human rights. He is the only one that has not committed actions calling into question his support for liberal values. In his electoral programme, he emphasises the fight against corruption, and advocates for strengthening democracy and human rights.³⁸ This includes, for instance, "freedom of opinion, expression, and association,"³⁹ and minority rights.

3.2. Foreign policy

A Ganjar-Mahfud government will likely strengthen Indonesia's external relations. In their election manifesto, they recognise different external challenges that Indonesia faces, and acknowledge the country's role in the Indo-Pacific due to its strategic positioning along major maritime trade routes and chokepoints. Because of this, the candidate pair argues, Indonesia should adopt a stronger position and become a "World Maritime Axis."⁴⁰ Ganjar therefore advocates for more bilateral and multilateral cooperation.⁴¹ Concrete proposals in this vein are the reinforcement of maritime connections, the protection of the marine environment, and the establishment of a strong maritime military force.⁴² On maritime security, Ganjar-Mahfud encourage regular and institutionalised

³⁶ Lau and Supriatma, "The Race Is On! Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Candidates Assessed."

³⁷ Lau and Supriatma.

³⁸ "Calon Presiden & Calon Wakil Presiden Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD. 2024-2029," 2023, <https://visimisiganjarmahfud.id/#galeriSection>.

³⁹ Translation from Indonesian: "kebebasan berpendapat, berekspresi, berserikat"; "Calon Presiden & Calon Wakil Presiden Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD. 2024-2029."

⁴⁰ "Penjelasan Visi Dan Misi. Calon Presiden & Calon Wakil Presiden Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD. 2024-2029," 2023, 8–10, <https://visimisiganjarmahfud.id/assets/docs/Buku-Penejelasan-Visi-Misi-Ganjar-Mahfud.pdf?v=1>.

⁴¹ "Calon Presiden & Calon Wakil Presiden Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD. 2024-2029."

⁴² "Penjelasan Visi Dan Misi. Calon Presiden & Calon Wakil Presiden Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD. 2024-2029," 18.

monitoring.⁴³ They also intend to strengthen the Indonesian diplomatic corps, and increase the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁴ Furthermore, they promise to modernise Indonesia's defence technology.⁴⁵ These proposals suggest an opening for deeper relations with the Netherlands: They conform with Dutch policy priorities such as establishing institutionalised mechanisms, and can build upon existing Dutch-Indonesian defence cooperation.

Like Pranowo, Ganjar centrally endorses Indonesia's long-standing concept of a 'free and active' foreign policy. Under this heading, his central aim is to make Indonesia "politically sovereign [and] economically independent."⁴⁶ Indonesia's international ties must conform with this: they must respect state sovereignty, and allow the country to independently take initiatives.⁴⁷ Ganjar refuses, too, to commit to particular partners, arguing that the world must shift from a unipolar to a multipolar one.⁴⁸ In the face of US-China competition in the region, he wants to collaborate with all powers according to Indonesia's interests.⁴⁹ Underlying all this is the fact that the most important determinants for Indonesia's foreign policy are domestic demands and development.⁵⁰ Finally, Ganjar supports an independent Palestine, "based on principles of anti-colonialism and neoimperialism."⁵¹ While these factors do not rule out Dutch-Indonesian cooperation, it could mean that the Netherlands has to accept that Indonesia sets priorities that diverge from the Dutch ones.

⁴³ "Penjelasan Visi Dan Misi. Calon Presiden & Calon Wakil Presiden Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD. 2024-2029," 149.

⁴⁴ Suoneto, "Where Does Ganjar Pranowo Stand on Indonesia's Foreign Policy?"

⁴⁵ "Penjelasan Visi Dan Misi. Calon Presiden & Calon Wakil Presiden Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD. 2024-2029," 145.

⁴⁶ Translation from Indonesian: "berdaulat dalam politik, berdikari dalam ekonomi"; "Visi Dan Misi. Calon Presiden & Calon Wakil Presiden Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD. 2024-2029," 2023, 10, <https://visimisiganjarmahfud.id/assets/docs/Buku-Visi-Misi-Ganjar-Mahfud.pdf?v=1>.

⁴⁷ "Penjelasan Visi Dan Misi. Calon Presiden & Calon Wakil Presiden Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD. 2024-2029," 19; Suoneto, "Where Does Ganjar Pranowo Stand on Indonesia's Foreign Policy?"

⁴⁸ "Penjelasan Visi Dan Misi. Calon Presiden & Calon Wakil Presiden Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD. 2024-2029," 20.

⁴⁹ Suoneto, "Where Does Ganjar Pranowo Stand on Indonesia's Foreign Policy?"

⁵⁰ Suoneto.

⁵¹ Translation from Indonesian: "berdasarkan prinsip anti neokolonialisme dan neoimperialisme"; "Penjelasan Visi Dan Misi. Calon Presiden & Calon Wakil Presiden Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD. 2024-2029," 143.

4. Anies Baswedan: Likely deepening of Dutch-Indonesian cooperation

The final candidate is Anies Baswedan, with his running mate Muhaimin Iskandar. While Anies is not affiliated with any political party and does not currently hold office, he has been politically engaged for some time: after having been the Minister of Education and Culture in Jokowi's first term as president, he was the governor of Jakarta from 2017 to 2022.⁵² He has an academic background as a political scientist.⁵³ The Coalition of Change for Unity, led by the NasDem Party, nominated him for the presidential race.⁵⁴ Muhaimin is the Chairman of the National Awakening Party, a party affiliated with Muslim groups, and with positions close to "moderate Islam."⁵⁵ Below, the pair's support for democratic values and foreign policy ideas will be discussed in turn.

4.1. Support for democratic values

Anies's past behaviour, like that of Prabowo, paints a mixed picture regarding his support for liberal values and human rights. When he ran for governor of Jakarta in 2017, for instance, he engaged in polarising discourse, endorsing an "anti-Christian/anti-Chinese message"⁵⁶ to weaken his opponent.⁵⁷ Former vice president Jusuf Kalla, who backs him in the presidential elections, claims that Anies is the only among the three candidates who is not guilty of corruption.⁵⁸ Yet, he has been subject to allegations of corruption during his time as governor of Jakarta. These claims relate to a project for affordable housing, and "a Formula E race held in Jakarta in June 2022."⁵⁹

In the current presidential election campaign, however, Anies seems committed to tackling corruption and nepotism. His first priority as president would be to dismiss officials who have conflicts of interest in carrying out their duties, and to ensure promotion based on meritocratic

⁵² Lau and Supriatma, "The Race Is On! Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Candidates Assessed."

⁵³ Jaffrey, "Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election Could Be the Last Battle of the Titans."

⁵⁴ "Candidate Profile: Anies Baswedan," *The Jakarta Post*, accessed January 4, 2024, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2023/11/24/candidate-profile-anies-baswedan.html>.

⁵⁵ Bulkin, "Indonesia's Political Parties"; Lau and Supriatma, "The Race Is On! Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Candidates Assessed."

⁵⁶ Lau and Supriatma, "The Race Is On! Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Candidates Assessed."

⁵⁷ Leo Suryadinata, "'Islamisation of Politics' in Indonesia and Malaysia?," FULCRUM, January 12, 2017, <https://fulcrum.sg/islamization-of-politics-in-indonesia-and-malaysia-a-commentary-by-leo-suryadinata/>.

⁵⁸ Achmad Nasrudin Yahya, "JK Sebut Hanya Anies Capres yang Tak Terlibat Korupsi, Dituduh di Kasus Formula E Tidak Terbukti," *Kompas.com*, December 20, 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2023/12/20/19542431/jk-sebut-hanya-anies-capres-yang-tak-terlibat-korupsi-dituduh-di-kasus>.

⁵⁹ Yohanes Sulaiman and Yovinus Yovinus, "Corruption Investigations Unlikely to Disrupt Anies Baswedan's Campaign," *Indonesia at Melbourne*, May 22, 2023, <https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/corruption-investigations-unlikely-to-disrupt-anies-baswedans-campaign/>.

principles in the military, the police, and the civilian bureaucracy.⁶⁰ Specifically, the candidate intends to increase the capacities of the Corruption Eradication Commission, and extend its reach into different regions.⁶¹ One of his points is to involve more women in Indonesia's foreign policy to increase the diversity of perspectives.⁶² Anies's manifesto also contains several references to promoting liberal democracy, such as safeguarding a transparent legal system and the neutrality of elections, and strengthening human rights.⁶³ Overall, Anies's track record with regard to support for democratic values hence seems to be better than Prabowo's, but worse than that of Ganjar.

4.2. Foreign policy

Several aspects of Anies's foreign policy stance seem to encourage greater cooperation with countries such as the Netherlands. Overall, he aims to strengthen diplomatic efforts with partner countries.⁶⁴ Like his contenders, Anies supports the notion of a 'free and active' Indonesian foreign policy, which means that Indonesia should adopt a leading position in the Indo-Pacific.⁶⁵ To do so, the country should assume an active role in international fora such as the G20 or the OECD, and consolidate its leadership within ASEAN.⁶⁶ Among the three candidates, he intends to rely the most on international institutions.⁶⁷ Finally, Anies's manifesto also contains plans to improve the Indonesian armed forces "through technology transfers [and] the acquisition of high-tech defence equipment."⁶⁸ These proposals might engender greater Dutch-Indonesian cooperation because they open Indonesia up to stronger external relations generally, align with the Dutch support of international institutions, and could strengthen the existing cooperation on defence technology between Indonesia and the Netherlands.

Anies furthermore advocates for expanding Indonesia's trade and investment relations with the world. Broadly, he aims to expand the country's economic diplomacy, both bilaterally with the aim to conclude trade agreements, and in international financial institutions.⁶⁹ One aspect of this is to strengthen the portfolio of Indonesian companies abroad.⁷⁰ The candidate also intends to maintain

⁶⁰ Singgih Wiryono and Novianti Setuningsih, "Anies Akan Selesaikan Pejabat yang Punya Konflik Kepentingan jika Terpilih Jadi Presiden," *Kompas.com*, December 21, 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2023/12/21/07524731/anies-akan-selesaikan-pejabat-yang-punya-konflik-kepentingan-jika-terpilih>.

⁶¹ Singgih Wiryono and Krisiandi, "Anies Disebut Ingin Ada Perwakilan KPK di Daerah," *Kompas.com*, December 20, 2023, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2023/12/20/09411051/anies-disebut-ingin-ada-perwakilan-kpk-di-daerah>.

⁶² "Visi, Misi & Program Kerja: Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar," 2023, 77, <https://mmc.tirto.id/documents/2023/10/20/1241-amin-visi-misi-program.pdf>.

⁶³ "Visi, Misi & Program Kerja: Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar," 82, 85–86.

⁶⁴ "Visi, Misi & Program Kerja: Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar," 73.

⁶⁵ "Visi, Misi & Program Kerja: Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar," 73–74.

⁶⁶ Ananda Teresia and Bernadette Christina, "Indonesia Presidential Frontrunner Under Fire as Rivals Attack Defence Plans," *Reuters*, January 8, 2024, sec. Asia Pacific, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesia-presidential-frontrunner-under-fire-rivals-attack-defence-plans-2024-01-08/>; "Visi, Misi & Program Kerja: Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar," 74.

⁶⁷ Post, "A Defensive Debate."

⁶⁸ Translated from Indonesian: "melalui transfer teknologi, akuisisi alutsista berteknologi tinggi"; "Visi, Misi & Program Kerja: Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar," 79.

⁶⁹ "Visi, Misi & Program Kerja: Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar," 74.

⁷⁰ "Visi, Misi & Program Kerja: Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar," 15.

existing and attract more investment to Indonesia.⁷¹ A specific focus lies on Indonesia's ties with developed countries.⁷² This could reinforce existing Dutch-Indonesian trade relations.

Yet, there are limitations to Anies's willingness to interact with the Netherlands. When it comes to defence ties, he mostly envisions to strengthen relations with Indonesia's neighbours, not with Europe.⁷³ In the introduction of his election manifesto, furthermore, he makes ample reference to the Indonesian struggle for independence against the Dutch colonisers, and the oppression of Indonesians under the Netherlands.⁷⁴ The Netherlands might thus not be his first priority in seeking cooperation partners.

⁷¹ "Visi, Misi & Program Kerja: Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar," 31.

⁷² "Visi, Misi & Program Kerja: Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar," 74.

⁷³ "Visi, Misi & Program Kerja: Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar," 75.

⁷⁴ "Visi, Misi & Program Kerja: Indonesia Adil Makmur untuk Semua. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Abdul Muhaimin Iskandar," 3-4.

5. Predictions for the election results

This short analysis shows which direction Indonesian politics can take after Jokowi – although it is unlikely to become too unpredictable following the elections. The candidates have different levels of support for democratic values but similar foreign policy preferences. Having an insight into who is most likely to win the elections will facilitate a better understanding of where Indonesia’s Indo-Pacific engagement might be headed in the coming years. Currently, Prabowo seems highly likely to win the presidential elections. He has consistently led the polls, and his rankings have steadily increased throughout the election campaign.⁷⁵ The candidate furthermore receives support from Indonesia’s current president.⁷⁶ If he manages to obtain more than fifty percent of the vote in the first round, he will be elected president immediately. This is a possibility. Otherwise, there will be a run-off election on 26 June between the two strongest candidates in which Prabowo would currently only need a few percentage points to gain the majority.⁷⁷

While Ganjur-Mahfud’s public support was initially close to that of Prabowo-Gibran, it has decreased in recent months.⁷⁸ This still makes them the second-strongest candidate pair, but they are far less likely than Prabowo-Gibran to win a run-off election. In the event of a second round of voting, the third candidate Anies Baswedan’s Islamist supporters will probably switch to Prabowo, who will then be highly likely to become the next Indonesian president.⁷⁹ There are also predictions that Ganjar will be overtaken in the first round by Anies.⁸⁰ The latter has been trailing the polls since the beginning of the election campaign, but has recently been gaining support.⁸¹ Rumours have, finally, emerged that Ganjar and Anies might form a coalition in the run-off elections to counter Prabowo, but as of yet, it is unclear whether this will materialise.⁸²

Figure 1 presents the outcomes of election polls from September 2023 to January 2024, and Figure 2 visualises the timeline and possible outcome of the elections.

⁷⁵ According to the most recent polls by Indikator from 13-14 January, he is set to receive 48.6% of the vote. “Efek Elektoral Debat Capres: Perbandingan Temuan Survei Tatap Muka Dan Survei Telepon” (Jakarta, Indonesia: Indikator, January 20, 2024), 36, <https://indikator.co.id/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/RILIS-INDIKATOR-20-JANUARI-2024-1.pdf>; “Peta Elektoral Pasca-Debat Capres Dan Cawapres. Periode Survei Telepon: 23-24 Desember 2023” (Jakarta, Indonesia: Indikator, December 26, 2023), <https://indikator.co.id/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/RILIS-INDIKATOR-26-DESEMBER-2023.pdf>.

⁷⁶ “Indonesians Set to Roll the Dice on Prabowo,” East Asia Forum, December 11, 2023, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2023/12/11/indonesians-set-to-roll-the-dice-on-prabowo/>.

⁷⁷ Teresia and Christina, “Indonesia Presidential Frontrunner Under Fire as Rivals Attack Defence Plans.”

⁷⁸ In mid-January, Ganjar-Mahfud’s public support was at 22%. “Efek Elektoral Debat Capres: Perbandingan Temuan Survei Tatap Muka Dan Survei Telepon,” 36; “Peta Elektoral Pasca-Debat Capres Dan Cawapres. Periode Survei Telepon: 23-24 Desember 2023.”

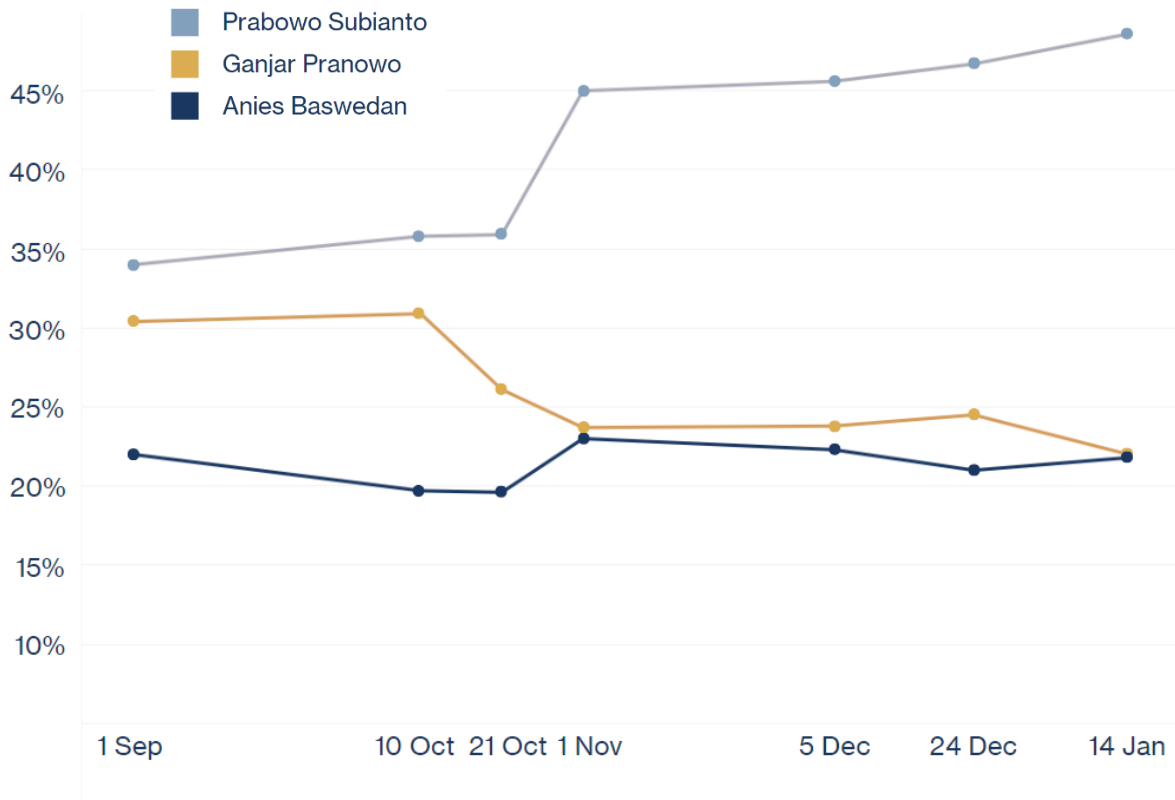
⁷⁹ Jaffrey, “Indonesia’s 2024 Presidential Election Could Be the Last Battle of the Titans.”

⁸⁰ “Indonesia’s Presidential Hopefuls Face Off in Debate,” *Voice of America*, January 7, 2024, <https://www.voanews.com/a/indonesia-s-presidential-hopefuls-face-off-in-debate-/7430544.html>.

⁸¹ In the latest survey, 21.8% of the voters supported him. “Efek Elektoral Debat Capres: Perbandingan Temuan Survei Tatap Muka Dan Survei Telepon,” 36; “Peta Elektoral Pasca-Debat Capres Dan Cawapres. Periode Survei Telepon: 23-24 Desember 2023.”

⁸² “Ganjar Says Coalition Building with Anies for Run-Off ‘Possible,’” *The Jakarta Post*, January 11, 2024, sec. Politics, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/indonesia/2024/01/11/ganjar-says-coalition-building-with-anies-for-run-off-possible.html>.

Figure 1. Election surveys from September to December 2023



Source: Indikator Politik

*The date of the survey in September was not specified. It was thus set for 1 September 2023.

Figure 2. Timeline of the Indonesian elections and likely events



6. Conclusion

Whether the new Indonesian president will facilitate deeper ties with the Netherlands depends less on his stance on foreign policy, and more on his support for democracy and human rights. In fact, in their views on Indonesia's external relations, the three candidates do not diverge substantially from each other or from previous Indonesian practice; all three embrace the country's long-standing 'free and active' foreign policy. Under this heading, they seek a stronger role for Indonesia in the Indo-Pacific. This is to be achieved by extending bilateral and multilateral cooperation with other countries, which offers opportunities for the Netherlands and other European states looking to strengthen the regional order. However, the three candidates are strongly focused on remaining non-aligned in the Sino-American competition and emphasise the need for Indonesia to be independent from foreign interference. The Netherlands should therefore be careful not to impose political conditionalities, and will have to accept Indonesian policy positions that diverge from the Dutch ones. When it comes to foreign policy, it might finally be slightly more difficult for the Netherlands to work with Prabowo because of the allegedly pro-Russian stance he has taken on the war in Ukraine.

There are stronger differences among the candidates regarding their support for democracy and human rights. Prabowo seems least concerned with these values, as demonstrated by his past and more recent undemocratic behaviour, and existing allegations of human rights violations. The candidate most supportive of democratic values appears to be Ganjar, while Anies lies in between the two. In their election programmes, however, all three, including Prabowo, pledge to promote human rights and democracy. These promises are rather general, and it remains to be seen how the elected candidate will turn them into reality. It therefore is crucial for the Netherlands to keep track of internal developments in Indonesia.

Currently, it is highly likely that Prabowo will win the elections, if not in the first round, then in a run-off election against either Ganjar Pranowo or Anies Baswedan. Considering the above conclusions, the Netherlands then faces an uncomfortable choice: whether to work with a president linked to the Indonesian dictatorship, accused of human rights violations, and with a history of polarising Indonesian society, or to distance itself from a crucial partner in the Indo-Pacific.

Close Dutch-Indonesian cooperation in the Indo-Pacific is important for the Netherlands, but not guaranteed. With the Indonesian presidential elections on 14 February 2024, the relationship could be given a new direction. This paper has taken the three candidates in turn to examine how close each of them would be to the Netherlands politically, and which foreign policy preferences they advance. Table 1 presents an overview of the three candidates' stances on foreign policy and political values.

Table 1. Summary of candidates' fit with the Netherlands on support for democracy and foreign policy

	Prabowo Subianto	Ganjar Pranowo	Anies Baswedan
Support for democratic values	Allegations of human rights violations as general under Suharto dictatorship	Polarising campaign tactics Promise to strengthen human rights No history of human rights violations Promise to strengthen human rights and fight corruption	Polarising campaign tactics in past elections Promise to strengthen human rights and fight corruption
Foreign policy	'Free and active' foreign policy Indonesia should engage bilaterally and multilaterally, but assert its independence Differences with Europe over Ukraine	'Free and active' foreign policy Indonesia should strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation Indonesia must act independently and according to its own interests	'Free and active' foreign policy Active role for Indonesia in international fora Strengthening Indonesia's economic ties, specifically with developed countries Reference to oppression under Dutch colonial rule