

**The People's Voice:
Presidential Politics and Voter Perspectives in Indonesia**

Report on a series of Focus Groups
Conducted during May in seven Indonesian provinces
ahead of the July 2004 presidential elections

National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

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Executive Summary

This report, based on 22 focus groups with likely voters conducted during May in seven provinces¹, provides insight into voter perspectives as the presidential campaign begins, and examines how supporters of the various Indonesian political parties think about issues important to them, as well as how they view the five tickets that will appear on the July 5 ballot.

The participants in these focus groups are generally dissatisfied with the state of their country, especially when discussions turn to economic matters (where inflation and unemployment top the list of concerns). Women, especially, are concerned about the rising cost of education – and young voters blame the current leadership for not fulfilling a promise to bring this under control. Yet they are not despairing. Many see multiple signs of progress around them – often talking about construction of roads and shopping malls and infrastructure improvements. There is general satisfaction at the fundamental political transition that has occurred in Indonesia, including steps toward decentralization in key provinces.

Some participants are concerned about the decline in security, locally and nationally, since the start of the reform period in 1998. There are also pockets of discontent about some of the effects of greater freedom, such as more visible conflict and the offensiveness of some popular cultural expressions in the media and in young people's fashions. Yet musings about things that were better in the New Order days of President Soeharto are usually qualified with reference to the corruption and political repression that also characterized those days (even by the youngest voters, and even by Golkar supporters). Many participants believe their country could head in the right direction with better leadership, though few think it has yet gone far in that direction.

Over all of the discussions hovers the dark cloud of “KKN” (the widely used acronym for “corruption, collusion and nepotism”). Indonesians seem to encounter it often, from the nepotism or other “inside connections” widely perceived necessary to obtain a job, to the bribes demanded by government officials for routine administrative transactions or public services.

Personal qualities in a potential president seem to matter much more to voters than policy statements or party affiliation. One of the most striking aspects of the first direct presidential election in Indonesia is the rapid emergence of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as the leading candidate. Yudhoyono – who is often referred to by his initials, “SBY” – is a

¹ The twenty-two groups were stratified by gender, age, socio-economic status, religion, and by party preference. The groups were recruited to be homogenous in order to enhance comfort and frankness, and to facilitate the analysis. All participants voted in the April 5, 2004 parliamentary elections and stated that they are sure to do so on July 5. Ten of the 22 groups consisted of first time voters between the ages of 18 and 21, as these young people may have a substantial impact on the forthcoming elections and the future of Indonesian political culture. Polling Center, an Indonesian public opinion research firm, did the recruiting, according to specifications developed by NDI. Indonesian moderators, trained by Polling Center, led each two-hour discussion, utilizing guidelines drafted by NDI. Each group was monitored by a professional staff person from NDI, and analysis was completed in Washington on the basis of transcripts prepared of each discussion. Groups were conducted in Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, Papua, West Irian Jaya, North Sulawesi and East Kalimantan. For more details on the groups, see Appendix A.

retired Army general who among focus group participants nationwide has established a profile as a person of integrity, quiet competence and “authoritative bearing.” In other words, he seems to embody the personal qualities many Indonesians are looking for to take decisive action to overcome the country’s enduring culture of KKN. Notwithstanding his military background, no doubts are raised about SBY’s ability or inclination to continue consolidation of the political freedoms Indonesians cherish. Further working in Yudhoyono’s favor in terms of a second-round runoff is that he is at this point far and away the most popular second choice of participants who prefer other candidates. Moreover, there is virtually no animus demonstrated toward him, while each of the other candidates has a group of participants who would never consider a vote for him or her.

Other key findings from this research include:

- **Honesty and values, but not necessarily religion, are key issues for many prospective voters.** Participants want their president to be honest above all, because corruption is the burden that is retarding the country’s progress on so many fronts.
- **Most vice-presidential candidates are not well-known.** Four of the five candidates for vice president either are not well known at all, or actually evince negative reactions. Jusuf Kalla, however, is seen both to complement Yudhoyono and to have positive attributes of his own. His wealth persuades many that he would be good on economic policy, where SBY may be weaker, and also that he would not need to resort to corruption, as he has already established his fortune.
- **Despite flaws in election administration, the results are perceived as legitimate.** Participants did not question the overall result of the recent legislative elections. There is, however, a widespread belief that the elections contained administrative flaws.
- **Participants cross party lines to attend campaign rallies and events.** Even among the relatively committed voters included in the focus groups, a large number say they attend the rallies of other parties and welcome campaigners for other parties to their homes. This is in part because they anticipate there may be money, household staples or other small “gifts” to be had. In addition to suggesting that turnout at political events is not a reliable guide to a candidate’s true support, these discussions confirm that “money politics,” the distribution of cash to voters to influence their selection, is very real in 2004.
- **Inclusive cabinets are preferred to partisan governance.** Although a few clearly disagree, particularly in Jakarta, the predominant view among participants is that the parliament and cabinet alike should include members of diverse political parties, as a way to achieve a degree of consensus and harmony in policy-making. There appears to be no appreciation for the potential value of a “loyal opposition” or the development of an alternative slate of political actors to establish an alternative governing program for voters’ future consideration – even among

supporters of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), which has said it aspires to play this role.

- **Women candidates confront familiar obstacles, and Megawati faces specific challenges.** While most participants say, when asked directly, that women are just as qualified as men to hold almost all political offices, there is a lot of rationalization about why so few women are prominent in politics: they are not educated for it; they are too busy with family obligations, etc.

SEVEN LARGEST PARTIES, 2004 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS		
Name	Leader	Notes
Golkar	DPR Speaker Akbar Tandjung, chairman	Secular nationalist party with broad national constituency; former ruling party under President Soeharto
PDI-P (Indonesian Democracy Party–Struggle)	President Megawati Soekarnoputri, chairwoman	Secular nationalist party with broad national constituency
PKB (National Awakening Party)	Former president Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), founder	Inclusive party, but mostly supported by rural Muslims on Java
PPP (Development Unity Party)	Vice-President Hamzah Haz, chairman	Conservative Islamic party, supported by both rural and urban Muslims
PD (Democrat Party)	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), founder	New party
PKS (Prosperous Justice Party)	Hidayat Nurwahid, president	Ran as Justice Party (PK) in 1999; conservative Islamic party, stronger in urban areas; cadre party; campaigned on clean government platform
PAN (National Mandate Party)	MPR Speaker Amien Rais, founder and chairman	Inclusive party, but mostly supported by urban Muslims

Principal Research Findings

The Country's Direction

Participants are not happy with the state of the nation or with their political leaders, but remain hopeful about their country.

The mood of the participants is negative but not bleak. After decrying the sad state of affairs in the country, many participants quickly turn to discussing the many signs of development and modernization they see around them, and they readily acknowledge that they are much more satisfied with the overall political transition – the greater civil liberties they themselves enjoy – than they are with individual politicians.

The gap in social status is very obvious. (Middle aged PKS woman, Bandung)

The direction is right but we haven't arrived there yet. (Young Christian PDS man, Manado)

New roads have been built and the construction is better than what we had before. There are more mosques now and better ones as well. (Middle aged PAN woman, Klaten)

Physically our country is going up in terms of economic development, information technology, but we are decreasing in terms of morality – free sex behavior and such. (Middle aged PKB man, Semarang)

Indonesia is already on the right track but we need more time and we need a process. (Middle aged, Partai Demokrat man, Jakarta)

They remain hopeful that with better leadership than they have experienced things could go well.

The country is not wrong but its leadership. (Middle age urban PD woman, Manado)

Across the board the most consistently cited problem the nation faces is KKN, the intertwined problems of “corruption, collusion and nepotism.” Several people mention that Soeharto and others prominent in his regime were corrupt, or that the phenomenon weakens the economy and undermines development overall. But what most rankles Indonesians is the petty corruption they encounter daily close to home, from the nepotism or other “inside connections” widely perceived necessary to obtain a job, to the bribes demanded by governmental officials for routine administrative transactions or government services. These experiences confirm for many that there is a culture of corruption all around them, especially pernicious in the elite and in civil servants, and that it will require strong action to address this.

I am looking for work, but because of nepotism I am finding it very difficult. It is very difficult to find work without a relative. (Young PDIP woman, Minahasa)

Government employment is like an inheritance. Those having no relation with the office cannot get the job. (Middle aged PD woman, Manado)

Security is also an issue with many faces – from concern about the secessionist efforts in several places, to an enduring sense that the police cannot be counted on to uphold the law, to very personal fears, especially among young women, about their safety on the streets.

Another problem broadly shared is the rising cost of education, along with a sense that families shouldn't be obliged to pay for it.

The education cost is too expensive. I think the regional government has addressed this issue through a scholarship program. (Older blue collar Golkar man, Kutai)

Rather than discuss what the candidates have said they will do about these problems as matters of public policy, or the kind of governing experience that might be useful, voters tend to focus on the personal qualities they think are important for a president to have if he or she is to be successful in confronting these issues. Voters want their president to be honest above all, because KKN is the burden that is retarding the country's progress on so many fronts. And many believe a religiously observant person is more likely to have the necessary integrity, but not everyone agrees.

[Politicians'] honesty is closely related to their faith. (Older working class Golkar man, Kutai)

A president who has religious faith should be against KKN. (Young PDIP woman, Minahasa)

I am in the contrary. Consider the communists; they can be honest. They have no religion. (Middle aged PDIP man, Bandung)

The Candidates

The focus groups also explored impressions of the five candidates for president, and in some cases of their vice-presidential running mates, as they are seen by a broad cross-section of the voting public. (Interestingly, in a country where two of the past three presidents have been vice presidents who succeeded upon the resignation or impeachment of their predecessors, participants evince little interest overall in the vice presidential candidates.) One of the most illuminating parts of the research came from questions that were posed to voters about who are their second and third choices for president, as this provides some insight into alternative candidates that might attract support on election day if a voter sours on his or her first preference, or if voters begin to see a lagging candidate as unviable and perhaps a wasted vote. Moreover, these second choices would be very

important if the presidential contest goes to a September runoff, should no candidate win an absolute majority on July 5.

The broad appeal of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono

Yudhoyono, the well-known retired general who resigned in March from Megawati's cabinet, after serving for three years as Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security², is very favorably viewed by a broad cross section of Indonesians and has virtually no serious negatives in the eyes of participants. Indeed, he is often seen as a person who rises above the usual partisan sniping of politicians.

He has lots of experience, he is polite in whatever he says, and he is powerful. (Middle aged, middle class PKB man, Semarang)

SBY is seen as an authoritative personality who is firm ("tegas"), a man of integrity and competence, neither overly religious nor anti-Muslim. He seems to embody all the qualities that Indonesians feel they have been missing in their last several presidents, who are variously seen as corrupt, flighty, indecisive and/or ineffective.

He's just charismatic. I saw him when he resigned; he seemed to be able to make a decision, he seemed to be straightforward. In addition, he is calm and has an authoritative bearing. (Young PKS woman, Jakarta)

For some, moreover, he is a man in a traditional society where cultural (and to a lesser extent, religious) hesitations about women in leadership positions remain a factor. In almost every group of women comments are made about how handsome he is.

If he becomes president, his picture can be placed at everybody's house because he is a good-looking man. (Middle aged PKS woman, Bandung)

Overall, SBY seems to be viewed as exuding the personal qualities many Indonesians feel they have been missing: decisiveness, fluent communication with the public, and determination to overcome the country's enduring culture of "KKN."

SBY's potential weaknesses, such as his military background, do not pose serious problems

While some participants say that "others," especially university students, will oppose him because of his military background, this history in uniform seems overall to be more of an advantage than a burden to SBY's candidacy. Many Indonesians are looking for a leader with discipline for himself and toughness in dealing with others – on the corruption issue above all. The visibility he gained as Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security, and his frequent televised appearances reporting on progress in dealing with

² He served in the cabinet of Abdurrahman Wahid as Minister of Energy and Mines and then Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security until he resigned. He was then re-appointed to the latter post by Megawati Soekarnoputri when she became president.

insurgencies in restive provinces (a position in which his military bearing and experience were clearly assets), seems to have enhanced his credibility as a competent leader without raising undue anxiety about ties to the military. This experience is also reassuring to voters for whom insecurity is a concern.

I think the university students will reject both Wiranto and SBY because they are military men. (Middle aged, middle class PKB man, Semarang)

I think Bambang's figure is OK. We don't have to see his background as military, but we can see his education background. (Middle aged, upper class PAN man, Balikpapan)

With the experiences in the military, he can create a safe environment. (Middle aged PAN woman, Klaten)

The one policy area where it is occasionally noted Yudhoyono may be weak, domestic economic policy, is deftly addressed by his selection of a prominent, successful businessman, Jusuf Kalla, as his running mate. Kalla seems to escape the suspicion of corruption and nefarious dealings often attributed to wealthy individuals in Indonesia.

A concern raised by *Partai Demokrat* supporters in Manado is there are many Christians in prominent roles in their own party, at least in their region. Though they say it does not bother them, they worry that it may be off-putting to some.

Finally, another perceived liability for Yudhoyono is his nascent political organization, *Partai Demokrat*. SBY is the main, and perhaps the only thing that attracted voters to this new party. Even those who voted for PD's candidates in April note that without majority support in the legislature, Yudhoyono would have his work cut out for him in dealing with the legislature as president. (As noted below, there are mixed views, even among his strongest supporters, about the virtues of an inclusive multi-party cabinet versus a more coherent, one-party cabinet that might encounter some resistance in the DPR.)

SBY is [PD's] only strong figure. In other words, they have few seats in parliament. I am afraid in the future his program will be rejected. (Middle aged PD man, Jakarta)

Partisan responses to SBY candidacy confirm his broad appeal

While SBY is either the first or second preference of virtually all participants in the focus groups, he actually manages to be the first choice of some adherents of parties with other candidates in the July election. There is a notable consistency in the words chosen to describe him across the country. None of the voters participating in this research expresses hostility toward Yudhoyono.

Golkar supporters. Apart from those who voted for *Partai Demokrat* (all of whom concur that he is the reason they did so), the most consistent source of support for Yudhoyono is among Golkar voters. Two-thirds of a group of young Golkar men in Jayapura choose him first, as do half the young Golkar women in Semarang, along with six of ten older Golkar men in rural Kutai. Of the four Golkar groups convened, only the middle aged Christian group of men in Minahasa express strong support for Wiranto, Golkar's candidate, and SBY is their second preference.

Firm ... authoritative bearing ... neutral. (Middle aged Christian Golkar man, Minahasa)

Principled ... smart ... authoritative ... handsome. (Young Golkar woman, Semarang)

PDI-P voters. Notwithstanding his resignation from Megawati's cabinet to challenge her (and the bristling response it elicited from the First Family), PDI-P voters in four different provinces, men and women alike, see Yudhoyono as their clear second choice, after Megawati.

Straightforward. (Middle aged rural PDI-P man, Sorong)

Firm... clever. (Young rural PDI-P man, Klaten)

In an interesting juxtaposition with his popularity among Golkar voters, SBY is the second preference of young PDI-P women in Minahasa who are dead set against Golkar as a party because "the leadership is full of KKN and involved in 'cases'." They all choose SBY as their second preference, after Megawati, and they point to SBY's experience as security minister as a reason.

Religious party adherents. Perhaps most interesting, given his military and largely secular profile (and the fact that Christian voters like him), is the support SBY engenders from adherents of Muslim-based parties – PKB, PPP, PKS and PAN.

A group of rural middle-aged PAN women in Klaten are strongly opposed to both Megawati and Wiranto. After saying they would all vote first for Amien Rais, 9 of 10 then choose SBY as their second preference – ahead of other "religious" political figures such as Hamzah Haz. One of these women explains that "with the experience in the military, he can create a safe environment." Urban PAN men in Balikpapan express greater hesitation about the Yudhoyono-Kalla ticket, with one noting that Kalla is a traitor to his Golkar roots, but the predominant view is that SBY is "calm" and an acceptable second preference to their candidate, Amien Rais.

Though finishing sixth nationwide in the recent legislative elections, and not having its own candidate on the presidential ballot, PKS garnered the greatest number of votes in Jakarta. A group of young PKS women from the outskirts of the capital are very

enthusiastic about SBY; 9 of 10 choose him first in the presidential ballot. They like his low key manner and his military background is a plus.

SBY in the campaign never promised much, but he relies on his experience and he is communicative. (Young rural PKS woman, Jakarta)

Handsome ... charismatic. (Young rural PKS woman, Jakarta)

Only two of ten upper class PKS women in Bandung, on the other hand, select Yudhoyono first. The others prefer Amien Rais, though they all pick SBY second. The descriptions of the retired general here echo what is said elsewhere: he is “firm” and “charismatic.” This group talks more explicitly than most about the centrality of religion in the character of the president they hope to see elected this year, and several say they were PAN supporters before switching to PKS for this year’s legislative elections. Yet their second preference is not Hamzah but rather Yudhoyono, suggesting that he is acceptable to those with a distinctly religious sensibility, perhaps because of his reputation for integrity, straight talk and honesty.

Automatically, if the president is religious then the person can wisely rule the country. (Middle aged urban PKS woman, Bandung)

There is nothing bad about [Yudhoyono]; he is good to be president. (Middle aged urban PKS woman, Bandung)

Perhaps most surprising is the substantial support for Yudhoyono, as the first preference, among women who voted for PPP in April. Half of a group of young middle class urban female voters in Balikpapan indicate they prefer SBY to their own party’s candidate, Hamzah Haz. And while only one in a group of middle aged PPP voters in Majalengka opts for Yudhoyono as a first preference, the rest in the group all choose him as their second preference, rather than move toward Amien Rais or other candidates.

The party of former president Abdurrahman Wahid (“Gus Dur”), PKB, has officially endorsed the ticket of Wiranto and Gus Dur’s brother, Solahuddin Wahid. The focus group discussions with PKB supporters occurred before the party’s official endorsement (although it was clear at the time the younger Wahid was a possible running mate for Wiranto). Yet a high degree of animosity is displayed toward Golkar and Wiranto by the PKB men in Semarang, suggesting the party may not be able to deliver its supporters to that ticket even with Solahuddin as the vice presidential candidate. In fact, five of nine here select Yudhoyono first for president, and only one the Wiranto-Solahuddin ticket. Several women in a PKB group in Sorong also select Yudhoyono ahead of the Wiranto-Solahuddin option. Among voters who still strongly support Gus Dur, there is a clear willingness to support Yudhoyono now that their preferred candidate has been excluded from this election.

I think ideally our president should be a military figure. (Middle aged PKB man, Semarang)

We know that civilians and the military are like cats and dogs. Yet I still have a good feeling about him [SBY]. (Middle aged PKB man, Semarang)

Finally, participants from the predominantly Christian PDS party, whose leadership has endorsed the Megawati ticket, vote overwhelmingly for SBY - both middle aged women in Jayapura, and young men in Manado.

Vice-presidential candidate Jusuf Kalla is an asset

Unlike some of his counterparts, who generally come from parties with contradictory profiles from those of their presidential partners, Kalla's reputation and profile does not conflict at all with those of Yudhoyono in the minds of focus group participants. Both are seen as experienced public figures of stature and accomplishment, technocrats rather than politicians, and are not burdened by their long ties to the discredited Soeharto regime. Rather than the "odd couple" image that several of the tickets are deemed to present, theirs is seen as a partnership in which the two complement one another. Kalla's wealth persuades many that he would be good on economic policy, where SBY is seen as weaker, and also that he would not need to resort to corruption, as he has already established his fortune.

SBY has a military background and Jusuf Kalla is a businessman and that is a good combination of military and business. (Young PDI-P woman, Minahasa)

Jusuf Kalla is more mature, ... he is clever, smart. That's why Kalla can cover up what is lacking in SBY. (Young Golkar woman, Semarang)

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is not very clever in talking, but Jusuf Kalla is, so they complete each other. (Middle aged Christian PDS woman, Jayapura)

Jusuf Kalla is a rich man. If he is already rich he is not looking for money for himself. (Middle aged PD man, Jakarta)

They complete each other. (Young PPP woman, Balikpapan)

Megawati Soekarnoputri stirs mixed emotions

Incumbent President Megawati Soekarnoputri is staunchly supported by most of those who identify with the PDI-P (though SBY is preferred by a few), but she has also earned the hostility of many others. Along with General Wiranto, she is mentioned most often as the presidential candidate for whom voters would "never" cast a ballot.

Megawati, moreover, has the unique burden of being the only candidate in the race who is held responsible for the current situation most voters are unhappy with (notwithstanding that many of her rivals in this race have all held very senior governing positions in the recent past).

While some young women say they support Megawati “because she is a woman,” it is in groups of women that one encounters the staunchest opposition to her candidacy.

We like Mega because she is a woman. (Young PDI-P woman, Minahasa)

While she is president we never hear her voice. We only hear her voice while she is campaigning. If she is elected again, she will be quiet again. (Young PDI-P woman, Minahasa)

How come a woman is president? It isn't clean. (Middle aged PAN woman, Klaten)

Megawati's perceived performance as president seems to reinforce in some men a bias against women as candidates, though men and women alike are favorably impressed by other prominent women. While a few voters invoke religious doctrine to justify their opposition to women in leadership posts, others say Islam does not exclude women from full equality in politics or other aspects of life. Some are opposed to women in politics for other than religious reasons.

It's kind of strange to have a woman as a president. (Middle aged, upper class PAN man, Balikpapan)

Especially in the Javanese culture, a woman should surrender to her husband and I do agree with this rule. (Middle aged, middle class PKB man, Semarang)

While it is difficult to disentangle views about women in high office from opinions on Megawati's performance, there are men and women alike who can point to other women as potential national leaders. Former Minister of Women's Empowerment Khofifah Indar Parawansa of PKB is a case in point. She is singled out by numerous participants, including some men, as an example of a qualified woman political leader, though she also has her critics.

I hope Khofifah will be able to change women's destiny. (Middle aged, middle class PKB man, Semarang)

I am sure that women will be better than men as leaders. (Middle aged PKB man, Semarang)

[Khofifah] is not mature yet. Certainly she represents women's gender, but this issue on gender is less important than other issues. (Young Golkar woman, Semarang)

More women should be in politics, but they should be qualified

In addition, men and women say that women should be involved in greater numbers in politics but often add the caveat that those women should be “qualified.” In

describing the advantages women bring to politics, respondents name a variety of qualities such as being instinctive, sensitive, motherly, skillful, quick to complete tasks and regularly several tasks at once, taking careful consideration when making decisions and often using feelings in that decision-making process.

Incongruous tickets elicit negative reactions

The clashes of personality, style and political agenda between president and vice president that have characterized the administrations of both Gus Dur and Megawati seem to have led many voters to be at least somewhat averse to the teams of opposites that have been assembled by some of the campaigns. For instance, the perceived incongruities between the political profiles of the incumbent president and her new choice to be vice president, Hasyim Muzadi, elicit negative reactions from various quarters. In other groups, Hasyim is just not very well known.

Wiranto and Solahuddin Wahid

Even among Golkar voters, support for retired General Wiranto is inconsistent. Many of the participants like the notion of a military man as president; they want someone who is firm and authoritative, so that alone is not a handicap for Wiranto.

[Military background] is a positive side for us, because they have a firm personality. (Young, working-class man, supporting a minor party, Majalengka)

I think ideally our president should be a military man. (Middle aged PKB man, Semarang)

One reason may be that a number of Golkar voters identify as one of the important factors they look for in a president the “ability to work with international leaders” – and the former armed forces commander’s indictment on crimes against humanity by a UN-supported tribunal in East Timor many people feel undermines him on these grounds.

While he attracts some secondary support (as a possible second or third preference) from a few supporters of other parties, Wiranto also has serious negatives among non-Golkar voters and (along with Megawati) is the candidate who engenders the staunchest resistance by voters who would “never” vote for him. For these opponents, his personal profile and his identification with Golkar are both reasons to vote against him.

Wiranto has made mistakes (Middle aged PD woman, Manado)

The presence of Gus Dur’s younger brother on the ticket does not seem to reassure many people about Wiranto. One concern is that the younger Wahid is seen to be a proxy for his elder brother.

If he becomes vice president, the thinker is not him, but Gus Dur. He must influence him. (Middle aged PD man, Jakarta)

Amien Rais and Siswono Yudohusodo

Amien Rais is very well known across Indonesia and elicits strong reactions both positive and negative. Among his supporters, who are concentrated mainly in the party he leads, PAN, he is seen as smart, committed to the downtrodden, principled and a good, observant Muslim. He is also seen by participants of all political persuasions as honest and is not associated with KKN. These are qualities that may help him attract voters from other parties as election day nears.

On the other hand, the most frequently noted characteristics of Amien Rais are that he is “ambitious” (this is not usually meant as praise) and that he talks a lot. Amien apparently talks at greater length and more often than most people would care to hear and he is not always consistent in his message. While supporters explain his inconsistencies away as part of his “strategy,” critics refer to “broken promises.”

He is a good figure; he wants to save the country from [international] debt. (Middle aged PAN man, Balikpapan)

He is honest. (Young PKS woman, Jakarta)

Amien attracts some support from adherents of other parties with a religious theme – he is the first choice of eight of ten PKS women in Bandung, for instance – and he can clearly count on the allegiance of even those PAN voters who chide him for his long-windedness.

Siswono Yudohusodo is not well-known, although some people recall aspects of his service as Minister for Transmigration in the Soeharto era, saying his name reminds them of “farmers,” or the military. He may attract some hometown support in Kutai, where one older Golkar man says, “I think he is good enough; he was born here.”

Hamzah Haz and Agum Gumelar

Vice President Hamzah seems not to have established a very textured image of himself as a potential leader of the nation. As with most vice presidents anywhere, he suffers from the burden that position usually entails; he is often described as “a follower.”

Some voters describe Agum Gumelar, vice presidential candidate for Hamzah Haz, as “straight-forward”, though the more frequent reaction to his name is for people to say they don’t know much about him, or they have not heard of him, notwithstanding his time in high government office.

We only know he is in the sports business. (Middle aged upper class PKS woman, Bandung)

Observations About the Political Process

Exclusion of Gus Dur is broadly supported

With the exception of some PKB loyalists, the political party of former president Abdurrahman Wahid, participants by and large agree that the requirement that candidates for president be certified to be in good health is a sound measure.

A president should have perfect health, physically and mentally. (Middle aged PAN woman, Klaten)

Inclusive, multiparty government is generally preferred

The predominant view across Indonesia is that the legislature and cabinet alike should include members of diverse political parties, as a way to achieve a degree of consensus and harmony in policy-making. There seems to be almost no appreciation currently for the potential value of a “loyal opposition” or the development of an alternative slate of political actors to establish an alternative governing program for voters’ future consideration. Rather, voters focus on the advantages of harmony, and suggest this enables political rivals to keep a check on one another and perhaps diminish and control the instinct for avarice.

I think it is better if every party has a representative in parliament. (Middle aged, middle class PKB man, Semarang)

I think they should come from different parties, to prevent them of thinking only of their own party. (Young PPP woman, Balikpapan)

I think it will be better if parliament contains multiple parties... in order to be more balanced and to have no monopoly. (Older Golkar man, Kutai)

In my opinion, if one party only is not good, then 24 parties is good. Not only seven big winning parties. It should be all 24 parties [in government]. (Middle aged PDI-P man, Sorong)

A smaller school of thought sees advantage in a politically narrower, and hopefully therefore more focused and decisive administration. Even within a group of *Partai Demokrat* voters in Jakarta, views are mixed on this.

If the president comes from this party and the ministers come from different parties, then there will be no harmony. (Young PPP woman, Balikpapan)

It's a pity, the governmental cabinet they made: Kabinet Gotong Royong. That makes things worse. That's why I prefer SBY as a president with all the cabinet from Partai Demokrat – one package. (Middle aged PD man, Jakarta)

Voters point to flaws but do not dispute results of April's elections

Participants did not question the overall results of the legislative elections and believe that the presidential election will be fair enough. There are concerns, however, about a number of issues, perhaps fueled by media coverage. Participants in every group believe the elections were administratively flawed, and they speak of the problems in consistent terms: the voter registers were inaccurate, in that eligible voters were not allowed to cast a ballot, while ineligible persons (dead and so forth) were present on the registers. The more serious concern that is widely believed is that votes were miscounted as the count moved up the administrative chain and away from the local polling places where voters know there was no problem because they had the opportunity to witness the count directly.

We trusted the KPU, but they did not keep our trust. (Middle aged, middle class PKB man, Semarang)

They have misused the budget and in many cases miscalculated the votes. I think it possibly happened in sending the voting forms from polling stations to the center. (Middle aged, middle class PKB man, Semarang)

Almost no significant violence was noted, and there is virtually no concern expressed about violence around the forthcoming presidential election. As in the previous research conducted for NDI last December, the anxiety expressed is about the behavior of PDI-P supporters, at least in Semarang, although Golkar is cited as well.

If there is [election-related violence], it must be PDI-P. It seems that if Megawati is not elected any more, her masses will certainly make chaos. (Young Golkar woman, Semarang)

Honestly, I am worried about PDI-P's campaign. There was fighting by PDI-P members with different legislative candidates. (Middle aged PKB man, Semarang)

Yes, the Golkar party; they burned the stage [at a campaign rally]. (Young PPP woman, Balikpapan)

Campaign techniques

Even among the relatively committed voters included in these focus groups, a large number say they attend the rallies of other parties and welcome campaigners for other parties to their homes. This is in part because they anticipate there may be money, household staples or other small "gifts" to be had. In addition to suggesting that turnout at political events is not a reliable guide to a candidate's true support, these discussions confirm that "money politics," the distribution of cash to voters to influence their selection, is very real in 2004. In numerous groups there is discussion of the specific amounts that various parties offer for vote commitments.

I participated [in campaign events] because of the entertainment. (Older working class Golkar man, Kutai)

They don't need to come to the house. I don't need any candidate to come to the house and give out promises. They just need to keep the promises they made in the campaign. (Young PDI-P woman, Minahasa)

APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF THE FOCUS GROUPS

DATE & LOCATION	GENDER & AGE	RELIGION	BACKGROUND	PARTY AFFILIATION
TUESDAY 4 MAY				
JAKARTA (CAPITAL CITY)	MEN 25 – 40 YEARS	Various	Urban middle class salary earners	Moved from PDI-P in 1999 to Democrat Party in 2004
	WOMEN 17 – 21 YEARS	Muslim	Urban Students	First time voters who chose PKS in 2004
SATURDAY 8 MAY				
JAYAPURA, PAPUA PROVINCE (EASTERN INDONESIA)	WOMEN 25 – 40 YEARS	Christian	Urban middle class	Voted for Christian-based PDS party in mostly Christian province
	MEN 17 – 21 YEARS	Muslim	Urban students, informal employment	First time voters who chose Golkar
SEMARANG, CENTRAL JAVA PROVINCE (MOST POPULOUS ISLAND)	WOMEN 17 – 21 YEARS	Muslim	Urban middle class in large industrial city	First time voters who chose Golkar
	MEN 25 – 40 YEARS	Muslim	Urban middle class in large industrial city	Voted PKB
SUNDAY 9 MAY				
SORONG, WEST IRIAN JAYA PROVINCE (EASTERN INDONESIA)	WOMEN 25 – 40 YEARS	Christian	Rural village dwellers working in agriculture or informal economy	Voted for Muslim-based PKB in mostly Christian province
	MEN 25 – 40 YEARS	Various	Rural village dwellers working in agriculture or informal economy	Voted for PDI-P
KLATEN, CENTRAL JAVA (MOST POPULOUS ISLAND)	WOMEN 25 – 40 YEARS	Muslim	Rural village dwellers working in agriculture or informal economy	Voted for Muslim-based PAN
	MALE 17 – 21 YEARS	Various	Rural village dwellers working in agriculture or informal economy	Voted for PDI-P in party's heartland
TUESDAY 11 MAY				
MANADO, NORTH SULAWESI PROVINCE (EASTERN INDONESIA)	WOMEN 25 – 40 YEARS	Muslim	Middle class urban setting in small regional city	Voted for Democrat Party
	MEN 17 – 21 YEARS	Christian	Middle class urban students in small regional city	Voted for Christian-based PDS in predominantly Christian province
BANDUNG, WEST JAVA PROVINCE (MOST POPULOUS ISLAND)	WOMEN 25 – 40 YEARS	Muslim	Urban middle class in large industrial city	Moved from Muslim-based PAN to fast growing PKS
	MEN 25 – 40 YEARS	Muslim	Urban middle class in large industrial city	Voted for PDI-P
WEDNESDAY 12 MAY				
REMBOKEN, NORTH SULAWESI (EASTERN INDONESIA)	WOMEN 17 – 21 YEARS	Various	Students and informally employed in semi-rural setting	Voted for PDI-P
	MEN 25 – 40 YEARS	Christian	Informally employed in semi-rural, small town setting	Voted for Golkar
MAJALENGKA, WEST JAVA (MOST POPULOUS ISLAND)	WOMEN 25 – 40 YEARS	Muslim	Agricultural or informal employment in rural setting	Voted for PPP
	MEN 17 – 21 YEARS	Muslim	Agricultural or informal employment in rural setting	Voted for minor parties

FRIDAY 14 MAY				
BALIKPAPAN, EAST KALIMANTAN (EASTERN INDONESIA)	WOMEN 17 – 21 YEARS	Muslim	Urban youth studying or formal employment in regional industrial town	Voted for PPP
	MEN 25 – 40 YEARS	Muslim	Urban middle class with formal employment in regional industrial town	Voted for PAN
SATURDAY 15 MAY				
KOTA BANGUN, EAST KALIMANTAN (EASTERN INDONESIA)	WOMEN 41 – 55 YEARS	Various	Rural village dwellers with agricultural or informal employment	Voted for minor parties
	MEN 41 – 55 YEARS	Various	Rural village dwellers with mixed formal and informal employment	Voted for PDI-P in 1999 but for Golkar in 2004

APPENDIX B: NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

1. Focus Group Research. Focus groups are semi-structured group interviews that proceed according to a careful research design. Groups are recruited to be homogeneous (according to gender, age, education, voting history, ethnicity and/or religious affiliation) for two reasons: in order to clarify what are the views held by a particular sub-group of the population, and to enhance the comfort level of participants, so they feel they are among peers and that everyone involved is equally entitled to express their opinion. When done well, they are free flowing, open-ended, and often unpredictable. They are designed to elicit a wide range of ideas, attitudes, experiences, and opinions held by a selected small sample of recruited respondents on a defined topic.

Focus groups are useful in helping understand the language that people use when they discuss particular ideas or concepts. They are also useful in gaining a deeper appreciation for the motivations, feelings, and values behind participants' reactions. It is a flexible form of research that allows one to probe into issues important to the research sponsors, while permitting participants to raise other issues or concerns that might not have occurred to the researchers. As an organized group discussion, it provides a forum that enables participants to stimulate each other in an exchange of ideas that may not emerge in individual in-depth interviews or public opinion surveys that rely on one-on-one questionnaires.

Focus groups such as these can help one better understand the many shades of gray – hesitations, enthusiasm, anger, or uncertainty. Focus groups are first and foremost concerned with understanding attitudes, rather than quantifying them. Because of the small numbers involved, however, focus group participants cannot be expected to be thoroughly and statistically representative of the larger population from which they are drawn, and findings ought not be generalized beyond the small number of participants. They offer insight into emerging ideas and popular attitudes on key issues, but it would be unsound to extrapolate to firm conclusions about what “all” or “most” Indonesians believe based on such a small sample of individuals.

The findings from this set of political focus groups in Indonesia provide hypotheses and tentative conclusions that require further investigation. They complement the public opinion surveys being conducted by other organizations in the country during the 2004 legislative and presidential elections.

2. Special challenges of working in Indonesia. Before the fall of President Soeharto in 1998, opinion research on political topics would have been very difficult, and probably impossible, to conduct due to the climate of political repression. Six years into the period of “*reformasi*” (reform), Indonesians are becoming much more comfortable expressing themselves in public, to one another, and to strangers conducting opinion research. But it is worth noting that this is still a new phenomenon in this society – and for older persons, especially, additional time and care is required to elicit frank expressions on potentially controversial issues, like political preferences and evaluations of government or political personalities.

While with this round the moderators and observers encountered no consistent pattern of suspicion from participants, or reluctance to discuss issues, there was typically some tension evident at the start of a number of groups. Without indicating what the topics of discussion would be, or for whom the research was being conducted, the Polling Center facilitators in some groups were obliged by participants to provide explanations about their organization, the nature of focus group research and sometimes even the personal background of the moderator to engender the trust necessary for the groups to proceed.

While some recent opinion research in Indonesia has found significant reluctance on the part of respondents to state political preferences, this project found that almost all participants who had voted in April 2004 were willing to declare at the screening stage for which party they had voted. Only voters who had exercised their right in the April 5 legislative elections and expressed a view that they would definitely vote in the first round presidential election in July 2004 were recruited. Therefore, this research did not set out to explore any sense of disillusionment with the electoral process among the Indonesian electorate.

Furthermore, during the course of the discussion participants were asked to state their preference for both political parties and presidential candidates. The researchers encountered no reluctance to do so.

3. Literacy and language. Officially, Indonesia's rate of illiteracy of persons older than 15 years is 16.2 percent with women twice as likely to be unable to read (22 percent) as men (10.4 percent).³ Participants of this group were screened to exclude those with no formal education and an inability to speak, read and write in Indonesian due to the fact that the research used a number of written exercises during focus group discussions, such as asking participants to write down government priorities, positive and negative aspects of "reformasi," as well as political party preference. While this did exclude a modest portion of potential voters, the countervailing consideration was that this allowed the researchers to use written exercises that appeared to make it easier for participants to convey their preferences. Based on NDI's recent experience, clear guidance provided by the facilitators resulted in few problems in completing the handouts during this research project. However, there was a correlation between the poorly educated, often coinciding with rural locations that had less access to information such as daily newspapers, and the length or detail in the respondent's answers.

4. Demographics of participants. Participants in this research very broadly reflect many of the characteristics of the people of the Indonesian archipelago – though not in a strictly representative manner. As summarized in Appendix A, half the participants were women, and the groups were segregated by gender. Several groups were recruited to be politically or religiously homogeneous, while some were mixed on either or both of these counts. The sample of groups was skewed towards younger, first-time voters in the 17-21

³ <http://esa.un.org/socdev/unyin/country3b.asp?countrycode=id> sourced to Education Indicators: UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook, 1996

years age group and those in the 25-40 years age group to reflect the youthfulness of a country where the median age is 24.7 years⁴.

The locations of the groups span almost 2,000 miles across four of the major islands, many different ethnic groups and the five largest religious groups. Among Indonesia's diverse 32 provinces, the seven where this research was conducted include Central Java, populated by the largest ethnic group, and Papua, located on the archipelago's margins where separatist sentiments bubble just beneath the surface. East Kalimantan is a sparsely populated, but resource rich and export-oriented area, spared the ravages of the financial crisis of the 1990s, whereas North Sulawesi is a predominantly Christian province in a mostly Muslim nation. With this round of research, NDI extended its reach to two other "extremes," conducting groups in the sprawling capital Jakarta where big shifts in voter behavior had taken place in April as well as to Sorong in the remote but resource-rich Bird's Head region of Papua, where the new province of West Irian Jaya had recently been created.

Participants were drawn from the large urban centers of Jakarta, Bandung and Semarang with their industrial base and rural periphery. In the smaller towns of Majalengka (West Java), Kota Bangun (East Kalimantan), Remboken (North Sulawesi) and Sorong (West Irian Jaya), some participants came from households where agriculture was the primary or secondary source of income. In smaller, regional settings, participants were often drawn from rural settings and identified themselves as farmers, rural traders and villagers. With a need to ensure that participants are indeed strangers and do not know each other when they come together, NDI has not conducted groups at the village level.

With this research, further effort was made to refine the recruitment process by grouping participants according to the political parties they had voted for in April 2004. Furthermore, three groups specifically looked at those voters who said they had changed their party preference between 1999 and 2004 to examine in further detail the reasons behind the shift in support for political parties. Specifically, there were groups who had shifted their votes from the Indonesian Democracy Party-Struggle (PDI-P), the leading party in 1999, to the Democrat Party (PD), a new party with the greatest gains in the 2004 elections. There was also a group specifically recruited of those who had voted for PDI-P in 1999, but shifted to Golkar in 2004, the party with the largest vote in the recent elections. Finally, with the continuing rise of the Islamic-based Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), a special group was recruited of those who had moved to this party from the more established but still relatively new National Mandate Party (PAN), led by a prominent leader with Islamic credentials.

5. Process of Recruitment. Participants were recruited randomly by the staff of Polling Center from diverse locations within the same administrative area according to pre-determined strict criteria using a 17-part questionnaire. Those taking part in the groups were drawn from locations distant from one another to ensure anonymity within the group. Participants were later collected from their homes by recruiters hired by the Polling Center

⁴ <http://esa.un.org/socdev/unyin/countrys.asp?countrycode=id> which cites *World Population Prospects* (United Nations, New York, 2002)

staff and then re-screened upon arrival by Jakarta-based staff at the focus group location to ensure the recruitment had been completed correctly. An NDI staff member oversaw the process in the field at each location by reviewing the initial recruitment questionnaires and monitoring the re-screening before each group commenced.

6. Location. As professional focus group research facilities (with one-way mirrors and recording equipment) are not available in most locations in Indonesia, these focus groups were held for the most part in private homes, with the exception of two Jakarta groups that were conducted at the Polling Center's office with the complete facilities. Based on their previous experience, the Indonesian researchers recommended this practice in order to enhance the comfort level of participants. While participants in some groups appeared initially nervous about taking part in this research, questioning who was behind the research, there were never any questions raised about the venue. Despite this, it must be acknowledged that in the small towns, the identity of owners of the modest houses used and their political affiliations may have been known – and this could conceivably have had an effect on the discussion. However, the owners of the venues never participated in the focus group discussion and this did not appear to affect the tone or content of the discussions.

7. Moderators. Two different facilitators were used to conduct the research over a vast geographic area. Attempts were made where possible to match each facilitator to areas where they understood or spoke local languages. The trained facilitators are a staff member and a consultant used regularly by the Polling Center for focus group research projects. Both facilitators worked with NDI on the December 2003 focus group research project.

NDI staff members discreetly observed all the focus groups in an adjacent room via closed circuit television with a local translator. By passing notes to the moderators occasionally, these observers were able to actively guide the facilitators during the discussions and ensure that certain points were examined more closely using follow-up questions.

8. Transcripts. Each of the sessions was recorded and English language transcripts were prepared. While an initial read-out of the findings was prepared immediately upon conclusion of the research in Indonesia for USAID and other interested parties, this report is based on later in-depth analysis of the transcripts in Washington.

APPENDIX C: RESEARCHERS

Thomas O. Melia designed the guidelines that framed the research and is the primary author of this report. He is Director of Research at the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, and Adjunct Professor in the School of Foreign Service, both at Georgetown University. During more than a dozen years at the National Democratic Institute from 1988 to 2001, he held various senior positions, including Director of Programs in the Middle East (1993-1996) and Vice President for Programs (1998-2001). He has also worked as a professional opinion researcher, at Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, Inc. He can be reached at the following email address: tom3@georgetown.edu.

Jim Della-Giacoma was the principal field researcher; he personally observed 14 of 22 of the focus groups in Indonesia, coached the moderators, and prepared the initial analysis of the research data based on detailed notes of the sessions he observed. He is a senior advisor for Citizen Participation programs for NDI, and is based in Washington, DC. He has previously worked on focus groups research projects in Afghanistan, Angola, East Timor and Iraq. A fluent speaker of Bahasa Indonesia, his work in the Indonesian archipelago spans more than a dozen years as a journalist, research consultant, United Nations official, and NGO activist. Between January 2001 and April 2003, he was NDI's country director in East Timor, now the independent nation of Timor-Leste.

Stephanie Lynn is NDI Indonesia's Director of Political Party and Women's Participation Programs. She managed this research project, observing 10 of the 22 groups and contributed to the analysis. With NDI since 1998, previous to her work in Indonesia, she was a director of programs in Serbia under the dictatorship of Slobodan Milosevic and in the period immediately after his democratic fall from power. Her previous political experience stems from her time as an executive assistant to a minister and house leader in the British Columbia government in Canada and for seven years as a political party organizer and campaign manager. She lives in Jakarta.