

Indonesia under President Jokowi: An Assessment

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The election of Jokowi, as he is widely known, was hailed internationally. Not only a peoples' President, but also a modern Indonesian liberal from a new generation. He was famous for having a Chinese running mate as mayor of Solo and seemed to do a credible job in his short half term as governor of Jakarta. He was against corruption and a hero to civil society. He won narrowly against the Suharto-era general Prabowo Subianto, and most Indonesians breathed a sigh of relief. He was known to be a man who delivers and was expected to bring good governance. However, in power for nearly a year now, Jokowi's presidency is already a desperate mess. The Indonesian economy is stagnating. First-quarter growth was down at 4.7 per cent. Many international agencies are predicting total growth this year of well under 5 per cent. The economy often grew at 6 per cent under Jokowi's predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and before that at 8 per cent under Suharto. Jokowi's economic nationalism has become protectionism and is seriously damaging economic growth. He preaches all kinds of food self-sufficiency but the main effect of this is to raise prices and that pushes millions of people back into poverty. Jokowi promised to revive the economy through action on bureaucratic reform, infrastructure and creating a maritime transport network. Despite a lot of money being allocated for infrastructure, almost nothing is happening on these fronts.

Jokowi cannot get much through parliament where he controls few numbers. His cabinet was foisted on him by Megawati Sukarnoputri, who leads the party Jokowi notionally represents, and other traditional powerbrokers. It is a disappointing cabinet. A reshuffle is said to be in the winds but the worst performers are the political party appointees and they will be very hard to shift. His one political asset, his popularity, is waning. The civil society figures who backed Jokowi so strongly are now demoralised and paralysed and a number of them are in jail too. All this does not look promising for the future and could lead to all sorts of new instability. The army and the police have traditionally been at loggerheads. The police are now asserting themselves, with Mega's backing. By some recent appointments, Jokowi seems to be leaning towards the army for political support. Jokowi has become isolated. One part of his government solicits foreign investment but many parts of his government make foreign investment harder and harder. His foreign policy also elicits skepticism in the neighbors – whether Indonesia will remain committed to ASEAN, particularly at a time when the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is to come into effect at the end of this year.

Baladas Ghoshal, currently Secretary General and Director (Academic) Society for Indian Ocean Studies; until recently ICCR Chair in Indian Studies at the Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, is also honorary Distinguished Fellow at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. Professor Ghoshal is a former Professor of Southeast Asia and South-West Pacific Studies and Chairman of the Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Between 2004 and 2007, he was a Visiting Professor of International Relations first at the International Christian University, Tokyo and then at Nagoya City University, taught at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (1990-91) National University of Malaysia (1998-1999), University of Malaya (2000) and the Universiti Utara Malaysia (2002-2003). He has held Senior Fulbright Fellowships at the Cornell and Rutgers Universities (1983-84); Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore (1985-86); Centre for Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong (Sept.-Oct.2003), East West Centre (2010), Consultant to the United Nations Support Facility for Indonesian Recovery (November 2003-February2004). Professor Ghoshal is a doyen in Southeast Asian Studies programme in India. He has published extensively on Indonesian politics, ASEAN and regional

security issues, reads, writes and speaks Malay and Bahasa Indonesia. His most recent publications are a book on **India-Indonesia Relations** brought out by Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore, and a monograph on **China's Perception of India's Look East Policy**, brought out by Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

**Wednesday, October 14, 2015,
12:00 Noon
Room 203, Luce Hall, 34 Hillhouse Avenue**