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## Indonesian National Election Project

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After more than four decades years of authoritarian rule, Indonesia held democratic legislative elections in 1999. Elections were held again in 2004, including Indonesia's first direct election of a president and vice-president. In both cases, a team led by Liddle and Mujani surveyed Indonesian voters to see why they made the choices they did.

The surveys were designed to assess the relative impact on Indonesian voters' choices of six sociological and psychological factors:

- Religious beliefs and affiliations.
- Ethnic and regional loyalties.
- Social class and economic interest.
- Attachment to national party leaders.
- Attentiveness to local opinion leaders.
- Partisanship or party identification.

Previous scholars have pointed to religious orientation as the primary determinant of voting behavior. Because most people in Indonesia are Muslim, it was thought that voters would choose a candidate based on whether the form of Islam they practiced was animistic, conservative, modernist, or priyayi (aligned with Hinduism).

Liddle and Mujani's surveys did not find this to be the case. Instead, they found that the strongest determinants of Indonesian voting behavior were attachment to party leaders and party identification.

Voter attachment to leaders is likely driven by the rapid spread of television in recent years and the current atmosphere of press freedom, the survey found. The importance of party identification may be a result of voter familiarity with the three parties allowed to operate during the previous authoritarian regime of Suharto.

Results of this survey will feed into the larger Comparative National Elections Project. They also help us to understand politics in the world's largest Muslim nation, currently at the center of the worldwide struggle against terrorism. The



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creation and strengthening of democratic institutions in Indonesia is crucial to resolving these conflicts.

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