

## Playing with Identity Politics: An Analysis Post-2019 Presidential Election

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### Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk membahas potensi disintegrasi bangsa Indonesia pasca pemilu 2019. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi kepustakaan dengan menggunakan konsep identitas politik. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa permainan politik identitas dalam pelaksanaan Pilpres menciptakan proses yang kontra produktif. Ada potensi disintegrasi bangsa akibat politik identitas yang dimainkan dua pasangan calon yang bertarung di Pilpres. Menguatnya perasaan in-groupness menimbulkan ketidaksukaan terhadap kelompok lain mendorong munculnya berbagai fenomena dan tindakan kekerasan akibat penggunaan politik identitas pada pemilihan presiden 2019.

**Kata kunci:** *Politik, Identitas, Pemilihan Presiden*

### Abstract

This article aims to discuss the potential for the disintegration of the Indonesian nation after the 2019 general election. The method used is a literature study using the concept of Identity Politics. The result of the study found that the game of identity politics in the implementation of the Presidential election created a counter-productive process. There is a potential for national disintegration due to the identity politics played by the two pairs of candidates fighting in the Presidential election. The strengthening of feelings of in-groupness creates dislike for other groups pushed the emergence of various phenomena and acts of violence due to the use of identity politics in the 2019 presidential election.

**Keywords:** *Politic, Identity, Presidential Election*

## A. Introduction

General elections are crucial moments in implementing the democratic process in Indonesia. Generally, the General Election is interpreted as the realization of popular sovereignty and also interpreted as a means to provide and strengthen the legitimacy of the people (Hukam, in Haris, 1998: 49-50). Therefore, elections should be carried out honestly and fairly and be free from all kinds of fraud. Especially after the reformation in Indonesia in 1998, the tap of democracy is increasingly wide open in the reform era to the present.

According to Aspinall, Indonesia was enjoying a democratic moment in this reformation period. The occurrence of the reform process in Indonesia provides new hope for the order of life of a genuinely democratic society. Also, there are demands for political reform because of the optimism for improving the implementation of democracy (Aspinall, in Purnaweni, 2004). Aspinall then gave three reasons why optimism emerged in democracy in Indonesia after the reformation (2004). First, because of the widespread enthusiasm for reform. Second, democratic reforms are believed to solve the economic crisis due to corruption and a lack of accountability that permeates the political system and the three divisions in the ruling political elite.

Post-reform, Indonesia has implemented at least four presidential elections four times, namely in 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019. Along with the emergence of various paradoxes in the implementation of democracy in Indonesia, it should be re-questioned about the optimism of improving the implementation of Indonesia's post-reform era. The phenomenon that happened was contrary to the optimism expressed by Aspinall. The 2019 presidential election feels so tiring and

wastes considerable energy. In addition to the increasingly pluralistic society with rapid social change, the rapid development of technology also raises various problems that threaten the nation's integration.

The 2019 presidential election deserves attention because of several things, including First, Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto returned to fight as presidential candidates as in the 2014 presidential election. In the 2014 presidential election, Joko Widodo won from Prabowo Subianto with a margin of 6.3% of the vote. At that time, Joko Widodo received 53.15% votes, and Prabowo Subianto received 46.85%. At that time, the presidential election results ended in the trial of the dispute over the results of the presidential election, which was tried at the Constitutional Court. In the 2019 presidential election event, there was also a dispute over the presidential election results. The Prabowo camp stated that there had been a systematic and massive structured and electoral fraud in the election. The preliminary hearing of the PHPU 2019 Presidential Election revealed many frauds claimed to be structured, systematic, and massive fraud (TSM) (Makkl 2019).

Secondly, the noisy 'battle' between supporters of two pairs of candidates in the virtual world such as social media and real-life is far from the substance of democracy. Through social media, both supporters of the candidate pair mutate themselves as "Cebong" and "Kampret." If we surf on social media, both Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, every one of them has been considered normal. They are labeling animal names as "cebong" and "kampret" a typical political phenomenon that only occurs in Indonesia. Wawan Masudi said this kind of political event was rarely seen in general elections in other

countries, at least in Australia and Norway (Marsudi, in Hamid et al., 2018).

The appearance of each of the supporters of the candidate pair is an expression of cynicism formed by the two opposing camps. The cynical expression that emerged showed the failure of Indonesian democracy in achieving maturity after the reformation because hate speeches dominated the second fight of the supporters. The 'battle' between the supporters of two pairs of candidates is not only happening on social media but also in the real world. Mutual killings between the two supporters of the candidate pair that took place in Sampang Regency, East Java Province, in November 2018 (Nathanael 2018) and the emergence of various types of violence due to political contestation in other places proved that democratic procedures ended up degrading each other's dignity groups of supporters of candidate pairs can trigger violent conflicts among supporters. The party of democracy which "he said" must be decorated with joy and enthusiasm suddenly eroded with narratives of anxiety and fear. Some academics often refer to the 2019 Election as a threat to the moral deformity of our democracy (Sofyan 2019).

Third, the 2019 presidential election shows how political contestation played within identity politics. The use of identity politics not only occurs in the 2019 Presidential Election, but the 2017 Jakarta Governor Election (Pilgub) is also an example of how the identity of Religion is an extraordinary political power. Many DKI Jakarta regional elections are allegedly loaded with voter mobilization through identity politics, especially after the mass movement of 212. Concern over the

growing use of identity politics in the upcoming 2019 election is of interest to many parties (Fernandes 2019).

So, this article discussed the potential for the disintegration of the Indonesian nation after the 2019 Presidential Election (Pilpres). The potential for disintegration strengthens, one of which is caused by the identity politics played by the two pairs of candidates for President and Vice President and campaign teams in the 2019 presidential contest. Triggering the potential for disintegration is the emergence of alleged fraud in a structured, systematic, and massive election (TSM) conducted by one candidate pair. The rise of suspected fraud in the election has increased polarization among voters. The result is that there is still public defamation based on political choice.

On the other hand, there is still frequent debate between supporters of candidate pairs, especially social media. Unity of the nation under threat? The question is not making it up. At least since the emergence of alleged blasphemy cases by Ahok in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Pilgub, there are indications of the rise of social divisions. Even though the legal issues were completed, the social impact was still felt (Zuhro 2019).

## **B. Method**

This article tries to illustrate the potential for the disintegration of the Indonesian nation after the Presidential Election in 2019. The approach used in writing this article is the study of literature using the concept of identity politics to analyze problems – most of the data is obtained from scientific articles, online media, and books. The data collected then examined critically and deeply to be able to solve a problem

## C. Result and Discussion

### 1. Identity politics: Indonesia Contextualization

Identity politics is another name for biopolitics or political differences. If examined more deeply, Identity politics is a concept offered at the international meeting of the Association of Political Scientists in Vienna in 1994 (Abdillah, 2002:16). This concept then developed as a result of the development of society and the strengthening of the identity of the group, ethnicity, and race. In Foucault's view, the spread of identity or bio-political politics results from the collapse of a "scientifically planned society" which is a movement with the implementation of objective demographic controls. These are the basics of biopolitics (Foucault, in Abdillah, 2002:61).

Identity politics is not only related to ethnic identity but also social identity. Ethnic identity itself can be explained as a continuum from primordialism to instrumentalism. According to the primordialism view, ethnic identity originates from a given social existence such as blood ties, language used, and customs that are not visible but are binding and compelling (Geertz, 1973 in Norval, 2012). Ethnic identity could also be seen as nothing but a mask that is strategically used to increase group interest, which is often economic (Norval 2012). However, the instrumental approach attacks the concept because ethnicity can be a resource for various interest groups. That is by emphasizing the analysis results in which elites often mobilize various groups for their interests. Conceptually, instrumentalism begins with the work of Barth, which attacks ethnicity because it is too soft and open to manipulation by elites (Barth, 1969 in Norval, 2012:273).

Identity politics is not a new concept in Indonesia, but it got more potent when the faucet of democracy was opened after the 1998 reforms. The change in the system from authoritarian to democratic causes many groups, classes, races, and ethnicities to voice their aspirations in general elections and express support for candidates who are considered appropriate and represent their group identity. The regional head election in West Kalimantan in 2015 showed signs of increasing ethnicity (Kristianus 2016). The strengthening of identity politics in the local sphere and politics decentralization After enacting Law no. 22/1999, political movement identity becomes clearer (Haboddin 2012).

According to Drake, politics itself has undergone a shift where social identity is the focus and source of political action. Modern distributive politics discuss identity politics resulting from struggles between social classes and organized by parties representing class interests. Identity politics refers to the political mechanism of organizing identity, both in identity politics and social identity, which is the source and means of politics (Drake, in Setyaningrum, 2005:19). Social identity itself is a social classification pinned and recognized by individuals/groups and is open to debate, negotiation, revaluation, and being subject to power. In this case, the social identity is inherently political. However, in its formation, most of it escapes the reach of Political Sociology but is in harmony with social structures and political institutions (Amin, Nazaruddin, and Akmal 2020; Drake 2010; Ikramatoun and Amin 2018). It is essential to know that social identity is more than just a label or relationship between one party and another. Social identity is a social category that applies to specific individuals

and groups. Social identity is not a neutral label but connotatively brings along emotions, praxis, and morals connected with individuals in that category. Conceptually, social identity is a series of mutually connected meanings and implicit qualities. Erving Goffman stated that:

The Society establishes the means of persons and complementary attributes to be ordinary and natural for the members of these categories. When a stranger comes into our midst, first appearances are likely to enable his category and attributes, his social identity (Goffman, 1963:11-12). Agnes Heller describes identity politics - in this case as politics - which focused on a distinction. In contrast, the main category is promising freedom, tolerance, and freedom of play (free play), even though the pattern will eventually pattern intolerance, violence, and ethnic conflict. In the end, identity politics can also include racism, bio-feminism, environmentalism (political, environmental issues), and ethnic disputes (Heller, in Abdillah, 2002:22).

Jeffrey Week's identity is related to equality with many people and what distinguishes someone from others. Jeffrey Week's opinion emphasizes the importance of identity for individuals and groups or communities (Widayanti, 2009: 14). Identity becomes vital because it involves the identity of someone or a group. In political contestation, attaching specific identities to the political process is a form of political communication built between the pairs of candidates carried by their supporters. In communication, identity often gives not only the meaning of a person but also the characteristics of culture behind it; from these characteristics, we can reveal that person's existence. Understanding identity at the level of relations between humans will

lead us to understand something more conceptual, namely about how to put someone in the place of someone else or at least put or share thoughts, feelings, problems, sympathy, in the process of communication (Liliwei, in Wijaya, 2016: 34-35).

On the Contemporary political developments in Indonesia, identity politics threatens attitudes nationalism and pluralism is a reality of uncertainty that the experience of the Indonesian people regarding the strengthening of identity politics (Zahrotunnimah 2018). The Identity politics in Indonesia, as quoted from Ma'arif in his book *Identity politics and the Future of Indonesian Pluralism* ", explains that especially in Indonesia, identity politics is more related to ethnicity, religion, ideology, and local interests generally represented by political elites with their respective articulations (Ma'arif, 2012: 55).

Jakarta Governor election in 2017, which Anis Baswedan and Sandiaga Uno won, is a new portrait for identity politics and political representation in Indonesia (Nasrudin 2018). Polarization in the supporters of the candidate for the leader during the Jakarta governor election was centered on supporters of Ahok-Djarot, who were described as non-Muslim representatives and supporters of Anis-Sandiaga, who were representatives of indigenous Muslims. The strengthening of identity politics based on ethnicity and religion also occurred in the 2019 presidential election. One of the issues raised was related to Chinese ethnicity and Islam and the emergence of the Bela Islam movement, 212 Reunions, and others. While related to the ideology carried out during the 2019 Presidential Election, the main issues of concern were communism and Religion. The application of

identity politics in political contestation in Indonesia itself continues to reap criticism because of the potential for disunity arising from its form.

## **2. Playing With the Identity politics**

The Indonesian nation, as described by Anderson as an imagined community where the people will never know all their members, meet each other, or even hear it. Imagined communities only exist in the mind of every person who lives in the community he imagines (Anderson, 1991:6). Indonesia consists of various ethnic groups spread across various islands from the city to the interior. Ethnic formation also has its history. Lee cites Amin Rais's statement that Indonesia is vulnerable to divisions like Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. In the Indonesian context, the division manifested in disintegration (Lee 1999).

The situation is rational, considering that the Indonesian nation consists of many cultures and sub-cultures and the diversity of religions that the population adheres to. During the New Order regime, the existence of SARA (Tribe, Religion, Race, Inter-Group) was "taboo" by the authorities to be disputed or merely discussed in public spaces. Repressive actions were aimed to create security and political stability. The stability of these two things becomes legitimacy for implementing development and people's welfare.

However, these conditions changed drastically after the reformation, where the issue of SARA re-surfaced, primarily related to the issue of religion drawn into the political sphere. The political elites who carefully played the issue aside from being a vote-gather strategy also created in-groups and out-groups. The strategy of playing identity politics is like reopening Pandora's box. The game of identity politics

has led to the polarization in the body of the nation, which is binary opposition: Radical vs Moderate, Islam Nusantara vs Arab Islam. The sacred religion was then used to mobilize the masses for elite interests, as Aksi 212.

### **3. Aksi 212: A Social, Political and Economic Movement**

The December 2, 2016 action (later known as Aksi 212) was a social movement to defend Islam, which was considered abused by Basuki Tjahaya Purnama (Ahok), the Governor of DKI Jakarta. Aksi 212 is an Islamic Defending Action that appeared in a series of demonstrations held in Indonesia, especially in the city of Jakarta, in reaction to Ahok's statement at that time serving as the Governor of DKI Jakarta for issuing a statement deemed to defame Islam in his working visit to the Islands Thousand. At that time, Ahok, who was visiting the Thousand Islands, alluded to Al-Maidah Ayat 51, which Ahok said often used for political campaigns.

On October 6, 2016, a netizen named Buni Yani uploaded a video excerpt entitled 'Defamation of Religion?' on his Facebook page. This video is an edited version of Basuki's work video by highlighting statements containing blasphemy against Islam (Wikipedia). As a result of the video uploaded by Buni Yani, the video was consumed by the wider community, which then provoked anger from Muslims because they considered Ahok to defame Islam. This background then triggered the emergence of the Islamic Defendant Action movement commanded by the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI).

On Friday prayers, on October 14, 2016, thousands of Islamic mass organizations commanded by FPI held a demonstration in front of DKI Jakarta City Hall. In their action, they demanded that an

investigation into the blasphemy case carried out by the Governor of DKI Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, be carried out immediately. Habib Rizieq Shihab, the FPI, criticized that he would take more significant action if he did not respond to this case in the next three weeks (Siswanto, 2016). This action took place on October 14, which became the motorbike for the Defensive Action of Islam, which then took place several times. On November 4, 2011, the Islamic Defender Action was carried out because the community requested that the legal process against Ahok be accelerated. This time, the action brought a large enough crowd, not only from Jakarta but also from various regions, urging Ahok to try immediately. The "aksi 411" carried out in front of the State Palace ended with a riot between the demonstrators and the police officers allegedly due to provocation from specific individuals. Also, the trigger for the clash between the police and the protesters was because the demonstrators insisted on staying at the State Palace until their demands were met.

Then, the GNPF MUI, the organizer of the Islamic Defender Action II, revealed that it would hold a similar action on December 2, 2016. Habib Rizieq said that this action would take place super peacefully because it was held in joint worship (Supriyadi 2016). This action also attended President Joko Widodo, who was then warmly welcomed by the active participants. This action came to be known as Aksi 212. This action with a considerable mass took place peacefully, unlike previous actions, which ended in chaos. The emergence of this action based on religion attracted attention, especially after the overthrow of the new order in 1998, which was able to move various

elements of the community to take to the streets and overthrow the government of President Suharto.

Not only stopped until 212, but the mass action also continued the act of defending Islam until Ahok was named a suspect on May 9, 2017, with a two-year sentence sentenced by the North Jakarta District Court judges for blasphemy cases. In addition to the imprisonment of Ahok, another impact of Aksi 212 was Ahok's defeat in the DKI Jakarta Pilgub in 2017. The figures in Aksi 212 formed 212 alumni presidiums, which are currently more popular as Alumni 212. Until the implementation of the 2019 Presidential Election.

In the perspective of social movements, Aksi 212 is categorized as a Religion-based social movement. The social movement is interpreted as a collective effort to pursue a common interest or a movement to achieve a common goal or joint movement through collective action (established collective action) (Giddens et al., 2009). Other than that. A social movement is a movement carried out by a group of people, as a collective action, both to support funds or to oppose the implementation of a specific value or norm, so the work process of social movements must rely on the intellectual power of individuals or groups (Kurniawan and Lutfi 2016).

Having viewed from the characteristics of the (political) social movement, Aksi 212 also fulfills these prerequisites where: 1) there is a collective behavior of a wave of masses who demand that Ahok be punished immediately for being considered to defame Islam; 2) the existence of common interest, namely the interest to immediately try "the oppressor" of Islam; 3) changing and maintaining the community or institutions within it, which in this case is that Ahok is no longer the

Governor of DKI Jakarta; and 4) long-term goals, even though the Aksi 212 has been completed and Ahok has been imprisoned, the mass action then formed 212 alumni who later were also involved in mass movements that took place in the 2019 Presidential Election. In this case, though vague can be seen, the long-term goals were to participate in enlivening political contestation.

Nevertheless, it is not easy to see the type of social movements in Aksi 212. However, the pattern of actions taken is not much different in 2016-2017 and in 2018-2019, where the 2019 Presidential Election occurs. Both play religion as an issue to fight against the government. The social movement strategy was not much different when Action 212 and when they called themselves Alumni 212. They always made framing that the existing government did not side with Islam. The symbol is the same as what was done when urging the government to try Ahok in the case of blasphemy of Islam immediately.

Another exciting thing about Aksi 212 is that it also has an economic dimension besides being a social and political movement. Aksi 212 also gave birth to economic institutions based on Islamic law principles, namely in the form of sharia cooperative 212 (212 Mart). Thus, the Aksi 212 also aims to gather the economic strength of the people, especially the alumni. The cooperative 212 Syariah Mart is different from conventional retail, which only sells products that are recognized as halal by MUI. Products such as liquor and cigarettes are not sold at the 212 retail outlets (Hamdani 2018). In addition, the action moments 212 are also maintained as attributes inherent in various products from clothing, hats, flags, scarves. Thus, there is a process of forming economic symbols that the group will interpret the same.

#### **4. Cebong vs Kampret: The Fight Between The Supporters of the Candidate**

The contestation of the 2019 Presidential Election was animated by “Cebong,” who associated as supporters of Joko Widodo, and the “Kampret” as supporters of Prabowo Subianto. The emergence of nicknames on each of the supporters of the Presidential Candidate is not new considering that in 2014, the use of “Cebong” and “Kampret” was also done. Based on the article entitled “Dictionary of election terms: Where did Cebong and Kampret come from” written by BBC.com, the terms Cebong and Kampret were attached since the 2014 Presidential Election. The term Cebong was given to Joko Widodo because he served as Mayor of Solo and Governor of DKI Jakarta. He kept frogs. While the term “Kampret” is analogous to Prabowo Subianto, who likes to turn facts. Although the use of names for supporters of Presidential Candidates is unique, there is an in-group and out-group process in the competition between the two supporters.

In-group is the feeling of people in common interests, having a sense that those not involved in the same situation or interests are considered another group (Summer, 1940, Polak, 1979). The ‘we’ or ‘us’ feeling reflects an in-group attitude in a community structure. The opponents of this group are out-groups. Furthermore, in-group feelings towards out-groups are characterized by antagonism and antipathy (Polak 1979). Feelings arising from the effects of in-groups and out-groups give birth to ethnocentric attitudes. This attitude then triggers the feeling that the group is the best and whatever is done by the group in mutual interests is considered proper. The formation of ethnocentric is because in-group and out-group are also the result of socialization of

what social members teach, both consciously and unconsciously, which is carried out simultaneously with other cultural values. In this outreach effort, labeling or stereotypes are often used to mock their out-groups.

In-group and out-group attitudes also appear in the behavior of the 'Cebong' and 'Kampret' tend to assume that the supporters of other candidate pairs took action is wrong. This then became the trigger for debate both on social media and in real life of its supporters. This attitude promotes ethnocentrism that can create potential disunity in the nation. The two supporters, not infrequently throwing each other utterances of hatred, berating each other, insulting each other when meeting in one space on social media. This attitude was also taken when in real life, several cases of fights to murder were captured by the media during the Presidential Election event; even this difference in political views was also one of the triggers of the crackdown in household relations between married couples.

Furthermore, using these two terms has led to significant polarization in society. This is, of course, inseparable from the role of social media and the buzzers in both camps who throw issues and news that are often hoaxes. Social media that can reach citizens faster and broader seems to be an effective means of carrying out black campaigns for both sides. Social media become seemed to have parted in following the two camps. Furthermore, the impact of the division of the camp as each of them has a worrying effect, especially on the nation's integrity. The emergence of in-group and out-group attitudes in each of the supporters of the presidential candidate pair contradicts the spirit of unity written on the third point of Pancasila. The presence of various

kinds of conflicts between the two supporters shows how the attitude of the in-groupness towards the group turned out to be stronger than the spirit of the unity and unity of the Indonesian nation. The case in Sampang and the emergence of various kinds of videos that show the friction between the two supporters of the candidate pair who competed in the 2019 Presidential Election should be minimized if the spirit of unity is firmly embedded to prioritize the interests of the nation.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The use of identity politics in the 2019 Presidential Election creates a counter-productive political process and creates the potential for national disintegration. The game of identity politics brings enormous social costs and can threaten the integrity of Indonesia as a nation. The potential for national disintegration arises because of the identity politics game, which polarization in the society. The results from the politic of identity game show us that there is a strengthening of the ingroupness and outgroupness of each of the supporters of the presidential candidate, which leads to the potential for disintegration. Before it became a severe problem that threatened the integration of the Indonesian nation, reconciliation was needed immediately by involving various national elements, especially between the two pairs of candidates who competed. Reconciliation must be carried out by prioritizing national interests, no longer in the group's interests during the presidential election process. The central figures involved during the 2019 presidential election must also be brought together to reduce political tension after the presidential election.

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