



Original Article

The Role of Intelligence in Mitigating the Risk of Social Conflict Disasters in the 2019 Elections

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Abstract:

This study explores the critical role of intelligence in mitigating the potential risks of social conflict disasters during the 2019 elections in Indonesia. In the context of democratic processes, elections serve as a pivotal juncture where societal tensions can escalate, leading to potential conflicts and upheavals. This research investigates how intelligence, encompassing strategic information gathering, analysis, and dissemination, can contribute to the prevention and management of such risks. By delving into the proactive measures taken by intelligence agencies this study aims to unveil the ways in which timely and accurate information can shape policies and interventions aimed at averting social conflict disasters. Findings from this research contribute to the broader discourse on the nexus between intelligence, political stability, and conflict prevention. The insights gleaned may inform future electoral strategies and enhance the effective ess of intelligence-led initiatives in safeguarding democratic processes from the destabilizing forces of social conflict. Ultimately, this study underscores the imperative for a holistic and collaborative approach in harnessing the power of intelligence to foster resilient and peaceful democratic societies.



<https://jurnal.usk.ac.id/riwayat>

Keywords: Intelligence, Social Conflict, 2019 Elections.

Introduction

Democracy originated from Athens, Ancient Greece in the 5th century BC. It comes from the word, demos means people, and kratos or cratein means government, so that it is defined as government of the people, or government of the people, by the people and for the people (Gunawan et al., 2019). In a democratic state, the people are not just the subjects of policies but the determiners of policies. As a democratic nation, Indonesia upholds the principle of popular sovereignty, where the people have the right to choose their leaders and representatives through general elections. The active involvement of the community in every stage of the electoral process, both in planning and implementation, is a key characteristic of a healthy democracy. This demonstrates that elections are not

only the domain of political elites but belong to the entire Indonesian population ([Samsudin et al., 2020](#)).

General Elections are a democratic process to directly elect representatives or government officials by the citizens of a country. General Elections are a crucial mechanism in modern democratic systems that enable people to participate in determining the leadership and policies of the state ([Sari, 2023](#)). In an election, voters typically select individuals they believe are most qualified to govern a country. This selection should not be based on background, ideology, or political affiliation, but rather on integrity, competence, and a clear vision for advancing the nation ([Lever, 2023](#)).

Elections are a democratic phenomenon held in Indonesia every five years. Presidential elections, in particular, are significant moments for Indonesia, marked by high political dynamics and widespread public enthusiasm ([Syafii et al., 2023](#)). However, beneath the excitement of the democratic celebration, the potential for social conflict due to political differences and sensitive issues also looms. In the 2019 presidential election in Indonesia, the most frequently raised sensitive issues were religion, politics, public policy, and social justice and welfare ([Qodir, et al., 2022](#)). In this crucial situation, the role of intelligence becomes the frontline in maintaining national stability and security ([Sumawiharja et al., 2021](#)).

The Constitutional Court, through Decision Number 14/PUU-XI/2013, mandated the conduct of the 2019 general elections as a simultaneous election for President, the People's Consultative Assembly (DPR) at the national and regional levels, Regional People's Representative Councils (DPRD), and Regional Representative Council (DPD). The simultaneous general elections on April 17, 2019, proceeded relatively smoothly, safely, and peacefully. However, it should be noted that the 2019 elections faced two major issues that deeply saddened the Indonesian nation. First, the deaths of hundreds of polling station officials (KPPS) and other state officials. Not less than 527 KPPS officials died, and 11,239 individuals fell ill during the voting and vote-counting process of the 2019 elections. Second, allegations from one of the participating camps, the supporters of candidate pair 02 Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno, regarding the occurrence of structured, systematic, and massive fraud that allegedly favored the opposing candidate pair 01 Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin. As a result, supporters of Prabowo-Sandiaga Uno staged demonstrations in various regions, demanding the annulment of the election results due to alleged fraud. What began as peaceful demonstrations turned into riots in several areas in Jakarta, particularly around the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) and the Constitutional Court. The protesters burned and damaged public facilities, attacked security forces, and engaged in clashes. These riots resulted in loss of life and injuries, as well as significant material damage ([Aziz et al., 2020](#)).

The social conflict during the 2019 elections serves as a valuable lesson for Indonesia. The public's enthusiasm, coupled with high political dynamics, and the potential for social conflict, should be anticipated. Internal party conflicts, conflicts between social organizations, and the spread of misinformation are triggering factors that can disrupt the stability of democracy. The dissemination of information on social media is indicated to be prone to becoming propaganda, manipulation, and persuasion for negative campaigns ([Helmi et al., 2020](#)). Recognizing this situation, the role of intelligence becomes crucial in mitigating the risk of social conflict during the 2019 elections ([Communication and Information Office of East Java, 2019](#)).

In disaster risk mitigation, intelligence, as a vital state function, is tasked with collecting, processing, and analyzing information from both domestic and foreign sources

regarding potential threats, including the risk of social conflict ([Demirtas et al., 2014](#)). In the 2019 elections, the role of intelligence became even more critical in mitigating the risk of conflict that could disrupt the smoothness and stability of democracy. As the political temperature rose in the lead-up to the elections, there were concerns that it might lead to social conflict ([Brimob Corps of the Indonesian National Police, 2019](#)).

This article will examine the role of intelligence in mitigating the risk of social conflict during the 2019 elections. In the upcoming discussion, we will explore how intelligence works, from identifying potential conflicts to taking preventive measures and assisting in handling conflicts that arise. Through this discussion, it is hoped that we can understand the importance of the intelligence role in safeguarding democracy and national security, especially in critical moments like the 2019 elections.

Methods

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a literature study approach. Data for this research is obtained from various reading sources such as books, scientific journals, online articles, and official documents related to intelligence and mitigation of social conflict disaster risk in the 2019 Indonesian General Election. The literature study approach is chosen because this research aims to analyze and synthesize existing knowledge about the role of intelligence in mitigating the risk of social conflict disasters in the 2019 Indonesian General Election. By using a qualitative descriptive method, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive and in-depth description of the topic.

Results

According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), conflict is defined as a dispute or disagreement. Social conflict is a comprehensive dispute among members of society in various aspects of life. The emergence of conflict is caused by several factors, such as differences in feelings, opinions, or beliefs; differences in cultural backgrounds shaping individuals; varying interests; and the occurrence of revolutions or rapid social changes in society ([BPBD NTB, 2023](#)). In Law No. 7 of 2012, it is stated that the impact of social conflict is significant, leading to the disruption of national stability and hindrance to national development. As per Law No. 24 of 2007, mitigation involves a series of efforts to reduce disaster risks, whether through physical development or awareness-raising and improving the ability to face disaster threats. Mitigation aims to recognize risks, raise awareness of disaster risks, plan for disaster management, and so on. Disaster mitigation encompasses all efforts from prevention before a disaster occurs to handling after a disaster ([BPBD Kab. Bogor, 2022](#)).

Indonesia, as a unitary state, inherently carries vulnerability due to its diversity in ethnicity, language, religion, race, and ethnic groups, which can contribute to conflict potential. The increasing prevalence and extent of conflicts signify a decline in nationalism within society. If not managed properly, this situation could lead to national disintegration. This issue is complex, resulting from the accumulation of ideological, political, economic, socio-cultural, and security problems that overlap. If not addressed promptly and at its root causes, it could become a prolonged issue ([BPBD Semarang, 2022](#)). Elections are a democratic phenomenon held in Indonesia every five years ([Sumawiharja, et al., 2021](#)). Elections are a crucial element in upholding the sovereignty of the people, placing the people as the primary point holding primary sovereignty. Indonesia has conducted five legislative elections and four presidential elections post-

reform, starting from 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019. The 2019 elections were the first simultaneous elections combining the selection of members of the DPR, DPD, and DPRD as well as the presidential and vice-presidential elections. The 2019 elections were conducted based on Law No. 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections (Election Law) ([Rundengan, 2023](#)).

Conflicts during election periods are often rooted in differences in views and political choices. Generally, conflicts during elections arise from differences in views on values and cultures ([Silangen, 2020](#)). The 2019 elections, held simultaneously for the selection of members of the DPR, DPD, President, Provincial DPRD, and District/City DPRD, were considered the most challenging elections ever held in Indonesia. Despite claims of peacefulness, the elections took a toll, resulting in the death of election officials due to exhaustion. Fatigue was not only experienced by officials and organizers but also by voters. New issues arose with allegations of fraud from supporters of Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno, favoring the Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin camp ([Aziz, et al., 2020](#)).

Political tension peaked after the announcement of the KPU recapitulation results in favor of the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin pair. Supporters of Prabowo-Sandiaga Uno demonstrated in various areas, demanding the cancellation of the presidential election results due to alleged fraud. Initially peaceful demonstrations turned into riots in several points in Jakarta, particularly around Bawaslu and the Constitutional Court. The crowd burned and damaged public facilities, attacked security forces, and engaged in clashes ([Aji, 2019](#)). These riots resulted in 10 casualties and others injured, as well as significant material losses ([Manurung, 2019](#)). The government took decisive steps to calm the situation, deploying security forces and patrolling in vulnerable areas. The government also restricted social media features to prevent the spread of fake news during the May 22, 2019 riots ([Madrim, 2019](#)). Although the riots were brought under control, scars and trauma still linger in society. This event serves as a valuable lesson for Indonesia to strengthen democracy and enhance political maturity. Hence, it is crucial to mitigate the risk of social conflict during elections to maintain national unity and prevent similar tragedies in the future. This is where the role of intelligence becomes extremely crucial in mitigating the risk of conflicts that could disrupt the smoothness and stability of democracy during the 2019 presidential election. Intelligence plays a role in the information processing process. Intelligence involves a series of planned and directed activities to seek, collect, process, and interpret information. This information is then conveyed to leaders or authorities to assist them in planning, policy-making, and taking actions to reduce calculated risks ([Maarif, 2024](#)).

Based on Law No. 17 of 2011 regarding the State Intelligence, three universal definitions of intelligence are included: (a) Knowledge, which is processed information for policy formulation and decision-making; (b) Organization, which is an entity used as a container tasked with the authority to carry out intelligence functions and activities; (c) Activity, which includes all efforts, work, activities, and actions in conducting investigation, security, and gathering functions. With the four main elements provided by Law No. 17/2011, there are at least four main elements underlying the definition and concept of intelligence, namely: (1) the existence of intelligence information; (2) the existence of strategic analysis; (3) the potential threat; and (4) efforts to secure national interests and security ([Bahtiar, et al., 2021](#)).

The following are the roles of intelligence in identifying the potential for social conflict during the 2019 presidential election. First, intelligence acts as an early detector of potential threats and provides early warnings regarding various forms and natures of

dangers/surprises/threats, such as social conflicts. Through data collection and analysis from various sources, including social media, mass media, and intelligence networks in the field, intelligence can map vulnerabilities and early indicators of conflict. Intelligence monitors the political, social, and economic situations in various regions to detect potential friction between groups, provocations, and the spread of issues related to ethnicity, religion, race, and societal groups. Intelligence must maintain an objective and neutral stance, reflecting independence and impartiality, as all actions are based on facts and unaffected by personal or group interests and do not depend on external parties but solely for the benefit of the nation and state. Second, intelligence plays a front-line role in conflict prevention. The results of intelligence analysis form the basis for the government and security forces in formulating prevention strategies and measures. Intelligence provides information and recommendations related to potential vulnerabilities, groups that may trigger conflict, and vulnerable areas. Intelligence also conducts intelligence operations to detect and thwart provocative actions and propaganda that can trigger conflict, as an effort to prevent and/or counteract activities that harm national interests and security. Third, intelligence assists in handling conflict situations. Intelligence provides real-time information about the situation on the ground to security forces to help them take appropriate and effective actions. Intelligence also assists in identifying actors behind the conflict and gathers evidence for legal processes ([Katuuk, et al., 2023](#)).

In the events of May 22, 2019, related to the social conflict during the 2019 presidential election, intelligence stated that there were several masses carrying firearms such as revolvers and Glocks, along with ammunition. Intelligence information also indicated attempts to target officers, public officials, and the masses. During the incident, there were 41 suspects and six terrorist networks ([CNN Indonesia, 2019](#)). This certainly indicates significant potential danger if these actions are not anticipated and controlled. The success of intelligence in identifying the potential riots and targeting efforts serves as tangible evidence of the crucial role of intelligence in mitigating social conflict disasters during the 2019 presidential election. The events of May 22, 2019, also serve as a valuable lesson for the Indonesian people. There are still gaps and weaknesses in the intelligence system that need strengthening. There is a need for improved coordination and communication among relevant institutions, as well as the development of more advanced intelligence technology to anticipate increasingly complex threats. In addition, the participation of the community is crucial in supporting intelligence efforts. The public can assist by reporting suspicious information to security forces and increasing awareness of potential provocations and fake news.

The importance of the intelligence role in mitigating social conflict disasters during the 2019 presidential election serves as a reminder that national security stability is a collective responsibility. Intelligence, security forces, and the public must collaborate to prevent and counter potential threats that could disrupt democracy and national security.

Conclusion

The 2019 elections marked a crucial moment in the history of Indonesian democracy. Behind the public enthusiasm, the potential for social conflict due to differing political choices and sensitive issues loomed large. In this critical situation, the role of intelligence stood at the forefront in safeguarding stability and national security. This research indicates that the role of intelligence in mitigating the risk of social conflict disasters during the 2019 elections is essential and crucial. Intelligence plays a role in: 1)

Identifying conflict potential: Intelligence gathers data and analyzes information from various sources to map vulnerabilities and early indicators of conflict, 2) Conflict prevention: The results of intelligence analysis form the basis for the government and security forces in formulating strategies and prevention measures. Intelligence also conducts operations to detect and thwart provocative actions and propaganda that can trigger conflict, 3) Handling conflict situations: Intelligence provides real-time information about the situation on the ground to security forces to assist them in taking appropriate and effective actions. Intelligence also aids in identifying actors behind the conflict and gathers evidence for legal processes.

The events of May 22, 2019, serve as a real example of how intelligence successfully identified the potential for riots and targeting efforts. This success underscores the importance of the intelligence role in maintaining national security stability. However, there are still gaps and weaknesses in the intelligence system that need strengthening. There is a need for improved coordination and communication among relevant institutions, as well as the development of more advanced intelligence technology to anticipate increasingly complex threats. In addition, the participation of the community is crucial in supporting intelligence efforts. The public can assist by reporting suspicious information to security forces and increasing awareness of potential provocations and fake news. The importance of the intelligence role in mitigating social conflict disasters during the 2019 elections serves as a reminder that national security stability is a collective responsibility. Intelligence, security forces, and the public must collaborate to prevent and counter potential threats that could disrupt democracy and national security.

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