

The Challenge of Identity Politics in The 2024 Election

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Abstract

Identity and representation are two significant things in human life. While religion and ethnicity are two things that become the identity and representation of humans. The democratic process in Indonesia is inseparable from the political orientation of identity and representation. This research is qualitative in nature, focusing on the case of the 2018-2022 DKI Regional Election in the second round. The case will be analyzed using the theory of identity politics and political representation. The results show that identity politics orientation and political representation affect the democratic process. Democratization that upholds freedom is the basis for every individual to actualize themselves, including in political matters. The individual freedom guaranteed by the constitution in Indonesia reflects the high popularity of this democratic system. However, this freedom has ultimately made the divide between identities (religion, ethnicity, language, gender, etc.) in Indonesia clearer, especially in relation to the nation's political issues. The issue of religion and nationalism are two identities that are currently being debated in Indonesia. The polemics of identity politics are increasingly tapering until the emergence of truth claims that one interest group is better than other interest groups, this interest affair then begins to divide the nation that previously upheld differences.

Keywords: Politics, Identity, Religion and Nationalism

Introduction

Indonesia has many different tribes, beliefs, and cultures in various regions or places. In addition, the rapid development of the times and modernization also affects the lives of Indonesian people today. The many differences make a different identity of each community in it. Each community forms a culture according to the background of the identity it carries. This is something that naturally happens in Indonesia, which has many cultures and traditions in it, therefore the emergence of a group based on the identity it carries. Groups that come from these identities greatly affect the current political situation. We can see today, that the course of politics in this country is stronger based on "identity politics" either from the government or the community itself (Sholikin, 2018a). With the existence of "identity politics" in Indonesia, there are many pros and cons that occur in the current political situation. We can see this with the emergence of political movements that make the situation even hotter, because of the strengthening of the image of identity in today's politics. The improvement of the democratic system that is continuously launched by various

parties in the government system in Indonesia does not always provide a sense of justice for every layer of society. This is actually done to guarantee every right owned by citizens, so that freedom is an equalization of opportunities for every individual in it.

Democracy in Indonesia itself basically continues to be dynamic with the issue of diversity, which often triggers disharmony between groups. Differences on the basis of diversity in Indonesia have recorded a lot of history as the main factor in the emergence of conflicts, such as conflicts between religions, between ethnicities, between tribes, etc. These conflicts are increasingly developing not only as conflicts between one identity but have entered a new phase as conflicts between identities. The expansion of conflicts between identities is often encountered as part of the democratization process, which is more accurately said to be “wild democracy”. “Wild democracy” is not limited to the concept of democracy that should be applied in the life of the state (Sholikin, 2021b).

The conflict between nationalism and religious identity is currently getting more and more tense to the point of disturbing the stability of the state. The

different views on political identity between these two identity groups give birth to various issues and become for the wider community caused by the presence of propaganda and claims between groups for the truth of the identity they believe in, leading to the emergence of pro-government groups and anti-government groups. Differences in identity politics in Indonesia are important to study as an effort to draw a common thread from the differences that exist so that political stability is maintained (Sholikin, 2021a). As a country with a background of diversity, Indonesia has proven that from the time of independence until today, unity can be maintained.

Identity politics based on similarities in identity is often the main cause of political conflict, especially with regard to tensions between superior and inferior groups or between majorities and minorities. Not least in Indonesia, the understanding of liberal democracy that glorifies Pancasila above all makes religion a substance whose existence is considered a threat to the diversity that exists in Indonesia, especially against religious minorities.

The positive thing that can be taken from identity politics is that there

is an effort to preserve the cultural values that characterize the group concerned, so that the strengthening of culture will not fade and disappear In the life of the nation and state as well as the life of multiculturalism in Indonesia, national, ethnic and religious identities play a very important role In today's contemporary political era, identity politics threatens the attitude of nationalism and pluralism. This will lead to socio-economic, socio-political, social and socio-cultural changes (Sholikin, 2019). Ethnic and religious identity are two things that become elements of social change. The process of religious identity politics will have a direct or indirect impact on social change and vice versa.

Research Method

The method used in this research is a qualitative research method with a normative method literature study. Literature study is a research that examines document studies, namely using various secondary data such as laws and regulations, court decisions, legal theories, and can be in the form of scholars' opinions. This normative type of research uses qualitative analysis, namely by explaining existing data with words or statements not with numbers.

Discussion

Definition of Identity Politics

Identity politics is a political tool of a group such as ethnicity, tribe, culture, religion or others for certain purposes, for example as a form of resistance or as a tool to show the identity of a group. Identity is politicized through extreme interpretations, which aim to gain support from people who feel 'the same', whether by race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements. Puritanism or the teaching of purity or orthodoxy also plays a major role in producing and distributing the idea of 'goodness' to members on the one hand, while on the other hand closing the reason for resistance or critical thinking of members of certain identity groups. Identity politics, according to Abdillah, is a politics whose main focus of study and problems concerns differences based on physical body assumptions, the politics of ethnicity or primordialism, and conflicts of religion, belief, or language. Identity politics is present as a resistant narrative of marginalized groups due to the failure of the mainstream narrative to accommodate minority interests; positively, identity politics presents a mediation vehicle for voicing aspirations for the oppressed (Sholikin, 2018b).

Identity politics is considered a powerful weapon by political elites to reduce the popularity and electability of their political rivals or efforts to gain political support from the public. Ethnic and religious issues are two things that are always included in the identity politics agenda of the elites in Indonesia, especially the conditions of Indonesian society where the atmosphere of primordialism and sectarianism is still quite strong so it is very easy to win public sympathy, trigger anger and mass sentiment by spreading ethnic and religious issues. In recent years, identity politics has appeared in many forms, ranging from feminism in Europe, the proletarian movement in Latin America, the anti-apartheid movement in Africa, the upheaval of Zionism vis a vis the recognition of the Palestinian nation, the summer spring movement in the Middle East, the push for ethnic or tribal-based regional expansion to the separatism movement in our country are the faces of identity politics. The spectrum of identity politics is wide, from authoritarianism to democracy, from equality to partisanship, from modernity to local wisdom, from nation states to religious states.

Our domestic politics are often in a state of instability, especially after independence where we changed government systems ranging from guided, parliamentary to Pancasila democracy. The New Order era was all centralized to the central government held by The Smiling General, Soeharto, and the current era, the reform era, democracy in Indonesia has been considered quite mature and much better than the previous eras. However, although the state of democracy in our country is getting better every year, there is one thing that cannot be separated from the political journey in Indonesia, namely Identity Politics. We may only be familiar with the word Identity Politics around 2017 where at that time the DKI Jakarta Governor Election was held. The loud and sporadic identity politics at that time made the community segregated and divided into two opposing camps, the incumbent versus the opposition. Cebong versus Kampret. What is the real meaning of identity politics? The description of identity politics is inseparable from the meaning of identity itself. defines identity or identity as recognition of an individual or a certain group that becomes a whole unit characterized by entering or being involved in a particular group or group.

This incorporation into a particular group or group is certainly inseparable from a sense of equality based on an identity. This identity or identity comes in various forms and types such as gender identity, religion, ethnicity, profession, etc. So that an association based on a common identity will form an identity group. Identity politics itself is a description of the political identity adopted by citizens with regard to their political direction. Identity politics was born from a social group that felt intimidated and discriminated against by the domination of the state and government in organizing the government system. This then became the basis for the birth of identity politics in state issues (Sholikin, 2013).

From this it can be concluded that identity politics is actually a way of doing politics based on common identity, in Indonesia itself identity politics is often narrowed down into two groups, namely nationalists and religious. I will not discuss why it can be divided into two groups as above, but I will discuss how the impact of identity politics on our nation and state. Identity politics provides a large space for the creation of balance and opposition towards the democratization process of a country. If

not managed properly and wisely, it will lead to the destruction of state stability. The conflict between the two identities can threaten the stability of the country if the government does not have the political will to mediate this issue. Not only political interests are at stake but also the interests of the wider community, because identity politics as the politics of difference is a challenge to the achievement of an established democratization system. For example, during the colonial era we were able to unite because we had one identity, namely the Indonesian nation, we were able to fight the colonizers because of the spirit of unity, however, if mismanaged, then identity politics will make the community divided (Solikhin, 2017).

However, if mismanaged, then identity politics will divide the community like during the DKI elections. Which until now the community is increasingly compartmentalized and divided not only in its political life but also social and cultural. This, if allowed to continue, will tear the stability of the nation. And this is quite unfortunate considering that the differences we have have actually been our strength, now it has become a weapon that destroys us from within our own nation. The solution

is only one, dialog. Dialogue with anyone who has a different view from us will open a new perspective for us to understand how they behave and choose their stance. Because supposedly between nationalism and religion cannot be clashed.

Historical Roots of Identity Politics in Indonesia

It is well understood that identity politics as a source and means of politics in the struggle for political power is increasingly visible in current political practice. Especially before the grand democratic party that will be held in 2024 in Indonesia through a big agenda called PEMILU at this time. Actually, Donald L Morowitz 1998, one of the political experts from Duke University has defined identity politics as giving a very firm line to determine who will be included and who will be rejected. The line of determination will certainly seem unchangeable. Therefore, the status of both members and non-members will appear to be permanent.

Scholars working on other identity politics discourses, however, have tried to reinterpret it in a simpler and more operational logic. Agnes Heller, for example, has defined identity politics as a political movement whose focus of

attention is on difference as a major political category. Agnes Heller describes identity politics in this case as politics, which is focused on a distinction, whereas the main category is the promise of freedom, tolerance, and free play, although in the end it will give rise to patterns of intolerance, violence and ethnic conflict. Finally, identity politics can also include racism, bio-feminism, environmentalism, and ethnic strife. How does Nationalism play a role in political practice? In this case the discussion is related to nationalism from an anthropological perspective, as cited in Gellner (1983), that nationalism is defined as an ideology that assumes that cultural boundaries must coincide with political boundaries, meaning that the state must include only people of the "same type". Nationalism emerged as a response to industrialization and the disengagement of people from primordial ties to kinship, religion and local communities. In Indonesian history, it is said that the role of nationalism ideology in Indonesian politics was started by a group of young men who were members of the Budi Utomo organization.

Through this organization, it is then seen as a symbol of the birth of

nationalism awareness among the natives by initiating the "Youth Pledge" as a political commitment to aspire to their spirit of nationalism. 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 represented generally by political elites with their respective articulations.

The regional expansion movement can be seen as a form of identity politics. The issues of justice and regional development are central to their political discourse, which is influenced more by the ambitions of local elites to emerge as leaders, a problem that is not always easy to explain. Of course, this is different from the understanding of the history of nationalism in Indonesia, which was originally an ideology, as a form of resistance to colonialism that began with the publication of the Medan Prijaji newspaper owned by the first indigenous press entrepreneur and journalist R.M. Tirtoadisoerjo.

His critical attitude was always expressed in the form of writings that certainly made many Dutch East Indies

officials furious, as well as revelations of corruption scandals within the colonial bureaucracy. As a result, in 1912 the newspaper was liquidated on the grounds of debt and fraud, and Tirtoadisoerjo was banished to Ambon. In contrast, in the current contemporary political era, identity politics threatens the attitude of nationalism and pluralism, namely a reality of insecurity experienced by the Indonesian people related to the strengthening of identity politics. Therefore, when traced from Indonesian history, the emerging identity politics tend to be charged with ethnicity, religion and political ideology. Related to the condition of the Indonesian nation which is multiculturalism, identity politics can be an interesting study material to be examined if it is related to strengthening nationalism.

How the Urgency of Identity Politics in the 2024 General Election

Indonesia. The use of religious issues in gathering political support has a big hole that can be filled by irresponsible people who really want to divide Indonesia. If this continues, a low spirit of unity will increase the potential for polarization of society and even political elites. Furthermore, identity politics also has the potential to destroy

the principles of democracy. We know that the democratic system has become the system of government adopted by Indonesia given the pluralism of its society. If populism in identity politics becomes stronger, there will no longer be social justice, equal rights for all Indonesians, and even freedom for others and oneself.

Religious-based identity politics used in political campaigns will also create a divide between religious groups in Indonesia. The strong pressure from radical religious groups in Indonesia will indirectly have a negative impact on other religious adherents. Religious minorities will feel discriminated against, which will lead to divisions between religious communities. Learning from the experience of the 2019 simultaneous elections, it is possible that these issues will re-emerge in the upcoming 2024 elections. Past events have a great opportunity to be echoed by radical groups for personal gain. Likewise, by groups that basically want division between the majority and minorities in Indonesia.

Eliminating the practice of identity politics is one of the important homework for Indonesia ahead of the 2024 elections. This is especially

important because it is closely related to equality of rights, community unity, and democratic principles. As a multicultural and democratic country, it is appropriate that all people have equal rights in elections. Not only Javanese people can become leaders of the country, but people outside Java can too. Not only Muslims can become leaders of the country, non-Muslims can too. In the sense that a person's right to become a leader or representative of the people is not based on ethnicity, religion, race, or ethnicity alone, but rather on the ability of those people to lead and protect the community.

Conclusion

The divisions that arise due to political groupings based on religious identity and nationalism cause disruption of state stability characterized by the emergence of a crisis of confidence in the government, the spread of hoax news, persecution, limited space for democracy, etc. The substance of the existence of religious identity politics is not the main factor that contributes to the destruction of national integrity in Indonesia, but nationalism identity is also a trigger for the birth of disharmony in identity politics in Indonesia today. Religious identity is one of the

foundations for the establishment of the nationalism identity of the Indonesian nation, so identity politics in Indonesia should be responded to by providing the widest possible space and access to the public to prove that religion and nationalism are in line and have one goal, namely maintaining the sovereignty of the Indonesian state, not allowing the conflict between the two to expand by presenting policies and news that contain propaganda.

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