

# Radicalism and Political Identity in Indonesia President Election 2019

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**Abstract**— While mass media throughout the world preach about the defeat of ISIS in the Middle East, Indonesia is carrying out general elections, namely the 2019 Legislative Election and Presidential Election. The 2019 General Election is a means for the public to obtain information about ideas offered by candidates before making choices at polling stations sound. But there was a lot of noise during the campaign period, when the winner was announced, and culminated in the riots in Jakarta on 21-22 May 2019. This happened because during the 2019 campaign period, it was still dominated by campaigns that capitalized ethnic, religious, racial issues, and intergroup (SARA), identity politics, fake news content and hate speech, and mutual mockery between supporters regarding non-substantive issues. Behind such phenomena, there are extremist-radical groups who want to take advantage of the situation, or 'play in turbid water'. Those who were identified as militant, hardliners, radicals and terrorists planned to carry out terror with ideological goals which they had long been afraid of. Identity politics is a new revival of the resistance movement against globalization. The issue of identity politics can basically be used in democracy as long as it is within a reasonable corridor while prioritizing the values of unity considering identity is the social reality from which we come. Identity politics are widely used by politicians to sharpen differences that lead to SARA, especially issues of religion and ethnicity.

**Keywords**— *radikalism, terorism, political identity, president election.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

If we look at the flow of events that made headlines in world newspapers in recent months, it is difficult to avoid the feeling that something very basic has happened to the ISIS Caliphate, namely the defeat of ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) in Syria by a joint US-led force. In 2014, ISIS was declared by Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi, and in 2019 it was destroyed. Short time for the reign of the 'Caliphate' which is full of blood and tears. However, many see that ISIS's defeat was only temporary. The appeal of ISIS seems to still fascinate its followers in the Middle East and throughout the world. They are still 'ready' to make movements or amaliyat. ISIS sleep cells are still possible to 'blow themselves up'. Despite the collapse, the power of

ISIS is still dangerous, because ISIS still has leaders, troops, facilitators, resources and ideologies that are the main 'fuel' of their movements.

When many newspapers around the world (both print and electronic) preach about ISIS's defeat in Syria (Middle East), Indonesia is carrying out a democratic feast, the 2019 Presidential Election. The presidential election this time is indeed tinged with issues and upheaval that drain the mind and energy. On May 21-22 2019, when Muslims carried out the fasting of Ramadan, as written in many newspapers, there were demonstrations and riots that claimed lives. The blood of many demonstrators was spilled when thousands of Prabowo's supporters took to the streets of the capital city of Jakarta. Prabowo's supporters held a demonstration in front of the General Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) building, after the General Election Commission (KPU) officially declared Jokowi to win the 2019 Presidential Election with a vote of 55.5 percent of 154 million ballots. Two days of protests and riots filled with violence resulted in the deaths of eight rioters and many injuries to the demonstrators. Hundreds of other protesters were injured when police fired rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons at protesters who threw stones at police and Molotov cocktails. More than 400 people have been arrested for involvement in riots.[1] Inevitably, many people think that the 2019 presidential election is the loudest general election since the reform era.

Actually, the 2019 general election is a means for the public to obtain information about the ideas offered by candidates before making a choice at the polling place. However, there was a lot of noise during the campaign period, during the announcement of the winners, and culminated in the riots on 21-22 May 2019. This happened because during the 2019 campaign period, it was still dominated by campaigns that raised ethnic, religious, racial issues and intergroup (SARA), identity politics, fake news content and hate speech, and mutual ridicule between supporters regarding non-substantive issues. This condition is also exacerbated by massive campaign mobility on social media, through mobilizing influencers and buzzer forces in order to accelerate the influence and spread of issues. Let alone pushing for a quality electoral process, this phenomenon

adds to the polarization in society. Political identity even tends to be more brutal in its use in the 2019 Election. Polarization is increasingly strengthened accompanied by inter-identity support that is increasingly distant. Therefore many are worried that if this situation develops further, it will have an impact on the unity and integrity of the Indonesian nation.

Related to the phenomenon as mentioned above and behind the sharp polarization in the community, many have analyzed that there are radical-extremist groups who want to take advantage of the situation. Those identified as militant groups, hardliners, radicals and terrorists want to take advantage of the momentum by committing terror in order to achieve the ideological goals that they have been holding. For them, the 2019 presidential election is the best momentum to continue their struggle, or at least show their existence, because of the noisy socio-political situation. This rowdy situation became a 'way' to smooth out their utopian ideals, namely the establishment of an ISIS government. The relationship between domestic workers and employers is an informal relationship and that is why there are no legal provisions that are presented to regulate their relationship. The results of Retno Dwiyantri's research revealed that the psychological contract between the employer and the domestic workers was a reciprocal relationship which was manifested in the compatibility between income and obligations with family relations approaching.[2]

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach that is a research approach without using statistical numbers but by descriptive presentation that is trying to describe a symptom or event, an event that is happening at this time, where the researcher tries to take pictures of events and events which are the focus of attention then described as is. This study uses a case study design to see the social phenomena that occur, the background, and the effects of the event.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In April and May 2019, during the month of Ramadhan, we witness the 'clean sweep' by Detachment 88 against radical groups, pro-ISIS cells in Indonesia. The Jamaah Ansarud Daulah (JAD) congregation which is a 'fraction' of ISIS is believed to be carrying out terror or amaliyat by taking the momentum of the 2019 Presidential Election, which at that time still left many problems and conflicts among the people. Previously it had happened overseas, a very heartbreaking tragedy, namely suicide bombing, on Easter Sunday 2019 in Sri Lanka. This fact shows how fortunate Indonesia has been in the last few years having 'low caliber' terrorists and 'high caliber' anti-terror police. Indonesia was also fortunate to have a stable domestic political environment, even though there were disputes in the general election. With the enormity of suicide bombings in Sri Lanka, it is still important to continue to assess how pro-ISIS groups in Indonesia are developing. It seems that there are those who play a role in local, regional and international roles. Like in Sri Lanka, the pro-ISIS groups in

Indonesia did not necessarily give up on ISIS's defeat in the Middle East. They were even more courageous to fight clandestine according to ISIS's main direction. In Sri Lanka, intelligence services are more focused on the Tamil and Sinhalese communities than on those who are radicalized, thus missing out on the growing threat. In Indonesia, pro-ISIS groups are always under the supervision of the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), and the state police (Special Detachment 88).

Radical and pro-ISIS groups in Indonesia have indeed weakened. The weakening of the terrorist group was actually caused more by a massive wave of arrests by the police (Detachment 88) after the suicide bombing in May 2018 in Surabaya, rather than by dramatic developments in Syria. The biggest arrests of radical and pro-ISIS groups in Indonesia, such as the Jamaah Ansharud Daulah (JAD), have damaged the organizational structure even though it still leaves some territorial units that remain determined to act alone (lone wolf). Many cells emerged that had never had an affiliation with JAD or with other existing pro-ISIS organizations such as the Jamaah Ansharul Khilafah (JAK). There were also cells consisting of ISIS supporters who had never been interested in JAD, but tried to find fellow jihadists through online and offline recruitment.

How to trace the steps and existence of pro-ISIS groups in Indonesia so far, we can look at the results of reports from the Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC).[3] Pro-ISIS cells that emerged from 2015 onwards had better capabilities regarding the construction of bombs guided by Bahrin Naim. Bahrin Naim repeatedly tried to organize independent and inciting pro-ISIS cells for acts of violence in Indonesia from his base in Syria. Their actions and strategies are not quite successful because some do not have experience in conducting terror operations and have obstacles in the practice of terror faced by terrorist operators in Indonesia.

From the time Bahrin Naim was first interested in ISIS, he supported the concept of autonomous cells. He considers JAD as a feudal organization where the command of amir must be followed without question and seniority is more important than creativity. JAD only issues two orders: migrating to Syria or fighting. Since when ISIS was attacked by coalition forces in the last half of 2014, Bahrin Naim's strategy is to carry out attacks wherever and whenever possible. The existence of small cells is the best vehicle to do it. Bahrin Naim's belief in the importance of such cells intensified after he studied how ISIS succeeded in building the Caliphate by following the strategy outlined in Abu Bakar An Najdi's *Idarah Tawawusy* book. The key to political victory and the ISIS caliphate is to make the ruling government weak, namely by creating social-political chaos. If autonomous cells that carry out jihad are quite numerous and isolated from each other, according to them, they can carry out repetitive actions in such a way that the law enforcers or the police cannot cope.

Although autonomous cells are growing like this, in fact their terror capabilities are alleged to remain low. The final act in Indonesia was when the pro-ISIS terror group claimed that those who carried out suicide bombings in several churches in Surabaya in 2018 were members. Many of the

pro-ISIS autonomous cells in Indonesia have actually been hampered by their own geographical distribution factors, if they were formed online. In addition, the development is also hampered because they do not have inspection procedures, cannot conduct training or indoctrination, let alone how to prevent them from being detected by security forces.

The emergence of organized terrorism has indeed receded. At present, what is feared is the generation of lone wolf terrorists, namely those who move on their own without networks. The generation of lone wolf terrorists learn terrorism from the internet. The deterioration of the terrorist organization (tandzim) has now become the main discourse in the study of terrorism. This is what is labeled as "leaderless jihad," which approaches the "system" (Nizam). According to some experts, groups such as Al-Qaeda have ceased to exist as a centralized entity. They no longer control large resources, run training camps, or are in a position to direct operations. Al-Qaeda, for example, is no longer an organization and is nothing more than a social network that only inspires global jihad. Terrorism has been divided and has become itself.[4]

Autonomous terrorist cells generally have a short life span. The aim of these terrorist cells is to plan acts of violence or terror. If there are arrests by security forces, the group will disband, and fall apart. The closer to actually carrying out terror operations, the higher the risk of being caught. Whether the terror effort failed or succeeded, it was generally followed by the rapid arrest of key players by the police. But there is also a constant process of grouping and rearranging, so that the loss of a terrorist cell is quickly followed by the emergence of other terrorist cells. The danger is that if someone with technical expertise and combat experience back from Syria then doctrines and trains some ISIS supporters, it certainly becomes a very serious and dangerous threat.

Hundreds of Indonesians have been deported from Turkey after trying to join ISIS. However, those who did not have combat experience with ISIS in Syria, it was admitted that no one returned to their homeland. However, there are still many autonomous groups of pro-ISIS terrorists in Indonesia who are still committed to violence. Nothing indicates that this is likely to change in the near future. This network has a genealogy that is connected uninterruptedly with its leaders in Indonesia and abroad. Indonesian security forces must be aware that after the Sri Lankan bombing, the churches may have become important targets for the pro-ISIS terror group. Indonesia has been fortunate so far that terrorists generally have little combat experience and the ability to think big. If they had better imagination and leadership, these pro-ISIS autonomous cells might be able to carry out terror with far greater damage.

The idea of individual jihad (fardiyah jihad) has a special appeal for ISIS sympathizers who cannot go to Syria, or who have no relationship with larger organizations such as JAD, or who have become members of JAD but whose leaders have been arrested. In several case studies and research conducted, some of the characteristics of these autonomic cells are prominent. They are generally very small groups, namely three or four men. They don't have

firearms. Therefore, attacks on the police have a practical purpose, namely to get weapons. They dare to do that because of its strong ideology. The target is mostly local, except for one group that wants to attack the Myanmar embassy; they don't know how to plan a serious operation so they are quickly detected.

The growth of pro-ISIS autonomous cells in Indonesia seems to be the same as the old pattern. Such cells have emerged in the past as a result of the crackdown on the security forces and the government against the dominant group. Autonomous cells also arise due to personal competition among prospective leaders, due to ideological debates between them, or the desire to show sympathy for their colleagues caught by the security forces. The existence of small cells means that sooner or later, one of them is likely to think of copying the type of attack that occurs elsewhere. It may be easy to ignore or underestimate the quality of Indonesian terrorists, but as long as they continue to come into contact with ISIS ideology, they remain a serious security threat.

The threat of the pro-ISIS group detected its movement during the 2019 Presidential Election. Even though they do not use their ISIS identity frankly, they use 'movements' of other movements or act individually. After ISIS forces in Syria were besieged and defeated, their leaders also called on all affiliated networks throughout the world to launch terrorist acts in their respective places. Terrorist observer, Al Chaidar, said that the police must be vigilant about the movement of the JAD terrorist network (Jamaah Ansharud Daulah) which is still active ahead of the 2019 General Election, on April 17, 2019. He noted that there are at least 137 cells of terrorist networks still active in Indonesia, and most of it is spread on Java.[5]

ISIS's propaganda was massive, both through the translation of books, ISIS magazines such as Dabiq (editions 1-16) and even using social media including Telegram groups and whatsapp to reach wider targets, as well as to avoid monitoring and tracking of police officers. The book titled Syrian Javanese Ayaturrahman (Karomah Jihad in Syria) is one of the many propaganda that greatly influences ISIS defenders in Indonesia. This is all they do to build opinions in the midst of Muslims about the invalidity of the Pancasila, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and the 1945 Constitution. All that must be replaced with the Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi version of the Khilafah Islamiyah system.

In addition, this takfiri missionary also aims to recruit new members and prepare Indonesian Muslims to accept ISF's takfiri understanding. Through studies in several mosques and online discussions in Telegram groups such as the Tauhid Defenders Group (GPT), the Khilafah Islamiyyah Group (KI) and the Mudik Bareng Group, ISIS sympathizers invited the public to participate in supporting ISIS and at the same time forgiving anyone who don't agree with them.[6]

ISIS sympathizers try their best to create social terror in Indonesia. They believe that they can operate well in Indonesia only if Indonesia is in a state of chaos and widespread social conflict. When an incident of SARA-like

social unrest occurred in the territory of Indonesia, ISIS sympathizers were determined to create similar riots in other regions in Indonesia. Fortunately, their determination has never been realized, due to the preventive actions that were successfully carried out by the security forces during the 2019 general election.

Another ISIS scenario is to play religious sentiments to fight between believers and between followers of religious groups in Indonesia. In Syria, the ISIS scenario was successful. In Syria, ISIS confronts Muslims with other religious communities, divides Sunni Muslims with Shiite Muslims, and strikes takfiri groups with salafi jihadi groups. In Indonesia, ISIS sympathizers provoke and ride community groups that are anti against Unity in Diversity and anti-democracy to create social chaos. They hope that if Indonesia succeeds in being made chaotic by wrapping religious sentiments, they will more easily replace the legitimate Indonesian government with the ISIS caliphate, through three war strategies. The three war strategies, they adopted from ISIS in the Middle East, namely: conventional warfare, guerrilla warfare and terror attacks.

Based on an interview from Mohamad Musoffa Iksan (a terrorism researcher) against Sufyan Tsauri (former Al Qaeda terrorist group conducting training in Aceh), currently there are an estimated 3,000 jihadists in Indonesia. They are watching and waiting for the socio-political chaos which is the moment they will attack. The issue of chaos in the 2019 general election is attractive to terrorist groups. The socio-political conflict in the 2019 Presidential Election is very much awaited and hoped for by them. Because only with conflict, they have the opportunity to build the system of khilafah government they want. They realized that the Khilafah Islamiyah system of government was impossible to achieve with democracy.

Indonesian militant groups have long struggled to form an Islamic government (khilafah Islamiyah). They reject the concept of a modern nation state with a democratic government system, because according to them, the system is a man-made product and comes from the Western world. Only through war and conflict, ISIS succeeded in establishing its caliphate in Iraq and Syria. ISIS is unlikely to establish a government when there is peace in Syria and Iraq. Likewise, militant-terrorist groups in Indonesia want and need conflict, because with a conflict situation, they will give them the opportunity to operate. During a conflict, there will be a vacuum of security, government and authority. At that time they had the opportunity to establish a Khilafah Islamiyah government.

### **Radicalism and Identity Politics**

Religious belief can be said to be the most powerful and influential force in the world. Throughout history, religious ideas and commitments have inspired individuals and believers to abandon all narrow personal interests in order to achieve higher values and truths. History shows that love, self-sacrifice and devotion to others are deeply rooted in the religious worldview. At the same time, religion is also often directly linked to the worst examples of human

behavior.[7] Repeatedly the belief in God is directed towards crusades, inquisitions and suicide bombings.[8]

The emergence of radicalism is the most shocking phenomenon in the late 20th century. Every religious tradition in the world has these hardline camps which sometimes reveal themselves surprisingly. They opened fire on worshipers who were praying in mosques, killing doctors and nurses who worked in abortion clinics, shooting at their president, killing civilians with suicide bombings, and even carrying out political coup attempts in the name of religion. Indeed, only a small proportion of fundamentalists do this, but most of them reject the values that are prevalent in modern society. Even the most moderate fundamentalist mindset is confusing, because it seems they are so stubbornly opposed to the most positive values in modern society.[9]

Radicalization is a process characterized by increased commitment to violence or commitment to allow methods and strategies of violence in various conflicts.[10] All of these processes can include changes in knowledge and beliefs, feelings, and attitudes that increase, then justify violence in conflicts between groups, or things that require sacrifice in defending their groups. Thus, basically radicalism includes two elements that are closely related, namely action (behavior) and attitude (goal). Nonetheless, the nature of dependence between the two does not always have to be there. Therefore, radical attitudes are not always and uncertain implemented with violence. One thing to note is that radicalization always deals with various processes that must be distinguished analytically because they are directed by a variety of different mechanisms, follow several different patterns, and must be understood in the local socio-political context that is occurring.

According to Angel Rabasa, the definition of radicalism is the process of adopting an extreme belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to lead to social change. Meanwhile deradicalisation, mentioned by Angel Rabasa as a process of leaving an extreme perspective and concluded that the way of using violence is unacceptable for influencing social change.[11]

Along with that, radicalism emerged in the form of identity politics. Identity politics is a new revival of the resistance movement against globalization. When globalization makes boundaries between countries, tribes, races increasingly blurred because they are connected so closely, for a group of people who are marginalized or feel marginalized, the boundaries of identity are important to be re-enforced, to protect interests, or to affirm "who we are". Affirmation and differentiation between "us" and "them"

However, this limit has never been complicated or rigid, especially when used for political purposes. Someone who is definitively an "outsider" can be included in the "us" group by looking for supporting reasons or by not questioning them at all. Elites will silence and obscure other issues and supporters will justify it without criticism.

In the Western world, identity politics is also a mainstay of weapons in developed countries like the United States. When Barrack Obama ran for president, the first

attack was his black race. Then his religion is questioned, is he Muslim or not. Donald Trump, Obama's successor, is now questioning where Obama was born. This political attack with an identity sentiment can only be defeated by a candidate's high level of popularity, and his ability to escape the trap of these fundamental sectarian questions.

In terms of time, new social scientists were attracted to the issue of identity politics in the 1970s. Starting in the United States, when the government faces minority problems, gender, feminism, race, ethnicity, and other social groups who feel marginalized and feel persecuted. In subsequent developments, the scope of this identity politics extends to issues of religion, trust, and diverse cultural ties.

LA. Kauffman is a political expert, who first explained the nature of identity politics by tracing its origins to the student nonviolent movement known as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, a civil rights movement organization in the United States in the early 1960s.[12] Who actually created the term identity politics was first still running away to this day. But substantively, identity politics is associated with the interests of members of a social group who feel blackmailed and pushed aside by the dominance of large currents in a nation or state. This is where the idea of justice for all becomes very relevant. In the United States, the originators of the theory of identity politics argue that the practice of slavery and extortion is what builds awareness of the blackmailed class. For example, black people, Spanish-speaking communities, and other ethnicities who feel marginalized by the economy of capitalism are siding with capital owners who are generally white people.[13]

Democratic events, namely the election of the President of Indonesia in 2019, are very prominent in the use of negative identity politics issues. The most prominent identity politics is the use of religious sentiments, which are used to attract sympathy from supporters, and hit opponents' positions. This is a big problem in national political governance. Various survey results from survey institutions, for example the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI), show a decline in the number of people who support the Pancasila. On the other hand there is an increase in the number of people who want Indonesia based on sharia (sharia Pro-NKRI). Based on LSI (Indonesian Survey Circle) survey data, from 2005 to 2018 there was a decline in pro-Pancasila communities. In 2005 as many as 85 percent, now (in 2018) there are only 75 percent.[14]

The Center for Political Studies, University of Indonesia (Puskapol UI) conducted a study entitled "Managing Political Identity: Counter-Narrative Strategies Against Politicization of Identity Politics in 2019 Elections Through the Involvement of Candidate Campaign Teams". The results of the research found several factors that were of serious concern not only by the second team of presidential candidates, but also stakeholders in the 2019 Election. First, the context of contestation during the 2019 presidential election was a residue from the sharp political polarization and politicization of issues identity that occurred during the 2014 Presidential Election and the 2017 Jakarta Governor Election. In other words, there was a kind of contestation

dynamics, the use of identity politics with religious sentiments, and polarization that continued to be treated.

Second, the presidential election system and electoral design which stipulates a "presidential threshold" of 20 percent, also increases the intensity of political polarization, because politically logically only opens the opportunity for two or three candidates to emerge.

Third, the phenomenon of the political consulting industry, influencers, and buzzers in the digital campaign of the presidential candidate pair. Apart from playing an important role in determining the production of issues and the dissemination of campaign content on digital platforms, their role also contributes to exacerbating political polarization and the politicization of issues of religious identity. This can be seen clearly that non-programmatic issues continue to be reproduced and disseminated by the cyber army of each camp.

Fourth, the 2019 General Elections together to elect legislative members, senators, and elect the president, causing more dominant presidential election issues and marginalizing attention to legislative elections, both DPR RI, DPD, and Provincial and Regency / City DPRDs. Fifth, online media and newspapers as sources of public information, tend to be interested in raising issues of identity politics, and non-programmatic issues in their reporting.[15]

#### CONCLUSION

In a practical political struggle, the use of identity politics is basically understandable because it does not conflict with the principle of democracy itself, as long as it is within a reasonable corridor while prioritizing the values of unity, bearing in mind that identity is the social reality from which we originate. But on the contrary, if identity politics is overused and this identity is exaggerated or manipulated for political targets and collides with the identity of the opposing party, it will certainly lead to increasingly sharp polarization in the community. This polarization ultimately fosters a feeling of exclusivity between one group and another based on particular ethnicity or beliefs. Today, identity politics is widely used by politicians to sharpen differences that lead to SARA, especially issues of religion and ethnicity.

This phenomenon is widespread because the political practices carried out are considered effective in giving space to evoke the identity of certain groups in order to get emotional support. Identity politics is so interesting and burning among radical-extremist groups who play around the issue.

Radical extremists want to take advantage of this turbulent atmosphere for their own purposes, and use the chaos to carry out terror attacks. The intense narratives of the political elite to delegitimize the process and results of the 2019 Presidential Election through hoaks and misinformation, whether we realize it or not, have encouraged the desire of terrorist groups that have been silent, to commit dangerous actions, namely terror. The arrest of suspected JAD members accused of planning an attack opened up the fact that terrorist groups took advantage of the 2019 Presidential Election for their own

political purposes and interests, namely fighting for the existence of the ISIS Caliphate.

Indonesia as the largest Muslim majority country in the world, has suffered a number of major terror attacks carried out by militant groups that have links with global jihadist networks such as al-Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiah, and ISIS over the past two decades. These tragic facts certainly become lessons for the Indonesian people to be aware of all forms of threats that would damage the harmony and unity of the Indonesian nation that has existed for a long time. This concern is not excessive considering that in addition to the facts of terror that occurred, also the growth of militant and extreme groups, both appearing prominent and hidden. Many studies show that in Indonesia there are still quite a lot of radical cells scattered, including those who understand ISIS and who are just sympathetic to ISIS.

Thus the analysis of the existence of a radical militant group in the 2019 Presidential Election seems to be proven. This is not an 'opinion' but rather a research by various groups of militant groups that has a strategy to take the momentum of a large democratic event such as the 2019 Presidential Election in order to realize their ideological ideals, namely building a government system based on Islam, the Islamic Khilafah.

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