

IDENTITY POLITICS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ELECTIONS IN THE GLOBALIZATION ERA

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ABSTRACT: The politicization of identity issues in an electoral momentum appears in Indonesia because it has a high degree of heterogeneity. This identity politics is formed as a manifestation of the interactions that occur between the values of democracy that become mainstream with local values or other values that have been formed as a social structure in society. The momentum is growing with globalization which makes it easier for people to carry out their social activities. This research will discuss how the politicization of identity in the implementation of elections in the era of globalization. Using literature review, it was found that the strengthening of identity politicization often happens because of the flourishing of organizations based on the interests of their identities. Oftentimes, what emerges is identity politics originating from issues of ethnicity and religion. This identity politics is also often populist narrated through the use of social media. In the long run, this phenomenon risks directing popular democracies into practices that tend to be racist, which in turn weakens the democratic order. As a result, social segregation is growing and will affect the national spirit that has been created.

Index Terms: Elections, Identity Politics, Globalization, Social Media.

I. INTRODUCTION

Election translates the principle “*Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus approbetur*”[1] because it involves direct participation from the people in determining the direction of future policy. The existence of this election is also a differentiator of a democratic system, as stated by Sydney Verba, that “*the distinctive feature of democracy and the one which allows us to distinguish the democracy from other political methods*” [2]. While Kofi A. Annan, in a report through The Report of the Global Commission on Elections, said “*the elections are the indispensable root of democracy*” [3]. Thus, elections are an absolute prerequisite for the realization of democracy, at least in terms of democracy that is understood as a modern democracy.

Elections often show the struggle of ideas from each contestant with the intention of attracting public attention. The methods taken are usually carried out by utilizing various media and teaching aids during the campaign period, or other ways that can facilitate the transformation of the interests of the contestants to the public. This orientation on public support, on the one hand, is very useful for the development of community participation in voting, but on the other hand, “wild” ways that are deliberately practiced simultaneously will emerge. One example is identity politics which has been growing lately.

With the development of technology and information in the globalization era, the use of identity politics as a way of utilizing elections can influence the life of democracy in Indonesia. Identity politics are often associated with a movement to pressure the government to fulfill the demands of its identity interests [4]. Everyone can easily use social media in making narratives based on certain identities, especially those directly directed at supporting one candidate and dropping another candidate. What is questionable is how to dispel identity politics in every election in the globalization era?

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative approach. Literature studies were used primarily to trace the development of identity politicization in each election implementation in Indonesia,

especially with the development of information technology in this globalization era. The research was also conducted by observing the use of social media by the public in disseminating the interests of their identity. Primary data were obtained from the results of observations on the practices of identity politics, at least in the implementation of elections in the period 2014-2019. The data were also supported by secondary sources such as books, journals, and media coverage that are relevant to research studies. The data obtained were verified and analyzed by the descriptive analysis method. Data verification was done through the triangulation technique, which is comparing the data obtained so that it comes to the belief that the data obtained were valid.

III. RESULTS

Elections are a key variable in the political process for a democratic country because in large part, elections determine who gets what, when, and how. Therefore, elections must effectively determine who leads the country and the direction of the policies they take, and in democracy, public opinion (*die öffentliche Meinung*) plays an important role. The implementation of an election itself must be carried out based on the principle of the election that is honest, free, and fair, which is held regularly based on general (universal) suffrage, and equal and confidential suffrage [5].

Ideally, elections in a democracy are a peaceful means for all groups in society to fight for their interests. This aggregation of interests is what drives the emergence of identity politics in elections. Amy Gutmann in “*Identity in Democracy*” explained that democracy is not only a matter of rational interest but also a matter of identity (democratic politics is both interest and identity-driven) [6]. So it is difficult to let go of the use of this identity in political contestation in the elections. Whereas Amy Chua, stated that global trends show that the use of identity sentiments - or what he calls “*political tribes*” - is currently inevitable in political circles [7].

In the classical definition, identity politics is understood as the participation of individuals in politics in the name of certain social groups. In the beginning, there was a

situation that caused the dichotomy of social status which hampered the fulfillment of community rights. So intimacy arises between various groups which together are considered to experience repression [8]. This is caused by a lack of political representation, so there is no transformation of interests in various policies [9]. Therefore, identity political movements that appear in various parts of the world are understood as a form of expression carried out to gain recognition and legitimacy in order to achieve their interests [10]. Whereas in Indonesia, political identity is more related to ethnicity, religion, ideology, and local interests that are generally represented by political elites with their respective articulations [11].

The essence of each individual or group to have a cultural identity and social identity does not necessarily justify that these identities can be appointed in the election. There is recognition of identity as a social reality, but it is very dangerous if the identity is used as a tool to gain power in elections. Such use of material identity politics can actually threaten social cohesion. The political elite involved in the election can manipulate their social identities, thus potentially causing the seeds of conflict that threaten the process of democratizing the election. When viewed from the perspective of ethnicity, for example, this identity politics is usually used by elites as political rhetoric as "we" for "native people" who want power, and "they" for "migrants" who must give up power. In other words, identity politics is only used as a tool to mobilize politics to fulfill its economic and political interests.

Identity politics strengthened after the 2014 election. Issues related to ethnicity, religion, or certain ideologies were used by some politicians' elites to build a negative image of their political opponents [12]. This phenomenon continues with a wave of demonstrations that accompany the 2017 DKI Jakarta Governor Election (known as Aksi 212). These two events influenced the behavior and choice of party politics and presidential candidates in determining political policies and attitudes related to the 2019 elections. Even identity politics tended to develop with the increasingly massive use of social media by supporters of each candidate.

In each election, the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) always issues a Local Election Vulnerability Index (IKP) to measure the level of vulnerability in the region. In the Election of Regional Heads (Pilkada) in 2018, there were three provinces included in the high category of vulnerability, namely Papua, Maluku, and West Kalimantan. Of the three provinces, West Kalimantan is included in the high vulnerability seen in the dimensions of contestation related to identity politics and the use of SARA issues that are carried out through the use of social media [13]. For elections in 2019, there are 16 provinces that are considered to have the highest vulnerability, five of which are Papua, West Sumatra, Banten West Java, Central Java, and the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY).

The use of social media allows users to form an integrative network as widely as possible and can show identity differently from users in the real world [14]. The elite can act as a factual source of information, but can also do message engineering to gain support. The dissemination of social media information to strengthen group identity is

often done with the intention of strengthening social networks. However, if the discourse of identity spread on social media continues to be reproduced and targets certain groups, it can create polarized camps in the community. The long-term effect is to trigger a latent conflict that can divide groups.

The use of identity politics at the time of elections, whether by making religion a commodity, ethnicity, and race as an absolute preference for choice, will actually damage the essence of the election itself. Religion, ethnicity, and race are primordial identities that should be placed on the holy altar, not used as modes of obtaining power. Certain issues of social identity claims which have been issued by contestants and political partisans are certainly very dangerous because they are vulnerable to mutual conflict. Likewise, if this phenomenon continues to be allowed, the elections carried out are no different from the jungle of the wilderness which is filled with irregularities.

The author considers that there needs to be an improvement in the concept of holding elections in the future. As voters, the community must use an objective approach, namely the approach to the program planned by the contestants, compared to their social identity. The community will be far more appropriate to measure the capacity of each contestant when holding his political office later because this approach will give a concrete picture of what will be done later. In the framework of future government policy formulation, it is necessary to have regulating regulations related to the practice of multicultural culture at every level of society. This country's pluralism must be formulated in a conducive situation, in order to avoid potential conflicts in each election administration. This regulation is needed in order to encourage the growth of a sense of community concern in citizenship that is very diverse.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the implementation of elections, issues that have emerged have always been related to the use of identity as a political symbol. This identity politics can be seen in the 2014 elections and has become stronger in the 2019 election. The development of the media has contributed to the development of identity politics in the community. The ease of accessing parallel information by disseminating information that often contains ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations (SARA). If left unchecked, it can create social segregation that can threaten the integrity of the country. So that there is a need for regulations that enhance multiculturalism between communities. Whereas in elections, the community must pass an objective approach, which is to assess the programs offered by election contestants, compared to their own social identity.

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