

Identity Politics in Electoral Politics

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ABSTRACT

Identity politics is interpreted as people's subconscious formation systems due to myriad social problems and dissatisfaction. Religion's politicization as a form of identity politics impacts the sustainability of democracy in Indonesia. This study uses a hybrid of primary and secondary data collection techniques. The primary data encompasses information from the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, intellectuals, scholars, academicians, mass organizations and NGO leaders, competent people in political corruption and elections, and researchers through direct, in-depth, and intensive interviews and testimonies. At least two important things are increasingly sticking out in the view above (populism and identity politics), which are intertwined to create actual political dynamics in the mayoral election in Serang City. In the political arena, populism is characterized by efforts to place the public as the mainstream and focal point. The problem is that populism is often held hostage as a means of reaching the center of power. Public participation in the discussion of public interest only appears in the short period leading up to the political competition. The victory can be seen among the candidates for mayor of Serang; there seems to be no significant difference between them because no ethnicity or race holds privilege. The dominant religion in this identity politics is the Muslim community, which the candidates are targeting because the people of Serang City are predominantly Muslim. Most of the elected mayor's votes prove that he has more value than other candidates. The relationship between religion and politics becomes problematic when it comes to the particularities of local politics, for example, the emergence of identity issues such as religious sentiment, ethnicity, son of the region, and majority - minority. The issues of religion and ethnicity are considered applicable in regional head elections (Pilkada). The issue of religion and ethnicity (SARA) is considered the cheapest issue in the election context, manipulating the public's low education level.

Keywords: Identity Politics, Electoral Politic, Serang City

INTRODUCTION

In the Indonesian context, the dynamics of electoral politics in direct and simultaneous democracy for regional head elections (Gub/Bup/Mayor),

presidential and vice-presidential elections, and legislative elections have very crucial political implications. Namely, the massive identity political movement that has colored electoral politics in various regions in the direct contestation of regional heads (Romli, 2019). Identity politics that is very massively surging and booming in Indonesia is the al-Maidah case, which was the choice of the candidate for Governor of DKI Jakarta, Ahok. The Al-Maidah case has changed the national political map and polarized the voices of Muslims in Jakarta and even in various regions in Indonesia. Theoretically, identity politics has become a crucial issue in every contestation for regional heads where, if one of the candidates has a different race, religion, or ethnicity, it will disrupt electoral dynamics in the region. Among several regions that have raised issues of identity politics in electoral politics, there are five regions: DKI Jakarta, North Sumatra, West Kalimantan, North Sulawesi, and North Maluku.

However, the use of issues with negative nuances of identity politics is still a threat. The survey results from the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) Denny JA show a decline in the number of people supporting Pancasila. On the other hand, an increasing number of people want Indonesia to be based on a Sharia NKRI (Syariah Pro-NKRI).

Identity politics, according to Roger Scruton in a political dictionary (Scruton, 2013), is defined as a political action that places the pursuit of identity as its main agenda, believing that no political program will succeed if people do not know who and what they are, and why they have to consider their interests so much to form common goals and loyalties. While identity politics has taken hold among the leaders of minority groups, whose attitudes toward the existing order may often be antagonistic, it is not exclusively a politics of protest. The majority of nationalist movements also make identity a major political issue.

Cressida Heyes (2002), Identity politics, by its definition, is a type of political activity studied theoretically based on experiences of equality and

injustice felt by certain groups to gather unity to increase their level and prestige. Stuart Hall, Identity politics is interpreted as a process formed through the human subconscious system, which occurs because of dissatisfaction in dealing with various kinds of social problems (Sahabi, O & Nacho, 2020). In fact, parties often use identity politics excessively, which creates polarization in society. This polarization fosters feelings of exclusivity between one group and another, which can be based on ethnicity or certain beliefs. Politicians use identity politics to sharpen differences in choices in direct presidential elections (Kambo, Gustiana & Ahmad Yani, 2021). For example, in North Sumatra, narratives of negative identity politics appeared heavily, alluding to religion, immigrants, and local or indigenous and non-indigenous people. Meanwhile, on the other hand, parties interested in elections continue to push the issue of negative identity politics into the public sphere.

Identity politics is centered on the politicization of shared identity or the feeling of "we," which is the main basis for group collectivity. Identity is politicized through extreme interpretation, which aims to gain support from people who feel "the same," whether in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, or other adhesive elements (Porter, 2013). Identity politics exists as a narrative of resistance to marginalized groups due to the failure of the mainstream narrative to accommodate minority interests; positively, identity politics presents a vehicle for mediating the voice of aspirations for the oppressed. Second, a journal written by (Habibi, 2018) about identity politics in Indonesia. The focus of the study in this paper is on the dynamics and development of identity politics in electoral politics in Indonesia. Habibi describes the social culture of the people in Indonesia with various identities, be it religion, race, ethnicity, or nation; the identity politics developing in Indonesia continue to experience enormous significance. Conflicts based on identity politics are relatively well maintained in electoral politics in Indonesia.

Academic studies related to identity politics have always been the concern of many groups, especially academics, both from within and outside. The disciplines of study are also different; there are sociological, Islamic, and political approaches. First, a thesis written by (Surandi, 2004) entitled *The Politics of Islamic Identity and Women's Rights (Case Study of the Implementation of Islamic Sharia in Serang, Banten)* In this study, Alawiyah uses concepts and theories about identity politics, whether based on religion, race, ethnicity, nation, and so on. Women are often used as symbols to mark this identity. The results of this study indicate that women in the process of implementing Islamic law in Serang Banten are used as symbols and instruments for the creation of an Islamic society. One proof of the application of Islamic law is the implementation of the headscarf for women. Hijab is the initial stage because there will be many Islamic laws that are not in favor of women, so women's rights as human beings are neglected.

Second, a journal written by (Habibi, 2018) about *Identity Politics in Indonesia* The focus of the study in this paper is on the dynamics and development of identity politics in electoral politics in Indonesia. Habibi describes the socio-cultural society in Indonesia with various identities, including religion, race, ethnicity, and nation. The identity politics that is developing in Indonesia continues to experience enormous significance. Conflicts based on identity politics are relatively well maintained in electoral politics in Indonesia. Thus, what distinguishes this research from previous studies is that identity politics in the local democratic arena is used to advance the interests of certain groups and justify other groups being anti-Islam. The mobilization of identity politics in electoral politics is massive in order to support and win the partners they support.

The feature of the oppositional dichotomy is the main foundation that distinguishes our collectivistic feelings from others. Nevertheless, at the individual level, in the era of modernization, which is all mechanical, there is a

"stuttering" to understand the structure of a plural society, so intolerance is increasing. In short, there is a mismatch in social imagination regarding the daily lives of modern humans and their interactions with the general public.

In this context, the politicization of religion as a form of identity politics impacts the sustainability of democracy in Indonesia. Identity politics will continue to be exploited by religious groups who want to clash Pancasila, the ideology of the Indonesian nation, with the revealed texts (Syariah Islam) in the realm of practical politics in both the regional head and presidential elections in 2019.

This research aims to first, understand the process and the emergence of forms of identity politics and what drives the birth of identity politics in Indonesia. Second, understanding the politics of identity is more effective in mobilizing the Ummah in practical politics, including regional head and presidential elections. And third, understanding that identity politics is a threat to democracy.

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research methods are methods for exploring and understanding meanings that, by a number of individuals or groups of people, are ascribed to social or humanitarian issues (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This research aims to explore and understand the meaning that a number of individuals or groups of people attribute to social or humanitarian issues. This qualitative research process involves important efforts, such as asking questions and following procedures, collecting specific data from participants, analyzing the data inductively from specific themes to general themes, and interpreting the meaning of the data.

This study combines two data collection techniques, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data used is in the form of information originating from the executive, legislative, and judiciary, intellectuals, scholars, and academicians, leaders of mass organizations and NGOs, and/or people

who are competent in the fields of identity politics, local democracy, and elections through direct, in-depth, intensive interviews, and the testimony of researchers who were successfully recorded while in the field. While secondary data is collected from various places and includes published works such as books, theses, dissertations, articles, or papers, both published through seminar forums and magazines, journals, mass media reports, research results, and documents, history related to the problem under study. Secondary data is needed to build the initial construction of the research and is then needed to assist in the interpretation in order to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding. In addition, qualitative data includes audio and visual material. This data is in the form of photos, art objects, video recordings, or all kinds of sounds. Therefore, this research is known as purposive sampling. Provide information about the limitations of the study at the end of the discussion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Motives for the Emergence of the Identity Political Movement

The 2018 Serang Mayor election is a general election in the City of Serang, Banten, to determine the Mayor of Serang City and Deputy Mayor of Serang City for the 2018–2023 period. The incumbent, Mayor Tubagus Haerul Jaman, cannot run for office because he has held office for two terms. He supports his wife, Vera Nurlaela, running as a pair with Nurhasan, a Gerindra Banten politician. Meanwhile, the incumbent Deputy Mayor, Sulhi Choir, chose to run as a candidate for the Banten DPRD from Perindo.

Out of a total of 4 prospective pairs of candidates (bapaslon) who registered with the Serang City KPU, there was one pair of candidates (bapaslon) who was declared ineligible, namely the pair Agus Irawan Hasbullah-Samsul Bahri. The spouse is declared ineligible for support. The 2018 Serang City Pilkada was attended by 3 candidate pairs, consisting of 1

individual candidate pair and 2 political party candidate pairs. The following is a list of candidate pairs for the 2018 City Election of Serang:

Table 1. List of Candidates for Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Serang in 2018

No.	Mayor's Candidate Name	Name of the Candidate for Deputy Mayor	Supporting a Political Party	Number of Supporters
1	<u>Vera Nurlaela</u>	<u>Nurhasan</u>	PDIP, Gerindra, PD, PKB, Nasdem, PKPI dan PBB	33/45 votes
2	<u>Samsul Hidayat</u>	<u>Rohman</u>	Perseorangan	41.492/ 455.291 votes
3	<u>Syafrudin</u>	<u>Subadri Usuludin</u>	PAN, Hanura, PPP, dan PKS	15/45 votes

Source: data obtained from various sources

Based on the table 1 above, the domination of political party support in the election for mayor of Serang was in the Vera Nurlaela-Nurhasan pair supported by eight political parties: Golkar, PDIP, Democratic Party, Gerindra, PBB, PKB, PKPI, and Nasdem. The Syafrudin-Subadri pair is supported by four parties: PPP, PKS, PAN, and Hanura. Meanwhile, in the elections for the City of Serang, one candidate from the individual line took part in the fight, namely Samsul Hidayat-Rohman. Apart from the three pairs of candidates for Serang Mayor who were determined by the KPU as election participants and declared administratively and constitutionally valid, the KPU did not pass one pair of candidates for the Serang City Pilkada (Agus Irawan-Samsul Bahri) because they did not meet both administrative and constitutional requirements. While the vision and mission of each pair of candidates, whether carried out by political parties or non-party or independent paths, are as follows table 2.

Simultaneous elections that were held throughout Indonesia were considered successful. In addition to increasing voter turnout by up to 80%, almost all international election monitoring bodies that were invited acknowledged the success of the KPU and all its instruments in holding honest, fair, and transparent elections.

However, it cannot be denied how the politicization of religion has contributed to the election. Not only is religion used to gain people's voices, but identity politics such as race, ethnicity, and other social groups are

massively exploited in this Democratic party. The politicization of religion that has surfaced since the 2017 DKI Jakarta Pilkada has left scars that are hard to erase, so it is used both in legislative and presidential elections, especially in simultaneous regional head elections. Politics and religion cannot go hand in hand and will instead produce an unhealthy democracy. Thus, identity politics is a robust problem in electoral politics, including in the regional elections in Serang City. Identity politics means the exclusive exploitation of identities such as religion, ethnicity, race, and other social groups to mobilize politics (Jubba, Rafi, & Qodir, 2021).

Table 2. Vision and mission Candidate Pair for Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Serang 2018

Serial Number	Candidate Pair	Vision	Mission
1	<u>Vera Nurlaela - Nurhasan</u>	“ Towards a Beautiful, Prosperous, Competitive, and Religious City of Serang”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improving the welfare of the people with justice 2. Improving economic development that is inclusive and competitive 3. Increasing tourism development and revitalizing local culture as well as social piety 4. Improving equitable infrastructure development and environmental preservation 5. Improving bureaucratic reform and public services.
2	<u>Samsul Hidayat - Rohman</u>	“ Creating a Luminous City of Serang (Clean environment, neat city planning, competent bureaucrats, harmonious citizens, confident of progress, God bless)”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating a conducive and harmonious atmosphere for religious life. 2. Improving the quality of life of the people of Serang City. 3. Maintain and develop community solidarity through the appreciation of the values of unity and local wisdom. 4. Improving service to the community through the implementation of the principles of good governance and clean governance by involving the participation of various elements of society
3	<u>Syafrudin - Subadri Usuludin</u>	“The Realization of an Empowered and Cultured Civilization City”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building a Civilization of Human Resources (HR) based on Islamic values and Banten culture for the advancement of Serang City residents, the nation, and humanity. 2. Building Serang City's Environmental Civilization in a sustainable manner. 3. Building a regional economic civilization that is supported by the people's spirit, innovative and creative thinking, and mutual cooperation for the welfare of the citizens of Serang City.

Identity politics often falls into stereotypes, both towards oneself within a group, and when looking at the existence of other groups. Forms of identity politics then often fall into the strengthening of SARA sentiments. Then the category changes to the politicization of identity. Again, the presence of identity politics only serves as a medium for attaining power. The issues of religion and ethnicity are considered applicable in regional head elections (Pilkada). The issue of religion and ethnicity (Sara) is considered the cheapest issue in the election context, manipulating the public low education level, particularly in the city of Serang.

The dynamics of identity politics that emerged in the regions, especially in the election for the mayor of Serang City, are a turning point from identity politics that were born from national politics, as expressed by Wijaya Fasa as follows:

“Identity politics is a reality that emerges from national politics, but in the context of local politics, it is actually not too obvious. I see that identity politics is less intelligent for politics in the country because, actually, politics must be made of intelligent and rational choices.”

At least two critical things are increasingly sticking out in the view above, namely, those mainly related to populism and identity politics, which are intertwined to create actual political dynamics in the mayoral election in Serang City. In the political arena, populism is characterized by efforts to place the public as the main stream and focal point. The problem is that populism is often held hostage as a method and means of reaching the center of power. Public participation in the discussion of public interest only appears in the short period leading up to the political competition. In this way, public participation is defined as calculating the number of political votes. Populism, according to Burhanuddin, can use political jargon that appears populist, making it a vessel for the aspirations of marginalized groups, even though it is then hijacked by the interests of a few parties and even by the power oligarchs

who are competing in political contestation through elections. Once again, populism is a carrier to the epicentrum of the seat of power.

Margaret Canova 1981 in Mahasin (1994) divides populism into three forms. First, populism is "little people." This type of populism is oriented towards farmers, the petty bourgeoisie, and cooperation between small entrepreneurs, and always harbors prejudice and suspicion towards big businesses and the government. This populism believes a big scenario exists for entrepreneurs and those in power to oppress the "little people." It is said that this type of populism is not very enthusiastic about the ideas of progress, be it urbanization, industrialization, or capitalism, because it is considered to have an impact on moral decline (Muhtadi, 2019). Poor people (Wong Cilik) populism like to look to the past and cry over the present. In the political context, 'wong cilik' populism tends to be anti-politicians and ivory tower intellectuals long for strong people with populist ideologies. Some examples are the American Populist Party in the 1890s, the peasants' parties in Europe, and the Social Credit Party of Canada in the early twentieth century (Mahasin, 1994).

Second, authoritarian populism expects the birth of charismatic leaders beyond mediocre politicians. Max Weber distinguished between charismatic leadership and democratic leadership. Even though Juan Peron was "democratically" elected as president, he won not through a process of political rationality but based on Peronia's irrational ties that idolized strong, charismatic leaders (Rahardjo, 1994). Populism then gave birth to a cult so that a populist platform could rule through undemocratic means. When, as president, Peron appointed his wife as vice president, he seemed to say, "I am the state." Populism at extreme levels can give rise to fascist groups like Hitler or de Gaulle.

Canovan's categorization above is relatively helpful, although it cannot capture the complexity of understanding populism in a single and standard

sense. Canovan cannot determine whether populism falls into the left or right category. Canovan is also considered very ambitious, so his work is too broad in portraying what populism actually means. Instead of wanting to define the concept of populism strictly, Canovan obscures it with a broad categorization.

Islam, the religion of the majority of the Indonesian population, has a relatively single faith system, but as a cultural-intellectual expression and as a religious and political understanding, it turns out that Islam is plural. It's the same as the Catholic religion, which looks theologically unified in politics. Catholics are also not single, but plural, especially since Protestants are made up of various sects. Indonesia's pluralism with the emergence of identity politics will destroy the integrity of the ummah, which the nation's founders have long built. Because movements based on identity politics are hazardous for the future of Indonesia because they tend to be anti-pluralism, anti-democracy, and anti-nationalist,

In addition, there is another view put forward by Ari Setiawan regarding the phenomenon of identity politics, which is a threat to simultaneous elections, namely identity politics seems to be still a national problem that must continue to find solutions to handle it, because if we talk about elections, we will talk about electoral matters. votes or votes. Identity politics will become or increase, if, later in one of the election implementations, this practice is carried out and gets an electoral vote effect or becomes a winner, serving as references for potential contestants to do the same to win in their respective regions even though the true purpose of the election itself is not just a matter of winning, especially by justifying various methods including identity politics. Far from that, the purpose of elections is to maintain the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia so that the nation's aspirations not only stop at the nation's founders but can also be carried on by the next generation. identity politics is the opposite, because it can cause horizontal conflict and divide the national unity that our founders

fought for. They even went through sacrificing the blood of our heroes.

In this context, it depicts an extreme identity political movement that created separatism. Historically, identity politics in this country can contain ethnicity, religion, and political ideology. Radical and semi-radical groups dressed in Islam, which were influenced by Islamist and Salafi movements, centered in several Arab countries initially, for example, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), and the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI) in one respect they have the same demands, implementing Islamic sharia in Indonesia.

In the end, identity politics in any form will not jeopardize the integrity of this nation and state in the future, if the nation's founding ideals of national unity and integration, the spirit of the youth oath that has fused ethnic sentiments, and the philosophy of Pancasila are not left hanging in the air, above the clouds, but not lived.

In the local context, the Election for the Mayor of Serang was colored by identity politics which led to religious sentiments compared to racial, ethnic, and ethnic sentiments as explained by Setiawan as follows:

“Identity politics in the local context is dominated by or more frequently appears in religious sentiments or certain religious groups. Maybe, according to some circles, minority and majority politics are still magnets for obtaining electoral votes.”

Some people often complain that our politics is moving towards identity politics. Our politicians diligently exploit religious sentiments, ethnicity, or racism. Political mobilization was carried out in places of worship. It is almost hard to tell the difference between a campaign, which is supposed to be based on persuasion, and a provocation. Voters are directed to vote based on identity sentiments. Religious sentiment or identity politics as a means to mobilize the masses to influence their choices will have threats stipulated in Law no. 7 of 2017 as stated by Setiawan:

“In clear electoral regulations, identity politics, or SARA, are among those prohibited, and there are also consequences for the perpetrators. In Law No. 7 of 2017 concerning Elections, if proven guilty of committing identity politics other than in the form of punishment or administrative sanctions, you can also be punished with criminal penalties, with a maximum penalty of 2 years and a fine of 24 million rupiah”.

Theoretically, many factors explain the electability of regional head candidate pairs, including sociological, psychological, and rational choice models. The essence of the sociological model is that the similarity of social characteristics determines political choices. Sociological variables that are believed to be predictors are religion, ethnicity, age, gender, education, and income (Chirumbolo, Areni, & Sensales, 2004; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1968). Religion is believed to influence voter behavior as an essential element in social division. Lipset and Rokkan (eds.), in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives* (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967), say, for example, that there is a significant correlation between religious affiliation and support for confessional parties in Europe. Barone, D’Ignazio, De Blasio, & Naticchioni (2016) also found evidence of a relationship between religion and voting behavior in Italy. Arend Lijphart (2019), in *Religious vs. Ethnic vs. Class Voting: The 'Crucial Experiment,'* found that, compared to language and social class variables, religion was more influential in determining party choices in Belgium, Canada, South Africa, and Switzerland. Studio Norris (2004), in *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, confirm the influence of religion in choosing. In essence, this sociological model is often referred to as "the embodiment of identity politics in electoral behavior.

Table 3. Acquisition of Votes for the Mayor of Serang 2018 Candidate Pair

No.	Mayor Candidate Pair Name	Vote Gain	Percentage
1	<u>Vera Nurlaela</u> – Nurhasan	90.104	32,04
2	<u>Samsul Hidayat</u> – Rohman	82.144	29,21
3	<u>Syafrudin</u> – Subadri Usuluddin	108.988	38,75
Amount		281.236	95,38

The vote acquisition for candidate pair number 1, Vera Nurlaela -

Nurhasan, was 32.15 percent with 90,468 votes. Candidate pair number 2 Samsul-Rohman by 29.16 percent or 82,030 votes. Meanwhile, candidate pair number 3 Syafrudin-Subadri, won 38.69 percent with 108,856 votes.

Based on table 3 results of the votes obtained from each candidate for mayor of Serang, the victory for the mayor candidate was caused by several factors that influenced people's political preferences in direct electoral politics in Serang City. Among the several winning factors, the psychological model states that sociological and demographic variables do not determine political preference by psychological factors. The measure is closeness to the party or partisanship of the candidate. Even though these two camps are contradictory, both sociological and psychological models assume that the issue or program in the campaign is not an important variable.

On the other hand, the rational choice model presupposes the importance of technocratic programs or issues in explaining the electability of candidates. In the study of voter behavior, evaluating incumbent performance is one measure of how well the rational choice model works. Satisfaction with the incumbent's performance is the basis for reward and punishment (Healy & Malhotra, 2013). Another measure is egocentric and nootropic retrospect. In addition, the electability of a candidate can also be determined by the personal qualities of the candidate, such as the perception of voters as to whether the candidate is honest/clean of corruption, able to lead, pays attention to the people, is friendly and polite, assertive and authoritative, smart or insightful, and has an attractive appearance (Mujani, 2022).

The above description essentially shows the victory of the mayoral candidate in the mayoral election in Serang City. Syafi'ie revealed that this victory could be seen from the candidates for mayor of Serang. There are no significant differences between one another because no ethnicity or race holds privilege. Moreover, the dominant factor in this identity politics is religion which is the target of the candidates in the Muslim community because the

people of Serang City are predominantly Muslim. The number of votes won by the elected mayor shows that he has more value than other candidates, proving that the people of Serang city have a high level of political participation and can be said to be rational voters.

In the context of democracy, the electoral political process in the city of Serang during the mayoral election is a form of local democracy that has developed since classical Greece to modern times. The concept of democracy as a political system cannot be separated from the Greek philosophers. However, in the mid-20th century, the meaning of democracy underwent a paradigm shift: First, democracy was defined as a form of government; second, democracy is understood based on the source of authority for the government and third, democracy is one of the procedures to form a government (Huntington, 2020). The main procedure of democracy is the competitive election of political leaders by the people through direct elections. Here, Joseph A. Schumpeter - an economist and politician from Moravia - defines democracy in terms of "the will of the people" (source) and "the common good" (goal). Therefore, according to Schumpeter, democracy is called the democratic method. The democratic method is an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions that realize the common good by making society decide its own problems through the election of individuals to assemble in order to carry out their will.

The continuity of directly electing regional heads in each leadership succession always shows a tendency for regional heads who act as king makers to change the map of local political forces that will continue the power transfer. The position of the regional head as a king maker will reduce the bad sides of the previous power by appointing a successor from his own family, steering the authority to choose their families to perpetuate power and cover up the disgrace of their power in the past. In a study by Mietzner (Mietzner, 2009) regarding the 2009 general election, he stated that after the fall of the

authoritarian regime, Indonesian political leaders tended to prepare their families to become future leaders of Indonesia. This study proves that leaders in the regions have transferred their power more after leadership to family, relatives, or close friends who become public officials.

Religious Sentiments in Local Democratic

The issue of religion in local political contestation in the city of Serang has become one of the strategic instruments in influencing people's political preferences to determine the candidate to be elected. The relationship between religion and politics becomes problematic when it is related to local political particularities, for example, the emergence of identity issues, such as religious sentiments, ethnicity, local people, and majority-minority. The issues of religion and ethnicity are considered applicable in regional head elections (Pilkada). The issue of religion and, ethnicity (Sara) is considered the cheapest issue in the election context, manipulating the public low education level.

The conception of local politics is rooted in the concept of democracy at the local level, where it is generally believed that democracy at the local level will strengthen the realization of democracy at the national level. Local politics is interpreted as the interaction of actors in an area to contest the election of regional heads. Local politics, local governance, and decentralization are related terms. Local politics operates within the framework of central-regional relations concerning administrative and political matters. Local government is a political organization within the local community. He is involved in decisions and governance to promote public interest in the local area. Local government is a political institution that exists in the local community and is the focal point of the political system. Local politics operate under democratic principles like those at the national level. The local political process is contained in the regional head election contestation, both in determining candidates for legislature members, regents, and governor candidates at the local level.

Based on Zakaria Syafi'ie's view, the phenomenon of the emergence of

religious sentiments in electoral politics in Serang City is due to:

“Identity politics is a political tool for a group for a specific purpose, such as as a form of resistance or as a tool to show their identity. This identity politics can be used as a campaign strategy for candidates in elections and is the reason for some people to vote, so that someone chooses a candidate not based on quality but based on identity, which is not necessarily the level of intelligence and ability that is adequate and qualified to carry out tasks and carry out people's messages”.

Theoretically, many factors explain the electability of regional head candidate pairs, including sociological, psychological, and rational choice models. The essence of the sociological model is that the similarity of social characteristics determines political choices. Sociological variables that are believed to be predictors are religion, ethnicity, age, gender, education, and income (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968). Religion is believed to influence voter behavior as an essential element in social division. Lipset and Rokkan (eds.), in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives* (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967), say, for example, that there is a significant correlation between religious affiliation and support for confessional parties in Europe. De Blasio, & Naticchioni (2016) also found evidence of a relationship between religion and voting behavior in Italy. Arend Lijphart (2019), in *Religious vs. Ethnic vs. Class Voting: The 'Crucial Experiment,'* found that, compared to language and social class variables, religion was more influential in determining party choices in Belgium, Canada, South Africa, and Switzerland. Studio Norris (2004), in *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, confirm the influence of religion in choosing. In essence, this sociological model is often referred to as "the embodiment of identity politics in electoral behavior.

The above description shows that several factors cause the strengthening of identity politics, including; First, it arises because of economic inequality. From the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu) records, vulnerable areas are those with high economic disparities. Second, low

political literacy and communication literacy. Third, poor political institutions are a latent problem in Indonesia. Fourth, there is political polarization. With firm polarization, it is easy for political elites to trigger conflicts that lead to divisions.

Furthermore, Saputra, Setiawan, & Herpina (2021) supported the emergence of the phenomenon of religious sentiment in regional head elections in the city of Serang that Bawaslu, as one part of the election organizers, has an interest in so that issues of identity politics such as religious sentiment do not become mainstream in every election event. Thus, Bawaslu takes an active role in anticipating this, starting from preparing regulations in the form of Bawaslu Regulations as a preventive effort and technical rules to manage every issue, including identity politics. In addition to regulations, Bawaslu also conducts research in the form of an Election Vulnerability Index (IKP) to map areas prone to identity politics so that all stakeholders can anticipate this problem properly. In identity politics in the local context, the most dominant or more frequently appearing are religious sentiments or certain religious groups. Because maybe, according to some circles, minority and majority politics are still a magnet for obtaining electoral vote effects.

Therefore, there needs to be an effort or steps taken by Bawaslu to minimize issues related to religious sentiment, namely always using preventive methods, either conveying appeals or discussing persuasively to these groups. However, if they continue to carry out identity politics and harm other groups, Bawaslu will carry out enforcement procedures which will then be assessed whether the actions taken fall into administrative violations, criminal violations or violations of other laws, to then issue recommendations.

In this context, as part of post-reform democracy developments in Indonesia, regional elections reflect a paradigmatic change and great progress. Political participation is wide open to determine regional heads. Since it was

held for the first time in 2005, starting in 2015, the local elections were held simultaneously in several regions without the exception of the local elections in the city of Serang in 2018 directly.

The term "vote trading" was chosen to distinguish it from the practice of buying votes. In electoral literature, "vote buying" means giving something (money, goods, etc.) to voters (or electorates) to cast their votes in elections for the party giving the thing. While vote trading has a broader meaning, it does not always involve voters, as in the concept of "vote buying." The term includes the phenomena of vote theft and vote bloat for certain candidates and/or political parties that involve election organizers at all levels, without the involvement of voters. In short, the concept of vote trading is broader and includes the practice of vote buying.

The practice of "vote trading" undermines the quality of elections and harms democracy. If we hope for quality elections and a healthy democracy, then there is no other choice. This practice must be eliminated. According to Syafi'ie's view, the victory of candidates in regional head elections is possible because they are influenced by the existence of political parties that have a significant influence on them, because political parties can be used as vehicles or boats for someone to gain power. It is undeniable that masses from political parties can gain votes in the election process. However, the role of Islamic mass organizations must be a severe concern for the candidates because the mass base is in these Islamic organizations. If these Islamic mass organizations can be influenced, then the opportunity to swing into office will be easy to obtain. Meanwhile, the level of political participation of the people who are members of these Islamic organizations indicates that they are already aware of the importance of building democratization.

The impact of identity politics using religious sentiments in the mayoral election in Serang City is that identity politics itself is bad because a candidate is not selected based on eligibility and propriety (H. A. Saputra, Setiawan,

Nofrima, & Muksin, 2021). The candidates were selected based on an emotional connection solely and not the candidates' quality factor, leading to insufficient leaders. However, it must be acknowledged that making choices for candidates based on identity is not always bad. In fact, there is a common struggle behind identity politics to achieve certain things that are collectively desired.

In addition to religious sentiments, the ethnic sentiments of each candidate are often an important question for the public to find out the regional origins of the Serang mayor and deputy mayoral candidates. The term ethnicity elaborates on the origins of candidates participating in local political contests in Serang City. However, it turns out, that when the choice is aimed at a sense of regionalism, the regional similarity factor or the origin of the candidates becomes a significant consideration. There is a dislike for one of the mayoral candidates, and the people of Serang City still cannot accept leaders from outside Serang or Banten. Thus, ethnic issues have also become a strategy for one pair of candidates to gain votes from the public. The ethnic sentiment is sometimes a determining factor in the victory of one of the candidate pairs, becoming a reality in regions including the city of Serang compared to other cities such as Jakarta, where the people are heterogeneous. The ethnic sentiment is still dominant and has become a classic problem, especially in Serang.

According to Syafi'ie, identity politics or sentiment, especially religion, is used to gain votes because society is generally a religious community. Religion is a source of belief, and everyone will struggle to defend their beliefs, so if their beliefs are disturbed, the community will be angry. It is very logical if candidates use identity politics to win votes amid the religious community by conveying religious issues without having to discriminate against other parties and be exclusive, because members of society are pluralistic, and the integrity, unity, and integrity of the nation must be maintained.

Judging from the interpretation of the situation above, the 2018 Mayor election intersects politically with the presidential election of 2019. Religious sentiment in the Mayor election will increase sharply because it will affect power politics in local political contestation. Therefore, several arguments strengthen religious sentiments. First, the simultaneous Pilkada in 2018 will determine the course of the 2019 Presidential Election (Pilpres). Moreover, several Pilgub and Pilbub or Pilwali are held in provinces with a large number of votes, such as North Sumatra, West Java, Banten, East Java, and Central Java, which will undoubtedly be helpful in facing the presidential election next year. The political victory in the Pilkada simultaneously realized by political parties (Parpol) will make it easier for the party machine to carry out political consolidation toward the 2019 Presidential Election. Seeing the importance of the simultaneous Pilkada for political consolidation in 2019, it is feared that political parties will use all kinds of methods, including unintelligent ways based on identity provocation, to attract mass sympathy. Because the elite tends to be pragmatic, only thinking about victory, even though it was done by carrying out sharp social divisions. The elites became a part of destroying democracy.

Second, identity politics will be used as a political strategy because of the intensity of influence in garnering mass sympathy in a relatively short time. The Jakarta Pilgub has proven that a campaign using identity sentiment can boost a character's popularity in a short time. Identity-based political propaganda is influential and powerful in gaining people's voices because matters related to identity are more easily felt sentimentally by humans. Not only in Indonesia, the strengthening of a sense of identity is a symptom that occurs on a global scale.

Third, the use of identity politics will increase in the coming years due to the increasing level of digital literacy in society. In the current digital era, public political debate has shifted space, from real space to virtual space.

Virtual space has different characteristics from the real world, where the public has tremendous access, anyone can argue, and is longer in scope of time. Therefore, the political debate in cyberspace can potentially have a broader and more profound impact on the public. Due to its practicality and wide reach, political operations using social media are often used by sympathizers, volunteers, and even cyber teams built by political parties to spread political campaigns. In fact, in several cases that were revealed, it was found that they were deliberately spreading hoaxes, black campaigns, and identity-based propaganda. The development of digital media produces a paradox. On the one hand, it strengthens democracy because it becomes a channel for conveying practical criticism, becomes an egalitarian public communication channel, and encourages government transparency. However, on the other hand, it can also be used to spread messages, propaganda, and bad opinions that threaten democracy.

Fourth, identity politics is likely to increase because certain groups of people use it to gain prestige, power (and maybe even money) from inserting this propaganda. In the last few months, through the issue of defending religion, many people who were previously unknown to the public and whose voices were not heard suddenly became influential and heard figures.

Finally, identity issues become a dilemma for candidate pairs to win votes in the mayoral election. On the one hand, it becomes a very strategic issue for pairs of candidates to win voters' votes, but on the other hand, it becomes a threat for pairs of candidates to gain public sympathy to support one of the candidate pairs.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that identity politics is a reality that emerges from national politics; in the local context, the most dominant or frequent are religious sentiments or specific religious groups. Maybe, according to some circles, minority and majority politics are still magnets for obtaining an

electoral vote effect. Populism and identity politics, are intertwined to create political dynamics in the mayoral election in Serang City. Thereby, public participation is defined as calculating the number of political votes. Political mobilization was carried out in places of worship. It is almost hard to tell the difference between a campaign, which is supposed to be based on persuasion, and a provocation. Voters are directed to vote based on identity sentiments. Religious sentiment or identity politics as a means to mobilize the masses to influence their choices will be prohibited by Law No. 7 of 2017.

Second, the issue of religion in local political contestation in the city of Serang has become one of the strategic instruments in influencing people's political preferences to determine the candidate to be elected. The issues of religion and ethnicity are considered applicable in regional head elections (Pilkada). The issue of religion and ethnicity (SARA) is considered the cheapest issue in the context of regional elections. Several factors have led to the strengthening of identity politics, including, first, economic inequality. According to the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu) records, vulnerable areas are those with high economic disparities. Second, low political and communication literacy. Third, poor political institutions are a latent problem in Indonesia. Fourth, there is political polarization. With firm polarization, it is elementary for political elites to trigger conflicts that lead to divisions.

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