

POLARIZATION OF HATRED IN THE 2018 NORTH SUMATRA REGIONAL ELECTION: How Local Democratic Development Realized?

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ABSTRACT

Procedural democracy through elections is a strengthened mechanism in post-reform Indonesia, by conducting direct local elections. Efforts to strengthen local democracy have been challenged by sharp political polarization in society, particularly on issues of religious and tribal identity. Such polarization has the potential to cause social segregation and conflict in society that tends to degrade democracy itself. Through the case of the North Sumatra regional election in 2018, this research uses the theory of affective polarization and political development in explaining how democratic development at the local level is realized in Indonesia. Through a qualitative approach, research data is collected by literature search, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Research findings show that there was a polarization of hatred in the 2018 regional elections, but this polarization occurred only as an effort to attract voters' votes, not because of hatred between religious people in North Sumatra. Local democratic development has weakened due to the polarization of hatred. The threat of democratic degradation also occurs if this political polarization based on the issue of religious identity persists in subsequent elections. Strengthening the scrutiny of candidates' political campaigns, particularly through social media and figures representing candidates' spouses, is crucial. This aims to minimize sharp political polarization in the implementation of regional elections and encourage democratic development at the local level to be realized.

INTRODUCTION

Democracy can simply be interpreted through the conduct of elections or referred to as procedural democracy. Sorensen argues that the main stage in determining a country's democracy is to find elements of competition, participation and freedom and not only in formal exposure but also in practice in civil and political liberties [1]. Although in practice, there is still a dilemma between autonomy and control [2], democracy is still the best way to realize development [3]. This argument reinforces Indonesia's move to democratize widely post-reform.

The achievement of an effective and consolidated democracy is inseparable from the circulation of power. The democratic circulation of power must pay attention to the fair, open and participatory aspects of competition. Open competition encourages broad participation of the public in exerting influence over the democratic system itself. In contrast in the case of Japan, party dominance and the presence of strong elements of clientelism in Japan resulted in a lack of competition, and the opposition was unable to exert influence on the democratic system implemented in Japan [4]. As an important indicator in democracy, election studies extend to the aspects of institutionalization, administration and system of election supervision as a sub-study of political development.

One of the efforts to democratize in Indonesia is through the implementation of direct regional head elections (pilkada). Local elections have been held since 2005 and have changed the political constellation at the national level as well as at the local level to be much more democratic and dynamic than ever before [5]. The process of aggregation of community interests in the regions is increasingly well consolidated, due to the direct involvement of the community in determining leadership in the regions through the electoral mechanism. The dynamics of regional politics are also increasingly dynamic and loaded with the agility of interests in the regions. The positive effect of local elections is that democracy at the local level is growing and increasingly consolidated. However, in practice, it turns out that there is still a problem, namely the development of political polarization of society which has the potential to occur segregation and social conflicts, especially polarization based on the issue of religious identity in the implementation of regional elections.

Several studies conducted by [6], [7] and [8] on the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Elections have shown the strengthening of identity politics and the polarization of society based on issues of religious and tribal identity. The study provides an interesting conclusion, that the main factor in the victory of the couple Edy Rahmayadi and

Musa Rajekshah was the strong issue of religion as a determinant of people's political preferences. The polarization based on the issue of religious identity in the 2018 North Sumatra regional elections certainly has the potential to erode the development of local democracy that has been initiated through direct elections since 2004.



Picture 1. Map of the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Election Victory

The map graphic info above shows facts that can be explained politically through the victory map of candidate pairs in the districts/cities of the candidate's voter base. The fact is that the Eramas couple won votes in pockets of voters in districts/cities with the majority of the people being Muslim and ethnic Mandailing, Malay, and Javanese. Meanwhile, the Djoss pair won votes in pockets of voters in regencies/cities with the majority of the people being Christians and ethnic Batak Toba, Karo and North Tapanuli. When viewed from the results of the election, it seems clear that the religious and ethnic divisions in the 2018 regional elections were very sharp. Taking the example of two regencies, namely Mandailing Natal and Samosir, where Mandailing Natal is a regency whose majority of people are diverse Islamic and ethnic Mandailing, Eramas won with more than 95% of the votes, while the opposite is in Samosir Regency, where the people in this regency are majority Christian and have Batak Toba ethnicity, the Djoss couple won a victory above 95%. This emphasizes that there was polarization in the context of SARA's identity in the 2018 North Sumatra Governor election.

The 2018 North Sumatra regional election showed two phenomena. First, strengthening identity politics (*political identity*), and secondly thickening the *butterfly effect*, especially from the 2017 DKI Jakarta Governor election. The situation that arose during the campaign process of the candidates' spouses until the voting on June 27, 2018 was the occurrence of tensions between religious believers, inter-ethnic tensions, black campaigns, the increasing role of local elites, especially religious elites and youth, and slander (*hoaxes*). Identity politics in the 2018 regional elections, which included religion, ethnicity and regional issues, were spread massively to the public through social media networks and figures directly or indirectly involved as campaign teams for winning candidates' spouses. This dynamic has the potential to encourage social segregation and conflict in society. This will be very detrimental and hinder the development of sustainable democracy,

especially at the local level. By taking the case in the 2108 North Sumatra Regional Election, this study tried to conduct an in-depth study related to the political polarization that occurred in society as a result of the direct election, and tried to answer how sustainable democratic development can be realized, especially at the local level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptually, political polarization is divided into two levels, namely elite political polarization and mass political polarization [9]. Elite polarization is a process of division that occurs between political parties that are inside the government and political parties that are outside the government. Although it seems more obvious in countries that implement a parliamentary system of government, in countries with a presidential system that adheres to two parties this is also very obvious, such as in the United States [10]. Referring to the United States, which tends to polarize the elite, it focuses more on legislative and deliberative bodies. Previously, U.S. political scientists measured polarization by examining the extent to which party members were born out of interest groups. But nowadays, experts tend to focus on analyzing voting patterns by first studying the systems in voting that occur in political parties (Democrats and Republicans) with the intention of measuring the polarization that occurs [11].

Furthermore, the study of political scientists related to mass polarization, there are two types or measures in the polarization of mass, the first of which is ideological polarization. This polarization refers to the degree to which voters have different beliefs towards ideological issues. For example, if faced with an ideological choice between conservative or liberal in the face of emerging issues [12]. The second is partisan cleavage. This type refers to the extent to which a voter identifies his or her political choices as well as his or her political views of a political party based on ideology, race, religion, gender, or other demographic characteristics [13]. This polarization refers to the extent to which voters/people do not like or distrust other voters/groups that are outside their political group or that they support [14].

The explanation related to political polarization above describes the political preferences that arise subjectively from the self of society as voters. Another interesting study is that political polarization tends to arise when the executive leadership abuses authority. The abuse of power by the executive leadership opens up opportunities for the emergence of pros and cons among the public, thus potentially giving rise to political polarization. Furthermore, this polarization can continue in electoral contestation, both at the national and local levels.

The political polarization in the 2018 regional elections showed a form of identity politics. Identity politics can emerge as a form of political struggle in seizing power based on a particular identity. Kristanus as cited by Buchari mentioned that the struggle for political power was carried out by groups that had been experiencing marginalization, oppression, and marginalization socially, politically, economically and culturally for a long period of time [15].

So identity politics is primarily not triggered by organizing groups through organizational or party affiliations, but rather is first triggered by feelings of isolation and injustice. This practice of marginalization and discrimination can be carried out by other groups in the practice of social relations or by the ruling regime [16].

Furthermore, the opinion of Ubed Abdillah in his writings on Klaus Von Beyme mentions that there are three characteristics inherent in identity politics [17]. First that the Identity politics movement essentially re-enhances the narrative that aims to control biological factors as constituents of fundamental differences as the reality of its life. Second, in the identity politics movement there is a tendency to build an inverted *apartheid* system. Furthermore, in the third, within the identity politics movement, the weakness is that there is an attempt to create a specific group of theories from science.

The study of political polarization further developed with the emergence of consequences of affective polarization (AP). The concept of AP refers to the cleavage of society that occurs in an electoral contestation based on hatred or hostility by one group towards another [18]. Based on social identity theory, AP refers to the extent to which political parties perceive each other as an unwelcome outside group. For example, comparing hostility between supporters to racial discrimination [19]. Based on social identity theory [20], AP refers to the extent to which partisans or societies view each other as an outward group that is frowned upon [21].

Affective polarization is expressly considered a negative and dangerous phenomenon because it reduces political confidence among supporters of the party that lost the election, and also has the potential to severely impede cooperation among the party elite [22] and even encourage discriminatory behavior towards opposing partisans [23]. It should have been a party system in which parties and partisans differed on ideological grounds to some extent, but this was not accompanied by intense interparty hostility [24].

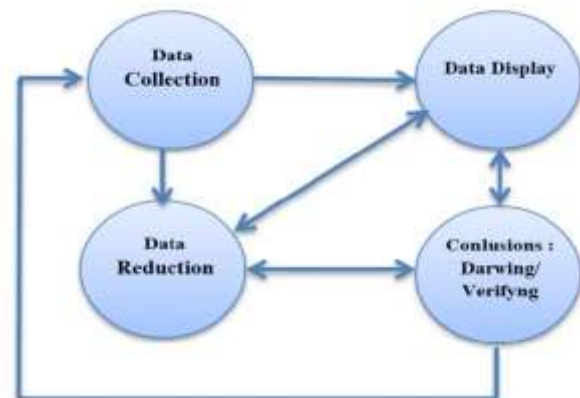
Political Development

In line with the emergence of political polarization in elections, democratic development is experiencing challenges that are not easy, especially in the local context. Theoretically, Myron Weiner revealed that the purpose of political development is as a tool to encourage political integration, the realization of an efficient, clean, authoritative government [25]. Meanwhile, Samuel P. Huntington mentioned five goals of political development, namely high economic growth, equity, democracy, stability, and national autonomy [26]. Furthermore, Lucian W Pye in Afan Gaffar [27], explained that political development includes several aspects, including community participation in various political activities of a democratic nature, widespread political participation is a characteristic of political modernization. From this explanation, it can be said that democratic development is an important part of a country's political development efforts.

In his comprehensive explanation, Almond for example believes that political development is intended for modern governing regimes, where efforts are made to encourage broad political participation and fulfill and respect the civil rights of the people, in the hope of alignment with substantial democracy [28]. In relating political participation to other variables of development, Huntington and Nelson put forward four alternative models, namely, the bourgeois model, the autocratic model, the technocratic model, and the populist model. Huntington and Nelson explain that in developing countries, the relationship between participation and other variables of development is likely to change at various stages in the development of the levels of political participation as a whole. The first stage, concerns the expansion of political participation to the middle class in the city; The second stage concerns the issue of extending political participation to the lower classes. The change towards the second stage, depends on the application of the bourgeois or autocratic model of development [29].

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, and does not intend to test hypotheses [30]. All data of this study was collected through in-depth interviews with selected speakers based on in-depth knowledge of the issues raised by taking into account the credibility of the speakers. In addition, a focus group discussion was also carried out which aimed to crosscheck and deepen the data that had been collected. All data collected related to the polarization of hatred that occurred in the 2018 regional elections was further analyzed using a data analysis technique developed by Miles and Huberman [31], through the stages of data collection, data presentation, data reduction and conclusion drawing. Before drawing conclusions, researchers analyzed and interpreted all the data presented related to the polarization of hatred with the development of local democracy in Indonesia.



picture 2: Miles dan Huberman Methodological Chartflow

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The North Sumatra Regional Election in 2018 was attended by 2 (two) pairs of candidates, namely: Edy Rahmayadi, a retired TNI with the last rank of Lieutenant General, paired with Musa Rajekshah who is one of the businessmen in North Sumatra. This Pasangan takes the tagline ERAMAS with the vision of North Sumatra With Dignity. While the competing partner is Djarot Syaiful Hidayat paired with

Sihar Sitorus (Djoss). Djarot is a national figure of the Indonesian Party of Struggle (Central PDI-P) cadre and was previously the Deputy Governor of DKI Jakarta paired with Ahok, while his partner, Sihar Sitorus, is a PDI Perjuangan cadre who is also a businessman from North Sumatra.

The North Sumatra regional election in 2018 was indeed difficult to escape from the shadow of national political problems in the 2014 Presidential Election and the 2017 DKI Jakarta Governor's Election. In the 2014 presidential election, where the community was divided in support between supporters who came to be referred to as "*cebong*" and "*kampret*". Continuing with the DKI Jakarta Regional Election which is full of community cleavages in a religious context which is then labeled with "blasphemy" groups and "anti-blasphemy" groups, making people's political backwardness not only in Jakarta but occurs in almost all parts of Indonesia, including North Sumatra. The blasphemy group was pinned on the supporters of the Basuki Tjahaya Purnama (Ahok)-Djarot Syaiful Hidayat couple, while the "anti-blasphemy (Islamic) group was pinned on the supporters of the Anies Baswedan-Sandiaga Uno couple. This cleavage was even more pointed when the DKI Jakarta Regional Election entered the second round which left only two pairs of candidates.

Referring to the national political activities in 2014 and 2017 that encouraged the emergence of sharp political polarization in society, it does not become wrong when the assumption that the political polarization that occurred in the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Election was strongly influenced by national politics in the 2014 elections and especially the DKI Jakarta regional elections in 2017. This is also strengthened because one of the candidates who ran in the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Election was Djarot Syaiful Hidayat who was a candidate for Deputy Governor of DKI Jakarta who was paired with Basuki Tjahaya Purnama (Ahok) in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Governor's Election.

Referring to the opinions of two local North Sumatra political experts, Faisal Riza and Arifin Sale), the tendency of political polarization that occurred in the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Election was a sharp cleavage on religious issues. Apart from the fact that there are only two candidate pairs competing, the religious backgrounds of the two candidate pairs are different, where the Edy-Ijeck couple is a candidate couple with an Islamic-Islamic background, while the candidate couple Djarot-Sihar has an Islamic-Christian background. Furthermore, the factors of supporting figures from each pair of candidates also strengthened the emergence of polarization with the issue of the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Election which was still very close to the implementation of the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Election, plus Djarot Syaiful Hidayat was Ahok's partner at the time of the DKI Jakarta Regional Election which was claimed by figures and some Islamic religious organizations as blasphemy of Islam, such as the figures of the Islamic Community Forum (FUI) which is led by the elites of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). There

is also the National Movement of Fatwa Defenders (GNPF) of Clerics.

In the context of the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Elections, polarization with the emergence of identity politics, especially religion, because some Islamic groups consider the current ruling regime to be marginalizing and criminalizing many Islamic figures. So that in line with the issue raised in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Election, one of the candidates in the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Election, namely the Djoss couple is considered a representation of the ruling regime and is positioned opposite to the interests of the Islamic religion.

The cleavage of society based on the platform and substantial issues of North Sumatra's condition from the beginning has actually been initiated by the Eramas couple through their jargon Dignified, but precisely what is conveyed through the media, especially social media and to the public is the resonance of the problem of the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Election, namely the issue of religious cleavage and identity issues. Religious sentiment in the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Election is indeed an issue that continues to be echoed, especially through social media. Referring to social media expert, Jonris Purba, currently with the rapid development of technology, social media has the ability to form polarization in society based on issues that are echoed continuously. Attributed to the low literacy of the people, resulting in a political polarization based on religious issues in the 2018 regional elections occurred strongly and sharply.

One of the party elites in North Sumatra, Sutarto rightly gives an idea that identity politics that occurs in regional elections and is carried out by political elites and also religious elites, is not because of their ignorance of the consequences of social segregation that will occur in society as a result of the cleavage that occurs by identity politics, but because of the awareness that with identity politics, The electoral impact is very beneficial for the candidates who are carried to be able to gain votes and win the fight. This awareness of the electoral benefits derived from identity politics then makes the issue of identity capitalized through religious elites and political elites and disseminated through mainstream media and social media. The impact that emerged from this was further conveyed by Sutarto was the emergence of polarization of hatred during the 2018 regional elections.

Furthermore, Faisal Riza explained that the issue of religious identity and political polarization of society that occurred in Jakarta in 2017 was raised and amplified in North Sumatra through the media and the spread of issues supported by winning figures, who in Faisal Riza are called agents. Related to Eramas, the agent in question is aimed at Islamic religious leaders who previously campaigned for Anis-Sandi in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Election, such as the Islamic Community Forum, the Muslim Congress and also the GNPF Ulama. In line with Faisal Riza, in a study published by Muhammad Fadly in 2018, it shows that the influence of local figures and elites is very large in encouraging people's political participation in the 2015 Toraja regional elections [32]. The ability and

influence possessed by local figures and elites are able to encourage the political participation of the community to support and choose candidates campaigned by these figures. In the case of the 2018 North Sumatra regional elections, the figures and elites not only came from the local, but also involved national figures and elites. These figures and elites come from a variety of segmentations, both religious figures, political figures, and also other influential figures.

Ustadz Abdul Somad (UAS) is one of the central figures considered capable of driving Eramas' electability in the 2018 regional elections. UAS was considered one of the charismatic clerics who were opposed to the interests of power at the time, and was also actively involved in pushing for the victory of the Anis-Sandi couple in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Election. The presence of UAS in the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Election and being in the ranks of Eramas encouraged the polarization of community politics which is generally seen as a continuation of the polarization that occurred in the previous DKI Jakarta Regional Election.

One of the phenomenal proselytizing activities carried out by UAS in Medan is da'wah with the theme "Prayer for Dignified North Sumatra" which was held at Merdeka Square Medan the day before the end of the official campaign period from the KPU. This activity presented national figures such as Ustadz Tengku Zulkarnain and also the former Panglima of the TNI, General (Ret.) Gatot Nurmantyo. The message conveyed by UAS in this campaign strongly invites the public to choose leaders who care about the ummah. The UAS and all other figures who attended and together with the Eramas team in the political campaign that was carried out, strengthened the polarization that occurred in society that tends to religious cleavages such as what happened in the DKI Jakarta Regional Election in 2017.

From the qualitative description of the above presentation, this study found that there was a very sharp political polarization based on religious identity in the 2018 regional elections. The involvement of figures who are considered contrary to the ruling regime and the dissemination of the issue of blasphemy to the Djoss couple through social media and political campaigns, are the main causes of this polarization. So what is the fate of democratic development, especially local democracy with a sharp case of political polarization based on religious issues in the 2018 regional elections?

Several studies on political polarization reveal that polarization actually encourages an increase in people's political participation. Abramowitz, for example, found evidence during the American presidential elections in 2004 and 2008, that voters were motivated to be active in politics exercising their right to vote because of the political polarization that ensued. Abramowitz concluded that those who participated were those who were polarized. There are many assumptions that the regional head elections in North Sumatra in 2018 have divided many familial ties, colleagues and friendships. However, there is

another important fact that emerges, namely that many people become more aware of politics, curious about candidates and the policies they offer, and participate in campaigning for candidates they support. In short, polarization has activated and aroused the desire of people who were not previously involved in politics to be more active in politics.

Factually, in the 2018 regional elections, there was a polarization of hatred in society in the context of religious identity issues. Some of the factors that cause political polarization are through political campaign activities, both carried out through local and national figures and elites, issues that are formed and disseminated through the media. But the polarization of hatred that occurs is only related to trying to win votes in the context of winning candidates. There was no interfaith hatred in North Sumatra, either before or after the elections were held. Furthermore, it is related to how the development of local democracies is in danger of being degraded as a result of sharp political polarization in the context of the issue of religious identity. This is because the polarization of hatred has the potential to give rise to segregation and conflict in society. Although the polarization of hatred based on religious identity only arises and strengthens in local elections and is not permanent, it still threatens democratic development at the local level. The phenomenon of polarization can degrade democracy at the local level, particularly in the electoral context. The development of local democracy will be difficult to achieve in accordance with the great goal of the concept of democracy itself, namely the welfare of the people.

CONCLUSION

This study found the conclusion that there was a polarization of hatred in society based on the issue of religious identity in the 2018 regional elections. The polarization was caused by the spread of religious issues originating from the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Election through social media and religious leaders involved in political campaign activities to win candidate pairs in the 2018 North Sumatra regional elections. Local democratic development is in danger of being degraded and democratic consolidation may be disrupted if this political polarization based on religious issues continues to occur in the conduct of regional elections.

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