



## Synergy of Inclusive Groups as An Effort to Resolve Identity Politics in Elections

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**Abstract:** *The practice of identity politics by exploiting the issue of SARA in the 2019 simultaneous election contestation has damaged the essence of democracy. This raises problems that threaten the unity and integrity of the Indonesian nation so it has implications for constituents in exercising their right to vote. Factors of diversity, structure and legal culture that are still weak are the main problems that demand to be resolved. This research focuses on efforts to gather and strengthen inclusive groups, namely active participation by the government, mass media, students and the community through a series of strategic steps in carrying out their functions. This study uses a type of normative research with secondary data types. Based on a philosophical, statutory and conceptual approach. From the research conducted, it was found that the synergy of internal (government) and external (community) roles based on the legal system in an inclusive manner is a step to overcome and resolve the problem of using SARA issues in attracting the votes of sympathizers, to create quality democracy.*

**Keywords :** *Identity Politics, Sara, The Legal System*

### Introduction

“All politics is identity”, a phrase that has recently emerged to describe contemporary political phenomena of the world, especially Indonesia. <sup>1</sup> The term identity politics is understood as the participation of individuals in politics on behalf of a particular social group. <sup>2</sup> So far, historical aspects have shown the phenomenon of identity politics in Indonesia. This phenomenon has justified the existence of fundamental problems that have not been resolved in the misuse of the problem of diversity of the Indonesian nation. The phenomenon of identity politicization is

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<sup>1</sup> Laode Machdiani Afala, *Politik Identitas Di Indonesia* (Malang: Malang: UB Press, 2018), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Liliana Mason and and Nicholas T Davis, “A Broder Approach to Identity Politics Socio-Partisan Sorting and the Deepening [Artisan Divide,” Conference Paper, n.d.

experienced by every country, in Indonesia identity politicization is related to issues of ethnicity, religion, ideology and local interests represented in general by elites based on their respective interests.<sup>3</sup> The use of identity politics in Indonesia has become more prevalent in recent years leading up to elections. It involves people trying to define themselves and their own group in a way that appeals to them, rather than looking at the entire country or society as a whole. This was most evident in the election campaign between Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto in 2014, and again in the 2019 presidential election campaign.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the idea in this essay is to create a concept in an effort to overcome the involvement of identity politics, especially the use of Ethnic, Religious, Racial and Intergroup (SARA) issues in the holding of the 2019 simultaneous election contestation. This is motivated by various problem factors. *First*, Indonesia places the highest position on elections as a manifestation of people's sovereignty that cannot be violated by its existence. Elections have a direct relationship to produce an ideal leader, and prevent executive, legislative, and inaccessibility conflicts. The capacity of candidates for people's representatives in carrying out their duties and functions cannot be separated from the electoral system used in recruiting candidates.

Unfortunately, the holding of elections at that time was injured by the emergence of the phenomenon of identity politics by utilizing the issue of SARA in Indonesia. This indirectly affects constituents who exercise their right to vote based on group interests. Initially, the emergence of the SARA issue related to identity politics was marked by the mobilization of mass movements at the last Jakarta regional elections known as the 411 and 212 movements.

The 411 and 212 movements were two moments of large-scale civil movements carried out by a combination of several Islamic groups, namely the GNPF-MUI. The mass movement was triggered by allegations of blasphemy against Islam committed by Basuki Cahya Purnama. The mobilization of ethnic and religious issues is one of the variables that explain the current political dynamics and democratic

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<sup>3</sup> Erman and Muchid Albintani, "Politik Identitas Dan Negara Bangsa Di Riau'," *Nakhoda: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan* 17, no. 29 (2018): 1–3.

<sup>4</sup> F. A. Rif'an, "Politik Identitas Dan Perilaku Pemilih Pada Pilpres 2019: Studi Di Kota Palembang Sumatera Selatan," *Jurnal Politik Walisongo* 2, no. 2 (2020): 83–100.

development.<sup>5</sup> This event is inseparable from aspects of Indonesian history where in general the phenomenon of Indonesian identity politics contains elements of SARA.<sup>6</sup> In 2014, for example, the issue of SARA came up before the election day for presidential candidates and vice presidential candidates in 2014, the issue was intensified through the role of media channels. Some of the main issues are the religiosity of the two candidate pairs, namely Prabowo Subianto-Hatta Rajasa and Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla. The religion referred to in this case is the ability of presidential candidates to read the Qur'an, lead prayers, to family religious background.<sup>7</sup> The same thing also happened in the 2018 regional election contestation some time ago, where the issue of sara took an important role in the seconds before the election, it happened in the regions of South Sumatra, North Sumatra and West Java.<sup>8</sup> Even though the Director of Imparsial AI Araf expressly said that politicians using the issue of SARA are a reflection of one's superficiality in politics.<sup>9</sup>

*Second*, the strengthening of identity politics in Indonesia is intensely used by political actors to maintain their existence in power struggle efforts.<sup>10</sup> Political events are colored by the issue of SARA to win the votes of sympathizers in various ways and forms. This problem was exacerbated by the decentralization policy and amendments to the NRI 45 Constitution at the beginning of the reform opened up open space for local elites to use the SARA issue as a way to seize power, both at the local and national levels. Indirectly, the SARA identity-based movement has consequences for the birth of forms of violence and communal conflicts that occur in many regions, by using religion and ethnicity as a channel for mass mobilization of voters.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Aurel Croissant, "From Transition to Defective Democracy: Mapping Asian Democratisation," *Democratization* 11, no. No. V (2004): 44.

<sup>6</sup> Ahmad Syafii Ma'Arif, *Politik Identitas Dan Masa Depan Pluralisme Kita* (Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina, 2012), 20.

<sup>7</sup> agama Amirul Hasan, "Media Dan Kekuasaan: Analisis Isu Agama Dalam Pilpres RI 2014," *Jakarta: Jurnal Penelitian Keislaman*, no. 2 (2014): 101.

<sup>8</sup> Umam Chaerul, "Pengamat Sebut Politik Sara Masih Jadi Catatan Buruk Di Pilkada Serentak 2018," *Tribun News.com*, n.d.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Meyer, *Politik Identitas: Tantangan Terhadap Fundamentalism Modern* (Jakarta: FES, 2004), 17.

<sup>10</sup> Muchtar Habuddin, "Menguatnya Politik Identitas Di Rumah Lokal," *Studi Pemerintahan*, 2008, 23, <https://www.neliti.com/id/publications/31001/menguatnya-politik-identitas-di-ranah-lokal>.

<sup>11</sup> Gerry Arend Van Kilken, *Perang Kota Kecil: Kekerasan Komunal Dan Demokratisasi Di Indonesia*, 2007, 4.

The phenomenon of identity politics by utilizing the issue of SARA in reality must be prevented and resolved. This is because it can hamper the democratic process in Indonesia which is still in transition. Moreover, Indonesia is a plural country with diverse ethnicities, ethnicities, religions and languages that have the potential to shape contemporary political behavior. Based on the spirit of struggle that includes difference, recognition and multiculturalism, identity politics is trapped into several important problems, including, <sup>12</sup> Identity is used as a way to fight other groups on the basis of differences. Then, identity politics directs one person not to acknowledge the identity of others, thus demanding that one be exclusive of the other party. On the other hand, the identity is not fixed but changes with social development which has implications for the possibility of power relations, policy subcoordination or excessive domination.

### **The Use of SARA Issues as Identity Politics in Election Contestation**

Based on the description of the problem as mentioned above, pay attention that in the future Indonesia is faced with simultaneous election contestation in 2024. It is necessary that the problem of identity politics with the means of SARA issues that tend to be used as a tool for power mobilization is given important attention to be resolved. Because, according to the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) survey, identity politics by utilizing the SARA issue is one of the main factors predicted to hinder the 2019 election. <sup>13</sup>

The holding of elections itself is a consequence of the principle of *representative democracy* adopted in Indonesia. The circulation of power is determined by elections, which are a concrete answer to the participation of the people in determining their leaders and representatives in state institutions. Therefore, elections are an absolute requirement in a democratic system. <sup>14</sup> One of the characteristics of elections is the participation of citizens in political life. Participation can take many forms, ranging from the official which is following the path set by the government to the unofficial form.

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<sup>12</sup> Eriic Hobsbawm, "Identity Politics and The Left," *New Left Review* No. 217 (1996): 38.

<sup>13</sup> Ayuwuragil Kustin, "Survei Lipi Isu Sara Berpotensi Hambat Pemilu 2019," CNN Indonesia, 2018, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20180808090003-32-320434/survei-lipi-isu-sara-berpotensi-hambat-pemilu-2019>.

<sup>14</sup> Jimly Asshidqie, *Pokok-Pokok Hukum Tata Negara Indonesia Pasca Reformasi*, Cetakan Ke (Jakarta: BIP, 2008), 740.

Political participation has various meanings. Political participation is the participation of ordinary citizens in determining all decisions that concern or affect their lives.<sup>15</sup>

The holding of elections is a necessity in democratic contestation as a transitional process marks the start of a "new periodical" of government.<sup>16</sup> Historically, the 1955 elections were considered quite democratic by many, based on the freedom and plurality of election contestants, bureaucratic and military neutrality, no riots or mass clashes, representation of all parties in the election organizing body and voter enthusiasm.<sup>17</sup> The situation and conditions of the election in 1955 are then expected to be repeated.

As an effort to prevent and resolve the phenomenon of using SARA issues in contestation, especially facing the upcoming elections. Then it is necessary to look at it from different forms of legal system perspectives, as a consequence of the rule of law.<sup>18</sup> A legal system, consisting of institutional elements, methods of rules (*instrumental*), behavior of legal subjects who bear rights and obligations which have been determined by these legal norms. A good legal system will produce good state administration as well. However, legal development efforts to date have been more concentrated on the issue of legal substance, this also happened to the holding of election contestation.

In the substance aspect, the Election Law, for example, has provided a prohibition on forms of insults, or things that should not be done in the implementation of elections as a measure to prevent and resolve the use of identity politics. However, in the structural aspect, the government through the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) still has weaknesses in several things that need to be addressed. On the other hand, there are problems of people's legal culture that require an understanding of the basic norms of the rules themselves.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, there must be continuous efforts to build a legal culture and the structure of law enforcement itself. This can then

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<sup>15</sup> Ramlan Surbakti, *Memahami Ilmu Politik* (Jakarta: PT. Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia, 2007), 140.

<sup>16</sup> Khelda Ayunita, *Hukum Tata Negara Indonesia* (Jakarta: Penerbit Mitra Wacana Media, 2016), 136.

<sup>17</sup> DR. Sirajuddin, *Dasar Hukum Tata Negara Indonesia* (Malang: Setara Press, 2015), 311.

<sup>18</sup> Lihat, "UUD NRI 1945" (n.d.).

<sup>19</sup> Jimly Asshidqie, *Konstitusi Bernegara: Praksis Kenegaraan Bermartabat Dan Demokratis* (Malang: Setara Press, 2015), 314.

be used as the basis for the development of inclusive groups involved in a participatory manner to determine the direction for mutual progress.<sup>20</sup>

### **Synergy of Inclusive Groups in Political Contestation**

The implementation of inclusive social groups is carried out through the mechanism of several important roles of organs, namely the government, mass media, and students. Through the following steps, namely:

#### **1. The Role of Government**

Strengthening the role of government to be independent is important to ensure democracy, otherwise it can be abused by the government in power solely to perpetuate its power. As the holder of policy power, the government has coercive power against other parties. In the formulation, it should be responsive, namely inviting as much community participation as possible through social groups and individuals in the community.<sup>21</sup>

- a. Bawaslu's role should be to be more responsive in regulating the *rules of the game* for elections. Therefore, Bawaslu needs to be given rigid and clear authority to follow up on election violations related to SARA. On the other hand, Bawaslu is expected to make a legal breakthrough by preparing a legal umbrella in the technical realm through the Bawaslu Regulation so that SARA politics no longer spreads to political contestation. One of them is accommodating investigative authority for Bawaslu balanced with training, as well as applying sanctions for structured, systematic and massive administrative violations (TSM).<sup>22</sup>
- b. The government through state institutions in the legislative, even executive, opens the presence of intense dialogue space as a step to find solutions that involve identity groups, as well as a means of political communication. As well as Bawaslu's breakthrough in the future through organizing an interfaith

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<sup>20</sup> Acemoglu, Daron, and dan james A.Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, (New York: Crown Publisher, n.d.), 89.

<sup>21</sup> Mahfud MD, *Hukum Tak Kunjung Tegak* (Bandung: Citra Atya Bakti, 2007), 26.

<sup>22</sup> accessed January 2, 2018, <https://www.idntimes.com/news/indonesia/indianamalia/cegah-isu-sara-dan-money-politic-ini-persiapan-bawaslu-2/full>.

jamboree. Thus, giving birth to a form of unity and unity between identity groups. The existence of this form of dialogue space is motivated by the reality that has historically emerged in accommodating these identity groups. Where it manifests well in building the spirit of Indonesia. Referring to the implementation of the youth congress in 1928 where youth groups left their tribal organizations such as Jong Java, Jong Sumatra, Jong *Ambon*, Jong *Batak*, then joined the youth Indonesia forum.<sup>23</sup> Based on this, it is necessary to develop a sense of unity and unity of the Indonesian people in the midst of their plurality. This understanding has been stated in MPR Decree No.1/MPR/2003 stating that:

“Political ethics and governance are expected to be able to create a harmonious atmosphere between actors of socio-political forces and between other groups to achieve the greatest progress of the nation and state by prioritizing common interests, not individuals or groups”.

On the other hand, this is supported by the existence of a *public complaint mechanism* that is easily accessible to the public responsively, so that it functions optimally.

- c. Fostering awareness of pluralism and multiculturalism through education. That is, in an effort to realize Indonesian pluralism, there are important things that need to be implemented including the political *will* of the ruler by placing the supra and political infra-structure in providing a form of recognition of pluralism. Then, people from any group and layer are given the right to participate in public debates or discussions about SARA, without coercion. After that, all parties should have a complete understanding that SARA in addition to having the opportunity to create conflict is also an energy in realizing the process of empowerment or democracy. This is in line with the Latin expression "*E Pluribus Unum*", where recognition of the plurality of SARA or society tends to prevent arbitrary political actions.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Sindhunata, "Demotologiasasi Persatuan Nasional," Kompas, 2000, 95.

<sup>24</sup> Heru Nugroho, "Dekonstruksi Wacana Sara," *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Gadjah Mada* Volume 1, no. Nomor 2 (1997): 10.

In the aspect of multiculturalism in a political perspective must be based on three parameters, namely cultural diversity, ethnic alliances and politically organized.<sup>25</sup> That is, the government in implementing the values of multiculturalism is based on the spirit of tolerance that recognizes the politics of differences and recognition of political civil rights aimed at managing cultural differences of citizens.<sup>26</sup> This is so that people can fortify themselves and get used to all forms of differences that exist.

## 2. The Role of Mass Media

The role of mass media is independent, because mass media has the power to form new beliefs or maintain beliefs owned by the community. Mass media should be able to behave neutrally, by providing an objective, transparent presentation not influenced by certain parties or offers. With this solution, the author believes that elections will be held properly, increase voter participation, voter quality and strengthen the democratic system, namely the creation of synergy between voters and the political process (*state and civil engagement*).

1. Building a *paradigm of humanity* that recognizes the existence of others as equal human beings. The role of mass media in political power is inevitable that the mass media is directly involved with political events and then shapes public opinion. The media performs its role through the use of apolitical discussions, aspirational message packaging strategies and performing the function of the media agenda.<sup>27</sup> Setting agenda as a function of the media is the ability to choose and emphasize certain issues because those issues are considered important by the public.<sup>28</sup> In this case, based on the function of the media, it then transforms *human* values, namely the recognition of the existence of groups, tribes, races, religions, and between groups in a balanced manner.

## 3. Student Roles

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<sup>25</sup> Alois Nugroho, *Benturan Peradaban, Multikulturalisme, Dan Fungsi Rasio* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2004), 9.

<sup>26</sup> Hikmat Budiman, *Hak Minoritas: Dilema Multikulturalisme Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: The Interseksi Foundation, 2005), 128.

<sup>27</sup> Ibnu Hamad, *Konstruksi Realitas Politik Dalam Media Massa* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2004), 37.

<sup>28</sup> Toemy Suprpto, *Pengantar Ilmu Komunikasi* (Yogyakarta: Media Pressindo, 2006), 46.



Hatta's presentation related to the concept of perfect and lively autonomy. Where the Earth archipelago geographically has cultural diversity, and rapid population development will be a burden if built with a centralized system. Therefore, the government in the internal sector should encourage student participation. This is because it is the duty of students actually as *agents of change, social control, moral force, and Iron Stock*.

Encourage the active role of the "guardians of the nation's morals" or scholars to neutralize and provide enlightening ideas about various new understandings that develop. One of them is through the role of students. This effort should be a synergy between community leaders, especially students through their movements or often referred to as *student movements towards social movements*. Where the campus movement turns into a social movement, as an effort of awareness to participate in a wider structure of life, namely social life.<sup>29</sup> The role of students is needed because of their nature in the position of *input (input)*, where students every action can affect the political system in making policies. This is inseparable from the nature of students as *agents of change and social control*.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the description of the steps mentioned above, the combination of the concept of an inclusive group consisting of internal (government) and external (community) roles is the best way to provide a form of prevention and resolution of the use of identity politics, namely SARA, especially in organizing the 2024 elections. This form of synergy resembles the principle of "Gathering and Strengthening" described by Moh. Hatta in an effort to organize the country.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Fahruz Zaman fadhly, *Mahasiswa Menggugat: Potret Gerakan Mahasiswa Indonesia 1998* (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 1999), 15.

<sup>30</sup> Roso Daras, *Total Bung Karno: Serpihan Sejarah Yang Tercecer* (Jakarta: Imania, 2013), 56.

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