

A systematic review analysis of populism and socio-political polarization in the dynamics of democratic politics in Indonesia.

A Systematic Review Analysis of Populism and Socio-Political Polarization in the Dynamics of Democratic Politics in Indonesia

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Abstract

Populism in Indonesia has become a significant phenomenon in the political landscape, particularly in the context of democracy that allows active public participation. This study aims to analyze the relationship between populism and social-political polarization within Indonesia's democratic dynamics. Using a systematic review method, this research integrates findings from previous studies to identify patterns, impacts, and implications of populism on social and political stability. The findings reveal that populism in Indonesia often stems from identity politics based on religion and culture, creating social segregation and exacerbating polarization. Cases such as the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election and the 2019 presidential election demonstrate how populism is utilized to mobilize mass support, albeit with significant consequences for social integrity. To address these challenges, the reactivation of Pancasila's values is considered an urgent solution to maintain social harmony and strengthen inclusive democracy. This study recommends strengthening Pancasila education and monitoring populist narratives on social media as concrete steps to mitigate the impacts of populism in Indonesia.

Keywords: Populism, Social-Political Polarization, Democracy, Pancasila, Indonesia.

Abstract

Populism in Indonesia has become a significant phenomenon in the political landscape, particularly in the context of democracy that allows for active public participation. This study aims to analyze the relationship between populism and socio-political polarization within the dynamics of democracy in Indonesia. Using a systematic review method, this study integrates findings from previous studies to identify patterns, impacts, and implications of populism for social and political stability. The findings indicate that populism in Indonesia is often rooted in religious and cultural identity politics, which creates social segregation and exacerbates societal polarization. Examples such as the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election and the 2019 presidential election demonstrate how populism was used to mobilize mass support, but with significant consequences for social integrity. In facing these challenges, the reactualization of Pancasila values is seen as an urgent solution to maintain social harmony and strengthen inclusive democracy. This study recommends strengthening Pancasila education and monitoring populist narratives on social media as concrete steps to address the impact of populism in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Populism, Socio-Political Polarization, Democracy, Pancasila, Indo*

A. Introduction

Populism in Indonesia has become a phenomenon that has attracted the attention of academics, practitioners, and the wider public, particularly due to its impact on socio-political polarization. This phenomenon has grown rapidly in line with the dynamics of democratic politics, which provide space for active public participation. However, this democratic space is often misused by populist actors to mobilize support, particularly through narratives based on religious and cultural identities. As a result, polarization within society has deepened, threatening social integrity and political stability.

According to Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2017), populism is a thin ideology that views society as divided into two antagonistic groups: the pure people and the corrupt elite. In Indonesia, this definition is relevant because populism often exploits "us versus them" sentiments, particularly in religious and cultural contexts. This approach is used by populist actors to foster mass loyalty, but it also reinforces social segregation.

Indonesia, as a country with a highly diverse population across religions, cultures, and ethnicities, is fertile ground for the growth of identity-based populism. As Hadiz (2016) explains in **Islamic Populism in Asia and the Middle East**, Islamic populism in Indonesia emerged as a response to modernization and globalization, which are often perceived as threatening local values. This movement is not only a political tool but also reflects societal concerns about social injustice and economic inequality.

Concrete examples of the phenomenon of populism in Indonesia can be seen in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election and the 2019 presidential election. In the Jakarta gubernatorial election, Anies Baswedan used religious issues to build political support, while in the 2019 presidential election, Prabowo Subianto adopted populist rhetoric by positioning himself as a defender of marginalized common people. According to Budiman (2021), these two events demonstrate how populism has influenced the dynamics of Indonesian politics, creating deep polarization within society.

The sociopolitical polarization resulting from populism not only impacts interpersonal relationships but also threatens the democratic values of Pancasila. Pancasila democracy, which is based on the principles of pluralism and inclusivity, is often displaced by populist narratives that tend to be exclusive and emphasize the interests of certain groups. As Welak (2022) notes, populism based on religious and cultural identity contradicts the spirit of Pancasila, which prioritizes unity in diversity.

This study aims to analyze the relationship between populism and sociopolitical polarization in the context of democracy in Indonesia. Using a systematic review method, this study integrates findings from previous studies to provide a comprehensive overview of populism's impact on social and political stability. This study also seeks to provide recommendations for addressing the challenges of populism by strengthening the democratic values of Pancasila, as mandated by the nation's founders.

B. Discussion

Definition of Populism

Populism is generally understood as a political movement that claims to speak for the people.

However, this definition is often ambiguous and can be interpreted differently by scholars.

Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser define populism as a political ideology that focuses on the division between the "genuine people" and the "corrupt elite." In this view, populism serves to articulate the voice of people who feel marginalized by the existing political system.

On the other hand, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe view populism more as a political strategy or movement that can adapt to specific social and cultural contexts. They argue that populism is not merely an ideology but also a way to build collective identity among social groups.

Implications of Populism for Democracy

Populism often thrives in countries with democratic systems, where active public participation is a key element. However, a dysfunctional democratic system often provides space for populist actors to exploit its weaknesses. Dysfunctional democracies, such as those characterized by corruption, social inequality, or unfair policies, create public dissatisfaction. Populists exploit these conditions to construct a powerful narrative, often using emotional appeals and claiming to represent the "voice of the people."

According to Budiman (2021), populism emerges as a response to the failure of democracy to meet public expectations. The government's inability to provide justice and prosperity equally is often the starting point for the development of populist movements. Populists typically exploit sensitive issues such as religion, culture, or economic inequality to gain mass support. They use simple yet compelling rhetoric, target specific groups as the cause of problems, and present themselves as advocates of alternative solutions.

Populism can also lead to the distortion of democratic principles. For example, populists tend to use democratic mechanisms to gain power, but once in power, they often weaken democratic institutions themselves. For example, they might push for restrictions on press freedom, suppress the opposition, or strengthen control over legal institutions. Thus, populism poses a threat to democracy,

not only at the procedural level but also at its fundamental values.

Case Examples of Populism in Indonesia

2017 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election

The 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election served as a vivid example of how populism operates in Indonesia. Anies Baswedan, one of the candidates in the election, employed a political strategy affiliated with right-wing Islamic groups to gain support. One of the culminations of this strategy was mass mobilization in large-scale demonstrations, such as the 411 and 212 Defend Islam rallies, sparked by the blasphemy case involving incumbent Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok). These actions not only influenced the election outcome but also created deep social polarization between supporters and opponents.

Anies Baswedan won the election with strong support from groups that felt their religious identity was threatened. In this case, religious-based populism became an effective tool for garnering mass support, but it also fostered social exclusivism and worsened relations between community groups.

2019 Presidential Election

The phenomenon of populism was also evident in the 2019 presidential election, which pitted Joko Widodo (Jokowi) against Prabowo Subianto as the main candidates. Both used different populist approaches to gain support. Jokowi projected his image as a reformer committed to bureaucratic reform to increase public participation in government. His campaign was bolstered by a narrative of infrastructure development and a commitment to inclusive policies.

On the other hand, Prabowo adopted a more emotional approach, positioning himself as a defender of the common people marginalized by corruption and injustice in government. Prabowo also leveraged support from right-wing Islamic groups, which previously played a role in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election. This support was reinforced by the endorsement of the Ijtima Ulama (Islamic Ulema Council), which affirmed full support for Prabowo.

The social polarization that occurred during this election was highly visible, both in the real world and on social media. Identity politics and personal attacks became the primary weapons

used by both camps. This situation not only created political tension but also impacted social relationships between individuals within society.

The Impact of Populism on Socio-Political Polarization

Identity-based populism, such as religion, plays a significant role in creating socio-political polarization.

Populist actors often use identity issues to incite sentiment and build political power. A prime example is the 212 Action movement, which emerged in response to the blasphemy case committed by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok). This movement successfully mobilized the masses by using religious issues as a political tool.

Feridus Welak (2022) stated in his research that identity-based populism has the potential to lead society toward division. This occurs because identity politics tends to reinforce exclusivism and ignore diversity.

Discussion: Community Integration vs Division

As a multicultural nation, Indonesia must maintain social integration. Pancasila, the state ideology, was formulated to accommodate plurality without discrimination. However, the phenomenon of identity-based populism can undermine societal integrity.

Identity populism tends to facilitate the exclusion of individuals or groups outside a particular identity. This contradicts the spirit of Pancasila, which upholds diversity.

Reactualization of Pancasila

Reactualizing Pancasila is a crucial step in countering the phenomenon of identity populism. Pancasila can serve as a platform for integrating society and preventing further division.

By reactualizing the values of Pancasila, we can re-instill the fundamental principles that support plurality without discrediting each other. This is essential to maintaining the integrity of Indonesian society amidst the challenges of populism.

C. Conclusion

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This research shows that populism has a significant impact on socio-political polarization in Indonesia. By exploiting sensitive issues, populism can create divisions within society. Therefore, the reactualization of Pancasila is crucial to maintaining social integrity and ensuring that democracy in Indonesia remains stable and inclusive.

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