

Gender Equality in Indonesian Democracy amidst Islamic Conservatism and Islamic Populism

Zuly Qodir,^{1*} Misran Misran,² Ahmad Sunawari Long³

¹ Doctoral Program Islamic Politics, Postgraduate Study Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta – Indonesia, ² Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif School of Political Thought and Humanity, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta – Indonesia, ³ Research Center of Theology and Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi – Malaysia

Abstract

The growth of democracy in Indonesia from 1999 to 2019 was significantly hampered by Islamic populist forces, conservatives, and politicians who discriminated against women. This article aims to explore the challenges facing Indonesian political democracy after the 2014 and 2019 elections, using qualitative methods and interviews with party officials. The study uses the theories of Islamic populism, conservatism, and discrimination against women. The article finds that the most dangerous challenges include the presence of populist and conservative Islamic forces that use religious sentiment in elections, political party elites that use women as men's political friends, and women seen as a threat to male politicians. This article emphasizes the importance of considering factors outside the electoral political process, such as religious beliefs and understanding, especially in the Indonesian context.

Pertumbuhan demokrasi di Indonesia dari 1999 hingga 2019 secara signifikan terhambat oleh kekuatan populis Islam, konservatif, dan politisi yang mendiskriminasi perempuan. Artikel ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi tantangan yang dihadapi demokrasi politik Indonesia setelah pemilu 2014 dan 2019, dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan wawancara dengan pejabat partai. Kajian ini menggunakan teori populisme Islam, konservasi, dan diskriminasi terhadap perempuan. Artikel ini menemukan bahwa tantangan yang paling berbahaya termasuk kehadiran kekuatan Islam populis dan konservatif yang menggunakan sentimen agama dalam pemilihan, elit partai politik yang menggunakan wanita sebagai teman politik pria, dan wanita yang dilihat sebagai ancaman bagi politisi laki-laki. Artikel ini menekankan pentingnya mempertimbangkan faktor-faktor di luar proses politik pemilihan, seperti kepercayaan dan pemahaman agama, terutama dalam konteks Indonesia.

Keywords: Islamic populism; conservative turn; gender discrimination; challenges to democracy

*Corresponding Author: Zuly Qodir (zuliqodir@umy.ac.id), Doctoral Program Islamic Politics, Postgraduate Study Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Jl. Brawijaya, Tamantirto, Kasihan, Bantul, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55183 Indonesia.

Introduction

Since the 1998 political reforms, Indonesia has held democratic presidential elections in 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019, each marked with violent political upheavals. The election was often preceded by rumors of the running candidates, involving sensitive issues such as communism, anti-Islam, pro-liberalism, and pro-capitalism. The 2019 Presidential Election was a time when tensions were particularly high, with rising politics-related fears, intolerance, and hatred (Menchik 2019). In addition, conservatism and Islamic populism were rising (Arifianto 2020a).

During the New Order, Indonesia experienced decades of dictatorial rule without democratic elections. The legislative elections were held but only to provide political legitimacy; the People's Representative Council and People Consultative Assembly were used solely to assert the dominance of the ruling Functional Group Party (*Partai Golongan Karya/Golkar*) over the United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan/PPP*), the Democratic Party of Indonesia (*Partai Demokrat Indonesia*), and Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan /PDI-P*) (Dhakidae 2003).

Soeharto's regime controlled all aspects of politics in Indonesia. They did not give sufficient space for participation to civil society organizations, including the religious and non-governmental ones. (Fakih 1996). The government apparatuses maintained civil society activities through an anti-subversion law. The state was under military control, whose absolute power resulted in fatal consequence (Heryanto 2004). For example, the domination over citizens' political activities, the limitation of

their political articulations in public spaces, and the state's centralistic policies reduce the citizens' critical thinking (Nugroho 2001).

After the political reform in 1998, elections were held regularly to promote a democratic transition of power (Afrimadona 2021; Wicaksono 2018). Civil society organizations also began to exert influence in public arenas, whose wielded power eventually prompted Soeharto's resignation on 20 May 1998 (Philpott 2000). Political actors avoided drawing the public's attention and potential charges of human rights violations (Majdid 1999). Under these circumstances, civil society organizations could exert control over the state. As their power rose, the public sought to position them within a new democratic context (Sularto 1999).

Indonesia's political developments continued over the subsequent decades, but many were concerned, especially the academics, that Indonesia's political manifesto differed significantly from their actual practices. The government's economic and political policies were made liberal, just like in much of Southeast Asia following the financial crisis of 1996-1998 (Gie 2002), but these were formulated by the same people who occupied positions for decades in the authoritarian government (Dhakidae 2003).

Some scholars have researched democracy and Islamic conservatism, including Pribadi (2021), in his study on the rise of Islamic conservatism in Indonesia, suggests that the rise of Islamic conservatism presents a substantial challenge for Indonesia as a multi-religious country that harms its social, cultural, and political situation, then Wahid (2014) who in his research examines the return of Indonesian Islamic conservatism. This research found that

first, the fading of liberal Islam in Indonesia. Second, the strengthening of Middle Eastern influence. This fact shows that the tendency of conservatism not only emerged in contemporary Islamic movements that were born after the Reformation but also penetrated the bodies of established Islamic mass organizations, such as the MUI and Muhammadiyah.

Latif (2023) examines religious conservatism in Indonesia regarding narrative, action, and motivation. This study shows how conservative groups successfully use religious narratives and hashtags in public spaces to influence the masses, narratives such as anti-Ahmadiyya', 'anti-Shia,' 'anti-liberal,' 'Islam in danger, danger of religious liberalism,' 'ahlul haq and ahl al-batil' etc. Action-level conservatism is seen from their role in influencing state policies, such as local-level laws and regulations, to harmonize with their version of Islamic teachings. Conservatism was born as a form of resistance to change, adherence to established norms and avoidance of ambiguity, strengthening the status quo, authority, social domination, hierarchical will, constancy of power, and robustness of orthodoxy. Then, in research conducted by Tanashur (2021) on issues of Islam, politics, and democracy in Indonesia. This research found that the dominance of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia is considered a threat to the progress of Indonesian democracy.

From the studies that have been carried out, it can be said that the study of conservatism and Islamic populism illustrates that the activities of conservatism and populism tend to be seen as a political movement. This is due to the wave of democratization that occurred in several Muslim-populated countries in various countries that hit Indonesia. In this study, the Islamic conservatism movement is not only a political

movement but also a religious movement that marries politics and actors of religious figures and political elites. In addition, the Islamic conservatism and populism movement in many studies said that this movement is a movement that is part of democracy. But what is rarely studied is that Islamic conservatism and populism are some of the severe challenges to the wave of democracy involving women.

This research aims to uncover the democratic challenges in Indonesia's politics after the 2019 general election, especially in relation to the movement carried out by Sharia groups and Islamic parties. In particular, this research seeks to answer the groups' movements and how the Indonesian government handled the arising challenges. This article explains that the presidential candidates in the 2019 election, Jokowi-Maruf, supported by most parties, i.e., PDIP, Golkar, PPP, PKPI, Hanura, and Nasdem, were considered not to represent Islamic interests. Meanwhile, the opponents, Prabowo-Sandi, supported by Gerindra, PKS, and PAN, were considered more pro-Islam.

Tensions in society continue to date with similar political jargon, such as Jokowi being anti-Islam, pro-communism, and liberalism-capitalism, and Prabowo-Sandi being pro-Islam, pro-populist, and anti-communist. A combination of religious identity and political power gave rise to identity politics after the 2019 presidential election. This research uses qualitative methods, with data from past studies (literature review) and interviews with party officials, to uncover these challenges. The informants were women politicians with direct involvement in political parties. Data were analyzed from the perspectives of Islamic populism, conservatism, and gender discrimination.

Islamic Populism

Menchik (2019) studied the preferences of the leaders of major Islamic organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, using survey data, interviews, and case studies. The finding shows that the leaders believed their values were compatible with democracy and authoritarianism. This aligns with Hefner (2007) argument in his canonical book, highlighting the rise of the pluralist movement among Islamic intellectuals; such underscores mutual respect, individual autonomy, and volunteerism, providing the social infrastructure for Indonesia's democratic culture. After the 2019 election in Indonesia, democracy and civil Islam have depended on NU and Muhammadiyah. Indonesia's democratization has been under the spotlight after the 'Arab Spring' in the Muslim Middle Eastern countries. Hefner (2019) posed questions regarding democracy and pluralist citizenship prospects in Muslim-majority nations by analyzing the world's events. For example, in early 2013, the hopeful dreams of the 2011 Arab Spring spread to Arab Muslim countries from Tunisia (Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds 2015; Sofi 2016). They constitutionalized a democratic Muslim state without Sharia in the Tunisian 2014 constitution (Hefner 2016). Progress toward pluralist democracy had ended. In Indonesia, democratization is made by the elite and proletary classes. Jokowi from Solo District changed the political construction of the local and national landscape (Mietzner 2014).

Religious and ethnic polarization in Indonesia started after the outbreak of political and economic crises and the regime change in the late 1990s. Islamism became an essential and non-negotiable political force (Afrimadona 2021; Wicaksono 2018). Studies of Islamism

and Islamic Populism in Indonesia grew exponentially, expanding on existing studies in the Middle East (Hadiz 2016; Teik, Hadiz, and Nakanishi 2014). Populism was seen as a force capable of challenging authoritarianism and political oligarchy (Hadiz and Robison 2004).

After the 1998 reform, the political changes were extraordinary. Moreover, political domination by communist countries on the global stage declined. Eastern Europe, for example, has lost in competition against the capitalist liberal countries. Amid the political turmoil at the national and global levels, Indonesia started to face serious democratic challenges. The presidential elections and administration have been marked with corruption, money politics, and political violence. At the same time, the power of Islam started to rise as a political force and a political identity, referred to as an Islamic populism movement (Pietrzyk-Reeves 2016).

Islamic Populism became increasingly influential in the lead-up to the 2019 presidential election when the religious and political polarization became more and more pronounced. Political parties were popularly categorized as Islamic or nationalist, with their candidates competing head-to-head in the presidential election (Afrimadona 2021; Wicaksono 2018). The polarization first became apparent in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election contested by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (popularly known as Ahok, backed by the nationalist parties) and Anies Baswedan (backed by the Islamic parties) (Vermonte 2017). During this election, Ahok was accused of blasphemy, citing his comment regarding Surah al-Maidah, Verse 51. The controversy and religious tension provided political capital that guaranteed Baswedan's electoral victory (Vermonte 2017).

The use of places of worship, such as mosques and prayer groups, for practical politics is arguably a step backward for Indonesian democracy. It signifies the rising trends of identity politics, religious sentiments, and ideological contestations (Anthony 2017). According to Grzywacz (2013), the role of Islam in shaping the national identity shows that Indonesia's national identity is built upon its language, Pancasila ideology, and the dynamics between Islamic ideology, political trajectories, and state politics. However, the present-day dynamics is primarily influenced by Islamic organization, which shows in the regional and presidential elections, akin to the political processes under the New Order regime (Afrimadona 2021; Anthony 2017; Wicaksono 2018).

Conservative Turn

In the past decade, the term 'conservative turn' has become widely used to describe the condition of Islam in Indonesia (Bruinessen 2013). This conservative turn can be traced to the beginning of Indonesia's political reform in 1998 when public spaces were dominated by 'Islamic activities' such as worship groups, *dzikir* (devotional recitations), book exhibitions, and fashion shows (particularly hijabs), as well as the use of Arabic language. This conservative turn *per se* does not indicate violence, but it signifies democratic contestation in public space and the rise of Islamism (Bruinessen 2013). Although this turn is initially associated with the revival of Salafi and puritanical Islamic movements, the impact seems to have reached the political discourse. For example, the Unitary Republic of Indonesia has been publicly challenged by the calls for an Islamic State, expressed by, among others, the founder of the

Islamic Defenders Front (*Front Pembela Islam/FPI*), Rizieq Shihab (Arismunandar 2019). Such a movement unequivocally drew much of the public's attention.

This extreme conservatism advocates for the implementation of Sharia law in Indonesia, but it has only received the support of a minority of Muslims. In a survey in 2005 by the Indonesian Survey Agency (*Lembaga Survei Indonesia/LSI*), it was found that 85.2% of Indonesian Muslims supported the state ideology of Pancasila. However, this number had fallen to 81.7% by 2010, 79.4% by 2015, and 75.3% by 2018. In other words, as stated by Ardian Sopa, a researcher at the Denny JA Survey Agency, over the past thirteen years, approximately 10% of Indonesians have lost interest in Indonesia's national ideology (Hidayat 2018). In fact, this number will likely continue to decrease over the next decade. The LSI survey was conducted in 34 provinces between 28 June and 5 July 2018. Multistage random sampling was applied to reach approximately 1,200 respondents, with a margin of error of $\pm 2.9\%$. Data were collected through interviews following a guideline prepared by LSI. This survey was also complimented by a qualitative analysis of data collected through focus group discussions and in-depth structured interviews. The results showed an apparent decline in Indonesians' loyalty to Pancasila and a noticeable increase in their inclination toward the Sharia law. Over the past thirteen years, the number of Indonesians desiring Sharia law has increased by 9% from 4.6% in 2005, 7.3% in 2010, 9.8% in 2015, and 13.2% in 2018 (Arismunandar 2019).

The survey result indicates the repressed desire of Muslims in Indonesia. As soon as Indonesia's political arenas became more open

following the fall of the New Order, they called for sharia law implementation. The freedom to express religious beliefs was no longer repressed by the state, so the Muslims started to feel free to actualize their ideas and desires, i.e., sharia law implementation and rejection of the national ideology (Hasyim 2013). Ideally, given such openness, the Muslims in Indonesia could have advocated for agendas that could drive Indonesia's democracy forward instead. However, they opted to promote the Sharia agenda in the public space. The conservatism movement includes proposing Sharia-based regulations to the government so that they could be recognized as part of the Islamic law in Indonesia. Another movement that has become a substantial challenge to democracy in Indonesia is the idea of banning pluralism proposed by the Indonesian Ulema Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI*) (Hasyim 2015).

Buehler and Muhtada (2016) argued that the incorporation of Sharia law in the state's regulations was perpetrated by activists who became politicians at the central and regional levels. On the one hand, this is a barrier to democracy, but on the other, it is a democratic space that allows all citizens to participate in the public space and makes political contestation. Either way, religious law, which indicates the rise of conservatism, cannot be banned because it has garnered political support (Buehler and Muhtada 2016).

Sebastian, L. & Nubowo (2019) argued that the rising conservatism in Indonesia following the 2019 Presidential Election may lead to extremism and threaten the democracy that has been restored since the 1998 political reforms. Under such circumstances, Jokowi-Makruf, the candidate pair backed by nationalist parties in

the 2019 Presidential Election, would receive opposition from the extremist groups. Therefore, they needed support from moderate Islamic organizations, such as Muhammadiyah and NU, to sustain the Indonesian democratic atmosphere in the 2019 election (Sebastian, L. & Nubowo 2019).

This condition indicates that Indonesia's democracy has changed. Freedom, non-violence, social justice, and human rights are threatened by the unwillingness to acknowledge or respect different opinions, political choices, or religious beliefs. Although democracy and tolerance exist, the freedom created by democracy has bred vigilantism, active discrimination, and hatred against different political and religious beliefs (Menchick 2016).

This conservative turn has also spread to mainstream Islamic organizations, such as Muhammadiyah, as seen in that organization's 2005 congress in Malang, East Java. During this congress, the organization's more conservative elements are juxtaposed with the progressive ones. The conservative delegates campaigned against pluralism and liberalism promoted by the progressive delegates. Ultimately, the progressive delegates could not advance their agenda (Burhani 2018). In the digital media, Islamists promoted their political narratives through slogans like 'Acts to Defend Islam' (*Aksi Bela Islam*) on social media, which were opposed by activists with hashtags such as #StopIslamism. In their narratives on the online media, both groups rely on religious and ethnic issues to assert power. In a way, they were equally radicalized and continued their political contestations in Indonesia's presidential elections (Poole, Giraud, and de Quincey 2019).

These conditions were prevalent in the 2019 election. Since then, Indonesian politics has been dominated by identity politics, especially Islamism. In the 2019 election, both candidates were backed by parties with non-religious ideologies. Nonetheless, one pair was considered more pro-Islam than others, so they received more political support from the Muslims. This shows the power of Islamism in the post-reform Indonesia (Arifianto 2020a). Islamism has become a conservative ideology utilized and contrasted with the secular ideology by several parties in Indonesian politics to gain leverage in electoral democracy (Mujani and Liddle 2009).

In addition, political problems in Indonesia cannot be separated from the state's policymaking. A policy considered deviating from religion will receive resistance from Islamic religious groups because it is considered a secularization attempt. Islamic activists have opposed this since the colonial era, and the tradition continues. Policies that marginalize Islam issued after the reform would also receive resistance. For example, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) will issue a fatwa to oppose state policy (Pasuni 2018).

The conservative influence has been particularly strong in higher education institutions (HEIs). The activism targets young people in preaching. The activists convey Islamic messages that the progressive groups perceive as hatred, intolerance, and non-moderate messages (Arifianto 2019). This movement contributed to the rise of conservatism in the post-reformation Indonesia. Young people from Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia and the Indonesian Muslim Student Action Union became the agents of the conservative movement in the Indonesian HEIs.

Conservatism also means a re-Islamisation system in Indonesia in post-reform Indonesia (Arifianto 2020a). This movement received positive responses from the middle class and mothers keen on receiving Islamic *da'wah* (Hasan 2014). Muslim millennials also adopted the Islamic way of life from the conservative group because it is considered more Islamic than the progressive group (Hasan 2017). Muhammadiyah and NU, with their campaign for moderate Islam in the Indonesian public space, were 'contested' by such rampant movement. The expectation was particularly high on Muhammadiyah. As a non-political Islamic organization, its contribution to the promotion of Moderate Islam should be able to match the conservative movement (Nashir et al. 2019).

Conservatism has drawn attention since the reformation, leading to a debate about the need for a more moderate Islamic power. Scholars argue that moderate Islam is more suitable to the country's political culture and culture, so most Muslims in Indonesia will likely accept it (Arifianto 2020b). The Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia agrees with Muhammadiyah and NU that a moderate Islamic tradition is the best approach, not conservative or puritanism.

Gender Discrimination

Evidence of discrimination against women by Islamic parties was found. First, women politicians were used to meeting the condition of 30% female legislative candidates and party management so that the General Elections Commission of Indonesia (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum/KPU*) does not disqualify them. Second, women actors were recruited to sway votes in legislative elections. Third, wealthy women are

used as a financial source in the legislative and regional elections (Pilkada). Fourth, women are considered competitors of male candidates, so they are often compelled to relinquish their candidacy on the grounds of religious obligation. Otherwise, women are tasked explicitly with housekeeping. The elaboration is as follows.

The first discriminatory practice against women by Islamic party activists is placing women in non-strategic positions in the management of political parties. For example, they are assigned as deputy treasurer, deputy secretary, or deputy chairperson. There is not a single Islamic party that places women as its general chairperson. Otherwise, they are positioned as a 'male companion' in the management in order to project a progressive image of the party. The Prosperous Justice Party's (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera/PKS*) general chairperson is Achmad Syaikh. Chairperson of the United Development Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan/PPP*) Suharso Manoafr, Chairperson of the National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa/ PKB*) Abdul Muhaimin, Chairperson of National Mandate Party (*Partai Amanat Nasional/PAN*) Zulkifly Hasan, Chairperson of the Moon Star Party (*Partai Bulan Bintang*) Yusril Ihza Mahendra and Chairperson of the Gelora Party, Anis Matta. All the General Chairpersons of the Islamic parties are male. Not a single Islamic party has a woman as its General Chairperson. By contrast, the nationalist PDIP and the Indonesian Solidarity Party are chaired by women politicians. Islamic parties did not position women as General Chairpersons because they considered women as male competitors, and being a leader was not natural for them.

Women are only tokens in the management of Islamic parties. The reason is often irrational, such as not to be condemned by the public. If

women are positioned as party administrators, their positions are not strategic, so they cannot significantly influence party policies. Therefore, women are discriminated against in political positions, but they cannot protest because it is the party's policy. This is captured in a statement by Yusriah, PKS activist:

"We, women, are placed in the party management to complement the men. If there are no women, they will be protested by the Indonesian Islamic community and reprimanded by the General Elections Commission (KPU). Islamic parties do not involve women in management, even though the number of women is large. The position is not strategic because it is only a complement, not the party's policymaker. The party's policymaker remains a male who becomes the General Chairperson, General Treasurer, and General Secretary. The woman becomes a party administrator to attract the public so that people will vote for a party accommodating women," (Yusriah, interview, June 12, 2022).

The statement by the PKS activists above emphasizes that women are recruited to attract sympathy from the Islamic community. However, they cannot take a strategic role in the party. With the inclusion of women in the party, they will not be penalized by the General Elections Commission (KPU). The requirement for a party is to allow a 30% quota of party administrators for women. Women are recruited to fill this quota to qualify for registration with the KPU and avoid administrative disqualification. This practice can be considered discrimination against women.

Second, famous female celebrities are recruited to sway more votes in legislative elections. Actresses in movies or soap operas, singers, and commercial models are enrolled as legislative candidates from Islamic parties at the House of Representatives (DPR RI). Some

notable examples include Desy Ratnasari (PAN), Kris Dayanti (PAN), Mulan Jameela (PKB), Ratih Sanggarwati (PPP), Angel Lelga (PPP), Okky Asokawati (PPP), Emilia Contesa (PPP) (KPU RI 2019). Among these celebrities, only Angel Lelga was not elected as a member of the legislative from the PPP due to insufficient votes in DKI Jakarta. Meanwhile, others were elected as legislative members in the 2019 elections. The Islamic parties did not nominate non-celebrity women, who are not well-known in the Legislative Election. This begs the question of whether ordinary women cannot sway votes and suggests that becoming a popular woman as a vote swayer is desirable.

Desy Ratnasari even served two terms as a member of the PAN council from 2014 to 2019 and a member of the DPR RI from 2019 until now. Kris Dayanti from PAN and Mulan Jameela from PKB are serving as members of the House of Representatives for one term. Ratih Sanggarwati has been a member of the DPR RI PPP once. It can be concluded that these women 'politicians' were elected as members of the DPR RI because of their popularity as national celebrities, movie players, soap opera stars, and singers with fans throughout the provinces. The Islamic party activists recruited them to sway voters and obtain seats in the DPR RI. The actresses are famous and considered more beautiful than average. This consideration can be considered discrimination against women because recruitment is not based on their qualities.

Third, wealthy women become financial supporters in legislative and regional head elections. Women with a lot of money as capital to become candidates for members of the DPR RI are preferred by Islamic parties. They can support the political parties and pair with popular male candidates who do not have

financial capital (Bazzi, Koehler-Derrick, and Marx 2020). In this case, women with financial capital are blackmailed, while those without capital are discriminated against. In other words, women are powerless in Islamic parties for religious reasons but can be promoted if they have the capital.

Women with financial capital provide funds for campaigning or meetings. They are sources of funding in political campaigns ahead of regional and legislative elections. They are made legislative or regional head candidates, so the party does not need to spend money on nominations. At least, the party will not lose money if the candidate loses. This is another form of discrimination against women, an exploitation through financial capabilities for the party's needs.

Fourth, women are considered 'male competitors,' so a religious basis is sought to give up their candidacy if male competitors also run for office. With conditions like this, the women are advised to give in to a religious argument stating that a woman's duty as a caretaker of the family is more noble (Maula 2016). Women have no obligation to serve in public politics as long as there are still many men. Women have the right to be involved in public politics only if men are unavailable or unable to perform their duties. Discrimination against women is based on various religious arguments proffered by male politicians. This condition hinders women from progressing and renders them powerless in front of male politicians.

All forms of discrimination against women by Islamic parties are justified by the arguments or verses and hadiths taken from the Prophet Muhammad. Thus, Islamic parties misuse verses and hadiths for the party's benefit but in the

name of Islam. Of course, there have been progressive Islamic interpreters such as Amina Wadut, Fatima Mernisi, Asghar Ali Engineer, and Farid Esack. However, the progressive interpretation is not used as a reference by Islamic party politicians (Sakai and Fauzia 2014). They cherry-picked their interpretation to justify the men's dominance in the public sphere. In other words, Indonesian Muslim women do not have an equal place with men in their political careers as politicians in Islamic parties.

Challenges in Democracy

In post-New Order Indonesia, identity politics are commonly used to promote religions and religious understandings to win the contestation between Islamic and nationalist ideologies. These groups have sought to advance their interests, influence voters' political behaviors, and pressure policymakers. Islamist groups seek to increase Islam's influence on practical politics. In contrast, the nationalists seek to ensure that only the influence of Islam in national politics and policies is moderate, arguing that Indonesia's national ideology, Pancasila, is already compatible with democracy and Islamic values (Maarif 2017). The founders of Indonesia, who also formulated Pancasila, believed that Islamic organizations must also align with and maintain these values to sustain independence (Bachtiar 2020; Nashir 2015).

Under Soeharto's authoritarian and dictatorial regime (1967-1998), the political administration sought to minimize religious polarization in Indonesian society by requiring all organizations to embrace Pancasila as their sole ideology. As a result, civil society organizations and Islamic activists were restricted, if not oppressed. These groups

worked underground, concealing their activities from the public's eyes. However, after the political reform in 1998, Muslim political activists established political parties that reflected their religious ideologies, finally articulating themselves after 32 years of subjugation. This creates religious polarization, and the problem worsens as Islamist and nationalist forces continue to contest the political spaces (Zarkasyi 2008). In Zarkasyi's (2008) words, the underground movement of political Islamism gained momentum following the fall of Soeharto's regime in 1998. As Muslims seek to contest state policies that they consider repressive, political Islam and Islamist groups rise.

The rising identity politics and conservatism created a setback to the progress of democracy in Indonesia. Ideological contestations continued and were particularly apparent in the 2019 election. In his campaign, Joko Widodo capitalized on the ideology of Pancasila. His victory over his opponent, Prabowo Subianto, who leveraged religious symbolism, shows how the contestation was won by the nationalists (Miichi 2014). In recent years, organizations considered incompatible with the values of Pancasila or desiring to replace Pancasila with another ideology are prohibited in Indonesia. For example, Joko Widodo's administration formally dissolved *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI) in 2017, arguing that the organization sought to replace Indonesia's ideological foundation and transform the country into an Islamic state. This dissolution was controversial and considered anti-democratic (Aswar 2018).

The Islamist organizations and ideologies have significantly influenced Indonesia's politics. As a result, civil Islam is challenged (Hefner 2000). The contestation was apparent

in the 2019 presidential election. The Islamist groups were coordinated by FPI and supported by Islamist parties, such as PKS and PAN. Meanwhile, the nationalist groups comprised PDIP, Golkar, and Nasdem. Similar contestations occurred in the national legislature and affected local and provincial elections.

In post-reform Indonesia, Islamist parties found extensive support in West Java, West Nusa Tenggara, South Kalimantan, Banten, West Sumatra, and Aceh. Prabowo Subianto was victorious in these areas. Meanwhile, nationalist parties garnered significant support from Bali, West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, Manado, Ambon, Papua, East Nusa Tenggara, East Kalimantan, and North Kalimantan. Joko Widodo won by significant margins in these areas. In addition, he was also victorious in Central Java and East Java, which are home to massive religious organizations. According to Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani (2012), in the post-reform era, identity politics became a powerful capital, especially in the 2019 election. Being a Muslim is a significant determinant to sway voters, and tolerance between candidates and supporters proves whether a candidate is pro- or anti-democratic (Mujani 2019).

In the regional elections, religious identity has also become the capital for several candidates. The power of religious identity is stronger in the presidential election. However, such power in Indonesian politics, especially during the presidential election, cannot be underestimated. Conservative religious parties moved from campus to campus have been proven effective in asserting influence. They spread the idea of intolerance and exclusivism to students through lectures and mentoring in special meetings. Nonetheless, the growth of conservatism on campus is not left unchallenged. The movement is faced with the

moderate power promoted by Muhammadiyah and NU (Arifianto 2019).

Conclusion

The development of democracy in Indonesia is expected to be the basis for more inclusive, civilized, and just politics. However, Indonesian democracy has faced challenges posed by the presence of groups that use religious sentiments to gain political support in their campaigns. The group is known as Islamic populists and conservatives who capitalize on Islam to build political sentiment. It creates a setback to the establishment of a democratic Indonesia.

The use of religious sentiments can be said to undermine democracy. Unfortunately, it is estimated that in the upcoming 2024 election, the use of religious sentiment through Islamic mass mobilization will continue. Religious sentiment is the most effective campaign to influence the emotions of Muslim voters. Therefore, Muslims must be careful with the jargon used to project an image of anti-Islamic groups and communists and to marginalize Islam or prohibit Muslim activities. Muslim voters should be critical to analyze whether politicians fight for the aspirations of Muslims or just play with their emotions, especially when seeing campaigns on social media.

Another challenge in developing Indonesian democracy is the presence of discriminatory politics against women. Various political party activities do not place women on an equal footing. Politicians prioritize the male perspective, arguing that women are suitable as men's companions but not as main players. The placement of women in parties and electoral districts aims to meet the 30% quota to comply with the General Election Commission (KPU) regulations. Otherwise, political parties will

receive disqualification sanctions and cannot participate in the election.

With the problems facing the development of Indonesian democracy, religious organizations, such as Muhammadiyah and NU, the largest mass organizations in Indonesia, need responses. Islamic moderation is expected to minimize the risk of extremism. In addition, democracy activists are expected to make elections part of the political education of Muslims, thereby making electoral politics inclusive, civilized, and just, not discriminating against women or different groups.[]

References

- Afrimadona. 2021. "Revisiting Political Polarisation in Indonesia: A Case Study of Jakarta's Electorate." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 40(2):315–39. doi: 10.1177/18681034211007490.
- Anthony, Noval Dhwinuari. 2017. "Dikritisi Karena Kampanye di Area Masjid. Anies: Itu Kantor." *Detik.Com*. Retrieved (<https://news.detik.com/berita/d-3443180/dikritisi-karena-kampanye-di-area-masjid-anies-itu-kantor>).
- Arifianto, Alexander R. 2019. "Islamic Campus Preaching Organizations in Indonesia: Promoters of Moderation or Radicalism?" *Asian Security* 15(3):323–42. doi: 10.1080/14799855.2018.1461086.
- Arifianto, Alexander R. 2020a. "Rising Islamism and the Struggle for Islamic Authority in Post-Reformasi Indonesia." *TRaNS: Trans - Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 8(1):37–50. doi: 10.1017/trn.2019.10.
- Arifianto, Alexander R. 2020b. "Rising Islamism and the Struggle for Islamic Authority in Post-Reformasi Indonesia." *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* 8(1):37–50. doi: 10.1017/trn.2019.10.
- Arismunandar, Satrio, ed. 2019. *NKRI Bersyariah atau Ruang Publik yang Manusiawi? Tanggapan 21 Pakar terhadap Gagasan Denny JA*. Jakarta: CeraH Budaya Indonesia.
- Aswar, Hasbi. 2018. "Destructing the Islamism in Indonesia: Joko Widodo Policy and Its Controversy." *International Journal of Malay-Nusantara Studies* 1(1):62–79.
- Bachtiar, Hasnan. 2020. "Dār al-'Ahd wa al-Shahādah: Muhammadiyah's Position and Thoughts on Negara Pancasila." *Studia Islamika* 27(3):485–513. doi: 10.36712/sdi.v27i3.11325.
- Bazzi, Samuel, Gabriel Koehler-Derrick, and Benjamin Marx. 2020. "The Institutional Foundations of Religious Politics: Evidence from Indonesia." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 135(2):845–911. doi: 10.1093/qje/qjz038.
- Brownlee, Jason, Tarek Masoud, and Andrew Reynolds. 2015. *The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bruinessen, Martin Van. 2013. *Conservative Turn: Islamic Fundamentalism Threat*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Buehler, Michael, and Dani Muhtada. 2016. "Democratization and the Diffusion of Shari'a Law: Comparative Insights from Indonesia." *South East Asia Research* 24(2):261–82. doi: 10.1177/0967828X16649311.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. 2018. "Pluralism, Liberalism, and Islamism: Religious Outlook of Muhammadiyah." *Studia Islamika* 25(3):433–70. doi: 10.15408/sdi.v25i3.7765.
- Dhakidae, Daniel. 2003. *Cendekiawan dan Kuasaan dalam Negara Orde Baru*. Jakarta: Gramedia.

- Fakih, Mansour. 1996. *Masyarakat Sipil Untuk Transformasi Sosial*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Gie, Kwik Kian. 2002. *Ekonomi Politik Indonesia*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- Grzywacz, Anna. 2013. "Constructing National Identity in Indonesia – Experience for Europe." *Mozaik: Jurnal Ilmu Humaniora* 14(2):20–37.
- Hadiz, Vedi R. 2016. *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hadiz, Vedi, and Richard Robison. 2004. *Reorganising Power in Indonesia: The Politics of Oligarchy in An Age of Markets*. New York: Routledge-Curzon.
- Hasan, Noorhaidi. 2014. "Ambivalent Doctrines and Conflicts In the Salafi Movement In Indonesia." pp. 169–88 in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, edited by R. Meijer. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hasan, Noorhaidi. 2017. "Religious Diversity and Blasphemy Law: Understanding Growing Religious Conflict and Intolerance in Post-Suharto Indonesia." *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 55(1):105–26. doi: 10.14421/ajis.2017.551.105-126.
- Hasyim, Syafiq. 2013. *State and Religion: Considering Indonesian Islam as Model of Democratisation for the Muslim World - Paper Prepared for the Colloquium on Models of Secularism*. Berlin: Liberal Inst.
- Hasyim, Syafiq. 2015. "Majelis Ulama Indonesia and Pluralism in Indonesia." *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 41(4–5):487–95. doi: 10.1177/0191453714566547.
- Hefner, Robert W. 2000. *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hefner, Robert W. 2007. "Introduction: The Culture, Politics, and Future of Muslim Education." pp. 1–39 in *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hefner, Robert W., ed. 2016. *Shari'a Law and Modern Muslim Ethics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hefner, Robert W. 2019. "Whatever Happened to Civil Islam? Islam and Democratization in Indonesia, 20 Years On." *Asian Studies Review* 43(3):375–96. doi: 10.1080/10357823.2019.1625865.
- Heryanto, Ariel. 2004. *Menggugat Otoriterisme di Asia Tenggara: Perbandingan dan Pertautan Antara Indonesia dan Malaysia*. edited by S. K. Mandal. Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.
- Hidayat, Faiq. 2018. "Survei LSI: Pro-Pancasila Turun 10%, Pro-NKRI Bersyariah Naik 9%." *Detik News*. Retrieved (<https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4119173/survei-lsi-pro-pancasila-turun-10-pro-nkri-bersyariah-naik-9>).
- Latif, Muhammad Amruddin. 2023. "Konservatisme Agama di Indonesia; Narasi, Aksi dan Motivasi." *Jurnal Al Tarmasi* 1(1):21–36.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. 2017. *Islam dan Pancasila Sebagai Dasar Negara*. Jakarta: Mizan.
- Majdid, Nurcholish. 1999. *Cita-Cita Politik Islam Era Reformasi*. Jakarta: Paramadina.
- Maula, Bani Syarif. 2016. "Indonesian Muslim Women: Between Culture, Religion, and Politics." *Ijtima'iyah: Journal of Muslim Society Research* 1(1):113–31. doi: 10.24090/ijtimaiyya.v1i1.930.
- Menchick, Jeremy. 2016. *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Menchik, Jeremy. 2019. "Moderate Muslims and Democratic Breakdown in Indonesia." *Asian Studies Review* 43(3):415–33. doi: 10.1080/10357823.2019.1627286.

- Mietzner, Marcus. 2014. "How Jokowi Won and Democracy Survived." *Journal of Democracy* 25(4):111–25. doi: 10.1353/jod.2014.0073.
- Miichi, Ken. 2014. "The Role of Religion and Ethnicity in Jakarta's 2012 Gubernatorial Election." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 33(1):55–83. doi: 10.1177/186810341403300104.
- Mujani, Saiful. 2019. "Explaining Religio-Political Tolerance Among Muslims: Evidence from Indonesia." *Studia Islamika* 26(2):319–51. doi: 10.15408/sdi.v26i2.11237.
- Mujani, Saiful, and R. William Liddle. 2009. "Muslim Indonesia's Secular Democracy." *Asian Survey* 49(4):575–90. doi: 10.1525/as.2009.49.4.575.
- Nashir, Haedar. 2015. *Negara Pancasila sebagai Darul Ahdi wa al Syahadah*. Jakarta: Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah.
- Nashir, Haedar, Zuly Qodir, Achmad Nurmandi, Hasse Jubba, and Mega Hidayati. 2019. "Muhammadiyah's Moderation Stance in the 2019 General Election: Critical Views from Within." *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 57(1):1–24. doi: 10.14421/ajis.2019.57.1.1-24.
- Nugroho, Heru. 2001. *Menumbuhkan Ide-Ide Kritis*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Pasuni, Afif. 2018. "Negotiating Statist Islam: Fatwa and State Policy in Singapore." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 37(1):57–88. doi: 10.1177/186810341803700103.
- Pepinsky, Thomas B., R. William Liddle, and Saiful Mujani. 2012. "Testing Islam's Political Advantage: Evidence from Indonesia." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(3):584–600. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00570.x.
- Philpott, Simon. 2000. *Rethinking Indonesia: Postcolonial Theory, Authoritarianism and Identity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Pietrzyk-Reeves, Dorota. 2016. *Civil Society, Democracy and Democratization*. Berlin: Peter Lang D.
- Poole, Elizabeth, Eva Giraud, and Ed de Quincey. 2019. "Contesting #StopIslam: The Dynamics of a Counter-Narrative Against Right-Wing Populism." *Open Library of Humanities* 5(1):1–39. doi: 10.16995/olh.406.
- Pribadi, Yanwar. 2021. "Kebangkitan Konservatisme Islam: Politik Identitas dan Potret Demokrasi di Indonesia." *Studia Islamika* 28(2):457–71. doi: 10.36712/sdi.v28i2.22204.
- Sakai, Minako, and Amelia Fauzia. 2014. "Islamic Orientations in Contemporary Indonesia: Islamism on the Rise?" *Asian Ethnicity* 15(1):41–61. doi: 10.1080/14631369.2013.784513.
- Sebastian, Leonard C., and Andar Nubowo. 2019. "The 'Conservative Turn' in Indonesian Islam: Implications for the 2019 Presidential Elections." *Note de l'Ifri, Asie. Visions - 106*. Retrieved (<https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/asie-visions/conservative-turn-indonesian-islam-implications-2019>).
- Sofi, Mohammad Dawood. 2016. "The Arab Spring: Pathways of Repression and Reform." *The Journal of North African Studies* 21(4):707–9. doi: 10.1080/13629387.2016.1175166.
- Sularto, St. 1999. *Masyarakat Sipil dan Demokrasi*. Jakarta: Kompas.
- Tanashur, Panji. 2021. "Does the Rise of Islamic Conservatism Threaten Indonesian Democracy?" *Politea: Jurnal Politik Islam* 4(2):10–20. doi: 10.20414/politea.v4i2.3862.
- Teik, Khoo Boo, Vedi R. Hadiz, and Yoshihiro Nakanishi, eds. 2014. *Between Dissent and*

- Power: The Transformation of Islamic Politics in the Middle East and Asia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Vermonte, Phillips J. 2017. "Insight: What Went (Not) Right in the Jakarta Election." *The Jakarta Post*. Retrieved (<https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2017/04/20/insight-what-went-not-right-in-the-jakarta-election.html>).
- Wahid, Din. 2014. "Kembalinya Konservatisme Islam Indonesia." *Studia Islamika* 21(2):375-90. doi: 10.15408/sdiv21i2.1043.
- Wicaksono, Denison. 2018. "Rising of Nationalist and Political Islamist Polarization Conflict in Contemporary Indonesia: Case of Direct Governor Election in Jakarta 2017."
- Zarkasyi, Hamid Fahmy. 2008. "The Rise of Islamic Religious-Political Movements in Indonesia: The Background, Present Situation and Future." *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 2(2):336-78. doi: 10.15642/JIIS.2008.2.2.336-378.

