



Net and political segregation: The polarisation of anti-*Pancasila* discourses on Twitter

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ABSTRACT

Ben Anderson stated that the media creates imagined communities using images and vernaculars that perpetuate stereotypes to the audience. It then relates them to one another. However, the use of social media today makes the imagined community concept paradoxical. People now tend to seek out social settings they prefer, and they cluster in communities of like-mindedness. Accordingly, a nation will grow more politically segregated, resulting in growing intolerance in political differences and making national consensus impossible. Discussions on social media preceding the 2019 General Election in Indonesia demonstrate this segregation, particularly regarding anti-*Pancasila* (the classification of specific groups as being oppositional to *Pancasila*, the foundational ideology of the state). This research attempts to show how the conversation of anti-*Pancasila* in social media contributed to political polarisation on Twitter during the 2019 Indonesian Presidential Elections. To attain its purpose, this study employed a critical discourse analysis of the Twitter accounts discussing anti-*Pancasila* issues. In order to limit the data, 47 tweets, retweets and replies from 33 accounts were selected from March 16, 2019, to April 16, 2019 as samples for analysis. This period represents the one month before the 2019 General Election held on April 17, 2019. The analysis shows that political segregation was rife amongst Twitter users. Using the presidential elections in Indonesia as the study setting, this research illustrates that ideological orientation can create polarisation, which calls us to reconsider the concept of the imagined community. In summary, net and political segregation is produced by the politics of othering through practices such as labelling and demonising.

Keywords: **Political segregation, social media, discourse, demonisation**

INTRODUCTION

Political events, such as general elections, clearly reveal segregation. In Indonesia, beginning with the 2014 Election, and continuing with the 2017 DKI Regional Election, and the 2019 Election, political segregation has become more entrenched due to the strengthening of identity politics. This study aims to explain how political and ideological segregation developed during the 2019 Presidential Election as a result of intense debates based on ethnicity, religion and inter-group issues on social media.

During the 2014 Presidential Election, political segregation was rife amongst supporters of the two candidates. Political parties and actors aligned themselves with voters based on emotion and persuasion. They used ethnic and religious issues to attract people's attention. As a result, "black campaigns" carrying religious sentiments and Islamic symbolism emerged and quickly became viral, targeting both candidates. According to *Politica Wave* that analysed the political perceptions of the two candidates on social media, the Jokowi-JK team (Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla) was the most targeted by black campaigns (74.5%), riding on slanders of Jokowi being a puppet presidential candidate, Christian, Chinese, Communist, disobedient Muslim, and Jewish or Zionist supporter. While the Prabowo-Hatta team (Prabowo and Hatta Rajasa) received less attention from black campaigns (16.5%), subjected to false accusations such as Prabowo having two nationalities (which is illegal in Indonesia), a psychopath, and incriminations with counterfeit stock transactions (Ardipandanto, 2015).

The antagonism continued in the 2017 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election to determine the Governor and Deputy Governor of DKI Jakarta for the period 2017–2022. After a dramatic rivalry, the Anies-Sandi team (Anies Baswedan and Sandiaga Uno) won 57.96% of the vote defeating Ahok-Djarot (Basuku Cahya Purnama and Djarot Saiful Hidayat), who received the remainder 42.04% votes. The desire to avenge politically gained ammunition when Ahok, the incumbent, who decisively cracked down on corruption, and a minority (Chinese and Christian) was accused of blasphemy. Thus, the electoral competition in the 2017 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election not only highlights primordial issues based on ethnicity, religion, race and inter-group, but also reignites the classical debate in Indonesia about religious and political (state) relations. Mass demonstrations labelled as *Bela Islam* (defend Islam) and *Bela NKRI* (defend Indonesia) grew massively.

The segregation of ideology with the same issues and sentiments continued in the 2019 Presidential Election, which pitted the same candidates against each other: Jokowi and KH Ma'ruf Amin (Jokowi-Amin), against Prabowo and Sandiaga Uno (Prabowo-Sandi). The enmity between both team's supporters continued to occur violently. Each defended their stance and their chosen presidential candidate. Political disputes revolved around the values, attitudes, and beliefs concerning certain issues. Arguments based on accurate data could not convince and change the opinions of the opponents while objective data only served to reinforce pre-existing beliefs. This study aims to explain how political segregation takes place in social media using the 2019 Presidential Election as its setting. Given that there are numerous arguments on social media that revolve around ethnicity, religion, and inter-group concerns and to limit the emerging conversation topics in social media, this study focused on anti-*Pancasila* issues.

Pancasila, the national philosophy resulting from the compromise of the nation's founders to sustain NKRI (Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia/Unitary State of the

Republic of Indonesia), became a focal point in the campaigns of both the presidential and vice-presidential candidates (Wijaya et al., 2020). Jokowi-Amin asserted that *Pancasila* constitutes the definitive philosophy of the Indonesian nation, and any attempt to supplant *Pancasila* must be resisted. On the other hand, Prabowo-Sandi claimed that *Pancasila* is the sole ideology of the Indonesian people. Moreover, Prabowo declared his commitment to confront anyone seeking to replace the *Pancasila* as the ideological state. Based on these statements of both candidates, their supporters collaboratively constructed a narrative portraying their adversaries as being anti-*Pancasila*. This then led to intense discourse on Twitter resulting in segregation.

The anti-*Pancasila* issue has been widely debated since Wiranto, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, officially disbanded *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (HTI) Indonesia in 2017. HTI represents a transnational Islamic movement that seeks to promote the global re-establishment of the Islamic caliphate. This movement is fundamentally designed to uphold Islamic law within both the political and societal spheres (Arief, 2016).

The dissolution was based on the belief that HTI has a negative effect in achieving national goals. There were also strong indications that HTI's activities were contrary to the principles of *Pancasila* and UUD 45 (a basic legal and formal constitution of the Republic of Indonesia). On some occasions, HTI activists had campaigned for *Khilafah*, a system of general leadership for all Muslims in the world to apply Islamic laws and bring Islamic teaching to all over of the world. They claimed that the system of democracy was misleading and stated various similar ideas describing their intention to supplant *Pancasila*.

Emont (2017) contended that the dissolution of HTI was part of Jokowi's efforts to control the hard-line Islamic forces opposing his government before the 2019 Presidential Election. After restricting the space for Islam fundamentalists, Jokowi supporters tried to raise awareness on issues of intolerance and radicalism to the public. Intolerance and radicalism was propagated as a threat to the Republic of Indonesia since it would divide the nation. This propaganda was systematically campaigned through social media, street banners, and various formal activities of governmental institutions.

The opposition then garnered support through buzzers and micro celebrities on social media that Jokowi's government was anti-Islam. Since the 2014 Presidential Election, Jokowi has been attacked continuously with accusations of being PKI¹-friendly, communist, non-Muslim and anti-Islam. Prior to September 30, 2018, the issue of PKI re-emerged. Mardani Ali Sera, a politician from the opposition party, PKS², created the hashtag #2019TetapAntiPKI on social media to promote their anti-PKI campaign. It was a public opinion strategy to associate the government with communism.

As a counterattack, the pro-Jokowi group accused the opposition of supporting the implementation of the *Khilafah* system, which was widely propagated in the social

¹ PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*) was a communist political party that operated in Indonesia around the middle of the 20th century. It participated in an insurrection called G/30S/PKI (The September 30 Movement), resulting in the deaths of 9 Indonesian military officials. In 1965, PKI was disbanded and officially declared an outlawed political party. Communism was prohibited due to its potential to undermine the existence of *Pancasila* as an ideology.

² PKS (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* or The Prosperous Justice Party) is an Islamic political party in Indonesia. PKS has consistently been the opposition party in both the 2014 and 2019 national elections.

media. Soon after, HTI banners supporting Prabowo-Sandi as the next president and vice president were publicly displayed, carrying horrendous words, such as “HTI is ready to support *Ijtima Ulama II*³ implementing the *Khilafah* State”. This suggests that HTI and its hard-line ideology was part of the opposition group.

The debates among social media users about anti-*Pancasila* used various hashtags, such as #2019TetapPancasila versus #2019TetapAntiPKI, or #PKIvsPancasila and #PancasilavsKhilafah⁴. The debates illustrate political and ideological segregation and can be clearly seen from the mapping results of a social media analysis for #2019TetapPancasila (Fahmi, 2018).

The social network analysis of #2019TetapPancasila shows that there were two predominant clusters: pro-Prabowo accounts and pro-Jokowi accounts. Contrary to the assumption that Jokowi’s followers started this hashtag, it was Prabowo’s followers who were actively promoting it on social media. They also raised the volume of conversation in this hashtag through mentions and tweets.

The results of another social network analysis (Puspita, 2018) provides a more detailed explanation. For instance, #2019TetapPancasila was not used by accounts that had affiliations with Jokowi-Ma’ruf. Users supporting the opposition party echoed #2019TetapPancasila, together with its rival hashtag, #2019TetapAntiPKI, within the same posts. According to Puspita (2018), the users who supported the opposition party interpreted the narration of #2019TetapPancasila as an attempt to position outsiders (pro-opposition users) as anti-*Pancasila*. In turn, the opposition responded by creating #2019TetapAntiPKI. The use of this hashtag not only constructed the narrative that the opposition are defenders of *Pancasila*, but also simultaneously manipulated the issue of PKI to attack pro-Jokowi supporters. #2019TetapAntiPKI was also a strategy to create negative sentiments of pro-Jokowi supporters.

Puspita (2018) argued that the politics of self-labelling that reflect the hostilities between supporters can take place with the use of the two hashtags. Positive labels would be attached to one group, while negative labels would be used to target the opposing group. Accordingly, the battle of attaching labels was unavoidable.

Continuing Puspita’s work, this study attempts to explain further the narrative wars constructed by the two hashtags. It focuses on the discourse of tweets, retweets, and replies of anti-*Pancasila* posts on Twitter. The results demonstrate the contestation of discourses and politics of labelling behind the anti-*Pancasila* issues confirm Puspita’s analysis. The contestation of discourses will also answer the researcher’s argument that digital revolution has driven the public to grow more politically segregated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anti-*Pancasila* debates are triggered from the formation of mass organisations which are seen as incompatible with the philosophy. The mass organisations identified as anti-*Pancasila* are defined by the state. Article 2 of Law No. 17 of 2013 about mass organisations

³ *Ijtima Ulama II* is a consensus reached by a group of *ulama* (Muslim religious scholars, specifically those adhering to a particular conservative and fundamentalist Islamic philosophy) to endorse Prabowo-Sandi as the upcoming president.

⁴ The hashtags #2019TetapPancasila and #PancasilavsKhilafah were utilised by internet users who support the government. The hashtags #2019TetapAntiPKI and #PKIvsPancasila were created by the opposition supporters.

(UU Ormas) explicitly stipulates that the formation of a mass organisation must not contravene Pancasila and UUD 1945. Nonetheless, there is no definitive definition of indicators that are in conflict with *Pancasila* or anti-*Pancasila*. However, Article 59 of the Law on Mass Organisations delineates several prohibitions for mass organisations that may indicate it as conflicting with *Pancasila*, including the prohibition against hostile actions towards SARA (*Suku, Agama, Ras dan Antargolongan*) (Tribes, Religions, Races and Groups); prohibition against the abuse, blasphemy, or defamation of religions practised in Indonesia; prohibition against separatist activities that jeopardise Indonesia's sovereignty; and, most critically, prohibition against embracing, developing, and disseminating doctrines or ideologies that contradict *Pancasila* (Sholihah, 2016).

Nonetheless, this definition leads to various interpretations, resulting in many individuals associating *Pancasila* with Islamic radicalisation or communism in their discussions. The indoctrination of communism as opposed to *Pancasila* during the New Order era continued in the post-New Order era. The proposal to allocate space for descendants of purported PKI members and sympathisers in public spaces is frequently interpreted as being pro-PKI and anti-*Pancasila*. The anti-*Pancasila* discourse is also frequently linked to Islamic organisations considered radical. The insufficient internalisation of *Pancasila* in the post-New Order era has led to a diminished understanding of anti-*Pancasila*. For instance, there exists a perception that individuals who wear attire highlighting Islamic identity, such as Muslim women in veils or men in robes, are categorised as members of a radical group opposed to *Pancasila*. These labels frequently emerge in conversations on social media concerning anti-*Pancasila*.

The discourse surrounding anti-*Pancasila* involves reciprocal allegations among opposing factions labelling each other as anti-*Pancasila*. This is the underlying cause of segregation. The current media landscape presents a paradox compared to Ben Anderson's conception during the age of print capitalism. During that period, media was a means to integrate the community. Print capitalism, through the mass distribution of novels and newspapers, was able to become the medium for transmitting ideas of awareness about imagined communities. According to Anderson (2006), the nation is a political community and imagined as something established by a certain boundary and sovereignty. It is imaginary because there is no geographical boundary integrating its members. The members do not recognise each other and interact indirectly. However, in their minds, there is an imagination of togetherness. This process of national awareness arose because the print capitalism functioned as the media for the formation of national languages.

The development of the media and communication technology supplanted print capitalism with electronic and digital capitalism. Robbins (1998) cautioned that the digital revolution is not strengthening solidarity as well as the printed revolution. The increasingly intense and broad interaction should have furthered the idea of cosmopolitanism. To the contrary, what happened next was a paradox.

The era of social media turned to be an accurate picture of McLuhan's predictions about the Global Village (1962). According to McLuhan (1962), the whole world can be considered a village where the inhabitants have close interactions. As such, social media has brought global citizens closer, allowing them to interact in real time. Through social media, people who do not know each other and have never met can eventually become friends. Some old friends, who have not met for years, can be reunited. Social media brings

together and integrates citizens. Distance is no longer a barrier to interact. However, is it true that social media is actually a unifying force?

Some studies on the propagation of hoaxes and fake news through social media demonstrate that interactions through social media have actually exacerbated ideological segregation (Colleoni et al., 2014; Flaxman et al., 2013; Spohr, 2017). According to Bishop (as cited in Spohr, 2017), people tend to align themselves with a like-minded community. Consequentially, a nation can grow more politically segregated. This is what happens in conversations on social media. When there is a controversial issue, conversations in social media discuss whether the information is the truth (the quality or state of being true), or just justification (the action of showing something to be right or reasonable), which leads to segregation.

There are two factors that intensify the segregation that takes place in the digital world. First is the Internet algorithm. The main objective of the algorithm is to help tracking data, which is useful for the advertising industry in targeting its market. However, Pariser (2011) warned the dangerous consequences of this algorithmic system, which can create big bubbles. These bubbles called Filter Bubble can isolate Internet users since they segregate them with others who think alike. As a result, the user only receives information that echoes back what he/she likes or believes. In the end, he/she will conclude that his/her opinion is true because the majority of people (in the bubble) say the same thing.

The second factor is the tendency of psychological bias amongst Internet users (Spohr, 2017). According to the theory of cognitive dissonance, a classical theory in psychology from Festinger (1954), individuals will avoid information that produces dissonance (contradictory thoughts). More often than not, a netizen tends to consume information, which is appropriate with his/her views and beliefs, and avoid content that is different or opposes his/her position and perspective. This is called selective exposure (Severin & Tankard, 2014) and has a significant influence on group homogeneity, which results in ideological segregation.

Further, whenever there is a controversial issue, Internet users tend to select information based on what he/she believes, or what he/she wants to hear. The search for information is not to find the truth, but to confirm what he/she believes. This leads to confirmation bias (Nickerson, 1998). Confirmation bias is very natural in the human cognitive system. People tend to hear what they want to hear and tend to interpret information to only strengthen what they already believe.

METHOD

Social media has a significant and positive effect on citizens' political involvement (Chen, as cited in Jun & Firdaus, 2023). Compared to other social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter is perceived as more open-minded for political debate and expression (Kasmani, 2023). Hence, it was deemed important to observe the political conversation of netizens in Twitter during the critical period before the 2019 General Election.

This study employed critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the analytical instrument to interpret the discourse of anti-*Pancasila* found in tweets, retweets and replies (Fairclough, 1992). This approach not only presents the text as a medium of conveying information, but also emphasises its role as a social practice. It also elucidates the practice of power relations implied in texts.

Fairclough outlined three types of analyses undertaken in CDA: (1) textual analysis, (2) discursive practice analysis, and (3) social practice analysis. This study conducted a three-stage analytical process, as explained next:

(1) *The Description Phase*

The main focus in this stage was identifying the formal text properties. Language not only conveys a message, but also brings specific connotations. The investigation of the meaning can describe the dynamics of the discourse of anti-*Pancasila* in Twitter accounts. According to Hasfi (2017), there are two distinct qualities that differentiate Twitter from conventional media texts. Consequently, it was necessary to adapt the textual analysis techniques of CDA:

- (a) Twitter texts have a straightforward symbolic meaning. They are different from texts in conventional media that have been constructed with hidden meanings and symbols. As a result, not much language/semantic analyses is necessary, because the meaning of texts can be understood directly.
- (b) Twitter texts are fast and have unlimited circulation, but carry superficial meanings. In the conventional media texts, although they have limited access and volume, they carry deep meaning. As a consequence, it is pivotal to select Twitter texts in a large timeframe as samples. In doing so, the conversation patterns of accounts related to the anti-*Pancasila* discourse can be captured adequately.

Data collection was conducted in two stages. First, Twitter posts were collected using its search feature for the keyword “anti-*Pancasila*” from March 16, 2019, to April 16, 2019. This period coincided with the one month before the 2019 General Election, which was held on April 17, 2019, where Internet users discussed anti-*Pancasila* issues more heatedly. Second, tweets, retweets and replies from accounts that had more than 10,000 followers were selected. Twitter accounts with such high numbers of followers imply that these accounts belong to influencers. Texts from influencers are important and decisive. Based on these two criteria, a total of 47 tweets, retweets and replies from 33 accounts was used as the sample for this study.

(2) *The Interpretation Phase*

The focus was on the generation of text through specific processes and the derivation of meaning. The phase aimed to ascertain the ideas behind the selection of shared texts.

(3) *The Explanation Phase*

This phase examined the relationship between text and social contexts. It is important to analyse social practices in order to understand the socio-cultural context that influences the text production.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Counter ideology: Islam versus communist

In analysing the anti-*Pancasila* Twitter sample, results reveal contents contradicting Islam and communism. The conflict between these two ideologies constitutes a dark political history in Indonesia. According to Aprianto (2003), it is very difficult to trace when and how the conflict between Muslims and communists began. There was a

period of time when both ideologies joined forces in *Sarekat Islam*, an organisation that presented a formidable political force against the colonial Dutch government in the early twentieth century. The first signs of discord between Islam and communism was sown when the Communist Asia Pacific congress in Yogyakarta in 1924 was rejected by Islamic parties, especially *Muhammadiyah*⁵.

Political issues strongly flavoured with religion marked the first election in 1955, in which communists became the target of political attacks, especially from the Islamic community. The Communist Party was accused of being an atheist and perceived as the enemy of Islam. The conflict continued in the political history of Indonesia until it reached a culminating point with the 1965–1966 massacres. The massacres were carried out on PKI members as well as those accused of being supporters of PKI and communist sympathisers. The humanitarian tragedy involving Muslims and PKI, was carried out by the New Order regime⁶. Since then, communists have been dictated as enemies of religion to never revive its existence.

The issue of communism resurfaced during the 2014 Presidential Election campaign. Joko Widodo (Jokowi), who was one of the candidates, was singled out as a descendant of PKI leaders. He was even regarded as anti-Islam. Although the slanders have been dismissed again and again, they continued to linger for the next five years. The discord between communism and Islam became the main feature of the anti-*Pancasila* discourse.

The contradictions between two ideologies emerged whenever the public discussed anti-*Pancasila*. A tweet from @MardaniAliSera, an opponent of Jokowi, highlighted the conflict between communism and Islam. He asserted that communists merely employed *Pancasila* as a facade to undermine Islam. To strengthen his assumptions, he recollected memories about G/30S/PKI in 1965 : “*Bahkan beberapa bulan sebelum memberontak, Aidit membuat buku “Membela Pantjasila”. Kedok itu untuk mendiskreditkan umat* (Even a few months before rebelling, Aidit made a book *Defending the Pantjasila*. It was just a way of manipulating to discredit the people).” Aidit served as Chairman of PKI during G/30S/PKI. Ali further explained how Aidit had claimed to be a *Pancasilais*⁷, but in the end, rebelled against it. Therefore, he accused Aidit as being anti-*Pancasila*. He associated the same issue with Jokowi’s government. He accused President Jokowi of hating Muslims and characterised him as anti-*Pancasila*, displaying the persona of a communist.

The opposition also labelled the government as anti-Islam based on Jokowi’s criminalisation of *ulamas* and his policy to dissolve HTI. Therefore, he equated the government to Aidit and communism. In his tweet, he also emphasised that Muslims support *Pancasila*. This tweet alluded to the historical conflict between Islam and communism. He argued that the term “anti-*Pancasila*” implies opposition against Islam and association with communism.

A similar tweet was found in @TanYoana’s account, as follows: “*Rakyat Di Takut-Takuti Isu Wahabi, Khilafah, HTI, FPI, PKS, RADIKALISME, ANTI PANCASILA...*”

⁵ *Muhammadiyah* is one of the biggest moderate Islamic non-governmental organisations in Indonesia.

⁶ Suharto was the president of Indonesia for 32 years (1966-1998). The authoritarian period during his reign was known as New Order Era.

⁷ Individuals who declare themselves as believers in *Pancasila* as an ideology.

Padahal Ancaman Sesungguhnya Adalah Komunisme (People are frightened by issues like WAHABI, KHILAFAH, HTI, FPI, PKS, RADICALISM, ANTI-PANCASILA... In fact, the Real Threat is COMMUNISM).”

This tweet used capital letters for several terms: Islamic organisations and political parties (HTI, FPI and PKS), terms associated with extremist Islamic movements (*Wahabi* and *Khilafah*), and ideologies (radicalism and anti-*Pancasila*). Radicalism is a term used to describe an ideology that seeks to forcefully and dramatically alter social and political systems (Chulsum & Novia, as cited in Sinaga et al., 2018). The tweet equated this term with other terms (*Wahabi*, *Khilafah*, HTI, FPI, and PKS) suggesting that they share ideological similarities, specifically being associated with Islam and anti-*Pancasila*. The juxtaposition of Islam and anti-*Pancasila* (both terms employed in a paradoxical manner) in a parallel sentence reflects a satirical critique of the government. The term “communism” is inconsistent with the terms given previously. The statement implies that communism is the real threat, and specifically targets the government.

The tweet is composed in the passive voice, which negates the actor. The government as the actor is intentionally omitted. This is referred to as passivation whereby statements are constructed without explicitly mentioning the actor. The omission of the actor in the tweet is intentional in order to conceal the agent (Fairclough, 2001). It acts as a euphemism to shift the responsibility from the author. This strategy works to transform existing negative statements into positive ones, difficult situations into comfortable ones, or unethical actions into ethical ones (Kahn, 2001). The truth or difficult situation is deliberately evaded or concealed to avoid critical thinking and debate. By removing the term “government” as the actor, the tweeter (the person who posted the tweet) safeguarded herself from allegations and criticism. She nevertheless portrayed the government as the advocates of communism, as indicated in the second sentence.

Both tweets convey the same concept. They grouped together both the government and communists, who have been officially designated as being against *Pancasila*, in the same category. Historically, anti-*Pancasila* has been associated with communism, whilst Islam has been hailed as a proponent of *Pancasila*.

Another tweet from @UusRsd also reflected the same sentiment. If @YanYoana mentioned Islamic ideology as being represented by Islamic organisations as opposed to communism, @UusRsd used PKI as a representation of communism. His tweet did not contradict communism with Islam, but rather likened the government to PKI. He highlighted a book titled *Aku Bangga Jadi Anak PKI* whose author is a representative of the government. Ribka Tjiptaning, the author, is affiliated with PDIP⁸, a political party in the ruling coalition.

The anti-*Pancasila* discourse associated with communism was constructed through tweets, retweets or replies from accounts that support the opposition groups. Implicitly, they aligned the government with communists by drawing a connection to Aidit, who accused Islam as being anti-*Pancasila*. They also linked PDIP figures with a PKI background. The assault against the government was prompted by the comments of the pro-government coalition, who claimed that *Khilafah* was anti-*Pancasila*.

⁸ PDIP (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan) is the party that won the general election and controls the government, and is also the party that President Jokowi comes from.

The opposite discourses of Khilafah

The government's allegation that HTI and its *Khilafah* system are anti-*Pancasila* sparked a debate on Twitter. Several discussions used the term *Khilafah*. Both pro-government and opposition accounts utilised this term. As an example, @TeddyGusnaldi, a pro-Jokowi account, referred to the term “*teroris khilafah*”, implying that individuals who advocate for *Khilafah* are considered as terrorist, anti-Islam and anti-*Pancasila*, even if they may present themselves of being Islamic and pro-*Pancasila*. This is evident from the phrase he used, “suddenly becoming Islam (*mendadak Islami*)” . While he did not mention any particular person or group, his tweet, “*jejak digital mereka yang anti Islam dan mau mengganti Pancasila, tidak terhapus* (Their online traces, which express opposition against Islam and advocate for the replacement of Pancasila, are indelible),” provides some clues. This tweet refers to a viral video showcasing HTI activities in campus or stadium settings where HTI officials delivered speeches advocating for *Khilafah* as the ideal system of the state. In another tweet, he also mentioned HTI introduced *Khilafah* as an opposition to *Pancasila* and UUD 45.

It is intriguing to note that Jokowi's supporters associated *Khilafah*, which implements Syariah laws, with an anti-Islamic label. This was prompted by accusations from opposition parties that Jokowi's administration is anti-Islam, following the government's decision to ban HTI.

The same point of view is presented by @_54TRIYA_. In a reply to @AkunTofa, which displayed the pictures of Islamic organisations' campaigns, @_54TRIYA_ wrote with capital letters, “*PASUKAN FPI, HTI, ISIS, KHILAFAH ANTI PANCASILA YG SUKA JUALAN AGAMA RASIS ANARKIS* (FPI, HTI, ISIS, KHILAFAH ANTI-PANCASILA TROOPS LIKE TO SELL RELIGION, RACIST, ANARCHIST).” This implies that @_54TRIYA_ categorised FPI, HTI and ISIS supporters as anti-*Pancasila* and *Khilafah*. Furthermore, the phrase “*suka jualan agama* (like to sell religion)” refers to the act of utilising Islamic principles as a means to convert the *Pancasila* into the *Khilafah* system. FPI, HTI and ISIS are commonly labelled as racist and anarchist organisations. All the words in the tweet were capitalised and accompanied by 18 Laugh Out Loud emoticons. Using all capital letters in an online post is perceived as poor etiquette, as it conveys a sense of shouting or yelling.

@_54TRIYA_ argued that the *Khilafah* supporters pretended to be Islamic, whilst @TeddyGusnaldi's stated that the group supporting *Khilafah* was a newly emerging Islamic group, which also coincided with being anti-Islamic. Both accounts were identified as individuals who support the *Khilafah* and exploit religion for their own purposes.

Similarly, a tweet by @CH_chotimah demonstrates the same intention: “*Kita yg selama ini ingin mempertahankan Pancasila selalu Dipertentangkn dgn Islam oleh mereka yg anti Pancasila. Setiap tindakn mereka yg kita kecam, kita dituduh anti Islam, Islam dijdkn tameng. Pancasila dipertentangkn dgn Islam, mereka inilh PKI sebenarnya* (We have consistently sought to uphold *Pancasila*, yet those who are anti-*Pancasila* have consistently labelled us as adversaries of Islam. We condemn their behaviour, yet they have accused us of being Anti-Islam. They employ Islam as a defensive mechanism. They juxtaposed *Pancasila* against Islam, so they are really the authentic PKI).”

This tweet was in response to allegations of opposition groups that the government was anti-Islam. She then referred to the opposition group as anti-*Pancasila*, who exploits Islam to label individuals with differing viewpoints as anti-Islam. The phrase “*Islam*

dijadikan tameng (They employ Islam as a defensive mechanism)” is analogous to the terms “*jualan agama* (they like to sell religion)” and “*mendadak Islam* (they are suddenly becoming Islam)”. The tweet also refers the opposition group as PKI. This was the response to the allegation that Jokowi had ancestral ties to PKI.

The accounts of opposition supporters also used the word “*Khilafah*” when discussing anti-*Pancasila* to accuse the government of deliberately creating the *Khilafah* issue to marginalise Muslims. The tweet from @NataliusPigai2 is one example. Natalius Pigai is a prominent human rights activist. Similar to HTI, he also became a supporter of the opposition. Thus, in his tweet, he did not explicitly deny the concept of *Khilafah*. Instead of vilifying *Khilafah*, he accused CSIS, LB Moerdani, Hendropriyono, and anti-Islam groups of attacking *Pancasila* and *Khilafah* deliberately, as a strategy to attack their political opponents.

CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies) is a research institute founded in 1971. Ali Moertopo, LB Moerdani, and Sofjan Wanandi are some of its respected figures. CSIS is often linked with Christian and Catholic organisations (Crib & Kahin, 2004). On the other hand, LB Moerdani and CSIS were accused by several Muslim figures and organisations as being responsible for the disputes between the military and Islamic groups in the 1970s and 1980s (Cohen, as cited in Freedman, 2000), resulting in the Talangsari and Tanjung Priok⁹ tragedy. The accusations have never been proven up to now.

In his article published in *rmol.id*, and linked in his tweet, Pigai shared his suspicion of the government attempting to defeat political opponents by using the issue of *Khilafah* and radical Islam. He mentioned pro-government figures, such as Luhut Panjaitan and AM Hendropriyono, as Moerdani’s ex-subordinates.

Using historical references, Pigai accused the government of taking the same strategy of using the issue of the *Khilafah* and radical Islam to subdue their political opponents. He stressed that Moerdani and CSIS took advantage of the *Khilafah* issue that enabled Suharto the rule the state for 32 years, obstructed Habibie¹⁰’s chances of becoming President and hindered Prabowo from becoming President (Pigai, 2019).

Twitter users countered the accusation made by pro-government supporters that *Khilafah* was anti-*Pancasila* by generating various discourses about *Khilafah* being aligned with their own interests and political stances. *Khilafah* was portrayed as anti-Islam or even used as a political instrument to attack Islam. However, no tweets, retweets, or replies were found from the opposition debating anti-*Pancasila* or clearly defending *Khilafah*. The concept of *Khilafah* remains ambiguous and controversial for the opposition as they can neither defend nor reject because HTI is part of their coalition.

It should be noted that the term *Khilafah* is inherently neutral in its meaning. However, when placed within the context of contestation, it takes on a distinct significance. Its meaning can change when used or attached to certain group identities.

⁹ The Tanjung Priok tragedy was a riot that took place on Sept. 12, 1984, in Tanjung Priok, Jakarta, which involved the Muslim masses and New Order government officials. To date, there is no established number of victims. The highest Military Commander at the time, L.B. Moerdani, said that 18 people were killed and 53 people were injured in the incident. However, data from Solidarity for the Tanjung Priok Tragedy (Sontak) mentioned that no fewer than 400 people were killed, not including the injured and missing (Raditya, 2019). The Talangsari tragedy which happened on Feb. 7, 1989, in Talangsari Lampung also involved the Muslim community with AM Hendropriyono as the commander of military in Lampung.

¹⁰ BJ Habibie was the President replacing Suharto after he stepped down in May 1998.

The politics of othering: Labelling and demonising

Both government and opposition supporters expressed their support for *Pancasila* as the official ideology of the state and established their collective identity as pro-*Pancasila*. They asserted their position in order to differentiate themselves from the opposing groups. This refers to the practice of othering, a fundamental approach used to establish both personal and group identities (Tekin, 2010).

Labelling individuals associated with opposing groups is a good illustration of the practice of othering. The pro-government supporters attached labels such as *radikal*/radical, *intoleran/intolerant*, *rasis/rasist*, *anarkis/anarchist*, *ekstrim/extreme*, *penyebarkan hoax/hoax-spreader*, and *pemberontak/insurgent* to the followers of opposition groups. At the same time, the followers of opposition groups marked the government supporters as *komunis/communist*, *antek PKI/PKI stooges*, *penyebarkan tuduhan keji/spreader of vile accusations*, *dungul/dumb*, and *panik/panic*.

Each group labelled its rivals as deviant, negative, dangerous, and considered them as a threat. Tables 1 and 2 describe the labels used, both for self and others. The tables show that the accounts of both groups label others as deviant. However, the supporters of the opposition group attached more negative labels.

Table 1. Labelling of self/us as *Pancasila* proponents

Categories of label	Ideology	Attitude/Behaviour	Targeted organisations
Group represented			
Pro-government	–	<i>Membubarkan ormas anti-Pancasila</i> (disbanding anti- <i>Pancasila</i> mass organisations)	1. NU (<i>Nahdlatul Ulama</i> , an Islamic organisation) 1. Banser (<i>Barisan Anshor Serbaguna</i> , a youth organisation under NU) 2. <i>Militer</i> (Military)
Opposition	–	1. <i>Muslim yang sholeh</i> (devout Muslim) 2. <i>Tegas</i> (firm) 3. <i>Toleran</i> (tolerant) 4. <i>Anti-korupsi</i> (anti-corruption)	<i>Bukan PKI</i> (not PKI member)

Tabel 2. Labelling of others as anti-*Pancasila*

Categories of label	Ideology	Attitude/Behaviour	Targeted organisations
Group represented			
Pro-government	<i>Komunisme</i> (communism)	1. <i>Penyebarkan fitnah</i> (spreader of slander) 2. <i>Panik</i> (panic) 3. <i>Dungu</i> (dumb) 4. <i>Maling teriak maling</i> (a thief loudly accusing another as a thief) 5. <i>Memecah belah</i> (divisive)	PKI
Opposition	1. <i>Wahabi</i> 2. <i>Khilafah</i> 3. <i>Radikalisme</i> (radicalism)	1. <i>Penyebarkan hoax dan hate speech</i> (spreader of hoaxes and hate speech) 2. <i>Pemberontak</i> (rebel)	1. HTI 2. PKS 3. FPI

Table 2. (con't)

Categories of label	Ideology	Attitude/Behaviour	Targeted organisations
Group represented			
		4. <i>Tidak menghargai TNI</i> (disrespectful of the military)	4. <i>Ormas anti-Pancasila</i>
		5. <i>Pembela koruptor</i> (defender of corruptors)	(anti- <i>Pancasila</i> community organisations)
		6. <i>Intoleran</i> (intolerant)	5. ISIS
		7. <i>Pembenci militer</i> (individuals who hate the military)	
		8. <i>Pembenci KPK</i> (detractors of anti-corruption agencies)	
		9. <i>Pemfitnah NU</i> (slanderer of NU)	
		10. <i>Teroris</i> (terrorist)	
		11. <i>Anti-NKRI</i> (anti-Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia/ The unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia)	
		12. <i>Jualan agama</i> (selling the religion)	
		13. <i>Rasis</i> (rasist)	
		14. <i>Anarkis</i> (anarchist)	

Polarisation was inevitable as each account sought to differentiate between “us” and “them”. The labelling portrayed “them” or outsiders in a negative manner, as seen through the lens of polarisation. Shafie et al. (2024) highlighted that digital communication, in this case social media, amplifies the positive representation of “us”, and the negative representation of “them”. Both representations associate the opposing groups with negative traits. Demirtas and Madran (as cited in Shafie et al., 2024) warned that the negative labelling of warring factions, although based on the false accusations, can potentially lead to social disparity.

Another way of associating rival groups with negative traits is by demonising. The term “demon” originates from the word that denotes Satan, vampires, devils, and other malevolent entities, which threaten good people. Demon is a concrete manifestation of immorality and malevolence (Befu, 2011). Within a stratified society, the term “demon” is a metaphorical representation of certain groups of people.

Certain conditions can lead to demonisation. If someone is deemed immoral, he/she will be perceived as a demon. However, the presence of a universal moral relativism can lead groups to demonise one another. They classify the negative qualities of others as demon-like and this is called mutual demonisation (Befu, 2011).

The pro-government supporters categorically labelled the opposition group (together with its supporters) as demons, by assigning them 22 labels, based on their ideology, attitude/behaviour and affiliations with specific groups. In turn, the opposition supporters vilified the pro-government group using seven labels. There is a greater quantity of labels for opposition groups because most accounts from the opposition supporters use nearly identical labels for pro-government supporters. In contrast, each narrative provided by the pro-government supporters is assigned to distinct designations of the opposition group.

Furthermore, alongside labelling, demonisation was also carried out by evoking collective memories using past tragedies. As an illustration, @MardaniAliSera referred to G/30S/PKI, while @NataliusPigai2 associated anti-*Pancasila* with the Tanjung Priok or Talangsari tragedies. Both accounts belong to the opposition groups. Accusing the government as being complicit in these tragedies can be categorised as demonising. Pro-government supporters engaged in further demonisation by instilling fear regarding HTI's efforts to establish the *Khilafah* system. The account @FadjroeL shared viral videos of speeches by HTI figures, while the account @JKFC23456789 provided links to articles, confirming that HTI is more dangerous than ISIS. Take note of the capitalised word “*bahaya*” which means “dangerous”. This suggests that fear is emphasised.

Establishing the connections between HTI/*Khilafah* and ISIS or radicalism also creates fear, as evidenced by another tweet by @TeddyGusnaldi which stated, “Why do ISIS and HTI supporters reject the national events? Because they are anti-*Pancasila* and anti-UUD 45”.

The aforementioned tweets demonstrate the practice of mutual demonisation. Each group accuses its rival and assigns derogatory labels to anyone outside of their own circle. Individuals who do not possess the same cultural moral and codes were considered their political enemies and subjected to demonisation. Demonisation is the politics of representing others as demons. Thus, demonic actions, according to Befu (2011) is a symptom of a sick society.

CONCLUSION

Segregation took root as a result of divergent preferences for Presidential candidates among Twitter users. Proponents of the regime constructed a narrative portraying supporters of the *Khilafah* system as anti-*Pancasila*. At the same time, the opposition generated anti-*Pancasila* discourses by focusing on communist and anti-Islam issues. The terms “*Khilafah*”, “communist”, and “anti-Islam” were defined and narrated by each group in such a way to distinguish the identity of their group and outsiders. The government supporters alleged that the opposition is both anti-Islam and anti-*Pancasila*. In the same way, the opposition groups argued that the pro-government groups are anti-Islam, thus implying that they are also anti-*Pancasila*. When used in the context of contestation, these phrases may have varying interpretations. In other words, the meaning of the terms used varies depending on the groups that use them.

This categorisation serves as the initial stage to create hatred, which is subsequently perpetuated through labelling, and further exacerbate differences. The disparities between two opposing groups persist and intensify as they are reinforced by easily memorable labels. The feeling of polarisation continues. Netizens then develop a sense of pride and loyalty towards one label and maintain hatred towards others. This hatred leads one group to demean others. Prejudice and generalisations continue. At this point, demonisation and dehumanisation become closely linked as the fundamental politics of othering. The primary purpose of social media is to connect those who are physically separated. However, thanks to the politics of othering, the society has become more segregated. In this context, the political segregation created by the anti-*Pancasila* discourses in Twitter becomes the paradox of the imagined community.

This study emphasises the crucial influence of algorithms in shaping online experiences as well as fostering filter bubbles and echo chambers. It further demonstrates the threat of echo chamber amplification. Twitter algorithms tend to prioritise content that corresponds with a netizen's pre-existing opinions, fostering echo chambers whereby netizens predominantly encounter information that reinforces their preconceptions. This restricted exposure reinforces pre-existing opinions and hinders engagement with competing perspectives, thus intensifying polarisation. This raises the critical question regarding the ethical implications of algorithmic design and the necessity for enhanced transparency and accountability.

Further, this study demonstrates that polarisation can exacerbate political tension and conflict. Twitter has transformed into a platform for hate speech, demeaning rhetoric, and online abuse. The discourse on Twitter may extend into the physical realm, potentially resulting in the deterioration of social cohesion and the collapse of trust among communities, while amplifying social discontent, protests, and even violence as societal divisions intensify. The polarisation may result in political stagnation for the government, hindering the passage of effective legislation and the resolution of urgent societal issues. Furthermore, the division can foster an environment in which populist and extremist rhetoric flourishes, thus eroding democratic institutions and procedures.

The research findings underscore the pressing necessity for the regulation of social media platforms, with particular emphasis on transparency and algorithmic accountability. Furthermore, cultivating critical thinking abilities through media literacy education is essential. Future studies must address several potential concerns that need exploration. For instance, reassess notions of the public sphere to consider the influence of digital media and the problems it poses to the democratic discourse. It is also essential to cultivate the concepts of digital citizenship that pertain to the ethical and social commitment of individuals in the digital era.

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