
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Religious Moderation in Anticipation of Religious Politicization ahead of The 2024 Election

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| ABSTRACT

The elections and local elections in 2024 are still about two years away. However, anticipation is needed so that the 2024 elections can be held safely. Based on the pattern of elections and local elections, which usually are filled by identity politics and lead to massive violence. This study aims to explain the challenges of vulnerability that Indonesia will face in the implementation of the 2024 elections and local elections. This study uses qualitative research methods with primary and secondary data sources obtained from verified and relevant sources for research. The findings found are the potential for polarization from the use of identity politics in the 2024 election, the widespread use of social media accelerates the polarization that occurs in society, and religious moderation is the answer in anticipating the use of identity politics in the administration of elections. With the community's involvement, the work scheme of religious moderation can be a tool to anticipate the politicization of religion.

| KEYWORDS

Religious Moderation; Polarization; Election.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the Indonesian people are preparing to celebrate a grand democratic festivity that has never happened in the history of Indonesian democracy. Indonesia will hold general elections in 2024. Unlike elections in previous years, the 2024 elections will hold presidential, legislative (DPR, DPRD, DPD), and regional head elections simultaneously in 37 provinces of Indonesia. This grand event is a test for the Indonesian nation in carrying out democracy procedurally and substantively. At the same time, it is a stage for Indonesia as the world's fourth-largest democratic country to show that the process of democratization in Indonesia is running progressively.

The 2024 moment will be an important consolidation stage to reach the maturity of Indonesian democracy. Electoral institutions have become more robust, which means the process of holding the elections is easily carried out on the election principle (Amir, 2020). The maturity of democracy does not only focus on electoral institutions but also on the people who participate in voicing their voting rights. The maturity of democracy in society is still a challenge in holding elections in Indonesia. This is because Indonesian culture, which is plural and diverse, is easily polarized by parties with political interests. Democratic election organizers are often marked by intolerance and violence from political campaigns.

The candidate's black campaign using SARA is a strategy to gain votes, which will harm the process of consolidating Indonesian democracy and disrupt national integration. If we look at the polarization cases that occurred during the previous election periods, it can be seen that there were many cases of destruction of places of worship and blasphemy of religion. In an exclusive interview with the jaring.id media with the CSIS research institute and the Setara Institute, it was found that

there have been reports of 32 cases of blasphemy and 6 cases of destruction of places of worship (Abdus, 2022).

By increasing negative sentiment toward religion and ethnicity, identity politics began to emerge during the Jakarta regional head election in 2012. At that time, the Jokowi and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama pair became the target of their opponent's black campaign by attacking the identity of the non-Muslim candidate pair (Abdus, 2022). Though the victory remained with the Jokowi-Basuki side, polarization in society continued to develop until it peaked in 2017, when we could see polarization in the community. It was as if the people of DKI at that time were divided into two camps, namely the Muslim and non-Muslim sides. The polarization continued until the 2019 election, which claimed many victims with the massive violence after the election.

Religious moderation is a strategy that can be used to support the development of religious harmony in Indonesia and to become a forum for Indonesia's diversity and pluralism. The modernization of religion is currently included in Indonesia's RPJMN (National Medium Term Development Plan) (Kemenag, 2020). However, in its implementation, the modernization of religion still requires contributions from all levels of society to form the normalization of religious tolerance in society so that it is not easy to be pitted against one another. In this article, the author will explain why religious moderation needs to be built and prepared to welcome the 2024 election organizers and how to accelerate religious moderation in Indonesian society.

METHODS

This article was prepared using library research methods. This library research is carried out by collecting various reading references that are relevant to the problem being researched, then understanding it carefully and carefully so as to obtain research findings. The author conducted a literature study in depth to support this research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Identity Politics and The 2024 Election

In recent years, identity politics has strengthened among Indonesian people. Identity politics is often present and causes divisions in society. Suppose we draw a long historical line in Indonesia's identity politics development. We can see identity politics has been played since the Dutch colonial era. The Netherlands often uses ethnic and religious identity politics to divide the Indonesian nation (Kurniawan, 2017).

The practice of identity politics was then carried over when Indonesia became independent. It was then continued in several government regimes, namely by withholding people's freedom to express regional identity. As a result, it caused political upheaval in several regions. Identity political upheaval is often the forerunner of conflict (Hamdani, 2020). When the faucet of democracy was opened wide during the reformation period, it became a turning point for strengthening the democratic process in Indonesia. The hope of freedom within the framework of a diversity of identities is wishful thinking. Strengthening democracy raises candidates' competitive attitude to get office votes, which then leads to the use of identity politics by candidates to fulfill political goals.

During the election period, identity politics is exploited and capitalized on by elites such as political consultants, political party members, campaign teams, and mass organization elites by spreading rumors and hoaxes. There are even several cases of spreading hate speech in places of worship, resulting in a polarization of religious leaders. On several occasions, the Chairperson of Bawaslu Rahmat Bagja stated that the factors that cause identity politics are an incomplete understanding of maintaining tolerance and the existence of each identity in the political space of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Gloria, 2022). This identity politics seems to be a disease in the body of a pluralistic and pluralistic Indonesian society. Without a shared understanding

to maintain the existence of each identity in the political space, identity politics remains a "thorn in the flesh."

In concept, identity is used to characterize and categorize individuals and groups. Someone who has the same identity has cultural similarities such as religion, language, and political and social organizations and creates a sense of *esprit de corps* (*kekitaan*) (Dina, 2019). According to Agnes Heller in her writing entitled "cultural memory, identity, and civil society," political identity can be defined as politics that focuses on differentiation as its central category even though it raises patterns of intolerance, violence, and ethnic conflict.

In determining identity politics, according to Castell, identification must first be carried out on how the construction of identity appears, which according to him, can be seen by three models of identity formation. Firstly, *Legitimizing identity* or identity legitimacy, namely the identity built by the dominant institution in social life. This institution shows dominance by placing a specific identity on a person or group. The second one is *Resistance Identity* or identity resistance, namely identity that is placed by certain social actors where the giving of identity is carried out under pressure due to domination so that it raises resistance and forms a new identity. Third, *Project Identity* construction in this model is carried out by social actors from specific groups to form a new identity to achieve certain societal positions (Soenjoto, 2019).

Identity politics played out in the election tomb seems to split society into two "good and evil" camps where the split is based on the candidate's particular identity affiliation. The 2017 DKI election has blatantly shown the divisions that exist in society. The community seems to be divided into him, namely supporters of Anies (Muslims) and Ahok (non-Muslims). The emergence of polarization was also marked by the mobilization of voters through identity politics, especially after the mass movement of the "212" movement.

The "212" movement was a series of previous actions to ask Basuki/Ahok to be imprisoned for committing something considered blasphemy. However, the "212" movement shifted to a more political realm (Facal, 2020). What is shown by the Islamic Defense Action, especially in the 212 Action, is an ability to mobilize 'religious' sentiments effectively but can have an impact on the emergence of seeds of hatred in the name of religion and are prone to be fabricated as political interests.

The impact of this polarization can lead to divisions and social conflict in society. Ade Armando's case is one of the impact cases of society's polarization. Ade Armando is one of the academics in Indonesia who is active on social media and actively voices his views. However, during a student demonstration, Ade Armando received physical violence from parties that were opposed to his views in the 2017 DKI regional election (Wiwanda (2020). Even though the 2017 DKI Pilkada has ended, polarization in social media is still felt today.

Identity politics has at least three impacts. The first one is that polarization causes social cohesion to crack. The identity politicization movement has not only succeeded in defending society but also weakened social cohesion. The strengthening of political pragmatism and primordial based on religion, region, and origin are some of the causes. This phenomenon not only has the potential to foster prejudice and religious and ethnic sentiment but also the birth of sectarian conflict. Second, there is a shift in identity. This can be seen from the many insults, threats of violence, and frequent swearing times that appear, just because of the problem of ideological differences and political choices. Third, cultural violence and identity politicization can impact the exclusivity and exclusion of different groups. It can escalate conflict if it is accompanied by a campaign narrative that leads to social stigma (Idham, 2020).

Many parties are concerned about the growing use of identity politics in the upcoming 2024 elections. The political contestation and competition for the growth of social media users have led to concerns that the projected tone of the future will be repeated. This projection of concern is clearly seen in the calculation of the election vulnerability index (IKP) from the 2019 and 2020 elections (Bawaslu, 2019; Bawaslu, 2020).

Indeks Kerawanan Pemilu 2019-2020
Subdimensi kampanye calon mengandung SARA

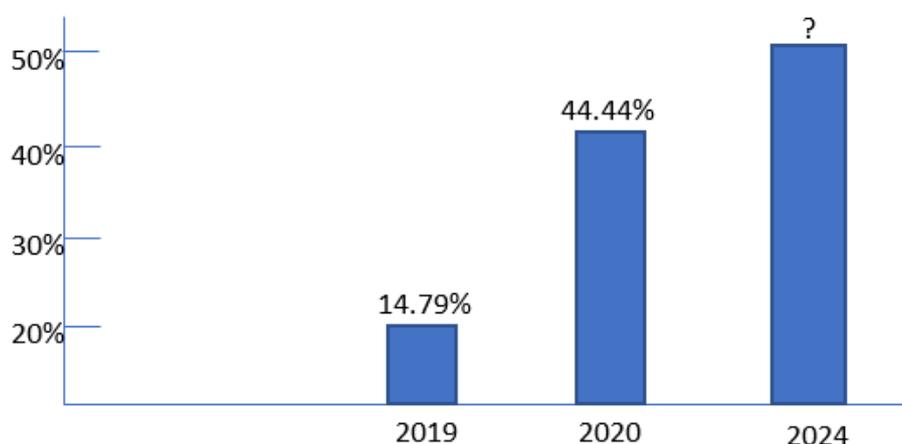


Figure 1. Election Vulnerability Index

In the indicators of election vulnerability in 2019 and 2020, it is clear that there has been a significant increase in the campaigns for candidates containing SARA. Campaign cases with SARA content, among others, were found by Bawaslu on campaign banners in West Kalimantan and cases in West Java when SARA issues were spread through social media (Twitter). Using Hate Speech and SARA Politicization based on the sub-dimensions of Power Relations at the Local Level, Campaigning, and Voter Participation, there are 90 districts/cities (17.5 percent) with a High Vulnerability level and 424 districts/cities (82.5 percent) with a Vulnerability level While in 2019 (IKP, 2019) (Bawaslu, 2019) (Bawaslu, 2020).

In 2020, the regional election vulnerability to the Sub-Dimension of candidate campaigns containing SARA had increased, namely, a score below 5.00. It shows the increasing vulnerability of elections, with 44.44% taken from level 5 as much as 33.33% and level 6 as much as 11.11%. The IKP also states that the main priority for reducing vulnerability is to reduce the quality of the sub-dimensions that have the greatest loading factor. Those factors are the Practice of Money Politics and Campaign Materials of SARA/Hate Speech/Hoaxes/Black Campaigns because the two sub- this dimension is the most dominant factor (IKP, 2020).

If we look at the provincial regions in 2020, the highest IKP for the 2020 Pilkada on the island of Sumatra is the city of Sungai Penuh, which has a score of 70.63. The highest vulnerability for Java Island is Serang Regency, with a score of 66.04. Meanwhile, on Kalimantan Island, Kotawaringin Timur has the highest vulnerability, scoring 72.48. On Sulawesi Island, the district with the highest level of vulnerability is Mamuju District, which scored 78.01. The highest vulnerability for Bali-Nusa Tenggara Island is Central Lombok Regency, which scored 70.63. For the Maluku Islands, the highest IKP is on Papua-Maluku Island, Manokwari Regency (IKP, 2020).

From the potential vulnerabilities and also the impact resulting from identity politics, of course, we all do not expect divisive identity politics at the grand election event in 2024. Therefore it is essential to have awareness from all parties, including political party elites, not to use identity politics. In addition, the participation of the community and religious leaders is also needed to instill an understanding of religious tolerance and moderation so that people can easily ward off black campaigns that smell of SARA and divide the nation.

Religious Tolerance Prevents The Disintegration of The Nation

Indonesia is indeed a plural country, from ethnicity and race to religion. Diversity in terms of religion makes society must be able to live side by side in harmony with groups or individuals who have different beliefs (Arifinsyah et al., 2020). Religious differentiation as a reality in the journey of nation and state should not be used to blaspheme one another but must be used to strengthen the foundations of unity. Mutual respect, respect is the key to forming harmony, which functions to maintain a strong unity in the social structure.

This is built on the awareness of each human being who thinks in harmony with the development of an attitude of allowing other people who are different from themselves to live according to what they believe. It is known that the existence of religion as a guideline for people's lives, along with the diversity of religions in Indonesia, has sentiments that are sensitive to each other which can be a scourge of national unity anytime and anywhere. It is common to find inter-religious conflicts occurring in people who are not yet aware of diversity. Then the culmination of intolerance, namely the sharp division of religious groups, will be easily directed to political platforms that ignore the state system that has been built.

The importance of religion as a fundamental part of social life in Indonesia is currently starting to experience a shift from religious practices which were initially inclusive to being exclusive and not accepting differences. This shift in practice is dangerous and has increasingly led to religious intolerance and populism among the public. It has led to increasingly widespread conservatism (Debora, 2020). The foundation and understanding of tolerance must begin with an attitude of openness without suspicion towards people or ethnic, racial, ethnic, and religious groups. Nurcholish Madjid (2009) mentions the idea of openness as inclusivism. Openness is essential to foster a genuine attitude of tolerance. On the other hand, a closed attitude (exclusivism) fosters an inflated ego about truth claims. The tolerance that people hope for should give birth to peace and strengthen humanity as a global issue for all religions. If the expected tolerance is this kind of tolerance, a paradigm of equality is needed as a manifestation of egalitarianism.

In Islamic teachings, tolerance is not only towards fellow human beings but also the universe, animals, and the environment. With this broad meaning of tolerance, inter-religious tolerance in Islam receives significant and serious attention because religious tolerance is a problem related to the existence of human belief in Allah SWT. The word Islam is defined by definition as "safe," "peace," and "surrender." Such a definition of Islam is often formulated with the term "Islam is the religion of rahmatil lil'alamîn" (a religion that is merciful to all nature). It explains that the arrival of Islam is not to eradicate existing religions, but Islam offers discussion, dialogue, and tolerance within a framework of mutual respect. Islam has realized that the diversity of human beings in belief and religion is God's will. Therefore it is impossible to be equated or unified (Mhd, 2020).

The shallow understanding of religious tolerance in some religious communities makes it easy for religious communities to become political vehicles. Religious communities are even willing to be mobilized for political purposes. Mass mobilization as a result of identity politics is clearly seen in the 212 Movement. Mietzner and Muhtadi (2018) found that before the mobilization of the "212" movement, religious conservatism among Muslim voters was experiencing a decline in the range from 2010 to 2016 (Fernandes, 2018).

In a different publication, Mietzner, Muhtadi, and Halida (2018) explained that mobilization (212) influenced the increase in support for Islamic political agendas. Supporters of (212) consider that by electing an Islamic leader, the political agenda that regional head candidates will carry out will be more in line with the Islamic political agenda. The LSI survey also stated that there had been an increase in the rejection of candidates who would fill political positions, at least an increase of 22%. This number will increase with the strengthening of religious sentiments and hate speech (Fernandes, 2018).

A wave of religious sentiment in Indonesia was sparked in the Jakarta regional head election (Pilkada) husks in 2017. During political contestation, some people used the issue of religious blasphemy as a commodity to discredit one of the candidates, Basuki Purnama (Ahok). The former Governor of DKI Jakarta was charged with Article 156a concerning Blasphemy of Religion. Not stopping there, similar issues also colored the 2019 presidential election (Peterson, 2020). In a brief interview, Alissa Wahid stated that religious sentiment is common among religious communities but often becomes a political vehicle during political contests where power struggles destroy each other between groups.

Religious Moderation in The Framework of Diversity

Religious moderation is needed as our cultural strategy for Indonesianness and diversity. As a very heterogeneous nation, since the beginning, the nation's founders have succeeded in passing down one form of agreement in the form of the nation and state, namely Pancasila in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which has succeeded and succeeded in uniting all ethnic groups, languages, tribes, cultures, and religions. Indonesia was not declared a religious state, but it did not separate religion from the daily life of its citizens. The values that exist in religion are maintained and integrated with the values of local customs and wisdom. Even several religious laws are institutionalized by the state so that the implementation of religious and cultural rituals runs in peace and harmony (Kawangung, 2019) .

The reality of Indonesia's diversity is currently faced with challenges in the development of democracy and technology. It causes different views in addressing existing differences. Differences in views within the political framework are common in domestic political dynamics. However, the problem is that differences become a political agenda for the interests of certain parties. One picture we often encounter is a religious conflict that occurs frequently and is generally triggered by exclusive religious attitudes. It is also because of contestation between religious groups to gain the support of the people, which is not based on tolerance, because each uses its power to win, thus triggering conflict (Hasan, 2017). In addition, the rapid development of technology is also a vehicle that can be used to trigger conflict, the ease with which messages of hatred and negative sentiment can be spread massively and quickly is also a challenge in realizing tolerance among religious communities.

In order to achieve moderation, inclusiveness must be avoided. According to Shihab, the concept of inclusivity in Islam is not only limited to recognizing the diversity of society but also must be actualized in the form of active involvement. The attitude of inclusivism understood in Islamic thought is to provide space for a diversity of Islamic thoughts, understandings, and perceptions. Moderation must be understood and developed as a shared commitment to maintain the balance of existing diversity. Religious moderation must be developed in anticipation of the potential for identity politics to divide national unity in holding the 2024 elections. The simultaneous 2024 elections will become the most significant democratic event in history. Of course, we are not repeating the existence of polarization which leads to massive violence in society. The 2024 election round starts with the registration of political parties. Currently, several parties have openly promoted the names of potential candidates who will compete. Political games at the grassroots level have begun to be played by the ruling political elites. It needs to be anticipated by every level of society to avoid becoming a vehicle for politics quickly.

The author proposes a scheme to foster an attitude of religious moderation and tolerance among Indonesian people. There are at least five work steps that can be used. In this case, the first agent of change is the religious instructor. The religious instructor is one of the available positions in the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Religious instructors are the government's spearhead in conveying religious messages and messages from government programs. The role of religious instructors in society is crucial because some people still view the importance of an ideal figure as a figure or patron in people's lives. Therefore religious instructors

have the potential to be positioned as religious figures or figures in society (Akhmadi, 2019). According to structuration theory, the existence of religious instructors can be seen as agents who can form structures in society. The activities of religious educators through repeated practices or actions will serve as examples or as actors. Religious educators, as agents, will develop daily habits that give actors a feeling of security and enable them to deal with their social life efficiently (Fakhruroji, 2020).

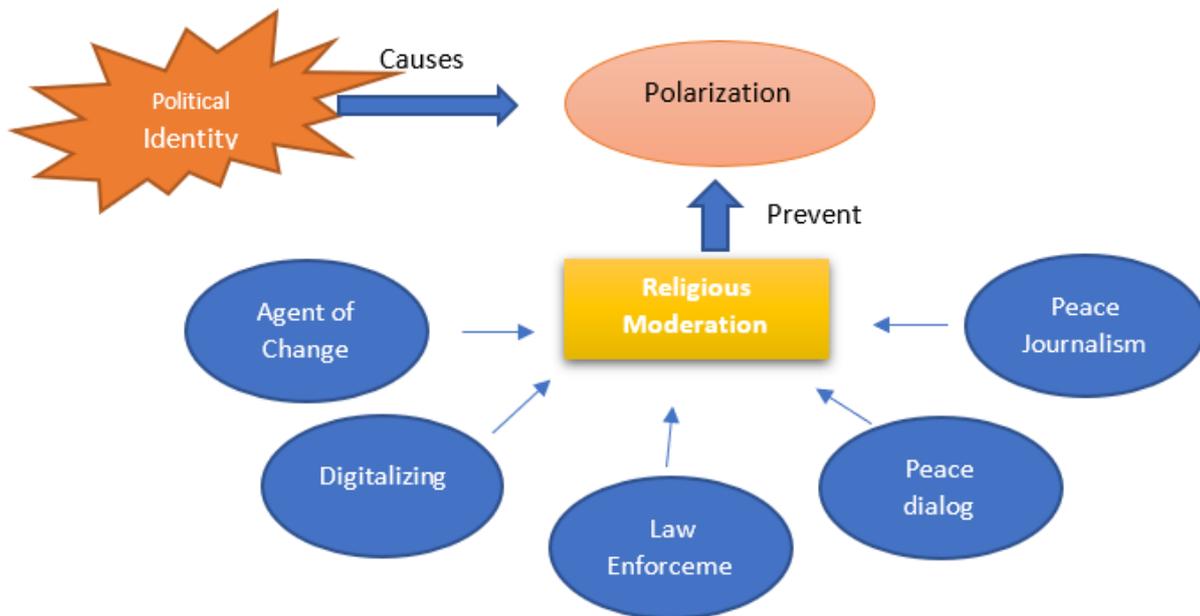


Figure 2. Scheme to Foster an Attitude of Religious Moderation and Tolerance

Second, digitalization of moderation and religious tolerance. The challenge we are currently facing is that many hoaxes and utterances of hatred in the digital space have divided society. This division of society occurs not only in the digital space but also impacts people's social life. We need to learn from the 2019 presidential election, where many volunteer support candidates deliberately by spreading hoaxes to gain votes. It is in line with the theory of Religious-Social Shaping of Technology introduced by Heidi Campbell in her book *When Religion Meets New Media* (2010). It is explained that the impact of the digital era on people's religious ways, among which the most pronounced is the fading of affiliation with religious institutions, shifting religious authority, strengthening individualism, and changing from pluralism to tribalism. So it is necessary to seize digital public space and social media as a forum and vehicle for enriching religious moderation discourse to continue being disseminated to the public. Dissemination of ideas through certain content such as videos, memes, publication of works, writing articles and opinions, all of which are produced and distributed to the academic community and the general public (Pratiwi at all, 2021)

The third is law enforcement. Currently, Indonesia has legal guarantees for hate speech with the approval of the ITE Law. For hate speech, it has been regulated in Article 28, paragraph (2) of the ITE Law, "Every person intentionally and without right disseminates information aimed at creating feelings of hatred or hostility towards certain individuals and/or community groups based on ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group (SARA), Efforts to prevent the occurrence of hate speech by providing counseling or outreach to the wider community regarding the information on the impact of electronic media if not used wisely, the ethics of using social media by providing legal knowledge about the ITE Law (Mawaeti, 2018).

Fourth, dialogue for harmony dialogue is a path to tolerance and cooperation between religious communities. According to Cornille (2013), interfaith dialogue has a broad meaning.

However, interfaith dialogue is often used to describe various engagements between different religious traditions, from daily interactions, expert debates, and formal or casual discussions of spiritual or institutional leaders, to interfaith social activism. Then, people became increasingly aware of the importance of dialogue between religions. Dialogue between religions is becoming increasingly important because people increasingly understand that the religions believed by humans are very heterogeneous. In Indonesia, interfaith dialogue is even institutionalized and funded by the government. We are, of course, familiar with, for example, the Interfaith Communication Forum (FKUB) or the Center for Religious Harmony (PKUB), which aims to build interfaith dialogue through representatives of religious groups. However, in this case, this forum must provide much space for religious communities to communicate. Approaching the 2024 election vortex, support from all levels of society is needed to provide space for community among people (Hefni,2020).

Fifth is peaceful journalism. It is undeniable that the mainstream media has a significant role in conveying news and information, especially in the vortex of elections (Roosinda at all, 2020). Often the media becomes an agent of disinformation to the public. Indirectly, the media also causes increasingly massive polarization because the news always displays only the contestation of candidates who will compete. In addition to mainstream media, social media also needs attention. As many as 36.3 percent of Kompas R&D respondents considered buzzers and influencers to be the main things that caused polarization to sharpen (Mutia, 2012). It certainly shows that social media is the root cause of polarization. Citizen journalists who voice content on harmony and tolerance are needed to prevent more massive polarizatio.

CONCLUSION

Religious moderation is very much needed in anticipation of the politicization of religion ahead of the 2024 general election. It is based on the reality of the potential for the politicization of religion in the 2024 election. Moreover, in 2024 the regional elections will be held simultaneously in 38 provinces. Previously, the regional elections used many identity politics to win votes. It can be seen from the elections that have been held previously. In addition to the Election Vulnerability Index records in the 2019 and 2020 election cycles, it was noted that several regions were categorized as regions with a high level of vulnerability. It is undoubtedly an alarm for the election administration that the 2024 general election and local elections have a high risk and potential for conflict.

From this reality, all parties must be able to anticipate it by preparing themselves. Religious moderation is one way to minimize the impact of polarization that occurs in the administration of elections. The role of various parties is needed to become agents of change. Besides, cooperation is needed to fight the spread of hoaxes and misinformation in the digital space by applying the digitization of religious moderation. The role of the media and society in shaping people's mindsets is also essential to form a view of religious harmony and tolerance. Finally, the government's role is also vital apart from being responsible for technically administering elections through the election management body. The government, in this case, must be able to form a harmonious community with dialogues with aims to form a pluralistic view and tolerance in society.

The author hopes through this journal that there is an attitude of awareness and anticipation of all parties toward the potential polarization that will occur in the 2024 general election and regional elections. Of course, we do not want to repeat the massive violence in the administration of elections. The wounds caused by the 2017 polarization have not been healed. That's why the moment of 2024 must be able to minimize polarization and violence.

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