



POLEMICS AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN CIREBON AHEAD OF THE MAYORAL ELECTION & MAYORAL CANDIDATE OF CIREBON

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Abstract This research discusses polemics and political dynamics in Cirebon ahead of the 2024 Cirebon Mayor and Mayor Candidate General Election. As part of the democratic process, the general election in Cirebon presents a fierce competition between candidates driven by local political interests and the influence of elite groups. The study aims to identify the factors that cause tension and competition in these elections and to explore their impact on local communities. The method used was qualitative descriptive with purposive sampling, in-depth interviews, and participatory observation. The results of the study revealed that the "White and See" campaign strategy and the limited capital of candidates were key factors in the decline in campaign enthusiasm. In addition, the emergence of a coalition of major political parties has further increased political tensions and polarization in Cirebon. These findings are expected to contribute to understanding the impact of political polemics on social stability and local democracy.

Keywords: Cirebon regional elections, political dynamics, polemics, campaign strategy, local democracy

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, democracy has become an important aspect in political arrangements in various countries (Bhakti, Dewi, & Masaaki, 2013). Democratic elections are expected to be a means of positive change, but they are often marked by challenges such as political manipulation, fierce competition between parties, and social polemics (Berger, 2017). This phenomenon does not only occur in developed countries, but also in local contexts such as in Indonesia, including in Cirebon, where the mayoral election triggers various polemics and socio-political dynamics (Held, 1999).

Ahead of the mayoral election, the political situation in this area has entered a crucial phase. Various political issues and dynamics color the local political landscape, creating an atmosphere full of tension and uncertainty. As part of the democratic

process, the mayoral election is a stage for candidates to fight for public trust and gain a mandate to lead the city in the next five years.

Entering the crucial phases leading up to the general election, the political situation in this country has become increasingly dynamic and full of tension. Various strategic issues, competition between candidates, and an increasingly fierce campaign process have colored the national political landscape. As part of the ongoing democratic process, the general election is a stage for candidates to fight for the trust of the people and obtain the mandate to lead the country in the coming period. In this introduction, it will discuss in depth the current political dynamics, factors affecting the current situation, as well as projections on developments that may occur ahead of the vote.

A comprehensive analysis of actual conditions is expected to provide a clear picture of the turbulent political landscape ahead of the implementation of the general election that the public is waiting for (Vigoda-Gadot & Mizrahi, 2014).

Cirebon City, one of the cultural centers of Java, is now in the spotlight in the local political arena. Ahead of various political processes that will roll, the situation in Cirebon City is increasingly dynamic and full of tension. Various strategic issues, competition between candidates, and an increasingly fierce campaign process have colored the political landscape in this area.

As part of the democratic process, the upcoming elections will be a stage for candidates to fight for the trust of the people of Cirebon and gain the mandate to lead the city in the coming period. In this introduction, it will be discussed in depth about the current political dynamics in Cirebon, the factors that affect the current situation, as well as projections on developments that may occur as the voting date approaches. A comprehensive analysis of the actual conditions is expected to provide a clear picture of the turbulent political landscape in Cirebon City today.

Previous research on local politics in Indonesia shows that regional elections often pose various challenges such as money politics, media manipulation, and conflicts between community groups (Tajuddin, Joni, & Bahari, 2023); (Aminah, Apriani, Pranasari, Indarti, & Herlina, 2020); (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2010). This research is relevant to the case of Cirebon, where the competition between mayoral candidates is not only driven by public support, but also by the influence of political elites and certain interest groups.

Although there are a number of studies related to regional head elections in Indonesia, studies that specifically observe political polemics and social dynamics in mayoral elections in Cirebon are still limited. This study tries to fill the gap by analyzing the factors that cause tension and increasingly intense political competition in Cirebon. The urgency of this research lies in its impact on social stability and democracy in Cirebon. The mayoral election is an important event that not only determines regional leaders, but also reflects the condition of local democracy.

Through this research, we can understand the impact of political competition on society and how local political actors play their role

The novelty of this research lies in its approach that combines the perspective of political polemics and social dynamics deeply in the context of the mayoral election in Cirebon. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how political competition can affect local communities and power structures at the local level. This study aims to analyze the factors that cause polemics in the Cirebon mayoral election and explore the impact of the developing political situation on the local community. This study also seeks to understand the dynamics of political competition between candidates and how it reflects the political reality in Indonesia more broadly.

2. Method

This research method is a qualitative descriptive method (P. D. Sugiyono, 2021). This method aims to understand social and political phenomena in depth based on the informant's point of view, especially in the context of political polemics ahead of the general election in Cirebon. According to (Moleong, 2007), qualitative research is used to gain a deep understanding of a particular phenomenon and focuses on the interpretation of social phenomena in a specific context (Creswell & Creswell, 2017); (Ahyar, Andriani, & Sukmana, 2020).

The sampling technique that can be used is purposive sampling or purposeful sampling. This technique was chosen to identify informants who have knowledge or experience related to polemics and political situations in Cirebon ahead of the election. With purposive sampling, researchers select informants such as community leaders, academics, journalists, and mayoral candidates who can provide in-depth and relevant views. (Sugiyono Sugiyono & Lestari, 2021) said that purposive sampling is useful for selecting informants who really understand the issue being researched.

The main data collection techniques in this study are in-depth interviews and participatory observation. In-depth interviews are used to obtain direct data from key informants who are involved or have in-depth knowledge of the research topic. In addition, participatory observation is carried out to monitor the political situation in the field, such as political campaigns or discussions related to the mayoral election. This data collection technique provides a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Moleong, 2007).

Data analysis in this study was carried out by thematic analysis. Data from interviews and observations are organized into relevant key themes, such as "mayoral candidate campaign strategies", "key issues in political polemics", and "public views on elections". According to (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), thematic analysis includes the process of coding, grouping, and drawing conclusions to map the patterns present in the data.

3. Result & Discussion

The current political condition in Cirebon can be said to be quiet ahead of the Cirebon mayoral election next November. The enthusiasm of the candidates for mayor and deputy mayor of Cirebon has decreased when compared to the 2019 general election. Campaign activities have not been carried out much, even those who have registered with the KPU have not carried out a massive campaign and do not openly announce themselves, in this phenomenon the occurrence of the "*White and See*" phenomenon in political campaigns refers to certain strategies used by candidates or political parties to attract voters' attention. Here is a brief explanation of the phenomenon:

In the context of political campaigns, the "*White and See*" phenomenon refers to a strategy in which candidates or political parties tend to avoid discussing substantive issues or obvious programs. Instead, they prefer to use rhetoric that tends to be vague, ambiguous, or does not provide concrete information to voters.

The main goal of this strategy is to capture voters' attention and build a positive image, without having to get too involved in in-depth discussions about policy issues that may be complex or controversial. Thus, candidates can look attractive and "clean" in the eyes of voters, but still have room to reinterpret their position according to the development of the situation (Benson & Simpson, 2017);(Ike Pratiwi Br Limbong, Sarmila Dalimunthe, 2024).

The "*White and See*" phenomenon is often considered a less substantial and manipulative campaign strategy, as it does not provide clear and transparent information to voters. However, in some cases, this strategy is considered effective for attracting the attention of a wider range of voters, especially voters who are less involved in complex political issues.

The phenomenon of "White and See" in political campaigns can affect voter behavior in several ways, including:

1. Ambiguity:

The "White and See" strategy that avoids discussing substantive issues can leave voters confused and not get clear information about the candidate's vision, mission, and program. This can make it difficult for voters to make informed decisions when voting.

2. Emotionality and Imagery:

By promoting rhetoric that is emotionally appealing, but less substantial, the "White and See" strategy can influence voters to focus more on the candidate's image and positive impressions, rather than on actual policy issues. This can encourage voters to choose candidates based on factors such as charisma, attractive promises, or a specific identity, rather than more rational considerations.

3. Voter Demobilization (Barton, 2011):

The absence of clear and transparent information from candidates can make voters feel frustrated and lose motivation to get involved in the political process. This can lead to a decrease in voter participation in elections, especially for those seeking more substantive information.

4. Increasing Polarization:

The "White and See" strategy that tends to avoid discussing controversial issues can exacerbate political polarization, as voters do not have clear information to compare candidates' positions. This can encourage voters to be more polarized based on non-substantive factors, such as identity, religion, or ethnicity.

Overall, the "White and See" phenomenon can have a negative impact on the quality of democracy and voters' ability to make informed decisions, so there is a need for efforts to encourage more transparent campaigns based on clear policy issues.

In addition to this phenomenon, another factor that is behind the lack of enthusiasm or campaign of the candidates for mayor and deputy mayor of Cirebon is capital ownership. Capital for those who want to participate in the 2024 Cirebon Pilwalkot. Among them are economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital.

This was conveyed by a political observer from Gunung Jati University (UGJ) Cirebon, Khaerudin Imawan. According to him, these four capitals are important factors to be able to achieve a level of popularity and electability for every candidate who will advance in the 2024 Cirebon Pilwalkot quoted (Syahroni, 2024); (Harto, Widodo, & Suparto, 2023).

As conveyed by the previous Cirebon Regent Imron Rosyadi, Imron Rosyadi admitted that he had not received a recommendation to run again as a candidate for Cirebon Regent. Based on data from the West Java Provincial Government and Regional Autonomy Bureau, Imron and the Deputy Regent of Cirebon, Wahyu Tjiptaningsih, will be dismissed as regional heads starting Friday (17/5/2024).

It is known that Imron Rosyadi is the former Head of the Ministry of Religion (Kemenag) of Cirebon Regency, initially a companion to Sunjaya Purwadisastra in the 2018 simultaneous regional head election (pilkada).

Another breakthrough from one of the largest parties in Cirebon is Hj. Wahyu Tjiptaningsih SE, M.Si registered as the 2024-2029 Cirebon Regent balloon through the PDI Perjuangan political party route. Registration at the DPC PDI Perjuangan secretariat located at Jalan Pangeran Cakrabuana Talun was received directly by the Chairman of the Registration Committee, Bejo Kasyono, Wednesday, April 17, 2024.

Registration for the Regent balloon for the public is open by the DPC PDI Perjuangan from April 2 to 20, 2024, and six people have been netted, including Bunda Ayu. Of the six names, they include Imron Regent of Cirebon, Sopidi former Chairman of the KPU, Yoga Stiawan member of the DPRD, former Chairman of the DPC Hanura Party, Supirman (Tong Eng) former member of the DPRD, Ajat Sudrajat Senior Politician, and Wahyu Tjiptaningsih. Wahyu Tjiptaningsih's registration procession

was very simple, because as a public figure, he was not escorted by his supporters, and was only escorted by his driver and personal assistant.

Another political dynamic emerged from the PKB Party. The Chairman of the Syuro Council of the National Awakening Party (PKB) of Cirebon City admitted that H Heru Cahyono will be included in the selection as a candidate for mayor for the Cirebon City Regional Head Election (Pilkada) on November 27, 2024. However, there are stages that will be passed by prospective candidates to get PKB recommendations in the Cirebon City Regional Elections. PKB ensures that it will open the widest possible space for anyone to be able to run for office, which is certainly in accordance with the party's visions and missions.

The Chairman of the Syuro Council of the Cirebon City PKB DPC, Habib Humed Bin Yahya, stated that the figure of Heru Cahyono was on the PKB radar because he had a strong commitment to advancing the City of Cirebon as well as extensive experience in the fields of education, community human resource development and development.

Bagus Idea Arief Setiawan or familiarly called Ibas who said, even though it has entered the screening radar, the mechanism must be taken in accordance with the existing screening system in PKB. Ibas also said that anyone can get a recommendation from PKB, because PKB does open a space for the best children in Cirebon City. So, no candidate for deposit is considered certain to get a rekom from PKB, but must follow the stages and procedures in the party. "Rekom does not belong to someone or who has become an order. But everyone has the opportunity to get a report, including Heru Cahyono who has the same vision and mission as PKB," he said.

Meanwhile, H Heru Cahyono himself expressed his gratitude and respect for the trust given by PKB by entering the radar of candidates for the Cirebon City Regional Elections. (Jurnal, 2024).

"I am very honored and grateful to the Chairman of the Syuro Council and PKB who conducted the selection for the Cirebon City Regional Elections. Of course, I am ready to build Cirebon City to be even better, by paying attention to all aspects of people's lives," said Heru Cahyono.

Heru Cahyono also emphasized his commitment to collaborate with all parties to create a more advanced and prosperous Cirebon City. "I will listen to the aspirations of all levels of society to ensure sustainable and inclusive development," he added.

This initial step marks the process of selecting mayoral candidates who will be selected by PKB to fight in the Cirebon City Elections. Heru Cahyono will compete with other candidates to get full recommendations and support from the party and the people of Cirebon City.

Ahead of the 2024 regional head election (Pilkada) in Cirebon Regency, it is getting hotter. Political parties began to put up horses, select candidates for Regent and Deputy Regent, and form a coalition to win the political contest.

On Friday (10/5/2024), three major political parties in Cirebon Regency, namely the Golkar party, the Democrats, and Gerindra, officially declared a coalition to face the 2024 Regional Elections. This coalition is expected to be the main force in winning the Regent and Deputy Regent seats in Cirebon Regency.

The Chairman of the Cirebon Regency Gerindra DPC, Subhan, explained that the purpose of this coalition declaration is to unite forces in welcoming the 2024 Regional Elections.

"We hope that this coalition can bring a victory effect for Prabowo in the national context and also a victory for the coalition at the Cirebon Regency level," he said.

Meanwhile, the Acting Chairman of the Cirebon Regency Democratic Party DPD, Ratnawati, revealed that the Democrats have been conducting the selection since April 2024. Even though it only has four seats in the Cirebon Regency DPRD, the Democrats realize the importance of a coalition to be able to carry a candidate for Regent or Deputy Regent. "With the Democrats joining this coalition, we have a great opportunity to achieve our political goals in the 2024 Regional Elections," he said.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Cirebon Regency Golkar Party DPD, Teguh Rusiana Merdeka, emphasized that this coalition is an important foundation for the progress of Cirebon Regency.

"The main foundation of this coalition is the same perception and commitment to win the 2024 Regional Elections," he explained. The coalition between Golkar, Democrats, and Gerindra is expected to gather more than 18 seats in the Cirebon Regency DPRD, thus allowing them to nominate Regents and Deputy Regents," he said.

"However, the final decision regarding who will be carried as candidates for Regent and Deputy Regent will be determined through the internal mechanism of each party," he added.

In facing the 2024 Regional Elections, this coalition is ready to cooperate and carry out political communication with other parties that have the same vision and mission.

"This effort is expected to strengthen the coalition's position in winning the 2024 Regional Elections and realizing an effective and clean government in Cirebon Regency," he concluded.

Meanwhile, one of the initiators or initiators of the coalition, namely the Democratic Party, initiated the formation of a joint coalition for the 2024 Regional Head Election (Pilkada) in Cirebon Regency.

The Chairman of the Democratic Party's Organization, Cadre and Membership Advisory Board (BPOKK), Herman Khaeron, explained that the idea of forming a coalition first is a strategy to prepare a strong political vehicle before determining the candidates for Regent and Deputy Regent.

"The Democrats agreed to build a coalition first, then look for the right figure. In Cirebon Regency, political communication between parties has been well established. The Advanced Indonesia Coalition has great potential to win," said Herman Khaeron.

Kang Hero, as he is familiarly called, added that currently, the coalition in Cirebon Regency consists of the Democratic Party, Golkar, and Gerindra. However, the coalition is still open to other parties, including PSI, Gelora, and PAN, which can strengthen the coalition.

"We want to reach at least 20 percent of the seats to be able to carry candidates for Regent and Deputy Regent," he explained. This strategy is in line with the direction of the Chairman of the Democratic Party, Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono (AHY), who encourages political communication and the formation of a strong coalition.

"We hope that this coalition will be able to win most of the election contests, although maybe not all," said Herman.

The next plan is to declare a joint coalition in Indramayu Regency, before returning to focus on Cirebon Regency. Herman emphasized the importance of maintaining priorities by forming a coalition before determining candidates, so that there is no conflict of interest.

"If we raise figures first, there is usually a conflict of interest. So, we focus on building a coalition first," he said.

Along with this step, each party in the coalition has opened the selection of candidates for Regent and Deputy Regent. The results of this selection will be communicated in the joint secretariat to find figures who can lead Cirebon for the next five years.

The coalition also has larger long-term goals, namely improving infrastructure, increasing people's incomes, and improving access to health services.

"If this coalition is successful, we can together bring Cirebon Regency towards better progress," he concluded as quoted from (Aziz Zulkarnaen, 2024)

4. Conclusion

This research reveals the political dynamics and polemics that occurred in Cirebon ahead of the 2024 Mayor General Election. The decline in campaign enthusiasm among mayoral candidates is indicated by the "White and See" phenomenon, in which candidates tend to avoid substantive issues and focus more on imagery. In addition, the limitations of political capital, whether in economic, social, cultural, or symbolic forms, also affect the candidate's ability to attract voters' attention.

The coalition of political parties formed in the run-up to the election further increases tensions and polarization in society, creating challenges to social stability and local democracy. This research is expected to provide a better understanding of

the impact of political polemics on society and the role of local political actors in influencing election results.

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