

***Post-truth* and Islamophobia in the contestation of contemporary Indonesian politics**

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Abstract

This study examines the post-truth politics phenomenon, its role, and its influence on the return of Islamophobic narratives in the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian power contestation. Using a qualitative approach and a critical theory, this study discovered that the prevalence of the post-truth political practices has indirectly reincited Islamophobic narratives in contemporary Indonesian power contestation. The return of the aforementioned Islamophobic narratives is apparent in at least three ways. First, not only has post-truth politics practice, which stems from the politicization of religion and ethnicity, had a negative

impact on the health of the power rotation process in Indonesia, but it also has wilted the reality of diversity in Indonesia as a pluralist nation, both in terms of religion and ethnicity. Second, post-truth politics practices, wherein lies propaganda, intimidation, falsehood, and hate speech, have catalyzed the rise of sentiments towards socio-religious groups, such as what happened in the *Aksi Bela Islam* (Defending Islam Acts) 411 and 212. Third, the return of Islamophobic narratives caused by post-truth politics is shown in the increasing clashes and practices of religious intolerance in Indonesia, where intolerance is done by the majority against the minorities.

Studi ini mengkaji fenomena politik pasca-kebenaran, peran dan pengaruhnya terhadap kembalinya narasi Islamofobia dalam dinamika perebutan kekuasaan Indonesia kontemporer. Mempergunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan teori kritis, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa prevalensi praktik politik pasca-kebenaran secara tidak langsung telah menghidupkan kembali narasi Islamofobia dalam kontestasi kekuasaan Indonesia kontemporer. Kembalinya narasi Islamofobia yang disebutkan di atas terlihat setidaknya dalam tiga cara. Pertama, praktik politik pasca-kebenaran yang bersumber dari politisasi agama dan etnisitas, berdampak negatif terhadap kesehatan proses perputaran kekuasaan, bahkan telah melemahkan realitas keberagaman sebagai bangsa yang plural dalam hal agama dan etnis. Kedua, praktik politik pasca-kebenaran yang di dalamnya terdapat propaganda, intimidasi, kebohongan, dan ujaran kebencian, menjadi katalis munculnya sentimen terhadap kelompok-kelompok sosial-agama, seperti yang terjadi pada Aksi Bela Islam 411 dan 212. Ketiga, kembalinya narasi Islamofobia akibat politik pasca-kebenaran ditunjukkan dengan meningkatnya bentrokan dan praktik intoleransi agama di Indonesia, di mana intoleransi dilakukan oleh mayoritas terhadap minoritas.

Keywords: *post-truth; Islamophobia; political contestation; Indonesia*

Introduction

In a democratic country with a Muslim-majority population, discussion about the correlation of religion and political contestation of power in Indonesia has always been an interesting theme, both in a theoretical

and practical sense.¹ In a theoretical sense, discussions about religion and Indonesian politics find their space when national political narratives encounter issues stemming from ethnicity, race, class, and religion. Not only has the use of primordial identity issues, specifically those which are engrained in the sacredness of religion as well as all forms of its symbols, lowered the quality of democracy in Indonesia, it has also shaken and threatened the order of life as a nation and country.²

In a practical sense, political discourse arose as a consequence of the increasingly chaotic political struggles at the elite level, be it local or national. At the local electoral level, an uproar ensued in the implementation of simultaneous regional elections in 2016, 2017 and 2018.³ Though the battlefield was at the regional level, the effect almost rivaled that of the national level. Meanwhile, at the national electoral level, political discourse gained momentum following the holding of the 2019 presidential election. As predicted earlier, the political battle of the 2019 presidential election took place in a contestation space that was not only tight but also heated. The aroma of identity political practices oozing during the regional election of DKI Jakarta slowly but surely made its way to the national level.⁴

Delved even further, the political theatre in Indonesia, both at regional and national level, such as the regional election of DKI Jakarta and the presidential election, is dominated by post-truth politic theatricals.⁵ The

¹Masdar Hilmy, *Islamism and Democracy in Indonesia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010, 1-5.

²Petrus Reinhard Golose, "Strategi Penanganan Firehose of Falsehood pada Era Post-Truth", *Jurnal Ilmu Kepolisian*, Volume 13, Number 1 (2019), 7.

³Fakhruddin, Yuslimand, Syamsu Rizaldi, "Evaluasi Pilkada sebagai Wujud Demokratisasi", *Jurnal Wacana Politik*, Volume 4, Number 1 (2019), 2.

⁴Arya Fernandes, "Politik Identitas dalam Pemilu 2019: Proyeksi dan Efektivitas", *Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*, Number 1 (2018), 3.

⁵Budi Kurniawan, "Politisasi Agama di Tahun Politik: Politik Pasca-Kebenaran di Indonesia dan Ancaman bagi Demokrasi", *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama*, Volume 12, Number 1 (2018), 133.

political maneuvers of the elites of pushing narratives that reek of racism⁶ and are emotionally and rationally manipulating to distort objectivity⁷ are the most evident component of post-truth political practices.⁸ On this occasion, we saw starkly how post-truth political practices in Indonesia occur in a systematic, structured, and well-designed space no matter what the media it is carried out upon—offline or online. Online, post-truth politics are executed through the massive spread of hoaxes. Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Whatsapp, are the dominant platforms where numerous hoaxes are produced and propagated.⁹ Unfortunately, the fake news is dominated by issues regarding the primordialism of religions and their attributes. While offline, the emergence of post-truth politics is characterized by the behavior of political elites who tend to intimidate and use political propaganda, such as performing identity politics in the form of sarcastic and discriminatory comments, mobilization of religious groups, and giving certain religious groups negative images and stigma.¹⁰

In a broad perspective, the appearance of the term post-truth politics in Indonesia, which, in practice, leans towards discriminatory attitude and behavior in the name of symbols and religion, to some extent, can be perceived as a metamorphosis of Islamophobic political views and practices.¹¹ As part of global political discourse, the term Islamophobia is

⁶Laylia Farida and M Gafar Yoedjadi, “Politik Identitas dalam Pemilihan Presiden 2019: Analisis Framing Pemberitaan Kampanye Pilpres 2019 pada Medcom.id”, *Jurnal Koneksi*, Volume 3, Number 2 (2019), 363.

⁷Oscar Barrera et. al., “Facts, Alternative Facts, and Fact Checking in Times of Post-Truth Politics”, *SSRN Electronic Journal* (January 2017), 76.

⁸Genevieve Gorrell et. al., *Partisanship, Propaganda and Post-Truth Politics: Quantifying Impact in Online*, UK: University of Sheffield, 2019.

⁹Balázs Böcskei, “Post-Truth Politics as the Normal State of Politics”, *Tamara Journal for Critical Organization Inquiry*, Volume 15, Number 3 (2017), 259.

¹⁰M Himawan Sutanto, “Propaganda Politik Calon Presiden Republik Indonesia 2014 -2019; Analisis Isi Berita Kampanye Pemilihan Presiden Tahun 2014 pada Harian Kompas Edisi 4 Juni sampai 5 Juli 2014”, *Jurnal Humanity*, Volume 9, No. 2 (2014), 39.

¹¹Muhammad Qobidl 'Ainun Arif, *Politik Islamophobia Eropa*, Yogyakarta: Deepublish,

known to date back to the 1980s, although the discourse of which became popular and globally attracted the public following the September 11, 2001 tragedy—an attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York, United States.¹² In the context of contemporary global politics, Islamophobic politics can be found in the post-truth politics style popularized by the president of the United States, Donald Trump.¹³

On this subject, Trump's racist political narrative, which has raised the issue of identity and religion primordialism, his anti-Muslim campaigns and his contempt towards Muslim immigrant groups, has not only kindled negative stigma and stereotypes about Islam but also aroused fear.¹⁴ In this situation, Islam is perceived as a dreaded monster rather than religious teaching as it should be. Islam is equalized to terrorism, oppression of women, and infringement upon human rights.¹⁵ A survey by Pew Research Center (2017) shows that as a result of Trump's racist political maneuvers 69% of Italians, 66% of Greeks and Poles, 72% of Hungarians and 50% of Spanish citizens have negative views of Muslims. In Europe, there are concerns and fear that tend to perceive Islam as a transcultural force that can imperil the legacy of Judeo-Christian European civilization.¹⁶

2000; Ihsan Yilmaz, "Two Major Challenges to Muslims and the World in the Age of Post-Truth: Islamist Extremism and Islamophobia", *SSRN Electronic Journal* (January 2016), 6.

¹²Ahmed Saad Aziz, "Tracing a Narrative of Muslim Self-Aftermath of 9/11 in Monica Ali's Brick Lane: Islamophobia in the West", *Insaniyat: Journal of Islam and Humanities*, Volume 3, Number 1 (2018), 81-93.

¹³Avisia Suseno, "Islamofobia dalam Kampanye Donald Trump: Analisis Wacana Berita Pernyataan Donald Trump terhadap Islam pada Media OnlineMerdeka.Com", Jakarta: UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, 2016, 5.

¹⁴Onaiza Drabu, "Who Is the Muslim? Discursive Representations of the Muslims and Islam in Indian Prime-Time News", *Religions*, Volume 9, Number 9 (2018), 21.

¹⁵Gabriel Greenberg and Peter Gottschalk, *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy*, USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007, 142-44.

¹⁶Muhammad Aiman Awaluddin and Anisa Safiah Maznorbalia, "A Suggestion that Europe also a Muslim: A Study from Historical and Contemporary Perspectives", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 9, Number 1 (2019), 101; Syamsul Arifin et al., "Minority Muslims and Freedom of Religion: Learning from Australian Muslims' Experiences",

In Indonesia itself, Islamophobic politics is not exactly new. Its existence has long been known and discussed by many, especially when Indonesia experienced socio-economic and political upheavals due to the 1998 Reformation. During that period, the term Islamophobia in Indonesia was understood in regards to two things. First, Islamophobia emerged as a response from certain groups to the widespread practice of religious radicalism and terrorism by far-right Islamic groups.¹⁷ Second, Islamophobia was part of national political discourse aimed at identifying political movements based on Islamic ideology, which, at that time, were actively involved in the power struggle.¹⁸ The division of Indonesian political parties into nationalist, socialist, secular and Islamist spectrums following the implementation of a total multi-party presidential system had indeed to a certain degree influenced the growth of Islamophobic views and practices in Indonesia. Apropos of this, the term Islamophobia is used to describe the political movements of Islamist groups suspected of harboring transnational political agenda to reinstate Islam's political legitimacy to the constitutional system of Indonesia and the world in general (*Khilafah Islamiyah*).¹⁹

And now, amid the rise of post-truth politics and the widespread of identity politics, Islamophobic narratives emerge in an increasingly varied form of intrigues and modes. Islamophobia is no longer positioned as a political subject, but also as a political object.²⁰ As a political object,

Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies, Volume 9, Number 2 (2019).

¹⁷Sri Herwindya Baskara Wijaya, "Media dan Terorisme: Stereotype Pemberitaan Media Barat dalam Propaganda anti-Terorisme oleh Pemerintah Amerika Serikat di Indonesia Tahun 2002", *The Messenger*, Volume 2, Number 1 (2016), 32.

¹⁸Kunawi Basyir, "Ideologi Gerakan Politik Islam di Indonesia", *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, Volume 16, Number 2 (2016), 34.

¹⁹Masdar Hilmy, *Teologi Perlawanan: Islamisme dan Diskursus Demokrasi di Indonesia Pasca Orde Baru*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2009, 185.

²⁰Intiyaz Yusuf, "Three Faces of the Rohingya Crisis: Religious Nationalism, Asian Islamophobia, and Delegitimizing Citizenship", *Studia Islamika*, Volume 25, Number 3

Islamophobia emerged and brought about negative image and behavior towards Islamic politics and Muslim society as a whole.²¹ While as a political subject, the term Islamophobia is presented to the public as an instrument of power. In the context of current Indonesian politics, the use of Islamophobic narratives as an instrument of power is manifested in the behavior of the elites, who in the last few years have been making issues based on identity sentiments on the public as a political instrument to gain the seat of power.²²

Going by the conceptual framework above, this article examines in-depth two contemporary political discourses—post-truth politics and Islamophobic narratives, as well as their roles and impacts on the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian contestation for power. In this regard, several national political issues that are directly related to post-truth politics and Islamophobic narratives, which have been going on in Indonesia lately, especially in 2016, 2017 and 2018 regional elections as well as the 2019 presidential elections, are the two main issues which will be explained in this article.

Islamophobic narratives in post-truth politics

Genealogically, the term post-truth was first coined by Steve Tesich in his essay titled “The Government of Lies” which was published in *The Nation* magazine in 1992.²³ In general, the essay contains Tesich’s criticism of the United States’ government policies, such as those related to the Iran policy during the reign of President Ronald Reagan, as well as Gulf War policy during the rule of President George W. Bush. According to Tesich, the

(December 2018)

²¹See Imtiyaz Yusuf, “Three Faces of the Rohingya Crisis”...

²²Mohammad Supriyadi, “Politikasi Agama di Ruang Publik: Komunikasi SARA dalam Perdebatan”, *Jurnal Keamanan Nasional*, Volume1, Number 3 (2015), 396.

²³Adam Chmielewski, “Post-Truth and Alethic Populism”, *Public History Weekly* (November 2018), 91.

success of the United States in conditioning its citizens to their aggression against Persian Gulf countries, is due in part to their expertise in building opinion, especially in rousing emotion, instilling fear, and inciting religious sentiment of the people.²⁴

By definition, post-truth is known as a situation wherein objectivity and truth experience contractions and distortions due to influence from personal beliefs and feelings.²⁵ To influence belief and emotion, post-truth tends to exploit sensitive issues. The sensitive issues can be on the topic of economics, politics, and even the most primordial in nature, religion and race. The negative effect of racist post-truth politics abuse forms a divide between reason and belief. Mind and conscience no longer coexist in a dialectic-productive nature, and go on to negate each other leading to a destructive coexistence.²⁶ The finale of all this is sentimental attitude and behavior towards *liyan* (others). This condition is essentially the same as Islamophobic behavior wherein both exhibit absence of rationality to the point of being unable to see reality clearly and objectively and both induce excessive fear.²⁷ In current global politics, the real-life example of the abuse of sensitive issues is Donald Trump's political narratives, who campaigned against racist and hate politics. He declared anti-Muslim immigrant political policy, in response to the rampant radicalism of the immigrants that was looming upon and threatening the citizens of the United States at the time.²⁸

As part of global political discourse, post-truth politics is operated using two instruments—politics of falsehood and politics of fear, commonly

²⁴Kharisma Dhimas Syuhada, "Etika Media di Era Post-Truth", *Jurnal Komunikasi Indonesia*, Volume 6, Number 1 (2018), 77.

²⁵Golose, "Strategi Penanganan Firehose of Falsehood pada Era Post-Truth"..., 6.

²⁶Paaul Valadier, "Post-Truth: A Danger to Democracy", *Etudes*, Issue 5 (2017), 55-64

²⁷Ibnu Zulian, "Analisis Pengaruh Islamophobia terhadap Kebijakan Luar Negeri Amerika Serikat di Pemerintahan Donald Trump", *Jurnal Power In International Relation*, Volume 3, Number 2 (2019), 144.

²⁸Mohsin Khan et. al., "Muslims Representation in Donald Trump's Anti-Muslim-Islam Statement: A Critical Discourse Analysis", *Religions*, Volume 10, Number 2 (2019), 1-16.

known as Firehose of Falsehood (hereinafter “FoF”).²⁹ In practice, FoF threat as modern political propaganda is one level above hoax. Not only does FoF take advantage of advanced technology, but also utilizes neuroscience capabilities.³⁰ Using neuroscience, FoF works systematically to be able to influence the consciousness and emotional system of an individual. Therefore, post-truth political practices are usually operated around the topic of religion, because religion is the easiest medium in order to manipulate and incite the emotion within an individual or a group the act of which includes sowing the seeds of sentiment and hatred in the form of Islamophobia. This reality is consistent with the data available. In the United States, when Donald Trump made racist narratives as part of his political campaign, the trend of Islamophobia among Americans increased by 20 percent from before, that it was reported to have a greater impact than that of the September 11, 2001 tragedy.³¹ In France, for instance, more than 40 percent of Muslims therein claim to have experienced discrimination, especially after the emergence of identity politics propaganda that threatens the presence of immigrants (Muslims) by Marine Le Pen.³² A chain of post-truth politics’ triumphs, especially after Trump’s victory through his FoF political strategy, eventually stimulated countries in various parts of the world to replicate it. Indonesia, which at the time was at the brink of simultaneous regional elections in 2017-2018 and a grand election in 2019, was no exception.

²⁹See Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews, *The Russian, Firehose of Falsehood Propaganda Model: Why It Might Work and Options to Counter It*, Moscow: RAND Corporation, 2016.

³⁰Rendy Prasetya, “Criticizing Russian Propaganda Firehose of the Falsehood from the Framework of Social Network Analysis”, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337414874>

³¹Andrew Buncombe, “Islamophobia even Worse under Trump than after 9/11 Attacks, Says Top Muslim Activist”, *The Independent*, 27December 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-islam-muslim-islamophobia-worse-911-says-leader-a8113686.html>.

³²Suci Sekarwati, “Islamofobia di Prancis Naik Jadi 154 Kasus”, *Dunia Tempo.Co*, 28 January 2020, <https://dunia.tempo.co/read/1300634/islamofobia-di-prancis-naik-jadi-154-kasus>.

Post-truth in Indonesian politics

The popularity of post-truth politics in numerous parts of the world, especially following Donald Trump's unexpected victory, has transformed the political map of countries all around the world, particularly those leaning towards right-wing politics. In Indonesia, the omen of post-truth politics' emergence is signified by the shifting in the political narratives at the elite level towards issues vis-à-vis primordial identity, such as issues regarding religion, minority groups, social class, and certain ethnic groups.³³ Many political events throughout 2017-2019, starting with the political uproar in the DKI Jakarta regional elections to the heated politics during the 2019 presidential election, happened due largely to the maddening game of post-truth politics. To give an in-depth explanation regarding the emergence of post-truth politics in the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian power contestation, three symptoms of post-truth politics happening throughout 2016-2019 will be explained.

Politicization of identity

In the context of contestation of power in Indonesia, identity politics was clearly depicted in the 2017 DKI regional elections. Political contestation involving Ahok-Djarot, Anis-Sandi and Agus-Selfi was considered by many to be a political battle rife with identity politics. Two of the most frequently exploited identity issues were ethnicity and religion.³⁴ Ahok, who is of ethnic Chinese background, was an easy target for his political opponents. His adversaries constantly brought up the issue that it became a hot potato among the public. The echo of identity politics upon the political stage of DKI Jakarta 2017 marked the return of identity politics

³³Ida Susilowati, Nur Rohim Yunus, and Muhammad Sholeh, "Politics of Identity on Great 212's Reunion", *Dauliyah Journal*, Volume 4, Number 1 (2019), 22.

³⁴See Luthfi Assyaukanie, "Religion as a Political Tool: Secular and Islamist Roles in Indonesian Elections", *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Volume 13, Number 2 (2019), 454-479.

in the course of democracy in Indonesia.³⁵ The same pattern was also found in the next rotation of power at the national level that is the 2019 presidential election. The fight for the seat of *RI 1* (The number one of the Republic of Indonesia or Presidency) that brought the incumbent, Jokowi, against his political opponents in the 2014 presidential election, Prabowo Subianto, was not free from the abuse of identity issue.³⁶ The propagation of ‘*Asing-Aseng*’ propaganda,³⁷ the use of the term *pribumi* (indigenous Indonesian) as a political narrative, the decline of the nation’s sovereignty due to foreign intervention, exploitation of wealth by migrants, all of them are part of the instruments of identity politics that had so far adorned national political contestation.

Amid the increasingly outrageous political maneuver of the elites and the expansion of global capitalism hegemony, the use of identity politics has not only prompted intolerant behavior among politicians but has also veered off targeting people at the grassroots level. Unfortunately, intolerance, which has been identical to the existence of far-right Islamic mass organization, has lately also targeted other Islamic groups, even those considered to be the most moderate such as *Muhammadiyah* and *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU).³⁸ Statistically, Djayadi Hanan, director of the survey institution of Indonesian Survey Institute (*Lembaga Survey Indonesia* or LSI for short) found that in recent years, the intolerance phenomenon in Indonesia which had experienced a downturn since 2010, is in the last few years experiencing a surge of escalation (see Graph 1), especially ever

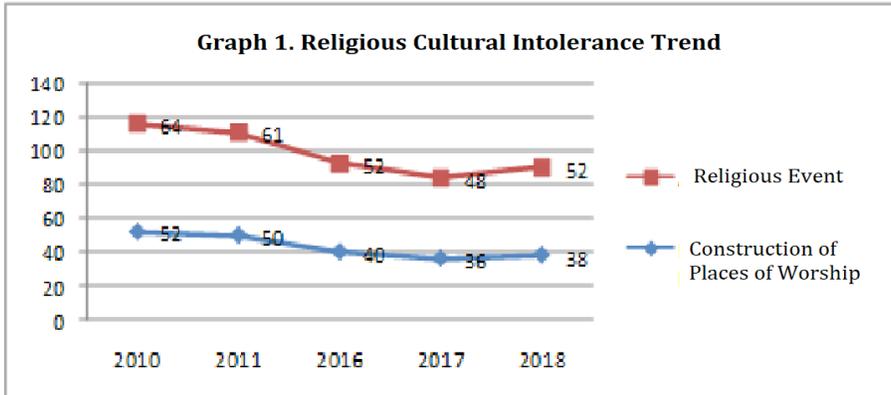
³⁵Dina Lestari, “Pilkada DKI Jakarta 2017: Dinamika Politik Identitas di Indonesia”, *Simulacra: Jurnal Sosiologi*, Volume 2, Number 1 (2019), 32.

³⁶Agus Saputro, “Agama dan Negara: Politik Identitas Menuju Pilpres 2019”, *Jurnal Asketik*, Volume 2, Number 2 (2018), 114.

³⁷*Asing* is a term used to refer to Western people, and *Aseng* is used to refer to Chinese people.

³⁸Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi, “The Myth of Pluralism: Nahdlatul Ulama and the Politics of Religious Tolerance in Indonesia”, *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, Volume 42, Number 1 (2020), 58–84.

since the colossal mass mobilization on the *Aksi Bela Islam* 212 and 411 during the 2017 DKI Jakarta regional election.³⁹



Politicization of religion

Historically, the strategic role and influence of a religious issue in the Indonesian political battlefield has been going on for a long time, taking place even before Indonesia established its sovereignty as an independent state. Now, as the Indonesian political system had leaped, from semi-presidential to a multiparty presidential system, religion still finds its space in politics. This is because since the opening of the total democratic system, the political space and stage have become more open and dynamic so that all political movements across ideologies can partake freely. This includes political movements based on Islam.⁴⁰ The truth is that the politicization of religion is a logical consequence of a free-for-all power struggle, be it at the local or national level.

³⁹Wahyudi Akmaliah, “The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities”, *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 10, Number 1 (2020), 1-24; Lihat juga Dedy Darmawan Nasution, “Ini Hasil Survei LSI Terkait Intoleransi Politik”, 25 September 2018”, accessed 18 June 2020, <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/politik/18/09/25/pfkwm409-ini-hasil-survei-lsi-terkait-intoleransi-politik>.

⁴⁰Ridho Al-Hamdi, “Islam and Politics: Political Attitudes of the Elites in Muhammadiyah 1998-2010”, *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume3, Number 2 (2013), 267-290.

In the power contestation in Indonesia, the true depiction of the politicization of religion is vividly reflected in many regional political events. One of the most notorious is the 2017 DKI regional election. The allegation and dispute of one of the pair candidates committing religious blasphemy, specifically on the Surah Al-Maidah, initiated the earlier eruption of religious sentiment. The case heated up as the blasphemy issue blew up.⁴¹ The climax of all that is the conception of *Aksi Bela Agama* (Defending Religion Act) 212, which showcased the superiority of the majority against minority groups. In the end, not only did the colossal mass deployment and mobilization negatively affect the atmosphere of politics in Jakarta, but it also significantly disrupted the stability of the economy and national politics.⁴² Whereas at the national level, the politicization of religion is depicted clearly in the political contestation of the 2019 presidential election, between pair 01 (Jokowi-Amin) and pair 02 (Prabowo-Sandi). In pair 01, attacks through the politicization of religion were geared towards the political beliefs and ideologies such as communists and its kin. Whereas in pair 02, the politicization of religion was geared towards issues of radicalism, fundamentalism and Islamic far-right extremism that is labeled to harbor transnational political interests in replacing the Indonesian government with an Islamic system.⁴³

If we reflect upon the political reality above, we must acknowledge that the escalation of religious politicization in Indonesia in the last few years has indeed been happening. The enactment of the 1998 Reformation

⁴¹Ahmad Najib Burhani and Deasy Simandjuntak, "The Ma'ruf Amin Vice-Presidential Candidacy: Enticing or Splitting Conservative Votes?", *ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, Volume 51, Number 4 (2018), 8.

⁴²Arie Setyaningrum Pamungkas and Gita Octaviani, "Aksi Bela Islam dan Ruang Publik Muslim: Dari Representasi Daring ke Komunitas Luring", *Jurnal Pemikiran Sosiologi*, Volume 4, Number 2 (2017), 65.

⁴³Alwi Dahlan Ritonga and Fernanda Putra Adela, "Mencermati Populisme Prabowo sebagai Bentuk Gaya Diskursif Saat Kampanye Politik pada Pemilihan Presiden 2019", *Politeia: Jurnal Ilmu Politik*, Volume 12, Number 1 (2020), 6.

and all its grand narratives to realize an emancipative political system that is far from the abuse of primordial and intolerant issues is still, until this very second, far from even being half baked.⁴⁴ The increasing trend of politicization of religion in recent years has had a practically significant impact on increasing intolerant behavior, both in political and religious sectors. Referring to the findings of the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI), we see that the majority of Muslims in Indonesia object to being led by someone who is not of the same faith no matter the level of authority, be it presidential, vice-presidential, governorate, regency or municipal level.⁴⁵

Table I. Political Intolerance towards Non-Muslim in Indonesia in 2016-2018

Level of Political Intolerance	2016	2017	2018
Non-Muslim President	48%	53%	59%
Non-Muslim Vice-President	41%	50%	52%
Non-Muslim Governor	40%	48%	52%
Non-Muslim Regent	39%	47%	52%

Source: LSI Survey 2019

The survey result above and the political dynamics that had transpired in the previous two elections, the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections, indicate that it is likely that in the next few years the abuse of religious issues and identity politics will continue to happen. This is further supported by a study performed by Djayadi Hanan, wherein intolerance, which has

⁴⁴Abdul Mu'ti and Ahmad Najib Burhani, "The Limits of Religious Freedom in Indonesia: With Reference to the First Pillar Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa of Pancasila", *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 9, Number 1 (June 2019).

⁴⁵jpnn.com, "Survei LSI: Mayoritas Muslim Indonesia Intoleran dalam Urusan Politik", *jpnn.com*, 3 November 2019, accessed 18 June 2020, <https://www.jpnn.com/news/survei-lsi-mayoritas-muslim-indonesia-intoleran-dalam-urusan-politik>.

been in a decline as of 2010, has lately begun to show a rise.⁴⁶ In turn, the increase of intolerance will immediately be followed by religious sentiments stemming from majoritarianism. In such a situation, the majority feel to be entitled to prioritization and that the minority should follow suit.⁴⁷

Politicization of data

Of all the forms of post-truth politics propaganda, the phenomenon of data politicization is arguably the form that is most likely to elude the public's knowledge. In general, the politicization of data is, indeed, more prevalent in developed countries such as the United States. At the 2016 United States presidential election, the politicization of data effectively helped Donald Trump ease his political interests, starting from voters' characteristic analysis phase to the use of political campaign.⁴⁸

In Indonesia itself, the discourse of data politicization is frequently discussed following the news about the data of one million Facebook users in Indonesia being leaked.⁴⁹ Beyond that, however, the politicization of data in Indonesia's political space has actually been going on for a long time even dating back to the 2014 presidential election, specifically since the widespread use of political survey institutions. As a political reference, survey institutions are not merely a 'tool' for measuring and finding out

⁴⁶Yustinus Paat, "LSI Sebut Intoleransi Politik Meningkat", *beritasatu.com*, 3 November 2019, <https://www.beritasatu.com/politik/583347-lsi-sebut-intoleransi-politik-meningkat>.

⁴⁷Suprpto, "Membina Relasi Damai antara Mayoritas Dan Minoritas: Telaah Kritis atas Peran Negara dan Umat Islam dalam Mengembangkan Demokrasi di Indonesia", *Jurnal Analisis*, Volume 7, Number 1 (2012), 21.

⁴⁸Elena L. Boldyreva, "Cambridge Analytica: Ethics and Online Manipulation with Decision-Making Process", 18th PCSF 2018 - Professional Culture of the Specialist of the Future, The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences, Future Academy, 2018, 95.

⁴⁹Fabian Januarius Kuwado, "1 Juta Data Pengguna Asal Indonesia Bocor, Menkominfo Panggil Facebook", *KOMPAS.COM*, 5 April 2018, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2018/04/05/17361101/1-juta-data-pengguna-asal-indonesia-bocor-menkominfo-panggil-facebook>.

the electability or popularity of the candidates, they also have a strategic function to influence voters' opinions and emotions.⁵⁰ The elephant in the room now is in the perspective of how the politicization of data affects the formation of post-truth politics surge in Indonesia.

It needs to be underlined here that post-truth politics works not to uncover facts, but rather to form an image, not in the sense of finding out the truth, but in the sense of manipulating emotion and rationality to distort objectivity. In regards to this, the politicization of data, through its specialization, offers statistical data as well as the use of science-based methodological instruments to play a strategic role and function in forming opinions and manipulating the emotion of the public, therefore influencing political behavior as a whole.⁵¹ In practice, data politicization is synonymous with the use of information media, both offline and online. In the United States political contestation, Trump is known to have succeeded in inciting Islamophobic sentiment after he exploited data politics and social media.⁵² In Indonesia itself, the politics of religious-based intolerance have dramatically increased following the emergence of religion and identity issues widespread in many media. Beyond that, the data politics phenomenon is also enacted by influencers or buzzers. In addition to playing an important role in determining the production of an issue and the amplification of campaign content on digital platforms, their role also aggravates political polarization and makes the politicization of identity even more blatant.⁵³

⁵⁰Henry E. Brady, "Contributions of Survey Research to Political Science", *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Volume 33, Number 1 (2000), 47-57.

⁵¹Timothy A. Gibson, "The Post-Truth Double Helix: Reflexivity and Mistrust in Local Politics", *International Journal of Communication*, Volume 12, Number 1 (2018), 169.

⁵²Suseno, "Islamofobia dalam Kampanye Donald Trump: Analisis Wacana Berita Pernyataan Donald Trump terhadap Islam pada Media Online Merdeka.Com", *Skripsi*, UIN Jakarta, 2016, 34.

⁵³Ario Seto, "Islamist Buzzers", *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, Volume 12, Number 2 (2019), 188; Felicia Felicia and Riris Loisa, "Peran Buzzer Politik dalam Aktivitas

Islamophobic Politics and the Contestation of Power in Indonesia

Etymologically, Islamophobia consists of two words, Islam and *phobia*. The word Islam refers to a set of beliefs brought and taught by the Prophet Muhammad.⁵⁴ Whereas the word *phobia*, according to the College Dictionary, means a baseless irrational fear of an object, behavior, or certain events, that motivates an individual to avoid and to be afraid. In the perspective of terminology, Islamophobia has several meanings that include negative prejudice, excessive fear, hatred, and hostility towards Islam and Muslims.⁵⁵ Islamophobia harbors stigma and stereotypes that lead to discriminative practices such as marginalization and exclusion of Muslims from social, political, economic, and cultural life.⁵⁶

Genealogically, the term Islamophobia has actually appeared since the 1980s, but the discourse related to it became more popular and garnered attention in the wake of the attack on the WTC building in September 2001.⁵⁷ During this period, Islam was perceived as a threat, both globally and specifically in the United States. Islam is referred to as a substitute for both Nazi and Communist forces which is synonymous with the concepts of invasion and infiltration. This refers to the negative stigma of Islam which they think has an exclusive, conservative, rigid paradigm, and a very narrow-minded view of modernization.⁵⁸

Kampanye di Media Sosial Twitter”, *Koneksi*, Volume 2, Number 2 (2019), 352.

⁵⁴Dalal Alshammari, “Islamophobia”, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Volume 3, Number 15 (2013), 178.

⁵⁵Yasser Ad-Dab’bagh, “Islamophobia: Prejudice, the Psychological Skin of the Self and Large-group Dynamics”, *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, Volume, Number 14 (2017),82-173.

⁵⁶Wajahat Ali et al., *The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America*, Washington, D.C: Center for American Progress, 2011, 47.

⁵⁷Hatem Bazian, “National Entry-Exit Registration System: Arabs, Muslims, and Southeast Asians and Post-9/11 Security Measures”, *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, Volume 2, Number 1 (2014), 82-98.

⁵⁸Salman Sayyid, “A Measure of Islamophobia”, *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, Volume 2, Number 1 (2014), 10-25.

In Indonesia itself, the term Islamophobia found its popularity only during a political transition of the government, from semi-presidential system to multiparty total presidential system.⁵⁹ National political unrest due to the instability of international geopolitics and national economy, coupled with the increase of religious terror committed by far-right Islamic groups, be it of the national level such as Bali Bombings, J.W Marriott Hotel Bombing or that of the global level such as the September 11, 2001 tragedy, had a direct and significant influence on the rise of Islamophobic discourse. At that time, Islamophobic discourses in Indonesia is intended to respond to and identify two things. First, the emergence of a political movement based on Islamic ideology suspected of having a transnational agenda of creating a theocratic caliphate political system. Included in this group are *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (Prosperous Justice Party, commonly shortened as PKS) and the non-combatant Islamic organization of *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI).⁶⁰ Second, the emergence of right-wing terrorist, fundamentalist and radical Islamic groups that were trying to fight against Western hegemony and political domination by spreading terror.⁶¹

Theoretically, Islamophobic narratives amid the emergence of post-truth politics in the contemporary power contestation in Indonesia can be categorized into two major themes—Islamophobia based on religio-cultural intolerance and Islamophobia based on religio-political intolerance. In religio-cultural intolerance, exclusivist behavior tends to target several

⁵⁹M. Sauki, “Perkembangan Islam di Indonesia Era Reformasi”, *Tasamuh: Jurnal Studi Islam*, Volume 10, Number 2 (2018), 52; Andar Nubowo, “Islam dan Pancasila di Era Reformasi: Sebuah Reorientasi Aksi”, *Jurnal Keamanan Nasional*, Volume 1, Number 1 (2015), 18.

⁶⁰Asep Muhammad Iqbal and Zulkifli Zulkifli, “Islamic Fundamentalism, Nation- State and Global Citizenship: The Case of Hizb ut-Tahrir”, *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, Volume 6, Number 1 (2016), 26; Aksa, ‘Gerakan Islam Transnasional: Sebuah Nomenklatur, Sejarah dan Pengaruhnya di Indonesia’, *Yupa: Historical Studies Journal*, Volume 1, Number 1 (2017), 1

⁶¹Bazian, “Islamophobia and “The Three Evils of Society””, *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, Volume 3, Number 1 (2015), 161.

aspects which are in direct contact with religious dimension *an sich*, for instance, whether groups or individuals (Muslim or non-Muslim) object if members of other religions build a place of worship or perform a religious activity in the surrounding proximity. Some survey institutions found that the Islamophobic trend that increases due to religio-cultural factor is easier to control and mitigate compared to intolerance in the religio-political sector.⁶²

If religio-cultural intolerance purely bases itself on the religious sector, then it is different from religio-political intolerance. Theoretically, political intolerance can be understood as exclusive behavior in the socio-political sector. To be precise, political intolerance can be measured by how tough is the resistance of an individual or a group if members of other religions hold certain structural positions,⁶³ such as president, vice-president, governor, regent or mayor. Intriguingly, in the context of contemporary Indonesian politics, the trend of political intolerance, which in the initial period of the Reformation era did not show any significant progression, now two decades later is showing an increase. This condition is proportional to the decline of Indonesia in the ranking of democracy, which, according to The Economist Intelligence report, experienced degradation from 48th to 68th.⁶⁴

The fact that the increase of political intolerance practices in Indonesia happened in the last few years, especially since the event of Defending Islam Acts 2012 and 411, directly provides an answer to the hypothesis postulated

⁶²M. Iqbal Ahnaf, "Membaca Survei LSI: Antara Korupsi, Religiositas, dan Intoleransi", CRCS, UGM, October 2018, <https://crs.ugm.ac.id/membaca-survei-lsi-antara-korupsi-religiositas-dan-intoleransi/>.

⁶³See Ananda Zhafira, "Efek Moderasi Kepercayaan Politik terhadap Hubungan antara Religiusitas Islam dan Intoleransi Politik", *Jurnal Psikologi Sosial*, Volume 15, Number 2 (2017), 35-122.

⁶⁴Dian Erika Nugraheny, "Indeks Demokrasi Indonesia Turun dalam Tiga Tahun Terakhir", KOMPAS.COM, 24 January 2020, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/24/20340031/indeks-demokrasi-indonesia-turun-dalam-tiga-tahun-terakhir-ini-respons?page=all>.

by many. The hypothesis to be verified revolves around one important question: does the presence of post-truth politics have major implications for the return of Islamophobic narratives in many parts around the world, including Indonesia? Related to this major question, findings from many survey institutions suggest that there is causality between the post-truth political phenomenon and the upsurge of global Islamophobia.⁶⁵ In fact, since the 2014 presidential election, the constellation of power in Indonesia is haunted and wounded by medieval-style campaigns that prioritize sentimental and emotional narratives rather than rationality. This campaign model that toys with the emotion and feelings of voters resonates with post-truth symptoms which are happening globally today.

Going even further, the findings also refute various arguments of many observers who claim that the impact of political intolerance practices in Indonesia, especially after the political movement of Defending Islam Act 212, is only short term in nature. The data shows that these practices have left a mark or legacy far and wide. This is not seen only from the trend of political intolerance, but can also expand into other areas such as intolerance practice in the religio-cultural sector. Surveys show that, in the last two years especially in 2019, there has been a rise in cases of intolerance in the religio-cultural sector. The scariest thing of all lies in the much more serious and larger socio-religious and socio-politics implication. The implication is on the return of a wave of fear and concern in the name of religion (Islamophobia) among the people that grow as a result of post-truth politics abuse, as has been the case in many countries in Europe in recent years and in the United States in particular.

Conclusion

In Indonesia, post-truth politics has taken part in many political events in the past decade, be it political at the local level or national level. In

⁶⁵Paul Valadier, "Post-Truth: A Danger to Democracy", *Etudes*, Issue 5 (2017), 55-64.

the 2017-2018 simultaneous regional elections and the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections, post-truth politics has shown its true self through rampant political propaganda enrooted in two major issues, religion and ethnicity. In practice, the use of religion and identity issues in post-truth politics indirectly revived Islamophobic narratives in the arena of Indonesian politics of power. The return of the Islamophobic narrative in Indonesia can be seen in three things. First, the use of post-truth politics stemming from the politicization of religion and ethnicity has not only contaminated the democracy in Indonesia but also threatened Indonesia's national structure as a diverse and pluralistic county. Sociologically, it is shown vividly by the emergence of various conflicts and friction at the community level that tend to be in close contact with primordial elements. Second, post-truth politics narratives that exploit racism, discrimination, intimidation, and hate speech have had a negative impact on the birth of sentimental behavior, especially behavior in the name of faith such as the Defending Islam Acts of 212 and 411. Third, the revival of Islamophobic narratives due to the abuse of post-truth politics in the contestation of power in Indonesia is apparent in the increasing intolerant behavior, where the majority feels more entitled to be given precedence, and at the same time requiring the minority to comply. Both intolerance in the religio-cultural sector as in worship facilities arson, persecution of religious activities and intolerance in political areas such as the imposing of restraint and limitation to certain individuals or groups from participating in politics.

Referring to the three facts above, this study emphasizes that the phenomenon of Islamophobia in Indonesia in the last few years, especially in the wake of the Defending Islam Acts of 211 and 411 during the 2017 Jakarta regional election, is, in practice, a result of the unhealthy contestation for power at the elite level. Therefore, if the political climate

in the future still uses classical methods that rely on the politicization of religion and its kin, it will have an implication for the existence and discourse about Islamophobia in the public. However, it must be acknowledged that avoiding religious themes in a power struggle in Indonesia is rather difficult because so far Indonesia has been using a total democratic political system. It is further challenged because normatively Indonesia does not yet have regulations strict enough to stop the usage of primordialism issues in every democratic event.

To respond to such conditions, on top of augmenting education regarding politics based on multiculturalism at the community level, there are at least two recommendations from this study. *First*, the necessity of strict regulations regarding legal consequences for every party, be it individual or group, who uses primordial issues such as religion and ethnicity as political commodities. Through this emphasis, it is hoped that political elites can keep their political narratives free of religious issues, so the situation of the community at the grassroots level can be more conducive and stable. *Second*, the need to strengthen education based on multiculturalism at the community level. This is extremely fundamental because Indonesia is known as a diverse country in terms of religion, ethnicity and culture. The disease of (Islam)phobia generally happens due to suspicion and cynicism of certain groups towards another group. By strengthening multiculturalist education, it is expected that the people will be wiser in responding to any differences so that they are not easily provoked by various post-truth narratives that contain primordial issues.

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