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Assessing the Leverage of Islamist Groups and Opposition Parties Alliance in Indonesia's Regional Electoral Contest

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Cover Page Footnote

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengkaji dinamika aliansi politik yang kompleks antara kelompok Islamis dan partai-partai oposisi dalam pemilihan umum di Indonesia, dengan fokus pada pemilihan gubernur Jawa Barat tahun 2018. Penelitian ini menggunakan data exit poll, menyelidiki hubungan antara religiusitas, narasi politik-keagamaan, dan perilaku memilih. Meskipun kekuatan mobilisasi kelompok-kelompok Islamis menarik bagi partai-partai politik dalam menciptakan aliansi sementara, hal ini tidak menjamin kemenangan pemilu, bahkan di daerah konservatif sekalipun. Propaganda politik-keagamaan pada dasarnya mengkonsolidasikan pemilih yang cenderung Islamis. Meskipun tingkat religiusitas yang tinggi di antara para pemilih, strategi aliansi gagal menerjemahkan mobilisasi agama ini menjadi keberhasilan pemilu yang luas. Hal ini menggarisbawahi bahwa keberhasilan kampanye semacam itu secara kontekstual bergantung dan dibentuk oleh kondisi sosial-politik lokal. Namun, aliansi tersebut menawarkan pengaruh politik yang potensial, yang menunjukkan adanya interaksi yang berkelanjutan antara kelompok-kelompok Islamis dan partai-partai politik dalam lanskap pemilu di Indonesia. Eksplorasi ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman kita tentang dinamika mobilisasi Islamis dalam kontestasi pemilu yang bertingkat.

Kata kunci: Islamis, politico-religious, perilaku memilih, pemilihan umum.

ABSTRACT

This article attempts to verify the intricate dynamics of political alliances between Islamist groups and opposition parties in Indonesian elections, focusing on the 2018 West Java gubernatorial contest. The study employs exit poll data, investigating the relationship between religiosity, politico-religious narratives, and voting behaviour. While the mobilising power of Islamist groups appeals to political parties, creating a temporary alliance, these do not guarantee electoral triumph even in a conservative region. The

politico-religious propaganda, in principle, consolidates Islamist-inclined voters. Despite high levels of religiosity among voters, the alliance's strategies fail to convey this religious mobilisation into broad electoral success. This underscores that the efficacy of such campaigns is contextually dependent and shaped by local socio-political conditions. However, the alliances offer potential political leverage, suggesting an enduring interplay between Islamist groups and political parties in the Indonesian electoral landscape. This exploration contributes to understanding the complexities of Islamist mobilisation within multi-level electoral contests.

Keywords: Islamist, politico-religious, voting behaviour, elections

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INTRODUCTION

In the post-reformation era, Islamic politics in Indonesia has grown in ubiquitous forms, including forming cooperative alliances between Islamist groups and political parties. In some conservative areas, secular parties pursued a clientelistic strategy with local Islamist entrepreneurs to garner vote support (Buehler 2013). While the political alliance between Islamist and non-Islamist parties in regional elections is not unique, national politics have amplified such endeavours. The rivalry between Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Prabowo for the 2019 presidency, accompanied by polarization, has put the Islamists firmly on the right wing, opposing Jokowi's pluralistic government style. Subsequently, Islamist groups and opposition parties have cultivated a peculiar strategic coalition in some electoral contests.

The tenacity of Islamist groups to engage in the political arena was preceded by substantial evolution in their mobilising power. This capacity has significantly surged since the beginning of political liberalisation after the fall of the Suharto regime, marked by the proliferation of Islamic groups in various regions advocating for socio-political Islamisation (Bruinessen 2013). The political emergence of Islamists is also attributable to structural problems, such as the marginalisation of educated Muslims, whose aspirations have become increasingly apparent. Simultaneously, existing political organisations and institutions have proven less effective in channeling their aspirations into the political domain (Hadiz 2016). Thus, resorting to street-style demonstrations of-

ten becomes one of the viable approaches for Islamist groups to manifest their influence and exert their power.

In late 2016, for example, Islamic populism was raised along with the street protest in Jakarta, which was also a hallmark of Islamist groups' invigoration in electoral politics. The mobilisation against ostensibly "blasphemy" by Ahok designated the political movement Defending Islam Action (ABI, Aksi Bela Islam). Under its banner, the Islamist groups have allied with the opposition parties, consisting of Gerindra, Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), and National Mandate Party (PAN), and were successful in defeating the pro-Jokowi candidate in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election (Mietzner 2018; Akmaliah 2021).

For Islamist groups that are not happy with the ruling government, cooperating with the opposition parties might be strategic as their sole effort in politics has never been rewarding. Although Muslims are the majority of the population and religion is a salient source of legitimation in the election (Aspinall et al. 2011), Indonesia's electorates, mainly in regions, are relatively immune from religious and ethnic politicisation (Xue 2018). Instead of bringing Islamisation into the practical political realm, most Muslims in this country pay more attention to making various socio-cultural and economic activities in Islamic expression (Sakai and Fauzia 2014). Thus, most Muslims have not been entirely enticed by the campaign of Islamist groups to be more directly engaged in political Islam.

The failure of the Islamist campaign in the political arena is also related to the lack of representative political legitimacy. Since the independence, no single Islamic organisation or group has the authority to speak in the name of Islam for Indonesian Muslims (Hadiz 2018). Therefore, their political voice is dispersed into different forms and fronts, which reduces its effectiveness. Conversely, the Islamic parties continually show a decline or stagnate results in elections, outperformed by secular parties in terms of programmes and performance (Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani 2012)

However, what is distinctive about Muslim politics in Indonesia is that although the Islamists' influence in state politics is relatively lousy,

they are never tired of seeking a portion of the political structure. The bolstering of Islamic mobilisation since 2016 was a repercussion of how the Islamist groups could exercise informal networks to pressure the ruling government (Buehler 2017; Mietzner et al. 2018). The Islamists' discontent in the fringes of the political arena was seen as resources for parties fighting ostensibly for Islamist sentiment (Buehler 2016). Since the 2016 defending Islam rallies, the opposition parties have brought the Islamist cause into the centre stage of politics as part of their populist strategy to face the dominant incumbent. The strategic alliances of Islamist groups and opposition parties conducted in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, the 2018 West Java gubernatorial election, and the 2019 presidential election illustrate that the Islamist political campaign has become more extensible and has penetrated multi-level politics.

Although the alliance between Islamist groups and opposition parties succeeded in defeating the incumbent candidate in Jakarta gubernatorial election, they failed to replicate this triumph in West Java, a region traditionally considered a stronghold for Islamist groups. This disparity in electoral success poses intriguing questions about the leverage of such alliances. The dynamics of this alliance, their use of national politico-religious strategies, and the varied voting behaviour they inspire are areas requiring further exploration. Notably, the defeat of Sudrajat-Syaikhu in the 2018 West Java gubernatorial election raises specific questions about the impact of engaging Islamist groups on electoral votes in Indonesia. Previous research (Fuller 1997; Ghadbian 1997; Wegner 2011) has explored the political participation of Islamist groups and its impact on electoral outcomes in many Muslim countries. Nevertheless, a comprehensive understanding of how the strategies and propaganda of alliance between Islamist groups and opposition parties influence voting behaviour remains elusive. Our study aims to fill this gap, providing a comprehensive assessment of the leverage of alliance between Islamist groups and opposition parties to their electoral outcome.

The 2018 West Java gubernatorial exhibits a particular case of using a multi-level politics strategy by the alliance of Islamist groups and op-

position parties. The region's strategic importance makes their efforts worthy of attention. First, West Java serves as a stronghold for various Islamist groups such as Darul Islam (DI), Hizbut Tahrir of Indonesia (HTI), and Islam Defending Front (FPI) was prolific, with about 60 percent of the Islamist protest movements occurring here since 1998 (Hamayotsu 2021; Pelletier 2021). These criteria indicate a strong presence of Islamist or conservative sentiment among the inhabitants. Second, West Java holds the largest share of voters, with approximately 33 million electorates or 17 percent of the nation's total. The province's election outcomes are thus seen as a critical determinant for the 2019 presidential race. Lastly, the province has traditionally favored Prabowo over Jokowi, with Prabowo securing about 60 percent of the votes in the 2014 presidential election (Sherlock 2009). This combination of a significant Islamist base, a large electorate, and a history of supporting non-incumbent candidates makes West Java a strategic point of interest for the alliance of Islamist groups and opposition parties. Winning here could significantly advance their interests in the national political arena.

Findings from the 2018 West Java gubernatorial election underscore the intricate relationship between religiosity, national politico-religious campaigns, and voting behavior. Despite a high level of religiosity in the region, this did not necessarily translate into electoral success for the alliance between Islamist groups and opposition parties. We found that the politico-religious issues tied to the 2019 presidential rivalry held little impact on voters' perception of the alliance's candidate. While the issues were widely acknowledged, they resonated primarily with Islamist-inclined voters leaving a broader appeal elusive. The argument is consistent with the research by Sakai and Fauzia (2014), who argue that Islamisation in Indonesia, including in West Java, prevails mainly in the socio-cultural realm and not in practical politics.

Moreover, the limited Islamic mobilisation and voters' attention to candidates' persona rather than their religious affiliation or rhetoric further underline the complexities of leveraging politico-religious narratives for electoral gain. However, this study highlights the potential

of such campaigns in consolidating Islamist-leaning voters behind their preferred candidate. As such, while the politico-religious strategy of the Islamist-opposition alliance did not lead to broad electoral success, it does offer insights into the dynamics of multi-level electoral behavior in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The strategy of Islamist groups that oppose the ruling government has become the attention of many scholars for years. In many countries, Islamists failed to achieve dominance of state power and eventually eradicated, or their parties obtained minimal votes. Thus, the Islamists mobilised their causes more in societal than political activities (Kurzman and Naqvi 2010; Al-Awadi 2013; Hadiz 2016; Lynch 2022). Some Islamist groups in Morocco, Lebanon, and Egypt were encouraged to participate in elections hoping for a change in the political regime that had been repressive to them. Accordingly, they made opposition parties a legal shelter to engage in political conduct, such as Morocco Justice and Charity (Al-Adl wa Al-Ihsan), Movement of Unity and Reform (MUR, Harakat al-Tauhid wa Al-Islah), or Moslem Brotherhood (Fuller 1997; Ghadbian 1997; Wegner 2011). The Islamist groups become pure-patronage seekers by being involved consistently in electoral games with different levels of strategies. The Justice and Development Party (JDP) in Morocco targeted victories as much as possible in regional elections to exercise the constitutional prerogative of government. Meanwhile, Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt used aggressive approaches such as mobilisation protests and joined the opposition parties' force intended to pressure the regime to readjust rules in its favour. Most of their attempts faced failures and questioned whether the alliance of Islamist-opposition parties could win against the incumbent in formal political participation.

When the ruling regime co-opts opposition parties, Islamist groups may retreat from alliances and refocus their efforts on societal activities, as with Islamist groups in Morocco. In contrast, other Islamist factions have chosen to continue their political opposition when faced with

similar circumstances. A recent example occurred in Jordan, where a splinter group from the Muslim Brotherhood established the Partnership and Rescue Party (PRP), consistently acting as an oppositional force (Wegner 2011; Bozkurt and Ünalı 2022).

The alliance of Islamist groups and opposition parties in elections was formed based on religious politicization, albeit with divergent objectives among the entities involved. From the perspective of opposition parties, engaging with religious mobilization and its strategy of religious politicization is seen as beneficial in their attempts to challenge the incumbent regime. As Maoz and Henderson (2020) suggest, political elites frequently employ a religious politicisation strategy when faith is highly influential, and groups can be unified through devout feelings. The strategy is prominent when the state implements repressive policies, sparking grievances among religious communities, especially in the absence of representative political parties that effectively advocate their interests or the rivalry among ethnic groups dominating state politics (Altınordu 2010; Sarkissian and Özler 2013).

In this context, when religious groups have “leverage” – a term indicating their ability to use their religious influence, capacity to mobilise support, or ability to frame political issues in religious terms that resonate with their followers - the opposition parties form a strategic alliance with them to win elections (Imtiyaz 2014). This alliance’s leverage is manifested through the significant votes they gain in elections, demonstrating a correlation between their politico-religious propaganda and voters’ behavior. Their strategic endeavour aims not merely to challenge the status quo but ultimately to secure electoral victories.

As the alliance of Islamist-opposition parties imposed the politico-religious in a national political rivalry, we consider second-order election theory to depict how the strategy affects electorates in West Java. The theory, primarily concerned with the impact of national and regional elections, posits that voters often use regional elections to express dissatisfaction with the national government by supporting opposition parties at the regional level (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Schakel 2013). This pattern has been observed in European parliamentary elections

(Prosser 2016). While such a practice might not fully comply with the Indonesian context due to its unique electoral stipulations and pragmatic coalitions (Hidayaturrahman et al. 2020), there are noteworthy parallels. For instance, like the second-order election in Europe, the alliance of Islamist groups and opposition parties in Indonesia also brought national political issues to the fore in regional elections. Even though the Indonesian system is characterized by a central party system requiring regional head candidates to be nominated by a party or coalition (Dinarto and Ng 2020) and fragmented multi-party coalitions that differ between national and regional levels, the introduction of national issues into a regional contest by the alliances underlines the potential for multi-level electoral behavior. Thus, while the theory of second-order elections may not perfectly fit the Indonesian context, it illuminates the strategies employed by the Islamist-opposition alliance in regional contests.

While organizing the second-order election theory in the context of the 2018 West Java gubernatorial election presents complexities, a modified approach can help analyse the impact of the Islamist group and opposition parties' strategies. Indeed, assessing the effects of a second-order election as a strategy is intricate due to the intertwining of numerous factors such as candidate popularity, party machinery, policy stance, campaign methods, funding, and organisational affiliations (Kohut et al. 2000; Mujani and Liddle 2009; Lockerbie 2013; Epley and Jung 2016). However, the impact can be discerned by observing the adoption of the politicization of Islam by the pro-Islamist candidate, aligning with strategies to represent a force that promises change to disenfranchised people (Damore and Nicholson 2014). This approach benefits the challenging candidate when the politicization of issues aligns with regional grievances. Consequently, the opposition parties must harness these issues into a popular movement (Trejo 2014) and amass majority support for significant electoral gains (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Snow 2004).

In modifying the second-order theory, it is crucial to consider that the national issues politicised by opposition parties may not always reso-

nate as urgent problems, limiting their capacity to stimulate mass political participation. Particularly, when religious politicization is employed, its restrictiveness comes into play as religious issues can be specific and narrow the voter segments (Holbrook and McClurg 2005), making the outreach to non-partisans complex and costly. Especially in Indonesia, the sensitivity to Islamic issues often proliferates in the socio-cultural sphere but holds less significance in political contests (Sakai and Fauzia 2014; Freedman 2009). Notably, ethnic and religious mobilisation does not guarantee a victory for candidates who benefit from traditional social status, albeit with the prominence of primordialism (Liddle and Mujani 2007; Xue 2018). Therefore, while applying the second-order election theory to the Indonesian context presents challenges, a refined approach that accounts for these nuances provides a valuable lens to assess the impacts of the Islamist groups and opposition parties' alliance.

METHOD AND DATA

For our examination, we used a quantitative method based on exit poll results from the 2018 West Java gubernatorial election. The data was collected to gain insight into voters' perception of politico-religious issues behind their choice on the ballot on June 27, 2018. We focused on statistical data from two-stage stratified random sampling, initially clustered across all regions (27 districts and municipalities) and then randomised by polling stations within sub-districts. From 76,211 polling stations accommodating 31,735,133 voters, we applied Slovin's formula to calculate our sample size with a desired 95 percent margin of error. This calculation resulted in the selection of 412 polling stations. These polling stations were chosen based on the principle of proportional representation, ensuring that the number of polling stations sampled in each district corresponded to the number of voters. Within each selected polling station, we collected data from two male and one female respondent, leading to 824 respondents for the study.

Aside from the respondent's socio-demographic information, the first section of the questionnaire describes the voter's religious and political affiliations and preferences, including the perception of the candidates.

The second section sought to gauge voters' perceptions of national politico-religious issues, such as the ABI movement, the importance of a Muslim governor, and the #2019GantiPresiden (pro-Prabowo) movement. To obtain insight into voters' electoral choices influenced by politico-religious issues, we asked respondents questions like, 'To what extent do you agree that the Aksi Bela Islam 212 inspired you to vote for a Muslim leader in the 2018 West Java gubernatorial election?' and 'Should the #2019GantiPresiden Movement receive support?' We utilized a five-level nominal and Likert scale to determine the influence or 'leverage' of the alliance between Islamist groups and opposition parties within the 2018 West Java gubernatorial election.

Then, the data were processed using SPSS 25 and analysed descriptively, considering the preference for each of the four candidate pairs. To illustrate the relationship between voters' tendencies towards politico-religious issues, we conducted a cross-tabulation analysis based on the choice of each candidate pair. For instance, we examined the extent to which supporters of each candidate had their choices influenced by their support for the ABI 212 and the #2019GantiPresiden movement.

RESULTS

Contextualising Multi-Level Politics in the 2018 West Java Gubernatorial Elections

This article emphasises that the alliance of Islamist groups and opposition parties in elections became viable due to political opportunities stemming from growing grievances among the Islamists, ideological convergence between Islamist actors and political parties, and adequate base support in the region. The democratisation that began after the 1998 reform facilitated the Islamist and conservative groups to use various political institutions to meet their objectives. Although Islamic parties could not gain political dominance, Islamist extra-parliamentary forces managed to influence state policy. During the Yudhoyono era (2004-2009), these forces pushed the government to issue a decree, endorsed by three ministers, to ban Ahmadiyah activities, which, in turn,

was being instigated as violence against minorities across the countries. During the Jokowi era, Islamist forces faced suppression, leading to a lack of political space and subsequent disillusionment. To avoid appearing as a marginalising Islam, Jokowi partnered with NU, a group that actively counters the narratives of Islamists (Mietzner 2018). This challenging position has spurred Islamists to engage more directly in practical politics by aligning themselves with opposition parties.

The street demonstrations 2016 led by Islamist groups, such as the FPI, created momentum for a robust response to the Jokowi government and simultaneously escalated their involvement in the electoral contest. It forms the solidification of alliances with parties opposing the Jokowi government. It is crucial to note that the presence of PKS and PAN among the opposition parties is crucial in strengthening the alliance between Islamist groups and opposition parties. This alliance showcased a blending of actors sharing Islamist ideologies, such as PKS politicians and Amien Rais of PAN. The victory of the opposition coalition in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial inspires Islamist groups to advance electoral support to opposition parties in subsequent elections. However, replicating such an alliance in most regions proved challenging due to the complexity of the regional party coalition. Among the 17 simultaneous gubernatorial elections in 2018, these three parties formed an unadulterated coalition only in West Java.

The alliance of Islamist groups and opposition parties in West Java strategically employed national politico-religious issues to their advantage, buoyed by a perceived robust support base ready for mobilization. The 2016 Jakarta Street demonstration, primarily attended by participants from various West Java sub-regions and the majority of votes cast for Prabowo, provided a foundation for the alliance to establish a mobilization network. Consequently, the Gerindra, PKS, and PAN in West Java eagerly forged close ties with the Islamist elements, such as FPI, mirroring their Jakarta-based campaign strategy (Bebey 2018; Mardiana 2018). The coalition of Gerindra, PKS, and PAN lavishly positioned their candidate, Sudrajat-Syaikhu, as representatives of Prabowo's support base. They vigorously campaign against Jokowi's re-election, pro-

elling the #2019GantiPresiden across media channels. This campaign highlighted the perceived shortcomings of the Jokowi administration, mobilising public support for a change in presidential leadership. In stark contrast, the three competing candidate pairs – Ridwan Kamil-Uu Ruzhanul (PPP, PKB, Nasdem, Hanura), Deddy-Dedy (Golkar, Demokrat), and Hasanudin-Charliyan (PDIP) – openly endorsed Jokowi’s re-election (Bayu 2018; Sanusi 2018).

Furthermore, the alliance between Islamist groups and opposition parties requires understanding their candidate’s relative electability compared to other candidates. Among the four candidates, Sudrajat-Syaikhu was the least popular. They trailed significantly behind other candidates such as Ridwan Kamil, who was admired for his outstanding tenure as mayor of Bandung; Deddy Mizwar, a national actor and deputy governor; Dedy Mulyadi, a famous regent of Purwakarta especially among Sundanese, and Uu Ruzhanul a regent of Tasikmalaya and renowned “santri (Muslims students) commander” in the province’s south. Meanwhile, Sudrajat, a retired army general turned Gerindra cadre, was relatively unknown in the West Java political scene. Similarly, Syaikhu, despite his role as the mayor of Bekasi, had limited recognition, and his support base was predominantly confined to PKS cadres. Therefore, wrapping the national politico-religious issues emerged as the plausible strategy to augment their popularity and electability.

Despite the apparent promise of the political alliance between Islamist groups and opposition parties in the conservative region of West Java, certain circumstances may have hindered the implementation of the national politico-religious strategy. First, there were no discernable differences among the candidates concerning religious identity, precluding any candidate from capitalizing on religious positioning. Moreover, several candidates embodied an Islamic persona. For instance, Uu Ruzhanul is a high cleric from traditional circles who has close relations with a santri base. Then, Ridwan Kamil, a modern-Islamic figure who initiated the dawn prayer movement and mosque-based public financial credit during his tenure as the mayor of Bandung. Deddy Mizwar also enjoyed a reputation as a devout Muslim actor. The national politico-

religious strategy may not have been practical since no local issues were associated with religion or national politics. Indeed, both provincial and district or municipal governments generally support Islamic policies. Lastly, Islamisation in West Java pertains more to the arrangement of local institutions (Hamayotsu 2021) and fragmentation of religious authority (Pelletier 2021) than to a political consensus. This implies that no grievances are rooted in local politico-religious issues that can be mobilised for electoral gain.

The Leverage of National Politico-Religious Campaigns

How effectual is the alliance of Islamist-opposition parties in using politico-religious issues? Before heading to that description, it is essential to note that the exit poll result verifies that the religiosity of voters in West Java tends to be high. The respondents who strongly agree and agree with voting for the candidate because of his religious background are 51.2 percent and 34.8 percent respectively. From the respondent's religious considerations in voting for the candidate, we tried to look at the preference of each candidate voter. As shown in Table 1, Sudrajat-Syaikh's voters showed most robust religious voting behaviour than the others, where 69.6 percent strongly agreed, and 26.9 percent agreed. However, the superiority of the Sudrajat-Shaikh in the religious aspect is not uncommon. Two other candidates, Deddy-Dedy and Ridwan Kamil-Uu Ruzhanul, also share a strong impression of religious preference. This is not surprising as both candidates highlighted their religious appearance and enacted pro-Islamic policies; meanwhile, the lack of religious considerations among the Hasanudin-Charliyan voters was in line with the pluralist and secular-leaning character of PDIP's constituents (Amin 2012). This section may be divided into subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn.

Table 1. Vote as the candidate's religious background (in percentage)

	Ridwan-Uu	Tb. Hasanudin-Anton	Sudrajat-Syaikhu	Deddy Mizwar-Mulyadi	Total
Strongly agree	42.1	27.8	69.6	47.9	51.2
Agree	39.2	27.8	26.9	38.7	34.8
Neutral	3.6	8.3	1.5	4.2	3.3
Disagree	11.7	30.6	1.9	7.0	8.6
Strongly disagree	3.4	5.6	0	2.1	2.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Authors

With solid religious voting preferences among the voters, the politico-religious mobilisation could be promising for the Islamist proponent candidates. This survey captured the respondent's perception of ABI and the #2019GantiPresiden to describe how much voters support politico-religious issues. In mapping voter inclination to the Islamist grievances over the Jokowi government, we explored the respondent's perceptions about the rumours saying that the government had mistreated Muslims. From the exit poll results (see Table 2), about 17.4 per cent of respondents strongly agree, and 37.3 per cent agree with the accusation, which means the narrative gained approval from more than half of the respondents. Indeed, Sudrajat-Syaikhu voters showed the highest level of agreement with this statement. Nevertheless, as described further, it does not necessarily become an advantage for Sudrajat-Syaikhu.

Table 2. The Jokowi government had mistreated the Muslims (in percentage)

	Ridwan-Uu	Tb. Hasanudin-Anton	Sudrajat-Syaikhu	Deddy Mizwar-Mulyadi	Total
Strongly agree	9.6	5.6	29.2	19.7	17.4
Agree	33.0	30.6	48.1	31.0	37.3
Neutral	30.4	19.4	15.4	33.1	25.6
Disagree	23.4	33.3	7.3	17.0	17.0
Strongly disagree	3.6	11.1	0	2.8	2.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Authors

Whether ABI has inspired voters to vote for a Muslim candidate, the survey showed that 24% of respondents strongly agree and 38.8% agree, which means that voters' support for this statement was relatively high. When looking at each candidate pair, the Sudrajat-Syaikhu voters

strongly supported that ABI had encouraged such a decision on the ballot, with 42.3 per cent strongly agreeing and 43.8 per cent agreeing (see Table 3). It indicates that most Sudrajat-Syaikhu's voters perceived the gubernatorial race as the extension spirit of ABI, which means an ideological connection was present. However, for other voters who agree with the statement, their support for ABI is irrelevant to Sudrajat-Syaikhu, as shown by the voters of Ridwan Kamil-Uu Ruzhanul Ulum and Deddy Mizwar-Dedy Mulyadi.

Table 3. The ABI 212 encourages voting for Muslim candidates (in percentage)

	Ridwan-Uu	Tb. Hasanudin-Anton	Sudrajat-Syaikhu	Deddy Mizwar-Mulyadi	Total
Strongly agree	16.9	9.3	42.3	19.0	24.9
Agree	35.8	33.3	43.8	38.7	38.8
Neutral	15.1	19.4	5.4	21.8	12.9
Disagree	24.2	33.3	7.7	13.4	17.5
Strongly disagree	8.1	16.7	0.8	7.0	6.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Authors

The subsequent political propaganda highlighted by the Sudrajat-Syaikhu was the #2019GantiPresiden campaign. As indicated in the exit poll results (see Table 4), if neutral responses are set aside, about 67,3 percent of respondents expressed support for #2019GantiPresiden, with 19.4 percent strongly agreeing and 29.3 percent agreeing. It suggests that the #2019GantiPresiden propaganda resonated strongly with the broader electorate. However, as further elaborated in the subsequent sections, its impact on voting behaviour did not necessarily give a clear advantage for Sudrajat-Syaikhu. Notably, a significant segment of Sudrajat-Syaikhu voters strongly supported the movement, with 40 percent strongly agreeing and 40.8 percent agreeing. This robust endorsement suggested that Sudrajat-Syaikhu managed to embed the narrative of a national political movement among their respective base of supporters, illustrating the persistence of multi-level electoral behaviour within this group.

Table 4. Voters' support for #2019GantiPresiden (in percentage)

	Ridwan-Uu	Tb. Hasanudin-Anton	Sudrajat-Syaikhu	Deddy Mizwar-Mulyadi	Total
Strongly agree	9.1	11.1	40.0	12.0	19.4
Agree	22.9	16.7	40.8	28.9	29.3
Neutral	33.5	25.0	14.2	36.6	27.6
Disagree	25.5	27.8	4.6	17.6	17.6
Strongly disagree	9.1	19.4	0.4	4.9	6.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Authors

An underlying objective in campaigning #2019GantiPresiden by Sudrajat-Syaikhu was to identify themselves as representatives of Prabowo. However, the attempt did not significantly increase their votes. As shown in Table 5, which cross-tabulated the voters' choice of gubernatorial candidate and their preferred 2019 presidential candidate, Sudrajat-Syaikhu secured less than half of Prabowo's voters. The remaining voters were distributed between Ridwan Kamil-Uu Ruzhanul and Deddy-Dedy pairs, suggesting that more than half of Prabowo's voters did not see a strong connection between Prabowo's political stance and Sudrajat-Syaikhu's. On the other hand, a starkly different picture emerges when we look at Jokowi's supporters. Most of these voters favoured the Ridwan Kamil-Uu Ruzhanul candidacy, and only a tiny percentage aligned with Sudrajat-Syaikhu. This trend might indicate a disconnect between Sudrajat-Syaikhu's #2019GantiPresiden campaign and the preferences of Jokowi's supporters.

Moreover, Sudrajat-Syaikhu's pair attracted half of the voters who preferred "Others" and a quarter of those who remained "Undecided." This distribution suggests that the #2019GantiPresiden campaign resonated among voters who were either not committed to the leading presidential candidates or favored alternative choices. Thus, while the campaign did not significantly boost Sudrajat-Syaikhu's appeal among Prabowo's or Jokowi's supporters, it did seem to strike a chord with a different voter segment.

Table 5. Voters' Support for the 2019 President Candidate (in Percentage)

	Ridwan-Uu	Tb. Hasanudin-Anton	Sudrajat-Syaikhu	Deddy Mizwar-Mulyadi	Total
Prabowo	33.5	2.2	48.4	15.8	100
Jokowi	64	10.3	5.8	19.8	100
Others	37	2	50	11	100
Undecided	54	1	25	20	100

Source: Authors

We also map each candidate's voters based on party affiliation to see the congruent voters-party preference. The low rates of party identification in regional elections are typical in Indonesia. Although the rate of party identification in the 2018 West Java gubernatorial race is generally undeterred from the national propensity, PKS and PAN voters' high inclination in the Sudrajat-Syaikhu implies the solidification of Islamist-inclined support. Whereas many supporters of PKS and PAN participated in the ABI movement in 2017 Jakarta, we suppose that politico-religious propaganda in second-order tactics tended to maintain ideological connection among the Islamist-inclined voters.

As shown in Table 6, this indication can be seen in nearly half of the Gerindra voters fleeing to Deddy-Dedy and Ridwan Kamil-Uu Ruzhanul. That means the #2019GantiPresiden movement is less meaningful even among Gerindra supporters. The table below also captures that Ridwan Kamil-Uu Ruzhanul clinched the winning factor as they succeeded in being the most favourable candidate among unaffiliated voters and other parties' constituents.

Tabel 6. Voters' Party Affiliation (in percentage)

Parties	Ridwan-Uu	Tb. Hasanudin-Anton	Sudrajat-Syaikhu	Deddy Mizwar-Mulyadi
Coalition of Ridwan-Uu	67.5	0	17.5	15
PKB	58.33	0	16.7	25
PPP	65	0	20	15
Nasdem	87.5	0	12.5	0
Hanura	0	0	0	0
Coalition of Hasanudin-Anton	52.2	32.6	0	15.2
PDIP	52.2	32.6	0	15.2
Coalition of Sudajat-Syaikhu	10.2	1	75.5	14.3
Gerindra	18.7	0	56.3	25
PKS	5.2	1.7	84.7	8.5
PAN	14.3	0	71.4	14.3

Coalition of Deddy-Dedy	45.8	0	18.75	35.4
Golkar	45.2	0	14.3	40.5
Demokrat	50	0	50	0
Unaffiliated voters	51	3.3	29.1	16.7

Source: Authors

Although the religiosity of West Java voters was relatively high, the use of politico-religious propaganda did not significantly boost the electoral performance of the Islamist groups and opposition party candidates. The voters demonstrated some support for ABI and *the #2019Ganti-Presiden* campaign, but this did not considerably affect voting behavior. This support appears to have consolidated the votes of individuals with Islamist-leaning perspectives, specifically those who believed the government was mistreating Muslims, supported ABI, and wished for a change in the presidency. Those voters were more likely to vote for Sudrajat-Syaikhu. Nevertheless, this politico-religious narrative did not resonate with a broader electorate. Further, calls for political change framed within this politico-religious narrative were considered irrelevant and failed to address the region's substantial problems. Despite being cloaked in Islamic identity symbols, the key issues were viewed as less pertinent to the regional power and resource contestations, except perhaps among those with Islamist-leaning views.

DISCUSSION

The findings explain the complexity of the relationship between religiosity, politico-religious narratives, and voting behaviour in regional elections such as the West Java gubernatorial contest. Despite high levels of religiosity among voters, this did not straightforwardly translate into electoral success for the alliance between Islamist groups and opposition parties' candidates. As highlighted by Aspinall et al. (2011) for the case in Medan, Indonesia, this article also acknowledges that the politicization of religion does not always benefit particular candidates. This is consistent with the findings of Sakai and Fauziyah (2014), who found that high levels of religiosity do not necessarily decode into politi-

cal appeal. Notably, our findings draw parallels with the case of Turkey (Wiltse 2017).

Despite concerted Islamist political campaigns, success varied considerably across regions, primarily influenced by local socio-economic conditions and religious practices. This comparative insight underscores the notion that the effectiveness of politico-religious campaigns is contextually dependent, suggesting that both the nature of religiosity and socio-political conditions influence the degree to which religiosity can be mobilized for political gain.

Moreover, the strategy adopted by the alliance of Islamist groups and opposition parties in West Java aligns with the religious politicization suggested by Maoz and Henderson (2020), where faith is harnessed to unify groups and challenge the incumbent regime. Nevertheless, this article emphasised the complexity of translating religious mobilisation into a broad electoral victory. The politico-religious narratives, intended to counteract President Jokowi's influence, resonated primarily with Islamist-inclined voters but failed to win broader approval. It points to a more intricate relationship, where a higher degree of religiosity does not necessarily result in unanimous support for the alliance's candidate. In addition, this pattern corresponds with the argument of Holbrook and McClurg (2005) that religious issues can limit the voter segment. The weak efficacy of the national politico-religious campaign also resonates with the assertion of Pepinsky, Liddle, and Mujani (2012) that in Indonesia's political landscape, an Islamic ideology rarely yields benefits in the political context, except in economic instability. In other words, the complexity of harnessing national politico-religious campaigns for electoral gain in a heterogeneous society like West Java underscores that religious issues, while influential, do not ensure broad electoral success.

However, our exit poll findings indicate that national politico-religious campaigns primarily consolidate Islamist-leaning voters behind their preferred candidate. If we put aside the victory as a significant outcome of the 'leverage,' the alliance found some achievements in consolidating the Islamist-inclined voters behind Sudrajat-Syaikhu. This alignment suggests the mobilising power of the politico-religious narra-

tives utilized by the alliance. The politico-religious narrative that aims for national politics could become more influential during political instability or dissatisfaction with secular governance. The success of alliances could rise if more voters seek alternatives. The power of these campaigns could grow if they appeal beyond Islamist-inclined voters. A combination of religious mobilisation and policies addressing regional issues could attract a more diverse voter base. Therefore, while the alliance's strategy did not lead to electoral success, it demonstrated the potential influence of politico-religious narratives in shaping multi-level electoral behaviour.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the political inroads of Islamist groups-opposition parties alliance in the West Java gubernatorial election shed light on the complexities of Islamist mobilisation in the electoral contest. The mobilising power of Islamist groups remains appealing to political parties to engage with them, creating a symbiotic alliance. Islamist groups' practical involvement in politics by influencing election outcomes through alliances with political parties is considered a strategic choice to demonstrate their strength in Indonesia's political landscape. For political parties, involving Islamist groups in their political campaign is a strategy to gain voter support. This tactic makes the most viable when fielding less popular candidates, where capitalizing on religious sentiment could serve as an alternative strategy.

However, despite aligning with Islamist groups is certainly far from a guarantee of electoral victory even in conservative base regions, politico-religious propaganda targeting national political sentiment does manage to consolidate Islamist-inclined voters to a certain extent. The leverage offered by political alliances involving Islamist groups could be an attractive political strategy for parties seeking to mobilise and consolidate voters. This, in turn, will perpetuate the intricate relationship between Islamist groups and political parties within the Indonesian electoral contest.

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