



Published in Nairobi, Kenya
by Royallite Global.

Volume 5, Issue 3, 2024

Article Information

Submitted: 3rd March 2024

Accepted: 21th June 2024

Published: 17th July 2024

Additional information is
available at the end of the
article

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

To read the paper online,
please scan this QR code



How to Cite:

Adela, F. P., Rahmatunnisa, M., Muradi, M., & Sulaeman, A. (n.d.). Integration of populism and military background in local politics: A case study of the 2018 North Sumatra gubernatorial election. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 5(3). <https://doi.org/10.58256/5kvy5463>

Integration of populism and military background in local politics: A case study of the 2018 North Sumatra gubernatorial election

Fernanda Putra Adela^{1,2*}, Mudiwati Rahmatunnisa², Muradi³, & Affan Sulaeman³

^{1*}Department of Political Science Study Program, Faculty of Political and Social Sciences Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

²Department of Political Science Study Program, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia

³Department of Government Science Study Program, Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia

*Corresponding author's email: fpadela@usu.ac.id,

fernanda19001@mail.unpad.ac.id

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8021-4572>

Abstract

The phenomenon of Islamic populism has become a decisive factor in Indonesian elections, significantly influencing local political dynamics and voter decisions. This research analyzes the phenomenon of populism and the role of candidates with military backgrounds in the 2018 North Sumatra Governor Election. Using a qualitative approach and exploratory case study method, this research explores how populist narratives and military background contributed to the victory of Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajekshah. Data were collected through literature study, in-depth interviews, and field observations, and then analyzed qualitatively. The results show that the Eramas campaign successfully utilized populist narratives by emphasizing religious identity and regionalism and leveraged Edy Rahmayadi's charisma and military influence to gain significant support. The research also examines the political implications of populism and military involvement in the democratic process. The findings provide insights into the dynamics of local politics in Indonesia and the contribution of populism and military background in influencing election outcomes. As such, this research adds to the understanding of how populist narratives and military attributes can be effectively used in political campaigns at the regional level.

Keywords: Indonesia, Military Candidates, Political Strategy, Populism, Regional Elections



Introduction

In 2016, a Republican - Donald Trump, won the election against Democrat Hillary Clinton. In the same year, the United Kingdom officially left the European Union. The exit of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union is more familiarly referred to as the BREXIT (*Britain Exit*) phenomenon. These two histories are two political events that have always been expressed by researchers as milestones in the rise of Populism in the 21st century (Cox, 2017; Galston, 2018; Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Margiansyah, 2019; Perdana, 2017; Ritonga et al., 2020). This is a milestone in the rise of Populism in the 21st century because, as researchers have observed, since these two moments, scholars have been competing to research the rise of Populism (Amin & Ritonga, 2023) and these two moments also colored the face of world politics because this phenomenon spread to almost all countries in the world marked by the emergence of populist figures in various countries (Ashkenas & Aisch, 2016; McCoy, 2017). The populist political trend has continued to roll to various regions (Solihah et al., 2019).

This phenomenon has illustrated that Populism has a contagious nature. Populism in Western Europe succeeded because of indirect contagion from one populist to another (Rooduijn et al., 2014). Populism is similar to a 'virus' that can have an epidemic effect, as has been the case in Western Europe (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013). Populism is no longer limited to causing an epidemic effect. However, it has caused a pandemic because it has spread to almost all corners of the world, even Indonesia. For Indonesia itself, the milestone of the rise was marked by the emergence of figures such as Jokowi in the 2012 DKI Jakarta election who won over *incumbent* Fauzi Bowo (Hamid, 2014), then Jokowi and Prabowo in the 2014 presidential election (Mietzner, 2015) and the victory of the Anies - Sandi pair over the Ahok - Djarot pair in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Head Election (Pilkada). The 2017 DKI election indicates the strengthening of Populism - specifically right-wing Populism in Indonesia (Kusumo & Hurriyah, 2018; Mudhoffir et al., 2017; Prayogi & Adela, 2019).

In this second event, Prabowo's military background indicates a very populist political color (Hadiz, 2016; Ritonga & Adela, 2020; Syarif & Hannan, 2020). Populists came to the surface with slogans full of criticism of democracy for various reasons. Then, in practice, after they succeeded in seizing power, not a few of them only made the democratic climate more polluted (polluted) or in the language of Burhanudin Muhtadi, Populism in the end only became poison for democracy (Muhtadi, 2019). As is contagious, the success of populist practices in DKI Jakarta has stimulated other regional head candidates, including in the 2018 simultaneous regional elections, in which populist contestants colored. Several facts are related to the momentum of the 2018 simultaneous regional elections:

1. The 2018 simultaneous regional elections are called political moments with a high temperature.
2. Contestants with military backgrounds followed the 2018 simultaneous elections.
3. Couples with military backgrounds in the 2018 Pilkada turned out to use populist narratives in their campaigns.

There are at least two themes, namely, the emergence of the issue of Populism and the proliferation of candidates with military backgrounds. These figures often practice populist narratives to get voters' votes. Seeing this, the author examines the problem of candidates with a military background with the issue of Populism in the 2018 North Sumatra Governor Election (Pilgubsu). The researcher identifies a

tendency for the military to be interested in playing populist narratives to win elections. This research will capture the electoral contestation with three meanings of Populism, namely Populism as an ideology, Populism as a discursive style, and Populism as a political strategy. This research focuses on how the integration of populist issues and candidates with military backgrounds contributed to the victory of Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajekshah in the 2018 North Sumatra Governor Election and the form of Populism applied in the election. This research helps develop what other researchers have not done, especially to explain Populism in the North Sumatra regional elections.

Literature Review

The author collects some literature related to the theme of the discussion as a premise. Research shows that Populism in Muslim-majority countries is formed from various asymmetrical classes (multiclass coalitions) and heterogeneous masses that are united by a specific agreed-upon religious symbol (Hadiz, 2018). The difference with this article is that the research focuses on populist issues and candidates with integrated military backgrounds contributing to a form of Populism applied to the election. Further research focuses on Islamic Populism and the challenges of democracy in Indonesia, criticizing arguments against cultural opposition and analyses that refer to security factors in understanding why right-wing Populism has strengthened. Right-wing Populism is also only meaningful in electoral competition but not as a political subject of public policy (Mudhoffir et al., 2017). The difference with this article is that the research objective focuses on how the construction of the political subject of right-wing Populism only means electoral competition.

Populism is not a new phenomenon in Indonesia. Historically, Populism in Indonesia has emerged since the Old Order era until the post-New Order era. Soekarno's idea of Nasakom (nationalism, religion, communism), while after the New Order, Populism was seen in the presence of populist figures (Kusumo & Hurriyah, 2018). The military experienced a dilemma when civilians were presented with political opportunities, and civilians felt disappointed with the practice of the democratic system. They then tempted the military to get involved in their struggles in the field (2017). The Sudrajat and Syaikhu (military) candidate pair utilized the campaign moment to reap the votes of the Islamic populist masses in West Java. This pair is considered quite successful in gaining votes because previously, they were less calculated based on the results of the survey releases of several existing institutions. This is due to the pair's ability to capitalize on the 2019 Ganti President narrative to consolidate the power of Islamic Populism in West Java (Djuyandi et al., 2019).

The three factors behind Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajeksyah's victory are religious identity politics, regional politics with the jargon of regional sons, and the influence of candidate figures (Miraza et al., 2020). The relationship between Populism and *post-truth* is related to changes in the social order as an unstable articulation without a rational basis but still believed to be the truth. Every possible articulation follows the relationship between power and society by ignoring other possibilities (truth) (Dahlan et al., 2022). People no longer think fundamentally about analyzing existing phenomena (York, 2018). Both candidates in the 2018 North Sumatra regional head election played identity issues in their political advertisements (2019). Joko Widodo's victory in the 2012 DKI Jakarta Governor Election against Fauzi Bowo (incumbent) was a populist phenomenon. The public felt the decline in the ability of the DKI Jakarta Government during the Fauzi Bowo era, the negative image of political parties and

corruption issues, social changes in society, and the existence of political representation. The slogan “New Jakarta” was used as a populist narrative to confront the established regime (Hamid, 2014).

There has been an increase in the military’s enthusiasm in the last 10 years to be involved in electoral contestation from the central level to district/city elections (2018). Maria Soussa (2018) explains Populism as a political phenomenon. Jati (2017) tries to trace the roots of Indonesian Muslim middle-class Populism and argues that Populism is a political strategy. Zoran (2019) offers a perspective for critics of liberal democracy in seeing the phenomenon of Populism as either an “ideology” or a “regime.” Koen Abts and Stefan Rummens (2007) provide a comparative conceptual analysis regarding the logic of Populism and the logic of democracy. The results of Koen and Rummens’ analysis explain that Populism acts to close the democratic vacuum. Matthijs Rooduijn and Tjitske Akkerman (2017) explained that Populism distributed through the political spectrum of both left and right parties tends to use populist discourse (Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2017).

Methods

This research uses a qualitative research method with an exploratory case study type. This method is intended to allow the phenomena that occur to be explored and understood by answering research questions through inductive data collection and analysis and interpreting the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2016). This method will help researchers understand the socio-political reality in the field; qualitative methods can contribute to a better understanding of social reality and focus on processes, patterns, and structural features (Mack et al., 2005). Qualitative research is effective for exploring information specifically related to a population’s values, opinions, behaviors, and social context. The use of exploratory case studies in this research references Robert K. Yin (2018) to explore situations where the evaluated intervention needs a more precise outcome.

Data collection techniques were conducted by literature study, *in-depth* interviews, and field observations:

1. The literature study is intended to obtain an overview or initial conditions regarding phenomena, concepts, and theories.
2. In-depth interviews with informants are vital to understanding the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Head Election (Pilkada). Among them are Musa Rajekshah (Deputy Governor Candidate), leaders of political party administrators supporting the candidate pair Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajekshah (Eramas), the Eramas Winning Team, Sihar Sitorus (Deputy Governor Candidate of another pair), the Chairperson of the Indonesian Muslim Forum, the North Sumatra Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), and other sources such as religious leaders and community leaders.
3. Field observations were conducted in Medan and other cities/regencies in North Sumatra.

The data analysis technique used in this research is qualitative data analysis. Then, the data reduction stage is carried out in the form of information and data collection activities derived from interviews, literature studies, and documentation searches relevant to this study’s problems. The data presentation stage in this research uses information and data selected for analysis at the data reduction stage. In presenting the data analysis, this study pays careful attention to the relationship between the data and

information needed to build a narrative description so that the sentence narrative is built with a directed systematic. The conclusion-drawing stage is carried out by describing the analysis that has been carried out and making a decision based on the results of the analysis.

Results and Discussion

The Dynamics of the 2018 North Sumatra Regional Head Election and the Political Career of Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajekshah Couples

The 2018 North Sumatra Regional Head Election (Pilkada) was followed by two main candidate pairs, namely Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajekshah (Eramas) and Djarot Saiful Hidayat and Sihar Sitorus after the pair Jopinus Ramlih Saragih and Ance Selian were disqualified by the KPU. This election is in the spotlight because of the political dynamics involving identity issues and populist politics. Eramas is supported by several significant parties (Hanura, PKS, Golkar, PAN, Gerindra, and Nasdem) with the strength of 60 DPRD (Regional People's Representative Council) seats in North Sumatra which carries an Islamic and regional-based program with the tagline Sumut Bermartabat. Meanwhile, the Djarot and Sihar pair supported by two parties (PDIP and PPP) has a strength of 20 DPRD seats, which emphasizes transparency and professionalism of the bureaucracy with the tagline Sumut (All Affairs Easy and Transparent). On election day, ERAMAS won significant victories in 17 of 33 districts/cities in North Sumatra with 57.58% of the vote, while Djarot-Sihar obtained 42.42% of the vote (KPU, 2018). The empirical fact is that the 2018 Pilgubsu battle cannot be separated from populist issues related to ethnic primordialism, religion, and regional sons linked to the candidate's leadership model and experience. The issues that emerged during the North Sumatra Pilkada were very identical to populist narratives; one example, for example, was the appeal for the prohibition of choosing infidel leaders, which was displayed on giant billboards and placed in the Al-Jihad Medan mosque environment (Tribunnews.com, 2018). In the narrative, choosing a disbeliever leader is more sinful than consuming *alcohol* or eating pork because the leader will affect everyone while getting drunk, eating pork, and even committing adultery only affects himself. In addition, the victory of ERAMAS cannot be separated from Edy Rahmayadi's background as a former Commander of Bukit Barisan I and Pangkostrad, who received strong support from the military community and other elements of society. Based on an interview with Opung Erika, who is a retired military officer, he said:

"I think the military family is solid to vote for Mr. Edy, just like in our place, this TPS (polling station) here, Mr. Edy won, maybe in the whole of Dairi, only this TPS here won. I am a former soldier, the spirit of my corsa spirit is still strong, especially since Mr. Edy is the only candidate from the army, so I asked my family to vote for Mr. Edy at the polling station."

In addition, identity issues such as religion and the son of the region also played a significant role in the campaign. Edy Rahmayadi was regarded as the son of the North Sumatra region, while Djarot, who came from Java, was seen as an outsider. Candidates Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajekshah have a background as native people born and living in North Sumatra. They claim they can lead North Sumatra well because they know its geographical and sociological conditions. This is because Edy Rahmayadi lived and served for a long time in North Sumatra; Edy is considered to know all the problems in North Sumatra even though he was not born in North Sumatra, while candidate pair number 2 Djarot Saiful Hidayat and Sihar Sitorus are considered blind to the conditions and problems in North Sumatra

because they are migrants. The ERAMAS campaign often touches on religious sentiments to attract the sympathy of Muslim voters, considering that the Djarot-Sihar pair consists of a combination of Muslims and non-Muslims. As stated in the results of an interview with a member of an Islamic mass organization on October 28, 2022:

“What is clear is that we choose leaders who have the same creed as us, namely Islam, that is what we believe in, and Mr. Edy is the right person who can lead North Sumatra, especially since he is originally from North Sumatra, his opponent, Mr. Djarot, is from Java, meaning that Mr. Edy understands the problems here and the solutions to improve it.”

The stigma of being an Islamic Candidate Couple can be seen from the frequent Subuh Congregational Movement and routine mosque cleaning activities by Eramas in various districts/cities throughout North Sumatra. Eramas appealed to the congregation to always istiqamah to uphold the Fajr prayer in congregation at the mosque, strengthen the bond of brotherhood among Muslims, and the ultimate is to ask for prayers and support from the community so that Eramas can achieve victory and also blessings in the 2018 North Sumatra elections (Nasution et al., 2023). Eramas also asked the community to start the voting day by doing the Fajr prayer in congregation at the mosque or mushola in their respective neighborhoods. In addition, to build an image as an Islamic candidate pair, Eramas is also shown by conducting grave pilgrimages. Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajekshah, since the beginning of the campaign period, have often carried out grave pilgrimages to the graves of Islamic religious figures and national figures in North Sumatra.

Edy Rahmayadi-Musa Rajekshah's Muslim background makes it easier for them to get support from Masyhur Ulama, such as Ustad Abdul Somad. The influence of Ustadz Abdul Somad (UAS) can attract Muslim support to vote for candidate pairs Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajekshah. Although Abdul Somad did not explicitly and frontally mention the name Eramas to be elected, his appeal to choose a Muslim leader made the public immediately understand what UAS meant. When approaching the calm period, a big agenda was held: a grand campaign themed “Prayer for Dignified North Sumatra” on Saturday, June 23, 2018, at Merdeka Field Medan, attended by thousands of Muslim communities. Islamic figures, such as Ustadz Abdul Somad, Tengku Zulkarnain, and former TNI Commander Gatot Nurmantyo, were also present at the agenda. These complex political dynamics, combined with an effective mass mobilization strategy, eventually led ERAMAS to win the position of governor and deputy governor of North Sumatra for the 2018-2023 period.

Populism and the Military in the 2018 North Sumatra Elections

In a democratic system, we often consider the separation between the military and politics inseparable. However, history has shown that the military has played a vital role in achieving and maintaining power for thousands of years. Separating the military from politics is considered impossible because the military is often used to achieve political goals. There is no country where the military is not interested in politics or has no influence on political policy. In this context, Edy Rahmayadi, a gubernatorial candidate with a military background and three-star rank, is a charismatic and populist leader who often campaigns for welfare, mumatan, and unity. Edy Rahmayadi, with the populist style often used in his campaigns, tends to have a populist character of authoritarianism. Authoritarianism is often used by individuals with a

military background, as seen with Prabowo in the 2019 presidential election (Argenti et al., 2022).

Authoritarianism populist style emphasizes charismatic leadership, where the leader makes the public know him well. Narratives often include siding with the people and opposing corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN). These narratives suggest that Edy Rahmayadi ran as a candidate based on the will of the people, which is one of the characteristics of authoritarian Populism. However, it is important to note that understanding Populism is difficult. Populism is complex, especially in the military, with different characteristics on the road to power. Nonetheless, it can be rationalized that individuals with a military background often use the populist style of authoritarianism as they are perceived to have the charisma necessary to become a leader.

“Mr. Edy comes from the military which we see has a charismatic spirit and has a leadership spirit that is firm, indiscriminate, and not afraid of anyone, besides that I also want and fully support him to bring North Sumatra to be better and more advanced”. (Interview with one of the community) Edy’s partner is also considered to have charisma and leadership that can bring change to North Sumatra, given the history of corruption involving previous governors from civilian circles. Considered to represent the people’s will through the campaign jargon that is continuously spread with the tagline “Eramas Pair is the Hope of the People to Advance North Sumatra.” This tagline emphasized Edy-Musa’s background as a Muslim individual to attract votes from Muslims (Lubis et al., 2024). In addition, during the campaign, Edy-Musa often held joint prayer agendas with the ulama. Therefore, it is unsurprising that most of Edy’s victories occurred in districts/cities where most of the population was Muslim. Edy’s background as a military man also had a significant influence, especially in building and fostering the spirit of korsa among the active and retired military. In addition, information obtained states that many retired military personnel are involved in winning Eramas. In addition, the wives of TNI members who have direct interaction with civil society also have a significant impact.

Authoritarianism can also be found in Musa Rajeksah, who has a business person background and comes from a religious family. This makes him a respected figure in the North Sumatra region. Edy Rahmayadi’s campaigns and narratives are often considered dangerous by some. They are feared to cause social conflicts, especially regarding identity and background, but even so, these populist issues managed to attract many voters for Edy Rahmayadi-Musa Rajeksah. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that these populist issues successfully attracted many voters for Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajeksah. Populism has its appeal to several voters, especially those who feel marginalized or not represented by the existing political elite. Messages that emphasize identity and background often influence voters looking for leaders who are perceived to understand and represent their interests.

Populism Theory Analysis of Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajeksah in the 2018 General Election

One approach that is very commonly used to identify Populism is to use Populism as a political strategy approach, as has been used by Gidron and Bonikowski. Three variants are used in political strategy: policy choices, political organizations, and forms of mobilization (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013). In this approach, Populism becomes a tool for political actors to gain, seize, and maintain power. Edy Rahmayadi is relevant because it is to gain power.

Table 2. Illustration of Populist Variants According to Gidron and Bonikowski

Varian	Definition Of Populism	Unit Analysis	Relevant Methods
Political Ideology	A set of interrelated ideas about the nature of political	Parties and party leader	Qualitative of automated texts analysis mostly of partisan literature interpretive textual analysis
Political Style	A way of making claims about politics, characteristics of discours	Texts, speeches, public discourse about politics	Discourse analysis, content analysis, rhetorical analysis
Politycal Strategy	A form of mobilization and organization	Parties (with a fokus on structures social movements leader	Comparative historical analysis, case studies

Source: processed by the author, 2024.

According to Gidron and Bonikowski (2013), populism can be understood through three main variants in political strategy: political ideology, political style, and political strategy (see Table 2). First, as a political ideology, populism is defined as a set of interrelated ideas about the nature of politics. The units of analysis are parties and party leaders, with relevant methods including qualitative automated text analysis, especially of partisan literature, and interpretive textual analysis. Second, as a political style, populism is a way of making claims about politics and a characteristic of discourse. Its units of analysis include texts, speeches, and public discourse about politics. Third, as a political strategy, populism is understood as a form of mobilization and organization. The unit of analysis is the party focusing on the structure of social movements and leaders, using comparative historical analysis methods and case studies.

All three have their strengths in reviewing phenomena. Of the three approaches, the researcher uses the third variant to examine the phenomenon of populism run by Edy-Musa. According to the researcher, this variant is most relevant as an approach because it better describes the case under study; in the third variant, namely populism as a political strategy, of course, we can see how the Eramas pair can influence and mobilize the masses, it can be seen from what he did during the campaign.

Table 3. Key Factors Affecting the Results of the 2018 North Sumatra Gubernatorial Election

No.	Factor	Explanation
1	Populist Issues	Emphasize the immediate needs of the community such as economy, education, welfare.
2	Candidate’s Military Background	Considered to have the authority and credibility to deal with security and governance issues.
3	Regional Son Narrative	Adopting a narrative of regionalism and nativism by emphasizing that only native sons are worthy of leading North Sumatra, ruling out candidates from outside the region.
4	Religious Narratives	Attracting the sympathy of Muslims and utilizing religious figures in campaigning for candidates.

5	Campaign Strategy	Utilize the narrative of success and discipline from a military background.
6	Campaign Strategy	Utilize the narrative of success and discipline from a military background.
		Highlighting populist promises that appeal to voters from all walks of life.
7	Support from Political Parties	Gaining strategic support from local and national political parties that can strengthen the electoral base.

Source: processed by the author, 2024.

Table 3 identifies the key factors that influenced the outcome of the 2018 North Sumatra gubernatorial election. The first factor was populist issues that emphasized the people’s immediate needs. The candidate’s military background gave the impression of authority and credibility in dealing with security and governance issues. The son-of-the-region narrative played an important role by highlighting regionalism and nativism, while the religious narrative appealed to Muslims and involved religious figures in the campaign. Effective campaign strategies included capitalizing on the success and discipline of the military and highlighting populist promises that appealed to voters. Strategic support from local and national political parties also strengthened the candidate’s electoral base, becoming a significant factor in the election victory.

Edy Rahmayadi adopted a narrative of regionalism and nativism by emphasizing that only native sons were fit to lead North Sumatra, ruling out candidates from outside the region. This can be seen from his various statements during the campaign that highlighted his identity as a son of North Sumatra to build emotional ties with voters. This approach aligns with the theory of populism as a political strategy used to mobilize popular support, as described by Gidron and Bonikowski. Edy often leads a regional narrative that the one who deserves to lead North Sumatra is a native Sumatran, such as the phrase:

“God willing, we are optimistic. Because we are both children of North Sumatra. The choice is only a child of North Sumatra or not. If fellow North Sumatra children certainly have a strong emotional bond to build their region. Pray for us”. (Detiknews, 2018)

In addition to the regional narrative, Edy Rahmayadi also used a populist strategy by holding prayers and dhikr with ulama to attract the sympathy of Muslims, utilizing religious figures such as Ustadz Abdul Somad to show his support for the Muslim majority group. This is also part of a populist approach that seeks to highlight differences with his competitors, Djarot Saiful Hidayat, who is Christian, and the Djarot-Sihar Sitorus pair, considered not sons of the region. Researchers try to develop this further, where it is known that the implications of the failure of JR Saragih and Ance, which is where the pockets of Muslim voters reside, then switch to the Eramas contestant. The Erasmus pair took advantage of the momentum by approaching Muslim voters through religious figures and the agenda. The examination of the development of populist political strategies based on identity was also

affirmed by Ikhyar Velayati Harahap, who is a political practitioner in North Sumatra.

“An important point where the increase in the electability of the Eramas pair was caused by the rolling case of JR Saragih and Ance Selian who failed to participate in the contestation. The case also ultimately diverted the public’s views at that time, especially the support of Ance Selian’s votes which were Muslim voters and the support of JR Saragih’s votes towards Eramas.”

Edy and Musa also utilized their military backgrounds and connections with the military community to strengthen support, capitalizing on the solid corsa spirit among the military and their families. ERAMAS’ victory cannot be separated from the populist issues that continued to be rolled out during the elections. They succeeded in building an image as representatives of the people who oppose corrupt political elites by putting forward priority programs in employment, health, infrastructure, education, and agriculture, which are the urgent needs of the people of North Sumatra. Populist rhetoric that places people against corrupt elites became the main narrative used in the campaign, adding to the complexity of populism in democracy. The fragmentation of voter primordialism is also reflected in the election results, where ERAMAS won in Muslim-majority areas, and DJOSS won in Christian-majority areas, showing the success of populist strategies in capturing the majority Muslim vote in North Sumatra.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study shows that candidates with a military background, such as Edy Rahmayadi, utilized a populist strategy to achieve victory in the 2018 North Sumatra Governor Election. This strategy involved using regional and religious narratives, which reinforced an identity as a regional son and Muslim and criticized corrupt political elites. By combining a charismatic military background and the support of the military community, Edy Rahmayadi managed to mobilize support from a wide range of people, including ulama and Muslim groups. Populism in this context serves not only as a political strategy to win elections but also as a tool to strengthen group identity and build emotional bonds with voters.

ERAMAS’ success in the 2018 North Sumatra Pilgub reflects a global trend where populism has become an effective tool in contemporary politics. Populist narratives that emphasize differences in identity, whether based on regionalism or religion, have proven capable of mobilizing the masses and winning the majority of votes. This phenomenon shows that populism can become a dominant force in local politics, especially when integrated with a charismatic military background. This research confirms that a deep understanding of populism as a political strategy can provide essential insights into electoral dynamics and how candidates build support in diverse communities.

Reference

- Abts, K., & Rummens, S. (2007). Populism Versus Democracy. *Political Studies*, 55(2), 405–424. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2007.00657.x>
- Amin, M., & Ritonga, A. D. (2023). Populist student organizations in Indonesia: an analysis of anti-establishment ideas. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-01697-9>
- Argenti, G., Paskarina, C., Darmayanti, N., & Deliarnoor, N. A. (2022). Post-Islamism in Indonesia: Analysis of Islamic Political Party Programs in the 2019 National Elections. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 11(1), 127-136. <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2022-0011>
- Ashkenas, J., & Aisch, G. (2016). European Populism in the Age of Donald Trump. *The New York Times*.
- Cox, M. (2017). The rise of populism and the crisis of globalisation: Brexit, Trump and beyond. *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, 28, 9–17. <https://doi.org/10.3318/isia.2017.28.12>
- Creswell, J. W. (2016). *Research Design: Pendekatan Metode Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan Campuran* (4th ed.). Pustaka Pelajar.
- Dahlan, R., Djuyandi, Y., Muradi, M., & Fedryansyah, M. (2022). Resilient System of Kinship Politics in Baubau City. *Croatian International Relations Review*, 28(90), 397-414. <https://doi.org/10.2478/CIRR-2022-0038>
- Detiknews. (2018). Kampanye Akbar, Edy Rahmayadi Prioritaskan Lima Aspek Pembangunan. In *news.detik.com*. <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-3985063/kampanye-akbar-edy-rahmayadi-prioritaskan-lima-aspek-pembangunan>
- Djuyandi, Y., Riadi, B., Ulhaq, M. Z., & Drajat, D. (2019). Strategi Kampanye Sudrajat-Syaikhu Mendapat Dukungan Masa Populisme Islam Dalam Pilgub Jawa Barat 2018. *Journal of Political Issues*, 1(1), 23–34. <https://doi.org/10.33019/jpi.v1i1.4>
- Faraidiany, M., Kusmanto, H., & Warjio, W. (2019). Politik Identitas dalam Iklan Politik pada Pemilihan Kepala Daerah Sumatera Utara 2018. *Jupiis: Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*, 11(1), 113. <https://doi.org/10.24114/jupiis.v11i1.12310>
- Galito, M. S. (2018). Populism as a Political Phenomenon. *JANUS.NET e-Journal of International Relations*, 9(1), 53–69. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.9.1.4>
- Galston, W. A. (2018). The Populist Challenge to Liberal Democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 29(2), 5–19. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2018.0020>
- Gidron, N., & Bonikowski, B. (2013). Varieties of Populism. In *Literature Review and Research Agenda* (Working Paper Series, Vol. 13, Issue 0004). Weatherhead Center For International Affairs. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2459387>
- Hadiz, V. R. (2018). Imagine All the People? Mobilising Islamic Populism for Right-Wing Politics in Indonesia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 48(4), 566–583. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2018.1433225>
- Hamid, A. (2014). Jokowi's Populism in the 2012 Jakarta Gubernatorial Election. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 1, 85–109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341403300105>
- Inglehart, R. F., & Norris, P. (2016). Trump, Brexit, and The Rise of Populism : Economic Have-Nots

- and Cultural Backlash. *HKS Working Paper, RWP16-026*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2818659>
- Jati, W. R. (2017). Dari Umat Menuju Ummah?: Melacak Akar Populisme Kelas Menengah Muslim Indonesia. *Maarif*, 12(1), 22–36.
- KPU. (2018). Pilkada 2018 Hasil Rekap T1 Sumatera Utara. In *infopemilu.kpu.go.id*. https://infopemilu.kpu.go.id/pilkada2018/hasil/rekap/t1/sumatera_utara
- Lubis, F. H., Nasution, F. A., & Harahap, R. H. (2024). The Commodification of Religious Rituals: Representations of Political Actors in Indonesian Elections. *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 105(2), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.105.214>
- Kusumo, R., & Hurriyah, H. (2018). Populisme Islam di Indonesia: Studi Kasus Aksi Bela Islam oleh GNPF-MUI Tahun 2016-2017. *Jurnal Politik*, 4(1), 87–113. <https://doi.org/10.7454/jp.v4i1.172>
- Mack, N., Woodsong, C., M. Macqueen, K., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide*. Family Health International And U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).
- Margiansyah, D. (2019). Populisme di Indonesia Kontemporer: Transformasi Persaingan Populisme dan Konsekuensinya dalam Dinamika Kontestasi Politik Menjelang Pemilu 2019. *Jurnal Penelitian Politik*, 16(1), 47–68. <https://doi.org/10.14203/jpp.v16i1.783>
- McCOY, A. W. (2017). Global Populism: A Lineage of Filipino Strongmen from Quezon to Marcos and Duterte. *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, 32(1–2), 7–54.
- Mietzner, M. (2015). *Reinventing Asian Populism Jokowi's Rise, Democracy, and Political Contestation in Indonesia* (D. Ernst & M. Mietzner (eds.)). East-West Center Collaboration Expertise Leadership.
- Miraza, M. M., Kusmanto, H., & Warjio, W. (2020). Edy Rahmayadi and Musa Rajekshah's championing factors in Indonesia's North Sumatra Gubernatorial election in 2018. *JPPUMA Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan Dan Sosial Politik Universitas Medan Area*, 8(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.31289/jppuma.v8i1.2765>
- Mudhoffir, A. M., Yasih, D. W. P., & Hakim, L. (2017). Populisme Islam dan Tantangan Demokrasi di Indonesia. *Prisma : Bangkitnya Populisme Dan Krisis Demokrasi*, 36(3), 48–60.
- Muhtadi, B. (2019). *Populisme, Politik Identitas, dan Dinamika Elektoral: Mengurai Jalan Panjang Demokrasi Prosedural*. Intrans Publishing.
- Muradi. (2017). The Military, Politics, and Populism in Indonesia. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 7(10), 883–890. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.1.2017.710.883.890>
- Nasution, F. A., Hardiyanto, S., Indainanto, Y. I., Thamrin, H., Purba, A. M., & Regif, S. Y. (2023). Congregational Morning Prayer Movement: A Political Movement or a Spiritual Movement. *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 104(3). <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.104.326>
- Oklopcic, Z. (2019). Imagined ideologies : Populist figures , liberalist projections , and the horizons of constitutionalism. *German Law Journal*, 20, 201–224. <https://doi.org/10.1017/glj.2019.13>
- Perdana, A. A. (2017). *Menguatnya Populisme: Trump, Brexit hingga FPI*. Indoprogress.
- Prayogi, I., & Adela, F. P. (2019). Populisme Islam dan Imajinasi Politik dalam Pilkada DKI Jakarta 2017. *Politeia: Jurnal Ilmu Politik*, 11(2), 31–43. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32734/politeia.v11i2.1083>

- Ritonga, A. D., Muradi, & Manan, F. (2020). Mencermati Gerakan Mahasiswa Dalam Perspektif Populisme Islam. *JRP (Jurnal Review Politik)*, 10(1).
- Robert K. Yin. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (Sixth). Sage Publication and COSMOS Corporation.
- Rooduijn, M., & Akkerman, T. (2017). Flank Attacks: Populism and Left-Right Radicalism In Western Europe. *Party Politics*, 23(3), 193–204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068815596514>
- Rooduijn, M., de Lange, S. L., & van der Brug, W. (2014). A Populist Zeitgeist? Programmatic Contagion by Populist Parties in Western Europe. *Party Politics*, 20(4), 563–575. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068811436065>
- Solihah, R., Bainus, A., & Rahmatunnisa, M. (2019). Jeje's Political Capital in the Regent Election of Pangandaran Regency in 2015. *Central European Journal of International & Security Studies*, 13(4), 469-488. <https://cejiss.org/jejes-political-capital-in-the-regent-election-of-pangandaran-regency-in-2015>
- Tribunnews.com. (2018). Respon Pengurus Masjid dan Bawaslu Soal Baliho “Larangan Memilih Pemimpin Kafir” di Medan. *Tribun Medan*.
- Yanuarti, S. (2018). Militer dan Pemilu-Pemilu di Indonesia. *Jurnal Penelitian Politik*, 15(2), 233–248. <https://doi.org/10.14203/jpp.v15i2.764>
- York, E. (2018). Post-Truth And Populism: A Populist Framework For Defending The Truth In A Post-Factuaal Era. *French Journal For Media Research*, 9, 1–6.

