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# The State Intelligence Agency (BIN) amid the 2024 general election in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This research explains the relationship between the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) and politics in Indonesia. The involvement of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) in the 2024 general election in Indonesia is the main focus of this research. This research describes the long history of the establishment of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) in Indonesia and its relationship with political contestation throughout Indonesian history. In the 2024 general election, President Joko Widodo conveyed to the public the existence of Intelligence information related to political parties participating in the election. This then shocked the public because it indicated the use of state institutions in practical political activities. This research uses a qualitative methodology with a literature review that relies entirely on secondary data sources in the form of written texts. And using data triangulation techniques as part of the data processing analysis. The research explains that Indonesia's 2024 elections face three central issues that continue from 2019: identity politics, the impact of socio-political divisions, and political buzzers. These issues are considered threats that could disrupt a conducive situation. The role of the National Intelligence Agency (BIN) is of particular concern, but allegations of BIN's non-neutrality have led to public distrust. History shows that Indonesian Intelligence and politics have always been closely linked.

**Keywords:** State Intelligence Agency (BIN); politicization; polarization; general election

## 1. Introduction

In 2024 Indonesia held a five-year democratic event or commonly called the general election which was held in February (Defretes and Kleden, 2023). The 2024 general elections will be held to fill five posts of Executive and Legislative power, these five posts are the President and Vice President, the House of Representatives (DPR), the Regional Representatives Council (DPD), the Provincial People's Representative Council (DPRD Provinsi) and the Regency/City People's Representative Council (DPRD Kab/Kota). Indonesia's general election in 2024 will probably be one of the busiest ever (Junaidi et al., 2024). In addition to elections being held simultaneously, there are several other additions that differ from previous elections, such as the holding of elections in new provinces, the addition of permanent voter lists, polling stations, and political parties. In addition, Indonesia is a very large country. The obstacle for the 2024 general election is the vastness of Indonesia. Based on this data, it is clear that additional security personnel are needed to ensure the general election remains stable and conducive, especially in places where conflicts may arise. Stability and an election-friendly environment, especially in areas where societal divisions can lead to bloodshed due to debates and friction between communities, is essential (Ri, 2023). Finally, it is important to carefully analyze the security implications of the planning, implementation and announcement phases.

According to the general election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), anticipatory and mitigation measures are needed for at least six strategic issues related to general election vulnerability (Ri, 2023). The six issues are the number of political parties contesting the general election, whether the general election should be held in new provinces, the impartiality of the election organizers, political support and community polarization, the use of social media in the general election contest, and the protection of the voting rights of women and vulnerable groups. Regarding the number of voters, there is a direct correlation between the number of political parties running and the possibility of vulnerability. This can be seen from a number of potential weak points, including violations of campaign finance laws, violations of campaign schedules, and the emergence of false information during the campaign (Prayudi, 2015). The 2024 general election vulnerability index, in general, offers a mapping and direction of potential vulnerabilities that need to be taken seriously to ensure the efficiency of the general election. Given the urgent need to mitigate these risks, the 2024 general election vulnerability index suggests a number of proactive steps that can be taken by Bawaslu and related parties.

In securing the 2024 general election, Bawaslu as the body responsible for the process of monitoring and cracking down on general election violations can cooperate with other state institutions to create conducive election conditions. Bawaslu can cooperate with the National Police and the Ministry of Communication and Information in terms of preventing and prosecuting social media abuse (Delmana, 2023). In addition, Bawaslu can also cooperate with the TNI and Intelligence Agencies for the entire 2024 general election process, Bawaslu has the right to request assistance from the security and Intelligence systems. Bawaslu has shown a similar trend of cooperation in previous general elections. Bawaslu asked the Regional Intelligence Community (Kominda) to look for potential weak points after the 2019 general election (Alvons, 2018). Furthermore, in the 2020 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections (Pilkada), Bawaslu collaborated with the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) to prevent possible vulnerabilities in the process of Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) and general elections.

This research examines the position of the National Intelligence Agency (BIN) in the 2024 general elections in Indonesia. The involvement of Intelligence Agencies in politics has a long history in Indonesia and other countries. Although in the scientific literature, research on Intelligence is still lacking due to its high secrecy. Because Intelligence is so secretive, it is a difficult and complex subject to research (McPhee, 2015). Intelligence research in politics has long been a vital component of strategic decision-making and national security. Since the Cold War era, major powers have invested significant resources into developing their Intelligence capabilities, both for defensive and offensive purposes. The importance of this research lies in its ability to provide information superiority. In the complex arena of international politics, having access to accurate and timely information can be decisive in negotiations, alliances, and even conflict prevention. For example, proper Intelligence analysis can help governments anticipate geopolitical crises or identify emerging security threats. As a democracy, Indonesia needs to support its citizens to have at least a basic understanding of all government agencies, including intelligence. Since Indonesia's independence, intelligence has been very important. Moreover, the nature of

Intelligence contributions can change over time (Mufti, 2021). Research that examines Indonesian Intelligence from a historical perspective is still very rare today. Even if there is, foreign researchers still have considerable influence.

Intelligence's involvement in politics, especially in Indonesia, is clearly illustrated in Ikrar Nusa Bhakti's research titled intelligence in the journal research titled *The Vortex of Democracy in Post-New Order Indonesia* (Bhakti et al., 2018) in his research explains the position of intelligence after the new order regime which leads to the reform of the Intelligence system where this is due to the consequences of the use of intelligence during the new order by President Soeharto's Government. Another study written by Beth Eisenfeld entitled *the intelligence dilemma: proximity and politicization-analysis of external influences* (Eisenfeld, 2017) explains the involvement of intelligence in politics, especially in decision or policy making. Both studies explain the relationship between intelligence and politics. This relationship is built on the history of the establishment of Intelligence Agencies, in some countries the relationship between Intelligence and politics is built in line with the democratization process of a country (Matei and Halladay, 2022). As happened in European countries in Larry L. Watts' research entitled "Intelligence reform in Europe's Emerging Democracies" (Watts, 2001), In this study, it explains that intelligence institutions in European countries are changing and adjusting their intelligence institutions to the form and conditions of democracy in the country. Departing from previous research conducted in European countries, what is the condition of intelligence institutions in Indonesia. This research explains the condition of the existing Intelligence Agencies in Indonesia in relation to their relationship with politics. The establishment of the intelligence services in Indonesia has had a long journey and gone through various dynamics. Each leadership regime in Indonesia has more or less influenced the condition of the Intelligence Agency. In particular, the position of the intelligence services in the general election of 2024.

The debate about the position and neutrality of the Intelligence Agencies in the 2024 general election has become a hot topic of discussion. After the National Intelligence Agency (BIN) was again directly responsible to the president after Presidential Regulation No. 73/2020 eliminated its coordination responsibilities within the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, the BIN is now directly responsible to the president (Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 73 Tahun 2020 Tentang Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Politik, Hukum Dan Kemanan). Coupled with President Joko Widodo's statement regarding the existence of intelligence information owned by the President regarding the direction of party support in the 2024 Presidential Election (Luxiana, 2023). This statement then shocked the public because it indicated the non-neutrality of state institutions in the 2024 general election process. The public considers the statement made by President Joko Widodo as evidence that the Intelligence Agency is used for political purposes that are not related to the interests of the state. Data from the Intelligence Agency is used by the authorities as a tool in maintaining their power. However, on the other hand, intelligence's involvement in keeping the country's conditions and the 2024 general election conducive cannot be underestimated. Therefore, this research is conducted to explain the position of the Intelligence Agency in Indonesia and its role in the 2024

general election and explain the issue of politicization of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN).

## **2. Methodology**

This research uses a literature review that relies entirely on secondary data sources in the form of written texts, such as books, legislative reports, scientific journals, and articles as well as views from mass media both print and digital. This research utilizes a qualitative methodology. The broad scope of the problem and the diverse phenomenological interactions between issues, facts, data/information, and actual events are the reasons for choosing this approach. The context of the topic discussed in this research is also another factor. The role and involvement of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) in organizing the 2024 general election is one of the many issues that are best explored and mapped critically, methodically, and thoroughly using qualitative techniques.

It is expected that by using this approach, the main concerns and scope of the research will be methodically and thoroughly examined, understood and mapped. According to Devine, the advantage of a qualitative approach is that it can explain not only the “what” questions but also the “why” and “how” questions, allowing free exploration of the beliefs, views and attitudes of the interviewees (Sugiyono, 2010). The information and data in this study were investigated and collected (data collection) using the document approach in accordance with this type of research—a literature study. The data and materials of this study were collected from secondary sources, including scientific literature, which served as the theoretical basis, point of view, and analytical framework of this study. In addition, news reports, phenomenological facts emerging in the public sphere, relevant rules and regulations, and opinions of stakeholders (event participants, viewers, and experts) collected from print and digital mass media were used to gather data and information (Ahyar et al., 2020).

The researcher then uses triangulation techniques as needed for diverse data or information collected from convergent, inconsistent, and even contradictory secondary sources. This method is essential to provide confidence to the researcher when selecting data or information to be used as reliable sources for the analysis and findings of the study. The data analysis method used in this research is concurrent with the data collection phase in accordance with the quality of the qualitative approach. This means that analysis is carried out at each stage of the data collection process. According to Sugiyono (2008), when researchers begin to collect various types of secondary data, they conduct an initial stage of analysis. Using a taxonomic analysis approach (categorization of relevant issues), the focus of the investigation is ascertained in the second stage of analysis (Sugiyono, 2010). The componential analysis technique was used for the third stage of data analysis (components of each discussion subject). In line with Miles and Huberman’s theory, qualitative data analysis in this study was carried out interactively by using a number of data collection procedures (data reduction), data presentation techniques (data display), and testing procedures (verification) (Miles et al., 2014).

### **3. Research results and discussion**

#### **3.1. Indonesia's general election in 2024**

The general election held in Indonesia in 2024 is the fifth direct general election since the 1998 reform. The election was held in February 2024 to elect the President and Vice President, Members of the House of Representatives (DPR), Regional Representatives (DPD), Provincial People's Representative Council (DPRD Provinsi) and Regency/City People's Representative Council (DPRD Kab/Kota). The 2024 general election is an interesting democratic event to study. Not only because all legislative and executive seats at all levels will be elected simultaneously in Indonesia's electoral democracy. There will be many things at stake in the 2024 general election, at least two important national agendas and needs. The first is to maintain the unity and integration of the nation, and the second is to ensure that the hard-fought democracy can continue to grow and be supported.

The National Intelligence Agency (BIN) plays an important role in maintaining national unity and integration as well as ensuring that democracy grows and is supported in Indonesia. BIN's main roles include early detection and conflict prevention, where it identifies potential threats that could divide society, whether they stem from ethnic, religious, political or social issues. With accurate and timely information, BIN can provide warnings and recommendations to the government to take the necessary preventive measures. In addition, BIN plays a role in countering terrorism and separatism. Through targeted intelligence operations, BIN tries to paralyze terrorism networks and separatist movements before they launch actions that threaten the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. BIN is also involved in monitoring and securing the general and regional elections, ensuring that the democratic process is safe and orderly, and preventing riots and violence that could trigger social divisions. In ensuring that democracy grows and is supported, BIN fights the use of identity politics that has the potential to divide society. By providing in-depth information and analysis, BIN helps the government and relevant institutions make the right policies to maintain harmony and tolerance between community groups. BIN also monitors the activities of political buzzers who can manipulate public opinion and spread disinformation (Yulianto, 2023), keeping the democratic process clean from fraudulent practices that undermine public trust. BIN also provides accurate information to policymakers, helping them make wise decisions that support democratic development and avoid policies that undermine the democratic process. However, BIN faces challenges in maintaining its neutrality, with accusations of non-neutrality that can undermine public trust. Therefore, BIN must operate with transparency, accountability, and maintain its independence from political pressure. By carrying out these roles, BIN contributes significantly to maintaining national stability and ensuring the democratic process in Indonesia runs smoothly and with integrity.

Maintaining the integrity and sustainability of the nation-state is an absolute matter in the life of the nation and state in the present and future. At the same time, the socio-political phenomenological truth that gave birth to polarization, division and social conflict has continued since the 2019 general election event and has the potential to explode at any time due to various causal factors (Syarwi, 2022). Maintaining

democracy as the consensus choice of how the state and power are managed, which has been pioneered and consolidated in such a way since the reformation in 1998, is also a present and future necessity that cannot be negotiated anymore, along with efforts to maintain the integrity of the nation-state. At the same time, however, the democratization process has given rise to a number of contradictions and distortions that are often troubling. This is because a number of democratic paradoxes have emerged along with the swift flow of political freedom and participation. Starting from the ongoing political divisions, especially after the 2019 general election and subsequent general elections, the tendency to use identity politics in all political contests, the spread of false or fake news that fertilizes the plague of misinformation, hate speech, black campaigns, and so on (Mansyur, 2023).

This discussion explains the conditions of the 2024 general election in Indonesia. Where the problems and issues that developed in the 2024 general election did not change much from what happened in the 2019 general election. This discussion maps at least three sociopolitical issues that are technical or non-electoral in nature, which hypothetically trigger and present problems and ultimately trigger conflicts in the framework of organizing the 2024 general election (Putra, 2023; Sujito, 2022; Syarwi, 2022). The three issues are as follows: First, the strategy of using identity politics to win the general election. Second, the lingering effects of socio-political divisions after the 2019 general election and previous general elections. Third, the development of political buzzers. This research clarifies the relationship between these three non-electoral issues and general election events that could lead to conflict in the 2024 general election.

### **3.1.1. The use of identity politics**

The key question guiding this paper's analysis is driven by the growth of identity politics as an election rhetoric over the past ten years. In the interpretation of politics on the basis of Indonesia's ideology, Pancasila, what happens to the dimensions of liberation and emancipation in the battle between 'Islamist-Radical' and 'Nationalist-Moderate' forces? (Lestari, 2018). The history of the last ten years is demonstrated by the experiences of the general elections in 2014 and 2019, both of which witnessed the mobilization of SARA identities, which in turn led to social tensions in a multicultural society and, in the worst-case scenario, brought an end to ongoing discussions on strategic issues of development within technocratic and oligarchic political-economic governance.

The majority of researchers studying Indonesian democracy have noted that, amidst identity politics and a public focus on conflictual configurations of elite confrontations, alliances, and consolidations, it has been difficult to achieve substantive democratic electoral quality over the past ten years in Indonesia (Sujito, 2022). The mobilization of religious, racial and ethnic (SARA) identities fuels social tensions in multicultural societies and, at worst, eliminates sustained discussion on strategic issues of development in technocrat-oligarchic political-economic governance, as witnessed in the experiences of the 2014 general election and the 2019 general election. Behavioral-culturalist researchers argue that religion, in this case Islam, presents negative aspects of democracy and is used as an electoral propaganda tool (Jones, 2015; Menchik, 2016). From the tradition of structuralist political

sociology, Hadiz (2016), Mudhoffir (2022a, 2022b), Yasih and Hadiz (2023), present a convincing argument that the way Islam is articulated in electoral politics is not simply the instrumentalization of religion but rather the creation of an Islamic popular movement that challenges and opposes oligarchic political-economic control and development strategies that marginalize Muslims as a force in the national economy.

Identity politics can be understood as a political tactic that utilizes ancestral connections and differences as its main theme. Positively, identity politics can give rise to patterns of intolerance in people's lives, such as verbal or physical violence, hostility between ethnic or religious groups, as well as tolerance and freedom (Nasrudin and Nurdin, 2019). This is problematic for Indonesians because, although the country has entered an era of democracy, such archaic expressions are currently emerging. Depending on ethnic or religious values, some regions are witnessing the revival of primitive forms. A political theory and movement known as identity politics emphasizes diversity as a major political category. Every group will inevitably have a diverse range of people with different identities, even when there are common ideologies and goals. In contrast, identity politics is defined by Cressida Heyes as conceptualizing the identification of experiences of injustice experienced by members of a particular social group and identifying political engagement in a broader sense (Heyes, 2009).

We can learn a lot from the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Head Election about how identity politics led to problems related to race, ethnicity, religion and intergroup (SARA) (Fautanu et al., 2020). Until the issue of SARA becomes so entrenched and influences the psyche of voters, it plays a significant function. A procedure that has the potential to undermine the implementation of democracy in Indonesia. The Middle Eastern (Arab) and Chinese were the two main drivers behind the DKI Jakarta Regional Head Election, which was purportedly an attempt to combat identity. Although the gubernatorial candidates at the time did not openly display their identities, it was evident in the real world that one of the two had a stronger identity (Putra, 2019). Although the candidates at the time did not seem to reveal their identities on the surface, the dominance of both candidates' identities was evident in the real world. One example was the blasphemy lawsuit against Ahok, one of the candidates, which triggered a series of Muslim protests known as the 212 Peaceful Actions (Fadhlan and Azizah, 2022). This demonstration shows us that there is a strong Islamic identity emerging in the DKI Jakarta Regional Head Election, which was created to politically benefit one of the gubernatorial candidates. This identity is not only there, but can also be seen during the process of its formation through a long procedure. The identity exists through the articulation and choice of positions of the gubernatorial candidates who fought in the DKI Jakarta Regional Head Election, including the structural dominance of supporting parties and also the penetration of capital.

The second example we can see is when Amien Rais, chairman of the Ummat Party Shura Council, and Ridho Rahmadi, chairman of the Ummat Party, stated that the Ummat Party would run on an identity politics platform in the 2024 general election. "We are identity politics", said Ridho, and we are the Ummat Party (Febryan, 2023). If there is no religious morality, politics will be directionless and entangled in situational ethics and relative morality. Identity politics is therefore very similar to Pancasilaism. It is not true that identity politics in Indonesia is only understood in

relation to religion. In the first National Working Meeting of the Ummat Party in Jakarta, the Ummat Party officially announced its official stance to support Anies Baswedan as a presidential candidate in 2024 (Iswanarno, 2023). Anies Baswedan is someone who is very close to identity politics, often referred to as the “Father of Identity Politics”. Anies discussed his opinion on the identity politics narrative that has recently been associated with Islamic parties in his speech at the Ummat Party National Working Meeting. This is especially true after the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Head Election and the 2019 Presidential Election (Putra, 2019; Sutisna, 2023).

Anti-establishment identity politics is expected to have gained traction in the 2019 general election as identity-centered narratives and populism begin to circulate. It is interesting to note that this anti-establishment identification is linked to religious identity, which is consistently used by populist politicians to claim that the Muslim population is marginalized by the government. The “2019 Ganti President” movement, “Partai Setan vs. Partai Allah”, “people power”, and distrust of independent and established institutions (the Election Commission and the Constitutional Court) are some examples of this (Masykuri and Ramadlan, 2021; Vigga and Husodo, 2020). Religious identity politics that are anti-establishment and prioritize party and group spirit over the spirit of togetherness will polarize society and even political elites. Identity politics is a contemporary discourse in national and global political praxis. When there are differences, identity politics usually follows. These differences can be related to race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or views. However, identity politics often triggers strife and bloodshed in society. Some people even say that identity politics is more dangerous than money politics because it can have long-term effects, dividing society into groups, making differences more obvious so that animosity and discord can flare up at any time, and increasing the likelihood of dysfunctional and latent conflicts that make people’s lives frightening.

The politicization of ethnic groups, sexual minorities, and other sensitive issues in the Indonesian electoral context is closely linked to the role of Intelligence in politics. This phenomenon reflects the complexity of Indonesia’s socio-political landscape and the challenges faced by state Intelligence Agencies in maintaining national stability. The State Intelligence Agency (BIN), as the agency responsible for national security, has a crucial but often controversial role to play in this dynamic. On the one hand, it is tasked with identifying and preventing threats to national security, including potential SARA (ethnic, religious, racial and inter-group) based conflicts. On the other hand, it must operate within legal and ethical boundaries, respecting democratic principles and human rights. In the context of elections, the politicization of sensitive issues such as ethnic Chinese, Malays or sexual minorities is often of particular concern to Intelligence. BIN must monitor the situation to prevent conflict escalation, but at the same time must be careful not to be perceived as interfering with the democratic process or favoring certain groups. History shows that incidents of ethnic or religious-based violence, such as the anti-Chinese riots in 1998 (Bhakti et al., 2018), have a profound impact on national stability. Such events provide important lessons for the Indonesian Intelligence community to improve its capacity for early detection and conflict prevention. However, the role of Intelligence in this regard also faces ethical and practical dilemmas. There are concerns that too intensive surveillance



of certain groups may violate privacy rights or freedom of expression. In addition, there is a risk that Intelligence information may be misused for political purposes.

The challenge for BIN and other Intelligence Agencies is how to balance national security needs with respect for democratic processes. They must be able to identify real threats without falling into the trap of paranoia or oversurveillance that can be counterproductive. In an effort to prevent the recurrence of SARA-based violent incidents, the role of Intelligence must be balanced with other efforts such as public education, inter-community dialog, and fair law enforcement. BIN and related agencies need to adapt to the changing political landscape, where social media and information technology play an increasingly important role in public opinion formation and mass mobilization. Going forward, the challenge for Indonesia's Intelligence community is how to remain relevant and effective in preventing conflict, without compromising democratic principles. This requires not only improved technical capabilities, but also a deeper understanding of Indonesia's complex socio-political dynamics. In a global context, Indonesia's experience in dealing with these sensitive issues can be a valuable lesson for other countries facing similar challenges (Ramadhan, 2020). How a democratic country with high ethnic and religious diversity manages its political stability, while still respecting the rights of minorities, is a relevant question in many parts of the world today.

### **3.1.2. Political polarization and societal division**

Polarization is inevitable in a democratic tradition that values freedom and diversity. It is a symptom that, as manifested in the landscape of electoral contestation, cannot be avoided, let alone eliminated. According to James Q. Wilson, one of the factors that causes the public to quickly split into two opposing political poles in a general election is a strong sense of loyalty to the candidate (Testriono, 2016). Of course, there are other elements that can also cause polarization, such as ideology and public reaction to certain issues or government policies. For example, polarization developed and persisted for a long time in the United States and the United Kingdom, two well-established democracies, because it was triggered by ideological differences that then impacted the winning government's political policies (Fiorina and Abrams, 2008).

In America, polarization puts the liberal Democratic Party and the conservative Republican Party against each other. In the UK, polarization has created a right-left political spectrum represented by the Conservative Party and the Labour Party, between the elite and the general public (Kleinfeld, 2023). Since polarization can emerge and develop outside of the election event setting as mentioned earlier, polarization is essentially a socio-political phenomenon and not a by-product of the election procedure. Before and after general elections in Indonesia, there is a phenomenon known as polarization, which is the political division of society into two extreme poles. The 2014 general election was the first manifestation of this polarization phenomenon. After the 2014 general election, this phenomenon continued, increasing in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Head Election (Mietzner et al., 2018), and became more acute in the 2019 general election (Fossati et al., 2022). Although the DKI Jakarta Regional Head Election is a local election, what is significant about

these three elections is that the polarization map involving two mass groupings still exists.

The two mass groups are the Traditional Islamic and Nationalist groups, which include non-Muslims and are associated with Jokowi-Kalla (2014 general election) and Jokowi-Mar'ruf (2019 general election), and the Modernist and Fundamentalist Islamic groups (Kahin and Aspinall, 2021), who supported Prabowo-Hatta (2014 general election) and Prabowo-Sandiaga (2019 general election). Prabowo's followers supported Anis-Sandiaga in the 2017 DKI Jakarta Regional Head Election, while Jokowi's supporters supported Ahok-Djarot. Various sociopolitical stigmatizations containing taunts, accusations, and attacks against each camp, such as "radical, Cendana lackey, Kampret, and finally Kadrun (desert lizard)" pinned on supporters of Prabowo, Sandiaga, and Anis, as well as "anti-Islam, communist, Chinese lackey, and Cebong" for supporters of Jokowi, Ma'ruf, and Ahok, show some phenomenological markers of this polarization (Prakoso et al., 2023). From various points of view, the above-mentioned symptoms of polarization are undoubtedly unhealthy. If this kind of socio-political division continues and all parties allow it, it will pose a serious threat to the ability of the nation-state to remain united and cohesive. At the same time, the hard-won democratic consolidation will also lose its importance. Election-centered political activities, which should serve as a platform for the exchange of ideas and candidates for the country's leadership, will instead fuel animosity and hatred among the people.

### **3.1.3. Buzzers that cause uproar**

The issue of buzzers, or what are commonly called "cyber troops", or the existence and behavior of these intentionally and programmatically constructed entities by each contestant camp, is the last non-electoral aspect that can cause general election conflicts (Putra, 2023). As mentioned earlier, buzzers were literally created as a tool to boost imagery in favor of candidates. In fact, buzzers often launch smear campaigns against political rivals due to their presence and function in local and national elections. Buzzers, celebrities or influencers, organizers and content creators form this dynamic network. They collaborate to influence public opinion on social media in an effort to undermine, belittle, or criticize the other side (Hidayat, 2020).

According to LP3ES research findings, some buzzers are volunteers working autonomously, while others operate under a more organized and paid organizational structure (Sugiono, 2020). Each person is paid a different rate. Buzzers usually receive between fifty and one hundred thousand rupiah per account, with a potential income of between one and seven million rupiah per month. Content writers usually receive around four million rupiah. Meanwhile, each account usually pays the coordinator two hundred thousand rupiah, for a total of five to fifteen million rupiah. Influencers and celebrities may also receive non-monetary awards such as commissioner positions or state-owned initiatives, totaling up to twenty million rupiah. Meanwhile, most volunteers are people who share the same ideology as the politicians they support.

Regardless of their classification, buzzers are dangerous characters for the long-term viability of democracy, according to various academic publications and/or the views of experts and practitioners. Buzzers become dangerous when they use hate speech or hoaxes to influence public opinion about certain political candidates. Buzzer

technology is seen as having the potential to polarize society (Putra, 2023). Buzzers promote hate speech, backbiting, heated disputes, and they even act as public agents for the spread of hoaxes. general elections that took place in 2014, 2017, DKI Jakarta, and 2019 all went this way.

A number of parties have issued warnings regarding the possible dangers posed by buzzers, who are anticipated to again enliven the digital space of the 2024 general election with their negative content uploads on various social media platforms, thereby igniting a contestation situation that will undoubtedly be heated. The 2024 general election is approaching critical phases, especially ahead of the registration period for Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidate pairs. In this context, it is important to know the mindset and purpose of Bawaslu RI in calling for decisive action against buzzers that could harm the Democratic Party (Ramadhan, 2021).

Buzzers and cyber soldiers are actually not part of the technological features of the general election, according to the chain of operation. That is, elections can be held without buzzers. But in the digital age, campaigns and initiatives to improve the public perception of candidates are closely linked to the demand for more efficient and widespread information and communication channels. Therefore, it is difficult to avoid the use of buzzers as a tool for campaigning and branding candidates as they will be running campaigns and branding in digital election venues. On the contrary, the behavior and role of buzzers actually cause more noise, ignite polarization, fertilize debates, and ultimately lead to horizontal and vertical conflicts.

### **3.2. The position of the State Intelligence Agency (Bin) in Indonesia's 2024 general election**

#### **3.2.1. Intelligence Agencies and politics**

Intelligence services play an important role in politics, shaping the decision-making process, providing critical information, and influencing the policy agenda (Jervis, 2018). They have a mission to collect and analyze intelligence, both at home and abroad, in support of national security priorities. These agencies have unique authorities and responsibilities granted to them by the Constitution, primarily through the "necessary and proper" and "implied powers" clauses of Congress (Watts, 2001). Congress, as the representative body of the people, plays an important role in overseeing and regulating the activities of Intelligence Agencies. This oversight is necessary to ensure the security of the country and prevent potential abuses of power (Bruneau, 2001).

Intelligence Agencies, with their expertise and access to classified information, have the ability to provide valuable insight and analysis to political leaders. This expertise is often needed to supplement the limited knowledge and understanding of intelligence activities among members of Congress, as noted by the 9/11 Commission and other sources (Ferris, 2010). Intelligence services serve as a non-partisan resource for policymakers, providing them with the information and analysis needed to make informed decisions. In addition, Intelligence services can play a role in shaping the policy agenda by identifying emerging threats, potential vulnerabilities, and areas for attention and action. Intelligence services can also have a direct impact on the policy agenda through covert operations approved by the President. Intelligence services in

politics can also face the challenge of balancing the need for secrecy and transparency (Estevens and Rodrigues, 2020). Intelligence services must maintain a balance between protecting classified information and providing the necessary transparency to the public and oversight bodies.

In the dynamic East Asian political scene, Indonesia's National Intelligence Agency (BIN) plays a unique role that reflects the complexity of the security and political challenges of the world's largest archipelago. Unlike its regional counterparts, BIN operates in the context of a fledgling democracy, attempting to balance national security needs with demands for transparency and accountability. In the post-reformation era, BIN has undergone a significant transformation, attempting to escape the shadows of the past when intelligence was often used as a repressive tool by the authorities. Today, the agency must navigate a more open political landscape, where public and legislative scrutiny has become increasingly critical. Unlike Japan's intelligence services, which are heavily constrained by the legacy of the post-war constitution, or South Korea's agencies (Lim, 2014), which focus intensively on threats from the north, BIN faces a broader and more diverse spectrum of threats. From separatism in Papua to religious extremism, domestic challenges dominate BIN's agenda, reflecting Indonesia's political priority of maintaining internal integrity and stability.

BIN's position directly under the President emphasizes its important role in high-level decision-making. However, it also raises questions about the potential politicization of Intelligence—an issue also faced by neighboring countries, albeit in different contexts. In China, for example, the close links between the intelligence services and the Communist Party reflect a fundamentally different political system. In the international arena (Schüller, 2023), BIN tends to take a more low-profile position compared to, say, China's aggressive intelligence services in foreign operations. This approach is in line with Indonesia's foreign policy which relies more on soft power and diplomacy, rather than hard power projection. The coordination challenges facing BIN reflect the complexity of Indonesia's political structure. With multiple security agencies operating semi-independently, ensuring a smooth flow of information and a coordinated response to threats is a complicated task. This contrasts with the efficiency demonstrated by smaller, centralized countries like Singapore. The modernization of BIN technology is a mirror of the broader development dilemma facing Indonesia. While countries like Japan or South Korea can allocate huge resources to advanced intelligence technology.

Indonesia must balance this need with other pressing development priorities. Human rights issues remain a sensitive topic in BIN operations. As the largest democracy in Southeast Asia, Indonesia faces greater pressure to ensure Intelligence activities are in line with democratic principles—a challenge perhaps less felt by more authoritarian regimes in the region. Going forward, BIN's evolution will continue to be shaped by domestic and regional political dynamics. How the agency adapts to new threats such as cyber warfare and disinformation campaigns, while maintaining its legitimacy in a democratic system, will be an important test of Indonesia's political and security resilience. In a broader context, BIN's characteristics mirror Indonesia's unique position in East Asia: a large democracy still seeking a balance between its political openness, security needs and regional ambitions. How BIN evolves in the

face of these challenges will have significant implications not only for Indonesia, but also for the stability and political dynamics of the East Asian region as a whole.

Although intelligence services have a significant influence on politics, their role is not without controversy. Critics argue that intelligence services are prone to bias, politicization, and abuse of power (Matei and Bruneau, 2011). Moreover, the influence of intelligence services in politics goes beyond providing information and analysis to policymakers. They can also engage in covert operations, surveillance, and other clandestine activities that directly impact political outcomes. In short, intelligence services have significant influence in politics through the provision of expertise and analysis, shaping the policy agenda, covert operations, and surveillance. Overall, the influence of intelligence services in politics is multifaceted and complex, involving a delicate balance between providing the necessary information and analysis, protecting classified information, and maintaining transparency. Intelligence services can be a valuable resource for political leaders, providing expertise, analysis, and information necessary for informed decision-making. In short, intelligence services have a significant influence in politics through their provision of expertise and analysis, shaping the policy agenda, covert operations, and oversight (Mufti, 2021). They play an important role in providing accurate and timely information to policymakers, shaping the policy agenda, and engaging in covert operations that directly impact political outcomes.

The influence of intelligence services in politics is multifaceted, including shaping the policy agenda, providing expertise and analysis to policymakers, engaging in covert operations to protect national interests, and maintaining a balance between secrecy and transparency. Overall, the influence of intelligence services in politics is multifaceted and complex (Matei and Bruneau, 2011). Intelligence services have significant influence in politics through providing expertise and analysis, shaping the policy agenda, engaging in covert operations to protect the national interest, and maintaining a balance between secrecy and transparency. They can play an important role in shaping the policy agenda, providing expertise and analysis to policymakers, engaging in covert operations to protect the national interest, and maintaining the balance between secrecy and transparency.

Overall, the influence of Intelligence services in politics is multifaceted and can include shaping the policy agenda, providing expertise and analysis to policymakers, conducting covert operations, and providing oversight. In addition, intelligence services can also have an influence on public perceptions of certain political issues by selectively releasing information or engaging in media campaigns (Matei, 2014). Their influence can also be controversial and subject to scrutiny, as the actions and decisions of Intelligence Agencies can sometimes be perceived as infringing on civil liberties or violating privacy rights. The CIA and NSA are authorized to conduct covert actions and clandestine activities. Their influence in politics extends to shaping the policy agenda, providing intelligence analysis and expertise to policymakers, conducting covert operations, and engaging in surveillance activities. Furthermore, intelligence services can also have an influence on society at large.

In the context of Indonesia today, the intelligence services have a very important role in keeping the country running and minimizing any possibility of conflict that threatens the integrity of the Indonesian state. Especially during the general election

period, the Intelligence Agency is one of the state institutions tasked with anticipating and making action plans to avoid divisions or conflicts in society. One of the things that the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) usually does in participating in securing the general election is by mapping conditions and problems ahead of the general election. This data is then processed to produce a policy and anticipation strategy if the predicted conditions occur. Thus, the presence of the Intelligence Agency in collecting data on field and community conditions is very helpful in creating conducive general election conditions.

BIN's involvement in Indonesian politics has a complex impact on the development of democracy. On the one hand, BIN plays an important role in maintaining national stability and protecting the integrity of democratic processes from internal and external threats. Its capabilities in early detection and conflict prevention contribute to creating an environment conducive to democracy. However, some aspects of BIN's operations also raise concerns. The risk of excessive surveillance, the potential politicization of Intelligence information, and the lack of transparency can threaten privacy, freedom of expression, and public accountability - essential elements in a democratic system. BIN's position directly under the President and the questionable effectiveness of legislative oversight add to the complexity of the situation. Continued reform and strengthening of oversight mechanisms are key to ensuring BIN can perform its functions without compromising democratic values. In conclusion, BIN's role in Indonesia's democratic development cannot be seen in black and white. It reflects the challenges many democracies face in balancing national security with civil liberties. How BIN evolves in the future will be an important indicator of Indonesia's democratic maturity.

### **3.2.2. Politicization of intelligence**

President Joko Widodo's statement some time ago about the existence of intelligence information owned by the President regarding the direction of party support in the 2024 Presidential Election has again enlivened the public space (Ni'am, 2023). Previously, in May 2023, the President's statement regarding his commitment to ensure democratic, honest, and fair 2024 elections caused an uproar in the public sphere. The President stated that his involvement was for the benefit of the nation and not for the benefit of presidential and vice-presidential candidates (Indonesia, 2023). There is ample reason for the public outcry experienced by observers and civil society organizations interested in security sector reform issues. This is based on the assertion that *cawe-cawe* also refers to assisting an overthrow, and has a bearing on the President's claim that political party support is determined by Intelligence data. Mahfud MD, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, has denied the link between *cawe-cawe* and the use of Intelligence data. However, any citizen loyal to a strong constitutional democracy should be fully aware that the President or other high-ranking state officials can misuse Intelligence data.

Moreover, a commitment to constitutional democracy is also characterized by the drafting of specific and clear laws regarding the functions, responsibilities, and authority of Intelligence, as well as restrictions on presidential power over the use of state instruments such as intelligence. therefore, we must look at intelligence in detail within the framework of constitutional democracy. Firstly, intelligence is a concept

that has many meanings (Rovner, 2008). According to this definition, Intelligence includes both covert and overt information and conclusions drawn or provided to users in response to specific circumstances. Furthermore, Intelligence is an institution that performs a variety of tasks, including planning, information gathering, and analysis, which are useful to those who make policy or decisions. These tasks are carried out through various organizational structures, functions, and activities (Hastedt, 2013). Ultimately, intelligence is the end result of the collection, organization, analysis, assessment, integration, and interpretation of all available data.

Second, intelligence exists because it is a system that provides policy makers with quick and precise information about possible risks to national security. As Intelligence provides early detection and warning to decision-makers, it is the first line of defense in the national security system, as stated in Article 3 of Law No. 17/2011 on State Intelligence (State Intelligence Law). The preamble of the law relating to the detection and early warning functions is affirmed in Constitutional Court Decision No. 7/PUU-X/2012, which normatively requires Intelligence to always behave professionally and uphold the law, democratic principles, and the protection of human rights. Ultimately, an Intelligence community has formed as a result of the division of the scope and tasks of state Intelligence. The Intelligence community builds sophisticated networks to transform unprocessed data into Intelligence products that can be used by policymakers. The State Intelligence Agency (BIN), the Strategic Intelligence Agency of the Indonesian Armed Forces (BAIS TNI), the Security Intelligence Agency of the Indonesian National Police (Baintelkam Polri), the Intelligence of the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Intelligence Agencies of ministries or non-ministerial government agencies form the Intelligence community in the context of the State Intelligence Law.

As a result, in accordance with the definition of intelligence, every sovereign state basically needs Intelligence to play a role in conducting surveillance within the parameters of national security, making Intelligence an important component in the administration of state government. However, President Jokowi's use of Intelligence data to track the trajectory of party support that could potentially be correlated with efforts to intervene has created a constitutional dilemma, a difficult or complicated situation for the application of the principles of constitutional democracy. The President's activities as the end-user of legally guaranteed intelligence information have gone wrong, as indicated by the constitutional dilemma. In this case, intelligence is being used to track the maneuvers and plans of political parties ahead of elections, rather than being used to develop appropriate policies to address possible risks to national security. Thus, Intelligence has been politicized in the true sense of the word (Bahtiar et al., 2021). This is the creation of a situation where the intelligence data produced has a tendency to align itself with the political ideas and agendas of the decision-maker, resulting in Intelligence conclusions being presented in a way that appeases the decision-maker.

Presidents who use intelligence to make judgments will undoubtedly make lower quality evaluations and decisions as a result of the politicization of intelligence. There are several reasons for this. First, intelligence results, evaluations, and conclusions will be orchestrated by those in power to further a predetermined political agenda and suppress distorted data. Second, the politicization of Intelligence erodes respect for

relevant procedures, strong organizational governance, and oversight systems. Finally, the continued politicization of Intelligence undermines public trust in the Intelligence services by creating the impression that the results of Intelligence analysis are solely used to advance a particular political agenda.

Therefore, part of the constitutional puzzle involving the politicization of Intelligence is for the president to realize that political parties and the political dynamics leading up to the 2024 elections are not a threat to national security, but rather a result of our commitment to democracy. Finally, there are several important lessons to be learned from these political events. First and foremost, the President as a statesman must place restraint above power. According to Javanese ethics, power should be focused on the common good or welfare, which is the definition of power in the republican tradition. This requires self-control and attention to (Suseno, 2005). Second, the Intelligence community needs to regain its fundamental qualities of independence and objectivity to prevent the politicization of Intelligence, especially during elections. Placing the intelligence institution as a professional institution means returning to its basic nature. This need also avoids intelligence failure, defined as the inability of Intelligence to react appropriately to threats to national security.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The 2024 general election is an interesting democratic event to study. Not only because all legislative and executive seats at all levels will be elected simultaneously in Indonesia's electoral democracy. There will be many things at stake in the 2024 general election, at least two important national agendas and needs. The first is to maintain the unity and integration of the nation, and the second is to ensure that the hard-fought democracy can continue to grow and be supported. The 2024 general election is not much different from the 2019 general election. There are three central issues in the 2019 general election which will continue in the 2024 general election. The three issues are as follows: First, the strategy of using identity politics to win the general election. Second, the effects of socio-political divisions that still exist after the 2019 general election and previous general elections. Third, the development of political buzzers.

This issue is then interpreted as a threat that can create a non-conducive situation. Therefore, the role of the National Intelligence Agency (BIN) in maintaining conducive conditions in the 2024 general election is of particular concern. However, in the process of implementing the 2024 general election, the issue of non-neutrality of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) has shocked the public. President Joko Widodo conveyed to the public the existence of Intelligence information related to political parties participating in the election. This then shocked the public because it indicated the use of state institutions in practical political activities. As a result, public trust in state institutions, especially the State Intelligence Agency (BIN), has faded. The State Intelligence Agency (BIN) as a partner under the President certainly has a dilemma in this case. However, if we look at the history of the establishment of the Intelligence Agency in Indonesia, Intelligence and Politics are an inseparable part. Because the institutional conditions of the State Intelligence Agency (BIN) will change along with regime changes and power interests.



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