

## Society Should Not Be Affected By Ethnic Group and Faith Issue for Elections


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There have been indications that the issue of ethnic group and religion has marred the regional leaders elections on 15 February that were conducted simultaneously throughout Indonesia. Although not significantly affecting the voters, the issue has been lamented. The society is asked not to be affected by this issue that is played by political elite and private political groups in the next elections.

This topic emerged in a discussion after the simultaneous regional elections on 15 February. The discussion was organised by the UGM Centre for Peace and Security on Tuesday (21/2). Speakers were the Centre's researcher, Dr. Zuly Qodir, and Director of Asian Studies Center of Flinders University, Dr. Priyambudi Sulistiyanto.

Zuly Qodir saw the regional leaders elections were an arena of fight between political elite that have the capital in terms of economy, politics, and power, whilst political brokers have emerged to affect voters. "There have been private political groups emerging, which was not interpreted well in the past. We can name them as political gang," he said.



In his opinion, this group outside political group had raised religious issues to affect voters through social media. They also developed issues that incite hatred to certain ethnic group and faiths. “There are labelling and discrimination to certain groups. They also try to rebuild social memory through communism issue,” he said.

For the time being, however, said Zuly Qodir, the issue of ethnic group and religion that is played by these private political groups did not much affect the voters. He warned the government that if the issue was not addressed well and let to grow bigger, it could potentially incite hatred to certain ethnic groups and religion, hence dividing people.

Dr. Priyambudi Sulistianto said the fear of the emergence of clan politics or a dynasty in the regional elections turned out to be not completely true. But some regions such as Banten did need a further study to prove that this is really true.

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