

## IDENTITY POLITICS AND ELECTORAL CHALLENGES OF THE INDONESIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF STRUGGLE (PDIP) IN WEST SUMATERA

Nafil Fadlul Rahman<sup>1a\*</sup>, Nunik Retno Herawati<sup>2b</sup>

Program Studi Magister Ilmu Politik, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, Universitas Diponegoro, Jl.  
Prof. Soedarto, Tembalang, Kec. Tembalang, Kota Semarang, Jawa Tengah 50139

<sup>a</sup>E-mail: [nafilfadlul25@gmail.com](mailto:nafilfadlul25@gmail.com)

<sup>b</sup>E-mail: [nunikretno92@gmail.com](mailto:nunikretno92@gmail.com)

(\*) Corresponding Author

[nafilfadlul25@gmail.com](mailto:nafilfadlul25@gmail.com)

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 20-01-2026

Revised : 07-02-2026

Accepted : 15-04-2026

### KEYWORDS

*Identity Politics*

*PDIP*

*Politic Culture*

*West Sumatera*

### ABSTRACT

Research on the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) has been dominated by a focus on Java, particularly its support base and electoral dynamics. Meanwhile, studies on PDIP in Sumatra, particularly West Sumatra, are still relatively limited. This region's distinct socio-political context presents its own unique dynamics, particularly in relation to identity politics and the electoral challenges faced by PDIP. This study will examine the dynamics of identity politics and the electoral challenges faced by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) in West Sumatra. As a nationalist party with an ideology often considered at odds with the cultural and religious sentiments of the Minangkabau people, PDIP has struggled to gain significant support in this region. Using a cultural-political approach, this study analyzes how the community's collective identity, historical narratives, and the formation of customary and religious values influence political preferences, which tend to be conservative and resistant to PDIP. This research uses qualitative methods with a literature review approach and discourse analysis to investigate the construction of identity politics behind PDIP's low electability. The results of this study indicate that opposition to the PDIP in West Sumatra is not solely driven by policy or performance issues, but is also influenced by ideological perceptions, historical trauma, and the strengthening of local identities that conflict with the PDIP's nationalist image. These findings underscore the importance of contextual political communication strategies sensitive to local cultural dynamics in navigating electoral contests.

*This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license.*



### INTRODUCTION

Research on the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) has so far focused primarily on Java, with particular attention to Central and East Java, the party's traditional strongholds (Maukana, 2014). Conversely, studies

on PDIP outside Java, particularly in Sumatra, such as West Sumatra, are still relatively limited. This is despite the fact that West Sumatra has a social, historical, and political character that differs significantly from Java, particularly in terms of its acceptance of nationalist parties like PDIP. This lack of research in this region severely limits academic understanding of the electoral challenges PDIP faces in the local context, influenced by the dynamics of identity politics and strong religious values. West Sumatra is also known for being dominated by Islamic-based parties and a tendency to reject secular-nationalist parties, further challenging PDIP's ability to build voter support. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze how PDIP's political strategies adapt to the local identity context and how the party overcomes ideological resistance from the local community. This study aims to address this gap by exploring PDIP's electoral dynamics in West Sumatra through the lens of identity politics.

A survey conducted by the Spektrum Politika Research and Consulting Institute revealed that the PDIP (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle) is struggling to gain acceptance among the people of West Sumatra. This is due to weak political communication from party elites and ideological differences with the majority of voters, who tend to focus on Islamic values and local customs (Antaraneews, 2020).

Identity politics plays a crucial role in the dynamics of general elections in West Sumatra. In this context, the use of religious and cultural identities as a tool for political mobilization is increasingly evident, particularly in response to parties deemed inconsistent with local values. The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) is often associated with issues that conflict with local community identity, such as secularism and pluralism. This has sparked strong resistance from local residents (Rochmanudin, 2022). Adi Prayitno, a political observer from Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, stated that identity politics and negative sentiment among the people of West Sumatra toward PDIP were two key factors contributing to the party's failure to win seats in the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) in the West Sumatra electoral district in the 2019 election (Ristianto & Meiliana, 2019).

In the Reformation Era, Indonesia has held five general elections (elections) since 1999, with five-year intervals between each election, namely in 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019. The first election was in 1999, where the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI Perjuangan) managed to win the most votes with a percentage of 33.74%. However, in the 2004 election, PDI Perjuangan was unable to maintain its position and was defeated by the Golkar Party which won 21.58% of the vote. Not stopping there, in the 2009 election, PDI Perjuangan was again unable to survive and was defeated by the Democratic Party which won 20.85% of the vote. The situation changed in the following two elections, where PDI Perjuangan again showed its strength. In the 2014 election, they managed to win 18.95% of the vote, and in 2019, the number of votes increased to 19.91%. Thus, of the five elections held after the fall of the New Order, the PDI Perjuangan has won three times at the national level (Afriandi, 2021).

However, it should be noted that the PDI-P's victory at the national level was not in line with its results at the regional level. In West Sumatra, for example, the PDI-P has never emerged victorious. In 1999 and 2004, Golkar dominated the elections there, while in 2009, Golkar's position was displaced by the Democratic Party. In the 2014 elections, Golkar again emerged victorious, and in the 2019 elections, the Gerindra Party took over. Over the five elections, the PDI-P has only secured four seats in parliament, with two seats won in 1999 and two more in 2014 (Afriandi, 2021).

The PDI-P's defeat was not only evident in the battle for parliamentary seats, but also in the presidential election. In 2014 and 2019, the PDI-P nominated Jokowi as its presidential candidate. Unfortunately, this nomination was not well received by the people of West Sumatra. In 2014, Jokowi, paired with Jusuf Kalla, only managed to win 539,308 votes, or approximately 23.08%. In the 2019 election, paired with Ma'ruf Amin, Jokowi saw a decrease in the number of votes, only obtaining 407,761 votes, equivalent to 14.08%. Furthermore, in the West Sumatra regional elections over the past two decades, no PDI-P cadre has won a regional election. In fact, in 2020, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) became a trending topic after the gubernatorial and vice-gubernatorial candidate pair, Mulyadi and Ali Mukhni, unilaterally returned their decree of support following a statement by PDIP Central Executive Board Chair Puan Maharani, who expressed her hope that West Sumatra would become a province supporting the Pancasila state. This statement drew criticism from several figures in West Sumatra (Detiknews, 2020).

In a study conducted by Fadil Afriandi, entitled "Low Support for the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle in West Sumatra, Indonesia," he revealed that the low vote share of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle

(PDIP) in the region was due to the party's lack of appeal among the local community. PDIP was considered insensitive to the character of the Minangkabau people, resulting in its identity and policies being deemed out of sync with community preferences (Afriandi, 2021). Furthermore, research conducted by (Nopriadi, 2017) revealed that cultural and customary factors, which significantly influence socio-political life in West Sumatra, often conflict with PDIP's nationalist ideology. This adds to the challenge for PDIP in trying to win over voters in the region.

Various previous studies have explained this phenomenon from various perspectives, such as ideological differences, historical trauma, and resistance to nationalist symbols often associated with the PDIP. However, studies that specifically examine this issue through a cultural-political and identity politics approach in Minangkabau society are still relatively limited. In this context, identity politics is a crucial element in understanding how local values, religious beliefs, and the collective history of a community shape their political preferences, ultimately tending to marginalize certain parties.

Based on this background, the main question to be answered in this study is "How does identity politics in West Sumatra influence the low support for the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) in the election contest?" The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of identity politics in facing the electoral challenges of the PDIP in West Sumatra, while also uncovering the dynamics of local political culture that can strengthen or weaken the position of political parties in the electoral democracy system. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the study of local politics in Indonesia and provide a new perspective in understanding cultural identity.

## METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of identity politics and the electoral challenges faced by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) in West Sumatra Province. The data used in this study are primary data obtained from direct interviews with PDIP members in West Sumatra, Niniak Mamak, and the community. In addition, secondary data were obtained from various reliable sources such as scientific journal articles, election results reports, mass media publications, and academic literature related to identity politics, political parties, and socio-political dynamics in the region.

Data collection was conducted through library research, identifying and reviewing relevant documents, including previous research, books, and online media archives, that discuss the electoral dynamics of the PDIP and the role of identity politics in West Sumatra. This study also utilized election results data from the General Elections Commission (KPU) and population data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) to support the analysis.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively and interpretively, namely by interpreting various secondary data collected using the theoretical framework of identity politics (Castells, Hall), ideological resistance (Gramsci), and the theory of the social base of political parties (Duverger). Through this approach, the study attempted to map the dominant narratives that shaped resistance to the PDIP and evaluate the socio-political constructions that hindered the party in gaining electoral support in West Sumatra.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### PDIP Electoral Patterns in West Sumatra: National–Local Discrepancy and Representational Fragmentation

Nationally, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) occupies a central position in the post-Reformation political landscape. Victories in the 1999, 2014, and 2019 elections demonstrate that the party has a relatively stable support base nationally (Afriandi, 2021). However, this pattern is not reflected in West Sumatra. From 1999 to 2019, PDIP never won a legislative election in this province and only secured limited representation in the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI). This discrepancy indicates a fragmentation of representation between the national and local levels.

Theoretically, this phenomenon can be interpreted through the perspective of Maurice Duverger (1954), who emphasized that political parties survive because they have a relatively homogeneous social base and are integrated into the structure of society. The social base of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) in Central and East Java was formed through a long history of populist nationalism, close ties with the Marhaenist group, and the political legacy of the New Order era. However, the social structure of West Sumatra has a different configuration,

where religious and customary identities are the main pillars of socio-political life. This difference creates a structural inconsistency. Support for the PDIP at the national level does not automatically flow to the local level because voters in West Sumatra do not entirely base their preferences on the logic of national aggregates. In this context, local politics has strong autonomy in shaping the direction of support. This phenomenon demonstrates the asymmetrical integration of the Indonesian party system: formally centralized but socially fragmented.

This discrepancy can also be understood through Manuel Castells' (2010) concept of collective identity. Political identity in West Sumatra was constructed through a historical process that emphasized the integration of Islam and tradition as a source of social legitimacy. When the PDIP was perceived as a nationalist-secular party, it faced challenges in gaining resonance within that identity structure. In other words, PDIP's electoral problems were not simply a lack of campaign strategy, but rather a failure to establish identity alignment.

The defeats of Joko Widodo's ticket in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections in West Sumatra reinforce this argument. Despite Jokowi's strong national legitimacy, the coattail effect failed to significantly shift voter preferences. This suggests that political preferences in West Sumatra do not fully follow national dynamics but are instead influenced by more dominant local meaning structures.

From Stuart Hall's perspective (1996), representation plays a crucial role in shaping political identity. The PDIP is perceived not only as a political organization but also as a specific symbol produced in public discourse. This symbol is then interpreted through the framework of the Minangkabau people's religious identity. If the party's symbol cannot be articulated within a framework of local values, it will encounter resistance. Furthermore, within Antonio Gramsci's framework, the PDIP's failure in West Sumatra can be understood as a failure to establish an alternative hegemony. Hegemony requires the ability to build consensus through the integration of divergent values within a single historical bloc. However, the PDIP has not yet succeeded in integrating nationalism with Islamic-customary values in a form that is widely accepted in West Sumatra.

Structurally, this phenomenon demonstrates that Indonesia's party system is not fully sociologically integrated. Although parties are national in scope, their acceptance remains contingent on local social configurations. In this context, West Sumatra serves as an example of how local identity can limit the penetration of national parties. Thus, the PDIP electoral pattern in West Sumatra is not simply a statistical anomaly, but a manifestation of the fragmentation of representation between national and local politics. This discrepancy demonstrates that national success does not guarantee local legitimacy, particularly when there is a mismatch between party identity and the social structure of society. Without a strategic transformation capable of building alignment between identity and social penetration, the pattern of electoral resistance against PDIP in West Sumatra has the potential to persist in future political contests.

#### **Identity Politics as a Mechanism of Symbolic Exclusion**

Identity politics in West Sumatra cannot be understood simply as a fleeting electoral strategy, but rather as a structure of meaning that organizes society's political preferences. From Manuel Castells' (2010) perspective, collective identity is formed when social actors construct self-definitions rooted in history, religion, and shared experiences. This identity then becomes a source of legitimacy in the political arena. In West Sumatra, the construction of Minangkabau identity is based on the adat principle of "basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah," which places Islam as the normative foundation of social life.

This identity is not merely a cultural symbol but also serves as a referential framework for determining who is considered politically representative. In line with Stuart Hall's (1996) view, identity is always negotiated within relations of power and history. In this context, the narrative of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) as a nationalist-secular party undergoes a process of discursive construction that positions it as an entity that is out of sync with society's religious identity.

Research by Rinaldi et al. (2020) shows that religious networks such as the Jamaah Syattariyah play a role in shaping public opinion in the lead-up to elections. Through sermons, religious studies, and informal social networks, religious identity is reinforced as a basis for political preferences. In such communication spaces, parties lacking symbolic closeness to these networks tend to lack legitimacy. Identity politics, in this context, functions as a mechanism of symbolic exclusion. Samosir and Novitasari (2022) explain that identity politics can limit the participation of certain groups through symbolic domination. The PDIP faces not only programmatic competition but

also symbolic structures that have established normative boundaries regarding which parties are considered in line with local values.

The controversial statement by PDIP elites that sparked public reaction in West Sumatra (Detik News, 2020) illustrates how symbolic issues can reinforce these identity boundaries. Asyura (2023) notes that party symbols, the color red, and national elite figures are often perceived as representing a central power center that is far removed from local aspirations. In identity-sensitive political situations, symbols become more decisive than the substance of programs.

Thus, low support for PDIP can be understood as a consequence of an institutionalized process of symbolic exclusion. Identity politics not only mobilizes support for a particular party but also simultaneously limits the space for acceptance of other parties. Within this structure, PDIP is positioned as an "outgroup" that struggles to gain social legitimacy.

### **Cultural Hegemony and Ideological Resistance**

Referring to Antonio Gramsci's (1971) thinking, hegemony does not operate through direct coercion, but rather through culturally formed consensus. In the West Sumatran context, this consensus is built through the internalization of Islamic values fused with Minangkabau customs. The adat principle of "basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah" is not merely a normative slogan, but rather an ideological framework that regulates social relations, including determining political preferences. This hegemony shapes what can be called a "common sense" of local politics. Within this common sense, parties perceived as closely aligned with Islamic symbols and networks gain moral legitimacy. Conversely, parties associated with secularism or liberal pluralism are potentially positioned as less representative entities. Afriandi (2021) emphasized that perceptions of the PDIP in West Sumatra are not solely related to its programs, but also to the ideological image that has become embedded in the community's collective memory.

This ideological resistance is reinforced by national political dynamics rife with identity-based polarization. Fernandes (2018) shows that in the 2019 elections, identity issues became an effective mobilization tool. In West Sumatra, this polarization found deeper resonance because religious identity has long been a foundation of social structure. In other words, the local context magnifies the effects of national polarization. Furthermore, Rozi et al. (2021) argue that the dynamics of identity politics in Sumatra are also related to the historical relationship between the central government and the regions. In the collective memory of some communities, central power is often perceived as an entity lacking an understanding of local complexities. The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), as a major national party, is often associated with the representation of central power. This perception reinforces the symbolic distance between the party and voters.

Cultural hegemony also operates through authoritative figures. Religious figures and *ninik mamak* (heads of the clan) hold strategic positions in shaping public opinion. When narratives developing in religious spaces tend to be critical of symbols of secular nationalism, resistance to the PDIP becomes increasingly institutionalized. In this situation, resistance is no longer spontaneous, but becomes part of a collective consciousness that is socially reproduced. Furthermore, this ideological resistance demonstrates that electoral competition in West Sumatra takes place in two arenas: the formal arena (elections) and the symbolic arena (the struggle for meaning). PDIP may be able to compete in the formal arena through campaigning and logistics, but it struggles in the symbolic arena, which has already been dominated by religious discourse. When the symbolic arena has established boundaries of legitimacy, conventional electoral strategies become less effective.

Thus, the PDIP's failure in West Sumatra was not simply a technical organizational issue, but rather the result of ideological dominance at the cultural level. The hegemony of Islamic values, fused with tradition, created a standard of political legitimacy that was difficult for parties lacking symbolic ties to overcome. This resistance was structural, ideological, and on going.

### **The Party's Social Base and Institutional Limitations**

From Maurice Duverger's (1954) perspective, political parties emerge and survive through organic connections with specific social bases. The PDIP's social base historically formed in Java, characterized by nationalism and populism, and close ties to the working class and secular groups. This social structure differs fundamentally from the social configuration of West Sumatra, which is deeply integrated with customary and religious networks.

This difference in configuration creates structural challenges for the PDIP. Rusta and Valentina (2022) show that party institutionalization in West Sumatra is suboptimal. Party institutions have not been able to establish deep social penetration into local communities. In a society that values social legitimacy based on custom and religion, the mere existence of formal organizations is insufficient to build trust. This limitation is evident in the small number of PDIP cadres with legitimacy as traditional or religious figures. In Minangkabau society, a person's social position is often determined by collective recognition within customary structures. Without figures with such symbolic authority, the party will struggle to build emotional closeness with voters.

In comparison, Fathani et al. (2021) demonstrated that the PKS was able to leverage religious-based social networks as a political mobilization engine. Its cadre development model, integrated with religious communities, provided structural advantages in building long-term loyalty. Even nationalist parties like Golkar adapted through religious activities and symbolic approaches (Hafiz, 2022), demonstrating strategic flexibility in understanding local contexts.

The PDIP's limitations can also be seen in its political communication aspects. In a society sensitive to symbols, political messages that are not tailored to local values can generate resistance. When parties are unable to integrate nationalist narratives with local religious identities, their messages tend to lack resonance. Furthermore, this institutional weakness has implications for weak grassroots networks.

Without a strong social network, the party struggles to maintain long-term support. Vote mobilization becomes dependent solely on electoral momentum, rather than on sustained social engagement. In the long term, the mismatch between the PDIP's national social base and the local social structure of West Sumatra creates a representation gap. The party is perceived as an external entity that does not fully understand the cultural dynamics of society. This perception reinforces the symbolic distance discussed previously in the context of cultural hegemony.

Thus, PDIP's challenges in West Sumatra lie not only in the ideological arena, but also in institutional aspects and social penetration strategies. Without structural transformation capable of building organic closeness with traditional and religious networks, PDIP will continue to face limitations in improving its electoral performance in the region.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that low support for the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) in West Sumatra results from a complex interaction between identity politics, cultural hegemony, and the incongruity between the party's social base and local social structures. Resistance to PDIP is symbolic and ideological, not merely programmatic. Religious identity, integrated with Minangkabau customs, creates a barrier to political legitimacy that is difficult to penetrate without a deep cultural articulation strategy.

Thus, this study confirms that, in the context of Indonesian electoral democracy, the success of national political parties is largely determined by their ability to interpret and integrate local identities into their political strategies. Without structural and symbolic transformation, parties will continue to face fragmented representation between the national and local levels.

## REFERENCES

- Afriandi, F. (2021). Rendahnya Dukungan terhadap Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan di Sumatera Barat, Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik*, 11(1), 133-154.
- Antara News. (2020, 11 Oktober). Survei: PDIP Sulit Diterima Warga Sumbar karena Lemahnya Komunikasi Politik Elit Partai.
- Asyura, R. (2023). Kegagalan PDIP dalam kontestasi politik lokal di Kota Bukittinggi. *Jurnal Politik Lokal*.
- Castells, M. (2010). *The Power of Identity*. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture Vol. II. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Detik News. (2020, 6 September). Polemik Ucapan Puan Berujung Mulyadi Kembalikan Dukungan.
- Duverger, M. (1954). *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*. Wiley.

- Fathani, A., et al. (2021). Strategi partai Islam dalam membangun basis elektoral di Sumatera Barat. *Jurnal Pemikiran Politik Islam*.
- Fernandes, A. (2018). *Politik Identitas dalam Pemilu 2019: Proyeksi dan Efektivitas*. Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).
- Fikri, F. F. (2022). Politik Identitas dalam Kemenangan Joko Widodo pada Pemilu 2019 di Kabupaten Kepulauan Mentawai. *Skripsi*. Universitas Andalas.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers.
- Hall, S. (1996). *Who Needs Identity?* In: S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of Cultural Identity*. SAGE Publications.
- Hafiz, M. (2022). Partai Nasionalis dan Islam: Studi tentang kegiatan keislaman Partai Golkar Sumatera Barat. *Skripsi*. Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta.
- Hamid, A., & Hikmawan, M.D. (2018). *Politik Identitas dalam Pemilihan Kepala Daerah*. Repository Untirta
- Hephezibah, W.C., & Pribadi, F. (2024). *Analisis Wacana Kritis Politik Identitas dalam Talkshow Kompas TV*.
- Mukhtar, K., & Hamdanny, D.R. (2021). *Wacana Poros Partai Islam untuk PILPRES 2024*. *Jurnal Pemikiran Politik Islam*, 4(2), 190-2017.
- Nopriadi, B. (2017). Faktor Penghambat Kemenangan Partai Nasionalis di Sumatera Barat. *Jurnal Politik dan Budaya*, 2(1), 22-36.
- Rinaldi, R., Puspita, Y., & Hanana, A. (2020). Wacana politik identitas Jamaah Syattariyah pada Pemilu 2019. *Jurnal Ranah Komunikasi*, 9(2), 117-130.
- Ristiano, C., & Meiliana, D. (2019, 13 Mei). Gagal di Dapil Sumbar, PDI-P Dinilai Tersandung Politik Identitas. *Kompas.com*.
- Rochmanudin. (2022, 3 Juli). Jalan Terjal PDIP di Tengah Kuatnya Tradisi Islam Masyarakat Sumbar. *IDN Times*.
- Rozi, S., Noor, F., & Gayatri, I. H. (2021). *Politik Identitas: Problematika dan Paradigma Solusi Keetnisan Versus Keindonesiaan di Aceh, Riau, Bali, dan Papua*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Rusta, A., & Valentina, T. R. (2022). Permasalahan pelebagaan politik PDI Perjuangan di Provinsi Sumatera Barat periode 2019-2022. *Jurnal Suara Politik*, 4(1), 25-37.
- Samosir, O., & Novitasari, I. (2022). Hak Politik Warga Negara Dalam Cengkeraman Politik Identitas. *Jurnal Ilmu Hukum, Humaniora, dan Politik (JIHHP)*.
- Siregar, A. (2017). Politik Identitas dalam Pemilu: Studi Kasus di Sumatera Barat. *Jurnal Politik Lokal*, 5(3), 42-56.
- Suryaningtyas, A.A., & Rosdiana, A.C. (2024). Politik Identitas dalam Kampanye Politik Ganjar Pranowo. *Jurnal Audiens*.
- Wirawan, I., & Dewi, K.S. (2018). Dinamika Politik Identitas Masyarakat Muslim Bali pada Pilgub Bali tahun 2018. *Jurnal Pemikiran dan Penelitian Sosilogi*.