



NICMCR – UNU Yogyakarta OPEN DIALOGUE
Yogyakarta, 2 November 2024
14:00 – 16:00 WIB / 08.00 – 10.00 CET

Religion in Political Polarization: Currents in the Netherlands and Indonesia

Introduction

The years 2023 and 2024 are marked by political turbulence around elections in which two populists played the leading role: Geert Wilders in the general elections in the Netherlands in November 2023 and Prabowo Subianto in the presidential elections in Indonesia in February 2024. These elections were accompanied by increasing polarisation in both countries. In the Netherlands, the victory of Wilders' Party for Freedom (PVV) was as a surprise. Anti-Islam and anti-immigration have historically been the key elements of Wilders' agenda. In Dutch society, previously known for its hospitality, charity and inclusive outlook, people are polarised and many wonder how the new government of the Netherlands will affect their lives. Prabowo in Indonesia, was notorious for his background of military violence and later for the support he enjoyed from fundamental hardline Muslims. After standing as a candidate three times, he was never thought to win the election by having the support of the majority.

In both countries, the growing polarisation is largely due to the major influence of social media. In the Netherlands, the increasingly harsh tone, less willingness to cooperate among the political elite in political debate, and sharp and extreme expressions get a lot of media attention. In Indonesia, where millennials and Gen Z hardly read books anymore, but mostly orientate themselves to postings via digital platforms, the influence of these platforms is all the greater. These postings hardly testify to healthy criticism, but often make eager use of disinformation and hate rhetoric. In the (probably not so) long run, this kind of political polarisation can be disastrous for the nation. It drives a wedge between elites, but certainly also between the grassroots, neighbours, colleagues and close friends. Under the guise of freedom of expression, democracy is being put to the test.

The Consortium wants to contribute to a balanced relationship between states, religious communities and civil society. Intercultural and interreligious dialogue, supported by faith traditions, is central to this. Will the voice of religion navigate through and is that voice in the digital wilderness capable of consolidating and turning the tide for the better?

Time and Venue

Time: 14:00 – 16:00 WIB (Western Indonesia Time)
Venue: Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama (UNU) Yogyakarta,
Pre-function Hall 5th floor
Jl. Ringroad Barat, Dowangan, Banyuraden, Gamping, Sleman Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
<https://www.unu-jogja.ac.id/>

Speakers

1. Dr. Martijn de Koning, Radboud University (*online*)
2. Rev. Em. Aart Verburg, Protestant Church in the Netherlands
3. Dr. Suhadi Cholil, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Yogyakarta

Moderator Prof. Frans Wijzen

Schedule

14.00 – 14.05	Opening (FW)
14.05 – 14.10	Welcome speech UNU Yogyakarta
14.10 – 14.15	Welcome speech NICMCR
14.15 – 15.15	Plenary session <ul style="list-style-type: none">– “The people know and we know the people – Far right, Populism and the failure of meaning in Europe (MdK)– “Populism is a narrative, what is the power of the narrative of religion and how should it be told?” (AV)– “Identity politics, populism and inclusive policy in Indonesia” (SC)
15.15 - 15.45	Question and Answer, discussion
15.45 – 16.00	Closing statements