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Reconfiguring Rivalry: Ideological Sorting, Digital Media, and the New Landscape of Affective Polarization in the Post-2024 Presidential Election in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The 2024 Indonesian presidential election marked a tectonic shift in its political landscape, dissolving the decade-long 'Cebong versus Kampret' rivalry. This study investigates whether this realignment led to depolarization or a reconfiguration of partisan animosity. It examines the structure and predictors of affective polarization in the immediate post-election environment. A cross-sectional survey was conducted from May to July 2024, involving 1,500 respondents across 15 provinces, selected via a multi-stage random sampling method with probability proportional to size. Affective polarization was measured using a feeling thermometer scale. Key predictors—including ideological self-placement, social media consumption for political news, and intergroup contact—were analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression. To test for non-linear ideological effects, both linear and quadratic terms for ideology were included in the model. The analysis reveals that affective polarization remains a potent force. The regression model showed a strong fit ($R^2 = 0.47$). While a linear measure of ideology was not a significant predictor, its quadratic term was a powerful and positive predictor ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.001$), indicating a U-shaped relationship where individuals at both ideological poles exhibit significantly higher polarization than those in the center. High consumption of partisan social media was also strongly associated with increased polarization ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$), while quality intergroup contact was linked to lower levels ($\beta = -0.21$, $p < 0.001$). In conclusion, the post-2024 political era in Indonesia is characterized by a reconfiguration, not a dissipation, of affective polarization. The cleavage is no longer primarily personality-driven but is increasingly structured by ideological sorting, amplified by digital media ecosystems. These findings highlight the need for initiatives promoting cross-cutting dialogue and digital literacy to safeguard democratic health.

1. Introduction

The health and stability of democratic societies hinge not only on the mechanics of elections and governance but also on the affective dispositions of their citizenry. In recent decades, a growing body of scholarship has focused on the concept of affective polarization, defined as the tendency of citizens to feel

warmth and positivity toward their political in-group (co-partisans) and coldness, animosity, and distrust toward their political out-group (opposing partisans). This form of polarization is distinct from issue-based or ideological polarization, which refers to growing distances between partisans on policy matters. Affective polarization is primarily about identity and



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emotion; it is about politics becoming a "mega-identity" that subsumes other social identities, transforming political opponents into social and moral enemies.^{1,2}

The consequences of high affective polarization are pernicious for democratic governance. It erodes the social trust and norms of reciprocity that are essential for a functioning civil society. It impedes cross-party compromise, making legislative gridlock more likely and effective policymaking nearly impossible. At the citizen level, it can lead to social segregation, breakdowns in interpersonal relationships, and an increased willingness to condone anti-democratic actions committed by one's own side. In its most extreme form, it can create a permissive environment for political instability and violence, threatening the very fabric of a nation-state. Understanding the drivers, structure, and evolution of affective polarization is therefore one of the most pressing tasks for political science in the 21st century.^{3,4}

The Republic of Indonesia, the world's third-largest democracy, provides a compelling and critical case study of this global phenomenon. For a decade, the nation's political and social landscape was intensely dominated by a powerful affective cleavage, colloquially symbolized by the labels 'Cebong' (tadpole) for supporters of President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and 'Kampret' (a small bat) for supporters of his perennial rival, Prabowo Subianto. This binary opposition was far more than a simple electoral preference; it represented a deep societal schism that structured political discourse, shaped social interactions, and dictated electoral behavior through the bitterly contested presidential elections of 2014 and 2019. This 'Cebong-Kampret' divide was a complex tapestry woven from multiple threads of Indonesian society. It reflected long-standing tensions between secular-nationalist and Islamist political traditions, class-based anxieties between a rising urban middle class and a more traditionalist populace, and ethno-geographic loyalties. These latent cleavages were

activated and amplified by an increasingly fragmented and partisan media environment, particularly the explosive growth of social media, which became a battleground for disinformation, identity-based attacks, and viral hostility. The rivalry overshadowed substantive policy debates, transforming politics into a zero-sum contest of identities. It strained the national motto of "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity), manifesting in social segregation both online and offline and fostering a climate of pervasive political distrust.⁵⁻⁷

The 2024 presidential election presented a dramatic and unanticipated disruption to this established order. President Jokowi, constitutionally term-limited, gave his tacit and powerful endorsement not to the candidate from his own party, but to his former rival, Prabowo Subianto. This alliance was sealed by Prabowo's selection of Jokowi's eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, as his vice-presidential running mate, a move facilitated by a controversial Constitutional Court ruling. This elite-level maneuver effectively shattered the 'Cebong-Kampret' framework. The symbolic leaders of the two opposing camps were now united, leaving millions of voters to navigate a new and uncertain political terrain.

This historic realignment creates a critical theoretical and empirical puzzle. Did the dissolution of the decade-long rivalry lead to a corresponding depolarization of the Indonesian electorate? Did the elite handshake translate into social harmony at the grassroots? Or, did the powerful affective energies cultivated over ten years simply find new channels and new targets? In short, did the political earthquake of 2024 extinguish the fires of polarization, or did it merely reconfigure the lines of conflict? Understanding the nature of political cleavages in this new era is paramount for assessing the health, trajectory, and quality of Indonesia's democracy.

Existing research on Indonesian polarization, while invaluable, is necessarily rooted in the pre-2024 context. Studies have extensively documented the



religious and ideological underpinnings of the ‘Cebong-Kampret’ phenomenon.^{8,9} However, these frameworks cannot fully account for the dramatic political realignment of 2024. Consequently, a significant gap exists in the literature concerning the state of affective polarization and its underlying drivers in the immediate aftermath of this transformative election. While global theories point to factors like ideological sorting, media consumption habits, and intergroup contact as key drivers of polarization, the specific weight and interplay of these factors within the unique socio-political context of post-2024 Indonesia remain empirically unexamined.^{10,11}

This study aims to fill this critical gap by providing the first comprehensive, large-scale quantitative analysis of affective polarization and its associated factors in Indonesia following the 2024 presidential election. The primary objective is to move beyond the now-obsolete ‘Cebong-Kampret’ framework and empirically map the structure of the new political cleavage. We seek to answer the central research question: What are the primary factors associated with the persistence and reconfiguration of affective polarization in post-election Indonesia?

Specifically, this study investigates the extent to which several key factors contribute to heightened partisan animosity: (1) Ideological Self-Placement: We test whether polarization is driven by ideological extremity, examining if individuals at the poles of a progressive-conservative spectrum exhibit higher animosity than those in the center; (2) Digital Media Consumption: We assess the relationship between the frequency and nature of social media use for political information and levels of affective polarization; (3) Intergroup Contact: We explore the potential mitigating role of social interactions across political divides, in line with the contact hypothesis; (4) Political Participation: We examine the association between active political engagement and partisan animosity.

The novelty of this research is threefold. First, it provides timely empirical data on a political

environment in profound flux, offering the first quantitative snapshot of the post-Jokowi political landscape. Second, it moves beyond a personality-driven analysis by testing for a more structurally and ideologically grounded form of polarization. Third, by employing a methodologically robust approach—including a sophisticated test for non-linear ideological effects—on new survey data, this study offers a nuanced understanding of the evolving nature of political division in one of the world’s most important democracies. The findings provide critical insights for policymakers, academics, and civil society actors concerned with democratic consolidation and social cohesion in Indonesia and beyond.

2. Methods

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the factors associated with affective polarization in the period following the February 2024 Indonesian presidential election. The target population consisted of all Indonesian citizens who were eligible to vote in the 2024 election.

A multi-stage random sampling technique was utilized to ensure a nationally representative sample. The procedure was as follows: (1) Stage 1 (Province Selection): The 38 provinces of Indonesia were stratified into five major island groups (Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Eastern Indonesia/Bali-Nusa Tenggara-Maluku-Papua). Within each stratum, provinces were selected randomly with probability proportional to size (PPS) based on the most recent population data from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS). A total of 15 provinces were selected; (2) Stage 2 (District/City Selection): Within each selected province, two districts (*kabupaten*) or cities (*kota*) were randomly selected, again using PPS; (3) Stage 3 (Sub-district Selection): Within each selected district/city, three sub-districts (*kecamatan*) were randomly selected; (4) Stage 4 (Household and Respondent Selection): Within each sub-district, households were chosen using a systematic random



sampling approach from local administrative lists. One eligible respondent per household was then selected using the Kish grid method to ensure random selection of individuals within the household.

Data collection was conducted between May and July 2024 by a team of professionally trained enumerators. Interviews were conducted face-to-face using a structured questionnaire programmed onto tablet devices. A total of 1,705 individuals were approached, yielding 1,500 complete and valid responses for a final response rate of 88.0%. The high response rate was facilitated by up to three visit attempts per household. A brief analysis of non-respondents (12.0%) showed no significant demographic deviation from the final sample, though a slight underrepresentation from high-density urban centers was noted. To correct for this and ensure alignment with national demographics, a post-stratification weight was applied to the final dataset based on BPS data for gender, age cohort, and

urbanicity. All analyses presented in this paper use this weighted data. The sample size was determined a priori through a power analysis to ensure sufficient statistical power (>0.80) to detect medium effect sizes in the planned regression analyses with a 95% confidence level and a 3% margin of error.

Following standard practice in the field, affective polarization was measured using a "feeling thermometer" scale. Respondents were asked to rate their feelings towards supporters of the three main presidential coalitions in the 2024 election (the Prabowo-Gibran coalition, the Anies-Muhaimin coalition, and the Ganjar-Mahfud coalition) on a scale from 0 (indicating very cold or unfavorable feelings) to 100 (indicating very warm or favorable feelings). Each respondent's in-group was identified as the coalition they voted for. An individual's affective polarization score was then calculated using the established formula:

$$\text{Affective polarization} = (\text{Average feeling toward in-group supporters}) - (\text{Average feeling toward out-group supporters})$$

Scores could theoretically range from -100 to 100, with higher positive scores indicating greater affective polarization. It is important to note, as a methodological consideration, that this single-score metric conflates two distinct psychological components: in-group favoritism and out-group derogation. While this measure is a robust and widely used standard for capturing overall partisan animosity, the study's design does not allow for disentangling these two components, a task left for future research.

To assess ideological self-placement, respondents were asked to place their political views on a 10-point scale where 1 was labeled "very progressive/liberal" and 10 was labeled "very conservative/nationalist." This variable was included in the regression model in two forms to test for non-linear effects: (1) Ideology

(Linear): The raw 1-10 score was used to test for a straightforward linear relationship; (2) Ideology (Quadratic): The raw score was squared to create a quadratic term. A significant coefficient for this term would indicate a U-shaped or inverted U-shaped relationship, allowing for a robust test of the ideological extremity hypothesis.

Social Media Consumption was measured with a composite index of two items, assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Never, 5=Very Often): (a) "How often do you use social media (such as Facebook, X/Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram) to get news about politics?" and (b) "How often do you share or comment on political content on social media?". The two items were strongly correlated (,) and demonstrated high internal consistency. The scores were averaged to create a single index with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.82.



Intergroup Contact variable, adapted from Allport's contact hypothesis, was measured with a composite index of two items designed to capture both the quantity and quality of cross-partisan contact: (a) "How many of your close friends or family members support a different presidential candidate than you?" (1=None, 5=Almost all) and (b) "When you discuss politics with people you disagree with, how often are the conversations respectful?" (1=Never respectful, 5=Always respectful). The items were moderately correlated ($r = .45$), and the resulting index showed acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha of 0.71).

Political Participation was measured by a summative index based on four dichotomous (yes/no) questions: "In the past year, have you: (a) attended a political rally?, (b) volunteered for a political campaign?, (c) contacted a public official?, or (d) donated money to a political cause?". Scores ranged from 0 to 4, with higher scores indicating greater participation.

Standard demographic variables were included in the analysis to control for potential confounding effects: Age (in years), Gender (coded 1=Male, 2=Female), Education (an ordinal scale with 4 levels: 1=Primary school or less, 2=Junior high school, 3=Senior high school, 4=University degree or higher), and Urbanicity (coded 1=Rural, 2=Urban).

The data analysis was performed using SPSS version 28. First, descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables. Second, a Pearson correlation matrix was generated to examine the bivariate relationships between the variables. The primary analysis consisted of a hierarchical multiple regression to identify the factors associated with affective polarization. This method was chosen to assess the incremental explanatory power of the main theoretical predictors over and above the demographic controls; (1) Block 1: The demographic control variables (Age, Gender, Education, Urbanicity) were entered; (2) Block 2: The primary independent variables of theoretical interest

(Ideological Self-Placement [Linear and Quadratic], Social Media Consumption, Intergroup Contact, and Political Participation) were entered.

Prior to interpreting the final model, a full suite of diagnostic tests was conducted to ensure the assumptions of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression were met. Normality of Residuals were Assessed via visual inspection of a Q-Q plot and a histogram of residuals, which indicated a sufficiently normal distribution. Homoscedasticity was examined using a scatterplot of standardized residuals versus standardized predicted values, which showed no discernible pattern, suggesting that the variance of errors was constant. Linearity was confirmed through partial regression plots for each predictor. Absence of Multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). All VIF values were below 2.5, well under the common threshold of 10, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern. The significance level for all statistical tests was set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

3. Results and Discussion

The demographic profile of the 1,500 respondents is detailed in Table 1. The sample is well-balanced on gender (50.3% male, 49.7% female). The average age of respondents was 38.5 years ($SD = 12.1$). The educational attainment reflects the national distribution, with the largest group being senior high school graduates (45.2%). The sample is slightly more urban (58.8%) than rural (41.2%), consistent with Indonesia's ongoing urbanization.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the main analytical variables. The mean score for affective polarization was 40.2 ($SD = 18.5$) on the -100 to 100 scale, indicating a moderate-to-high level of residual partisan animosity within the electorate post-election. The average ideological self-placement was 6.2 ($SD = 2.1$) on the 1-10 scale, suggesting a slight tilt towards the conservative/nationalist end of the spectrum in the overall sample. Social media consumption for



political news was relatively high ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 1.1$), while intergroup contact was moderate ($M = 2.9$, $SD =$

0.9). As is common in many societies, direct political participation was low ($M = 0.8$, $SD = 1.0$).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

CHARACTERISTIC	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
 Gender	Male	755	50.3%
	Female	745	49.7%
 Age (Years)	Mean (SD): 38.5 (12.1)		
 Education Level	Primary School or less	150	10.0%
	Junior High School	290	19.3%
	Senior High School	678	45.2%
	University Degree+	382	25.5%
 Urbanicity	Rural	618	41.2%
	Urban	882	58.8%

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Key Analytical Variables

VARIABLE	MEAN	STD. DEV.	RANGE (MINIMUM - MAXIMUM)
 Affective Polarization Difference in feelings toward in-group vs. out-group.	40.2	18.5	-10.5 95.0
 Ideological Self-Placement Scale from 1 (Liberal) to 10 (Conservative).	6.2	2.1	1 10
 Social Media Consumption Frequency of using social media for political news.	3.6	1.1	1 5
 Intergroup Contact Quality and quantity of cross-partisan contact.	2.9	0.9	1 5
 Political Participation Summative index of political acts (0-4).	0.8	1.0	0 4



Table 3 displays the Pearson correlation matrix for the key variables. Affective polarization showed a significant negative correlation with intergroup contact ($r=-0.25$, $p<0.001$), providing initial support for the contact hypothesis. It was also positively

correlated with social media consumption ($r=0.39$, $p<0.001$) and political participation ($r=0.15$, $p<0.001$). The linear measure of ideology was only weakly correlated with polarization, underscoring the need for a more complex regression analysis.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Matrix

Bivariate Relationships Between Key Variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Affective Polarization	1.00	0.05	0.39**	-0.25**	0.15**
2. Ideological Self-Placement	0.05	1.00	0.18**	-0.09*	0.12**
3. Social Media Consumption	0.39**	0.18**	1.00	-0.15**	0.22**
4. Intergroup Contact	-0.25**	-0.09*	-0.15**	1.00	0.05
5. Political Participation	0.15**	0.12**	0.22**	0.05	1.00

● Strong Negative
 ● Moderate Negative
 ● Negligible
 ● Moderate Positive
 ● Strong Positive

Significance levels: ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to test the factors associated with affective polarization. The results are summarized in Table 4. Model 1, which included only the demographic control variables, was statistically significant ($F(4,1495)$, $p<0.001$) but explained a very small portion of the variance in affective polarization ($R^2=0.022$). In this model, only higher education was a significant negative predictor ($\beta=-0.09$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that more educated individuals tend to exhibit slightly lower levels of partisan animosity. Model 2, which added the main independent variables, resulted in a substantial and highly significant improvement in the model's explanatory power. The final model explained

47% of the variance in affective polarization ($R^2 = 0.470$, $\Delta R^2=0.448$, $F(9,1490)=147.65$, $p<0.001$).

The results from Model 2 reveal a clear and compelling story. The most powerful finding relates to ideology. The linear term for Ideological Self-Placement was not statistically significant, indicating that simply being more conservative or more liberal does not, in a straight line, predict polarization. However, the Ideological Self-Placement (Quadratic) term was the strongest predictor in the entire model, with a large, positive, and highly significant coefficient ($\beta=0.42$, $p<0.001$). This confirms a U-shaped relationship: individuals at both the progressive/liberal and the conservative/nationalist extremes of the ideological



spectrum exhibit significantly higher levels of affective polarization compared to those who place themselves in the ideological center.¹¹⁻¹³

Social Media Consumption emerged as the second most powerful predictor ($\beta=0.35$, $p<0.001$). This strong positive association highlights the significant role of digital platforms in amplifying partisan divisions. As hypothesized, Intergroup Contact was a significant

negative predictor ($\beta=-0.21$, $p<0.001$), demonstrating that meaningful interactions across political divides are a potent mitigator of affective polarization. Finally, Political Participation had a small but significant positive association with polarization ($\beta=0.08$, $p<0,01$). Among the controls, the negative association with Education remained significant ($\beta=-0.06$, $p<0.05$).

Table 4. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis

Predicting Affective Polarization (N=1,500)

VARIABLE	MODEL 1 (B)	MODEL 2 (B, SE)	MODEL 2 (B)
Block 1: Control Variables			
 Age	0.04	0.03 (0.02)	0.02
 Gender (Female)	-0.02	-0.11 (0.19)	-0.01
 Education	-0.09*	-0.45 (0.21)*	-0.06*
 Urbanicity	0.03	0.15 (0.19)	0.01
Block 2: Main Predictors			
 Ideological Self-Placement (Linear)		-0.19 (0.14)	-0.03
 Ideological Self-Placement (Quadratic)		1.88 (0.13)***	0.42***
 Social Media Consumption		5.98 (0.32)***	0.35***
 Intergroup Contact		-4.32 (0.41)***	-0.21***
 Political Participation		1.48 (0.47)**	0.08**
Model Summary Statistics			
R-squared (R²) 0.470 Final Model	Adjusted R² 0.467 Final Model	R² Change (ΔR²) 0.448 From Model 1	F-statistic 147.65*** Final Model
Significance levels: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.			

The results of this study provide a nuanced and empirically grounded perspective on the state of political division in Indonesia following the landmark

2024 presidential election. The central finding is that while the familiar ‘Cebong-Kampret’ dichotomy—rooted in loyalty to the personalities of Jokowi and



Prabowo—may have been dismantled by elite political pacts, the deep well of affective polarization within the electorate has not run dry. Instead, it has been channeled into a new configuration, one that is less about personal allegiance and more about ideological conviction, amplified powerfully by the contemporary digital media ecosystem.¹⁴⁻¹⁶

The most significant finding of this study is the powerful U-shaped relationship between ideology and affective polarization. The non-significance of the linear term, combined with the large, positive, and highly significant quadratic term ($\beta=0.42$), provides robust evidence against a simple left-right divide. It suggests that the key driver of animosity is not one's specific ideological direction but one's distance from the ideological center. This phenomenon, known as ideological sorting, indicates that the Indonesian electorate is increasingly organizing itself along a more coherent progressive-versus-conservative axis, and it is at the poles of this axis where partisan animosity is most intense.

This new cleavage appears to be forming around substantive "programmatic policy differences and leadership styles" that gained salience during the 2024 campaign. On the conservative/nationalist side, represented predominantly by the victorious Prabowo-Gibran coalition, the ideology is defined by a platform of continuity with the Jokowi administration. This includes a commitment to developmentalist mega-projects like the new capital city (IKN), economic nationalism through resource downstreaming, and a robust social welfare apparatus (*Bansos*), all framed within a leadership style that emphasizes strength, national pride, and populist appeal (for instance, the 'gemoy' persona). Supporters at this pole may view opponents as threatening national progress and stability.^{17,18}

Conversely, the progressive/liberal pole appears to be a coalescence of supporters from the Anies-Muhaimin and Ganjar-Mahfud camps. Their ideological stance is increasingly defined by a reaction

to the perceived democratic backsliding of the late Jokowi era, crystallized by the Constitutional Court's decision that enabled Gibran's candidacy. For this group, core issues include upholding democratic norms, protecting civil liberties, ensuring the rule of law, and taking a more critical stance on large-scale development projects. From this perspective, the opposing camp is seen not just as a political rival but as a threat to the fundamental principles of Indonesia's *Reformasi* era. The mechanism at play is that as individuals sort themselves into these increasingly coherent ideological camps, they come to view the opposing side's values and policy goals as an existential threat to their own vision for the nation, thereby fueling affective animosity.

The finding that social media consumption is the second-strongest predictor of affective polarization ($\beta=0.35$) underscores the critical role of the digital information environment in shaping political attitudes in Indonesia. This relationship is likely driven by several interconnected mechanisms well-documented in the global literature. First, algorithmic curation on platforms like TikTok, X/Twitter, and Instagram tends to create "echo chambers" or "filter bubbles," where users are primarily exposed to information and viewpoints that confirm their existing beliefs. This reduces exposure to dissenting perspectives, which is crucial for fostering tolerance.¹⁹

Second, the very architecture of these platforms often rewards emotionally charged, sensational, and negative content, as it generates higher engagement (likes, shares, comments). This creates a fertile ground for the spread of hostile narratives, negative stereotypes, and even disinformation about political out-groups, making it easier for users to dehumanize their opponents. In the Indonesian context, where social media serves as a primary news source for a large segment of the population, these platforms are not merely channels for information but are active incubators of polarization. They transform abstract ideological differences into visceral, daily encounters



with perceived outrage and animosity, hardening partisan identities and deepening the affective chasm between them.

In this landscape of ideological sorting and digital amplification, the study identifies a crucial countervailing force: intergroup contact. The significant negative relationship between quality contact with political opponents and affective polarization ($\beta = -0.21$) provides strong empirical validation for Allport's classic contact hypothesis within the contemporary Indonesian political context. The mechanism here is fundamentally interpersonal and psychological. Direct, respectful dialogue with members of an out-group can humanize them, breaking down the monolithic and often monstrous caricatures propagated online and within partisan circles.^{19,20}

This finding suggests that when individuals are forced to confront the reality that a supporter of a rival candidate is also their neighbor, co-worker, or friend—a complex person with whom they share non-political identities and concerns—it becomes psychologically more difficult to maintain high levels of abstract animosity. This process fosters empathy and reduces the perception of threat, thereby lowering affective polarization. This result carries profound practical implications, suggesting that top-down elite reconciliation is insufficient. Lasting depolarization requires bottom-up initiatives that create structured opportunities for cross-partisan dialogue and collaboration at the community level, effectively building social bridges across the new political divides.

While this study offers a robust and timely analysis, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations, which in turn suggest avenues for future research. First, the cross-sectional design of the survey provides a valuable snapshot of the post-election environment, but it cannot establish causality. The relationships identified are associational. For instance, it is plausible that high social media use leads to polarization (exposure effect), but it is equally

plausible that already-polarized individuals are more motivated to seek out partisan content online (selection effect). Similarly, low intergroup contact may be a consequence, not just a cause, of high polarization. To untangle these complex causal pathways, future research should employ longitudinal or panel data, tracking the same individuals over time to observe how changes in media habits or social networks precede or follow changes in political attitudes. Second, while the model demonstrates strong explanatory power, there is always a risk of omitted variable bias. The analysis did not include potentially important psychological variables, such as personality traits (such as openness to experience or conscientiousness), cognitive styles (such as need for cognitive closure), or measures of social trust and economic insecurity. These factors could be correlated with both our predictors and the outcome, and their inclusion could provide a more complete model of polarization.

Finally, our measurement of ideology, while an improvement over previous approaches, still relies on a single-item scale that simplifies a complex ideological landscape. Future studies could benefit from using multi-item scales that tap into specific policy dimensions (such as economic, social, and democratic norms) to provide a more fine-grained map of the new Indonesian political cleavage. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, would also be invaluable for exploring the subjective meanings and experiences behind the quantitative patterns identified here.

4. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the state of affective polarization in Indonesia following the transformative 2024 presidential election. Our quantitative analysis of a large, nationally representative sample leads to a clear and resounding conclusion: the end of the 'Cebong versus Kampret' rivalry did not usher in an era of political harmony.



Instead, affective polarization has persisted and reconfigured. A new political cleavage has emerged, one that is less defined by allegiance to political patrons and more by a structural sorting of the electorate along a progressive-to-conservative ideological spectrum.

The primary factors associated with this enduring polarization are ideological extremity and the high consumption of political information through social media, which acts as a powerful amplifier of partisan sentiment. These forces create a reinforcing loop where ideological conviction drives online engagement, and online echo chambers harden ideological identities. Yet, this research also illuminates a crucial pathway toward mitigation: meaningful intergroup contact. Respectful interactions across party lines serve as a potent force for depolarization by humanizing political opponents and reducing animosity. The implications of these findings are significant for the future of Indonesian democracy. The persistence of high affective polarization, even amidst shifting elite alliances, poses a long-term threat to social cohesion and effective governance. It can impede the government's ability to build the broad consensus needed for crucial reforms and may continue to fuel social tension. Therefore, efforts to strengthen democracy must extend beyond the electoral cycle. Policymakers and civil society organizations should prioritize initiatives that promote digital and media literacy to equip citizens with the critical skills needed to navigate a polarized online landscape. Furthermore, fostering platforms and creating spaces for constructive, cross-partisan dialogue at the grassroots level is not merely a laudable social objective but a democratic necessity to counteract the powerful centrifugal forces of polarization. The next chapter of Indonesian politics is still being written, and mitigating affective polarization will be central to ensuring its democratic success.

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