

SUB THEME: SOCIAL SCIENCE

**RELIGION AND IDENTITY POLITICS: A SOCIOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE**

Maesa Nila Sari¹

¹Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia

Email: maesanilaindonesia@yahoo.co.id

Abstract

This article is aimed to propose some theories related to religion and identity politics from a sociological perspective. The research is conducted by analyzing each concept using theoretical and conceptual approaches. The proposition in this study is based on the literature study and factual evidence found in the research field. The proposition is limited to the function of religion and the function of identity politics itself. Generally, the outcomes of the proposition is to conclude that a religion has a potential chance to be a media on the identity political movement of minority religious groups in a dominant religious society. Some adjustments are made by the minority as a negotiation form in order to be accepted by the people in the society. However, the religion based on identity political movement can also have a potential chance to decrease the nationalism spirit. This article provides some practical suggestions on how to manage the identified political movement as a minority religious group in a multicultural society (like Indonesia) and recommends further studies on similar topics.

Keywords: religion, identity politics, and nationalism

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multicultural country. Indonesia consists of various races, languages, cultures, and religions (Jirhanuddin, 2010). Various religions in Indonesian society have their own dynamics. Even, internal differences among communities in a religion are considered normal. The differences include doctrine and mental attitudes, the level of culture, ethnicity, race, gender and sexual identity of the adherents. These differences are followed by the perspective or how public response to these conditions in different ways. This matters cause many religious problems in Indonesia.

Religious problematic in Indonesia is very complex. Qadir (2011) states that these problems stem from the commercialization of religion in the media through religious broadcasts, the exclusivity of a group with self-imposed rules, the politicization of religion, as well as the utilization of political issues by the religious elites and the country's elites. However, the religious problem which is crucial enough to be discussed in this article is the strengthening of group identification raises religious ideology augmentations. When people choose an ideology then they will join in the group with the same ideology, so they leave and even hostile to others who have different ideology. If the identification is getting stronger, it is feared that segmentation based on ideology groups as the affiliates will

emerges in the society, as in the categories of moderate, radical, fundamentalist, liberal, and so on (Qadir, 2011).

Substantially, religion and politics are in two different sides. Religion comes from God's revelation. Therefore, the truth is absolute and can't be disputed. While politics is the art for power sourced from the championed ideology. In a social process, both can come into contact. There are two steps in formulating the relationship between religion and politics. If religion is used for political purposes, then gradually it will lose the essence, because religion is used as just a legitimacy instrument to get the power. On the contrary, Lubis (2015) says that when politics are used to support the purpose of the religion substance, then people's life becomes an integrative, because things everyone pursues is the messages behind religion.

Referring to the context, it can be found that how religion is very potential to use as an identity political instrument of a group, how a religion with its activities is capable to represent a political act committed by a group of individuals with the similar identity, as well as ethnic identity, culture, gender, and sexual orientation to consummate the members' goals. Typically, groups that perform this action are the marginalized groups in the society or in the majority group that aims to seek the support from the same group. Furthermore, Norman (2011) argues that religion and its adherents also have potential to develop the culture of their own congregation inclusively so that they are not driven out of even two ideologies as well. It is a way to see how minorities are completely marginalized from the majority. However, not all identity politics take the secessionist movement (Purwanto, 2015).

In this article, the practice of identity politics on religion will not be seen in terms of theological view. Theological view would provide justification for how adherents should act. Religious case used as an identity political tool will be viewed from sociological paradigm, because by sociological paradigm the study will lead to the fact how humans act in believing in the religion. It is used as the principal in the study of the sociology of religion. Kahmad (2000) states that the study of the sociology of religion is directed to the collective religious life primarily focused on the function of religion in developing or inhibiting the life sustainability and the maintenance of the community groups.

Hendropuspito (2006) states that a religion manifested in the society is a social fact. While Taylor (2007) argues that religion has several dimensions and characteristics in the system of belief and the ritual practice. For him, the best way to study the religious phenomenon is by observing the types of religious belief as widely as possible, behavior, function, and others. Therefore, there will be no theological justification that is absolute, but it is opened to be criticized by any party in the scientific discussion forum. By viewing the phenomenon scientifically, it is expected to minimize the conflicts that exist on the diversity of religious practice.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND PROPOSITION

Religion and Society

Durkheim (in Furseth and Repstad, 2006) classically define religious element substantively and functionally as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is

to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices of the which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all Reviews those who adhere to them . Substantive elements in the definition of Durkheim are belief systems, practices or rituals, sacred objects include ritual equipment or special objects and forbidden things, as well as the church.

For Durkheim (in Hamilton, 2002), there is no wrong religion in the reality of people's life. All religions are true in its adherent view. Religion is seen as a social fact (Veeger, 1993). Religion is not simply a system of beliefs and conceptions. It is a system of action; it involves rituals (Hamilton, 2002). Sacred refers to the condition where the religion contains things or behavior which directly relate to the religion itself, while the profane is a part of everyday life and is considered as mediocre. Belief systems consist of concepts, while the ritual consists of the action. Belief system is defined as a representation that expresses the nature of sacred things and the relationships they have, either with other sacred or the profane. The belief system is divided into two types, namely "the sacred" and "the profane". While in ritual activities, when the society members participate in religious rituals, they are essentially worshiper community. Religious ritual itself is defined as a behavior rule which regulates how people should behave toward the sacred.

Durkheim's religious theory (in Ritzer and Goodman, 2010) states the society is the source of religion. Religion is also something that connects the society and the individual, because through ritual for the sacred things, social categories become the base of the individual concept. As he states, when the Arunta worship the totem, they actually worship the group. Thus, the function of the totem is to integrate the Arunta social system (integrating separate parts together and make a unity), which then he named the social solidarity (Jones, 2010).

In line with the context, Furseth and Repstad (2006) states that religion can provide social cohesion in parts of the social structure. Religious activities or rituals are surely not involved one person but many people, so in a religious ritual or activity, every individual has their respective role. The Different roles will form an integrated performance or solidarity among the people, just as proposed by Durkheim. For example: The case of Judaism in the United States. Jews do not form a single racial or ethnic group. Therefore, Judaism is not an individual religion although Judaism itself has several forms such as reform, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, and conservative. Furthermore, religion can be a critical factor in providing the unity of the society called pillarization. This pillarization describes the condition in which the structures of society become organizational units that are political or religious which provide the social functions and activities for their members.

Proposition 1: Both religion and society, they influence each other. Then, there will be found a condition in which religion can form a society or vice versa, the community itself with the minds and characters will create their religion.

On the other hand, the other experts argue differently. Marx (in Furrseth and Repstad 2006) sees religion as an ideology. This ideology is considered as a threat by Moodod (2010)

because ideology is not a good basis to solve problems and develop strategies to reform things because ideology is abstract and it is not related among specific society, institutions, as well as the values and norms.

Religion is only creating social classes (Hamilton, 2002). The class divisions in the society are economical (Campbell, 1994). In the social classes, the idea of the rule is historically a class rule. This idea is a tool and the pressure for subordinate classes in the community. A general idea at various times, include religion, provide legitimacy to the interests of the dominant classes. This can be recorded as a regular class that belongs to the victim of a shadow or an illusion with the same type as the worker class. They interpret social power and history as an expression of something transcendental, because basically they are also marginalized.

People create religion and the religion describes a wrong description of the reality of life. As a reason, the fight against religion indirectly depicts the fight against the world illustrated in religion. Religion is a tool that simultaneously creates injustice and protest. Religion is a common reaction to pressure.

Marx argument accompanied with Weber point of view (in Jones, 2010) which see the relationship between religion and life action. Weber (in Furseth and Repstad 2006) views religion with concern where religious attitudes seen as a type of social action. He saw it from the perspective of the meaning of the act itself. Weber attention toward theories of action-oriented goals and motivations of actors, it does not mean that he is only interested in a minor group, merely in terms of specific interactions among individuals (Jones, 2010). For him, the best way to understand the various societies is to understand and appreciate the typical forms of action that become the characteristic. In this case, Weber sees the connection between the Calvinist ethics with the capitalist economic system growth (Johnson, 1986).

Calvinist adherents' life given the guidelines by their religions and types of behaviors and attitudes are necessary to work effectively for capitalism. Calvinist is different from most religions. Calvinist encourages its adherents to focus on mundane work and at the same time to create the ascetic life, by having a simple life, worshipping diligently, and living frugally. Emphasizing on creative lifestyle and hard work, combined with a demand to have ascetic lifestyle - a typical lifestyle of Puritan society - and it is a combination of religious resources which provides the opportunity for capitalism entrench. Calvinist teachings emerge believe to its adherents that if they are successful and productive in the world, they will be given a reward of salvation. The fate is not decided by the Lord but in their own hands. Therefore, during the lifetime they focus on the efficiency and rationality in order to maximize their productivity. However, consuming excessive earnings is denied by Calvinists because of the need to live ascetically above.

Proposition 2 : Besides its manifest function as the goal, religion has a latent function which is unexpected or not as its initial purpose. As a latent function, religion has the potential to use as a tool to struggle something for adherents. The struggle in certain context is done in the name of religious interest.

Religion contains two important elements that cannot be separated: (1) individual experience with the divine, the sacred (the holy, the sacred, the dearest), which goes beyond the days, truth, absolute, and so on, and (2) religious institutions or raw form of expression of diversity (Machasin, 2012). In general, religion is a set of rules or life provisions inherent in human being in order to create regimentation which is the way towards the salvation of life. The religion's role in morality is to guide people to a higher level (Andang, 1998). However, in this section, the further study on religion and society will be viewed from theological side. The theological side here will be taken from several religions officially recognized by the Indonesian government, including Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism.

Rifai (1980) says that religion is a basic law and a rule of life (way of life), which functions include: 1) to educate people to have a strong and clear stance because human must be positive and precise; 2) to educate people in order to know how to find and have a peace of soul; 3) as a human emancipator from the material bondage; 4) to educate people to dare in upholding the truth and be afraid to make mistakes; 5) to suggested people so that the main traits grow in their souls, such as humility, courtesy and mutual respect; and 6) to educate people to prosper the society and state as part of the good deeds. Thus, it can be said that basically religion teaches good things.

In Islamic terminology, religion is known by the word "din". According to Naquib al-Atas, the meaning of the term "din" can be solidified into four, namely: a) hock, b) obedience and submission, c) a natural tendency to serve and worship Allah, and d) the wise power (Gauhar, 1982). In Islam, there is a term "rahmatan lil 'alamiin" which means mercy or compassion to all the worlds. Therefore, Islam becomes a basis to be well-behaved toward both God and the society.

Meanwhile, based on the Bible in Christianity, religion is a complex (complex case) from belief, worship and ethical demands in a system that is associated with Allah or gods. Christianity emphasizes much more on moral ethic rooted in compassion that bases itself on human values (Mansur, 2011). Meanwhile, according to Mother Teresa Catholicity point of view, religion is defined as compassion embodied in faith and hope, faith manifested by caring for each other, and hope reflected in deeds. So it can be said that religion is identical with compassion full of good character towards others and the environment. Therefore, the basic teaching of the Catholicity is the spiritual attitude.

Almost the same as religious meaning in Catholicism, Hinduism point of view has also teachings about human being. According to Hinduism, humans are very important creature. Humans are viewed as a combination of two different elements, namely good and bad (Rifa'I, 1980). In Hinduism, the ideals of life which become the goal of human are obligations, including the manners and the rules of life in society, the importance of living by earning profits, enjoyment and pleasures of life, and breaking away from what has been established (Hidayatullah, 2011).

From the Buddhism point of view, a religion is indispensable. Religion is necessary to understand the true purpose of life, choose and follow the ethical-moral system that refrain

from bad deeds, encourage good deeds, and allow the inner purification. Simply, the system is referred to a religion. Religion is a manifest of human struggles that has the great power to lead them towards self-realization. Religion has the power to change someone behaves negatively to be someone who is positive. Every religion in the Buddhist view, though it is not perfect, the religions lead to the achievement of a higher level creature. Since the beginning, religion has become an artistic source and human culture inspiration. Although many kinds of religion arise in history just pass through and are forgotten, every religion in its time had contributed something to human development. Religion teaches one how to soothe the senses, as well as make the peace of heart and mind (Dhammananda, 2002).

Religion in the Confucianism view is defined as the doctrine of moral decency. Confucianism comes from mainland China implies the formation of moral values in the society, as well as provides conception which guides to rule the governance as well as possible (Mansur, 2011). The teaching is defined as a philosophy and ethics composition that teaches how humans behave (Hidayatullah, 2011). The essence of a religion here is the teachings about the need for humans to be a good figure.

Proposition 3 : Religions basically teach goodness, include noble character in one's life, either vertically toward God or horizontally to others. Therefore, if there is a problem in a religion, it is actually not the religion which has the problem, but those who become its adherents have the problem, depending on how they interpret the teachings. In this case, it is not recommended to judge a religion if there are only certain people who commit the positive and negative action.

The attitude and understanding of a religion can be influenced by socio-cultural factors. Therefore, it is possible in a religion to have diversity. The different view in Islam for example is a certainty (Al-Banna, 2013). The diversity in this term is the attitude or understanding of religious adherents toward the doctrine, belief, or the teachings of God, which is certainly relative, and the truth definitely becomes relative. So, from here, the diversity of religious views and understanding could arise (Ghazali, 2005).

IDENTITY POLITICS

In general, Gatara (2008) mentions that the political concept itself includes several aspects which cover the common good, institutional, power, functionalism and conflict. Identity in this case involves the self-concept which purpose is for the common good in a group.

Identity politics emerges when there is a resistance in a group with the specific identity. The focus of identity politics lies on the difference of identity that includes ethnic, religion, and other things that are used to collect people based on the equal basis they owned (Suryana and Rusdiana, 2015). The appearance is seen as a response to the implementation of the rights that are often applied unfairly. In the religious context, identity politics are represented from the various efforts to put the religious values in the policy-making process, include the

occurrence of local regulations on sharia or the effort to make a city becomes identical with a specific religion.

Clifford (2000) states that identity politics is currently under attack from all sides. The issue of identity politics is not a new thing. The conflict between Bosnia and Serbia in the Balkans and the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups in Africa are as the examples. The revival of the identity politics in Indonesia is found from the emergence of political ferment in the form of violence acts by using religious sentiments (Suryana and Rusdiana, 2015). The case of GKI Taman Yasmin Bogor which shows that the government does not take side on the general public but only on certain groups, as well as the riot in Tolikara on Eid 2015 at least can be an example of the political chaos. Therefore, the topic of identity politics is an interesting topic to study.

Identity politics refers to the political practice based on group identity which is often based on ethnic, religious, or other socio-cultural denominations which are in contrast to the political practice based on the interests (Purwanto, 2015). Nicholson (2010) have previously argued that identity politics is also identically caused by sex and gender factors. Political identity or who is often referred to as identity politics is mentioned by Purwanto (2015) that it is also refers to various forms of political mobilization on the basis of collective identity which previously often hidden, suppressed, or neglected, either by a dominant group contained in a liberal democratic system or by a political citizenship agenda promoted for and on behalf of the more progressive democracy. In addition to the forms of the struggle to secede, identity politics is an effort to gain political recognition more fundamental to allow the acceptance of more equitable treatment on behalf of differences that are specific (peculiar) owned or attached to the individual.

Political relations and the power of the identity in an identity politics is constructed in the formation of identity construction by a person or group of people. The social construction of the identity always occurs in a context marked by the power relations (Gede et al, 2015). For example, the formation of the Javanese village Muslim resistance identity is the result of identifying themselves as the minority society in Bali.

Meanwhile, Ma'arif (2012) argues that identity politics in the study of social movement refers to the movement that seeks to defend and fight for the interests of the particular oppressed groups because of its identity. Group and individual interests according to the categories such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexual orientation is difficult or even cannot be promoted by agents based on classes and states. It closely related with the efforts to fight for the rights and recognition of the minority group existence. Identity politics take side on the cultural diversity and the right to be different, and the recognition of the difference as something legitimate.

Proposition 4: Identity politics is done to demonstrate the existence of a group or class which belongs to minor. Not only because of minority, identity politics can also be done by those who feel the urgency in the social life of community.

In contrast to Hiariej (in Maarif, 2012), he states that identity politics is not only a manifest of resistance against injustice, but also very concerned with pluralism and democracy. Postcolonial studies as a radical perspective in the tradition of the identity political study can be used as an example. Post-colonialism associates the identity with the multiculturalism problematic faced by the oppressed minorities. Identity is a matter of fighting for the right to narrate the experience of being the victim of colonialism that reject and suppress otherness. Therefore, this perspective teaches that the essence of post-colonial exploitation lies on the inability to be tolerant of others. Furthermore, this intolerance is rooted in the similar inability to encounter the powerlessness that constantly pressured.

Proposisi 5 : It is inevitable that identity politics becomes one of the elements in the community, especially if the society is multicultural. Similar to the concept of religion, identity politics is a neutral concept. The change of political movement into negative or positive depends on its activists in defining identity politics itself.

On the other hand, Giddens has a different opinion of identity. For Giddens, living in today's modern society must shape and reshape ourselves to be able to cope with the changes in our environment (Jones, 2010). The only proper action is to constantly monitor the conditions of ourselves and establish ourselves according to these conditions. Individuals routinely adapt their awareness about what is happening, self-forming, an identity, to be appropriate to the current conditions, while it is not necessarily so in the next period. It is mentioned by Giddens (1999) as reflexivity.

RELIGION, IDENTITY POLITICS AND NATIONALISM: AN AGENDA

As a consequence of the religious diversity in Indonesia, religion is inseparable from the identity political movement. Identity politics is the nother formulation of difference politics. Religious identity politics appears in the various movements. As part of a global phenomenon, the identity politics in Indonesia based on religion is getting obvious. All labels of religious fundamentalism, Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist always tend to form a closed system of thought which are synthetically isolate disagreement, doubt, alternatives, and openness. What happens then is a disregard for human rights, pluralism, tolerance, laws, and majority principles in the name of absolute truth owned by fundamentalist groups. Nevertheless, Islam basically support each of its adherents to be a human being who is dynamic, active, and struggle in all fields of life (al-Banna, 2013).

Many people are forgotten by rationality in a religion that teaches the values of nationalism which both teach patriotism to be able to reunite the disunited. In Islam, for example, nationalism is an obligation. Nationalism means the strengthening of family ties between the members of society or the citizens and showing them ways to take advantage of the bond to achieve common interests (Al-Banna, 2016). Islam as the religion of unity, as he also said, has guaranteed the bond strength for the society keeps doing mutual assistance in

the goodness. However, there are limitations of nationalism. Al-Banna (2016) mentions that the limitation is determined by the creed which belongs to the theological side.

Al-Banna (2016) also argues that the nationality also assumes that an ethnic group or a society is most entitled to acquire the virtues that are the result of their struggle. Therefore, Islam is also thinking of the minorities. Islamic principle in dealing with other believers is a principle of peace and friendship as long as they behave straightly and be kind hearted. Fraternity will create the security, peace and tranquility. It is based on Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 13 which means: " *O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.*"

In Islam itself it is known the concept of *maqashid syari'ah* that is defined by Usul Fiqh Ulama' as the desired meaning and purpose in conducting the law for mankind convenience. Based on this paradigm, Moslems in Indonesia are the Moslems who most benefited by nationalism than Moslems in Turkey for two conveniences namely religion and region. In other words, nationalism in Indonesia is more a blessing than a curse (Wahyudi, 2014).

Foster a tolerance, caring, and receiving culture is a very important breakthrough in the reform of Islamic law. The Moslems task now is to realize the changes in their environment to adjust the *muamalah* (Kuntowijoyo, 2007). The sincere tolerant culture which care for groups and parties in addition to the group and faction itself and even to accept their presence without any conditions (Auda, 2015). The tolerance and acceptance are scheduled nationally in order to create peace in all the differences in a multicultural society as in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Religion is one of the factors of identity in a society. Political element allows the teachings of a religion to be modified or made certain adjustments in order that the presence of the pertinent group is accepted in the world wide society so that people know their existence. In a multicultural society like Indonesia, acknowledging the existence of minority groups is very important. Therefore, the identity political movement in Indonesia is not forbidden as long as it does not contradict with the law and disturb the public.

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