Political Reforms and the Role of Parliament in Promoting Good Governance through the Integration of Religious Views in National Politics

Muhadam Labolo, Heru Rohmansyah and Margaretha Rumbekwan

Institut Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri (Institut of Governmental Affairs) IPDN
Corresponding Author: Muhadam Labolo, Email: labolomuhamad@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper describes political reforms and how parliament has worked to promote good governance in the face of religious and cultural politics in Indonesia. Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest Muslim population,which uses a unifying slogan translated as "unity in diversity."The country faces growing pressure from both religious organizations and nationalistic groups, of which both categories have followers who all claim to promote common national values based on the 1945 constitution and Pancasila as a national ideology. It is argued that the rise of religious, political parties across the archipelago has led to the establishment of either sound and or honorable movements that aim at national growth and development. However, little is a document about the activities of these political changes or poor representation at the international scene. This study applied a qualitative research method, using a descriptive interaction approach. Symbolic descriptive interaction is a theory which states that people act based on symbolic meaning, which emerges from specific situations. The symbol is an indication of a happening or event over time. The gestures in the form of symbols are agreed upon by a given community or organization and are used to express shared meaning. Basing on this, the present study aimed to discover a concept through the interpretation of political slogan into religion and conventional parties. The author(s) examined political parties and religious forces who associate themselves with both faith and Pancasila as a nationalistic political unifying ideology for Indonesia. Though this paper is not conclusive, further studies are required.

Keywords: Islamic Political Party, West Java Province Parliament, Symbolic Interaction.

Introduction

During elections, all political parties have wishful thinking of taking over leadership. In this regard, Indonesia is not an exception to this aspiration. In the process, there have, and there are many upcoming political parties, both with a religious background and secular roots or based nationalistic ideologies. Many promises are made during campaigns and or as slogans for the party. All this is done in the name of clean government and national prosperity. In today's domestic politics, Indonesia has registered several and increased number of political parties with the philosophy of *Hizb,* a term attached to a group of citizens who share the same thinking and goals, who organize themselves to achieve their shared objectives (Zarkasyi, 2008; Woodward, 2008).

From the perspective of religion, it is about the spreading of ethical values based on

faith(Tanuwidjaja, 2010). This means that Indonesia's political climate presents an excellent stage for moral, democratic religious values in both the legislative institutions (parliament) and executive institutions (Elman and Warner, 2008). Religious parties are of the view that in a real-life situation, politics isnotalwaysadirtygame;politics canalsobeapathtowardsheaven (Hasan, 2012; IV: Political Process, 2013).

Through parliament,religious, political parties have attempted to socialize a healthy political system (Sherlock, 1998).   The steps taken are based on the values ofethical behaviors and noble characters and excellent and reputable personalities (Tanuwidjaja, 2010). The platform of both the religious and secular political parties is founded on specific ideas and mindsets (Zarkasyi, 2008). One of them is that the members of the party can performlegislative dutiesbased on their expertise (BPKDPPKS, 2009).   It means that the members of the party who join public institutions, such as parliament, government bureaucratic offices, have to contribute to the political, moral growth of these institutions (Brewer and Stonecash, 2009).

The fall of secular regimes in majority Muslim countries led to the recovery from political stagnation (Bruinessen, 2018) of these countries. In Indonesia, post-Soeharto political spaceopening, created opportunities for involvement in politics and press activism (Nagy, 1998) by willing citizens to join politics. For Turkey, Mustapa Kamal's downfall led to the revival of "Islam as an anti-western" political rhetoric as well as a movement(Turam, 2007; Bruinessen, 2018). Most of the local citizens are interested in creating their political systems and establishing values that are not contaminated by foreign powers.

Muslimsbelieve religion and political ideologies are inseparable from people's daily lives, including politics, governance, the economy, and social norms (Muhammed, 2009). Political reforms are about promoting the notion of political Islam together with national ideology. In this respect, there is a need to examine the integration of religion in the socio-political life and application of Pancasila as crucial points in today's Indonesia (Pesurnay, 2018). The combination of Pancasila and religious views in the national ideology make it viable for political parties and reforms through parliament. Ideally, Pancasila works as a point of reference for social prosperity and improved wellbeing of citizens in Indonesia. Conningham (2015) suggests democracy as an ideal concept for proper national administration and politicking.

As it is pointed out in the title, this paper addresses the issue of political reforms and parliament's role in promoting good governance through religious politics and secular views. The new climate of freedom and openness of Indonesia in the reformation era allows the establishment of varying new political parties. However, though this is true, reforms and good governance need a lot of effort. Among the initiatives is the need to understand that Islamicideologies arenotathreat to national politics and clean governance, but they support good government.

Literature Review

Symbolic interactionism, according to the Blackwell encyclopedia, is defined as a sociological theory that grows from practical considerations and related to people's specific use of dialect to extract meaning out of images regardinghealthydaily life (Hall, 2007). In other words, symbolic interactionism theory attempts to develop the description of one's self, actions, and attitudes.

According toBlummer, as cited by Creswell (2009),the idea of reconstructing concepts, which include: the notion of self, the idea of work, the idea of the purpose, the concept of social interaction, and the idea of collective action. These points are explained in three forms as follow:

Concept of Action: is constructed in and through the process of interaction between an individual with himself (Hewitt, 2007). Human action is more than just a sum of biological reactions; it is the result of construction (Reynolds and Nancy, 2003). Therefore, the human is the constructor of his work (Hadi, Wahyudin, Ardiwinata, and Abdu, 2015). It means that before acting, human has to determine his objectives, plan his movement, predict the situation, note and interpret others' actions, and keep himself in check (Conningham, 2015). It is concluded that human is considered an active object that has rights upon the modified objects. Movement, as a behavior, is constructed by the actor to represent the responses in him (Haza, NurZalina, Mazlina and Ismawi, 2014).

The concept of Collective action: comes from the effects of each individual, adjusted and adapted to others' actions(Caglar and Alver, 2015). The point of collective action is the adjustment and the merge of meaning, purpose, thinking, and attitude (Charon, 2004). Social interaction takes much time to achieve a certain level of harmony in terms of collective action (Hewitt, 2007).

Concept of Object: it is based on the fact that human lives, among other objects, are both concrete and abstract artifacts (Brewster, 2013). Interaction characteristics do not determine the importance of an object, but by the interest and meaning, humans assign to it (Reynolds, and Nancy, 2003). Mead defines the purpose as something that can be pointed at or referred to. Symbolic interaction theory views human social life as a process in which objects are created, reinforced, transformed, or thrown away (Griffin, Ledbetter, and Sparks, 2015). Human growth and behaviors change gradually as their world of object changes.

Research Method

A qualitative method was used in this study. A qualitative approach is the research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from the observable people and behaviors. This approach is aimed at holistic background and individuals. According to Creswell (2009), a qualitative approach is characterized by research objectives that attempt to

understand a phenomenon without quantification; it is impossible to measure accurately.In this research, the researcher conducts interviews and observation to understand and analyze data. The steps of the study are implemented systematically as an attempt to answer research questions. This research uses the symbolic interaction approach as its underlying theory.

Findings and Discussion

Referring to the concept of **"object"**; human lives among objects, both concrete and abstract artifacts (Brewster, 2013). Its interaction characteristics do not determine the importance of an object, but by the interest and meaning, individuals assigned to it (Reynolds, and Nancy, 2003). Symbolic interaction theory views human social life as a process in which objects are created, reinforced, transformed, or thrown away (Caglar and Alver, 2015). Human growth and behaviors change gradually as their world of object changes (Griffin, Ledbetter, and Sparks, 2015).

Political religious activities of a part are conducted through three phases (Haza, NurZalina, Mazlina and Ismawi, 2014). The first phase is about the consolidation and development of caders (Tanuwidjaja, 2010). This phase is crucial to building internal strength, in terms of both infrastructure and supra-structure of democracy.

The caders who will hold positions in parliament or be involved in practical politics are developed in an activity called soft political approach. It has been observed that many political partiesare based on Islamic values (Turam, 2007). Currently, most politicians tend to lean towards Muslim activists chose as the processing future for Indonesia's democracy. Parties are trying as much as possible to develop suitable Islamic political ideologies to fix challenges face by political elites in the country.

The second phase is the social understanding in which the activities of political activism take place. Through activism, there is the promotion of good deeds and preventing evil deeds (Zarkasyi, 2008). This is conducted through various public services, including government organizations, particularly educational institutions, healthcare, and economic organs. The focus of this phase is promoting community service. This is why many Islamic hospitals, integrated Islamic schools, and Islamic banks are founded (Hadi, Wahyudin, Ardiwinata, and Abdu, 2015).

The third phase rotates aroundInstitutional bodies, where the caders of political parties are registered and managed. They contribute to government institutions through ethically offering service with integrity and high professionalism and expertise. Theprimary mission of this phase is to formulate, interpret, or integrate Islamic concepts and values into public policies issued for each institution (Hasan, 2012).

It is therefore interpreted that in a democratic country, politics cannot be conducted without parliament as the representative of the public (Brewer and Stonecash, 2009). Parliamentarism means the existence of cohabitation relationships between countries, as the holder of

sovereignty, and their elected representatives, as recipients of democratic values (Bruinessen, 2018; Elman and Warner, 2008). The members of parliament are the representatives of people (Hasan, 2012). They are thereto formulate laws and regulations based on the interest of the people they represent.

Referring to the field observation, members of the current political parties believe that Islam is inseparable from politics. Field analyses revealed that essential support of the Islamic parties is growing each day. Politic is the art of managing something to produce benefits that a community desire. In Islam, politics is interpreted as a part of good deeds.

"Politic is a very capable vessel, although it is not the only one. Nowadays, there is freedom due to democracy, hence leading to many parties. Parliamentary being people representing it is one way of promoting good deeds and preventing evil deeds. Ina bureaucracy, it serves as a controlling force for the government to encourage the installment of Islamic values in society (Muhammed, 2009). Through the integration of politics with religion, parliament shows that Islam is a perfect religion and that Islamic values and teachings are a solution to the national problems. The government reformation program aims to develop a clean government, free from corruption, collusion, and nepotism.

Conclusion

Religion integrated with politics may serve to help improve national governance and democracy of a country. The primary mission of a religious, political party is to penetrate public institutions to translate, formulate, and integrate spiritual values into public policies issued by the parliament. The members of parliament have to perform their function of controlling the government to promote Islamic values.

When the parliament members are elected through elections to public offices, they strive to achieve prosperity for all. The implementation of this mission is evident in the requirement that the members of parliament have to be clean from corruption, collusion, and nepotism, which serve as a basis for good governance. Each member of the representedparty in parliament attempts to implement the party's vision and missions in the institution whose aim is all good.

References

1. Elman, F.M, and Warner, M.C. (2008). Democracy, Security, and Religious Political Parties: A Framework for Analysis, Asian Security, 4:1, 1-22, DOI: 10.1080/14799850701783106.
2. BPKDPPKS. (2009). Seri TaujihatPekanan Kader partaikeadilansejahteraJilidI.Jakarta Era Intermedia.
3. Brewer, D.M, and Stonecash. (2009). Dynamics of American Political Parties. Cambridge University Press.
4. Brewster, K (2013). "Beyond classic symbolic interactionism: Towards anintersectional reading of George H. Mead's 'Mind, Self, and Society.'"American Sociological Association.

Conference Papers: 1–20 – via SocINDEX with Full Text

5. Bruinessen, V.M. (2018). The Governance of Islam in Two Secular Polities: Turkey's Diyanet and Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs. European Journal of Turkish Studies Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey: http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/ 5964; DOI: 10.4000/ejts.5964.

6. Caglar, S and Alver, F. (2015). The impact of symbolic interactionism on research studies about communication science. International Journal of Arts and Sciences. **8**: 479–84. ProQuest 1768593872.

7. Charon, Joel M. (2004). Symbolic Interactionism: An Introduction, An Interpretation, An Integration. Boston: Pearson. p. 31. ISBN 978-0-13-605193-0.

8. Conningham, F. (2015). Democratic Theory (internet) 2015 pp. 3422-3425 Available from www. sciencedirect.com (accessed 5 December 2015).

9. Creswell, W.J. (2009). Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, Thousand Oak, California: Sage.

10. Griffin, Emory A.; Ledbetter, Andrew; Sparks, Glenn Grayson (2015). A First Look at Communication Theory (9th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Education. ISBN 9780073523927. OCLC 875554087.

11. Hadi, R., Wahyudin, U., Ardiwinata, J. S., & Abdu, W. J. (2015). Education and microfinance: an alternative approach to the empowerment of the poor people in Indonesia. SpringerPlus, 4(1), 244.

12. Hasan, N. (2012). Islamist Party, Electoral Politics and Da'wah Mobilization among Youth: The Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia, Journal of Indonesian Islam Volume 06, Number 01.

13. Hall, Peter M. (2007). Symbolic Interaction. Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology. DOI:10.1002/9781405165518.wbeoss310. ISBN 9781405124331.

14. Haza, H, NurZalina, Mazlina, and Ismawi. (2014). A Review On The Madina Charter In Response To The Heterogeneous Society in Malaysia (internet) 2013 pp. 92- 99 Available from www. sciencedirect.com.

15. Hewitt, J. P. (2007). Self and Society: A Symbolic Interactionist Social Psychology (10th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

16. IV: Political Process. (2013). Public Opinion, Attitudes, Parties, Forces, Groups and Elections/Vie Politique: Opinion Publique, Attitudes, Partis, Forces, Groupes et Élections. International Political Science Abstracts, 63(1), 67–91.

17. Muhammed, S. (2009). Interpreting Islamic Parties. Palgrave Macmillan: United States.

18. Nagy, S.L. (1998). Islamic fundamentalism in Indonesia: Sample records for Islamic fundamentalism considerations. Available at https://worldwidescience.org/topicpages/i/islamic+fundamentalism+considerations.html.

19. Pesurnay, A. J. (2018). Pancasila Ideology as A Field of Interpretation. In M. Amini, M. Yusuf, & V. I. Yulianto. (Eds.), UGM Digital Press Social Sciences and Humanities: Vol. 1. Proceeding of the 2nd International Conference on South East Asia Studies (pp. 161–170).

20. Reynolds, Larry T., and Nancy J. Herman-Kinney. (2003). Handbook of Symbolic Interactionism. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press. ISBN 978-0759100923. OCLC 51059349.

21. Sherlock, Dr., S. (1998). Crisis in Indonesia: Economy, Society, and Politics. Current Issues Briefs 1997–1998. Available at https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/CIB/CIB9798/98cib13.

22. Tanuwidjaja, S. (2010). Political Islam and Islamic Parties in Indonesia: Critically Assessing the Evidence of Islam's Political Decline. Contemporary Southeast Asia Vol. 32, No. 1 (2010), pp. 29-49. DOI: 10.1355/cs32.

23. Turam, B. (2007). Between Islam and The State: The Politics of Engagement Stanford University Press.

24. Woodward, M. (2008). Indonesia's Religious Political Parties: Democratic Consolidation and Security in Post-New Order Indonesia, Asian Security, 4:1, 41-60, DOI: 10.1080/14799850701783197.

25. Zarkasyi, F.H. (2008). The Rise of Islamic religious-political Movements in Indonesia: The Background, Present Situation, and Future. Journal of Indonesian Islam, Volume 02, Number 02.

Corresponding Author's Note:

Muhamad Labolo Is an Associate Professor of Institut Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri (Institut of Governmental Affairs) IPDN, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. Is the current Dean of the Faculty of Political Governance at the Institute Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri. He is a graduate of Padjadjaran University with a Doctor degree in Political Science and Governance.