Labour, Democracy and Identity Politics, in Indonesian Industry During the Jokowi Era

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The purpose of this study is to explain the rise of the exclusive labour movement in Indonesia. The study was conducted using qualitative method, data were collected through interviews and the validity of the data was examined by cross-checking among informants. Data analysis was accomplished using the illustrative and inductive methods. The finding is that Indonesia has been implementing identity politics for decades and was praised by many world leaders when it successfully achieved democracy through free, honest, and fair elections after years of authoritarian government. However, conservatism moved slowly towards the exclusive parties. After several provinces and districts had succeeded in establishing regional regulations which accommodated Islamic teachings (Shari'a), social movements, including labour, increasingly and actively championed it in industrial relations. In the most extensive industrial areas in Indonesia, Islamic unions are striving for the concept of industrial relations, through identity politics and collaboration with similar exclusive movements continues by utilizing a democratic system.

Key words: *Labour movement, democracy, identity politics, industrial relations, Islam.*

Introduction

This research discusses three phenomena that do not function inter-relatedly in developed countries (Western Europe and the United States). The first is labour unions responsible for the association, and freedom of member's welfare, with differences in business class (Greer, 2018; Gill-McClure, 2018). The second is liberal democracy that runs along with human rights, social pluralism, economy, politics, as well as tolerance. The third is democracy which requires inclusiveness and respect for minority rights. Therefore, in European and American societies, identity politics is not the mainstream. According to Clifford Geertz (1963), identity politics in these countries as inherent from birth, especially ethnicity, mother tongue, race, and religion, is known as primordialism.

Conversely, in developing countries, these three phenomena function inter-relatedly. Labour unions fight for their religious beliefs in a democratic system. This phenomenon also occurs in Indonesia, a country inhabited by 264 million people (according to the 2017 data) where 87 percent are Muslim. A primary identity is not only used by the labour movement but also by other social movements such as farmers, youth, women, and even political parties. However, the International Labor Organization (ILO) through Covenant Number 87, prohibits the use of identity by labour unions. Since the early 1920s, the use of identity by social movements and political parties has started growing. During the First Liberal Democracy period in Indonesia (1950-1959), the ideological struggle of political parties existed, and identity politics achieved its glory. The religious parties have been developed with each forming a wing of an organization that acts as an agent of mass mobilization. Their benefit led to the organization of Labour, such as the *Sarekat Buruh Muslimin Indonesia (Sarbumusi)* which was the wing of *Nahdlatul Ulama* Party. *Serikat Buruh Islam Indonesia* (SBII) later turned into *Gabungan Serikat Buruh Islam Indonesia* (Gasbiindo) as the subsidiary of the Masyumi Party and *Serikat Buruh Kristen Indonesia* (Serbukri) which a subsidiary of *Kristen Indonesia* Party. An anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1963) calls this phenomenon "The political flow" (politics).

The labour movement and identity-based political parties were suppressed by the military, during Suharto's authoritarian rule, which ensured no genuine social movements emerged. During this period, communities were controlled through the pattern of organizing state corporatism, a concept which was first put forward by Schmitter (1974). However, after Suharto's fall in 1999, social movements and identity-based political parties existed. One of them is the *Persaudaraan Pekerja Muslim Indonesia* (PPMI) which is the focus of this study. The PPMI was founded in 1998 by Eggi Sudjana, Syaiful DP and Bahar Muid, who are all Islamic activists. Eggi Sudjana was an activist for the Islamic Student Association in the 1990s, while the other two are former SBII activists. The question associated with this paper

is, "Why did the democratic system emerge and does the developed labour movement fight for identity politics?"

Democracy and Identity Politics

Democracy as developed in the United States and Western Europe is supported by the social order, such as freedom, human rights, inclusiveness, and respect for fellow human beings. However, according to a study conducted by Diamond and Morlino, before implementing a democratic political system, Western society has a reinforced culture. Many countries succeeded and some failed in implementing democracy. But in the third wave of the 1970s, the factors consisted of freedom, the rule of law, accountability, responsiveness, equality, participation, and competition. These findings do not show much difference from the study of Galston (2018). He researched several countries with stable democracies and concluded that there are 4 (four) important supportive factors; namely, sovereignty, equality, and inclusiveness, in addition to constitutionalism and liberalism collectively. Unlike these two types of research, Huntington (1991) studied the history of democratic development and underlined elections, freedom, openness, and justice as the pillars of democracy.

Marc F. Plattner (2019) responded to Zakaria's idea (1997) on illiberal democracy. He recognizes both as two different concepts. Democracy answers the question of who rules, and this shows that the people are sovereign, while liberalism concerns the limits after officials gain and hold power. These boundaries protect individual rights and the rule of law. They are usually stipulated in the constitution, hence "constitutional democracies". However, in Europe and the United States, liberalism is more focused on those supporting the market economy, free markets and limited roles for the government. Plattner acknowledges that countries that are relatively free implement liberal democracy adequately.

Fareed Zakaria (1997) was the first to introduce "illiberal democracy". By implementing a non-liberal society, it became unsuccessful. However, a better method is through "liberal autocracy". Youngs (2015), in a study related to several Asian countries, concluded that liberal democracy was not the only way to manage the government. This was in accordance with the poor performance of western democracies, and the emergence of non-western countries to determine their effective sovereignty which needs to be developed. In other words, non-western countries are in search of a form of democracy that accords with their community character.

In Geertz's primordialism theory (1963), identity is given to anyone born and historically attached to the community. However, sociability and human cooperation occur easier in communities with similar ethnicity, religion, mother tongue, race, and customs. In pluralistic societies, it is difficult to scale as a nation is built, because the feelings of being ethnic

members are stronger than those being citizens. The sociobiologist Piere van den Bergh (1978) controversially stated that the strength of genes influences one's choice in cooperation and building community. Affiliations with relatives, ethnicities, and religions internalized by parents, scholars, pastors, and community leaders, is reinforced by historical processes in the community. When faced with the choice to build a foundation of state and community, the primary identity becomes the main reference.

Religious and tribal movements are prevalent in various parts of the world. They do not only respond to globalization, but create efforts to build states under their beliefs. According to some scientists, this phenomenon is interpreted as a conservative turn (van Brunessen, 2014), as bottom-up Islamization (Abdullah and Osman, 2018) and as threats to democracy by Islamism and conservatization (Lindsey, 2018). According to this research, it is democracy that is understood as an electoral mechanism, capable of providing space and opportunity for any group to achieve its goals.

Method

The objective of this study is to determine the relationship of the labour movement that fought for religious teachings using democracy, while fighting for the welfare of its members. In Indonesia, the era of the first and second liberal democracies grew a labour movement that promoted identity politics. This research was conducted in Karawang District, known as the largest industrial area in Indonesia, over three months. Data was collected through interviews with PPMI leaders and workers who were also members of this organization. The quality of the data was tested through the consistency of information with only the confirmed ones analyzed. Data analysis was conducted using an inductive and illustrative method in four stages. The first was to determine the consistency between the informants, while the second grouped it according to its various inconsistencies. The third found the patterns' uniqueness and distinctiveness of the research. The last discussed the research findings in terms of democracy, and identity politics, and drew a conclusion.

Data and Data Analysis

In terms of voter numbers, Indonesia is the third-largest democratic country in the world after India and the USA. It has the most complex general election, such as the election in April 2019. Approximately 193 million voters elected the president, members of the regional representative council (senators), members of the legislature, members of the provincial and district/city legislatures. A total of 153 million voters or 79.2 percent participated in the election.

Supporters of exclusivity, identity politics, and intolerance were faced with supporting inclusiveness, pluralism, and tolerance. The four-year tension took place in various regions of Indonesia. This started from the governor election in Jakarta in 2017, which openly confronted the different candidates with cultural identity. The candidates were Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) with triple minorities (ethnic, religious and racial minorities), Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono (ethnic, religious, racial majorities) and Anies Baswedan (religious majorities, ethnic and racial minorities). Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono had the greatest chance, Ahok had the smallest, though these two candidates do not use identity politics. On the contrary, Anies Baswedan who had a double minority, openly used identity politics to win the governor's seat in Jakarta. Democracy is superficially defined as an electoral process, which provides an opportunity for pirate forces that reject inclusiveness, pluralism, and tolerance.

One of the advocates of identity politics is PPMI. Eggi Sudjana, the founder of this system, became the main motivator of the 212 Movement and member of the Presidium Alumni (PA 212)[1]. The chairman of the Karawang Branch of PPMI mobilized its members to attend this movement, in a bid to defend Islam. PPMI is a labour movement that fights to uphold Islamic teachings. It played an active role in the 212 Movement due to its objectives which are in line with an interview conducted by Pupung Saiful in June 2019, in Karawang. However, a more specific reason was stated by its former leader, the current central head of PPMI and deputy chairman of the 212 Presidium Alumni, Daeng Wahidin. According to Daeng, an Islamic labour union is not only fighting for workers but also for Islamic teachings in a community order. Therefore, in an era of democracy where victory is determined by the majority, Muslims as the majority must take an active role in winning (interview with Daeng Wahidin in Jakarta May 2019).

Identity Politics and the Labour Movement

Identity politics has become an ideology or instrument with the use of PPMI (Rochadi, Pramanti, Sulaiman, 2018). The political socialization (*tausiyah*) carried out every Friday contains tawhid, which makes God the only one worshipped. This means that the regeneration of PPMI prioritizes Muslims obedience to the Qur'an and Hadith. Assuming someone has become a pious Muslim, their strength to fight becomes immeasurable, not only in industrial relations but also in jihad. This is because the Qur'an and Hadiths are complete

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[1] The 212 movement was the action of Muslims from Jakarta and surrounding areas who demanded the resignation of Jakarta governor Basuki Tjaja Purnama (Ahok) on charges of insulting Islam. The action was carried out on December 2, 2016, on the main road in Jakarta and was attended by around 200 thousand people. December 2 (212) then set as the name of the movement. The first action with the same demands was carried out on November 4, 2016 (411), which was also referred to as Volume 1 of Defending Islam Action. After the auction was over, they compiled a committee calling themselves the 212 Presidium Alumni (PA 212). The activists of *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI), Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) and PPMI dominated PA 212 administrators.

with various social structures, in accordance with the understanding and working relationships of employers and government. There are two laws, namely religious and state law. However, Muslims must prioritize religious law. The state law focuses on advocacy with cases faced by cadres (Interview with Pupung Saeful and chairman of the PPMI regeneration field Helmi Abir in Karawang June 2019).

According to the PPMI, fighting for Islamic teachings in the field of labour conflicts with neither democratic systems nor the ILO convention on freedom of association. The opportunities to realize Islamic industrial relations reopened after Soeharto's authoritarian rule. The ideal initiated since the early 1900s revived with the opening of structures for political opportunity. The era of the second liberal democracy, in addition to PPMI, also helped the fight for Islamic industrial relations, such as *Gerakan Organisasi Buruh Syarikat Islam* (GOBSI), *Gabungan Serikat Buruh Islam Indonesia* (Gasbiindo), *Serikat Pekerja Islam* (SERPI) and *Kongres Buruh Islam* (KOSBI). However, amongst all of them, only Gasbiindo accepted Pancasila as the state ideology. Despite having the same ideals, fighting for Islamic industrial relations and movement fragmentation cannot be avoided. The narrow interests of administrators' thirst for power are the main cause of division (Rochadi, 2009). That aside, the temptation to acquire government office through political parties defeats loyalty to ideology. The Islamic labour unions built special relations with Islamic parties. For example PPMI became a strong supporter of *Bulan Bintang* Party (PBB), GOBSI went to *Syarikat Islam* Party *Indonesia* (PSII), and Gasbiindo became a subsidiary of the Masyumi Party.

Although the majority of the Indonesian people adhere to Islam, the Islamic party has never won any election. Since the first general election in 1955 till 2019, victories have always been won by national or central parties. The use of Islam as an ideology for both political parties and social movements has failed. First, the political character of the Indonesian people rejected the right (religion), and the extreme left (socialist-communist), as well as the strong spirit of nationalism, which frustrated the right and left parties. This is certainly inseparable from the history of the Indonesian people's struggle to expel colonialism for hundreds of years. Political socialization through ideological education, from elementary school to university, plays a role in rejecting ideology. Secondly, in contrast to the elite labour unions and those interested in gaining political office, their members were more pragmatic, prioritized wages, and worked continuously for social security. Thirdly, formally there is a policy to realize the Pancasila state ideology in industrial relations, or 'Pancasila industrial relations'. Although it has experienced a decline due to the reduction of right and left labour unions, the majority of them still support the Pancasila ideology. Fourthly, workers are reluctant to give militant support, in line with right or left movements, due to poor evidence that a country has succeeded in carrying out industrial and socialist-communist industrial relations. The fall of several Islamic and socialist-communist countries convinced the

majority of workers in Indonesia to support Pancasila industrial relations (Rochadi, Pramanti, Sulaiman, 2018).

For the elite of Islamic labour unions, their difficulties manifested in the Islamic ideology in industrial relations, for the lack of workers' understanding of Islamic teachings and congested cadres. The organization does not play an optimal role because of limited funds, and the businessmen and government officials have a fear of Islam (Islamophobia). This condition allows unions to use the class approach (Interview with Pupung Saeful and chairman of the PPMI regeneration field Helmi Abir in Karawang, June 2019). This statement is not entirely true, as the officials at both the central and regional levels also adhered to Islam. Besides, the left movement in Indonesia is still moving underground. The victims of the violence by the Soeharto government, which tried to organize themselves to claim state responsibility, were always faced with brutal violence by FPI, HTI, and 'omission' by the police. There were different interests between elites and labour union members, in line with the demand in an increase in wages, social security, and work facilities. The failure of several labour parties since the 1999 to 2019 general election proved this conclusion.

Identity Politics and Democracy

Indonesia, under the Soeharto government (1966-1998) by David Bourchier (2015) is called illiberal democracy because it adheres to the ideology of the family state. This is different from the intention of Zakaria (1997) who first put forward this concept. Liberal democracy as it operates in Indonesia now, for right and left social movements, is very incompatible with their political ideals. Democracy in the PPMI's view is understood as "the majority of votes are determined" and "the majority of votes must lead". The concept follows the principle of classical democracy "from the people, by the people, and for the people". When the majority of the people have chosen, it cannot be prevented by any power. Because Muslims are the majority in Indonesia, it is only natural that they lead the country. PPMI efforts to build an Islamic social order began with their respective environments; namely family, workplace and then government. The commandment of the Qur'an is very clear, namely "*Inna shalati wanusuki wamahyaya wamamati lillahi rabbil" alamin*". It means: "Verily my worship, my life, and my death are only for Allah, the Lord of the worlds" (Surah Al An'am: Verse 162). The PPMI brings together workers of Islamic background and fights for industrial relations as a step towards building Islamic governance (Sharia Indonesia). Therefore, there is no mistake when Islamic labour leaders are calling for Islamic parties and leaders to be Muslim.

Democracy is only to be understood as a decision-making mechanism with victory determined by the most votes. Youngs (2015) called such efforts an attempt to find the sovereignty of people, and as building non-western democracy. The success of democratic countries turns out to be built through a process of decades, and was not determined by a

single variable. The majority authority must go along with human rights guarantees, protection of minority rights whether it is ethnicity, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or work, and it must not depend on the goodwill of the majority and respect for social, economic and political pluralism. There is no real example of non-western or illiberal democracy. Singapore, which is often referred to as an example of non-western democracy, has not open competition between political parties and candidates, but zero freedom of criticism, with quality public services.

The rise of intolerant Islam in particular identity politics in Indonesia cannot be separated from the success of Islamization since the mid-1990s. It is driven by the middle-class power in establishing *Ikatan Cendikiawan Muslim Indonesia* (ICMI). It then extended to the bureaucracy and parliament which describes the dominance of the Islamic middle class in government. When Suharto fell in 1999, the battle between the moderate and Islam based on the state, re-emerged. This was led by an educated generation of Islam as a result of the expansion of basic education in the early 1970s. These categories of people were also more prosperous, connected to the media and had a good international network.

According to Hefner (2018), there are several variants of Islam in general, but all forces support them in power. About 25 percent of educated Islamic generations support a broader political agenda and Islamization (Mietzner and Muhtadi, 2018). The Islamic exclusion events in other countries such as Uighur in China, Rohingya in Myanmar, and small explosions in Europe, aroused Indonesian solidarity. Small movements such as FPI succeeded in establishing an identity, as a movement that cares for Islam through demonstrations at foreign embassies in Jakarta and the ratio of food sellers in the fasting month. These factors encourage the strengthening of identity politics which is characterized by intolerant attitudes, as opposed to large Islamic movements such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah who are tolerant and dominated Indonesian Muslims for more than a century.

Majority factors in culture and political minorities are the next drivers. Paying adequate attention to the number of Islamic Indonesian people (87%) created no effect as the Islamic party never won elections, thereby making them inferior. This is, however, strengthened by paying attention to the economic conditions of *ummah*. Despite being a Chinese descent, the average Christian is also a minority, but they controlled the national economy. The social formation manifested since the colonial period fostered the hatred of Muslims towards the Chinese and Christians. Workers prefer entrepreneurs from Japan and Europe than from China, even though there was no difference in wages and social security. Government policy to invite investors from China has been the target of criticism, although the biggest investors in Indonesia came from Singapore and Japan.

PPMI provides the democratic system that creates opportunities for all political forces to fight for ideals. At the local level, it collaborates with other trade unions to support candidates for regents or mayors, on condition that candidates are Muslims. It makes contracts where prospective regents/mayors need to set the city minimum wage through decent living standards, market surveys, and negotiations with trade unions. The minimum wage in the city of Karawang, whose arrangement involved trade union activists from 2016 to 2019, is the highest in Indonesia. The union pressured the Karawang regent and council members to thwart the layoffs of 605 workers in 2018. Motivated by success at the local level, the PPMI sought to increase the movement at the national level by building an alliance with *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI) and *Bulan Bintang* Party (Crescent Star Party). All three have the same ideology in realizing Indonesian Islamic society.

The success of democracy is not determined by a single variable. However, voting and victory, by the majority of votes, is only a decision-making mechanism to elect a leader. Whatever label is on a democracy, it cannot ignore law enforcement, human rights, freedom of association/ press, people's participation, and fair and honest elections. Many countries that carried out the democratic system have been destroyed because they were not supported by elements that cannot be separated from each other. A democratic system cannot survive without good economic growth. Full democracy is needed, through participation and liberalization in all aspects of human life (Held, 2006). The implementation of will as commonly demonstrated by FPI, the main partner of PPMI, in the name of the majority, is according to Sen (2007) only an illusion. Political identity has no place in democracy because its essence is social, economic, and political pluralism. Assuming Indonesia wants to deepen democracy, it must get rid of stowaways like movements such as identity politics.

Conclusion

The analysis above shows how insignificant postmodernism is for identity politics movements. In addition, the fight for identity politics in plural societies such as Indonesia drags nations and countries to the brink of collapse. The use of a democratic system that gives the rights of each group to fight for ideas, including building the order and state of the society, needs to pay attention to justice, equality, law enforcement, social pluralism, and human rights. The labour movement has been built from the beginning to protect workers from injustice. Decent wages, definite social security, and healthy work facilities are the main ideas of the labour movement. Furthermore, careers at work are based on performance. Pprotecting identity politics, while most entrepreneurs have different cultural identities, is a dangerous act for the work and life of workers.

Declaration

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