Islamic Religious Review of Religious Politicization Behavior

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Abstrak

This research examines religious commentary on the politicization of religion. Through religious review analysis, we understand how religion is used or manipulated to achieve political goals. This research includes understanding the concept, and scope of religious politicization, its impact on society, its practice strategies, as well as religious review of this phenomenon, and its relevance in the context of current political life. This research is a qualitative research by examining a number of views, opinions, theories from experts in various relevant literatures to find useful information as a reference for analysis. This research is directed at trying to find answers to a number of previously existing conjectures and premises. The results of this study found that the overdose of politicization of religion is something that needs to be watched out for, because in its implementation it will gradually destroy the sustainability of the life of the nation and state

Keywords: Politicization of religion; Islam

INTRODUCTION

Today, the world of politics is heating up, many phenomena occur in it. One phenomenon that attracts attention in the context of global politics is the politicization of religion. The politicization of religion is an activity carried out by both an individual and certain social groups for practical political purposes of power by utilizing the use of norms, doctrines, teachings, principles, or symbols related to certain beliefs or religions in its implementation. It can be said that the interests of practical politics and power have made religion an object that is misused by parties who have certain interests.[1]

"Politicized religion" has the same meaning as the term "politicization of religion". However, what needs to be understood conceptually is that the term "politicized religion" is different from "political religion" or "religious politics". Supposing the presence of a political dimension that is considered reasonable in the eyes of religion (both textually and religious teachings), this is the meaning of "political religion". Meanwhile, the term "religious politics" refers to "pious politics"

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[1] Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth, "Explanatory Theories and Associated Analytical and Measurement Issues," in *The Role of Religion in American Politics* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3–42.

that displays a pious image by using certain religious symbols so that the image appears pious (although in reality it has not been proven to be true).

Religion appears on this earth politically or can be said to have a political dimension, where the process of creating religion can be in the form of "theological rebellion" or "cultural protest" over the greed of the political elite that controls and dominates, but on the other hand there is also a process of forming religion that was born by "ritual holders" to maintain social stabilization and control communities or societies that also maintain certain political-economic interests. For example, Islam was born as a form of resistance and criticism of things that are contrary to human moral values because the foundation of Islam (Al-Quran and Hadith) has explained everything that regulates human life, both with God, with each other, and with the environment. Therefore, this religious rule not only regulates the moral, spiritual and ritual aspects, but regulates all aspects of life from the time Islam was present until now.

The meaning of religion cannot be narrowed only by the scope of moral, spiritual, and rituals, then this will certainly make the impression of politicization of religion as a negative and dangerous thing, because religion covers all aspects of life, of course, political and ideological aspects can also be included in it. Religion is very multidimensional which has at least five main dimensions in it, namely experiential (feeling), ritualistic (practice), ideological (belief), intellectual, and consequential (belief).

Sometimes we also have to be wise in interpreting "politics", although with the many cases of injustice in the world of politics, we should not necessarily judge that politics is always dirty and controlled by certain parties. But if we can interpret it properly, politics is actually only one of the methods or behaviors carried out by someone who aims to increase status or authority within the scope of a particular group. Of course, this becomes very commonplace and if we review this is something that has often been done by various religious communities since ancient times. The politicization of religion can have a positive or negative impact, which is subjective depending on how we view it.

However, this politicization of religion can have a very negative and dangerous impact when it is done excessively without regard to applicable rules and human rights that cause harm to all parties and only benefit those who do it. This will be a disaster and catastrophe if it is not minimized and prevented from being practiced as early as possible

METHOD

This research is a qualitative research by examining a number of views, opinions, theories from experts in various relevant literatures to find useful information as a reference for analysis. This research is directed at efforts to find answers to a number of previously existing conjectures and premises. This research takes expert opinions as a basic framework of thought, and then dialogues them with the new reality. Researchers try to analyze and find new thoughts about the phenomenon of religious politicization, especially when this phenomenon is reviewed by religion itself, especially Islam.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Politics and religion are often intertwined, and the politicization of religion arises when religion is used as an instrument to gain political support. Understanding this concept is important to analyze its impact in the context of people's lives. Politicization of religion refers to using religion to achieve political goals or manipulating religious beliefs for political purposes. This phenomenon involves attempts by political parties or groups to utilize religious aspects to garner support or solidify their position in the political sphere. Some of the key elements in the politicization of religion involve interpreting religion to support a political agenda, using religious symbols, and creating political identities based on religious aspects.

The politicization of religion can be analyzed from various perspectives, including political, social, historical, and religious perspectives. The following is a brief explanation of some of these perspectives:

1. Political Perspective

In the context of politics, the politicization of religion can be understood as a strategy to gain political support by leveraging religious identity. This involves the use of religious rhetoric, iconography, or the implementation of policies that can appeal to voters from certain religious groups.[2]

2. Social Perspective

From a social perspective, the politicization of religion can be analyzed as a result of social inequality, discontent, or tension between different groups. Political leaders may take advantage of social uncertainty or tension to mobilize support by activating religious identities.[3]

3. Religious Perspective

From a religious perspective, the politicization of religion can be considered as a challenge to the integrity of religious teachings, because religion can be instrumentalized for political purposes. Conversely, there is also an argument that political parties can be a means to realize the moral and ethical values of religion.[4]

4. Historical Perspective

Historical analysis can provide insight into how the politicization of religion has evolved over time. Several historical cases show how politics and religion have been intertwined, both constructively and destructively.[5]

Politics and religion often intersect, forming patterns that can influence societal dynamics. The politicization of religion refers to using religion to achieve political goals or manipulating religious beliefs for political gain. This phenomenon involves attempts by political parties or groups to utilize religious aspects to garner support or solidify their position in the political sphere.[6] The scope of religious politicization is very broad and complex.[7] The politicization of religion has a broad scope and can be analyzed from various perspectives, including political, social, economic, cultural, and legal. First, from a political perspective, the politicization of religion includes the use of religious identity to achieve political goals. This can involve the appropriate interpretation of religion to support a political agenda and the use of religious symbols as a tool to gain support. This can include selective or even erroneous interpretations of religious principles.[8]

Second, from a social perspective, in their article entitled Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence, states that the politicization of religion can be investigated as a response to social inequality, intergroup tensions, or social change.[9] Political leaders may

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[2] José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (United States: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[3] Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?* (California: University of California Press, 1993).

[4] Ashis Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 13, no. 2 (1988).

[5] Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Knopf/HarperCollins, 2000).

[6] Levent Tezcan, "Talal Asad: Formations of the Secular. Christianity, Islam, Modernity (2003)," in *Schlüsselwerke Der Religionssoziologie*, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-15250-5_62.

[7] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (United States: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[8] Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*.

[9] Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (California: University of California Press, 2003).

capitalize on social discontent to form coalitions based on religious identity. And this implies creating divisions between religious groups to gain support from one group and build an us versus them narrative. Third, from an economic perspective, the politicization of religion can be related to the distribution of economic resources and inequality. Religious groups may become the focus of politicization when there are perceived economic inequalities.[10]

Fourth, from a cultural perspective, according to the politicization of religion can be understood as part of the collective identity of a society.[11] This dynamic involves the use of religious symbols in politics as a way to strengthen group identity, and gain support from religious communities. Fifth, from a legal perspective, says law can highlight the impact of religious politicization on religious freedom and legal principles. The politicization of religion can create challenges in maintaining the balance between religion and the state. Politicians may seek legitimacy by associating themselves with religious authorities or claiming that their policies are legitimate.[12]

Case Study

One example of the phenomenon of religious politicization in Indonesia is the case of the governor of DKI Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), in 2017. Ahok, a Chinese descendant and Christian, became the target of religious politicization in the gubernatorial election campaign.[13] Controversy arose when Ahok was put on trial for alleged blasphemy related to his speech that was considered blasphemous to the Qur'an.

Another example of the phenomenon of religious politicization in Indonesia is the role of religion in the 2019 presidential election. The campaign witnessed an increased use of religious issues and religious identity to gain political support. There were attempts to link presidential candidates with religious issues, which created a significant dynamic of politicization of religion.

Religious Review of the Politicization of Religion

In this context, theological analysis and religious ethics help us understand religious perspectives on the use of religion in politics. The religious review of the politicization of religion for political purposes includes a number of perspectives that reflect the complexity of views from different religious traditions. Some of the key dimensions of the review involve moral considerations, ethics, the selection and interpretation of religious teachings, and the relationship between religion and political power.[14] Many religious traditions emphasize the importance of morality and ethics in public life. The politicization of religion often calls into question whether political actions carried out under religious claims are in accordance with the ethical and moral values taught by the religion. The use of religion for political purposes tends to take parts of religious teachings, and this can be seen as a distortion that is incompatible with a full understanding of religious teachings.[15]

Some religious traditions emphasize the importance of religious neutrality in political affairs. This neutrality is seen as a way to maintain the integrity of religious values without falling

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[10] Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Religious Practice: A Human Capital Approach," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29, no. 3 (1990).

[11] Anthony D Smith, *National Identity* (United States: University of Nevada Press, 1991).

[12] Noah Feldman, *After Jihad : America and the Struggle for Islamic Democracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).

[13] John T. Sidel, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia* (Canda: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[14] Judith Butler et al., *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (United States: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[15] Sam Harris, *The End of Faith : Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005).

into the instrumentalization of religion for political purposes.[16] In the perspective of Islam in particular, ethics and morality play a central role. Reviews of the politicization of religion often assess the extent to which political actions justified by religious claims conform to the principles of religion.

An Islamic perspective on the politicization of religion involves a consideration of conformity with Islamic law or sharia. An assessment of whether the political action is compatible or contradictory to the principles of Islamic law is often the focal point.[17] mThe Islamic review of the politicization of religion for political purposes reflects the diversity of approaches, and views within the Islamic world. Some of the key dimensions in this analysis involve considerations of ethics, morality, Islamic law, and the concept of leadership in Islam.[18] However, there are also some Islamic views emphasizing the neutrality of religion in politics, stressing the importance of justice, common welfare, and fair treatment of all citizens, regardless of religious background. In line with this, many scholars emphasize the importance of justice and public welfare in the framework of the politicization of religion. They highlight that political action must accommodate the principles of justice and common welfare.[19] Scholars often denounce the politicization of religion that involves distortion or selective interpretation of religious teachings. They emphasize the importance of correct understanding of religious values.[20]

The concept of leadership in Islam, known as "khilafah" plays a role in the review of the politicization of religion. This analysis includes questions about the legitimacy of leadership that claims to be based on religion and the extent to which it reflects Islamic values.[21]

DISCUSSION

The Impact of Religious Politicization on Society

Religious politics can affect social cohesion, trigger conflict and even change cultural dynamics. The over-politicization of religion or what can be called an overdose is a serious matter to be discussed considering its great impact on the life of the state. Many political figures in Indonesia are also affected by this overdose of religious politicization, especially if we go back to the New Order era. This excessive politicization of religion not only sacrifices a handful of political elites or public figures, but also has an impact on ethnicity, tribalism, beliefs, religion and several aspects of the target of this political game. One of the negative impacts that is quite worrying is the waning sense of brotherhood and the declining awareness of the importance of maintaining existing human values.

For example, the overthrow of Ahok because of his case has caused the erosion of relations between communities or religious communities with each other, plus the burden of despair about the future of their own nation. Another example also occurs within the scope of the community of faith itself, for example Muslims who are divided into several community organizations (ormas). They kowtow to the same God, but in practice have several different beliefs that are still very risky for tolerance. Differences are still difficult to accept by a handful of people who are even in the same shade because sometimes what is shown is not acceptance,

[16] Samuel P Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997).

[17] Fatima Mernissi and M. J Lakeland, "Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World, Foreign Affairs," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993).

[18] Sachiko Murata, *The Vision of Islam* (New York: Paragon House, 1994).

[19] Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding the Qur'ān: English Version of Tafhīm Al-Qur'ān*, 1988.

[20] Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones: (Original Version)* (California: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017).

[21] Tezcan, "Talal Asad: Formations of the Secular. Christianity, Islam, Modernity (2003)."

but only pretense. It is certainly a big challenge for this nation, being in the midst of diversity that must remain one goal.

The politicization of religion will not have a negative and dangerous impact if done ethically and pay attention to the prevailing moral values. It would be better if we can minimize the politicization of primordial identity and start using elegant professional-intellectual politics for the sake of our beloved Indonesia.

Strategies for the Politicization of Religion

In the implementation of religious politicization, of course, there needs to be a well-thought-out strategy to avoid religious politicization that is not based on ethics and morals. In the Muslim holy book (Al-Qur'an) there is a letter that discusses that one of the main political principles regarding decision making is deliberation, of course this is in line with the foundation of the Indonesian state, namely Pancasila. In this context, Surah Al-Imran verse 159 emphasizes that every decision taken should not be based only on personal or group interests, but for the common good.

In the study of Islamic Politics in the Qur'an (Tafsir Siyasah Surat Ali-Imran verse 159) it is said that deliberation needs to be the main foundation in the state, so that the politicization of religion is not only interpreted as a religion used for the benefit of a group, it can be more clearly said as a campaign tool to increase the electability of a political party. Indonesia is a country based on democracy, which means that the highest sovereignty rests with the people. So, in carrying out all kinds of state interests, the people must be involved in it.

With the politicization of religion, it should be used as a guide in running the government system. As the leader of Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad SAW. became the perfect example to serve as a role model for leaders and rulers. This is because what he did in his day is still relevant when it should be applied in the present day. In this interpretation, religious politicization acts as a positive thing that supports the progress of the state.

Surah Ali Imran verse 159 explains the deliberation exemplified by the Apostleullah SAW. in the interpretation of this verse there are several tasfir used, namely Tafsir Al-Maraghi explains that in making policies related to politics there needs to be deliberation which has an essential role. First, to achieve policies for the common good there needs to be deliberation as a form of openness. From this openness, opinions of support and rejection can be revealed which can help consider existing policies and are open and known by the entire community. Openness of opinion will also prove one's love and sincerity towards the common interest, not just selfishness that thinks of personal and group interests.

Secondly, the benefits of deliberation can reveal a variety of views from various parties that will bring out opinions that are superior to others, even if they are not from the ruling circles. Third, collective decisions are produced by the best views that can only be obtained through the testing of opinions, opinions, and thoughts. Lastly, the existence of a common interest makes the deliberation forum more lively, where the people in it feel like they are in the same boat in achieving a common goal.

CONCLUSION

The overdose of religious politicization is something that needs to be watched out for, because in its implementation it will gradually destroy the continuity of the life of the nation and state. This will also certainly be a time bomb for the people in this country. Leaders who should be mandated to accommodate and realize the aspirations of their people instead become a very terrible boomerang for their own people, becoming traitors to their neighbors as well as becoming "thieves" in their own country. Therefore, the most dangerous thing about the politicization of religion is that it deifies lust above all else. Putting personal interests above social interests, without thinking about the rights of others.

If this continues to be the case, there will no longer be people who trust their leaders, because all their words and actions are only sweet promises at the beginning, which later turn into lies. Everything that is excessive is not good and so is the politicization of religion. If the goal is to maintain the spirit of brotherhood between people, maintain human values, and realize the ideals of the nation, then this is fine as long as the intended interests are for the common good.

It is necessary to pay attention to the impact of this religious politicization for the long term in the future. In the Islamic perspective itself, the politicization of religion is considered as an effort to apply the principles of Islamic politics. Where deliberation is one of the bridges to prevent the ruler from various kinds of tyranny.

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