

Political Dynamics and the Role of the State in Responding to the 212 Rallies

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Abstrak

This article analyzes the dynamics in politics that occurred in Indonesia, namely Action 212, which was a mass action with the concept of defending religion and held in Jakarta in December 2016. The action was organized to urge the acceleration of legal certainty aimed at one political figure for his blasphemy case. The purpose of this article is to look at the influence of the action on the dynamics of politics and democracy in Indonesia and the role of the state in responding to the action. This research employs qualitative research with exploratory analysis and the author uses library research, and the data used to analyze the aforementioned issues include news related to the topic as well as several prior studies. People do not feel that only Muslim leaders deserve to be leaders, not those of non-Muslim origin. The 212 Movement, which demanded Ahok's trial for alleged blasphemy, was attended by millions of Muslims from various regions. Ahok was eventually found guilty and sentenced to two years in prison by a panel of judges at the North Jakarta District Court.

Keywords: Political Dynamics, State and Religion, 212 Actions

INTRODUCTION

Discussing the dynamics that exist in politics will always be interesting to discuss. This is because it is always related to society, individuals with individuals or between groups and groups. Moreover, the dynamics and events in politics are quite difficult to predict. In 2016, to be precise on December 2, there was a mass action with the theme of defending Islam called Action 212. The action succeeded in attracting millions of people who came together to Jakarta to participate in the mass action. The action demanded an acceleration in the legal process against the alleged blasphemy case committed by Ahok or Basuki Cahaya Purnama.

The action was a response from several Muslim communities in Indonesia to the alleged blasphemy committed by Ahok as the Governor of DKI Jakarta. The alleged incident stems from Ahok's statement in the Thousand Islands which said that some Muslims were "lied to" by the letter al-maidah verse 51. This is because the letter mentions the prohibition of making leaders from non-Muslims which is used as a weapon for political opponents not to vote for him.¹ The choice of the word "lied" is actually a weapon for Ahok because it invites

¹ A Kusman, "Aksi Bela Islam, Populisme Konservatif Dan Kekuasaan Oligarki," *Maarif* 11, no. 1 (2016): 43–52.

different interpretations in the community. Some people considered that what Ahok said was harassment and blasphemy against Islam. This then invited demands for Ahok to be imprisoned. The action was also followed by some major scholars who also mediated with the police to arrest Ahok.²

However, in looking at a political event, in this case the 212 Action must also see whether there is political utilization in the non-political realm or domain. This can be proven by looking at the events that surround it. Moreover, Action 212 does not appear to be a political action, only an action to defend Islam. However, at that time it was ahead of the 2017 Jakarta elections. Therefore, in looking at political events, it must be ascertained whether there is political sublimation in it. It is feared that there is coercion for personal political interests in an event.³

In essence, the response given by Muslims is actually one part of the implementation of democratic life. As well as the presence of mass participation where they have the right to voice their opinions. In addition, as a form of implementation in democracy, the people have the power to influence the political direction of a country.⁴

However, the response given by the government, in this case the Joko Widodo administration, tends to lead to illiberal policies and is feared to harm democracy. Such as the criminalization of several proponents of the group and the ban on the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) organization. Responses that are considered political security by the government ultimately contribute to limiting the democratic process in Indonesia.⁵

METHOD

This research employs qualitative research with exploratory analysis. Qualitative research is an interpretative form of inquiry where researchers make interpretations based on what they see, hear, and understand. The strategy in conducting qualitative research focuses on data collection, analysis, and writing.⁶ Given that this research will discuss Islamic activism and the state of democracy post-212, a qualitative research approach can be considered appropriate for uncovering the research issues.

The author uses library research, where the researcher examines the research object through bibliographic materials such as books, journals, previous research reports, and internet media. The data used to analyze the aforementioned issues include news related to the topic as well as several prior studies.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Democracy has various meanings, literally democracy is defined as the power of the people or a government in which the people hold sovereignty. According to Hans Kelsen in Lutpiani's article, democracy is defined as a government that comes from the people and for the people. With this meaning, the exercise of state power is carried out by elected representatives of the people. The election is based on the people's confidence in the representative's ability to convey the will and interests of the people who are concerned in exercising state power.

Democracy consists of several principles that are universal, including the participation of citizens in political decision-making, certain equality obtained between citizens, certain

² Putri, G. E. Kebijakan Pemerintah terhadap Front Pembela Islam (FPI) Pasca Peristiwa 212 Tahun 2016-2021. *Politea: Jurnal Pemikiran Politik Islam*, 5(1) (2022): 141-156.

³ Muhammad Ainun Najib, "Sublimasi Politik Dalam Aksi Bela Islam 212," *Resolusi: Jurnal Sosial Politik*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.32699/resolusi.v1i2.502>.

⁴ Nasution, L. Hak Kebebasan Berpendapat dan Berekspresi dalam Ruang Publik di Era Digital. *Adalah*, 4(3) (2020).

⁵ Muhammad Naufan Rizqullah, "Membaca Aktivisme Politik Islam Dan Demokrasi Di Indonesia Pasca 212," *Jurnal Syntax Admiration* 2, no. 4 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.46799/jsa.v2i4.215>.

⁶ M. Labolo, H. Rohmansyah and M. Rumbekwan "Political Reforms and the Role of Parliament in Promoting Good Governance Through the Integration of Religious Views in National Politics." *Talent Development & Excellence* 12, no. 1 (2020): 3324–3330

freedoms or freedoms that are recognized and used by citizens and the rule of law. In addition, the principles of democracy are also in accordance with the concept of the rule of law where there is no absolute or arbitrary power, equal legal standing and treatment and the guarantee of human rights through the law. By applying the principles of democracy, a government will be formed in which every decision, either directly or indirectly, refers to the agreement of most of the people given freely by each individual or group.⁷

Social Movement

According to Sydney Tarrow, social movements can be defined as efforts to achieve certain goals through actions that challenge the status quo, authority and existing culture. The opposition is carried out by them on the basis of solidarity and collective action to oppose elites, authority, and rules and culture. People in a movement develop a sense of collective identity, which is about causing and helping their efforts by sustaining a movement. Movements are short-lived and then stop, either failing or succeeding in achieving their goals. Social movements run for a long time, are organized, and have supporters who provide support throughout the movement.

Social movements are traditionally defined as organized efforts to bring about social change. Collective efforts in social movements aim to resist or promote change among people and groups. Group types consist of informal individuals and groups that focus on implementing, resisting, and undoing changes that occur in socio-political issues. In this paper, the events of the 212 movement are a case of social movements in Indonesia related to the state and democracy and motivated by religious and political conflicts.⁸

Identity Politics

Identity politics is the political identity adopted or followed by citizens in relation to the political direction they take. The birth of identity politics can come from social groups that are intimidated and discriminated against from a group, state and government. Identity politics according to Cressida Heyes is a political activity in social groups due to the injustice that occurs. Then according to Manuel Castells, identity politics comes from dominant institutions or groups that internalize certain groups and have their own stereotypes. The existence of identity politics due to identity similarities is the main cause of political conflict related to tensions between superior and inferior groups or between majorities and minorities.⁹ As in the events of the action of defending Islam and the 212 reunion, it is an example of the identity politics of Muslims in the form of mass actions demanding an investigation into the blasphemy case by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok).

DISCUSSION

The Influence of the 212 Movement on Political Dynamics and Democracy in Indonesia

The 212 rally attracted millions of people to gather in Jakarta for a mass action. This action called for the acceleration of the legal process related to the alleged blasphemy case committed by Ahok or Basuki Cahaya Purnama. This action is the response of some Islamic communities in Indonesia to the accusation of blasphemy committed by Ahok as the Governor of DKI Jakarta. The incident allegedly began with Ahok's statement in the Thousand Islands that some Muslims were "lying" through Surah Al-Maidah verse 51. Indeed, the letter states that it is not allowed to appoint non-Muslim leaders as a weapon to persuade political opponents not to vote for them. The alleged incident stems from Ahok's statement in the Thousand Islands saying that some Muslims were "lied to" by Surah Al-Maidah verse 51. This is because the letter mentions the prohibition of making leaders from non-Muslims who are used as weapons to persuade political opponents not to vote for them. This triggered

⁷ Lutpiani, E. *Implementasi Demokrasi Di Indonesia*. Diakses dari <https://osf.io/hzvm9/download>, pada 10 September 2023.

⁸ Oman Sukmana, *Konsep Dan Teori Gerakan Sosial*, Intrans Publishing, 2016.

⁹ Yeni Sri Lestari, "Politik Identitas Di Indonesia: Antara Nasionalisme Dan Agama," *Journal of Politics and Policy*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jppol.2018.001.01.2>.

protests from a number of conservative Islamic groups, and they demanded that Ahok be tried for alleged blasphemy.

The main context for the 212 Movement was the election of the Governor of DKI Jakarta that took place in 2017. This election was controversial because one of the candidates, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), who was then the Governor of DKI Jakarta, was of Chinese descent and a Christian. This created tension and religious rhetoric during the election campaign. In the 212 Movement, participants demanded Ahok's arrest and said he was unfit to lead Jakarta due to blasphemy allegations. They also called on Indonesia to change its blasphemy laws.

The 212 Movement was initiated and dominated by various conservative Islamic groups in Indonesia, one of the main groups involved was the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). FPI is a conservative Islamic organization that played an active role in organizing and mobilizing the masses for the 212 Movement. Rizieq Shihab, the leader of FPI at the time, was one of the main figures of the 212 Movement and was often the spokesperson demanding Ahok's arrest. Besides FPI, a number of other conservative Islamic groups also joined the 212 Movement, such as the Ansor Youth Movement and many other Islamic mass organizations. The movement reflected a broad coalition of groups united in condemning Ahok and demanding changes to Indonesia's blasphemy laws.¹⁰

In the process of the largest demonstration movement after the 1998 reform, the 212 action was certainly colored by various group or individual interests behind it. The Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) is one of the groups that mobilized this action massively, of course, it has its own intentions. In addition, because this action was carried out during the election period for the 2017 DKI Jakarta governor candidate, one of the groups that also had an interest in it was the PKS political party. Indeed, the interests behind religious movements are not new. FPI received support from PKS elite hands in carrying out demonstrations, the ties between the two showed political interests. Especially after the formation of the Jakarta Bersyariah Assembly which was made to accommodate Muslim governors who rejected BTP. By looking at the relationship between the two, it appears that there are political interests, both of which utilize each other. PKS needs support so that its candidates win and FPI needs support from groups that also oppose either materially or licensing.¹¹

After the December 2, 2016 Islamic defense action, the 212 movement changed its purpose to become a group that supported Anies and Sandi in the 2017 DKI Jakarta governor election. Through the actions taken by this group, there are political dynamics in Indonesia where identity politics is getting stronger and there are socio-political conflicts within the Muslim community. The PA 212 movement also experienced a movement during the 2019 presidential election by openly providing support to the Prabowo-Sandi pair. The support was given on the basis that the candidate pair was pro-Islamic interests. Therefore, the view emerged that the 212 movement became an arena for finding strength against political or social class domination. Then the 212 movement was also used to maintain the current situation in favor of one party by manipulating political identity so that it could gain more support and legitimacy of power.¹²

With the 212 rally, one of the impacts was the increase in political intolerance. The Muslim community objected if the leader of the government or state did not come from their religion. In addition, political actors who will participate in elections such as regional elections or presidential elections also tend to attract couples with Islamic backgrounds to attract more support. The 212 action movement also had an impact on polarization in

¹⁰ Bagus Riadi and Diki Drajat, "Analisis Framing Gerakan Sosial: Studi Pada Gerakan Bela Islam 212," *Journal For Islamic Social Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2019).

¹¹ Abiyoso W and Thohari S, "Gerakan Front Pembela Islam (FPI) Dalam Aksi Bela Islam Pada Tahun 2016 Di Jakarta," *Jurnal Kajian Ruang Sosial-Budaya* 3, no. 2 (2019): 78–100.

¹² Yusril Fahmi Adam, "Islam Dan Politik Identitas: Konflik Pada Gerakan 212 Dalam Perspektif Sejarah Indonesia," *NALAR: Jurnal Peradaban Dan Pemikiran Islam* 6, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.23971/njppi.v6i2.4395>.

society. Indeed, with the 212 action, people became more active in participating in politics either through social media or directly on the streets. In addition, now the participation provided is also more massive not only during the election period but also involved in monitoring the performance of the government. However, on several occasions these changes also need to be limited because they can threaten national development and stability.¹³

The Role of the State in Addressing the Presence of the 212 Movement

The issue between the state and religion in Indonesia can certainly threaten the diversity that exists in Indonesia itself. The state must have interests that are based on society, and religion has negative and positive sides which can advance and even bring down the country if not regulated properly. So that in the 212 Action case study, it threatens the unity of Indonesia, so the government must take action for the continuity of the country's diversity and not only side with one party. The mobilization of identity politics increasingly cannot be controlled properly which causes intolerance to occur and threatens national unity. The action was held with thousands of masses who came down with the aim of getting rid of the DKI Jakarta governor candidate, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or commonly called Ahok, who was considered to have desecrated Islam during his working visit to Kepulauan Seribu on September 27, 2016. Many demonstrators who came to DKI Jakarta from various regions in Indonesia demanded to imprison Ahok for the case he did. The riots that occurred made the police conduct an investigation into the alleged blasphemy case, which led to the demands of the masses being met because the police had named Ahok as a suspect in the blasphemy case.

The process of investigation into Ahok's case was slow, so the community with FPI held the second volume of Islamic defense action which coincided on November 4, 2016 "Action 411". During the action, finally at 00.00 WIB on November 5, 2016, President Jokowi held a press conference at the State Palace. President Jokowi made a statement regarding Ahok's blasphemy case. President Joko Widodo and the National Police promised to resolve and finish Ahok's case related to blasphemy. The examination was carried out intensively, the process began with summoning witnesses from the reporting party or the reported party. Then there was a case title on November 15, 2016 with the aim of determining the legal status of Ahok. Then, a day later on November 16, 2016 the legal verdict against Ahok was decided, in which the police named Basuki Tjahaja Purnama alias Ahok as a suspect in the blasphemy case that dragged his name.¹⁴

The trial found Ahok guilty and he was sentenced to two years in prison in May 2017. The sentence was higher than the prosecutor's sentence of one year in prison with two years probation. The case accepted by Ahok was determined by the Panel of Judges of the North Jakarta District Court based on Article 156 a of the Criminal Code on blasphemy which reads 'Shall be punished with imprisonment for a maximum of five years whoever deliberately in public expresses feelings or performs acts: a. which are basically hostile, abuse or blasphemy against a religion adopted in Indonesia, b. with the intention that people do not adhere to any religion whatsoever, which is based on the One True God'. This made Ahok finally named a suspect.¹⁵

The mobilization of the 212 action cannot be separated from the propaganda of the FPI, which in its website tries to provide news or issues of irregularities committed by Ahok and

¹³ Naufan Rizqullah, "Membaca Aktivisme Politik Islam Dan Demokrasi Di Indonesia Pasca 212."

¹⁴ Kawan Hukum. ID. "Aksi 212: Politik Identitas vs Gerakan Anti Pancasila." Diakses dari <https://kawanhukum.id/aksi-212-politik-identitas-vs-gerakan-anti-pancasila/>, pada 10 September 2023

¹⁵ Kompas.com. "Mengenal Reuni 212, dari Aksi Melawan Ahok Hingga Kritik Pemerintah." Diakses dari https://megapolitan.kompas.com/read/2020/12/02/17531761/mengenal-reuni-212-dari-aksi-melawan-ahok-hingga-kritik-pemerintah?page=all&_gl=1*1c0arja*_ga*Njk1NDcyMDU5LjE2MDMxODM2NzA.*_ga_77DJNQ0227*MTY5NDM0ODA1MS4xLjEuMTY5NDM0ODA1Mi4wLjAuMA..#page2, pada 10 September 2023.

the government's arbitrariness in taking action against Ahok's case (abuse of power). Various actions were carried out with the slogan "Aksi Bela Islam" and on December 2, 2016 at the National Monument which was attended by hundreds of thousands of participants from various regions in Indonesia. After passing through the examination and trial stages, Ahok was found guilty by the court based on the North Jakarta District Court Decision Number 1537/Pid.B/2016/PN JKT.UTR dated May 9, 2017. During the reign of Joko Widodo, FPI increasingly mobilized the masses, because FPI itself did not support Jokowi in the 2014 presidential election. Jokowi was considered to support Ahok as governor of Jakarta and made FPI initiate the 212 action or 212 Movement (previously known as Aksi Bela Islam).

Since the 212 movement, of course, the relationship between FPI and the government has become disharmonious and there have been many violations of the law committed by these Islamic figures. The government took action by strengthening anti-radicalism policies. One example is the 2017 Perpu on mass organizations that resulted in the dissolution of Hizbut-Tahrir Indonesia. In 2019, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) also had its legal license as a mass organization revoked and in 2020 was designated as a banned mass organization in Indonesia.

CONCLUSIONS

The 212 Movement, which is a movement that arose because of the protests of the people who responded to Basuki Tjahaja Purnama's statement issued in the Thousand Islands regarding Surah Al-Maidah verse 51 which was considered controversial. Allegations of blasphemy were made against Ahok for his statement. Because of this, it finally made the Islamic community furious and there was a movement called the 212 movement in which they demanded the arrest of Ahok for the alleged blasphemy. The 212 Movement had an impact on the dynamics of politics in Indonesia. The dynamics of politics in Indonesia were affected by the 212 movement because we can know that most people in Indonesia embrace Islam, where they will prefer leaders who have a strong understanding of Islam and represent a leader for the Muslim community. People do not want to be led by non-Muslim leaders and this makes many of the prospective leaders attract couples who have a strong understanding of Islam. The 212 Movement also gave rise to a political dynamic that is currently commonly referred to as identity politics which is getting stronger, it is said to be able to sell religion to win political contestation in Indonesia.

Indonesia, which is a democratic country, has weakened its democracy after the movement because of the intolerance in religion and politics. People do not feel that only Muslim leaders deserve to be leaders, not those of non-Muslim origin. The 212 Movement, which demanded Ahok's trial for alleged blasphemy, was attended by millions of Muslims from various regions. Ahok was eventually found guilty and sentenced to two years in prison by a panel of judges at the North Jakarta District Court.

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