Transformation of Identity Politics: Islamic Political Economy and the Journey Towards the 2024 Elections

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Abstrak. Political dynamics have played a crucial role in shaping the Democratic Party in Indonesia, where politics is deeply embedded in everyday life. The transformation of identity politics within the realm of Islamic Political Economy is a key narrative influencing the path toward the 2024 elections. This moment serves as a critical opportunity to implement the principles of Islamic Political Economy, which advocates for an inclusive political framework. This study examines the evolution of identity politics, particularly within the framework of Islamic political economy, by analyzing its implications for the political process leading up to the elections. Employing a socio-legal research method, this study integrates normative analysis with qualitative reasoning to derive conclusions. The findings highlight the complexities of identity politics in Indonesia and their impact on politics, the economy, and society. While Indonesia's social, cultural, and religious diversity is a strength, challenges in maintaining unity persist. Identity politics—shaped by nationalism and religion—plays a significant role in economic policy, particularly in the context of Islamic political economy, which emphasizes social justice. However, while identity politics can foster unity, its manipulation has the potential to deepen societal divisions.

Keywords: Identity Politics, Political Economy, the 2024 Elections.

INTRODUCTION

Political dynamics play a crucial role in shaping the Democratic Party in Indonesia, where politics is deeply embedded in everyday life. Politics encompasses various processes involved in electing leaders within government structures, ensuring national development, safeguarding state sovereignty, and enhancing public welfare (Al-Farisi, 2018). As an abstract

concept, politics embodies both cooperation and conflict, generating diverse opinions and contradictions among individuals. The role of politics in society is significant, as it stabilizes the state, refines regulations, and governs administrative affairs. Indonesia, a country rich in cultural, religious, ethnic, and tribal diversity, continually faces challenges in achieving political stability and social harmony (Adeni & Lestari, 2020).

The democratic dynamics in Indonesia are essential in addressing these challenges. However, this diversity often becomes a trigger for disharmony between groups. Fundamental differences rooted in this diversity have historically led to numerous conflicts (Soenjoto, 2019). Disputes based on religion, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, and other identities have repeatedly emerged, impacting the nation's social and political stability. Moreover, these conflicts have become increasingly complex, evolving from single-identity disputes into multi-identity tensions. This progression reflects the intricate nature of Indonesia's political dynamics, where identity differences not only fuel intergroup tensions but also create internal frictions within the broader society (Budita, 2023).

The escalation of identity-based conflicts is often closely tied to the democratization process, sometimes referred to as "feral democracy." This term describes a condition where political competition becomes excessively group-oriented, often exceeding democratic norms, leading to polarization, divisive rhetoric, and political instability. Therefore, it is essential to develop more effective strategies for managing Indonesia's diversity to foster greater inclusivity in the democratization process (Zaini et al., 2023). These efforts include strengthening multicultural education, promoting intergroup dialogue, and reinforcing institutions responsible for balancing the interests of Indonesia's various identities.

The tension between nationalism and religious identity has intensified, posing a threat to national stability. Differences in political identity perspectives between these two groups often lead to conflict and confusion among the public, particularly through propaganda and competing claims of truth. This phenomenon has resulted in the emergence of pro-government and anti-government factions. Consequently, studying the dynamics of identity politics in Indonesia is crucial for maintaining political stability. Despite its diversity, Indonesia has demonstrated resilience in preserving national unity since gaining independence (Soenjoto, 2019). A deeper understanding of identity-based conflicts is vital for grasping the complexity of Indonesia's political dynamics and sustaining national stability amid diverse interests and beliefs.

The transformation of identity politics within the realm of Islamic Political Economy is a critical narrative shaping the journey toward the 2024 elections. This evolution signifies the integration of economic principles rooted in Islam with the intricate dynamics of identity-based politics. It highlights the urgent need to balance the aspirations of diverse identities with the economic needs of society, thereby playing a significant role in shaping the upcoming electoral landscape. Islamic Political Economy underscores the necessity of fostering an inclusive and equitable political environment amid rising tensions between nationalist and religious identities. This approach emphasizes that economic and social justice serve as foundational pillars in resolving identity-based conflicts without jeopardizing national stability (Toloh & Takalamingan, 2023).

The 2024 elections present a crucial opportunity to implement the principles of Islamic Political Economy, which advocate for an inclusive political framework. These principles emphasize the government's responsibility to ensure equitable economic distribution without identity-based discrimination, fostering an environment where all citizens benefit equally from economic growth. Moreover, Islamic Political Economy promotes a shift from identity-based politics to interest-based politics, strengthening unity in diversity and reducing conflicts that threaten national stability (Santosa, 2023).

Understanding the transformation of identity politics through the lens of Islamic Political Economy highlights the need for a fair, transparent, and accountable electoral process. This approach provides an opportunity to build a more stable and inclusive political foundation, where diverse identities are acknowledged and respected without compromising the country's stability and economic progress. Ultimately, this framework offers a pathway for steering Indonesia's political trajectory toward the 2024 elections with greater democracy and justice.

This study aims to investigate the evolution of identity politics, particularly within the framework of Islamic Political Economy, by analyzing the implications of these changes for the political process ahead of the general election. The primary focus is to understand how Islamic economic principles contribute to shaping identity politics dynamics and to identify the impact of this transformation on the democratic process and political stability leading up to the 2024 elections. This paper examines the shift in identity politics driven by Islamic Political Economy principles and evaluates how this transformation can provide a deeper understanding of identity politics in Indonesia as the country approaches a critical electoral moment..

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs the socio-legal research method, an approach that integrates normative analyses from various disciplines, including economics, politics, culture, and history. In this context, the study examines election laws as a reflection of public behavior in navigating identity politics during elections. The data collection process involves a comprehensive review of legal and political documents, as well as observations of identity politics phenomena during the 2014 to 2019 elections. Data validation was conducted using source and theory triangulation techniques, ensuring alignment between election-related regulations, relevant theoretical frameworks, and observational data that were verified and tested for objectivity. The collected data was then analyzed qualitatively using logical reasoning to derive research conclusions (Sugiyono, 2018).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia, a nation characterized by its rich ethnic, religious, racial, and cultural diversity, frequently encounters challenges to its unity. In response to these challenges, the national motto Bhinneka Tunggal Ika—"Unity in Diversity"—emerged as a guiding principle. However, since gaining independence, Indonesia has faced numerous external and internal threats, including military invasions, separatist movements, and dynamic political upheavals. According to Richard Jenkins (Rickard, 2021), identity constitutes a fundamental aspect of social life, enabling individuals to categorize others based on perceived differences and similarities. In Indonesia, identity politics often manifests in two primary factions: nationalist and religious (Zaini et al., 2023). While identity politics can facilitate equilibrium and discourse in democratic processes, its mismanagement poses a significant threat to national stability. Conflict between these identity groups, if left unchecked, can undermine the nation's cohesion. Historically, Indonesians united against colonial rule through a shared nationalist spirit. However, mismanagement of identity politics has, at times, deepened societal divisions, as seen in the polarization following the Jakarta gubernatorial elections (Toloh & Takalamingan, 2023).

Pancasila, Indonesia's foundational political philosophy, embodies a multicultural framework that stands in stark contrast to exclusionary identity politics. During the colonial era, the Dutch leveraged identity politics to fragment nationalist resistance. Similar conflicts persist worldwide, such as sectarian divisions between Catholics and Protestants in Scotland, the American Civil War, and tensions between indigenous and non-indigenous groups in the Malay Peninsula (Achie, 2017). Historical and contemporary conflicts underscore the detrimental consequences of identity politics, as exemplified by the dissolution of Yugoslavia, civil unrest in Syria and

Afghanistan, the rise of anti-Semitic policies, and the proliferation of terrorism and radical ideologies. Identity politics, when weaponized, can transcend national concerns and become a strategic tool for suppressing perceived threats to social, political, and economic dominance.

The Evolution of Identity Politics

The evolution of identity politics traces the shifts in individual and group self-perception over time, influenced by social, political, and cultural transformations. In the pre-colonial era, identity was primarily shaped by ethnic, religious, and cultural affiliations, which fostered communal solidarity. Language, customs, and shared beliefs played integral roles in constructing individual and collective identities. The advent of colonialism, however, disrupted these traditional structures, introducing new socio-political dynamics. Interaction with colonial powers led to both assimilation and resistance. Some indigenous groups incorporated colonial languages, religions, and customs into their identities, while others actively resisted cultural dilution to preserve their heritage (Adeni & Lestari, 2020).

Colonial influence often manifested through linguistic and religious assimilation, as colonizers imposed their cultures on indigenous populations. However, resistance to such impositions reinforced local identities, sustaining cultural distinctiveness despite foreign dominance. This historical trajectory highlights the fluidity of identity politics, shaped by external interactions and internal adaptations. The interplay between local traditions and colonial influences continues to inform contemporary identity constructs (Perdana, 2023).

In the modern era of globalization, technological advancements have fundamentally altered identity perception and construction. The rapid exchange of cultural values through the internet and social media has fostered increased intercultural dialogue, facilitating more inclusive and multifaceted identities. Globalization enables individuals to engage with diverse perspectives, integrating elements from various cultures into their self-concept. As a result, identity is no longer confined to rigid ethnic or religious frameworks but is instead evolving into a more dynamic and pluralistic construct (Abramowitz, 2014).

Implications of Identity Politics and Islamic Political Economy

The intersection of identity politics and Islamic political economy significantly influences electoral processes and policy-making. Islamic political economy, rooted in principles of social justice, equitable wealth distribution, and economic ethics, can shape voter preferences. Political narratives emphasizing Islamic economic principles—such as zakat,

distributive justice, and the prohibition of usury—resonate with certain voter demographics, potentially altering electoral outcomes.

Islamic economic policies can profoundly impact national economic structures. The institutionalization of zakat as a redistributive mechanism may restructure income distribution, enhancing economic equity. Similarly, the prohibition of usury necessitates financial system reforms, shifting investment paradigms and monetary policies. However, implementing these policies presents challenges, including transparency, consistency, and long-term economic sustainability.

Post-2024, identity politics linked to Islamic political economy may influence political stability and economic direction. Polarization arising from divergent economic and religious perspectives could exacerbate social and political tensions. Furthermore, economic policy shifts towards Islamic principles may reshape fiscal policies, financial regulations, and wealth distribution mechanisms. Consequently, a comprehensive analysis of these dynamics is essential to mitigate risks, foster stability, and ensure inclusive economic growth.

In Indonesia, tensions between nationalism and religious identity frequently surface. While religious institutions played a pivotal role in shaping Pancasila, contemporary discourse often portrays nationalism and religious identity as competing forces. Nationalism historically united diverse communities during the independence movement, yet today, it is sometimes leveraged by marginalized groups seeking recognition. Political elites often exploit identity politics for electoral gain, manipulating public perception to consolidate power, particularly during election cycles.

Identity politics functions as a means of self-representation, seeking cultural and political recognition. It encompasses religious, ethnic, and cultural affiliations, influencing societal dynamics. Although the term "identity politics" was coined in 1974 by activist Barbara Smith, its practice predates the terminology. In Indonesia, the persistent influence of identity politics underscores the complexity of interactions between religious identity and nationalism, with far-reaching implications for Pancasila's ideological stability.

Identity Competition in Politics

As the 2024 elections approach, identity politics is expected to intensify, with political factions leveraging religious, ethnic, and ideological affiliations to secure voter support. Candidates and parties may emphasize identity-based narratives to appeal to specific demographics. Religious discourse, ethnic allegiances, and political ideologies are likely to become

focal points in electoral campaigns, exacerbating societal polarization (Ackelsberg, 1996).

Identity politics often carries negative connotations, as it prioritizes identity-based affiliations over policy-driven discourse. It can restrict constructive debates, foster exclusionary practices, and deepen societal divisions. The Ummat Party, for instance, explicitly embraces identity politics by championing religious and pro-Islamic policies. While some view this approach as compatible with Pancasila's principles, critics argue that it exacerbates social stratification and inequality (Tomberg et al., 2014; Tombeg et al., 2021).

In response to the rise of identity politics, Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, Mahfud MD, has addressed concerns regarding its implications. He contends that identity politics, particularly when rooted in religious consciousness, must be managed prudently to prevent societal fragmentation. The trajectory of identity politics will inevitably shape Indonesia's socio-political landscape, necessitating vigilance to uphold national unity while fostering inclusive political engagement(Bekbenbetova & Rakhmetova, 2015).

CONCLUSION

This study illustrates the complexity of the evolution of identity politics in Indonesia and its impact on politics, economics, and society. Despite Indonesia's rich social, cultural, and religious diversity, challenges in maintaining unity continue to emerge. Identity politics, including nationalism and religious aspects, play a significant role in Indonesian politics and influence economic policy, especially within the framework of an Islamic political economy that emphasizes social justice and wealth redistribution. However, the manipulation of identity politics can deepen divisions, even though it has the potential to strengthen unity at its core. Globalization and technological changes open up space for more inclusive identities, but often, identity politics emerge as a response to social and economic inequality, reflecting societal concerns. In the Indonesian context, the battles of identity politics need to be addressed wisely, with a focus on broader interests and embracing diversity as a strength rather than a source of conflict. A better understanding of identity politics, with a focus on concrete solutions to people's issues, will help promote political stability and economic growth, while ensuring attention to social justice and the well-being of Indonesians as a whole.

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