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## **THE URGENCY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF ULAMA AND GOVERNMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN INDONESIA**

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**Abstract:** *Indonesia is a large country that has residents with various religious and religious backgrounds. As a country with a society of various religions, of course the state will not be able to protect and fulfill all the dynamic needs of its people if there is no support or relationships from elements of the people themselves. So, this is where the government needs relations or partners who can work side by side in realizing peace in religion. In this case, the ulama are one of the government's working partners, so it is necessary to study the urgency of the relationship between the ulama and the government in realizing the development of religious diversity in Indonesia. This research uses qualitative research methods with a schematic sociology approach. The data sources come from various literature, which is then analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques. The results of the research conclude: 1) The relationship between ulama and the Indonesian government in realizing peace is very necessary because society in general is close to ulama so that when ulama unite with the government then the government's call is the ulama's call, what is ordered by the government will be more easily obeyed by the community both in terms of tolerance in religion and in other matters. 2) The development of religious diversity in Indonesia has experienced positive developments, because every religious adherent in Indonesia has provided tolerance for each community, both for the community itself and towards communities of other religions.*

**Keywords:** *Relations between Ulama; Government; Religious Diversity.*

## INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity in Indonesia is a necessity because Indonesia is formed from several elements of society with different religions. To preserve and strengthen a country, of course the people as citizens of that country must unite and work together to create peace and tranquility. Observing the news in the media in the past few decades, unity and integrity between religious communities seems to be starting to fade, even though this cannot be separated from the participation of the media in reporting things that provoke emotions between religious communities. So in this case there is a need for policy and government participation to collaborate with other parties who can create harmony between religious communities in Indonesia.

If you look at the history of politics, one of the policies during the New Order era was to always promise changes and political nuances, the government was carried out using a centralized method in the central government (Komara, 2016). Meanwhile, the latest developments in the political system in Indonesia are no longer centered on the central government, but are run with a system of regional autonomy. Decentralization has offered the opportunity to align government policies with regions that prioritize regional needs, resource advantages and preferences.

Before decentralization, Indonesian society was controlled under leadership based on the central government (Simanjuntak, 2015). The government in the new order under Suharto's leadership saw a picture of the collapse of the political system and structure that had been maintained for 32 years. Furthermore, on May 21 1998, the Reform movement, which started from a deepening economic crisis, pressure to dismantle authoritarian political structures, and anger to root out practices of corruption, collusion and nepotism, forced President Soeharto to resign. (Reynaldo de Archellie, Munawar Holil, 2020). The new order period, the birth of Law no. 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage and the Compilation of Islamic Law (CII) is clear evidence that the role of ulama is quite large and that there is involvement of ulama with the government.

In late 2011, The Second International Conference of Islamic Media was held in Jakarta. The International Islamic Media Conference, which is supported by The Muslim World League and the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, was attended by around 400 participants consisting of intellectuals (ulama), academics, government and journalists from 28 friendly countries. The aim of this conference, namely about the "Arab Spring", is to reveal two phenomena, the issue of the future of Muslims in the Middle East and North Africa, and secondly, reform and change in Muslim countries proves the influence and role of the media (Mutohharun Jinan, 2013). Through this conference, it can be seen that there has been an effort towards bringing the government and ulama together in realizing a goal regarding diversity in Indonesia through a conference that discusses the involvement of the media in framing religious phenomena.

There have actually been several previous studies regarding the involvement of ulama with the government, but when it is related to religious diversity in Indonesia, that is where the value of novelty is that there have been no previous studies. The previous studies referred to include Febri Rohiman Hidayat's study regarding the role of ulama in

overseeing government programs (Febri Rohiman Hidayat, Dadan Kurniansyah, 2023). This study is relevant because it examines matters related to the ulama and the government, but this study is not about relations but the supervision of the ulama towards the government. Apart from that, there is also Edi Gunawan's study on the relationship between religion and the state (Gunawan, 2017). This study has similarities because it discusses religious relations which also include the role of ulama towards the state, namely the government, but what is discussed is the participation of religion in forming a state.

Based on the background of the phenomenon of religious diversity in Indonesian society that is visible today, government efforts are needed to collaborate with ulama in realizing harmony in religion and the state. This kind of study is very necessary, especially as it is supported by previous studies which have not specifically discussed the involvement of ulama or government policies in realizing religious harmony. The research that the author conducted is very different from previous studies, both in terms of the variables and substances studied. Thus, research on the relationship between ulama and government in building religious diversity in Indonesia has significant novelty so that its study is urgently needed.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The object of this study is the ulama and the government regarding relations or relationship issues in realizing religious harmony in Indonesia. The research method used is a qualitative research method (Jahja, 2023) with a schematic sociology approach (Abdulsyani, 2012). The data sources for this research come from various documents related to the relationship between ulama and the government, namely a study of facts and history related to the relationship between ulama and the government regarding religious diversity in Indonesia. Data collection techniques were carried out by means of literature studies from documentary materials. After all the data was collected, it was then analyzed using qualitative data analysis methods by describing historical facts about the involvement of ulama in supporting the government to maintain religious peace in Indonesia.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Representation of Ulama and Government Relations in Indonesian Development**

Regarding the representation of ulama with the government in general, there is actually a lot of participation of ulama as government partners in realizing Indonesia's development, both physical development and psychological development in the form of guidance and education of the Indonesian people. The development of the psychological field, for example, can be seen in terms of the involvement of ulama in supporting the realization of a regulation related to moral degradation, resulting in the formation of an anti-pornography law because it is considered to be able to improve moral values which are very minimal in this globalization which is most likely influenced by Western culture.

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Modernization sometimes forces us to unconsciously eliminate religion from social life, even at the expense of honest democratic practices, tolerance and a pluralistic civil environment – at least during the transition phase (Rubin, 2012). The ulama community continues to strengthen from time to time, especially in the Middle East, to create a generation that will act as a force for da'wah in the future (Study, 2013). Then in Indonesia, of course, we will also continue to produce future generations of ulama, to improve civilization in Indonesia for future superior generations. Institutionalism only began to emerge in the 1980s, mostly in political science, reflecting many features of older versions of approaches to understanding politics in theoretical and empirical directions (Reynaldo de Archellie, Munawar Holil, 2020). Despite these dramatic changes, the national bureaucracy retains its old authority for the administration of religion, as article 10 (3) of Law 32/2004 on Regional Government allows the central government to retain jurisdiction over, among other things, religious matters (Lindsey, 2012).

In this case, ulama have the right to fight for the truth and also the right to argue, so that a ulama has the right to fight for good values for the benefit of the large number of Muslims. Apart from that, they also have the right to freedom of thought and expression, as well as criticizing adversity to fight injustice in society (Siriyuvasak, 2005).

Apart from that, a country certainly has the right to limit the growth of religious diversity in its society or not, although each person has their own right to choose a belief (Perucho, 2018). Political authority over the people will continue to occur and is not only based on considerations such as fear of punishment, but basically the power of the political system cannot force people to choose a particular religious belief (Aldoughli, 2020). However, cultural institutions will be able to influence the wider community in choosing the right religion according to their beliefs (Yusof, 2012).

The Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) has issued a response to Islamic law (*fatwā*) Number 56 of 2016 regarding matters that endanger democracy and religious freedom while encouraging the creation of transparent and good government in accordance with democratic principles (Nasir, 2014). During the 1980s and 1990s, the influential Muslim community organizations Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) increasingly adopted the position that religious civil society should act as an institutional check on state power and a vehicle for social cohesion among citizens (Brown, 2019).

### **The Urgency of Relations between Ulama and the Government in Building Religious Diversity in Indonesia**

Ulama and intellectuals have played an important role in supporting academics (government) to shape the principles of the state in preparation for independence. Here we see the role and representation of the relationship between the ulama and the government in creating a state that embraces all people in various religions and beliefs, so that the principles of the state do not conflict with beliefs in any religion in Indonesia. Likewise, after the declaration of independence in August 1945, Indonesia went through a series of tumultuous political transitions, so that in the early 1950s Indonesia had an open and free parliamentary democracy. Here we can also see the relationship between

the ulama and the government in realizing religious diversity (Hefner, 2013). Thus, Pancasila as a state principle, even though it is a social imaginary, can be accepted by all people because it is the result of thinking between ulama and academics (government). Therefore, the ideal of ethnic and religious harmony, which is incorporated into the state ideology and proclaimed in the national motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika", is proof of the strong relationship between the ulama and the government (Hoon, 2017).

The involvement of ulama and the government in Indonesia's development since the beginning of independence until now is still visible. As evidence, today we can see the involvement of ulama (Indonesian Ulama Council) as seen in MUI fatwās, as well as discussing with the government the dilemmas faced in maintaining religious diversity. (Nasir, 2014). History reveals that ulama play an important role in Muslim society and even for all Indonesian people in general. They are also involved in the management of religious, social and public institutions such as schools and charitable institutions and others as well as monitoring public regulations in assisting the government system (Nasir, 2014). Since 1998, Indonesia's move towards democracy has been accompanied by a conservative change in Islam towards religious intolerance, which is marked by the state's success in protecting the religious system for justice (Parker, 2014). From an Indonesian perspective, the issue of diversity, including religion, is a very important issue to be addressed, especially Muslims and non-Muslims, ethnicities such as Javanese and non-Javanese, and community groups, for example military, bureaucrats, civilians, and race (indigenous and non-indigenous) (Susanto et al., 2020).

Young people have been particularly seen to be involved in increasing their marked growth in religious tolerance. The level of religious tolerance of young Indonesians has attracted special attention from sociological study activists (Laksana & Wood, 2019). In a pluralistic society like this, rights do not only belong to individuals, but also to ethnic groups and religious groups collectively. While the common good is largely considered more important than individual rights, given all this background, a communitarian approach must be used to understand citizenship (Ichwan et al., 2020). The Indonesian archipelago is home to a majority Muslim population. However, the way Islam is practiced is strongly influenced by a history of complex and dynamic cultural diversity, which differentiates Indonesian Islam from Islam in other parts of the world (Makin, 2019).

Pancasila is the Indonesian nation's agreement to build a country where all citizens are equal, with the same obligations and rights, without discrimination, without regard to religion, without regard to majority and minority status (Bourchier, 2019). The rich diversity of religions, ethnicities and cultures in Indonesia can create ambivalence. On the one hand, diversity increases the dynamics of life in Indonesia, but this can result in vertical and horizontal tensions that lead to internal and external conflicts.

Since mid-1997, several crises have emerged whose causes reflect the complex and multidimensional relationships between many areas in Indonesia, both related to national and international interests (Baidhaw, 2007). Building harmony and peace in Indonesia requires more cultural sensitivity, a coalition approach, and a multiculturalist model for

negotiations by both the government and local participants or religious leaders. However, the problem of competition between ethnic groups and certain groups for various limited resources remains a problem (Baidhawiy, 2007).

In terms of religious tolerance, there have been calls to use certain theories and methodologies and with that, few have applied analysis and discourse as a way of finding solutions to tolerance. In terms of this tolerance, there are several practical examples including Von Der Lippe's discourse analysis which brings out the way Norwegian youth talk about religion and diversity; Nicolaisen's study of the values of Norwegian Hindu children in relation to the hegemonic discourse on RE (Wijaya Mulya & Aditomo, 2019).

In Southeast Asia, Indonesia is the fourth most populous country and home to the world's largest Muslim population. Nearly 90% of Indonesia's population is Muslim and around 9% is Christian, while the rest are Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian and adherents of other religions including ethnic spiritual traditions. Since the 1998 democratic reforms that overthrew Suharto's authoritarian regime, conservative and progressive movements have grown rapidly in Indonesia (Wijaya Mulya & Aditomo, 2019).

At the grassroots level, conservatism and religious intolerance are felt in Indonesia, including in the educational environment. A survey conducted by the Wahid Foundation and the Indonesian Survey Institute of 1,520 Indonesian adults, for example, showed that almost 60% stated that they hated several minority groups such as non-Muslims, Chinese Indonesians and communist groups. Among these 60%, more than 90% do not want these minorities as government officials, 82.4% do not want them as neighbors and 7.7% are willing to commit acts of violence against them. In education, another survey by the Wahid Foundation among 1,626 secondary school students who attended reported that 60% were ready to take part in a religious war, 10% supported the Jakarta bombing in 2016 and 6% supported ISIS (Wijaya Mulya & Aditomo, 2019). This all reflects the diversity and religious attitudes of society, so the role of the ulama and the government is needed to become a stronghold of tolerance.

The development of religious diversity today is greatly influenced by the expansion of media such as the Internet and social media, which has drawn attention to the impact of these media on civil society activism and political mobilization. Some scholars predict that the media should facilitate and expand civic engagement, activism and collective action beyond traditional boundaries. Utilizing the Internet to disseminate information about alleged community suffering in religious conflicts to gain public sympathy will create a discourse towards conflict (Hamayotsu, 2013). Social changes and wrong ways of thinking will lead to the emergence of religious vigilante groups.

Jahroni and Crouch note that the role of a group in pressuring state officials to conform to the wishes of that group will have an impact on policy, although not very significant. Ali Fauzi studied religious freedom in Indonesia and compared it with religious freedom throughout the world, he found that there were limitations in violations of religious freedom (Sumaktoyo, 2020).

In a study of the Islamic orientation adhered to by Muslims in Indonesia. Indonesia has a population of approximately 240 million people and 90% of the population is Muslim. This study is important because currently there are conflicting views about the political influence and social role of Islam in Indonesia. For example, several high-profile incidents of inter-religious intolerance have been reported in the media. Examples of such incidents include the fatwa of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) prohibiting religious pluralism in 2005, attacks on places of worship and Ahmadiyah adherents, and violations of the rights of members of the Indonesian Christian Church (GKI Yasmin) to hold worship in Bogor. The survey used stratified random sampling, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 2.5%. Muzaffari in his study differentiates Islamists from non-Islamists by their belief in three principles: (1) Agreement that a Khilafa Islamiya 21 or Islamic state must be established in Indonesia. (2) Agreement that the use of violence is permitted to fight for Islam. (3) Agreement that according to Islam, Muslim women must wear the veil (Sakai & Fauzia, 2014).

Most of the leading literature on Asian welfare regimes classified Indonesia as a 'productive welfare regime' until the 2000s (Yuda, 2020). Sunakim's involvement in violent extremism raises concerns about recidivism in terrorist rehabilitation, as well as the effectiveness of Indonesia's deradicalization program (Agastia et al., 2020). After the New Order, an important feature that emerged was a general Islamic revival, partly because it coincided with the increasing involvement of women in civil society. Robinson explains the influence of Islam in Indonesian feminism insofar as Muslim women's organizations play an important role in the democratization process. Since religion is an important component of social life in the country, discussions about women's issues have a religious dimension and their groups need to be open to discourse in order to reach a wide audience. After the New Order, an important feature that emerged was a general Islamic revival, partly because it coincided with the increasing involvement of women in civil society (Poerwandari et al., 2018). The recent rise in influence of the MUI has prompted discussions about the extent to which Islamic authorities should be supported and legitimized by government authorities in Indonesia. The MUI is a quasi-governmental body representing Indonesia's Islamic clerics (Millie & Hindasah, 2015).

This involvement, according to Panggabean & Ali-Fauzi, hampers the police's ability to handle violence. In addition, in his study of violence against Shiites in Sampang Regency, Masdar Hilmy argues that state officials and religious figures there manipulate violence for economic and political gain through hegemony and cultural symbols. Vigil violence has been a recurring feature in Indonesia's social and political history since the country's founding as a state. This kind of violence became a concern again in the era of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono when vigilante groups often attacked property belonging to non-mainstream followers, such as Ahmadiyah and Syia. (Suryana, 2019). The presence of the online da'wah movement can be said to be a reaction to both trends: cyber pornography and terrorist propaganda, including hate propaganda. These da'wah movements are certainly more active in positioning themselves as moral guardians who seek to introduce Islamic morality and combat moral decay (Nisa, 2018). Barendregt

argues that Indonesian society has Islamized mobile media, as evidenced by the products offered via mobile technology related to Islam, such as Al Quran Seluler (a mobile application consisting of the Mobile Al Quran, its translation and recitation) and Mobile Syariah Banking (an application mobile banking for sharia banks) (Nisa, 2018).

The key to the MUI's influence as a clerical institution and government partner is the fatwa it produces. Before the beginning of this century, Indonesian Muslims often asked for fatwas from clerics in the Middle East. Since then, fatwa production has become institutionalized in Indonesian civil society, although Middle Eastern influence is growing again with the proliferation of internet fatwa sites. In Indonesia, fatwas are usually given collectively by a council that is independent of the state and appointed by Islamic organizations (Nisa, 2018). In May 1975, President Soeharto officially agreed, in a meeting with the Indonesian Mosque Council, to the establishment of a national fatwa institution. The Ministry of Home Affairs quickly instructed regional governments to form their own regional ulama councils to create a national structure that could be led by the institution (Lindsey, 2012).

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion that has been presented, it can be concluded that the relationship between the ulama and the government is very much needed to realize a more harmonious development of the Indonesian nation. The closer the relationship between the ulama and the government, the better the development and progress of the Indonesian nation will be. The development of religious diversity in Indonesia really requires good relations and relationships between ulama and the government. The government must make the ulama a partner in developing the country, because society in general submits and obeys the ulama so that when the ulama unite with the government then the government's call is the ulama's call, what the government orders will be easier for the public to obey. Every government policy must be approved by the ulama so that it does not harm the people and the interests of the nation. The development of religious diversity in Indonesia has progressed over the previous few years, there have been many ulama fatwas that regulate mutual respect for religious diversity in Indonesia and this is the result of good relations between the ulama and the government. For this reason, the study of the relationship between ulama and the government needs to receive serious attention from researchers to prime public understanding that Indonesia needs a government system that is in harmony with government programs and religious goals (*maqashid sharia*).



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