

Defending Islam Action and Its Impact on the Local Islamic Conservatism Movement in West Sumatra

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Abstract

The massive demonstrations as part of the Defending Islam Action against Ahok in 2016 have had a broad impact on the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian politics. The event has not only created socio-political polarization in society but also seeped into local political dynamics in West Sumatra. So far, most studies have focused on the motives and causal factors of the Islamic defense action with its various implications, but there are still few studies that explain the influence of this action on the local Islamic conservatism movement in West Sumatra. Specifically, this study answers the question of how the influence of the Defending Islam Action on the local Islamic conservatism movement in West Sumatra after the 212 rally. A deep understanding of the development of Islamic conservatism in the local context can develop theories of Islamic conservatism in explaining the Islamic revival movement in Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative method by interviewing a number of actors of the local Islamic conservatism movement in West Sumatra. The results of this study show that the transformation of national politics in the issues of the Defending Islam Action has a significant impact

on the local Islamic conservatism movement. The national political factor not only affects the local Islamic conservatism movement but also the proliferation of such movements locally, that are active in responding to social, political and religious issues. The national political factor followed by local political decentralization is a political opportunity for local Islamic conservatism groups to carry out conservative Islamic agendas in West Sumatra.

Keywords: *Defending Islam Action, Local Islamic Conservatism, West Sumatra, National Factors, Decentralization*

Introduction

Defending Islam Action or also known as “Aksi Bela Islam” (ABI) movement in Jakarta in 2016 has had a significant influence on the Islamic conservatism movement that occurred at the local political stage such as in West Sumatra. The success of extensive Islamic mobilization across diverse regions in Indonesia shows that Islamist mobilization is driven not only by theological issues but also by socio-political factors contributing to the contestation of religious authority over the past two decades.¹ In 2016, West Sumatra emerged as a region that mobilized a significant Islamic movement, contributing to the large-scale Islamic defense action. The mass mobilization from West Sumatra has participated in the 212 action is estimated to have even reached

¹ Alexandre Pelletier, ‘Competition for Religious Authority and Islamist Mobilization in Indonesia’, *Comparative Politics*, 53.3 (2020), 525–47 <<https://doi.org/10.5129/001041521x15974471626004>>. Lihat juga., Ahmad Najib Burhani, ‘Aksi Bela Islam : Konservatisme Dan Fragmentasi Otoritas Keagamaan’, *Maarif Institute for Cultural and Humanity*, 11.2 (2016), 15-29.

up to 14 thousand masses. Thousands of these masses not only participated in the 212 rally in Jakarta but also had considerable influence as 212 alumni in mobilizing the Islamic conservatism movement in West Sumatra.² In addition, alumni who joined the action have the potential to spread the attitudes and views of religious conservatism in their hometowns. The West Sumatra Islamic conservatism movement after the 212 rally is quite actively involved in responding to various kinds of socio-political issues on behalf of the 212 alumni. National Movement of Fatwa Guard for the Indonesian Council of Ulama's fatwa GNPf MUI West Sumatra or part of the 212 Defending Islam Action movement in West Sumatra. Various kinds of activities and activities carried out by 212 alumni actors ranging from 'silaturahmi,' building network alliances at the local level, to responding to socio-political issues that developed in West Sumatra. Among them are holding Islamic defense actions in the realm of Minang.³ This phenomenon not only shows the spread of the transformation of the Islamic conservatism movement from national to local politics but has also encouraged the increase of religious conservatism attitudes and

² '14 Ribu Massa Dari Sumbar Ikut Aksi 212 Di Jakarta', *Https://Www.Jpnn.Com/*, 2016 <<https://www.jpnn.com/news/14-ribu-massa-dari-sumbar-ikut-aksi-212-di-jakarta>>. Lihat juga, Moh Shofan, 'Pengantar Redaksi "Mendiskusikan Kembali Makna Moderatisme Muhammadiyah"', *MAARIF Journal*, 14.2 (2019), 6.

³ 'Aksi Bela Islam Di Padang', *Harian Singgalang*, 2017 <https://dprd.sumbarprov.go.id/2704170852_singgalang-tgl.11-april-2017-kolom-2.pdf>.

views on the local political stage in West Sumatra.⁴

Studies related to the Defending Islam Action that took place in 2016, of the three rallies, have been widely discussed by scholars. Existing studies tend to see that the massive demonstrations in terms of the prosecution of blasphemy against the Governor of Jakarta emphasize aspects, theological, socio-political to the strengthening of Islamic populism conservatism in Indonesia since the last two decades. Many of the existing studies emphasize the factors that caused the massive Islamic defense actions in 2016. First, the tendency of the causal factors of the Islamic defense actions to be caused by the floating mass of Muslims being faced by Muslims in the midst of the latest economic, social and political uncertainties. The uncertainty felt by the "floating ummah" is experienced by the ummah, especially among the younger generation, educated and middle-class Muslims because social inequality is getting sharper which encourages them to take action to defend Islam. In the Islamic defense action, the masses from mainstream Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah themselves were also actively involved in the Islamic defense action movement. Narratives of social, political, economic and psychological grievances have been constructed in such a way towards the floating masses of the

⁴ Zulfadli Zulfadli, Dewi Anggraini, and Mhd Fajri, 'From Formalization of Sharia To Islamic Conservatism: The Post Reform of Islamic Movement Phenomena in West Sumatera', *Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Filsafat*, 17.1 (2020), 1–24 <<https://doi.org/10.22515/ajpif.v17i1.2289>>.

Ummah so as to emphasize absolute morality as a solution to the socio-economic difficulties experienced by Muslims.⁵ The construction of the regime's failure to solve various kinds of social, economic and political problems to criminalize religion and not pro-Islam was not only used in the defending Islamic action in 2016 but also had an impact on the presidential election in 2019 as the collective imagination of the ummah in winning the presidential election contestation to support Prabowo Subianto-Sandiaga Uno.⁶ Moreover, at the national level, the rise of Islamic conservatism in Indonesia is more due to social-psychological factors. Burhan found strong evidence that social identity and political-economic grievances drive Indonesian Muslims to identify with or support conservative Islamic groups.⁷

Second, the causal factor of the Islamic defense action is that religious authority in Islam has experienced fragmentation in various shades of religious attitudes and views, including the strengthening of the "conservative turn" in Indonesia.⁸ Thus, no

⁵ V.R. Hadiz, 'The "Floating" Ummah in the Fall of "Ahok" in Indonesia', *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 7.2 (2019) <<https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2018.16>>.

⁶ Andar Nubowo, 'In Search of the Imagined Ummah: Explaining the Political Crossover of Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia's 2019 Presidential Election', *Journal of Asian Social Science Research*, 2.2 (2020), 109–34 <<https://doi.org/10.15575/jassr.v2i2.28>>.

⁷ Rizka Halida Burhanuddin Muhtadi, 'Muslim Identity and Deprivation: Socio-Psychological Sources of Support for Islamist Radical Groups in Indonesia', in *Rising Islamic Conservatism in Indonesia Islamic Groups and Identity Politics*, ed. by Syafiq Hasyim and Alexander R. Arifianto Leonard C Sebastian (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), pp. 14–37.

⁸ Martin van Bruinessen, "Introduction: Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam and the 'Conservative Turn' of The Early Twenty-First

religious authority is so dominant, but rather the authority is experiencing contestation between one another. The contestation of religious authority in the act of defending Islam has encouraged the mobilization of large-scale Islamic defense from various regions influenced by the strength or weakness of a mainstream religious authority found in a region. If the mainstream religious authority that promotes Islamic moderatism is strong and authority competition is low, then the mobilization of Islamic conservatism is also low. However, if the contestation of religious authority is increasingly open, followed by a decline in mainstream religious authority, the chances of mobilizing conservative Islam are greater.⁹ The fragmentation of religious authority in the Islamic defense action also shows a new map of diversity in Indonesia, an indication that Islamic conservatism is considered a threat to moderate Islam. Fragmentation in the Islamic defense action is influenced by social media, to the ability of conservative groups to transform conservatism as a pop-culture commodity followed by using religious psychology and threats experienced by Muslims against different groups.

In addition to studies related to the causal factors of the Islamic defense action in the prosecution of Ahok, existing studies

Century””, in *Contemporary Developments in Indonesia Islam Explaining the 'Conservative Turn'* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing Institute of Southesast Asian Studies, 2013), pp. 16–17.

⁹ Alexandre Paquin-pelletier and Alexandre Paquin-pelletier, ‘Radical Leaders : Status , Competition , and Violent Islamic Mobilization in Indonesia By Radical Leaders : Status , Competition , and Violent Islamic Mobilization in Indonesia’, 2019.

have also discussed the various impacts of the Islamic defense action in Indonesia's socio-political dynamics. The studies pay attention to, First, the impact of the Islamic defense movement on the presidential election in 2019. The Islamic defense action in 2016 has created a polarization in society that continued in the presidential election in 2019. The narrative between supporters of Pancasila vs khilafah, supporters of blasphemy and the imagination of the ummah has colored the 2019 elections. The polarization of society influenced by the action of defending Islam has increased social and political intolerance in 2019. Moreover, social and political intolerance often increases in the ongoing political contestation. Thus, the practice of intolerance in the presidential election is considered as something that is experiencing normalization that is reasonably acceptable to society.¹⁰ In social media, there has also been a sharp polarization by promoting narratives supporting Pancasila and anti-Pancasila and also narratives that promote anti-Islam. The battle of identity contestation in social media has created an algorithmic enclave, a trend in online social media used as an instrument in mobilizing and building deconstructive opinions against political opponents of identity.¹¹ Defending Islamic action is not only a driver of

¹⁰ Risa J. Toha, Dimitar D. Gueorguiev, and Aim Sinpeng, 'The Normalization of Intolerance: The 2019 Presidential Election in Indonesia', *Electoral Studies*, 74, July (2021), 102391 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2021.102391>>.

¹¹ Merlyna Lim, 'Freedom to Hate: Social Media, Algorithmic Enclaves, and the Rise of Tribal Nationalism in Indonesia', *Critical Asian Studies*, 49, 3 (2017) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2017.1341188>>.

religious social movements but also a political force in the contestation of the presidential election in 2019. Supporters of the Defending Islam rally expressed their support for candidates Prabowo and Sandiga using the imagination of Muslims to unite Muslims amidst the economic and social crisis and uncertainty experienced by Muslims.¹² It is feared that the defending Islamic action rallies will have a far-reaching impact on the presidential election in 2019. The role of mainstream mass organizations such as Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah can be the guardian of Islamic moderatism against the agendas and interests of conservatism groups that bring Indonesia towards the deepening of political Islamization in Indonesia.¹³

Second, the impact of the Islamic defense movement has increased religious intolerance in Indonesia. The massive mobilization of Islam in the action of defending Islam is an indication of increasing religious intolerance among Indonesian Muslims. The increase in Islamic intolerance did not only occur at the peak of the Islamic defense action but had begun before the Islamic defense action event. The series of religious intolerance events continued in the 2019 presidential election. Conservative groups have grown and developed mainly from among the Muslim middle class, more educated, have the capacity to develop Islamist

¹² Andar Nubowo.

¹³ Leonard C Sebastian and Andar Nubowo, 'The "Conservative Turn" in Indonesian Islam: Implications for the 2019 Presidential Elections', *Asie Visions IFRI Center for Asian Studies*, 106.March (2019).

organizations. The series of the Islamic defense actions were the culmination of this Islamist group because they felt that the interests of Muslims were not accommodated by the government in the midst of uncertainty and economic, social and political crises.¹⁴ In West Java, Islamic mobilization both before and after the 212 rally series is a form of reflection of the ideologization process that has been going on for a long time. Islamic mobilization originating from West Java in the 212 action can be seen as a form of successful mobilization of Islamist groups in West Java. The success of Islamist mobilization in the 212 action cannot be separated from the historical trajectory of local Islam in West Java as the base of Masyumi and supporters of Darul Islam (DI) and the Indonesian Islamic State (NII).¹⁵

Third, the impact of the Islamic defense movement on the use of social media as an instrument in producing religious discourse in political contestation through Islamic activism. The participation of people from various regions in the Islamic defense action cannot be separated from the role of online social media as a strategy for mass mobilization and discourse dissemination. The activists of the Islamic defense movement succeeded in

¹⁴ Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhtadi, 'Explaining the 2016 Islamist Mobilisation in Indonesia: Religious Intolerance, Militant Groups and the Politics of Accommodation', *Asian Studies Review*, 42.3 (2018), 479–97 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2018.1473335>>.

¹⁵ Amin Mudzakkir, 'Mobilisasi Islam Dan Politik Di Jawa Barat: Sebelum Dan Sesudah Rangkaian Aksi 212', in *Intoleransi Dan Politik Identitas Kontemporer Di Indonesia*, ed. by Yog Setya Permana Cahyo Pamungkas (LIPI Press, 2020), pp. 173–96.

influencing the masses through short messages, memes and propaganda images that were widely spread on the internet. The Islamic defense action has left online activism in the Islamic social movement in Indonesia. In the future, the internet can be used as an instrument in social movements.¹⁶

Based on the description of several studies presented above, about the causal factors of the Islamic defense action movement and the impact of the Islamic defense action movement in Indonesia, studies that explain the impact of other Islamic defense action movements at the local level in several regions in Indonesia have not been paid attention by researchers. So far, attention has been limited to the West Java-centric, Tangerang-centric Islamic defense actions and the involvement of actors affiliated with mainstream mass organizations in the 212 actions. In addition, while some studies have attempted to address the impact of the movement in Eastern Indonesia, where Muslims are a minority, such as Manado and Kupang, with similar 'laskar' active as in Jakarta, there is a lack of research on the impact of the movement in other parts of the country.¹⁷ Meanwhile, studies that explain the impact of the transformation of the Islamic defense movement in the context of local politics in West Sumatra have not been well

¹⁶ Muzayyin Ahyar and Alfitri, 'Aksi Bela Islam: Islamic Clicktivism and the New Authority of Religious Propaganda in the Millennial Age Indonesia', *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 9.1 (2019) <<https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v9i1>>.

¹⁷ Ahmad Sholikin, 'Gerakan Politik Islam Di Indonesia Pasca Aksi Bela Islam Jilid I, II Dan III', *Madani Jurnal Politik Dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan*, 10.1 (2018), 12–33.

mapped. In fact, the dynamics of national to local political influences are no less important in explaining the rise of Islamic conservatism in Indonesia.

This research is an extension of previous studies related to the influence of national politics on the local political stage in the case of the Islamic defense action in West Sumatra. In addition, the research complements the shortcomings of existing studies by looking at how the influence or impact of the transformation of the Islamic defense action in West Sumatra which also has implications for the increasing proliferation of Islamic conservatism movements in West Sumatra. Issues related to national political factors affecting local politics in the aspect of the strengthening of Islamic conservatism are important to know to map the causal factors and their broader impacts. Specifically, this research answers the question of how the transformation of the Islamic defense action movement towards the localized Islamic conservatism movement in West Sumatra after the 212 action. A deep understanding of the development of Islamic conservatism in the local context can develop theories of Islamic conservatism in explaining the Islamic revival movement in Indonesia.

This article is based on the argument that the development of Islamic conservatism at the local level is influenced by the development of conservatism at the national level. The influence of national politics on the local conservatism movement has exacerbated the diversity that exists in West Sumatra. In various

actions, the Islamic conservatism movement tends to use the exploitation of identity politics as an instrument in the religious conservatism movement. Thus, the increase in conservatism at the local level has led to the strengthening of intolerance and identity politics that tend to prioritize majoritarianism.

Literature review

Islamic Conservatism in Contemporary Indonesian Politics

Islamic conservatism has been a national phenomenon in Indonesia's political landscape since the last two decades. Religious conservatism is a response to a variety of responses that have developed in society. Thus, religious conservatism is not only a theological issue, but also a social, political and economic issue as well as the popular development of Islam in Indonesia. The development of Islam in Indonesia has experienced a dynamic turn towards Islamic conservatism (conservative turn). Bruinessen (2013) describes the development of Indonesian Islam as experiencing a turn, turn or turn towards Islamic conservatism. Islamic conservatism refers to religious attitudes and views that are characterized as conservative in understanding religion strictly, rigid, rigid and tend to object to modern contextual and progressive interpretations, rejection of gender equality to the use of hermeneutic methods of scripture.¹⁸ The dynamics of Islam

¹⁸ Martin van Bruinessen, 'Introduction: Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam and the "Conservative Turn" of The Early Twenty-First Century', in *Contemporary Developments in Indonesia Islam Explaining the 'Conservative Turn'*, ed. by Martin van Bruinessen (Singapore: ISEAS

moving towards a conservative turn is influenced by Indonesia's post-New Order political openness, the decline of liberal and progressive views of Islam and the influence of graduates from the Middle East who are active in promoting religious conservatism. The political openness has been utilized by conservative groups as a market place in expanding the influence of Islamic interpretation in Indonesia. This condition has also led to changes in Islamic authority along with the emergence of new Islamic authorities with a conservative character. In addition, conservative groups actively use the internet to promote religious conservatism. In connection with the popularity of conservative groups, they have attracted ulama and politicians as alliance partners in influencing state policies that are characterized by religious conservatism.¹⁹ In addition, the popularity of conservatism is also used as a strategy by religious entrepreneurs to gain economic and political resources.²⁰

The use of the internet as an instrument in promoting religious conservatism has massively increased since the last two decades. The spread of religious conservatism through the internet

Publishing Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013), pp. 16–17.

¹⁹ Alexander R. Arifianto, 'Rising Islamism and the Struggle for Islamic Authority in Post-Reformasi Indonesia', *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 2020, 37–50 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2019.10>>.

²⁰ Marcus Mietzner, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, and Rizka Halida, 'Entrepreneurs of Grievance: Drivers and Effects of Indonesia's Islamist Mobilization', *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde*, 174.2–3 (2018), 159–87 <<https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17402026>>.

is relatively successful because it can be easily accepted and understood by the public. The use of the internet as a "smart dakwah" shows how conservative groups actively produce religious discourse in attracting the influence and thoughts of the people. The presence of celebrity preachers and the use of digital marketing among the tech-savvy millennial generation. This conservative group is active on WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and other communication networks. Smart da'wah that is put forward is packaged in such a way that religious messages conveyed through various mediums such as writing, training, short videos can attract a wider audience.²¹ Intensive and massive utilization of internet media has caused the narrative of religious conservatism to dominate social media. PPIM research results (2020) show that religious trends on social media are dominated by religious conservatism. The narrative of religious conservatism not only dominates social media but conservative hashtags are among the most popular compared to hashtags on other issues.²²

Transformation of the Islamic Conservative Movement: from National to Local Issues

Religious conservatism groups in making changes in society

²¹ Mohammad Zaki Arrobi, 'Otoritas Agama Di Era Media Baru: Pemetaan Isu Dan Tren Kajian', in *Perspektif Ilmu Sosial Di Era Digital Disrupsi, Emansipasi Dan Regognisi*, ed. by Gregorius Ragil Wibawanto M.Falikul Isbah (Gadjah Mada University Press, 2021), pp. 67–97.

²² Dita Kirana and Endi Aulia Garadian, 'Religious Trend in Contemporary Indonesia: Conservatism Domination on Social Media', *Studia Islamika*, 27.3 (2020), 615–22 <<https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v27i3.18823>>.

cannot be separated from collective action strategies and mass mobilization incorporated in a social movement. Islamic activism takes various forms to mobilize resources through social movements.²³ Social movements are not only used as the main strategy for realizing social change when the community has various social problems but also as a means of realizing political goals. A social movement organization is an identity organization that has complexity or formality with goals and ideals that are implemented in a social movement. Social movements organize individuals, ideas, and resources to bring about changes in society that are in line with their ideology. Likewise, the religious conservatism movement cannot be separated from the existence of conservative organizations that follow a number of values, ideas, ideologies, and collective actions manifested in collective actions to achieve social change. Conservative organizations mobilize people, resources, networks, and take advantage of existing political opportunities to spread their ideas and ideologies related to certain target groups.²⁴

Social movements can be defined as organized activities that aim to encourage or inhibit social change in society. In general, a social movement is a complex or formal entity with the aim of

²³ Quintan Wiktorowicz, 'Aktivisme Islam Pendekatan Teori Gerakan Sosial', in *Aktivisme Islam Pendekatan Teori Gerakan Sosial*, ed. by Quintan Wiktorowicz (Jakarta: Democracy Project Yayasan Abad Demokrasi, 2012), pp. 35–40.

²⁴ Oman Sukmana, *Konsep Dan Teori Gerakan Sosial* (Malang: Intrans Publishing, 2016).

achieving goals implemented in a social movement that is based on moral demands and ideals about how the lives of individuals or groups who are marginalized from their society are organized. For the purposes of analyzing the organization of religious conservatism in this study, three important factors in social movements will be analyzed. These three factors include: First, political opportunity, structure mobilization, and cultural framing.²⁵ Political opportunity, also known as the political opportunity approach (POS), emphasizes that social movements occur because of political opportunities that arise due to changes in the ongoing political structure. Political processes refer to the conditions under which individuals or groups seek to gain access to political power and use it for their own benefit. In this context, economic and political factors are considered more important in the success of social movements than personal factors. There are four situations that can shape political opportunities. There are four dimensions of political opportunities that have a direct relationship with the social system in which social movements exist. First, the institutional openness or closedness of the political system. Second, the stability or irregularity of relations between ruling groups. Third, the presence or absence of alliances between elite

²⁵ Mayer N.Zald Doug McAdam, John D.Mc Carthy and In, 'Introduction: Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Framing Processes - Toward a Synthetic, Comparative Perspective on Social Movements', in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 1–11.

forces in society. Fourth, the certainty and tendency of the state to take repressive measures.²⁶

The spread of Islamic conservatism can influence conservatism in other parts of Indonesia. In the context of the action to defend Islam, the movement can influence and become the imagination of certain religious groups in the religious conservatism movement at the local level. As revealed by Buehler (2016), the pattern of the spread of political Islamization that occurred in Indonesia consists of vertical and horizontal patterns. The vertical pattern refers to the spread of Islamization from the national level to the local level which can touch the provincial, district / city areas. Vice versa, the vertical pattern can also be from the lowest level to the top level. From districts/cities, it can spread to the provincial level, and in a more advanced form, it can also spread to the national level. Meanwhile, the horizontal distribution pattern refers to the distribution from one Mayor/Regency to another area.²⁷ Although Buehler's study explains the pattern of the spread of shari'ah local regulations in Indonesia, it can help in explaining the transformation of defending Islamic actions towards local Islamic conservatism movements. In addition to national-

²⁶ Dough McAdam, 'Conceptual Origins, Current Problems, Future Directions', in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*² (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 27.

²⁷ Michael Buehler and Dani Muhtada, 'Democratization and the Diffusion of Shari'a Law: Comparative Insights from Indonesia', *South East Asia Research*, 24.2 (2016), 261–82 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0967828X16649311>>.

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local factors playing a role in influencing issues that develop in society, international factors also have a significant influence on the process of Islamization of a society. The development of local political dynamics is influenced by the interaction of international, national and local factors. The development of Islam at the local level has intersections with trends that occur at the national and international levels.²⁸

Methods

This research uses qualitative methods which are then narrated descriptively. The type of research used in this study uses descriptive research. The qualitative method is used to explore and portray the social conditions of certain religious groups as they are. In describing the social conditions of these religious groups, it is described in accordance with reality. This research tries to reveal how the localized Islamic conservatism movement in West Sumatra is influenced by the transformation of the national Islamic conservatism movement. This research takes a portrait in West Sumatra based on indications of the strengthening of Islamic conservatism group activities after the Islamic defense action movement. The unit of analysis in this study are individuals and groups who are actively involved in the local Islamic conservatism movement in West Sumatra. Data sources are obtained through

²⁸ Delmus Puneri Salim, *The Transnational and the Local in the Politics of Islam The Case of West Sumatra, Indonesia* (Springer, 2015) <<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-15413-8>>.

interviews with several figures driving the local Islamic conservatism movement as well as community groups that become excesses of the Islamic conservatism movement. Secondary data were obtained through books, research reports, journals, internet, print and electronic media. After the data is collected, it is analyzed through the process of organizing data, analyzing and interpreting it into a trend and tendency that can be used in portraying the social conditions of certain religious groups in the local Islamic conservatism movement in West Sumatra.

Results and Discussion

Local Islamic Conservatism in West Sumatra

The Islamic defense movement that took place in 2016 has brought serious implications for the strengthening of the local Islamic conservatism movement in West Sumatra. The mass mobilization of the Islamic defense action did not only come from Islamist organizations and groups but also from various regions in Indonesia. West Sumatra is one of the regions that is active in the mass mobilization of the Islamic defense action which is quite large in the Islamic defense action.²⁹ In the Islamic defense action, 212 action participants from West Sumatra are estimated to reach 14 thousand people using various means of transportation to Jakarta. Among them are those who leave using bus rental, leaving on their own initiative and groups to use airplanes, the majority of

²⁹ Shofan.

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which are filled by 212 action participants. Thousands of these masses not only participated in the 212 action in Jakarta but also had a considerable influence as 212 alumni after the Islamic defense action in West Sumatra.³⁰

As explained by the coordinator of 212 West Sumatra, Irfianda Abidin in the action of defending Islam volume 2, 411 the mass of Muslims who went to Jakarta was still small and limited. But two weeks after that, at the peak of the 212 mass event that came from West Sumatra was very large. In West Sumatra, they mobilized in advance by holding a long march starting from the Chinese village hut area, Simpang Kinol, Purnama Cinema, the West Sumatra Provincial Government Office to the West Sumatra Grand Mosque. At its peak event in the 212 action not only gained broad support from the community from various districts / cities in West Sumatra. There is support not only from Islamist organizations and also community forums that are willing to participate in the 212 action but also financial assistance from various elements of society. People who departed from West Sumatra for the 212 rally used airplanes, private vehicles, and dozens of chartered buses that left for Jakarta. The people who departed by airplane were filled with 212 demonstration participants. The number of airplanes filled with 212 action participants is estimated to reach dozens. In addition, the 212 grand

³⁰ '14 Ribu Massa Dari Sumbar Ikut Aksi 212 Di Jakarta', *Https://Www.Jpnn.Com/*, 2016 <<https://www.jpnn.com/news/14-ribu-massa-dari-sumbar-ikut-aksi-212-di-jakarta?page=2>>.

stage was also enlivened by the delivery of the West Sumatra MUI speech. The Chairman of the MUI of West Sumatra delivered his speech on the stage of the 212 Islamic defense action at Monas which was considered quite electrifying. In his speech, the Chairman of the MUI of West Sumatra said, "Many people ask why the people of Ranah Minang came to Jakarta. We came to show that we respect diversity. Because the rise of Muslims is not because we do not respect freedom. We do not want someone's mouth in this Republic to damage that diversity. We came to declare to all the people of Indonesia, that in Ranah Minang there was not a single stone thrown at anyone's church. No believer is prevented from worshipping. We have respected diversity since this country was liberated. From Ranah Minang, National Heroes were born, who upheld the proselytizing, who upheld the motto of freedom or death, all of which were based on the belief in the promises of the Qur'anul Karim. Therefore, we came here, not to riot, but to declare to this nation, do not try to touch the holy book, which became the belief of the fighters to take up arms, to liberate this country. Don't touch it with desecration. Do not touch with anything that harasses. Whoever is blocking the Minang people to go down to Jakarta, we have said to anyone "once stepped off the ladder, never look back", in the Minang saying "broken wings with beak sticks, longitudinal then transverse broken", we defend the Unitary State, but do not damage our faith.³¹ Based on the

³¹ 'Pidato Menggetarkan Buya Gusrizal Gazahar Ketua MUI

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explanation above, the action participants in the Islamic defense action movement not only received support from Islamic organizations and also West Sumatra clerical figures but also most elements of West Sumatra society who participated as action participants and also as supporters both materially and morally in the 212 action.

After the Islamic defense action, the alumni of the West Sumatra Islamic defense action movement established silaturrahmi, built networks, consolidated organizations to form alumni unions. 212 alumni have been actively involved in da'wah activities, building networks and organizing grand silaturrahmi in West Sumatra. There are several names of forums established such as the 212 alumni brotherhood, 212 golden generation, GNPF MUI West Sumatra and so on. This grand gathering of 212 alumni does not only occur in the national context but also occurs in the public space of the West Sumatra Muslim community. As shown in the grand event of the 212 alumni gathering from the picture below:



SUMBAR Dalam Aksi Bela Islam 3 Monas', *Aku Cinta Islam*
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UI4-HEiDgAY>>.

This religious group is not only silaturrahmi da'wah by holding various forms of religious activities but is quite active in responding to socio-political issues in West Sumatra. Conservative groups are also active in responding to socio-religious issues that develop in West Sumatra. Their activities are not only aimed at strengthening the Islamic identity of the Muslim community but also responding to external religious issues that they think threaten the existence of the Muslim majority in West Sumatra.

One example of the involvement of 212 alumni and GNPF MUI in responding to social, political and religious issues is the rejection of the crematorium that occurred in 2017. In 2017 there was a rejection of the existence of a crematory funeral home owned by Himpunan Bersatu Teguh (HBT) located on Jalan Klenteng Kawasan Pondok, Kec. Padang South, Padang City. The rejection of the crematorium funeral home was driven by religious groups incorporated in the Minang Community Forum Alliance consisting of a combination of Islamic mass organizations, GNPF MUI and the 212 golden generation. In addition, the rejection also came from the Association of Tjinta Teman (HTT), which is located opposite the HBT association.³²

Religious groups that are members of the Minang Community Forum and the National Movement of Guard for the Indonesian Council of Ulama's fatwa (GNPF-MUI) held a

³² “Generasi Emas 212 Tolak Krematorium! Wali Kota Padang Takciuh?,” *Pos Metro Padang*2, 2017 <<http://posmetropadang.co.id/generasi-emas-212-tolakkrematorium>>.

demonstration with the theme of defending Islam. The action protested the rejection of various forms of immoral practices and protested the existence of the HBT funeral home crematorium in Padang City. In the action of defending Islam, the masses who attended according to the Secretary General of GNPf MUI West Sumatra reached two thousand five hundred people who came from various districts / cities in West Sumatra.³³ The resistance of the crematorium is based on several reasons: First, it is too close to the mosque in the Pasa Gadang village, namely the Muhammadiyah Mosque, which disturbs the peace and tranquility of the worship of the mosque congregation. Second, the existence of the crematorium is located in a densely populated area which has caused unrest among residents of the village who are close to the location of the crematorium so that the existence of the crematorium is considered to have violated government regulation (PP) number 9 of 1987 article 2 paragraph 3a. Third, the burning of corpses is not in accordance with Islamic law and with Minangkabau customs. For these reasons, the rejection of the crematorium has resulted in a petition to reject the crematorium of Pasa Gadang residents.³⁴

Rejection action against the existence of crematorium Cremation is the process of burning a corpse or releasing a corpse by burning. This tradition is usually carried out by ethnic Chinese

³³ 'Aksi Bela Islam Di Padang'.

³⁴ Pasa Gadang Petition Document' (Kota Padang, 2015).

groups. They perform the cremation process on the corpse as part of the death ceremony. The rejection action against the crematorium has been going on since 2015 until 2017. A combination of conservative religious groups have protested several times. The first action occurred on November 4, 2015, a group of people on behalf of the Jamaah Mesjid Muhammadiyah protested against the existence of the HBT funeral home in Pasa Borong. This group of people considered that the existence of the HBT crematorium funeral home emitted an unpleasant odor that disturbed local residents who lived in Pasa Gadang. In addition, the existence of HBT's crematorium funeral home is considered to violate PP No. 9 of 1987 concerning Providing the Use of Land for Funeral Place Purposes. a number of Pasar Borong residents and a number of residents on behalf of RT 02 / RW03 Pasa Gadang Village protested against HBT's crematorium funeral home. While the second action occurred on November 14, 2015 carried out by Pasa Gadang residents followed by a combination of religious groups such as the Minang Community Alliance, the Minang Community Forum, and the 212 generation of emasi carried out a larger rejection action in front of the HBT building demanding a protest so that the burning of corpses was immediately stopped. While the third action was the rejection of the Minang Community Alliance to the Padang City DPRD Building. They asked for an audience with the Padang City DPRD so that the organizing permit related to the existence of the crematorium needs to be reviewed

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again.³⁵

Conservative groups protesting against the presence of the HBT crematorium put forward a narrative that the burning of corpses has caused unrest in Pasa Gadang residents. This is as expressed by the chairman of the Padang City Islamic Shari'a Implementation Committee, by Amir Aulia³⁶

“The presence of the HBT crematorium in Pasa Gadang not only disturbs the residents of Pasa Gadang, which is one of the densely populated areas, but also disturbs the worshipers of the Muhammadan mosque who worship at Pasa Gadang. In addition, the activity of burning corpses commonly carried out by ethnic Chinese is contrary to Islam, because burning corpses is prohibited in Islam.”

Although the presence of the crematorium is considered to have caused unrest among the residents of Pasa Gadang, according to one of the HBT administrators, the HBT does not violate the applicable rules. According to the HBT management³⁷

³⁵ ‘Jamaah Masjid Muhammadan Demo Ke Drpd’, *Posmetropadang.Co.Id*, 2015 <<https://posmetropadang.co.id/jamaah-masjid-muhammadan-demo-ke-dprd>>.

³⁶ Interviews with Amir Aulia Ketua KPSI Kota Padang 15 February 2022

³⁷ Interviews with MM Member of HBT Kota Padang, 4 July 2022

“HBT's license to carry out corpse burning is in accordance with the applicable regulations. We have fulfilled all the necessary requirements. Such as amdal permits, labor permits and operational permits for the implementation of corpse burning. Even the inauguration was authorized by the mayor. In fact, by using modern and sophisticated tools in burning corpses, it does not interfere with environmental pollution. The presence of this crematorium is a necessity in the ritual of organizing our funeral deaths.”.

However, even though all permits have been fulfilled by HBT, there are demands for protests coming from the alliance of community forums, GNPf MUI, the 212 golden generation to request that the operational process of burning corpses be stopped immediately. An alliance of religious groups demanding that the operation of this crematorium be stopped. Meanwhile, another opinion related to the HBT rejection case that occurred in Pasa Gadang is a business competition between the HBT association and the HTT association whose building locations face each other in the Pondok Village. Both the HBT and HTT communities come from different socio-economic statuses. HBT refers to the upper middle socioeconomic status while HTT refers to the middle socioeconomic status. These two communities have been

competing for a long time. This is as expressed by MT³⁸

“The rejection of HBT's crematorium in Padang City is more due to the competition between the HBT and HTT groups. The competition between the HBT and HTT groups has been going on for a long time. Since the presence of the HBT crematorium's corpse burning equipment obtained an operational permit, there were indications that important individuals from HTT were throwing issues, that the burning of the corpse had disturbed the densely populated area of Kel.Pasa Gadang. So that issues related to the impact of burning the corpse are framed in such a way as to be a big threat to the local community. Because it is considered to have disturbed the local community, so that it becomes a wild ball into issues of disturbing the religious activities of the Muhammadan mosque congregation so that it involves other larger religious groups.”

The protest demands carried out by a combination of religious groups consisting of the Minang Community Forum, GNPf MUI, 212 golden generation in rejecting the existence of a

³⁸ Interviews with M.T Head of West Sumatra Religious Moderation House 6 June 2022

crematorium in Padang City show that the presence of this group is active in responding to social religious issues in Padang City. Although all permits have been fulfilled by HBT in accordance with government regulation No. 9 of 1987 have been fulfilled completely and have been confirmed directly by the Mayor of Padang Mahyeldi that the existence of the crematorium is in accordance with applicable regulations. HBT has fulfilled all the requirements specified in the crematorium's operational permit. The protest action carried out by a combination of religious groups against the existence of the crematorium seems to show not only intervention in the presence of other religious groups in Padang City but also hints at the superiority of this religious group on behalf of the majority of Muslims in West Sumatra. The narrative put forward that burning corpses is not only against Islam but also against the ABS-SBK philosophy that is used as a philosophy in the Minang realm. Demonstrations carried out by religious groups and hearings with the DPRD and a meeting with the Mayor concluded the decision to temporarily stop the operation of the crematorium because it was considered to have caused unrest in the community. In addition, the appeal from the Mayor also aims to calm the atmosphere in maintaining religious harmony, especially in Neighborhood Pasa Gadang because the narrative developed has led to racial ethnicity and religion (SARA) elements.³⁹

³⁹ 'Walikota Padang Minta Pihak HBT Hentikan Operasional',

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The involvement of religious groups in responding to socio-political and religious issues is not only in crematorium issues but also in various other social issues. As seen in the series of events below:

Issue	Link	Years
Rejection of Ahok on religious issues	https://www.republika.co.id/berita/ofhlg377/ribuan-warga-sumbar-demonstrasi-tolak-ahok https://m.valoranews.com/?mod=berita&id=5553	2016
Mobilization of islamist from West Sumatra to join the 212 rally	https://www.jpnn.com/news/14-ribu-massa-dari-sumbar-ikut-aksi-212-di-jakarta https://kumparan.com/langkanid/forum-masyarakat-minang-klaim-1-000-orang-akan-ikut-reuni-akbar-212-1543580037716789690	2016 dan 2018
Demanding closure of HBT crematorium in Padang	https://covesia.com/archipelago/34920/aksi-unjuk-rasa-kembali-tolak-krematorium-di-padang	2017

Infonusantara.Net, 2017 <<http://www.infonusantara.net/2017/03/walikota-padang-mintak-pihak-hbt>>.

<p>Demanding the closure of the Inul Vista entertainment caroke venue for blasphemy</p>	<p>https://covesia.com/archipelago/35527/ini-alasan-gnpf-mui-demo-tolak-inul-vista-di-padang</p>	<p>2017</p>
<p>Visiting legal aid organizations (LBH) Padang regarding the issue of indonesia legal aid foundation (YLBHI) supporting the revival of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI)</p>	<p>https://m.batamtoday.com/berita/97686-Buntut-Rusuh-Soal-PKI,-LBH-Padang-Didatangi-Ormas.html</p>	<p>2017</p>
<p>Demanding for the investigation of President Megawati for alleged blasphemy.</p>	<p>https://dprd.sumbarprov.go.id/home/berita/1/317</p>	<p>2018</p>
<p>Reporting Sukmawati to West Sumatra Regional Police for her poem that was considered blasphemous</p>	<p>https://radarpekanbaru.com/news/detail/8684/forum-masyarakat-minangkabau-laporkan-sukmawati-ke-polisi.html</p>	<p>2018</p>

Joint action of the West Sumatra Muslim Alliance rejecting the ban on wearing the veil on the IAIN Bukittinggi campus.	https://hidayatullah.com/berita/nasional/2018/03/23/138640/tanggapan-iain-bukittinggi-soal-cadar-dinilai-tak-sesuai-harapan.html)	2018
Rejection of Chinese tourists to West Sumatra (2020)	https://regional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/27/15130221/forum-masyarakat-minang-minta-turis-china-keluar-sumbar-2-x-24-jam)	2020
Restrictions on Cap Go Meh Celebrations in Padang City (2003)	https://sinyalnews.com/2023/01/27/rapat-ormas-islam-fmm-dan-pemprov-sumbar-bahas-cap-go-meh/)	2020

Source: Pelita Padang: Interfaith Youth Community in Padang City 2023

The involvement of religious groups Forum Masyarakat Minang, GNPF MUI, and 212 golden generation as the drivers of Islamic conservatism movement that has been stated above is a form of transformation of national Islamic conservatism movement in the context of local politics in West Sumatra. In addition, the impact of this movement has led to the expansion of Islamic conservatism in the Muslim public sphere in West Sumatra. The influence of this Islamic conservatism group in

issues of community diversity related to freedom of belief is one of the variables that place the index of Religious Harmony of West Sumatra Province in a position of low harmony level. In this religious harmony index, West Sumatra received 64.34 points or ranked 33 out of all provinces. The points achieved by West Sumatra are below the national average points of 73.83.⁴⁰ The narratives developed in the 212 event and the construction of the discourse that was built influenced the local Islamic conservatism movement which gave birth to conservative attitudes and views. Thus alumni who are members of GNPF MUI, participants of the 212 action have the potential to spread attitudes and views of religious conservatism in their hometowns. In recent years, the region has also experienced an increase in intolerance, a trend that has worsened with the strengthening of political Islam and the accompanying polarization of politics and society. Thousands of West Sumatrans participated in the movement and brought divisive thinking and exclusivism to their hometowns.⁴¹

Based on the explanation of various forms of local Islamic conservatism movements above, it shows that the 2016 Islamic defense action has brought a wide influence on the emergence of Islamic conservatism movements at the local level in West Sumatra. National political factors affect the dynamics of the local

⁴⁰ Muhammad Adlin Sila and Fakhruddin, *Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama 2019, Badan Litbang Dan Diklat Kemenag RI* (Badang Litbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI, 2020), p. 60.

⁴¹ Ulta Levenia.

Islamic conservatism movement. The factors causing this national political transmission are in line with the views of Buehler & Muhtada (2016), namely the national factor, the vertical spread of certain religious issues is one of the patterns for the spread of various forms of spread of other religious issues in Indonesia.⁴² If Muhtada's view is related to the national-vertical spread pattern of the legitimacy of regional regulations of sharia in various regions in Indonesia, the national-vertical spread pattern also has a significant influence in the context of the influence of the conservatism movement of the action of defending Islam on the local Islamic conservatism movement in West Sumatra. Political Islam that develops on the local political stage is a political opportunity to advance the agendas of religious conservatism groups. According to Fossati (2021)⁴³ that, since the implementation of regional autonomy, conservative groups have taken advantage of the policy to bring conservative groups' agendas to the local political stage in Indonesia. Political change from centralization to political decentralization should ideally accommodate the diversity of ethnic and religious groups. However, this policy can justify the privileges that exist in certain regions against ethnic or religious majority groups. While in

⁴² Buehler and Muhtada. Lihat juga Dani Muhtada, *Perda Syariah Di Indonesia: Penyebaran, Problem, Dan Tantangannya, Dalam Orasi Ilmiah Dalam Rangka Dies Natalis VII Fakultas Hukum Universitas Negeri Semarang Pada Tanggal 4 Desember 2014 Di Semarang*. (Semarang, 2014).

⁴³ Diego Fossati, 'When Conservatives Support Decentralization: The Case of Political Islam in Indonesia', *Regional and Federal Studies*, 0.0 (2021), 1–25 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2021.1951252>>.

Western democracies, the implementation of decentralization aims to make governance more effective and efficient in managing pluralism and fulfilling the demands of minority rights, in the Indonesian context, decentralization policies in certain regions have a negative impact on the development of conservative-exclusive political ideologies rather than promoting progressive values. This situation is exacerbated when democratic institutions in regional decentralization fail to organize governance based on justice, equality and fulfillment of citizens' rights so that local government policy making has the potential to marginalize conflicting ethnic and religious groups in preserving their cultural identity. In addition, conservative elements often encourage discrimination against religious minorities.

In the context of populism, actions that claim to be in defense of Islam have led to the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia. Then, the reactions to the events were politicized by the use of Islamic identities that triggered the religious sentiments of Muslims. This identity was used to mobilize certain groups of people to protest against the government. Although the initial protests occurred locally in Jakarta, the movement later expanded to other regions including in West Sumatra. This also shows that the political background for the emergence of local Islamic conservatism movements is not necessarily a crisis but rather a national factor. This research is different from the prediction of Nuryanti (2021), who concluded that the trend of Islamic populism

in the Islamic defense movement was only temporary, because the context of political opportunities for the emergence of Islamic defense actions was political contestation in the Jakarta Governor election. In fact, he predicts that the continuation of the 212 movement is still uncertain and may disappear after the Islamic defense action. In addition, the solidarity ties of the 212 movement cannot be maintained in the legislative and presidential elections in 2019.⁴⁴ However, the 212 movement that developed in West Sumatra has a strong group solidarity that it is actively involved in various kinds of local Islamic conservatism movements in West Sumatra.

Conservative Islamism still has a very important influence on Indonesia's political and socio-economic development for the future. Moreover, these conservative groups have evolved, and they are not limited to using only one vehicle religion to express themselves politically but have other means of communicating their political viewpoints. Socio-political issues such as whether non-Muslims can be elected as national or local leaders and economic issues such as halal certification and sharia housing can be instrumentalized by these groups as part of the political aspirations of conservative groups. The development of religious

⁴⁴ Sri Nuryanti, 'Populism in Indonesia: Learning from the 212 Movement in Response to the Blasphemy Case against Ahok in Jakarta', in *Populism in Asian Democracies: Features, Structures, and Impacts*, ed. by Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay Sook Jong Lee, Chin-eu Wu (Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands, 2021), pp. 165–75 <<https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004444461>>.

conservatism at the local level in West Sumatra since the last two decades is a serious challenge to the existing diversity landscape in West Sumatra. The development of this local Islamic conservatism movement not only threatens the Islamic moderatism that has long been rooted in West Sumatra but often creates a negative stigma for the strengthening of Islamic conservatism in West Sumatra. Moreover, the identity construction of Adat Basandi Syara', Syarak Basandi Kitabullah (ABS-SBK) is often exploited or used as jargon in promoting conservative understanding. So that the unity between adat-Islam has a political dimension which is used as jargon by various interest groups in various places.⁴⁵ ABS-SBK, which is understood exclusively, is often used as an instrument in the local Islamic conservatism movement in West Sumatra.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the transformation of national politics in the issues of the Islamic defense movement has a significant impact on the local Islamic conservatism movement. The national political factor not only affects the local Islamic conservatism movement but also the proliferation of local Islamic conservatism movements that are active in responding to social,

⁴⁵ 'Peneliti UGM: Klaim Kesatuan Islam-Minang, Instrumen Politik', *Gatra.Com*, 2020 <<https://www.gatra.com/detail/news/481946/politik/peneliti-ugm-klaim-kesatuan-islam-minang-instrumen-politik?fbclid=IwAR1kWiEnyNt8Q8qe9fJT4iA5liJI0-itjkv44ADPXo8zKTPeUZ-0AVVGD70>>.

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political and religious issues. The national political factor followed by local political decentralization is a political opportunity for local Islamic conservatism groups to carry conservative agendas. Thus, the proliferation of local Islamic conservatism movement is a serious challenge to the diversity landscape in West Sumatra.

This article has the limitation that it only portrays the smallest part of the local Islamic conservatism religious group. Meanwhile, to understand the attitudes and views of religious conservatism at large, it is not only portrayed from the side of certain religious groups but requires extensive surveys and in-depth interviews to comprehensively understand the attitudes and views of religious conservatism of the community. Thus, further studies related to local Islamic conservatism can portray the individual aspects of society more comprehensively.

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