



The Dynamics of Religious Political Assertiveness of President Soeharto

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Abstract

History of Indonesia has recorded the name Soeharto as the second president and president with the longest term in Indonesia. The dynamics of Soeharto's religious-political struggle experienced ups and downs where at the beginning of independence Soeharto tried to embrace the power of Islam, so that Indonesia would be able to rise from the events of the thirty-September party movement of Indonesian communists. Whereat the beginning of the new order Suharto was very responsive to the political power of Islam regardless of the political content he wanted but at least, there was a strong desire to get Islam involved in it. But unfortunately in the middle phase of Soeharto's leadership began to turn towards the Islamic group, many policies did not benefit Islam, including a single principle policy towards Islamic parties and Islamic mass organizations, where all organizations must use the single principle of Pancasila. So that when not using a single principle is considered not recognized by the government, in addition there is no freedom for the scholars to laugh because they are considered to spread political movements, the use of headscarves is limited, religious education will be removed even if it is not successful. Soeharto's unreasonable attitude changed. Because in 1990 a lot of Soeharto's policies benefited Islam such as building mosques, establishing ICMI (Indonesian Muslim Scholars Association), awarding clerics and clerics, even Suharto was very religious in nature, where religious activities were very concerned, even he often used the name of the pilgrimage. The fact explained that Suharto was a devout president.

Keywords: *Political Decisiveness; Islamic Organization; Leadership*

Introduction

The Soeharto Order had a long vulnerable period of 32 years because it required studies in various fields of science. there are so many pros and cons to Suharto's leadership, of course in the chaos there are advantages, especially people around Suharto, but there are also disadvantaged people who want changes in pressure and action against the Suharto leadership continues to flare up so that the mass movement leads to the collapse of the collapse New Order power (Thaba, 1996). This study is important to give thought to the development of the New Order period touted as a period of ups and downs of Islamic politics in Indonesia.

It is interesting to see further how Soeharto retained his power for 32 years, it is not easy to remember that at that time Indonesia was not yet stable in all fields, but in the midst of limited conditions

both in economic and political terms, but Suharto's figure appeared as an ideal leader for the Indonesian people, with machines the party, the Golongan Karya party, became an instrument of the New Order's political interests. The New Order, led by President Suharto, lasted for a long time. No one thought that Suharto would be the president of Indonesia for so long, even one of the longest-running democratic leaders in the world. With this time span many political attitudes were taken by Soeharto to determine the direction of policy and power. Giving awareness to the public that, the term of office of President Soeharto is far beyond the term of office of President Sukarno, he replaced. After that many were stunned by the fact that the New Order government was in fact one of the longest-running authoritarian regimes.

As is known to all in the New Order regime, religion has very limited space to avoid becoming a political identity or political goal. Religion considered Suharto as a political threat that must be used, and if necessary be sidelined. Political elites or masses using religious symbols to oppose State hegemony are always accused of being extreme right just like the use of communist or socialist ideology for the same purpose of suppressing the hegemony of rulers accused of being extreme leftists. The task and role of Soeharto as a leader, is indeed not easy with the form of a multicultural state, because the Indonesian nation is a heroic country. Therefore, it is necessary to have a religious-political assertiveness from Soeharto to maintain the stability of the nation's security, with diverse racial and cultural diversity, becoming a separate challenge in building a nation with such conditions a head of state must be able to overcome every problem that arises so as not to have an impact on the harmony of religion in society.

Leadership History

Indeed, in 1966-1981 the New Order regime stood firmly with many political attitudes in favor of Muslims, but Suharto gradually abandoned Islam and turned against Islam, this was due to the new order being oriented towards development, which prioritized economic growth and needed political security stability. Suharto considered various ideologies and religious organizations, especially political Islam, as an imminent threat to political stability and power (Amir, 2003).

The New Order government was centralized, muscularly applied by Soeharto, the authoritarianism was often associated with the practice as applied by Hitler, with fascism, with the very authoritarian system of government in the world in the 20th century, because the theory greatly glorified race, thus closing the opportunity to live democratically properly. In a state, this condition became an interesting conversation during the reign of the New Order with a centralized system so that religious conditions were not spared from Soeharto's control (Wibisono, 2012).

President Soeharto's decision to lead Indonesia with his authoritarian style could indeed be what Indonesia was needed. A leader who can control all state affairs because it has been known together after the fall of the reins of the leadership of President Sukarno to President Soeharto. In his place, President Soeharto was confronted with conditions of sharp political conflict which led to the realm of horizontal conflict, thus the community was in dire need of very ideal leaders to create better political conditions. After that a number of policies of the New Order government were considered to be more pro-Muslim, the government's friendly attitude towards Muslims was seen when the government submitted a bill for the Indonesian national education system in 1989. In this law the government accommodated the interests of Muslims by including provisions that religious education becomes a compulsory subject that must be given to students from kindergarten to tertiary institutions, both public and private. (Karim, 1985).

Makiwawu (2012) gives a similar narrative that President Soeharto is a "humble" figure or person. Suharto is a figure who really cares for the little people and wants to learn "to be president. His concern for the small people is implied in national development planning, with the New Order

Government. Where Soeharto prioritized the welfare of the small people, and tried to eradicate poverty that spread across the country. The agricultural sector, which at the time became the foundation of 85% of the Indonesian people, was the beginning of Soeharto's steps in implementing national policies. Suharto also did not hesitate to make detailed records of various Nation and State problems. In the first five years of his rule, Suharto always recorded statements from ministers as well as experts, including professors as a reference for him before making any concrete decisions. When he had decided and determined the policies that would be used in the wheel of his administration, President Soeharto became very strict, so that during the subsequent years of Soeharto's leadership, the ministers recorded all instructions from the President.

As long as President Soeharto is in charge and in power one of the characteristics of Suharto's leadership is his determination to lead the country. The firmness of President Soeharto's leadership attitude later became the world's spotlight on how he led the multiracial and multi-religious Republic of Indonesia. Likewise its work in the international arena is able to overcome various problems of Developing Countries Members of the Non-Aligned Movement. Suharto's leadership was also reflected in the Organization of the Group of Islamic Countries (OIC), in the ASEAN Group of Nations Forum, APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), and others. (Makiwawu, 2012).

The assertiveness of Soeharto's religious politics was also seen in the early 1990s, many of Soeharto's political policies were pro-Islam, where the New Order allowed the formation of the Indonesian Muslim Scholar Association (ICMI). This policy provides its own advantages for Muslim communities who are given freedom of expression and are given a place to express religious activities. The closeness reached the peak point showing that there was no animosity between Suharto and the Muslims (Yusufpati, 2007).

As Suharto's increasingly close relationship with the Islamic community proves that Suharto played a role in maintaining power, attitudes that used to be indifferent turned good into the political dynamics of the nation's journey. This refutes the accusation that Suharto is anti-Islam. The more the end of the New Order leadership the more visible the religious movement towards Islam, many policies that overshadow the interests of Islam. (Muamar, 1998).

In determining political attitudes must have the best possible consideration, besides that political ethics is an absolute requirement for the government in making policies, as explained in the book on political ethics written by Haryatmoko that political policy is a binding decision for many people, the policy must be made on political authority full act on behalf of the people (Haryatmoko, 2003). If political policy does not heed political ethics, the policy taken does not have a clear efficiency for the interests of many people, this kind of thing makes political policy bad in the eyes of the people. Political image also gives rise to a negative meaning which leads to people's distrust of the government.

Thus a good political attitude is a must for a nation, with the politics of a nation being able to achieve a common goal, namely a more sensible and more prosperous life if the political process is carried out properly. Of course, Soeharto's political behavior strongly aimed the direction of politics itself for the welfare of the people, this was not felt during the New Order regime where politics was not made commander in making policies that were of public interest, and political interests were only enjoyed by a group of people who had interests.

Creating polite political attitudes and political validity is very important but extra political oversight is needed, so that every attitude carried out by state officials can be more controlled. However, it was different at the time of the New Order regime, all of which were carried out by not prioritizing aspects of the common interest which further provoked public emotions towards Suharto's leadership. The community asked Suharto to be responsible for the suffering suffered by the people during his leadership.

Political responsibility is that power is a mandate, therefore for religious people the power must be accountable to God and those who are under him. Starting from the mandate, then the command obligation of every believer to fulfill the mandate given to them, such a system is an Islamic political system. As well as the sovereignty discourse built by the New Order regime, this theory teaches that the highest power in the state is owned by the people, the will of the people in the public will be the basis of state power (Karim, 1985). Political politeness should be part of the dynamics of political life in the New Order era, which has long held the reins of power. From the dynamics of religious politics, it is explained above clearly how the people could not feel the existence of freedom and were haunted by the fear and disappointment of the community towards the New Order leader which is not in favor of the people's interests, the policy was rolled out no longer heed the values of morality (Rais, 1991).

Then Suharto again realized that his attitude so far that had shunned Muslims, had been a disaster for his leadership. Suharto returned to Islam as seen from Soeharto's steps and policies that seemed to support Muslims. Thousands and even tens of thousands of mosques stood throughout the archipelago with the help of Suharto's Muslim Basila charity foundation, thousands of preachers were also sent to Indonesian leaders with funds from the president. Soeharto's intimacy with Muslims continued with the blessing of the establishment of the Indonesian Muslim Cendikianwan Association (ICMI), from which the author tried to further examine how the impact of Suharto's political attitudes towards Islam from antagonistic attitudes since the establishment of the New Order regime, until suddenly the 1990s attitudes turned into accommodating towards Muslims. This attitude of accommodation does not only touch Islamic politics but also touches on other issues such as economics, law and education, and even matters of worship. Soeharto's closeness to Islam was at its peak just before the New Order leadership. The number of policies carried out by Soeharto made many pros and cons. From the dynamics of religious political orientation taken by Soeharto and how the impact on Islam in Indonesia from here the author will try to explore further.

Now Suharto surpassed a *primus inter pares* (supreme ruler) in military leadership. Suharto topped the pyramid of power where Suharto himself put everyone in key executive, legislative and judicial positions. Besides, Suharto also dominated ABRI, Bureaucracy, and Golkar. Although Suharto could easily manage the path for Indonesia, eventually Suharto would make peace with the pressure group. Efforts made by President Soeharto to be able to perpetuate his power include various things carried out by President Soeharto in managing the government, political parties, and the military. Soeharto is a leader who is not easily guessed by his temper. Through this mini-thesis research, the researcher found that some literature stated that President Soeharto was a person who had a calm, cautious, simple, quiet, and quiet personality. But in his leadership model Suharto adopted the Authoritarian leadership model. As noted by Fukuyama et al (2002) countries that adhere to the Authoritarian system from the beginning contain an internal contradiction of the legitimacy of its power.

Dynamics in Religious Political Assertiveness

After entering the final period of the New Order leadership, Suharto's religious political assertiveness was seen by making a new movement to advance Muslims, although there was much opposition from people closest to Istanah, but the government's strong determination to create a political format so that Muslims were in it so that it was formed. an Indonesian Muslim Cendikian Association, with the hope when the establishment of ICMI, that Muslims and the government together to protect and develop Indonesia better, both from the political, economic, legal and cultural aspects of the goal is based considering that the Indonesian people have begun to experience a crisis of trust to the leader.

With the birth of ICMI in the New Order, the government's attention to Muslims was seen, of course, the function and role of the government was increasing to ensure that the organizational structure

would run well, and the government considered bureaucrats to be able to carry it out because it had ideal characteristics such as division of labor, hierarchical levels, the behavior of the position holders, relationships that are impersonality, career (Weber, 1986). The sitting of bureaucrats in ICMI management such as Harmoko, Azwar Anas, Bedu Amang, Shaleh Afif and others, of course, has the goal of making ICMI steps younger, because some of ICMI's activities will be related to licensing issues which are controlled by the bureaucracy, this reason makes many figures enter in the management of the ICMI. Even though Suharto had blessed the establishment of ICMI but not everyone wanted ICMI to be present in the Istinah environment so that was the reason why many bureaucracies were seen directly in the ICMI Organization, to facilitate steps in determining a policy and program so as not to get opposition from the environment of the Palace.

ICMI members consist of three groups including the following: (1) Groups of Islamic scholars and thinkers, (2) Groups of Islamic politicians and activists (3) Government bureaucrats. (Ramage, 1995).

The division of three groups in the association of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals organizations at least illustrates that the strong desire of Islam is supported by Islamic thinkers and activists united to build a politic in the New Order government, thinkers groups of scholars want that Muslims are not just big religion but must have a creative idea so that Islam not underestimated, from the group of politicians and Islamic activists they want that Islam is not only known as a hard religion but Islam is a religion that prioritizes the principle of togetherness for many people, Islam has a polite political lobby to maintain political violence by promoting political ethics, the inclusion of bureaucrats in ICMI to run well when it is processed by skilled hands who are accustomed to government bureaucracy, and ICMI also looks not rigid.

ICMI became a new breakthrough when Muslims stopped fighting during the New Order era where Islam was always controlled and suspected by Suharto as a threat to the New Order. From the birth of ICMI as a forum for the struggle of Muslims, where many people hope for the struggle of ICMI, especially from old age groups who have experienced the bitterness of the struggle of Islam during the New Order, such as NU, Muhammadiyah, where this group views ICMI as a religious organization, and political organization. The change in Soeharto's political attitude was influenced by internal and external factors, in which the New Order saw the flow of Mulsim's intellectual growth in Indonesia which was quite significant, then the conflict between Soeharto and L.B Moerdani where Suharto dismissed him as ABRI (Republic of Indonesia Armed Forces) Commander (Latif, 2008). LB Moerdani's criticism of the business controlled by the sandalwood family-led Suharto to look for strength supporters to be safe from criticism from opponents. Apart from that, Suharto was aware of the political changes in the eastern part of the world such as in the State of Lebanon is a large Muslim adherents, would be very dangerous if the Muslim group became opposition to the government that he led.

With the existence of ICMI as an organization uniting scholars, it does not mean that they are safe from criticism, both outside Islam and within Islam itself as stated by Abdurahman Wahid. The presence of ICMI also led to speculation of Islamization within the bureaucracy and the Suharto government, as in the sixth development cabinet some names were considered affiliated with ICMI such as BJ. Habibie as minister of technology research, Wardiman Djojonogoro as minister of education and culture, Azwar Anas as minister of coordinator and public welfare, Harmoko as minister of information and many other names that are considered affiliated with ICMI (Ramage, 2002). But not all of them are members of the ICMI management and are included in the New Order's power circles, such as Amin Rais, Dawam Raharjo, and Sribintang Pamungkas who are still outside the government and become the balancing group of the government led by Suharto. Indeed the democratic system will work well also there is one group not included in the government as a counterweight and as a means of control.

The birth of ICMI opened a democratic tap that went well, where government actions could be directly monitored by opposition groups or balances in the government. ICMI was also able to be the upholder of the political problems of the New Order, many policies were born as a form that Islam was able to be a solution for the State when the State was in a bad state because of public pressure because it was not trusted by many people. Besides that ICMI is able to strengthen the Islamic economy with indicators of the establishment of Islamic banks in the New Order. ICMI has become a historical record of the long journey of the New Order government in developing the nation.

The change in Soeharto's religious political rigidity was increasingly seen when the permission of the Indonesian Muslim intellectual organization was established, the presence of ICMI was able to be an answer for Muslims so far feeling uncomfortable about various policies towards Islam, because the beginning of the New Order was considered to fail to get closer to the Soeharto government, with thus every desire of Islamic groups is difficult to be accommodated and even marginalized so that there is no opportunity for Islamic groups to express themselves. But the situation reversed with the formation of ICMI to make Islam feel like being born again, but these changes have received a negative reaction from Soeharto's closeness to maintaining power. And indirectly improved the government's image of Islam.

Suharto and Muslims

In 1991 Soeharto as the ruler of the New Order decided to go on the pilgrimage with his family members to withdraw Suharto from performing the pilgrimage in contrast to other State leaders, the pilgrimage performed by Soeharto using private funds not using state funds, escorts provided by the Saudi Arabian State were rejected by Suharto, after returning home from the haj pilgrimage Suharto preferred to use the name hajj to change attitudes towards Islam increasingly romantic and embrace various Islamic groups. (Thaba, 1996). The change in Soeharto's religious attitude is very evident that he is very much in wisdom and enjoys a series of worship in the holy land, this change in attitude indirectly portrays Suharto's personality as someone who is not allergic to Islam, even though many believe Soeharto is very thick with the Javanese *kejawen* but Suharto's closeness to Islam shows that he was a devout Muslim.

From the above explanation it can be seen that Suharto is a great figure who is full of controversy with Muslims (Abdulgani-Knapp, 2007). The figure of Soeharto's leadership in controlling his power made Islamic politics ebb and flow because Islam's presence became the most important thing for Suharto at the end of power, Soeharto's strategy and role greatly made the political journey of Islam interesting to trace. Soeharto's political changes made the conditions of Muslims seem to be reborn and had a role in the New Order government so that these conditions were used so that Islam could color the history of the Suharto Order which was considered to have a dark history of Islam.

As the head of the Soeharto State knew very well that the social welfare system of Indonesia was collapsing, in order to solve it he had to use a dual role in which Suharto played the fist of the State and as a citizen, asking for donations and channeling funds in building mosques throughout Indonesia. The action to build a mosque is the first step to make Islam stronger in Indonesia.

Conclusion

The firmness of Soeharto's religious politics at the beginning of the formation of the New Order was not yet seen as resolute, due to political considerations given the unstable condition of the Indonesian people. Entering the 1980 phase the new order government felt strongly in everything, both economic and social politics, automatically the role of religion seemed neglected, starting from here many religious

political policies were considered not strategic even religious marginalization occurred so religious leaders were prohibited from talking about political issues. This political assertiveness made the religious community uncomfortable so that a movement against the policy arose so that in 1990 Suharto's religious political firmness from being aggressive became better and more friendly to religious interests, many religious activities were carried out by the New Order government.

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