The Politicization of Mosques for the Interest of the Statein Post-Reform Era

Ahsanul Khalikin[1], Rosidin[1]*, Muh. Isnanto[1], Arnis Rachmadhani [1],Reslawati [1],Lilam Kadarin Nuriyanto [1], Marpuah[1], Herman Hendrik[1], Titi Isnaini Fauzah[1],Wakhid Sugiyarto [1],R. Adang Nofandi [1], Raudatul Ulum [1] , Dandung Budi Yuwono[1]

[1]national Research and Innovation Agency, Jakarta, Indonesia

Abstract:

This study provides comprehensive knowledge regarding the importance of excluding mosques from any political interests and explains the presence of control over mosques by the state. This qualitative study was conducted using an exploratory method and qualitative data collection technique. There are three main issues regarding state interventions in religious practices carried out in mosques. First, the state's presence through by defining the role of mosques in the formulation of laws and regulations. Second, the state sorts the materials for sermons that are regarded deviant from the state's interests. Third, the state include contents to support the state's interest in sermon materials. This research was conducted at the Ad-Dakwah Mosque in Sukabumi City which also serves as the center for religious moderation education. The mosque is used as a research analysis unit as a "counter-narrative" of the study's findings which state that mosques have been exposed to radicalization. The Alumni Family Association of the Mosque Youth Communication Board (IKA-BKPRMI) supported the Law Number 7/2017 stating that anyone who commits 'religious politicization' during political campaign can be subject to sanctions.Both in terms of the location (the mosque) and the material (abusive content, inciting, pitting one against the other, insults). On Sunday, April 22 2018, they showed their objection to the use of the mosque for political-purposes. This study proposes a new perspective regarding the politicization of mosques to support the state's interest. Previous studies only regarded mosques as an entity that is not affected by the state.

Key Word: Mosque, Politicization, State's Interest, Post-reform Era

Introduction

Places of worship, especially mosques contribute to the nation as they facilitate the citizens to conduct religious activities and also convey the communication between the state and the religious community. The statutory regulations issued by the government regulate the activities in mosques, such as the Law no. 7 of 2017 and KPU Regulation No. 23 of 2017 concerning roles and politics. The law states that mosques may not be used for political purposes such as political campaigns. However, the condition seems to be a paradox as some politicians 'play politics' in the mosque by concealing political campaigns into religious activities. Some of them establish state-sponsored mosques and deliver politic-related speech in the mosques.

It is interesting to analyze the neutrality of mosques when there are some mosques being involved in practical political activities. Some mosques in the Special Region of Jakarta put up banners reading "This mosque does not pray for the bodies of supporters & defenders of religious blasphemy" (https://www.liputan6.com/ news/read/2870421/polri-pemasang-spanduk-masjid -rejecting-praying-the-corpse-that-real-crime) which raised concerns from many parties. The Center for the Study of the Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council (DDII) issued a decree with Number: 06/B-MAFATIHA/II/1438/2017 concerning Religious Sanctions for Supporters of Blasphemy of Religion and Election of Non-Muslim Leader Candidate Pairs. (NU Online, 2017, March 22). This decree then prompted a widespread response calling for the need to keep mosques neutral as the place for muslim community to unite and religious activities, instead of to disintegrate the community into different political groups.

This study was performed to propose a comprehensive picture of how mosques should be freed from political interests since mosques had been co-opted as an instrument of state power. In fact,

mosques had been used by some people to form certain perspectives toward the state based on their own interests.

The presence of state in religion-related domain is not fair because the state is actually a political entity. Therefore, the call for keeping the mosques neutral becomes paradoxical. It is necessary to 'control' the mosques to prevent them from facilitating political interests to gain political power. Therefore, statutory instruments were formed to regulate activities that are allowed and prohibited in mosques. The assistance and control over the recitation materials held in the mosque can be regarded as co-optation of mosques by state power.

To address this issue, this study examined the forms of state's interventions in religious practices carried out in mosques based on three major aspects. First, this study examined the presence of the state in religious practices in mosques by defining the role of mosques in the formulation of laws and regulations. Second, how the state filters the materials of religious discussions and speech to keep them aligned with the interests of the state was also analyzed. Third, this study discussed how the state interfere with the materials of speech and sermons delivered to the community. In-depth analysis to those concerns will create better comprehension regarding the presence of state's control over mosques.

Literature Review

The Politicization of Mosques

The mosque or "masjid" (in Arabic) comes from the word "sujud" or prostration. In the early era of Islam, mosques used to be simple buildings that facilitated the Muslim congregation. Nawawi, Jahnkassim, & Hamat (2016) sated that mosques only facilitated obligatory worship rituals (prayer). Then, Zin (2018) explained that during the early development, mosques served as a place of worship the center of political, social and economic discussions and also the shelter, educational institution, public space and even prison. The first mosque was built in Medina. Until later in the Umayyad Era, the development of mosque was limitedly used for religious purposes only. Since then, mosques are seen as sacred places of worship and social affairs (Allahham, 2019). However, in its current development, the function of mosques has shifted to also facilitate political contestation, where the religion is being used as the vehicle for some parties to gain political power(Hadžić, 2020). Mahmudah (2020) refers this situation as the politicization of mosques, where

mosques are used as a tool in pursuing political interests and spreading the ideology of certain political party. Furthermore, mosques are often used as the space for the mobilization of the mass to control deviant religious discourse or religious views (Zuhri, 2016).

Assyaukanie (2019) stated that the politicization of mosques can trigger (1) conflicts between congregations that have different political views; (2) deviant function of mosques as spaces for political movement; (3) loss of mosques' congregation; (4) the spread of hate speech. One form of mosque politicization is wrapped as Islamic studies or religious speech that are supported by certain political actors to gain sympathy. All forms of politic-related movements in the mosques can be considered as mosque politicization (Lussier, 2019). In line with the view, Barton, Yilmaz, & Morieson (2021) presented the movements that politicize mosques during regional head elections. Similar phenomena also occurred during the 2017 governor election in Jakarta, where mosques were used by the mosque committee, religious leaders and politicians to gather congregations concealed as religious gathering where political views were shared in the activities. In addition to the utilization of mosques as political vehicle, religious symbols such headscarf for women and worship clothes for men were also used to conceal the activity to look like religious gathering (Assyaukanie, 2019). For example, Hary Tanoesoedibjo, general chairman of the Perindo Party, who is of Chinese descent and is a Christian, suddenly visited a mosque wearing a turban or hajj cap.

The state has become a political entity that has strict control and power over the religion domain (Batuman, 2013). The state's control over religion is manifested in state power to oversee activities carried out by mosques (Maritato, 2017). In this context, the control exercised by religion and religious authority over mosques are reflected in the mosque administration and the appointment of mosque leaders as well as the writing of sermon texts to influence the as social, religious, and political views of the multi-ethnic communities (Samuri & Hopkins, 2017). For the state, the control aims to protect the fundamental interests of the state, such as public order, public security, public health, morals and the rights and freedoms of the people (Nieli, 2015). However, over time, this control then extended to the organization and management of mosques to only align with the visions and missions of the state

(Scharffs, 2016). Likewise, in Egypt, the new regime exercised control over mosques throughout the region. They closed mosques that did not have official permits, banned clerics from preaching, and formed new policies in mosques to support state regulation against terrorist movements (Henne, 2019).

State authority over mosques brought impacts to the community. As written by Chiodelli & Moroni (2017), state's supervision and control of mosques have influenced the regulations that led restrictions on space and worship activities. Sarkissian, (2012) explained that in Tunisia, the state has full control over the mosque and the determination of the prayer leader to ensure that the contents of the preaches are approved by the local government. Such control has declined the comprehension about the religion among the community. Fox (2016) asserted that the teaching of religious values that is limited by state policies prevents the whole knowledge from being clearly conveyed. In addition, state control over mosques also allows the conversion of mosques as political arena. Some experts stated that mosques are often used as a place to gain political support and to instill state ideology and values in society (Oskooii & Dana, 2018; Mohamed et al., 2014). Mosque makes a strategic place to control public authority to fit the goals and implementation of policies expected by the state (Martínez-Ariño, 2018; Lunn 2016).

Post-Reform Era

Ever since the post-reform era, freedom was the focus of the state's values, including the freedom of religion, belief and politics (Adiwilaga, 2019). However, those freedoms were still controlled and limited by the state, especially the authorization of movements and religious spaces such as mosques (Ansor, 2016). Nasution (2016) also argued that to maintain unity and end sporadic post-reform movements, the central government used its power to regulate six important areas, namely finance, foreign affairs, defense, security, state administration and justice and religion. Azwan et al., (2021) mentioned that mosques function beyond places of worship but also the place for deliberations where the insights regarding economics and politics were developed. Rifa'i, (2016) also supported the view as he stated that the end of the 20th century after the reform era, mosques developed extended function as a place for political arena to influence the perspectives of the community and to gain political support from the community.

The development of Islam in post-reform Indonesia is marked by the rapid growth of Islamic mass organizations that promoted the integration between Islam and democracy, human rights, advocating for minority groups and gender equality (Ansor, 2016). Mass organizations and spaces for religious discussion became more open in conducting religious propagation. On the other hand, Indonesia's post-reform political climate is marked by the politicization of religious symbols which harmed the democracy. The politicization of religion reached its culmination during the 2017 Jakarta regional head election (Priyadharma, 2018). The Istiqlal Mosque was used as a space to spread hate speech against Governor Ahok. In addition, post-reformation era was also marked by the rise of radical veiws and Islamic extremist propaganda spread in the mosques (Heiduk, 2012). In this era, mosques also function as the space for political contestation for politics and by extremist radicals. Korteweg & Yurdakul (2010) found Indonesia's democracy is being tested by the politicization of mosques and religion.

Method

This study was conducted in Sukabumi, where there are many mosques that function as a center for the teaching of religious moderation. The mosque became an object of this study on the grounds that it is a "counter-narrative" to the findings of the aforementioned study which mentioned that mosques had been exposed to radicalization. It is assumed that there was another mosque prototype with a wasathiyah (center) pattern developed by the community as a way of accentuating that a mosque is required to spread peace as a "house of God."

First, a literature review was conducted to collect relevant documents to select only significant information and/or initial mapping for future researchers before conducting field observation. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with the informants; Chairperson of the committee of Bolandongan Ad-Dakwah Mosque Sukabumi, Head of Islamic Community Guidance Section of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Sukabumi City, Indonesian Council of Ulema (MUI) Sukabumi Branch, Chairperson of Indonesian Islamic Ummah Union (PUI) of Sukabumi City, and historian of the Sukabumi Grand Mosque. The interview ended when the researchers find the data sufficient where no further information needed to be collected. Field observations conducted by the researcher were

expected to help this study to be as objective as possible.

Regarding numerous limitations, the main focus of this study was to examine the mosque administrators and the implementation of religious moderation, in order to maintain and enhance existing religious moderation in Sukabumi. Informants in this study were categorized into the mosque committee and the community. Informants representing the mosque committee were anyone who was actively involved in the process of religious moderation. Meanwhile, informants representing the community were those from the community and/or congregation who had a history in the process of religious moderation.

The mosques selected to be included in this study were based on the following criteria for the moderate mosque: 1) mosque committee came from various religious understandings, religious cultural mass organizations, 2) Khatib, lecturers accommodated across schools of thought, 3) worship rituals accommodated various schools of thought, 4) the content of lectures/sermons respects various schools of thought and religious understanding, 5) reading sources accommodate cross-school books, and 6) the five characteristics referred to are institutionalized in the teaching of religious moderation.

Research Findings

Evidence of politicization:

1.   Regulations regarding the position and role of mosques (directorate general circular, lecturer certification), state assistance;

During the Covid-19 pandemic from mid-March 2020 to the present, the committee of the Jami Ad-Da'wah Balandongan Mosque in Sukabumi has always adhered to MUI Fatwa Number 14 of 2020 on Organizing worship during the Covid-19 virus outbreak. The MUI mentioned a number of services, such as the ta'lim assembly or communal Quran reading, congregational Friday prayers, tarawih prayers, and Eid prayers. Circular of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 15 of 2020 on Guidelines for Organizing Religious Activities in Houses of Worship in Creating a Productive and Covid-Safe Society during the Pandemic. The Indonesian Mosque Council as a religious mass organization also issued various circulars on congregational and Friday prayers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.   Prohibitions made by the government;

Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections or by the General Election Commission (KPU) Regulation No. 23 of 2018 on the General Election Campaign mention several prohibitions in political campaigns. Moreover, some things should be neutral from practical politics. Therefore, politicization found its place to be attached to a negative stigma. A political campaign by offering the vision, mission, program, as well as self-image of the candidate should be done to convince voters instead of politicizing something that should be neutral to attract sympathy. For example, the Election Law stipulates that election campaigns are prohibited from using government facilities, places of worship, and places of education (Politics or Politicization? By Ahmad Sadzali, Lc., M.H. lecturer at the Faculty of Law, Islamic University of Indonesia, November 6, 2018).

Minister of Religious Affairs, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin asked that the campaign at places of worship be prevented. According to him, places of worship, such as mosques, churches, monasteries, or other places of worship are not places to campaign for regional head candidates or legislative candidates for the 2019 election. Accordingly, campaigning in places of worship must be prohibited (Republika.co.id by Febrian Fachri, Arie Lukihardianti, M Nusyamsi, April 24, 2018).

3.   Leaving "contents/messages" in the sermon

The Surabaya mosque committee advised the following measures and techniques to stop mosques from politicization: First, creating a vision and mission as well as statutes and budgets. Every policy and implementation of mosque management will not come out of these rules. Second, independent in terms of schools of fiqh. Committees and mosques must be independent of the point of view of fiqh schools because mosque congregations do not only consist of followers of certain fiqh schools. Third, independent from practical and party politics. Committees and mosques must be independent, and not involved in practical politics. Fourth, selectively choose prospective preachers and lecturers, by standardizing preachers and lecturers and looking at their history. Fifth, making rules for the contents of lectures and sermon content. The Mosque committee provides rules for conveying the contents of lectures and sermons to lecturers and preachers. Lecturers and preachers may not discuss khilafiyah issues. The content of lectures and sermons should not be biased toward one side, not mocking and blaming other groups. The content of lectures and sermons must not divide the people, not contain hate speech and not

compartmentalize society and not be provocative and controversial. Sixth, increase the activities of the dhikr assembly and the ta'lim assembly. The existence of these activities might close the gap for the politicization of mosques. Seventh, evaluating the activities that have been carried out. Eight, providing participation to the congregation of the mosque to provide control and evaluation of the performance of the mosque committee and activities carried out at the mosque. https://newssetup. kontan.co.id/news/menteri-agama-keluarkan-surat-edaran-soal-pelaksanaan-salat-idul-adha-ini-isinya?page=all.

Discussion and Analysis

Findings Summary

The point is that according to the Position and Role of Mosques for the Interests of the State based on the regulations of Law No. 7 of 2017 and KPU Regulation No. 23 of 2017, there are things prohibited and must be neutral from practical politics in political campaigns, politicization gets its place pinned from a negative stigma. The Election Law stipulates that election campaigns are prohibited from using government facilities, places of worship, and places of education. This supports the appeal of the Minister of Religious Affairs, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, to prevent the implementation of campaigns in places of worship. Places of worship, such as mosques, churches, monasteries, or other places of worship are not places to campaign for pairs of regional head candidates or legislative candidates for the 2019 election. To anticipate the politicization of mosques, the opinion of the mosque committee in the Surabaya suggests strategies and steps preventing the politicization of mosques by the followings: (1) Creating a vision and mission as well as statutes and budgets. (2) Independent in terms of schools of fiqh. (3) Independent from practical and party politics. (4) Selectively selecting prospective preachers and lecturers by standardizing preachers and lecturers and looking at their history. (5) Making rules for the content of lectures and sermon content. (6) Increasing the activities of the dhikr assembly and ta'lim assembly. (7) Evaluating the activities that have been carried out. (8) Providing participation to the congregation of the mosque to provide control and evaluation of the performance of the mosque committee and activities carried out at the mosque.

The existence of a place of worship, in this case, a mosque, seen from its function, has 2 (two) functions, namely the manifest function and the latent function.

The manifest function of this religious institution is mean to have patterns of belief (doctrine) that determine the nature of the relationship, both between humans and God Almighty as well as relationships between humans, the existence of ritual ceremony that symbolizes a pattern of belief (doctrine) and reminds people of the existence of that pattern of belief (doctrine), and a pattern of people's behavior that is consistent with the teachings that are believed. Meanwhile, the latent functions of religious institutions or hidden functions can be considered in several ways, namely places of worship, besides functioning as a place to carry out worship activities to God Almighty. They also function as a place to meet and communicate with each other among religious people. Mosques, for example, apart from being used as a place of prayer for Muslims, are also used as a place to carry out public recitations, deliberations, discussions, and so on. The human spirit being able to carry out religious teachings well has fostered another spirit in various fields of life. This supports a theory developed by the American sociologist, Robert K. Merton, organizing his theory of real function (and latent function and dysfunction as well) in his book, Social Theory and Social Structure, published in 1949. Merton investigated closely social action and its effects and found that real function can be defined very specifically as the beneficial effect of conscious and intentional action. Manifest functions stem from all kinds of social action but are most often discussed as the result of the work of social institutions such as the family, religion, education, and the media, as well as the product of social, policies, laws, rules, and norms. Furthermore, in Talcott Parson's functional theory, focusing on mechanisms that increase stability and order in social systems, especially regarding the concept of social balance, namely the continuity of social pattern, is not something that is difficult and problematic and does not require explanation. Further social advancement is ensured by these consistent and normative adjustments (Turner, 2012).

If the existence of a functional relationship is successfully unraveled, then such as an analysis can also be very important to explain how such a functional relationship can survive or even be hindered by its development. If functional analysis can be concerned with the issue of structural stability, functionalists can shift their analytical claims from the level of description and interpretation to problems that require a full and lengthy explanation, although limited to issues related to the durability of functional relationships within a particular set of conditions or

sequences. Thus, the theory of functionalism explains that social activity is a social system, in which social institutions are interrelated and dependent on one another.

1.   Regulations regarding the position and role of mosques (directorate general circular; lecturer certification), state assistance;

Anyone who engages in 'religious politicization' during a campaign can be subject to sanctions as stipulated in Law Number 7 of 2017. "Both in terms of the location (mosque) and the material (ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations (SARA) content, inciting, fighting against each other, insults), all the sanctions have been regulated." (Heyder Affan: Political issues: Mosques in Indonesia are 'the freest in Southeast Asia': https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-43870331)

2.   Prohibitions made by the government;

The ban or prohibition of campaigns being carried out in places of worship has the support of the Alumni Association of the Young Mosque Activist Communication Board (IKA-BKPRMI). On Sunday (22/4/2018), they made a statement to reject the use of mosques as a place for politics. Chairperson of IKA-BKPRMI, Andi Kasman Makkuaseng, reminded all young mosque activists not to make mosques a tool for politics. Nevertheless, he said, this did not mean that the mosque youth would be blind to politics. "Mosques should not be used as political pawns, but political discussion in mosques is acceptable." (Republika.co.id by: Andi, Tuesday, April 24, 2018, at 3:20 Western Indonesia Time) https://republika.co.id/berita/nasional/news-analysis/18/04/24/p7okhh440-mengapa-kampanye-politik-di-rumah-ibadah-dilarang. prohibition of campaigning in places of worship, not only inside, but also all forms of activities such as sticking stickers and installing campaign props are also the things that are prohibited from being carried out in places of worship and their courtyards. (Moh. Makmun, Mahmud Huda, The Politicization of Mosques from the Fiqh Siyasah Perspective: A Study of Mosque Committee in Surabaya, 112: 2019)

a.   Leaving a "contents/messages" in the sermon

Some mosque committees explicitly give meaning to the politicization of mosques, such as Tajus Subkhi who stated that the politicization of mosques is to make mosques a vessel, place, and media to support one of the candidate pairs who are participating in

political contestation, both candidates for Regent-Mayor, Governor, Presidential Candidate and Candidate Members of the Legislature at all levels whose aim is to gain or seek votes and support and seek sympathy from the congregation of the mosque. M. Sholeh Hasan suggested that the politicization of mosques is those who make mosques an arena for political contestation through lectures that lead people to support one another. Therefore, it can cause divisions among the congregation of the mosque or the people themselves, and this is certainly not justified because it will cause Muslims to be reluctant to go to the mosque. Based on the understanding put forward by the mosque committee in Surabaya, it can be inferred that the politicization of mosques is to make mosques a place for practical political interests, either in the form of invitations to elect someone who is contesting the General Election (presidential election, legislative election, or regional head election) or vilify other people who are participating in the General Election contestation.

b.   Research Implications/Strategic Plan

It has been stipulated in Law Number 7 of 2017 that anyone who commits 'religious politicization' during a campaign can be subject to sanctions. Both in terms of the location (mosque) and the material (ethnicity, religion, race, and inter-group relations (SARA) content, inciting, fighting against each other, insults)."This has received support from the Alumni Association of the Young Mosque Activist Communication Board (IKA-BKPRMI). On Sunday, April 22, 2018, they made a statement against the use of the mosque as a place for politics. Based on the understanding put forward by the mosque committee in Surabaya, the politicization of mosques is to make mosques a place for practical political interests, either in the form of invitations to vote for someone who is participating in the General Election contestation or vilifying others who are participating in the General Election contestation.

Conclusion

Law Number 7 of 2017 and KPU Regulation Number 23 of 2017 on roles and politics mention that mosques may not be used for political purposes such as campaigning. This becomes a kind of paradox since the government actually 'plays politics' in the mosque by using the mosque as a medium to convey its interests. This state policy emerged in the form of the establishment of a new state-sponsored mosque, the provision of assistance by the state in the construction of mosques, and the delivery of special

materials in sermons that contained the interests of the state.

The state is present to shape the opinion of Muslims towards the state and its interests in the mosque. Forms of state interference in religious practices carried out at the Ad-Dakwah Balandongan mosque in Sukabumi City turned out to be through three main focuses; First, the state continues to be present in religious practices in mosques through the definition of the role of mosques in the formulation of laws and regulations. Second, the state filters out anything that is not adhering to the interests of the state. Third, state control is present through the sermon materials delivered. Understanding the existence of state influence over mosques is improved by finding the answers to these three issues.

The results of this study can add insight to previous studies. This study has shown a new perspective in viewing the politicization of mosques which is in the interests of the state. Currently, mosques have been seen from an objective perspective that ignores the point of view of the interests of the state. By using a "subjective perspective", it is possible to map how the conception and evaluation of the politicization of mosques which are the interests of the state are imposed on them. In contrast to the objective perspective, the responsiveness and satisfaction levels placed on them are very low.

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Adress for Correspondence :

Rosidin, Research Center for Religious Harmony and Moderation, National Research and

Innovation Agency, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email:--nazalnifa@yahoo.co.id