struggle between ethnicity, religion and class that underpins the politics of difference. The panel is interested in addressing the following questions: • To what extent the class background of power players plays a key role in the political contests that have used ethnicity and religions to support their claim for domination? • How does the power struggle between ethnicity, religion and class shape and re-shape the politics of difference in Indonesia’s future? • Does economic deprivation remain the main source of public protests and social mobilization? To what extent does it pose threats to the politics of difference? • To what extent is the relevance of Fuchs' assumption about “the emergence of ‘post material’ values [such as peace, gender inequality, ecological sustainability, sexuality, race and right-wing extremism, etc.] as well as the emergence of an ‘immaterial labour class' in relation to the changing patterns of protest?’

**Unity in Which Diversity? Examining Class and Identity in Contemporary Indonesian Politics**

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**BACKGROUND**

Since the 2014 presidential election, Indonesian political landscape has increasingly been characterised as a battleground for competing identity-based groups. In particular Islam has become the most prominent marker of a popular collective identity, driving a wedge between the muslim and non-muslim electorate in the process. The 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election and the 2019 presidential election confirmed this worry. Many popular groups were formed or reinvented around Islamic slogans and narratives. The incumbents in both executive elections were described as not Islamic enough, enemies of Islam or even communists.

This political development has troubled many pro-democracy activists and scholars alike. Those who oppose the trend were quick to organise rallies, workshops, seminars and press conferences condemning the so-called “politicisation of religion.” In its place, they promoted the notion of Indonesia as a rainbow nation comprising of various ethnicities, languages, and religions. This campaign was centred around the promotion of the Bhinneka identity (deriving from the state’s official slogan Bhinneka Tunggal Ika or Unity in Diversity) in contrast to the religious (Islamic) one.

In academia many scholars and observers quickly jumped to the conclusion that identity is indeed an important category to explain Indonesian politics. Loyalty to one’s religion or ethnicity seems to be taken as an important, if not the main, explanation for political and economic behaviours, which transcends class differences. Much of the focus of their research is on the formation of those identities and how they are translated into people’s choices and actions in the public realm.

The popularity of identity as a political category seems to ignore a long-standing source of division in Indonesian society, i.e. material inequality. As a deeply unequal society (Winters 2013) Indonesia is vulnerable to conflicts that potentially arise from the grievances of the marginalised and the struggles over resources among various groups. Indeed, in the early years of Reformasi a number of scholars identified similar structural inequalities at the root of the supposedly identity-based conflicts in the Moluccas (van Klinken 2001; Wilson 2005) and Poso, Central Sulawesi (Aragon 2001). It seems now that the focus has shifted almost exclusively to identity, particularly the religious one.
OBJECTIVE

This paper seeks to consider the arguments for identity politics by examining existing literature on Indonesian democracy. How valid is identity in explaining current Indonesian politics? What is missing from the focus on identity? How would a study on identity politics that takes material inequality seriously look like? This research will contribute to the ongoing debate about the academic merit of non-material interests in explaining the struggle for power and resources. Anthropology is often understood as a discipline whose main interest is to study the social and cultural rather than the structural. This research will help narrow the gap between the cultural and structural approaches, and offer ways whereby both can complement each other.

DESCRIPTION

In recent years, two major strands of literature on identity politics have come up quite strongly in the broader discussion on democratisation in Indonesian. The first group focuses on how the post-New Order political configuration has encouraged various interest groups, which would have been outside the New Order inner circle, to organise and make claims. Islamic groups (Hamayotsu 2011), ethnic groups (Wilson 2005), indigenous people (Murray Li 2000), women groups (Porter 2003), environmentalist groups (Di Gregorio 2014), LGBT (Ridwan and Wu 2018), and youth (Wallach 2008) mobilise their unique identities to extract political as well as material concessions.

Most of those studies employ social movement theories by the likes of Dough McAdam, Sydney Tarrow and Charles Tilly. According to this approach, individuals with shared interests organise themselves and demand state recognition, redistribution of assets, positions in public offices, changes in the law or other types of concession from the state. There were well documented cases of success (Rosser, Roesad et al. 2005), in which the movements created significant changes or received the recognition they desired albeit temporarily. These successes are interpreted as indications of the efficacy of identity. More importantly, those movements bring together people from various class backgrounds, giving the impression that their shared identity transcends economic inequality that might otherwise separate them.

Islam has definitely become the most important political identity in recent years. Rinaldo (2010) explains how Islam offers an acceptable and accessible vision of Indonesia amidst the ideological confusion that characterises the post-New Orde era. Islamic organisations and political parties serve as institutional vehicles that give shape to that Islamic vision by taking part in political contestations including elections (Hamayotsu 2011). This way, Islam becomes an established avenue for formal political participation. On the welfare side of things, Islamic organisations such as NU and Muhammadiyah run various basic services crucial to the survival and welfare of many impoverished populations in Java and Sumatra. Emotional and pragmatic loyalty to Islamic is built through repeated interactions with these services (Hicks 2012).

The second group of analyses view Islamic identity as an effective tool of manipulation of the masses. In his research on Islamic militia, Mudhoffir (2017) sees the origin of these violent groups in the capitalist proletarianisation which produces unemployed youths. They adopt an Islamic identity as a way to gain political and economic benefits in their local context. Manipulation of Islam also takes place in the hands of the elite in their quest for power. They use Islam as it is effective in covering up wealth disparities in society and in mobilising people across classes. Islam as a political identity enables the “suspension of difference” in which the faithful is imagined as a homogenous entity despite internal social and economic disparities (Hadiz 2018, 2).
FINDINGS

The first group takes identity politics as the determinant of actions. Their description is rich and colourful as they recognise agency in individual organisers and activists, and consider organisational details important in mobilisation. They can be meticulous in description but sometimes at the expense of historical backgrounds, especially political-economic ones, that conditioned political institutions in a given context. In particular, those working with resource mobilisation theories often suffer from a narrow (administrative and legal) definition of politics.

The latter group of scholars doubt that Islam possesses an intrinsic mobilising power. They argue that identity (Islamic) politics mask the real conflicts in society, whose roots can be found in the dynamics of capitalist social formations. Their analysis focuses on revealing how those dynamics take the form of identity politics. As they are informed by the Marxist notion of class, their investigation generally concludes with the centrality of capitalist contradictions and this often renders their analysis rather predictable.

Arguments for identity politics can therefore pay more attention to certain configurations of power and material interests that have long shaped society, whilst respecting the significance that people attach to identity. Certain configurations of power may favour one type of articulation over the others, and this process cannot be determined a priori. Identity and class interests may interact in ways that are unique to a context. Therefore, it is argued here that we need to look at how resources are available to certain groups over time and how interests are articulated in collective terms in the struggles over those resources.

CONCLUSION

Geertz’s famous phrase describes how humans are “suspended in webs of significance” (Keesing 1987, 161). Where an anthropologist sees meaning, a Marxist sees exploitation and manipulation. Identity arguments must be situated in a context that historically, politically and economically favour certain social or cultural expressions. These expressions, in turn, help determine how resources are later contested and allocated.

Keywords: identity politics, inequality, class, Islam, Indonesia

BIBLIOGRAPHY


In Fear of Purification in Representational Sense: Reshaping Political Preferences in Young Chinese Indonesians Post-Ahok Era

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In the midst of different ideologies, rational choices, and imaginary state, political preferences can be naturally expressed by many group and communities due to the openness of Indonesian society. Along with Indonesian political movement, the expression of political discourse is believed related to political preferences. The preferences often reflect the political identity based on their entity or community which are attached to the concept of self-identity. Nowadays, the sense of Indonesian politics tends to accommodate the practice of purity of its supporters, the political preferences echoes the generation matrix that regulates the relation between the visible and the invisible, the imaginable and the non-imaginable at a representational level. In the context of political preferences of Chinese Indonesians, political inclusion has been established in which reflects new hope giving a vocal voice in expressing political thoughts. However, this sphere is only an illusion due to the current political movement that creates the tendency of creating social groups based on people’s political preferences. Based on our findings through ethnographical approach in digital and social media, personal sphere such as family chat groups and social media posts forces the existence of purity in the everyday life political condition which nurture a problem in defining political representation of a certain group. Defining ‘the others’ political identity based on imaginary self preference becomes a problem. Reshaping political preferences is an eternal struggle for Chinese Indonesians, as their struggle to escape from an act of being cautious in any