THE INTERSECTION OF ISLAM AND POLITICS IN INDONESIA'S LOCAL AUTONOMY ERA

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Abstract

The article examines the impact of local governance on Islam and politics in Indonesia, examining how decentralization of power has allowed local politicians to collaborate with Islamic organizations and parties to affect local policy. Local officials have been accused of Islamization, which entails promoting Islamic ideals and practices through governmental policy. The article examines the issue of mixing religion and politics, stressing that some Indonesians feel Islam should be crucial in the country's political landscape. In contrast, others believe religion and politics should be kept separate. After reviewing the many perspectives on Islam and politics in Indonesia, the article finishes by underlining the need for a more harmonious interaction between these two sectors. It emphasizes the existence of inter-religious conflicts in Indonesia, some of which have been fuelled by politicians' exploitation of sectarianism to further their interests. As a result, the paper suggests that politicians and policymakers adopt a more inclusive approach that respects religious diversity and encourages communication among different religious groups. This essay proposes that education and the media can promote inter-religious harmony and tolerance, resulting in a more peaceful and prosperous society.

Keywords: *Islam, Politics, Political Islam, Indonesia, Local Autonomy, State and Religion*

A. Introduction

With a population of more than 270 million, Indonesia is a varied country with a wide range of ethnic and religious communities (BPS 2023b). Almost 87% of Indonesia's people practice Islam, the country's primary religion (BPS 2023b; 2022). Due to the country's high percentage of Muslims, religion significantly impacts Indonesian politics, especially in the modern era of decentralized rule. Islam's prominence as the state religion of Indonesia gives it considerable sway over the country's politics. Since local governments now have more power to enact policies, religious groups, especially Islamist ones, have become more involved in politics due to decentralization (BPS 2023a; 2021). However, there are difficulties when religion and politics mix, and the state must take steps to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and equally.

There has been a rise in the participation of religious groups, notably Islamic ones, in Indonesian politics due to decentralization, which has given more power to local governments to enact laws. Many religious groups, especially Islamic ones, have become involved in politics due to decentralization in Indonesia, which has allowed local governments to take on more policy authority. As the dominant religion in Indonesia, Islam significantly impacts the country's politics. Many Indonesians look to religious leaders for direction in many areas of life, including politics, because of how deeply ingrained the country's teachings, values, and beliefs are. It has given Islamic groups and parties a powerful voice in Indonesian politics. At every level of government, political parties have allied and competed for influence. Other critics, though, say there is a dark side to how Islam and politics combine. There have been cases where religious communities, like the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, have utilized their influence to advance their goals or discriminate against minorities. It has prompted worries about the influence of religion on politics in Indonesia and its potential effects on the country's secular fabric (Hefner 2002; Azra 2004; Hadiz and Teik 2011; Gedacht 2016; Mukrimin 2012; Hosen 2005; Laskowska 2016).

The growing influence of Islamic organizations in politics in Indonesia, the demands of the Islamic community, and the necessity for secular administration all challenge Indonesia's new era of local autonomy. With the rise of local autonomy, Islamic groups have become more active in politics, with some forming their political parties. Although the Indonesian constitution safeguards the principle of secularism, there is a rising concern that Islam's influence on politics could lead to the implementation Islamic law or Shariah.

Indonesia is facing a difficult challenge in dealing with the growing influence of Islamist groups in politics. The government of Indonesia supports and encourages democracy and pluralism, but some worry that Islamic groups' participation in politics could threaten the country's secular system of government. The potential for Islamist organizations to influence politics and ultimately lead to the imposition of Islamic law (Shariah) is a significant source of anxiety in Indonesia. The principle of secularism in the Indonesian constitution safeguards against the imposition of any particular religious ideology, yet, the increasing power of Islamic parties in the country's politics poses a threat to this protection. The concerns and interests of Indonesia's various religious and ethnic groups must be balanced with those of the Islamic community (Al-Aharish 2017; Laskowska 2016; Nurdin

2016; Azra 2004; Nastiti and Ratri 2018; Mukrimin 2012). Although having an enormous Muslim population in the world, the country also has a sizable Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, and animist minority. Maintaining a stable and welcoming democratic society will need to ensure that the interests of these various groups are considered and their rights are protected. Islamic groups' participation in politics extends beyond forming political parties to encompass the shaping of national agendas and laws. The possible impact of religious ideology on governmental decisions may limit Indonesia's social and economic development.

Therefore, as Indonesia continues to work toward social, economic, and political development, one of its most significant challenges will be striking a balance between the demands and influence of Islamic groups in politics and the principles of secular governance, democracy, and pluralism. In order to accomplish this, it will be necessary to strike a careful balance between the varying demands and interests of some different groups while also ensuring that the ideals of democratic government and secular governance are respected.

This article will assess and analyze the complexity of the dynamics between Islam, society, and Indonesian politics. This paper aims to explore the role of Islam within Indonesia's local autonomy era, its challenges and opportunities, and the potential future of Islamic politics in the country. As we will see in the next section of this article, the introduction of local autonomy, Indonesia underwent a significant political transformation. Local autonomy provided greater power to regional governments and allowed them to address local issues and needs. However, this also meant that the role of religion, particularly Islam, became more prominent in local politics. Various challenges have arisen with the increasing role of Islam in local politics. One of the primary concerns is the potential for conflicts between religious and secular values, particularly in areas like education and governance. Crucially, there is a risk of exclusivity and marginalization of non-Muslim communities.

This article concluded by stressing the potential for Islam's constructive and all-embracing participation in regional politics. It can potentially motivate the fight for economic and social equality, especially in disadvantaged minorities. Islamic political parties are more sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged and the outcast. Several factors, including

the government's stance on local autonomy and the impact of global Islamic movements, will determine the trajectory of Islamic politics in Indonesia in the future. It is also essential to consider the range of beliefs and practices held by Indonesia's Muslim population. Hence, managing the intricacies of local autonomy and developing a more inclusive and heterogeneous society in Indonesia requires an appreciation of the interplay between Islam, society, and Indonesian politics.

B. Results and Discussion

1. The Impact of Local Autonomy on Islam and Politics in Indonesia

In Indonesian politics, the era of local autonomy designates when authority was devolved from the national to the subnational level. The Law on Regional Autonomy, passed in 1999 to empower local communities and advance democracy and good governance, marked the beginning of the decentralization process (Faguet, Fox, and Pöschl 2015; World Bank 2003; Hudalah, Firman, and Woltjer 2014; Lele 2012; Mukrimin 2018). In politics, "local autonomy" describes the movement toward devolving federal authority to state and municipal levels. It entails delegating decision-making power, financial resources, and administrative duties to regional or local governments. By enabling more accessible and accountable local leadership and granting people more say in their development, local autonomy aims to improve governance.

Contemporarily, Islam and politics in Indonesia have been profoundly affected by the country's decentralized power system (Mukrimin 2018; 2013; 2021; Mukrimin, Lahaji, and Akifah 2018). There is a strong Islamic impact in Indonesian politics because Islam is the country's most widely practiced religion. Islamic political parties and organizations rose to popularity and began to have an outsized impact on local politics during the era of local autonomy. Decentralization of authority, democratization processes, and the rise of religious conservatism all had a role in amplifying this shift toward Islamic influence in politics. As a result, local governments started pursuing policies that represented Islamic values and beliefs, such as introducing sharia law in some areas. Many diverse strains of Islamic politics have arisen in Indonesia due to local autonomy, from moderate and progressive movements to more conservative and fundamentalist parties. The aims of these groups can be very different, and they frequently struggle with one another for influence and power within their communities.

Local autonomy has also had a notable impact on the lives of Indonesia's Muslim population, particularly in terms of societal norms and cultural practices. For instance, local governments and organizations have been able to enact laws like dress codes or religious education programs to encourage better adherence to Islamic norms. Nonetheless, the increasing role of Islam in politics has not been without controversy, especially concerning the treatment of religious minorities like Christians and Hindus, who may feel sidelined or discriminated against due to these policies. Given the emergence of Islamist movements worldwide, there have also been worries about the possibility of extremism and radicalization among some elements of Indonesia's Muslim community (Hasan 2014; Sirry 2020; Arifin et al. 2019). Thus, local autonomy has greatly affected Islam and politics in Indonesia by giving Islamic organizations and movements more opportunities to influence local decision-making and societal norms. There have been heated discussions concerning the intersection of religion and politics in the country due to this transition, particularly concerning the treatment of minorities and the risk of radicalization.

2. The challenges faced by Islam during the local autonomy era

Notwithstanding the advantages of local autonomy, Islam encountered many difficulties throughout this time. The primary concern was the struggle to control local resources and decision-making power among diverse Islamic groups and other stakeholders. There were worries about local Islamist groups becoming more extremist as they gained political power. For example, conflict and friction frequently erupted between Indonesia's Muslim majority and many other religious and ethnic minorities (Suryana 2017; Arifin et al. 2019; Mukrimin 2012; Mukrimin, Lahaji, and Akifah 2018). It is especially true in regions with sizable Muslim populations, such as Aceh and East Java, where there were accusations of bias and violence towards non-Muslims.

The participation of Islamic political parties in local government is one of the most pressing questions that have been raised about the concept of local autonomy. These parties have been accused of leveraging their political influence in local governments to advance their goals, frequently at the expense of other religious groups. It has resulted in tensions between various religious communities, which have occasionally boiled over into bloodshed

and conflict. The growing prominence of non-Muslim organizations in local politics is another obstacle for the Islamic community in Indonesia, posed by the local autonomy that has been granted. Because of this, there are concerns regarding the marginalization of the Islamic community, as members of this group are less likely to be represented in local councils and other groups that make decisions. In some areas, the rise of non-Muslim groups to positions of greater power and influence in local government has raised concerns regarding the potential erosion of Islamic values and traditions (Azra 2004; Hadiz and Teik 2011; Gedacht 2016; Umam and Junaidi 2011; Mukrimin 2012; Formichi 2015).

Notwithstanding these obstacles, Indonesia's era of local autonomy has also witnessed the emergence of more accountable and transparent local governance. Because of this, there has been an increase in the amount of participation and engagement from the local communities, especially the Islamic community. As a consequence of this, local autonomy has the potential to produce a political landscape in Indonesia that is more diverse and inclusive. It would be a landscape where many communities could have their voices heard and their needs addressed.

3. The Role of Islam in Local Governance

Establishing Islamic political parties in Indonesia is among the most important elements contributing to Islam's involvement in local governance. These groups seek to strengthen Islam's position in all spheres of society and advocate for incorporating Islamic principles into governmental policies. It is difficult to argue against the fact that Indonesia's substantial Muslim population—which accounts for around 87% of the nation's total population—has helped Islamic political parties gain significant ground in recent years (BPS 2021; 2023a). These parties want to instill Islamic ideals in governance to make it more representative of the dominant faith in the nation. It entails advancing Islamic ideals, creating more streamlined and just laws, and ensuring that the government gives the welfare of the populace priority.

Islamic political parties have been more visible in recent years in local politics. One example is Aceh, a province in the country that has adopted Sharia Law as a method of governance. The Prosperous Justice Party, a solid Islamic political party in the province, was responsible for passing this Sharia Law. Public flogging for homosexuality and the need for

Muslim women to wear headscarves in public institutions are two examples of Sharia Law's regulations. Without going to the extremes of the Aceh province, other Islamic political parties in Indonesia seek to advance Islamic ideals through their policies (David Kloos 2014; Ansor 2014). These parties have benefited from the political decentralization measures in the country, which have increased the authority of local and regional administrations. As a result, Islamic parties can now have more significant influence in municipal politics across a more comprehensive geographic range.

As a result, the rise and influence of Islamic political parties are crucial to integrating Islam into Indonesian municipal politics. The push for Islamic principles in government is inspired by the desire to make governance more reflective of the country's central faith, which could result in a more just and equitable society. Some of the most influential Islamic political groups in Indonesia include the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), the United Development Party (PPP), and the National Awakening Party (PKB). These groups want to impact local policymaking via their representatives in the federal, provincial, and municipal governments.

Islam's growing importance in Indonesian local politics can also be attributed to the sway wielded by various Islamic groups around the country. Some of these groups are devoted only to religious instruction and charity, while others are actively involved in politics and promoting Islamic principles. One outcome of the proliferation of Islamic groups in Indonesia is a more significant role for faith in municipal politics. Many of these groups have developed solid relationships with local government leaders, enabling them to fight for policies consistent with Islamic beliefs.

Furthermore, Islamic organizations like NU and Muhammadiyah play a role outside policymaking. They also provide critical social services to their communities, such as operating schools, hospitals, and disaster relief activities. It has allowed them to establish themselves as vital community members and enhanced their influence in local governance. As a result, Indonesia's varied spectrum of Islamic groups has played a critical role in promoting Islamic principles and beliefs in local governance. They have been able to create legislation and offer essential social services to their communities, cementing their place in Indonesia's social and political fabric. For example, many local government officials have increasingly recognized that adopting Islamic values can positively impact governance

methods. Its acceptance has resulted in incorporating Islamic concepts into policy creation and decision-making processes. As a result, Islam's role in determining local policy and governance in Indonesia is continually growing and expanding. In recent years, local government officials in Indonesia have realized that incorporating Islamic ideas might lead to better governance practices (Latief and Nashir 2020; Muslimin 2015; Munabari 2017).

Furthermore, incorporating Islamic ideas into government practices extends beyond policymaking to implementing welfare programs such as zakat (Islamic charity) distribution, poverty alleviation programs, and Islamic education. This strategy has strengthened public trust in local governments and improved public services in various regions. As a result, in recent years, Islamic ideas have played an increasingly prominent role in defining local laws and governance practices in Indonesia. Through ongoing acceptance and application, Islamic ideals can contribute even more to the country's governance and general welfare.

As a result, the role of Islam in local governance in Indonesia is a complex and diverse issue. Islamic political parties and religious groups have significantly established governing systems that reflect and promote Islamic values and beliefs (Mukrimin 2012). Furthermore, local government officials are increasingly attempting to incorporate Islamic values into governance procedures to serve their communities better.

4. The Role of Islamic Principles in Shaping Local Policies and Governance

Islamic values play a key role in determining local policy and government in nations with sizable Muslim populations. These guidelines are founded on Islamic jurisprudence, the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith. They offer direction on how to act morally and fairly, by individual rights and obligations, and in the context of a community. Islamic ideas are incorporated into national laws and constitutions in many Islamic nations. It contains the sharia law principles, which provide the legal foundation for many facets of life, including personal behavior, marriage and divorce, inheritance, economic dealings, and criminal justice.

At the local level, Islamic principles guide policies and decision-making in areas such as public services, education, healthcare, and social welfare (Mukrimin 2018; 2012; Mukrimin, Lahaji, and Akifah 2018). Local governments are expected to operate following

the Islamic principles of accountability, transparency, and social justice. It includes ensuring that public resources are used ethically and efficiently and that policies are designed to serve the common good.

Islamic beliefs value consultation and participation in decision-making. To ensure that policies and actions align with the needs and concerns of the people they serve, local governments are obliged to connect with the community and solicit input from citizens. Islamic teachings have sparked movements for racial equality and women's rights. (Warouw 2016; Parker 2017) Drawing on Islamic ideals of justice and equality, Muslim communities have been at the forefront of movements to advance the rights of women, minorities, and marginalized groups. Thus, Islamic ideas are vital and diverse in determining local policy and government. They offer a moral framework for making decisions, encourage openness and honesty, and stress the need to look out for the greater good. They also provide an ever-evolving resource for solving modern problems and advancing social fairness.

5. Controversies and Criticisms

One of the primary concerns regarding the Islamization of local policies is the potential for discrimination against minority groups such as Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and others. It can manifest in various ways, from restrictions on religious practices and festivals to denying equal access to public services and employment opportunities. In addition, there are concerns that this strategy could undermine the principle of secularism and restrict the room for diversity and pluralism in public life. For instance, when Islamization influences local policies, minority groups run the risk of being marginalized. It can lead to the exclusion of other religions and philosophies. This exclusion can take the form of limiting religious ceremonies and practices, prohibiting the celebration of holidays, and imposing stringent dress codes, restrictions, and norms (Suryana 2017; Duncan 2007; Arifin et al. 2019; Sona 2020). In addition, the Islamization of local policies can result in discrimination in access to public services and employment opportunities. When policies are based on religious favoritism, the employment and development opportunities of members of other religious groups may be drastically diminished. Such discrimination can result in economic and social isolation, hindering the capacity of individuals and communities to fully participate in public life.

The impact of Islamization on the principle of secularism is also a significant concern. The principle of secularism aims to ensure that the state does not favor any religion over another, and citizens have the freedom to practice their religion without interference from the state. However, when Islamization dominates local policies, religious neutrality in the state's action is undermined, reducing freedom of expression and individual autonomy. Therefore, the Islamization of local policies can undermine diversity and pluralism, limit opportunities, and create an environment of religious exclusion. While religion plays an essential role in people's lives, it is vital to maintain a balance between religious freedom and secular principles to ensure fair and equal opportunities and democratic inclusivity (Mujani and Liddle 2009; Schäfer 2015; Berg 2019; Assyaukanie 2019).

On the other hand, some argue that promoting Islamic values and morals can contribute to social harmony, morality, and order. They maintain that Islamization can help address issues related to crime, corruption, and social inequality and foster a sense of community and shared values. Furthermore, they argue that a strong emphasis on Islamic principles can counterbalance the influence of Western cultural values and promote a distinctly Indonesian identity (Assyaukanie 2019; Mavelli 2013; Schäfer 2015; Mujani and Liddle 2009).

Those who advocate for the promotion of Islamic values assert that adhering to Islamic principles can result in a more peaceful and equitable society. They emphasize that compassion, empathy, and respect for all individuals, regardless of race, religion, or origin, are central to Islamic teachings. They argue that encouraging people to abide by these principles can make communities more cohesive and harmonious. Moreover, some contend that Islamization can provide a framework for addressing social problems such as violence and corruption. Islamic law, or Shariah, provides guidelines for addressing criminal behavior and promoting justice. It can help reduce the incidence of crime and corruption and nurture a sense of accountability and responsibility in individuals. In addition, proponents of Islamization contend that promoting Islamic values can counteract the influence of Western cultural values, which some belief are incompatible with Indonesian culture. They believe that by emphasizing the significance of Islam in daily life and promoting Islamic morals and ethics, communities can develop a distinct identity that is consistent with their traditions and values. Those who support Islamization contend that it can contribute to

social harmony, morality, and order and aid in addressing problems associated with crime, corruption, and social inequality. They believe that by promoting Islamic values and principles, communities can become more cohesive and compassionate and develop a unique identity that embodies their cultural heritage (Salim 2015; Lukito 2019; Munabari 2017).

The argument over Islamization is also intertwined with broader problems of democracy, human rights, and governance in the country. Opponents say that Islamization can erode democratic processes and institutions and limit civil rights and freedom of expression. They also point out that Islamic doctrines and practices can be interpreted in a variety of ways, and that imposing a single interpretation can lead to societal tensions and disputes. Furthermore, the Islamization of a culture can have significant ramifications for underprivileged groups, such as women and religious minorities. Islamic laws and policies frequently discriminate against these people, depriving them of fundamental rights and opportunities (Lukito 2019; Salim 2015; Munabari 2017).

On the other hand, Islamization advocates maintain that to overcome the harmful effects of Westernization, globalization, and secularism. Promoting Islamic principles, morality, and ethics in society is vital. They argue that Islamization may make a society founded on social justice, fairness, and equality more just and equitable. Opponents of Islamization point out that these assertions are frequently used to justify political, social, and economic repression, which results in increased inequality and injustice. Islamic law and practice frequently legitimize repressive regimes and silence dissenters. Hence, the Islamization debate is complex, varied, and strongly linked with more significant questions of democracy, human rights, and governance. A simple yes or no answer cannot simply answer it. It necessitates a sophisticated comprehension of the numerous views and interests at play and thorough consideration and analysis of the historical, cultural, and political settings in which it occurs (Hefner 1997; Nastiti and Ratri 2018; Azra 2004; Hadiz and Teik 2011; Mukrimin 2012; Umam and Junaidi 2011; Formichi 2015).

Notwithstanding the problems and controversies surrounding the issue, Islamization remains an essential trend in Indonesian municipal politics. As the country navigates a fast-shifting political and social landscape, it will likely remain a source of debate and discussion for many years. Finally, the degree to which Islamization is accepted or rejected will be determined by factors ranging from political leadership and public opinion to economic

development and cultural influences. These regulations have been attacked for being anti-Muslim and anti-women and for breaking Indonesia's secular constitution. Opponents contend that such application of Islamic law and policies violates the ideals of the Indonesian state, founded as a secular democracy. They contend that laws that favor one religion or group over another violate equal rights for all citizens, regardless of religion. The policies mentioned include those that enforce Islamic law and those in Indonesia that has been criticized for discriminating against non-Muslims and women. Opponents contend that such practices contravene Indonesia's secular constitution, establishing the country as a secular democracy. The critique centers on the premise that laws that favor one religion or group over another violate the ideal of equal rights for all Indonesian residents, regardless of religious affiliation. As a result, these regulations contradict Indonesia's founding principles as a secular democracy.

For years, there has been disagreement on how Islamic law and policy should be applied in Indonesia. Opponents claim that these laws violate the secular ideals set by the nation's founders and are discriminatory against non-Muslims and women. The fact that Indonesia's constitution declares explicitly that the state is not based on any particular religion and that all citizens have the freedom to practice their faith freely has also been criticized. Nevertheless, there have been some instances in recent years where non-Muslims have been treated unfairly by laws and regulations. Furthermore, detractors of such programs argue that they violate equal rights and opportunities for all people by providing special treatment to Muslims. Preserving religious variety in Indonesia's pluralistic society has been fundamental to the nation's sense of self. Thus, implementing Islamic laws and policies in Indonesia has been attacked for breaking the principle of equal rights for all people, discriminating against non-Muslims and women, and going against the secular values stated in the constitution. The government must ensure that all laws and regulations are neutral and do not favor any religion or group over another.

6. Reservations about mixing religion and politics

Mixing religion and politics can be a controversial topic. On the one hand, some people argue that religion provides moral guidance and should be reflected in political decision-making. On the other hand, others argue that religion is a personal matter and should not be imposed on others through political means.

One of the central reservations about mixing religion and politics is the potential for discrimination and exclusion. If a particular religion is given special treatment in politics, it could marginalize minority religious groups or non-religious individuals. It could also lead to laws and policies that are not based on reason and evidence but rather on religious beliefs, which can limit the freedom and autonomy of individuals to pursue their own beliefs and lifestyles. It can create a situation where only those who conform to the dominant or privileged religion can be entirely accepted. In contrast, others who do not fit the mold are unfairly disadvantaged. Furthermore, mixing religion and politics can also violate human rights, especially in societies with a history of religious conflict or sectarian violence. By privileging one religion over others, political systems can exacerbate tensions between different religious groups, leading to violence and instability (Formichi 2015; Mujani and Liddle 2009; Sakai and Fauzia 2014; Azra 2004; Bagir et al. 2020; Gedacht 2016; Al-Aharish 2017).

Moreover, it can also lead to the imposition of religious law or morality on individuals who do not necessarily subscribe to those beliefs. It creates a situation where individuals may be forced to live according to a set of beliefs or principles that are not their own, which can be oppressive and violate their rights. Religious law or morality imposition on individuals can occur in various aspects of life, including government policies and societal norms. For instance, in some countries, laws are based on religious texts or beliefs. It can limit the freedoms and rights of individuals, particularly those who do not share the same beliefs.

In addition, societal norms and customs can also be deeply rooted in religious beliefs. For example, the dress code or behavior expectations may be based on religious modesty guidance. While these customs may be customary and entrenched in specific communities, they can challenge individuals who do not subscribe to them. It can create a social dynamic in which individuals may feel compelled to conform to a religious norm for social acceptance, leading to feelings of exclusion or discrimination against others. Moreover, the imposition of religion on individuals can be especially detrimental when they are marginalized or underrepresented in society. It can be the case for minority groups or those not part of the majority religion in their country or community. In such scenarios, the imposition of religious laws or customs can lead to situations where these individuals are at

a disadvantage, unable to exercise their rights and privileges equally. It can significantly challenge their overall well-being and progress, leading to greater marginalization and discrimination. Thus, the imposition of religion on individuals can be limiting and oppressive and can violate their human rights. It is crucial to ensure that individuals are not forced to live by beliefs or principles that are not their own and that communities promote inclusivity and respect for diversity in beliefs, customs, and cultures. In this case, religion can be an essential aspect of individual identity and personal belief, but it should not be the basis for political decisions or policies. It can lead to discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion and endanger the free and equal enjoyment of human rights for all members of society. Political decisions should be based on reason, evidence, and the common good and should be inclusive and respectful of all individuals and groups regardless of their religious beliefs.

The influence of religious fundamentalism in politics is also a source of concern. The democratic values of tolerance and inclusivity can be undermined by extremist beliefs, resulting in bloodshed and conflict (Burhani 2016; Chalmers 2017). The separation of church and state is a tenet of modern democracy that can be compromised if religion and politics are mixed. The separation of church and state assures that people are free to follow any religious path they see fit or no religious path. Additionally, it guarantees that democratic decision-making is grounded in secular, rational principles rather than religious ones. For instance, when religion and politics mix, some faiths may receive more favorable treatment than others. It can also result in the government implementing laws that single out one religion for special treatment, which is against the law. It could exacerbate tensions between various religious groups and cause societal instability. There is also a danger that religious leaders who enter politics would use their positions of power to advance their agendas rather than those of their followers. The democratic system may suffer as a result, and public confidence in elected officials may decline.

The intersection of religion and politics can stymie scientific research and social policy development, which may contradict specific religious views. For example, scientific progress in fields such as reproductive health or stem cell research may be hampered by religious groups who regard them as contradicting their beliefs. It can stifle progress in critical domains and prevent people from receiving necessary healthcare treatments. Some

communities may face prejudice and oppression if religion and politics are mixed. When religious views are utilized as the foundation for law, they can be used to justify discrimination against specific groups and religious minorities. Such prejudice can lead to the implementation of laws that limit the rights and freedoms of some groups, stifling progress and undermining social cohesion.

Religion and politics can also muddle personal and public ideas. Religious leaders and institutions may have disproportionate influence over political decision-making, resulting in policies that do not reflect the population's diverse values and demands. It can also promote division and mistrust between people with various religious connections or beliefs. Hence, while religion and politics may overlap, they should be kept separate from promoting progress, tolerance, and variety. Promoting a secular government that respects all beliefs and lifestyles ensures progress and fair access to services and opportunities. Then, the separation of religion is essential for a modern democracy. It defends individual freedoms, provides equitable treatment for all citizens, and fosters secular decision-making. Mixing religion and politics can damage society and democracy.

Ultimately, the separation of religion and state means that no religious institution or doctrine should dictate governmental policy or influence elected officials' decision-making processes (Mujani and Liddle 2009; Schäfer 2015; Assyaukanie 2019; Mavelli 2013). It is crucial for defending individual rights and combating discrimination against specific groups based on their religious views. In countries where religious beliefs and practices are not separated from politics, minority groups frequently struggle for equitable representation and legal protection. Religious ideas are frequently firmly held and contentious, resulting in possible conflicts of interest that can be difficult to overcome. Rational decision-making and secular principles help to guarantee that policies are based on evidence, consensus, and population needs rather than religious doctrine or dogma. By separating religion and state, governments can take a more pragmatic and objective approach to governance based on science, reason, and human rights. When religious organizations wield significant authority over government institutions, corruption and abuse of power can occur. It can take many forms, from suppressing opposing opinions to discrimination and persecution of underprivileged populations. A strict separation of church and state helps to prevent these concerns, encouraging transparency and responsibility in government.

Ultimatetly, the separation of religion and state is required for a modern democracy to function correctly. It protects individual rights and guarantees that all citizens are treated fairly, encourages logical decision-making based on secular ideals, and aids in preventing corruption and abuse of power. Any attempt to blend religion and politics, on the other hand, can have ominous implications for society and jeopardize the foundation of democratic values. While religion can provide moral guidance, keeping religion and politics apart is critical to avoid prejudice, extremism, and the erosion of democratic norms.

C. Conclusion

The interaction of Islam and politics during Indonesia's era of local autonomy has been discussed in the parts before this article. As we have seen, Islam has played a crucial part in defining Indonesia's socio-political landscape, and the growth of Islamic politics has been a response to the problems brought about by modernity and globalization.

We have seen that the decentralization of authority has opened the door for expanding Islamic politics at the local level in Indonesia. Islamic political parties and grassroots organizations have effectively mobilized Muslim voters and influenced local policies and governance. Consequently, Islam's participation in Indonesia's domestic politics has become more outspoken and assertive.

At the same time, several concerns have been raised over the influence that Islamic politics could have on democratization and human rights. Some people are concerned that Islamist organizations may encourage intolerance, discrimination, and violence against those who are not Muslims and other minority groups. The advancement of gender equality and the rights of minority groups may be hampered by social and religious conservatism.

Eventually, it is critical to continue monitoring and evaluating the impact of Islamic politics on Indonesian democracy and human rights. Religious freedom and secularism must be protected, and Islamic politics must not encroach on the rights and liberties of other citizens. Therefore, there is a need for more excellent dialogue and engagement between Islamic groups and other stakeholders in Indonesian society. It promotes mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect for religious and cultural diversity. Promoting interfaith dialogue and education can promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society.

In conclusion, the intersection of Islam and politics in Indonesia's local autonomy era is complex and multifaceted. While the rise of Islamic politics has provided a voice for Muslim citizens and contributed to local development, it also poses challenges to democracy and human rights. By promoting dialogue and understanding and ensuring the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, we can ensure that the interaction between Islam and politics in Indonesia can contribute positively to the country's democratic and social development.

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