



The Religious Dimension as a Catalyst for Political Conflict and Violence in Indonesian Society

Qomar Ali

IAIN Madura Pamekasan

aliqom@gmail.com

Abstract: This study examines the religious dimension as a significant contributing factor in political conflict and violence occurring within Indonesian society. Indonesia is a heterogeneous nation encompassing diverse religious affiliations, a condition that has historically contributed to episodes of social unrest and communal tension. Numerous documented cases of violence implicating religion have been recorded across multiple regions of Indonesia, including the incidents in Pekalongan (1995), Situbondo (1996), Poso (1998), Ambon (1999), Tasikmalaya (1996), and Sukabumi (2008). These events generated substantial losses both in terms of public infrastructure and human casualties, attributable largely to excessive religious commitment prevalent among the population. This study employs a qualitative research methodology grounded in library research, drawing its data from literary sources including books, scholarly articles, and research reports. Data were analyzed through the qualitative data analysis technique developed by Miles and colleagues. The findings reveal that the religious dimension constitutes a primary factor in various instances of political conflict and violence in Indonesia. Religion-based conflicts have been instrumentalized by political elites as a means of consolidating political power. The persistence of religious and political conflict in Indonesia is attributed to the prevalence of hyper-commitment within most religious communities and the broader factor of religious differentiation.

Keywords: Dimensions of Religion, Conflict, Political Violence, Indonesia.

Introduction

Indonesia is a nation characterized by an exceptionally large population. (Witro, 2020) Based on data published by the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri), the total population of Indonesia as of December 2020 reached 271,349,889 individuals. (Kompas.com, 2021)

Furthermore, Indonesia is widely recognized as a state composed of numerous distinct ethnic groups, (Suprianto et al., 2021; Yanti & Witro, 2020) each bearing its own unique cultural characteristics. (Brata, 2016) The cultural wealth of Indonesia encompasses several dimensions. First, there exists a rich diversity of ethnic groups united under a single national identity, including the Toraja, Ambonese, Ternate, Javanese, and Batak peoples. Second, Indonesia is home to a plurality of religious beliefs, with six major religions officially recognized by the state, namely Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Third, the diversity of regional languages fosters distinct local identities, as reflected in Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, and Banjari cultures. Fourth, the diversity of arts and culture is a direct product of the broad spectrum of these ethnic groups. (Antara & Yogantari, 2018)

When examined from the standpoint of social structure, Indonesian society exhibits two distinguishing characteristics, organized along horizontal and vertical lines of differentiation. Horizontal differences refer to variations in culture, customs, and ethnic identity that are characteristic of each region, as well as differences in religious beliefs and affiliations. Vertical differences, by contrast, are defined by disparities in social attributes such as occupational status, profession, and place of residence, whether in urban or rural settings. (Ismail, 2012)

Social differences that emerge within the fabric of communal life frequently generate social conflicts. This phenomenon is evidenced by numerous historical episodes in Indonesian society. Such conflicts arise from competing interests, particularly the competition for economic resources, which inherently carries political dimensions and is often intensified by religious tensions, as observed in the conflicts in Sumbawa (2013), Poso (1998), and Ambon (1999). (Setyawan & Khotimah, 2018)

The political dimension of human life is deeply embedded in social existence, a notion classically articulated by Aristotle, who described humans as *zoon politicon* (political animals). As fundamentally social beings, humans are incapable of living in isolation. Fulfilling their needs requires access to various means, and politics constitutes one such means. (Effendi & Syafrudin, 2020) Religion similarly serves as another means. Max Weber observed that religiosity motivates individuals to fulfill their worldly expectations and desires, and it is therefore not uncommon for individuals to make considerable sacrifices in pursuit of these expectations, even when such pursuits involve violence, whether grounded in religion or other motivations. (Wibisono, 2015)

Accordingly, the political and religious domains are frequently intertwined within social life. Both politics and religion function as instruments through which individuals strive to fulfill their life's needs and attain desired outcomes. In its essence, religion represents a divinely ordained way of life intended to bring peace and prosperity and to guide believers toward salvation in the hereafter. All religions, at their core, uphold the values of brotherhood, peace, and unity. However, in practice, religion sometimes gives rise to conflict, violence, and other harmful manifestations. This illustrates that religion is a dual-natured phenomenon,

containing elements of peace on one hand, and dimensions of conflict and violence on the other. (Natalia, 2016)

With respect to prior scholarly work on religion in political conflict and violence, several relevant studies merit acknowledgment. The first is "Religion in the Maelstrom of Conflict (Resolution Analysis Study of the Emergence of Religion-Based Social Violence in Indonesia)" authored by Buyung Syukron, published in the journal *Ri'ayah*, Volume 02, Number 1, in 2017. (Syukron, 2017) This work focuses on various resolutions to violence committed in the name of religion within Indonesia, and is accordingly distinguishable from the present study, which specifically investigates the religious dimension in the context of political conflict and violence.

The second is an article entitled "Socio-Political Dimensions of the Ambon Conflict," authored by Didit Rudiansyah, published in the journal *Sosiologi Reflektif*, Volume 10, Number 1, in 2015. (Rudiansyah, 2016) This work examines the social and political dimensions of the Ambon conflict and therefore differs from the present study.

The third is an article entitled "Violence in the Name of Religion," authored by Ahmad Isnaeni, published in *Kalam: Jurnal Studi Agama dan Pemikiran Islam*, Volume 8, Number 2, in 2014. (Isnaeni, 2017) This article analyzes the factors generating violence in the name of religion, particularly differences in doctrinal interpretations and religious beliefs.

The fourth is an article entitled "The Complexity of Religious Violence in the Life of Religious People in Indonesia: A Sociological Review," authored by Haedar Nashir, published in the journal *Asy-syir'ah*, Volume 49, Number 1, in 2015. (Nashir, 2015) This work examines religious violence in everyday Indonesian life from a sociological perspective and is therefore distinguishable from the present article.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the present authors are compelled to engage with the subject of religion and violent conflict. While religion is fundamentally a mission of peace, repeated instances of violence have been carried out in its name. This constitutes a compelling and socially significant research concern. Accordingly, this study was undertaken to address the central problem of the role of the religious dimension in political conflict and violence.

This study explores in depth the extent to which the religious dimension has influenced political conflicts and violence throughout Indonesian history. It should be noted, however, that the authors do not examine each incident individually, given the extensive number of cases that have occurred. Instead, the authors select and analyze several representative events.

This article employs a qualitative research method based on library research. The use of qualitative methods is appropriate given that this study utilizes qualitative data, (Sugiyono, 2013) namely data that exist in the form of thoughts, understandings, and meaningful narratives. Qualitative research aims at achieving comprehensive analysis and well-grounded conclusions. The object of inquiry encompasses religion and violent political conflicts. Data were gathered from library sources including books, scholarly articles, and research reports pertinent to the research subject. These data are presented in a narrative-descriptive manner, conveying the results of analysis derived from the obtained sources. The analytical technique applied is a documentary study employing the qualitative data analysis approach of Miles and colleagues, specifically the technique of data condensation, involving the selection of relevant

data from field notes or other sources, the presentation of data based on collection and analytical findings, and the subsequent drawing of conclusions. (Miles et al., 2014)

Religion and the Maelstrom of Conflict in Indonesian Society

In the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), as cited by Rachmad Abdullah in his article, "religion" is defined as a body of teachings that establishes rules regarding procedures of faith (belief) and forms of worship directed toward God Almighty, and that contains norms governing relations among human beings as well as between human beings and the natural environment. (Abdullah, 2015)

According to Max Muller, the term "religion" originates from the English language. In Latin, the equivalent term is "religio," which originally conveyed the sense of "fear of God, contemplating the heart about things that are divine, and piety." Cicero subsequently enriched this understanding by incorporating the meaning of "diligence." (Sumarto, 2017) According to Thouless, as cited by Abdul Hamid, religion is a practical relationship that exists within the individual and is experienced as a belief in a higher being that transcends humanity. (Hamid, 2017)

According to Harun Nasution, religion can be understood through several dimensions. First, it is a belief recognizing the existence of a relationship between humans and supernatural forces that must be obeyed. Second, it is an acknowledgment of supernatural powers that govern and shape human behavior. Third, it involves attaching oneself to a supernatural force in order to exert influence over human conduct. Fourth, it gives rise to a particular way of life shaped by the existence of supernatural powers. Fifth, it generates a system of behavior originating from belief in supernatural forces. Sixth, it is an acknowledgment of obligations that humans must fulfill, premised on the understanding that human beings occupy a subordinate position relative to these supernatural powers. Seventh, it constitutes a body of teachings originating from God and conveyed to humanity through apostles or messengers. (Muhammaddin, 2018)

Drawing from these definitions, religion can be understood as a divinely revealed teaching that places humankind in a subordinate position relative to God, thereby generating various forms of obedience to rules that govern both one's relationship with God and one's relationships with fellow human beings and the environment.

Within the context of social life, religion is inseparable from human existence, as it prescribes a way of life that regulates relations among individuals within a social framework, with the overarching objective of fostering peace and tranquility.

According to Hendropuspito, as cited by Angga Natalia in his research, religion performs several functions within society. First, it assumes an educational function by providing guidance for living. Second, it assists individuals in attaining happiness. Third, it enforces social control oriented toward public peace and tranquility through various teachings and rules upholding sound moral norms; moreover, religion imposes strict sanctions against actions that violate ethical standards and generate divisions and conflicts within social life. Fourth, it fosters a spirit of brotherhood, offering the comfort that every human being seeks. Fifth, it fulfills a transformative function by assisting individuals in reforming old habits and cultivating new ones that contribute to the development of an ideal human character, while

preserving positive traditional values and extending their relevance to broader social concerns. (Natalia, 2016)

In communal life, religion occupies a central position as a harmonizing force that guides the community toward collective peace and unity through various rules and teachings.

Nonetheless, Indonesian society is inherently diverse, particularly in the domain of religion. Religious differences, however, should not be exploited as a means of achieving political objectives. (Syukron, 2017) The phenomenon of violence in the name of religion emerges partly because religion is instrumentalized for political purposes. (Isnaeni, 2017)

Religious conflicts are those that involve an array of values, claims, and identities articulated through religious slogans or expressions. (Al-Maududi, 2007)

Religion ought to serve as a source of peace in the face of competing interpretations. Conflicts between adherents of different religions or between religious communities are complex phenomena that involve not only differences in belief but also social, economic, and political interests. Such conflicts are therefore highly susceptible to exploitation in the name of religion. (Syukron, 2017)

Religion promotes social integration by binding its adherents to uphold mutual solidarity. It also functions as a vehicle for cultivating peace and maintaining the common good over the long term. However, religion simultaneously creates opportunities for social disintegration, generating conflict, division, and tension within society. This indicates that religious practice frequently runs counter to the noble mission proclaimed by God's messengers, which is the establishment of peace and unity. (Tasmin, 2007)

Conflicts arising from social disintegration that result in religious violence may be driven by several interrelated factors. The first is the emergence of a truth-claim. Truth is an element inseparable from religion; in this context, truth is grounded in belief in God as its ultimate source. The existence of divergent speculative interpretations creates the conditions for social conflict, which is typically fueled by variations in religious understanding and practice. The second factor is the emergence of misperceptions between adherents of different religions, further compounded by differences in ethnicity, customs, and culture. In practice, there is a tendency to align religious concerns with the cultural characteristics of particular regions, a tendency that heightens the risk of conflict and gives rise to sectarian divisions. The third factor involves the proliferation of religious doctrines that, in practice, lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, fostering intolerance toward adherents of other religions and potentially escalating to outright hostility. The fourth factor is the persistence of limited understanding of the concept of pluralism. (Latifah, 2018)

Pluralism shapes the attitudes of religiously observant individuals within the context of social life. Problems arise when individuals fail to distinguish between religious pluralism and religious plurality. Drawing on the work of Terrence W. Tilley in "Postmodern Theologies and Religious Diversity," as cited by Tasmin, there exists a meaningful distinction between the two concepts. Religious plurality refers to the empirical reality of the coexistence of diverse religions, whereas religious pluralism, within the academic study of religions, constitutes a form of behavior that responds to this empirical reality. This distinction is a

concern of disciplines such as sociology, philosophy of religion, and theology, and is particularly relevant in the context of Western globalization. (Tasmin, 2007)

An adherent's understanding of his or her religion profoundly shapes that individual's behavior. This is because a religious worldview can evolve into an ideology. When this occurs, the individual acquires two defining characteristics. First, an ideology grounded in religious teachings may be formulated to achieve specific goals, whether in the realm of worship and ritual or in social domains. Second, this ideology may be deployed as an instrument for the attainment of political objectives, often serving as a justification and motivation for acts of violence and conflict. In this configuration, religious ideology functions as a political weapon. (Sumbulah, 2006)

Religion and politics are thus perpetually intertwined in practice; both serve as instruments through which individuals pursue their goals in social life. An adherent's religious understanding accordingly constitutes one of the fundamental causes of religious and political violence. (Wibisono, 2015)

The foregoing demonstrates that religion is a complex phenomenon. On one side, it offers moral guidance; on the other, it can serve as a justification for conflict and violence. According to Charles Kimball in "When Religion Becomes a Disaster," as cited by Tasmin, there are five conditions that may cause religion to become corrupt.

The first is the claim that a particular religion represents the sole and absolute source of truth. This creates opportunities for exploitation by adherents who use religious texts to encourage division, employing religion as a tool to justify the practice of *takfir* (declaring others to be heretics) against those who hold differing interpretations of sacred sources.

The second is blind obedience to religious leaders, fostering uncritical adherence to charismatic religious authorities.

The third is the emergence of passionate desires directed toward the realization of a theocratic ideal, namely the religious state. This arises from the aspiration for a perfect political order guaranteed by divine authority.

The fourth is religious Machiavelism, in which adherents employ religion as an instrument for achieving personal desires and goals through morally reprehensible means that cause harm to others.

The fifth is the incitement of individuals to participate in "holy war" without genuine understanding or legitimate justification. (Tasmin, 2007)

Abdul Aziz Ustman Altwaridji has identified several contributing factors to the occurrence of violence in the name of religion. The first is the fundamental need for security. The second is the widespread deprivation of basic human needs within society, including access to livelihood, political participation, and identity formation. The third is the incapacity of the government to satisfy the basic aspirations of individuals or groups.

Within the Indonesian context, religion is inseparable from social life. As a pluralistic and multicultural society, religion may serve as a force of national cohesion. Simultaneously, religion can also function as a trigger for violent conflicts. Religious conflicts and violence in Indonesia frequently arise from both political interests and social tensions. (Syukri UR, 2019)

This is evidenced by numerous cases of religious conflict throughout Indonesian history, including the incidents in Pekalongan (1995), Purwakarta (1995), Situbondo (1996), Sampang and Bangkalan (1997), Rengasdengklok (1997), Poso (1998), Ambon (1999), Mataram (2000), Maluku (2000), Tasikmalaya (2006), Sukabumi (2008), and Sumbawa (2013). (Latifah, 2018)

Given these various incidents, this paper proceeds to explore the religious dimension of social and political conflicts throughout Indonesian history.

Conflicts and Political Violence in the Name of Religion in Indonesia

Randall Collin has argued that religion is in essence economics, politics is in essence religion, and economics is in essence politics. On this basis, religion cannot be separated from politics and economics. (Nashir, 2015) Politically oriented religious movements tend to produce militant revivalism, as exemplified by Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaida, who perpetrated acts of violence in the name of religion.

According to Azyumardi Azra, a professor at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, political conflict and violence in Indonesia has existed since the post-independence period, as evidenced by the emergence of the DI/TII rebellion. This movement exploited religion as a pretext for achieving political objectives. Although the movement was suppressed during the Suharto era, it subsequently resurfaced. Ali Moertopo and Bakin recruited former members of DI/TII, directing them to undertake a series of actions that included the conduct of *jihad*. Following the collapse of the Suharto regime, this group became increasingly visible, vocal, and militant, as extensively documented in various mass media outlets at the time. (Lay, 2009)

Since 1995, there have been numerous episodes of violence and social unrest in Indonesian history in which religion was employed as a pretext for aggression, including the incidents in Situbondo (1996), Tasikmalaya (1996), Rengas Dengklok (1997), and Banjarmasin (1997). These events preceded the monetary crisis and rendered places of worship targets of mob violence. Similarly, during the New Order era, the Ambon incident (1999) resulted in extensive casualties due to interreligious conflict; in Kupang (1998), Christians destroyed Muslim places of worship, while in Poso (1998), members of opposing religious communities engaged in deadly violence against one another in the name of religion. (Hisyam, 2006)

The conflict in Poso stands as one of the most consequential episodes of religious violence in Indonesian history, having unfolded across five distinct phases and resulting in numerous casualties and the destruction of numerous places of worship. The conflict persisted from 1998 to 2001. (Masyrullahushomad, 2019)

The series of conflicts in Poso was initiated by a confrontation between youths belonging to different religious communities on December 24, 1998. Over time, however, the dispute evolved into a sustained conflict between Muslim and Christian adherents. In its subsequent development, the conflict was instrumentalized by corrupt political elites seeking votes in the competition for the position of Regent of Poso. These elites mobilized the masses by invoking religious identity, with the Muslim community identifying their group as the "white" group and the Christian community identifying themselves as the "red" group. In April 2000, the conflict's political dimension intensified coinciding with the election of a new district head,

resulting in a contested division of governmental positions between Muslim and Christian elite groups. When these demands were not accommodated by the authorities, the conflict escalated through December 2001, ultimately becoming a protracted religious conflict in which the Muslim group framed the struggle as a *jihad* and the Christian group understood it as a crusade. (Alganih, 2016)

Another conflict in Tasikmalaya was directed against the Ahmadiyya congregation. This conflict also bore a political dimension, as it occurred during a general election period. Political elites and parties exploited the stigma attached to the Ahmadiyya to garner public sympathy. (Zuldin, 2013)

A further significant conflict emerged during the 2017 gubernatorial election in DKI Jakarta. During this period, a large-scale mobilization initiated by Muslim groups demanded the imprisonment of one gubernatorial candidate, Basuki Cahya Purnama (Ahok), over remarks deemed insulting to Islam. In response, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), through KH. Ma'ruf Amin, issued a *fatwa* declaring that Ahok had committed an act of religious insult. This ultimately contributed to Ahok's electoral defeat against his political opponent, Anis Baswedan. (Saputro, 2018)

A comparable dynamic characterized the 2019 presidential election, in which religion became a central issue in political competition. Widespread demonstrations were organized by opponents of the incumbent candidate, actions connected to the 212 Movement stemming from the 2017 DKI Jakarta electoral conflict. The situation was further aggravated by allegations of the "criminalization of the clergy," as numerous religious figures supporting the opposition were summoned by government security forces and several were detained for alleged violations. (Candramukti, 2020)

These developments gave rise to the perception that the incumbent ticket, Jokowi and Ma'ruf Amin, was engaged in suppressing opposing religious scholars. Following the declaration of the incumbent's electoral victory by the Elections Commission, demonstrations erupted alleging electoral fraud. Clashes between demonstrators and security forces ensued, resulting in a number of casualties. (Candramukti, 2020)

The Dimension of Religion in Political Conflict and Violence in Indonesia

Religion possesses substantial potential for generating conflict. Conversely, it also represents the foremost pathway toward peace. Religion therefore carries the capacity both to incite and to deter war and violence. (Isnaeni, 2017)

As a social reality, religion is not confined to doctrinal elements alone; it also encompasses adherents, religious concepts, religious institutions, sacred spaces, and ideological structures. Accordingly, whenever conflict emerges between or among religions, all of these variables are invariably implicated. (Gerth & Mills, 1991)

As previously established, religion and politics are inseparable forces within society. This relationship manifests as identity politics. According to Gutmann, political identity can be classified into three models based on its effects, namely the good (harmless), the sour (less dangerous), and the ugly (very dangerous). The good and sour models are considered compatible with democratic progress, as they raise public awareness regarding the importance of civic responsibility and the struggle against injustice, provided they do not generate hatred

toward others. The ugly model, by contrast, is fundamentally incompatible with democracy, as it prioritizes the interests of one's own group to the detriment of other identity groups, thereby legitimizing violence against others. (Idham & Pranowo, 2020)

The cases examined in this study confirm that identity politics is a major driving force in religious conflict. These events correspond to the ugly model of identity politics, which is antithetical to democratic values.

Accordingly, the theoretical framework advanced by Abdul Aziz Ustman Altwaridji is substantiated by the evidence regarding the factors underlying religion-based conflict, one of which is the deprivation of access to political participation. These conflicts are generated by the assimilation of diverse local political interests into religious symbols. Relations between community groups may become conflictual when those relations are infused with political content, and in such circumstances, conflicts are deliberately manufactured to serve the interests of the political elite. (Rudiansyah, 2016)

A further conflict involving religious authority occurred in Ambon (1998), where a protracted confrontation unfolded between Muslim and Christian communities. The conflict was initially sparked by a fight between a thug and a city transport driver, but subsequently escalated into widespread clashes between the Muslim Ambonese and Christian Ambonese communities. The conflict persisted for two years, from 1998 to 2000, claiming the lives of many people. (Harahap, 2018)

The conflict in Tasikmalaya (1996) was deeply permeated by religious discourse. The local community displayed a rigid and absolutist adherence to religious values, a disposition that gave rise to bigotry and intolerance toward non-indigenous ethnic groups, particularly the Chinese community, which enjoyed comparatively greater economic prosperity than the indigenous population. The resulting jealousy and disillusionment erupted into violence expressed through religious symbols, manifesting in riots around the Tasikmalaya Grand Mosque, the destruction of and attacks on churches and commercial establishments owned by the Chinese minority, assaults on the local police station, and various other forms of physical damage. (Soehadha, 2014)

In Situbondo on October 10, 1996, a violent incident occurred involving the destruction and burning of a church. The episode was triggered by remarks that insulted prominent local religious leaders (kyai). The individual responsible advanced teachings rejecting the prophethood of Muhammad as the Messenger of God and the final Prophet. This provoked widespread public outrage. The conflict intensified when the court's verdict against the perpetrator was judged insufficiently severe, provoking the anger of Situbondo's Muslim community. The resulting violence began with attacks on civil servants and court officials and subsequently spread throughout Situbondo, targeting minority groups, specifically the Christian and ethnic Chinese communities. Ethnic Chinese properties, a priest's residence, and six churches were burned in Banyuputih District, leaving seven victims dead from among the family of a local priest. (Carmin, 2018)

In Pekalongan City on November 22, 1995, riots erupted along Jalan Hayam Wuruk. Various establishments, particularly shops and locations associated with the Chinese community, became targets of public anger. The incident was precipitated by reports that a member of the ethnic Chinese minority had torn and urinated upon the Muslim holy book,

the Quran. Despite the findings of authorities indicating that the perpetrators suffered from mental disorders and had recently been discharged from a psychiatric facility, the riots proved impossible to contain and had a profound impact on the people of Pekalongan. (Rahayu, 2016)

Similarly, in Sukabumi on April 27, 2008, an assault was carried out against the Ahmadiyah congregation in Parakansalak Village RT.02/RW.02, Parakansalak District, Sukabumi Regency. The act of violence was motivated by antagonism among the Muslim population toward the teachings of the Ahmadiyah, which are regarded as heretical. The perpetrators set fire to the Al-Furqon Mosque, the place of worship used by the Ahmadiyya congregation, destroying in the process thirty copies of the Quran published by the Ministry of Religion. Furthermore, the residence of a teacher affiliated with the Ahmadiyya congregation became a target of mob violence. (Koeswinarno & Fakhruddin, 2013)

These events are closely linked to the dynamics of religious authority in Indonesia. As one of the nations with the highest number of religious adherents in the world, Indonesia presents a context in which the underlying factors for violence are rooted in the hyper-commitment of those involved. This hyper-commitment manifests as a radical and uncompromising stance in the pursuit of specific goals, whether political in orientation or grounded in particular religious doctrines. (Brubaker, 2015)

This is further compounded by the factor of religious differentiation within the broader population. Religious differentiation may give rise either to attitudes of intolerance or to mutual respect among adherents of different faiths. In the context of a pluralistic Indonesian society, tolerance and mutual respect serve as essential mechanisms for preventing the escalation of conflict. Nonetheless, those most lacking an adequate understanding of religion's true nature are frequently individuals who combine high religious fervor with shallow religious knowledge, rendering them susceptible to indoctrination through teachings that justify violence in the name of religion by invoking a sacred mission to eradicate evil through wrongful and unjust means. (Rudiansyah, 2016)

Conclusion

Indonesian society, as a multi-religious community, constitutes a potential site of violence and conflict. Drawing from the cases of violence and political conflict examined in this study, the religious dimension emerges as the primary determining factor in these conflicts. Religion has been instrumentalized as a means of acquiring political power and realizing the ideological aspirations of elites who exploited and in some cases deliberately generated these conflicts. The relationship between religion and various political conflicts is fundamentally attributable to hyper-commitment, which fosters radical attitudes and behaviors and provides justification for violence. The core purpose of religion, however, remains the creation of peace and tranquility within society. In addition, religious differentiation contributes to the emergence of conflict through the absence of tolerance and mutual respect among adherents of different religions.

Furthermore, elite political groups exploit religion as a means of achieving practical goals and consolidating their positions of power. This reflects the operation of identity politics, in which religion is deployed as an instrument for the realization of political objectives. Bigotry

and an ideological approach to religion within Indonesian society have consequently produced numerous episodes of conflict and acts of violence.

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