

THE POLARIZATION OF BONDOWOSO HADHRAMIS AND THEIR INTRA-ETHNIC RELATIONS

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Abstract: *This article examines polarization within the Hadhrami Arab population in Bondowoso, East Java, especially in light of the rise of the 212 movement and the presidential election in 2019. During this time, the national political climate has become more tense. The issue of religion, which is drawn to political contestation, creates polarization among Muslims, including Arab Muslims. In Bondowoso, the polarization aligns with the different religious understanding backgrounds such as Sunni and Shi'a. Nevertheless, polarization does not lead to social conflicts between them. Departing from this description, this study then focuses on two things. First, it seeks to reveal the views of Hadhrami Arabs on several national issues based on their respective religious backgrounds. Second, this study also reveals Arab intra-ethnic relations with different positions in addressing national issues. This research applied qualitative research with a case study approach to examine this focus. The study found that Arab perceptions of national issues varied according to their religious background. These perceptions correspond to their respective religious understanding. Second, although they differ in political and religious positions, the internal relations among Bondowoso Arabs are running normally without falling into violent conflict.*

المخلص: يركز هذا المقال على دراسة الاستقطاب الذي ظهر بين المجتمع العربي الحضرمي في بوندووسو، جاوة الشرقية. خاصة بعد ظهور حركة ٢١٢ والانتخابات الرئاسية ٢٠١٩. في بوندووسو، جاوة الشرقية.

خلال تلك الفترة، ازدادت حدة التوتر في الوضع السياسي الوطني. إن جر القضايا الدينية إلى الصراع السياسي يخلق استقطاباً بين المسلمين، بما في ذلك العرب المسلمين. وفي بوندووسو، يتماشى هذا الاستقطاب مع خلفيات مختلفة في فهم الإسلام مثل السنة والشيعة. إلا أن الاستقطاب لا يؤدي إلى صراع اجتماعي بينهما. وخروجاً عن هذا الوصف، تركز هذه الدراسة على أمرين. أولاً، تحاول هذه الدراسة الكشف عن آراء العرب الحضرميين في مختلف القضايا الوطنية بناءً على خلفياتهم الدينية. ثانياً، تكشف هذه الدراسة أيضاً عن العلاقات العرقية العربية ذات المواقف المختلفة في الاستجابة للقضايا الوطنية. يستخدم هذا البحث النهج النوعي مع منهج دراسة الحالة لفحص هذا التركيز. وقد توصلت هذه الدراسة إلى أن تصورات العرب للقضايا الوطنية تختلف باختلاف خلفيتهم الدينية. ويرتبط هذا التصور بالفهم الديني لكل فرد. ثانياً، على الرغم من اختلاف المواقف السياسية والدينية، استمرت العلاقات الداخلية بين عرب بوندووسو بشكل طبيعي دون الوقوع في صراع عنيف

Abstrak: Artikel ini fokus meneliti polarisasi yang muncul di antara komunitas Hadhrami Arab Bondowoso, Jawa Timur. Khususnya setelah munculnya Gerakan 212 serta pemilihan presiden 2019. Selama masa itu, situasi politik nasional meningkat tensinya. Isu agama yang ditarik ke dalam kontestasi politik menciptakan polarisasi di kalangan Muslim, termasuk Muslim Arab. Di Bondowoso, polarisasi tersebut sejalan dengan latar belakang pemahaman Islam yang berbeda seperti Sunni dan Syiah. Akan tetapi, polarisasi tidak melahirkan konflik social di antara mereka. Berangkat dari deskripsi ini, kajian ini fokus pada dua hal. Pertama, studi ini berusaha menyingkap pandangan Arab Hadhrami mengenai berbagai isu nasional berdasarkan latar belakang keagamaan masing masing. Kedua, kajian ini juga menyingkap relasi intra etnis Arab dengan posisi yang berbeda di dalam menyikapi isu isu nasional. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus untuk meneliti focus tersebut. Kajian ini menemukan bahwa persepsi Arab mengenai isu isu nasional bervariasi sesuai latar belakang keagamaan mereka. Persepsi tersebut berhubungan dengan pemahaman keagamaan masing masing. Kedua, meskipun mereka berbeda di dalam posisi politik dan keagamaan, relasi

internal di kalangan Arab Bondowoso berlangsung normal tanpa jatuh ke dalam konflik kekerasan.

Keywords: polarization, Arab, Hadhrami, religion, politic.

INTRODUCTION

The Arab community has long lived in Indonesia. Some historians refer to the land of Hadhramaut, Yemen, as the origin of the Indonesian Arab community. This underlies the frequency with which the name Hadhrami was pinned on the Indonesian Arab community, including those that spread to several other regions in Asia.¹

Although there are some differences regarding the exact time of arrival, they existed before the Dutch colonization. In addition, their migration to Indonesia has increased since the opening of the Suez Canal.² Their presence also marked the activity of the massive spread of Islam to the Archipelago.³

Unlike other foreign communities, Arabs get a more special place due to their Islamic status being considered purer than other communities.⁴ Many studies on Indonesian Arabic have been conducted.⁵ However, of many studies conducted, some are more focused, for example, on the genealogy of the Indonesian Arab community living in Indonesia.⁶

¹ Huub de Jonge, *In Search of Identity: The Hadhrami Arabs in the Netherland East Indies and Indonesia 1900-1950* (Leiden: Cyrillic Brill, 2022), 19.

² See Frode F. Jacobsen, *Hadrami Arabs in Present-day Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2009); Huub de Jonge. "Discord and Solidarity Among the Arab in the Netherlands East Indies 1900-1942." *Indonesia*, 55 (1993): 73-90.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Sumanto Al Qurtuby. "Arabs and Indo-Arabs in Indonesia: Historical Dynamics." *Sosial Relations. IJAPS*, 13, 2 (2017): 45-72.

⁵ Some researches on Indonesian Arabs are Ismail F. Alatas. "Gold and Silver, Branded Horses, and Well-Tilled Land: Gender and Hadrami Migration." *Indonesian Feminist*, 3, 1 (2015): 4-13; Ahmad N Burhani, "Ethnic Minority Politics in Jakarta's Gubernatorial Election." *ISEAS*, 39 (2017), 1-6; Syamsul Rijal, "Internal Dynamics Within Hadhrami Arabs in Indonesia From Social Hierarchy to Islamic Doctrine", *JIIS*, 11, 1 (2017), 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2017.11.1.>; Motoki Yamaguchi. "Islamic School and Arab Association: Ahmad Surkati's Reformist Thought and Its Influence on the Educational Activities of al-Irshad." *Studia Islamika*, 23, 3 (2016): 435-469.

⁶ Al Qurtuby, Arabs, 45-72.

Meanwhile, the polarization in the Arab community, as well as their attitude towards national issues at this time, has not been touched much. Departing from that basis, by making the Bondowoso Arab community – “Jama’ah” as the call is used in daily life - as the subject of research, this study took a particular picture of the polarization caused by differences in addressing national issues as well as the relations that exist between each member of them.

The Arab community in Indonesia has attracted the attention of many scholars to research it. Most of them examine the Hadhrami Arab, which is believed to be the origin of Indonesian Arab ethnicity. Some of them examine the history of Indonesian Arab genealogy and historical dynamics, including social relations between Arab communities,⁷ their nationalism,⁸ and roles in da’wah.⁹

De Jonge examined explicitly the social solidarity of the Hadhrami Arab in the Dutch East Indies era 1900-1942 when the Japanese arrived. According to Jonge, the Arab community experienced social change through openness and identification of a new identity. Most of the Indonesian Arabs who are identified as Hadhrami due to their origin, Hadhramaut Yemen, identified themselves more as Indonesian rather than Yemeni.¹⁰

In a broader review, Jacobson examined the historical dimensions of Indonesian Hadhrami Arabs to date.¹¹ Longitudinal research conducted by Jacobson emphasized the historical perspective rather than the social dimension. Although it cannot be denied, historical data presents – at least – a social sketch of a particular society at a specific time.

Sumanto Al Qurtubi did something that was similar. His research had almost the exact dimensions as Jonge’s and Jacobson’s. Of course, the most significant difference was Qurtubi’s discussion

⁷ Alatas, Gold and Rijal, *Internal*, 1-28.

⁸ Rabith Jihan Amaruli, Singgih Tri Sulištiyono & Dewi Yuliaty. “Preserving Memory, Campaigning Nationalism: the *Haul* of Habib Hasan bin Thaha and the Remaking of the Hadhrami-Arab Identity in Indonesia.” *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8:1 (2022). DOI: 10.1080/23311886.2022.2125145.

⁹ Muaz Tanjung, Arik Dwijayanto, Nabil Chang-Kuan Lin, “Genealogy, Diaspora, and Da’wah: The Religious Role of Sheikh Ibrahim al-Hadhrami in Pattani and Java.” *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 21 Number 2 (2021), DOI: 10.21154/altahrir.v21i2.3075

¹⁰ Jonge, *Discord*, 73.

¹¹ Jacobsen, *Hadrami*.

of Arabic dialectics with contemporary issues in Indonesia. However, the issues between Indonesia in 2009 and 2017 have had many differences.

Syamsur Rijal's research should also be considered as a research topic close to this research. Rijal highlighted the relations between Hadhrami communities in the contemporary era. In particular, Rijal focused on understanding how tensions and conflicts occur within them, especially regarding specific issues. Rijal concentrated on debates on two main religious issues, namely the issue of Shi'a and the issue of Salafism. According to Rijal, these two issues have given rise to opposing views between Sayid groups (regarding the Shi'a issue) and among followers of Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah (regarding the issue of Salafism).¹²

Although several studies on Indonesian Hadhrami Arabs have been carried out quite a lot, including intra-ethnic relations between them as the focus of this research, some gaps remain. *First*, the discussion on Arab Hadrami's polarization in addressing national issues and the model of relations that is carried out is relatively rare, especially in the aftermath of the 212 movement and the 2019 presidential election, which some studies consider as the space for Islamism and Islamic group contestation.¹³ *Second*, from several studies that focus on explaining polarization and relations between Hadhrami Arabs, no one has yet seriously explained it using a sociological perspective, especially about the understanding that the social background of each Arab entity influences their position on national issues as well as the model of relations that are carried out.

This research attempts to fill this hole by presenting the theory of social capital as an analytical tool to understand how polarization and the model of relations between Hadhrami Arabs work. Thus, this research presents a sociological perspective that is expected to be able to explain Arab phenomena by making the Bondowoso Arab Community as research subject. This research seeks to answer two main questions. *First* is the perceptions of members of Jam'ah Bondowoso regarding current national issues based on their

¹² Rijal, *Internal*, 1-28.

¹³ Ali Akhbar Abaib Mas Rabbani Lubis, "Contestation on Political Space Between Islamism and Islamic Group in Presidential Election 2019." *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 20, 2 (2020).

background in religious schools, education, economic interests, politics, and the environment of interaction. *Second*, it is about intra-ethnic relations around Jama'ah, which have different positions in addressing national issues.

To answer the questions, this research used qualitative research. This research does not stop at capturing social phenomena but understands the value of an action. To understand the value behind an action, a special method is needed that can be useful in understanding the motives and meaning of human action.¹⁴ To enter into the meaning of the actions of the Jamaah community in Bondowoso as a particular case, the case study approach will then be the approach used. The in-line case study approach with this research is based on three primary considerations: this research tries primarily to answer the question of 'how', the question of researchers are less able to control the social dynamics being studied, and the focus of researchers is contemporary phenomena. These three considerations are the most important reasons why a case study approach needs to be used.¹⁵

SOCIAL CAPITAL

The involvement of civil society in responding to national issues can be seen from the perspective of social capital. Apart from the economic aspect, social capital is believed to be another aspect that influences a society's level of progress and thinking.¹⁶ Everyone's ownership of social capital influences how issues of democracy and nationality get a response. In addition, social capital as a concept is also relevant for describing social relations in society. It is because social relations are one of the central bases of social capital theory itself.¹⁷

Within one ethnic group, ownership of social capital cannot be seen singly. Everyone in one ethnicity may have different social capital. According to Costa and Kahn, there are several factors that

¹⁴ See Irving Zeitlin, *Rethinking Sociology: A Critique of Contemporary Theory* (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1973).

¹⁵ Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (London: Sage, 2018).

¹⁶ Alexander Tatarko, Anna Mironova, Fons J. R. Van De Vijver. "Ethnic Diversity and Social Capital in the Russian Context." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 48, 4 (2017): 542-559, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022117692099>.

¹⁷ See John Field, *Social Capital* (London: Routledge, 2003); Nan Lin, *Social Capital: a Theory of Social Structure and Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

affect the quality of each person's social capital, such as demographic and socio-economic characteristics and the characteristics of the community itself.¹⁸ Robert Putnam deserves credit for his role in popularizing the concept of social capital. This concept was previously better known in the spectrum of economic and social theory.¹⁹ Because of this, Putnam's theory of social capital still gets the main place in this research.

Trust, norms, and networks are features of social organization that Putnam calls social capital.²⁰ This social capital is important in framing the social relations of society. Social capital is the reason that can best explain the disparity in progress between groups and between individuals. The quality of social capital, Putnam believes, is a factor that influences the progress or productivity of a society. Of course, different from material economic capital, social capital refers to how a person forms social networks and relations and the existence of accepted norms among each. Therefore, for Putnam, the concept of social capital is theoretically close to the concept of civil virtue.²¹ Putnam describes social capital in three main features: trust, norms, and social networks. Others divide trust into two parts, namely institutional trust and individual trust so that there are four features of social capital.²²

This feature of social capital is certainly not singular. Apart from Putnam, several others offer different features. This difference may indeed appear to see the scientific lens used as a perspective of social capital is also different.

Paul Collier,²³ for example, reduces the concept of social capital into three main features. Includes social interaction, the impact of

¹⁸ April K Clark "Rethinking the Decline in Social Capital", *American Politics Research*, 43 (4, 2015), 569–601. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X14531071>.

¹⁹ Field, *Social*, 4.

²⁰ Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 167.

²¹ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 16.

²² Emanuele Ferragina, "The Welfar State and Social Capital in Europe." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 58 (I, 2017), 55-90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020715216688934>.

²³ Paul Collier, "Social Capital and Poverty: A Microeconomic Perspective" in Christiaan Grootaert & Thierry van Bastelaer, *The Role of Social Capital in Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 19.

social interaction, and the working mechanism of social interaction. Collier's social interaction is the basis for classifying social capital. Despite these differences, Putnam's concept will still get a major portion. One of the main reasons is that some consider Putnam's conception to have the broadest reach compared to others.

According to Putnam, the *first* feature, namely trust, is an essential component of social capital.²⁴ The greater the trust in social relations, the greater the desire of each to establish cooperative relations. There are two forms of trust, namely institutional trust and individual trust.²⁵ The first relates to citizens' trust in public institutions such as educational institutions, the judiciary, etc. The second relates to mutual trust between individuals in society.

Despite being an essential feature, social trust can only be formed from two other features: social norms and civic engagement (social networks). Based on Putnam, social trust arises from these last two features.²⁶ Social norm relates to the right to mutually control one's behavior socially because every action has what is referred to as an externality, namely the positive and negative consequences of each action that each person can feel.

Putnam places social networks within several parameters of a person's involvement in specific formal organizations. Some of the parameters that Putnam uses, for example, are political participation, involvement as citizens, religious participation, and so on.²⁷ As a theory emphasizing social relations, social capital is projected to produce an ideal relationship model. Ideal in the sense that social relations are formed in the form of cooperation at the individual and communal levels. Cooperatives or cooperation are ideal relations from which the community gets some benefits socially. Quoting Hanifan, Putnam explained that the benefits of social cooperation do not only impact individuals but also each person.²⁸

With this ideal social relationship, the relationship between one group and another and individuals and others runs in harmony. Such harmony can be realized when the quality of social capital is getting

²⁴ Putnam, *Making*, 170.

²⁵ Ferragina, *The Welfare*, 55-90.

²⁶ See Putnam, *Making*, 172.

²⁷ See Putnam, *Bowling*, 20.

²⁸ See Robert D. Putnam, *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

better. Therefore, said Putnam, the idea of social capital is intended for two primary purposes. *First*, maximizing the positive consequences of social capital. *Second*, minimize the negative consequences that arise from it. The positive consequences of social capital can be in the form of mutual support, cooperation, trust, and institutional effectiveness, while the negative consequences are sectarianism, ethnocentrism, and corruption.²⁹

ISLAMIC POPULISM

Islamic populism cannot be separated from the movement of Islamic political movements.³⁰ Because it reads Islam as the basis of the movement, Islamic populism, and even populism itself, is part of identity politics.³¹ Populism is associated with political movements that are at one of the two extreme poles.³² Populism is also read as a movement without stance, which is opportunistic to gain the maximum sympathy from society.³³

Populism is partly understood as an anti-establishment political view and divides society into two parts: the people and the other. This classification is done based on political identity, with relationships that tend to be antagonistic.³⁴ So, the basis of populism is based on national identity and religion.³⁵ Although some people say that populism is a defensive expression echoed against modern Western ideas, such as liberal democracy, some others mistakenly call it a pathology. The fragmentation character of Islamic populism is dangerous in the context of a society in Indonesia that has multiple identities because

²⁹ Putnam, *Bowling*, 20.

³⁰ See Vedi R. Hadiz, *Islamic Populism in Indonesia and the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

³¹ See Jan Warner Muller, *What Is Populism* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 34.

³² Hadiz, *Islamic*, 21.

³³ Michael Conniff, *Populism in Latin America* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1999), 5.

³⁴ Francisco Panizza, *Populism and Mirror of Democracy* (London: Verso, 2005) 3; Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 12.

³⁵ See Hadiz, *Islamic*.

religion can be misused to commit violence and spread hostility.³⁶ Although, it cannot be said that religion justifies violence.³⁷

Islamic populism is also challenging the future of Indonesian democracy. There are two factors that make this phenomenon a threat to democracy. The *first* is, in the sense of religion, that populism raises the practice of intolerance. The *second* is that the exploitation of Islamic issues leads to the emergence of intolerant behaviors in both the legislative and executive realms.³⁸

RELIGIOUS MODERATION

The concept of moderation is becoming more prominent in Islam. Theologically, moderation is a religious ideal with its argumentation base in the al-Quran. Wasathiyah is the Islamic term for moderation. This word comes from *surah* al-Baqarah: 143, which explains the status of Muslims as moderate people (*ummatan wasathan*).

This moderation necessitates two main aspects. *First*, moderate as Muslim self-identity. *Second*, as a worldview of Muslims. Moreover, the attitude of moderation is notably present in every major religion and civilization on earth.³⁹ Moderation in Islam is sometimes interpreted from various perspectives. On the one hand, moderation is synonymous with the meaning of serenity. Some Islamic concepts that are relevant for this purpose are patience (*sabr*), gentleness (*rifq*), and steadfastness (*hilm*). Sometimes, moderation is also interpreted as a neutral and mediocre attitude.⁴⁰

Islamic moderation firmly opposes Islamic extremism and terrorism. Moderation is the answer to avoiding extreme and excessive behavior in religion. According to Wahbah Zuhayli, moderation in Islam is manifested in an attitude of balance. Such balance can be actualized in the context of fulfilling rights and obligations, adequacy

³⁶ Eileen Barker, "In God's Name: Practising Unconditional Love to the Death" in Madawi Al-Rasheed & Marat Shterin, *Dying for Faith* (London: Tauris, 2009), 17.

³⁷ See David G. Bromley & J Gordon Melton, *Violence and Religion in Perspective David G Bromley, Cults, Religion, and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

³⁸ Zainuddin Syarif & Abd Hannan, "Islamic Populism Politics and Its Threat to Indonesian Democracy." *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 20, 2 (2020), DOI :10.21154/altahrir.v20i2.2128.

³⁹ Mohammad H Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: the Quranic Principles of Wasatiyyah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2.

⁴⁰ Kamali, *The Middle*, 14.

of material spiritual needs, individualism-collectivism, as well as ways out of terrorism and extremism. How vital this spirit of moderation is, Wahban Zuhayli calls it a pillar of Islamic civilization.⁴¹

Manifestations of wasatiyah or Islamic moderation are seen in the following formulations.⁴² *First*, moderation relates to the substance and principal meaning of Islam. Moderation keeps particular things from being positioned as elements that can eliminate more basic elements. *Second*, Islamic moderation can tie the various dimensions of Islam together. Islam is not solely a religious system, but also a legal system distinguished by its particular characteristics. Wasatiyah effectively consolidated diverse madhabs of Islamic thought and teachings into a single dimension of critical importance.

Third, Moderation adequately situates the relationship between continuity and change. Islam encompasses not just enduring and eternal teachings, but also teachings susceptible to modification and transitory in nature. There are fixed (*al-thawabit*) and changing (*al-mutaghayyirat*) in Islamic teachings. Islamic moderation is able to place each area proportionally.

Fourth, Islamic moderation is demonstrated through recognizing and appreciating variations in Islamic teachings regarding objectives and methods. As a goal, Islamic teachings rest on what is known as Islamic goals (*maqashid al-shariah*). Meanwhile, as a tool, Islamic teachings are dialectical with certain situations and conditions to realize the intended goals. *Maqashid al-shariah* has not changed. However, the method or means of implementation may change. In this context, Islamic moderation can apply these two dimensions of tools and goals appropriately. In the objective space, Islamic teachings do not change and are not different. But in terms of ways, Islamic teachings can change and be different.

Fifth, Islamic moderation presupposes evolution rather than revolution. Evolution means that Islamic teachings promote gradual but continuous changes rather than sudden and fast changes. Gradualism (*taddaruj*) is important to provide wider opportunities for change to occur naturally and with minimal resistance.

⁴¹ Wahbah Al-Zuhayli, *Qadhaya al-Fiqh wa al-Fikr al-Mu'āshir* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2006), 578.

⁴² Kamali, *The Middle*, 49.

Sixth, moderation practically promotes dialogue and active involvement. This dialogic power allows each perception and interpretation of truth to be communicated to avoid coercion of acceptance of truth. In principle, each person has the potential for right and wrong. Therefore, blaming each other and truth claims need to be avoided by building open dialogue.

Seventh, open moderation accepts various pluralistic and consultative truths. Moderation in this sense can be seen, for example, from accepting the various ideas of Islamic jurisprudence or madhab. The madhab system in Islam is a form of acceptance of the potential for truth in various views and thoughts of religious law.

THE ARAB OF BONDOWOSO AND THE DYNAMICS

The Arabs of Bondowoso does not consist of a monolith. They possess a vibrant hue. Their perspective about national matters, particularly politics, is impacted by this fact. A novel phenomena has emerged in their engagement with political matters. This phenomena can be attributed to their heightened level of engagement and attention towards the matters at hand. However, nothing comparable to this had ever happened before.

Habib Alam Zabidin (not his real name) stated that previously the Arabs in Bondowoso had never taken political issues seriously. They are involved in political activities limited to giving their voting rights in various political events. *“I was in the Arab Village (Kampong Arab) for a long time. The Arab Village has never been serious about political matters,”* said Habib Alam Zabidin. According to him, their seriousness in addressing political issues in the homeland only emerged in 2014 and 2019. That was when the presidential election was attended by two pairs of candidates, Jokowi vs Prabowo Subianto. Habib Muhammad Ja’faran (not his real name) said the same thing. This young person who graduated from Lebanon sees that Arabs are actually indifferent to politics. They are not very involved in political issues. *“The Bondowoso congregation doesn’t really intervene in politics; they are very ignorant,”* explained this YAPI Pasuruan alumnus.

According to Habib Alam Zabidin,⁴³ changes to the Kampung Arab phenomenon have occurred since the influx of social media

⁴³ The name is anonym.

information related to political issues. For example, how easily do they get issues about communism and hatred of religion. Because of that, the choices given by some people in the Arab Village, seemed to be determined from the issues above. This issue, for example, is related to the order to elect Prabowo accompanied by hatred produced to corner Jokowi.

“Most of the Sunnis were against Prabowo yesterday, although not all of them. If I go to Jokowi, I used to be active in organizations, so I know history, I can read. They will follow if they are mostly because they have already followed what was ordered from them. All of them are trust the issue.”

The interesting thing that happened in the context of the presidential election was the meeting of the interests between *al-Irshad* community and the *habaib*. While the former is used to describe the ‘ordinary’ Arabs, the latter is the term for Arabs, especially from Hadhramaut, who are believed as the descendent of Prophet Muhammad. Another term to mention them is *sadah*, the plural form of *sayyid*. It is well known that the birth of *al-Irshad* itself was motivated by opposition to the honorable position of the *habaib*.

“There are many who became success team for Jokowi, and also for Prabowo. The Jokowi man is for example Habib Toha. While Prabowo man is the late Habib Saleh, that was yesterday’s judge. If Prabowo is Al-Irsyad. Al-Irsyad and *habaib* met yesterday”.

Habib Rizieq’s current charisma is powerful in Arab circles. According to Habib Alam Zabidin, Habib Rizieq’s influence did not only affect those with strong views. Even moderates admire Habib Rizieq “*It is amazing. Regardless of their moderate views, they are still in awe of Habib Rizieq.*”

The influence of Sunni and Shi’a differences in the decision to choose a presidential candidate is actually felt among hard-core Sunnis. “*If it is the Sunnis who read it loudly, the reason is Habib Rizieq, the reason in Jokowi’s government is that there are Shi’a,*” said Habib Zabidin. Another important thing relates to the presence of the figure of Habib Rizieq in the vortex of domestic political issues. “*Then the figure of Habib Rizieq is also influential,*” said Habib Zabidin.

Habib Barwan⁴⁴ is one of the Habib who is the strongest in showing his side with Habib Rizieq. Including his anti-Jokowi political position. According to him, the current government is controlled by groups hostile to Islam. *“Habib Rizieq is a symbol of Islam. How are you being bullied? Means they do not respect Islam. The proof is that the clergy are not respected”*.

Habib Talhah conveyed a different view.⁴⁵ This Shi’a figure sees the influence of Habib Rizieq’s figure in an ordinary Arab Village. Unlike Jakarta, which welcomed the figure of Habib Rizieq fanatically.

While some Arab circles are sympathetic to the 212 movement, Habib Alam Zabidin has a different view. Arabs believe that Ahok has blasphemed religion by citing Al-Maidah’s letter. They don’t read that there is a political aspect behind it. He said:

“The average person is like that, because it is the case of verse al-Maidah. If so, I have a different view. I already said the first. But I was opposed and did not believe them. This is not Ahok’s goal, you are being carried around. The others are from Ahok’s case.”

An unsympathetic view was also conveyed by Habib Ja’faran.⁴⁶ According to him, he could not get too into the attitude of agreeing or not with the movement. *“Personally, I prefer preaching in moderation. Because my background is Lebanese, although there it also depends on where the school is.”* In some initial information, there is an assumption that Jokowi is surrounded by Shiites. For this reason, some *habaib* among the Sunnis chose to support Prabowo, in addition to other considerations. *“If Shi’a said to Jokowi,”* said Habib Toba.⁴⁷ He himself, who came from the Shi’a community, chose to support Jokowi. *“I go to Jokowi, because it is real, there are results, the five years of leadership are real.”*

But they agreed that Indonesia’s position with all its ideology should not be questioned. According to Habib Abduh,⁴⁸ Pancasila is no longer necessary to be questioned. *“There is no need to be opposed to the Pancasila religion. The important thing is that the da’wah of*

⁴⁴ The nama is anonym.

⁴⁵ The name is anonym.

⁴⁶ The name is anonym.

⁴⁷ The name is anonym.

⁴⁸ The name is anonym.

Islam is alive and people are free to carry out the Shari'ah," said the alumni of Darul Mushtafa Yaman.

Meanwhile, Habib Abduh did not want to question political choices overly. He received a mandate from the teacher to maintain harmony and brotherhood. He said:

“When relaxed, I sometimes make excuses with my Shi'i brothers. Discuss with them, even though they are different. In this way, in my opinion, we can directly convey what we believe to be true. And I delivered in between jokes. So, you don't feel it”.

ARAB IN BONDOWOSO AND ITS DYNAMICS

There are several historical and well-known figures because of their reputations as experts in Islamic thought. They are Habib Muhammad bin Ahmad al Muhdhar, Habib Ahmad bin Muhammad al Muhdhar, Habib Hamza Al Habsyi, Habib Ali Zaenal Abidin al hamid who is currently in Malaysia and Habib Ahmad Prints duwek (two heads). This last figure is called by this nickname because of his genius and depth of thought in the field of religion.

What's interesting about this community, is the fact that there are two large communities with two different organizational bases and religious ideologies. The two are the Al-Khairiyah Foundation and the Al-Irsyad Foundation. These two education-based foundations are also not monolithic.

The Al-Khairiyah Foundation includes two different religious understandings. They are the Sunni community as the largest, and the Shi'i as a minority. Al Ershad is also inhabited by two different religious segments, although in the same ideological family, namely moderate Sunni-salafi-wahabi and extreme Sunni-salafi-wahabi. Al Khairiyah itself is on the north side of the railroad tracks and Al Ersyad is on the south side of the railroad tracks.

The two foundations occupy a central position in the context of transmitting Islamic understanding in Bondowoso and its surroundings. Both of them contributed greatly to strengthening Islam in Bondowoso. In addition, there are also many *majlis ta'lim* which are cared for by several *habaib* from the Al Khairiyah Foundation or ustad from Al Ersyad. One of them is Majlis Habib Muhammad bin Umar among Al-Kharyyah and Majis Ustad Syafiq Basalamah among Al-Irsyad.

The two groups are involved in complex and dynamic relationship, especially in conflict. The horizontal conflict between Al Ersyad and Al Khairiyah once erupted to shed blood at the An Nur mosque, one of the mosques in Kampung Arab. The conflict became even more complex when Bondowoso became the center for the development of two transnational currents, the Shi'a from Iran and the Wahhabi-Salafi from Saudi.

The dynamics of this relationship then influence many of their respective positions in addressing various issues, including the issue of national politics. These issues have especially come to the fore and attracted Arab Bondowoso's involvement since the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections, to religious issues, which culminated in the incident of insulting the Al-Maidah letter.

JAMA'AH PERCEPTION: Not Monolithic

Due to the variety of madhabs and religious stances among Arabs, their perspectives on national political matters are not monolithic. Their viewpoint is not singular. They have different perceptual records. This difference even appears among fellow Arab *habaib*, who are generally affiliated with the Al-Khairiyah Foundation. Among *habaib* themselves, there are many organizations, religious schools of thought, and education that they follow.

Based on some of the data from interviews and observation techniques, their perceptions can at least be classified into the following frameworks. *First*, the perception emerged and strengthened among *habaib*, who religiously is part of the Shi'a. In the context of partiality towards the current Jokowi government regime, adherents of the Shi'a school of thought tend to support the Jokowi government. For them, Jokowi administration has guaranteed their national rights, including the protection they must receive as citizens of the nation. Pancasila as the basis of the state with the concept of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia as the form of the State, is the final and relevant form for the life of the Indonesian nation.

Thus, they have a positive perception of national political issues and the image of the Jokowi government. It's just that although they tend to be the same, there are tendencies that remain different among some adherents of Shi'a, especially concerning their respective educational backgrounds. There are two tendencies that arise among

them. *First*, Iran's Shi'a Alumni tend to be more progressive and open in showing their Shi'ism, as well as in the political context, support or alignment with Jokowi. *Second*, Shi'a who are Lebanese alumni or YAPI Bangil are more closed in articulating their identity. They support Jokowi, but they don't show it very expressively.

This classification is certainly not without problems. There is actually a kind of inconsistency when the Shiites are so articulate in supporting Jokowi's government. This inconsistency is related to the background of Shi'a ideology, which has a rigorous view in the context of leadership. Theologically, they only recognize the leadership or *imamate* from the lineage of Ali bin Abi Talib and Sayidah Fatimah.

In fact, empirically, there are some Shi'a Arabs in Bondowoso who show their sincerity in applying the concept of *imamate* with reluctance to attend Friday prayers. They believe that the existing Friday prayer priests do not meet the requirements specified in the context of the *imamate*, where only those who are imams from the descendants of Sayyidina Husein have the right to become priests and at the same time have justice as priests.

The contradictions emerged when they expressed support for Jokowi government as the legitimate leader. As a legitimate leader, Jokowi's government must be supported, and Muslims must not abuse this legitimate leadership. This view is, of course, aimed at attacking the stance of some conservative Sunnis who often criticize and even delegitimize Jokowi's government. The strange thing is how can those who theologically only justify political leadership from the Sayyidina Husein bin Ali path declare their support for the Jokowi government on the grounds that they are the legitimate leader. Moreover, the concept of *imamate* is one of the fundamental teachings in Shi'a beliefs.

Of course, there are many possibilities regarding this inconsistency. For one thing, this can be read as one of the strategies of the Shiites to protect their existence. After all, the dominant political forces that most benefit the existence of the Shiites are Jokowi's leadership and the strength of the *PDI Perjuangan* party. With this support, there is a symbiosis that the Shiites hope for in the form of protection for their existence.

When Gus Dur was still in power, they affiliated with the National Awakening Party (PKB) as a political reference because in this party they get protection as a minority. Moreover, Gus Dur was indeed very keen to fight for the rights of minority citizens who were often vulnerable to social persecution, such as the Shiites.

When Gus Dur died, and PKB was no longer trusted to provide the maximum protection as given by Gus Dur, they chose another political power. In this case, it is the nationalist forces that are in the *PDI Perjuangan*. *PDI Perjuangan* is considered a more inclusive party in accepting and fighting for minority rights. This belief was even higher when one of the Shi'a leaders, the founder and chairman of IJABI, scholar Jalaluddin Rahmat, became a member of the DPR RI from that party.

This contradiction can also be read as a consequence of the political choices of some Sunni groups who are harsh towards the Shiites who are in the position of Prabowo Subianto's supporters. This strict Sunni group is the Sunni segment in the Bondowoso district, which is a dropout from Mecca and Medina. They openly support Prabowo Subianto because they think that the strength of Jokowi and the *PDI Perjuangan* is too close to the interests of parties that so far have a bad image in the Muslims' view, including Shi'a.

Moreover, there is the figure of Habib Rizieq who supports Prabowo. The two factors then intertwined in influencing the Sunni group's political position, which was rather harsh towards the Shi'a, in affirming the Shi'a's alignment with Prabowo Subianto. Fundamentally, this Sunni group differs only in the context of political support from the ruling government.

They have no differences on issues like the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. For them, NKRI is final. Moreover, Sunnis have a flexible leadership model conceptually as in the Shi'a concept of Imamah. It is just that in the current context, the Shiites seem to be exploring the concept of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia more, even though fundamentally, they have a more exclusive concept of Imamah.

While, Sunni is divided into three configurations. *First*, the Mecca-Medina alumni group. This group is more progressive and strict on the Shi'a group and tends to support Habib Rizieq rejecting Jokowi. *Second*, the Yemen Alumni group, where they are more

persuasive in dealing with Shi'a groups. This second group is trying to maintain the social order to avoid conflict based on differences in understanding. In terms of political expression, even if they support Prabowo and Habib Rizieq, they have never publicly supported them. This was caused by Habib Umar bin Hafidz's involvement, who warned his alumni not to get into the vortex of political conflict.

Third, domestic Sunni Alumni, especially UIN or IAIN. They prefer a non-partisan position and avoid direct involvement in politics. In this segment, some were in Jokowi's ranks during the presidential election, and some were in Prabowo. The Sunni alumni segment of Mecca and Medina differs from the Yemeni Sunni alumni segment. While the former is more explosive, Yemeni alumni tend to be cautious about expressing their political choices. This was partly influenced by the teachings of their teacher, namely Habib Umar bin Hafid, who did not pay too much special attention to issues of national politics.

Principally, they agree with the ideology of Pancasila and the conception of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKR). It means that fundamental national issues, such as the conception of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia and Pancasila, are final in the view of the *habaib* in Bondowoso. Both the Sunnis from all segments and the Shiites. The difference occurs at the level of electoral political support between Jokowi and Prabowo Subianto.

The selected scientific network, the teacher training chain that is followed, is usually in line with the religious madhab that is followed. For example, for those who follow the Shi'a school of thought, from the start, the scholarly networks they follow are usually those that are in line with their views and ideas. In the context of the Congregation in Bondowoso, those who have a Shi'a Madhab, will usually choose to study in countries or regions known as Shi'a bases, such as Iran, Lebanon, and Syria. Meanwhile, at home they usually choose to study at YAPI Bangil.

While Sunni groups usually choose a different goal. In Bondowoso, there are several studies abroad destinations for Sunnis. Such as Mecca, Medina, and Yemen. While in the country, the goal is to study at several Islamic boarding schools that follow the same religious madhab. For this reason, their national views are greatly influenced by their madhab. Thus, to a certain extent, their national

views reflect the madhab concept they follow. For example, for those who follow the Sunni madhab, their views in the context of nationalism are influenced by anti-Khilafah tendencies, flexibility of leadership models, and so on.

The dynamics taking place among the Hadhrami Arabs of Bondowoso must be interpreted within the same framework as what is known as the strengthening of Islamic populism in Indonesia. This is because religious narratives have become a commodity traded, especially by particular groups seeking political advantage. Even though, once again, the political expression of Hadhrami is not singular, the phenomenon of the emergence of groups that are very expressive in defending Islam and the clergy in asserting their political positions shows signs of what is called an Islamic political movement.⁴⁹

As a political movement, Islamic populism is a form of identity politics.⁵⁰ In the context of Arab Hadhrami in Bondowoso, as well as conservative Muslims in general in Indonesia, the identity that is highlighted as a unifier is religious identity, precisely the religion of Islam. Narratives such as anti-Islam, anti-*ulama'*, and *ulama' dihalim*, are among the languages that emerge from the form of commodification of Islamic identity as a symbol of struggle as well as an instrument to attract the sympathy of a wide audience. However, religion remains one of the most effective mobilizers in moving people's emotions. With such narrations, some Hadhramis Bondowoso tries to convey that Muslims are currently disadvantaged. Muslims have been experiencing political losses from forces involved in political contestation, such as Jokowi and PDI Perjuangan.

In the current political spectrum, Muslims are confronted with the political power of the rulers who are considered the antithesis of the struggle of Muslims. This vis-a-vis position continues to be widely reproduced to strengthen the internal political position as well as weaken the opponent's political position.

ARAB ETHNIC RELATIONS IN BONDOWOSO

The complexity of the perceptions of the Arab Village in Bondowoso in addressing national issues does not correlate directly with their social relations. They differ in addressing issues of nationality or

⁴⁹ See Hadiz, *Islamic*.

⁵⁰ See Muller, *What Is*.

nationalism, mainly based on their respective religious backgrounds. However, the internal relations among the Arab ethnic groups are running as they are. The relationship is running normally. There is no significant change in the context of social relations concerning changes in strengthening the attention of some Arab villages towards politics. For them, differences in political and national issues, including religious background, are not too much of an obstacle and disrupt the relationships built amid the Arab Village community.

However, religious issues such as Shi'a-Sunni-Wahabi-Salafi have far more potential for conflict. That is, differences in religious understanding still have a determinant scale of conflict that exceeds political differences. Interestingly, this potential conflict was prevented and did not escalate into violent conflict. It is undeniable that polarization has formed among Arabs after the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections. It means that, to a certain extent, politics influences the formation of polarization without significantly affecting their social relations model.

The 2019 presidential election has divided the Arab village community into several groups. Tensions arose. It is just that the root of their tension is not in differences in political support but instead in the differences in the schools of thought that they adhere to. The difference between these madhabs has made the political polarization even greater. A kind of stigmatization continues to be capitalized on to strengthen each position. For example, the stigma that all Shi'as go to Jokowi while all Sunni-Saudis go to Prabowo and Salafi-Wahhabis do not engage in politics. Despite this fact, this data shows no firm generalization about it.

Interestingly, although polarization is formed, they maintain harmonious social relations. It means that even if they exist, political tensions do not disturb the social order they have guarded for a long time. Arab Hadhrami succeeded in implementing the proper mechanism for managing differences so that they did not arise into large-scale tensions and conflicts that ended in violence.

This social mechanism exists in the consciousness of all Hadhrami members who know the importance of maintaining harmonious internal relations within their ethnicity. Differences are treated maturely, although that does not mean that the anger that arises from

political differences is something that is not found at all. It is what maintains cohesion among Hadhrami circles.

In Putnam's perspective, Hadhrami Arabs have solid social capital in managing differences while maintaining social cohesion. Social capital that is formed is maintained through various features that contribute positively to maintaining cohesive relationships within Hadhrami.

These features are related to the following features. *First*, trust, as one of the migrants who have long lived in Bondowoso, concentrated in one place together, the trust between each member has long been formed. This belief cannot be separated from the fact that there is a close family relationship among the Hadhramis in Bondowoso, especially among the *habaib* or *sayyid*'s circles. This trust prevented tensions arising due to political differences, changing, or breaking into destructive relationships such as conflict.

Second, the norm. Hadhrami circles have a solid collective awareness that they must maintain social harmony. Differences among *habaib* in Bondowoso are not new, especially regarding the Sunni vs. Shi'a religious affiliation. In fact, they managed these sensitive differences by prioritizing family mechanisms whenever a situation had to threaten the social harmony between them.

The last feature (*third*) is the social network. The social network in question relates to social and political organizations that bridge the relationships of Jama'ah members even though they come from different political affiliations and religious views. This network become more facilitated by the development of digital platforms that change some patterns of Indonesian Muslim society.⁵¹

In the context of Bondowoso, there are two social networks that can be said to have succeeded in supporting harmonious relations among fellow Hadhramis. The *first* is the Al-Falah Al-Khairiyah Foundation. This foundation, which is engaged in education, is a typical home for the Hadhrami *habaib* in Bondowoso. All Hadhrami entities with different ideologies and political preferences mingle without highlighting their differences. In this organization, the main interest is the organization.

⁵¹ Zainuddin Syarif & Abd Hannan. "Islamic Disruption: How Digital Platform Changes Religious Pattern of Muslim Society in Contemporary Indonesia." *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 22, 1 (2022), DOI : 10.21154/altahrir.v22i1.3730.

Apart from Al-Khairiyah, Rabithah Alawiyyin is the second social network with a positive function that binds internal relations among the Hadhrami from the *habaib* segment. Those with a united lineage as descendants of the Prophet Muhammad through the line of Sayyidah Fatimah are united in this organization. The identity presented is the similarity of lineage as the descendant of the prophet, not religious affiliation.

For this reason, when there are differences in the *Rabitah*, it serves as a reminder that they come from the same family. Nothing is allowed to undermine the bond of those in the same line, including differences in religious and political views. In fact, in some cases, *Rabithah* became a mediator who brought together the interests of the Hadhramis when they were involved in disputes and needed a joint settlement.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals several things that became the focus of this research. *First*, the political and national perceptions of Bondowoso Arabs are not monolithic. The complexity of madhabs and religious positions among Arabs makes their perceptions of national political issues relatively pluralistic. Their perception is not singular. They have a variety of different perceptions. This difference even appears among fellow Arab *habaib*, who are generally affiliated with the Al-Khairiyah Foundation. Because, among hababib himself, there are many organizations, religious, and educational schools that he follows.

Second, intra-ethnic relations usually run in polarization caused by differences in political affiliation and religious attitudes. In other words, despite forming segmentation based on political differences, social relations have still been prevented from falling into violent conflict.

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