

## Political Identity In The Perspective Of The Christian Faith: Welcome To The Future

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**Abstract.** *Identity politics is a political tactic in which people or groups organize themselves based on certain traits such as religion, culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, or even hobbies. This can happen due to discrimination or injustice in society that makes the person or group feel the need to form a similar group for support and protection. In the context of society, identity politics can appear in various forms such as feminist movements, anti-racism movements, or LGBT movements. However, we must also beware of the dangers of identity politics that can divide society and create conflicts between different groups. The basis of Christian belief also teaches us to live in peace and harmony with fellow human beings. We are taught to forgive and give others a second chance. In the context of identity politics, these values and principles can help us build inclusive and peaceful societies where every individual feels valued and accepted.*

**Keywords:** *Identity Politics, Christian Faith, Pluralism*

## **PENDAHULUAN**

Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world. There are more than 17,000 distinct islands, with hundreds of local cultures, sub-cultures and languages. In the Papua region alone, there are no less than 252 ethnic groups who have their own distinctive language. Such cultural diversity, if Indonesia is able to maintain it for a long time, then it can be considered as a very valuable historical miracle. Therefore, identity politics which frequently appears in Indonesia's modern history must be handled wisely and supervised with appropriate and intelligent historical reasoning. At the time of the proclamation, Indonesia's population was only around 70 million people, but at the beginning of the 21st century, the population had reached more than 235 million, increasing threefold since 1945, making Indonesia the fourth largest country in the world after China, India , and the United States.

The political situation in Indonesia is heating up as the presidential and legislative elections approach. Many young and experienced people want to get involved in the country's politics. As political beings, humans have a natural nature to live together in society. Only in the context of living together can humans achieve the highest moral awareness. This is because issues related to the whole society will be discussed and debated in order to achieve actions that bring the common good.

In its evolution, the meaning of politics has widened and cannot get a single meaning. Even its existence in the realm of science in the field of social sciences has created differences among political experts (Sirait, 2000, p. 19) . For example, Miriam Budiarjo revealed that the field of politics as a scientific discipline was still relatively new and began to develop at the end of the 19th century. (Budiardjo, 2003, p. 1) .

Currently, politics is considered as an act that undermines dignity and morality. Politics is considered as a place where chaos occurs everywhere. Most politicians are considered to be greedy, cunning, hypocritical and only think of their personal interests. Politics is seen as a dirty arena full of manipulative acts and empty rhetoric. Such views dominate the political climate in the country. (Manafe, 2017, p. 1) Sabam Sirait stated that various surveys were not needed to confirm this. From chats in coffee shops to cafes, gatherings of housewives to student demonstrations, labor demonstrations to scientific seminars for academics: it is certain that when it comes to political affairs, what is heard is cynicism which is often expressed in a sarcastic tone.

Nowadays, it is hardly heard of people talking about politics in positive terms. (Manafe, 2017, p. 1) .

The emergence of ethnic politics stems from increased awareness to identify oneself as part of a particular class or ethnic group. This awareness then triggers the formation of solidarity between groups and nations. Ethnic politics refers to politics relating to "ethnic groups" or "small minorities", while the interpretation of ethnic groups can include ethnic nations (national ethnicities).

In the Bible, there are many examples of figures who lived in the world of politics, such as Saul, David, Solomon, Daniel, Esther, Mordecai, and others. When looking at Saul's life, we can learn about the dirty politics he did. Saul hated David and considered him an opponent who must be eliminated. He is also arrogant and feels capable so he does not need God's advice and words. However, David was well-behaved, honest, and pleasing to God. Various characters in the Bible show noble personal integrity, how they uphold the principles of truth even though their lives must be at stake.

How do people who have faith in politics view? Are individuals who embrace Christianity allowed to participate in politics? Based on historical data, there are several Christian figures involved in politics, such as Desmond Mpilo Tutu, Martin Luther King, Jr., Elisabeth Fry, William Wilberforce, and John Calvin. They have changed the world and left a trail of struggle against injustice and truth which is very inspiring (Manafe, 2017) . This shows that God allows believers to get involved in politics. The important lesson is that Christianity must not shy away from politics. Some of the reasons why politics is considered noble is because justice and truth must be political goals that Christians strive diligently for. Involvement in politics must begin with a call to fight injustice and social problems. The world of politics can be a means to achieve this goal. Christians, even special ministers, can engage in politics as a vocation to improve the world and to spread the light of Christ as an ethical guide in dealing with world problems, as long as they keep fighting for normative rights as their main motivation and leave practical politics centered on power and using any means. to reach the goal.

The attitude of Christians in political life should be based on the understanding that politics is a gift from God. Politics is not a negative thing. Therefore, position and power must be seen as an opportunity to serve God through service to the people. They must side with the weak. Christian politicians are called upon to side with them for two important reasons: this group of people is

often the victim of oppression, injustice and arbitrariness. Their partiality should not be based on primitive sentiments such as ethnicity, race or religion. However, these parties also cannot make rules and laws not apply to this group.

Having goals and missions that focus on the people and kingdom of God. A Christian politician must have a strong personality. This personality is reflected in the consistency of his attitude towards a particular issue related to the interests of the people. According to Hasibua, there are three aspects of personality that support one another that are important for leaders (including Christian politicians) to have, namely vision, values, and courage. The most important aspect of the three aspects of personality is vision. Because by having a clear vision (shared vision), organizational concepts and goals can be developed.

In a situation that is not good and is considered corrupt, politics at the same time continues to be expected and is increasingly being practiced in everyday life. This shows the paradox that it seems that politics has two sides. On the one hand, politics just happens in the institutional routines and behavior of corrupt and despicable perpetrators, and on the other hand, politics is expected but not realized in daily life (Djunaedi et al., 2013, p. 1) . This statement presents a problem for Christian life. Some people think of politics as a dirty activity. Many Christians, including Christian students, are afraid or do not like politics. This is caused by the negative image of politics which is considered as a place of devils or sins. Sometimes, political practice in Indonesia involves the use of church institutions to achieve the political goals of a particular person or party.

Bearing this responsibility, it is inevitable that communities, especially followers of the Christian religion, will inevitably face political and legal problems. The greater the role and influence of the church in this field, it is hoped that it will increasingly reflect the image of Christ that exists in every congregation. The fundamental question is: how does the Bible view politics? In the Bible there are many examples that can be used as guidelines to be applied in political life.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

Research is an essential part of science, which aims to know more and better understand all aspects of life, so that research must be carried out systematically using scientific methods and techniques. (Soekanto, 1986, p. 3) According to Soerjono Soekanto, research is a scientific work activity related to construction analysis which is carried out methodologically, systematically, and

consistently. Methodological means according to a particular method or method. Systematic is based on a reason, while consistent means there are no contradictory things in a particular essay. (Soekanto, 1986, p. 5) In principle, the research method provides guidelines on how a scientist studies, analyzes and understands the problems he faces. Research is a principal means of developing science and technology that aims to reveal the truth in a systematic, methodological, and consistent manner. Through this research analysis and construction were carried out on the data that had been collected and processed (Soekanto, 2007, p. 62) .

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The practice of identity politics in Indonesia has been going on for a long time. Usually, this is related to issues of ethnicity, religion, ideology and local interests expressed through regional autonomy efforts. Local political actors often use the issue of development injustice as a criticism of old leaders. This issue was then used by political opponents to undermine the reputation of old leaders by dividing society into different groups and determining who would be accepted and rejected. As a result, freedom of expression, tolerance, diversity and democracy are threatened.

Religion and politics are often considered as two different poles in human life, especially in political life. Therefore, there are two extreme views on the relationship between religion and politics. First, the view that religion and politics are an inseparable unit, and second, the view that religion and politics must be totally separated. In political history, both in Europe and in the United States, attempts to completely separate religion and politics have always failed. Religion is considered not a public problem, especially in politics, and is only considered as a personal human problem.

The government must show neutrality towards religions. Although it was hoped that the separation of religion from politics would prevent conflict, this has not actually worked. In fact, secularism eventually produces a situation that is not much different from before. The failure to separate completely occurs because humans who practice religion and politics are the same person, and it is difficult to divide themselves in different realms. In fact, if we consider the end result or goal of religion and politics, there is no reason to separate the two. Because basically, political activity must be based on religious values.

As the body of Christ, the first thing we need to pay attention to is the dangers of identity politics. This can occur when considerations of ethnicity, preference, group, and family influence the church's ministry strategy. Strategies based on identity politics can have a negative impact on the congregation and even on the fellowship of ministers such as pastors, elders, deacons and teachers. Moreover, if church members voice their preferences or lifestyle in ministry activities within congregations, classists, and synods, this can exacerbate the situation. (Gaspersz & Souisa, 2021, p. 9)

Individuals who are involved in a particular identity "power" are often arrogant. However, for those who do not have the same ethnicity, religion or group, there are at least two attitudes that emerge. First, the individual becomes a boastful follower. Or, secondly, he will fight hard to get the same opportunities as others because of his belief as a follower of Christ. This second attitude is fueled by the unwavering power of faith.

The second thing, identity politics is related to the personal characteristics of a leader who must have a strong vision and mission that can be expanded through stable communication and relationships. In the context of the church, we believe that the vision of a church leader can be seen from the extent to which he follows the example of Christ's life. Christ who was willing to die to save humanity. What is important here is the ability to sacrifice for the good of the church; for if a grain of wheat had not fallen to the ground and died, it would have been but one grain; but if it dies, it will bear much fruit (John 12:24) (Yayasan Lembaga SABDA (YLSA), 2005) .

One challenge that must be faced is how to overcome the temptation to do business within the church and even make the church a political vehicle. The temptation can damage the spirit of sacrifice for the sake of the church. Don't get caught up in the theology of success which can affect the relationship and communication between church functionaries and congregations or between ministers. Therefore, the development of human resource capacity must be increased in a planned manner starting from the scope of the church, classis, and synod. This capacity development includes sharpening the vision, improving the ability to communicate and relate, as well as improving the intellectual, ethical, moral and spiritual qualities. Don't just focus on physical development in our church patterns.

While identity politics can easily be used to serve certain interests, this only occurs when HR management is ineffective. In the church context, this is even more complex. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the recruitment of pastors starting from the family, congregation, Faculty of Theology, vicariate, and appointment as pastor properly. If this process is managed properly, it will affect the level of discipline and discipleship of the pastors, both spiritually and socially. Regardless of this natural process, recruitment patterns can be biased and limited to certain ethnic groups, groups or families. Therefore, it is important to pay serious attention to the input-process-output-impact stages of manpower in the recruitment of pastors.

Finally, we can face the reality of identity politics with faith (spirituality) which promotes humility, love for justice and truth, and empathy for those who are marginalized. All of this can be achieved through the spirit of collective dance shown in the worship celebrations of the congregations in the neighborhood and daily practical actions. In this way, the acts of faith of the congregations will no longer be a personal expression, but instead become a communal meeting in a common struggle. We can learn this example from the private meeting between Moses and God or the communal meeting between Miriam and Deborah who danced and praised God, and David and Israel who danced in front of God's Ark of the Covenant. We can also experience encounters with God in silence like Jesus who brought his disciples to rest and pray to God the Father.

The political education of a nation can run smoothly through the awareness process of groups in society to continue to criticize and control the ongoing political process. Nations or countries that are in these conditions, will get used to being open and ready to make improvements. In addition, politics will not become something scary, but become commonplace. Criticism will not be perceived as a threat, and critics will not be treated as enemies. Changes made by the authorities over their wrong policies at the pressure of the people are the best political education. Thus, positive habits will arise which will eventually lead to an open political character and change to a better and more advanced direction. Good habits that run in government, will become the political ethics of a nation.

In the political and legal sphere, the attitude that needs to be developed by the church is a positive, critical and innovative attitude. Being positive means seeing the world of politics as God's call to provide service and dedication, and because of that, we must make contributions that are in line with the Christian faith with a positive outlook. Critical means not hesitate to criticize if the

authorities make mistakes or violate applicable laws and principles. Criticism that is in accordance with Christian ethics must be constructive criticism (building, polite , and empowering), not destructive criticism (defaming, harsh, and finding fault). Innovative means trying to provide new or alternative solutions when there is a stalemate in politics. We must be able to communicate openly and dialogically, and not be afraid of change.

## **DISCUSSION**

Politicians are not the saviors of this world. Salvation for all mankind has been given through Jesus Christ. God knew that the world needed salvation long before a system of government was invented. He showed the world that humanity cannot save itself through economic, military or political power. Prosperity, happiness, hope, joy and salvation can only be achieved through the faith, love and grace of Jesus Christ.

Politics means implementing government for the benefit of society as a whole without regard to differences in class, religion, group, choice, or party interests. In a country based on law, politics is carried out in accordance with applicable law. Public understanding needs to be increased that when a person takes office in politics, he no longer represents a certain group (unless he actually serves as a representative). Sometimes there are conflicts between religion and politics, such as when Christian society expects political representatives (who are also Christians) to fight for the interests of Christianity. Such demands cause a negative political image. A politician fights for the interests of all religions, all classes, and all societies. Therefore, don't be surprised if Christian politicians build mosques, build madrasas, attend non-Christian religious events, and so on. Don't be surprised if, as a Christian in a political position, he cannot freely carry out his religious practices because he has to comply with applicable laws. Christian religious practice emphasizes forgiveness and acquittal, but a politician must act within the law when it comes to shifting, displacing, or relocating.



## **CONCLUSION**

Any form of identity politics will not endanger the unity and integrity of this nation and state in the future, as long as the spirit of national unity and integration of the founders of the nation, the spirit of the Youth Pledge which has eliminated ethnic differences, and Pancasila as the basis of the state philosophy are still firmly adhered to and fully realized. heart and responsibility. However, this pragmatic attitude and lack of morals and vision often ignore this responsibility and seriousness. This kind of attitude is the biggest threat to Indonesia, both in the past, present, and in the future .

Jesus' political attitude became the basis for the church's involvement in politics. Obviously, the church should not be equated with a political institution or political party. The church does not encourage its followers to vote for a particular political party. However, the church conducts political education. One form of political education that is carried out is through Adult Christian Religious Education (PAK), which includes sermons, books, Bible study, and so on. This does not mean that we have to be members of a political party, but that we have to have political awareness. We must not be stupid or indifferent to political conditions, but must criticize by reading facts and opinions in the newspapers every day. Christ is God over us as individuals and also over ourselves as a nation and state. Therefore, we must participate in determining the beliefs and policies that govern the country. One form of participation that can be done is by participating in general elections and regional head elections.

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