

Dynamics of Religious Conflict and Social Movements in Society

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Religion is a social institution that plays a crucial role in shaping societal values, identity, and solidarity. However, in practice, religion also has an ambivalent character, serving as both a source of social integration and a trigger for conflict. On the other hand, social and political conflict often fosters the emergence of religion-based social movements that utilize religious values as a moral foundation in their struggle for justice and social change. This article aims to analyze the dynamics of the relationship between religion, conflict, and social movements in society through a sociological perspective. The study employed a literature review method with a descriptive qualitative approach, analyzing various sociological theories of religion, conflict theory, social movement theory, and relevant previous research findings. The discussion demonstrates that religion has a dual capacity as a source of social cohesion and conflict, depending on the social, political, and economic context, as well as the interpretation of religious teachings. Conflict can strengthen religious identity and trigger the birth of religion-based social movements that derive moral legitimacy, organizational structure, and collective motivation from religious values. The case study of the communal conflict in Poso demonstrates that religion-based conflict does not exist in isolation but is influenced by the interaction of social, economic, political, and identity factors. Therefore, understanding the relationship between religion, conflict, and social movements requires a multidimensional approach to be able to explain the role of religion more comprehensively as a factor that can drive conflict or become a force for social transformation towards peace and justice.

Keywords: Religion; Social Conflict; Social Movements; Sociology of Religion; Religious Identity; Social Mobilization.

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1. Introduction

Religion is one of the oldest and most influential social institutions in human life. Since ancient times, religion has served not only as a belief system governing human relations with God, but also as a source of moral values, ethics, social norms, and collective identity. Through its teachings, religion provides a framework of meaning for individuals and groups in understanding life, building social solidarity, and guiding societal behavior. Therefore, religion is often viewed as one of the primary foundations for creating social order, strengthening community cohesion, and maintaining the stability of communal life.

However, viewing religion solely as a unifying force is an incomplete view. History and the reality of contemporary society demonstrate that religion is complex and multidimensional. On the one hand, religion can be a source of peace, solidarity, and positive social change. On the other hand, religion can also be a factor that reinforces conflict, social polarization, and even legitimizes acts of violence when combined with political, economic, or group identity interests. This situation demonstrates that religion has a dual

capacity as a force that can unite or divide society, depending on the social, political, and cultural context, as well as how religious teachings are interpreted and practiced.

The relationship between religion, conflict, and social movements has long been a focus of attention for social scientists, particularly in the sociology of religion. The complexity of this relationship has increased with the development of globalization, advances in information technology, increased social mobility, and changes in global political dynamics. In various contexts, religion can form the basis for the formation of a strong social identity, thereby strengthening internal group solidarity. However, exclusive religious identities, claims to absolute truth, and competition between religious groups can also trigger social, political, and ethnic conflict. Events such as the Crusades, sectarian conflicts in the Middle East, religiously based extremist movements, and communal conflicts in various countries demonstrate that religion is often used as a means of legitimacy to mobilize the masses and intensify intergroup confrontation.

Conversely, social and political conflicts often trigger the emergence of religion-based social movements. When societies face structural injustice, discrimination, poverty, social inequality, or political repression, religious institutions often provide relatively safe spaces for communities to build solidarity, voice aspirations, and engage in collective mobilization. Religious organizations provide social networks, leadership, resources, and moral legitimacy that can foster the formation of social movements in the fight for justice and social change. In such situations, religion not only provides spiritual comfort but also provides an ethical foundation for criticizing injustice and encouraging communities to take organized collective action.

History records numerous social movements that have successfully utilized religious values as a foundation for their struggle. The Civil Rights Movement in the United States led by Martin Luther King Jr., the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and various democracy movements in numerous countries demonstrate that religion can be a moral force that drives peaceful social change. The values of justice, brotherhood, equality, and humanity taught by religion serve as a source of inspiration and legitimacy for people's struggles against oppression and for civil rights.

Besides its role in the emergence of social movements, religion also provides moral legitimacy, organizational structure, and strong motivation for the actors involved. Religious beliefs can strengthen collective identity, foster a spirit of sacrifice, increase commitment to shared goals, and maintain the movement's long-term sustainability. Religious rituals, symbols, narratives, and sacred texts are often used to strengthen group solidarity, build member loyalty, and provide ethical justification for demands for social change. Thus, religion serves not only as a source of spiritual inspiration but also as a crucial social resource in the process of collective mobilization.

To understand this complex relationship, a sociological approach is needed that can explain the various underlying factors. Relative Deprivation Theory explains that social movements emerge when people perceive a gap between their expectations and the actual conditions they experience. Meanwhile, Resource Mobilization Theory emphasizes the importance of organization, leadership, social networks, and resources in supporting the success of social movements. Political Process Theory explains that changing political opportunities can encourage the emergence of social movements, while Social Identity Theory

explains how religious identity can strengthen solidarity, a sense of belonging, and community participation in collective action.

Based on this complexity, this paper aims to analyze how religion can function as a triggering factor for conflict escalation, how social and political conflicts encourage the emergence of religious-based social movements, and how religion provides moral legitimacy, organizational structure, and motivation for actors involved in social movements. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of religion in the dynamics of contemporary society, so that it is no longer viewed dichotomously as a cause of conflict or solely as a source of peace, but rather as a social institution that has the capacity to produce both consequences depending on the surrounding social, political, cultural, and historical context.

Theoretically, this discussion is expected to enrich the study of the sociology of religion, particularly regarding the relationship between religion, conflict, and social movements, and serve as a reference for further research. Practically, the results of this study are expected to provide insights for policymakers, religious organizations, social activists, and the wider community in understanding religion's potential as an instrument for conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and a driver of constructive social change in an increasingly complex and pluralistic society.

2. Literature Review and Problem Statement

Conceptualization of Religion, Conflict, and Social Movements

Conceptual Definition of Religion

In the realm of sociology, attempts to define religion have yielded a rich variety of perspectives, reflecting the complexity of this phenomenon in human life. Emile Durkheim, one of the fathers of sociology, saw religion as "a system of beliefs and practices which unites in one moral community called the Church all those who adhere to it."¹

For Durkheim, the essence of religion lies in the separation of the sacred and the profane, and its function in strengthening social solidarity and collective consciousness. Meanwhile, Max Weber understood religion through the concepts of "rationalization" and "work ethic," emphasizing how religious beliefs can shape economic ethos and influence individual social action, as seen in their relationship to the rise of capitalism.

In contrast to both, Karl Marx tended to view religion as the "opium of the people," an illusion that served to legitimize existing power structures and dull the working class's awareness of oppression. Although his view was often oversimplified, Marx recognized religion's role in society as a response to suffering and alienation.

These sociological definitions highlight that religion is not simply a set of personal beliefs, but rather a multidimensional system that includes beliefs (a collection of dogmas, myths, and sacred narratives), practices (rituals, ceremonies, prayers, and ethical behavior), and institutions (religious organizations, hierarchies, and power structures).

As belief systems, religions offer a framework of meaning for understanding the universe, the origins of life, and the purpose of human existence, often involving belief in supernatural or transcendent

¹ Durkheim, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated by Joseph Ward Swain. New York: Dover Publications, 2008 (original edition 1912).

entities. The practical aspects are manifested in various forms of religious expression, both communal and individual, which aim to connect adherents with the sacred, strengthen group identity, and internalize religious values.

Furthermore, religion also manifests itself in organized social institutions, such as churches, mosques, temples, monasteries, or synagogues. These institutions serve not only as centers of worship but also as agents of socialization, education, and even social advocacy. They provide structure for communities of believers, manage resources, establish religious norms and authority, and serve as platforms for the collective expression of faith. The existence of these religious institutions allows religion to have a structured and sustained impact on society, influencing law, politics, education, and culture.

Thus, for the purposes of this paper's analysis, religion will be conceptually defined as an organized system of beliefs, practices, and institutions that provides a framework of meaning for individuals and groups through the distinction between the sacred and the profane, and has the capacity to shape identity, mobilize social action, and influence power dynamics in society. This understanding will also explicitly distinguish between the spiritual (transcendent and personal dimensions of experience), cultural (manifestations of religion in art, traditions, and ways of life), and political (use of religion for purposes of power, legitimacy, or resistance) aspects of religion.

Social conflict

Social conflict is an intrinsic phenomenon in every society, referring to disagreements between individuals, groups, or social entities with different and conflicting values, interests, identities, or resources. Various sociological perspectives have attempted to explain the nature and function of conflict in society. From a functionalist perspective, as expressed by Lewis Coser, conflict is not always destructive; in fact, it can have positive functions. Coser argues that conflict can strengthen the cohesion of internal groups in conflict with external entities, help establish or maintain group boundaries, and serve as a mechanism for adjusting social norms and relationships when tensions build up.

In this view, conflict is an inevitable part of social change and can act as a "safety valve" that prevents the excessive accumulation of hostility, while simultaneously encouraging innovation and adaptation. Fundamentally different, the Marxist conflict perspective, rooted in the thought of Karl Marx, sees conflict as the inevitable result of structural inequalities in society, particularly between social classes. For Marx, conflict is the driving force of history, where the struggle between the haves and have-nots (bourgeoisie and proletariat) over the means of production will ultimately lead to revolution and social transformation.²

Conflict, in this view, is antagonistic and inherent in the capitalist economic system, where exploitation is at the heart of social relations. Therefore, conflict is not an anomaly, but rather a manifestation of the fundamental contradictions inherent in society's class structure, which can only be resolved through radical changes to that system. Beyond class conflict, modern sociology also recognizes the importance of intergroup conflict, arising from differences in identity, whether ethnic, racial, gender, or

religious. This perspective highlights how stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination can exacerbate differences into serious antagonisms.

Intergroup conflict is often exacerbated by struggles over scarce resources, social status, or political recognition. Social identity theory, for example, explains how individuals tend to identify with their own group (the "ingroup") and differentiate themselves from other groups (the "outgroup"), which can fuel bias and, in extreme cases, violent conflict. When religious identity becomes the primary dividing line between "us" and "them," such conflicts can be particularly profound and intractable, as they involve claims to absolute truth and a sense of sacredness.

Essentially, regardless of perspective, social conflict can arise from a variety of sources. These may include differences in fundamental values about what is right and wrong, competing economic or political interests, the reinforcement of exclusive group identities, or inequities in the distribution of resources such as land, water, or power. Conflict can range from latent (hidden) to manifest (open), and its intensity can range from mild rivalry to full-scale violence. Understanding these diverse roots of conflict is essential to analyzing how religion can enter and interact within the dynamics of social conflict, whether as a trigger, a resolver, or a movement shaper.

Social Movement

A social movement can be defined as an organized, sustained, and often informal collective effort by a group of individuals to promote or oppose change in society through collective action. Unlike spontaneous collective action or fleeting crowd behavior, social movements have a more structured level of organization and goals, though not always as formal as political parties or government institutions.

Their primary goal is to influence authorities, public policy, or cultural norms in a way that supports their agenda. These movements can focus on specific issues (e.g., the environmental movement, the civil rights movement) or be broader in scope, fundamentally challenging the existing social order.

To understand how social movements operate, it is important to identify their key components. Leadership is a crucial element that provides strategic direction, inspires followers, and represents the movement in the public eye. Leaders not only articulate goals but also play a role in managing resources and mediating internal conflicts. Ideology, or a set of values and beliefs, is the backbone of a movement, providing a motivational framework, moral justification, and a guide to action for its members. This ideology helps shape a collective identity and distinguishes the movement from other groups. Furthermore, resource mobilization is a vital practical aspect, encompassing the movement's ability to gather and utilize the human (activists, volunteers), material (funds, facilities), and non-material (information, expertise, networks) resources necessary for its ongoing action. Without adequate resources, a movement will struggle to maintain momentum or achieve its goals.

Another important component is framing, the process by which social movements construct and present issues, problems, and solutions in ways that appeal to potential members, the public, and policymakers. Framing involves framing injustices, identifying those responsible, and proposing a framework for appropriate action. Through effective framing, movements can shape public perceptions, mobilize emotional and cognitive support, and justify their collective actions.

In the context of faith-based social movements, framing is often particularly powerful because it can leverage deeply held moral and sacred narratives, framing their struggles as divine obligations or as a

struggle for absolute truth. All of these components work synergistically to enable social movements not only to emerge but also to survive, grow, and potentially achieve the desired changes in the social and political landscape.

Theoretical Relationship

The study of the relationship between religion and social conflict has deep roots in classical sociological thought, though often with contradictory conclusions. One of the most provocative views is that of Karl Marx, who viewed religion as the "opium of the people." For Marx, religion served as a deceptive tool of social control, diverting the working class's attention from real-world suffering and exploitation to the promise of happiness in the afterlife. In this perspective, religion plays a role in stabilizing an unjust social order by legitimizing the status quo and preventing the emergence of class conflict. Religion, therefore, is seen as inhibiting revolutionary consciousness and fostering latent conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. While this view is highly critical, it highlights religion's potential to justify inequality and dampen efforts for social change, indirectly contributing to the maintenance of structural conflict.

On the other side of the spectrum, Emile Durkheim offered a perspective that highlighted religion's role as a source of social order and cohesion. For Durkheim, religion is a system of beliefs and practices fundamental to creating collective solidarity and a shared morality. Through sacred rituals and symbols, religion unites individuals into a moral community, strengthens social bonds, and prevents anomie, a state of normlessness that can lead to social disorganization and conflict.

In this view, religion is the foundation of social order, providing the rules, values, and meaning necessary to maintain harmony. When religion fulfills its integrative function, it tends to mitigate internal conflict and promote cooperation, although Durkheim also acknowledged that these strong internal bonds can create clear boundaries with other groups, potentially triggering intergroup conflict.

Despite these contrasting views, these early theories also paved the way for understanding how religion can serve as a basis for solidarity and collective identity, crucial for the mobilization of social movements. When individuals share similar religious beliefs and practices, they tend to develop a strong sense of shared identity (the "ingroup"). This collective identity not only provides a sense of belonging but can also serve as a foundation for collective action. Religion provides narratives, symbols, and rituals that can be utilized to articulate grievances, mobilize emotions, and build solidarity among adherents who feel oppressed or marginalized. This is particularly relevant in cases where religious identity coincides with ethnic or political identity, strengthening the basis for social movements.

Taken together, these early theories, though sometimes contradictory, laid the foundation for a more complex understanding of religion in social contexts. They demonstrated that religion is neither a monolithic entity that always sparks conflict nor always ensures peace.

Rather, the role of religion is ambivalent and contextual. It has the capacity to legitimize oppression and delay change (as in Marx's view), but also to build strong solidarity and serve as a foundation for collective efforts for justice and change (as can be inferred from Durkheim). Understanding this duality is crucial in analyzing how religion can contribute to the emergence, development, and sustainability of potentially transformative or conflictual social movements.

3. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using the library research method. This approach was selected because the study aims to analyze and interpret the dynamic relationship between religion, conflict, and social movements through existing theoretical perspectives and previous scholarly works. Library research enables a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena by systematically examining relevant academic literature and documented evidence.

The study relied exclusively on secondary data, including scholarly books, peer-reviewed national and international journal articles, conference proceedings, official reports, and other academic publications related to the sociology of religion, social conflict, social movements, relative deprivation theory, resource mobilization theory, political process theory, and social identity theory. In addition, documented cases of religious conflict, particularly the communal conflict in Poso, Indonesia, were utilized as empirical illustrations to support the conceptual analysis.

Data were collected through document analysis, involving the identification, selection, classification, and critical review of literature relevant to the research objectives. The selected references were evaluated based on their relevance, academic credibility, and contribution to understanding the relationship between religion, conflict, and social movements.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The analytical process consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, relevant information was selected and categorized according to the research focus. Subsequently, the data were organized into major analytical themes, including religion as a source of collective identity, religion as a source of conflict legitimization, conflict as a catalyst for religion-based social movements, and the role of religion in providing moral legitimacy, organizational structures, and collective motivation for social movement actors. Finally, the findings were interpreted through the perspective of the sociology of religion to develop a comprehensive understanding of the interaction between religion, conflict, and social movements in contemporary society.

Through this methodological approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive conceptual explanation of religion as a social institution with a dual capacity, functioning both as a potential source of conflict and as a transformative force for promoting social justice, peace, and collective social change.

4. Results and Discussion

Religion as a Source of Exclusive Identity

While religion often serves as a social glue and a source of cohesion, its exclusionary nature also has the potential to create rigid social boundaries between “us” and “them,” which in turn can trigger identity conflicts. Strong religious identities, especially those based on claims of absolute truth and non-negotiable doctrines, often lead to sharp distinctions between adherents of the “true” faith and those deemed “different” or “heretic.”

This division can be reinforced through historical narratives that glorify one's own group and demonize others, creating the perception that only one path to truth is valid. When religious identity becomes the primary determinant of social and political affiliation, theological differences can easily transform into social and political antagonisms, leading to profound polarization in society.

These distinct identity boundaries are often exacerbated by struggles for resources, territory, or power. In many conflicts around the world, religion is not the sole factor, but often serves as a crucial symbol that crystallizes ethnic, political, or economic differences. Religious identity can be used to mobilize support, justify violence, and instill a sense of moral righteousness in conflict participants. The conflict in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants, or communal conflicts in various parts of South Asia, demonstrate how religious identity, while fundamentally a part of cultural and ethnic identity, can be intensified to become a primary driver of prolonged hostility and violence, with each group viewing the other as an existential threat to its identity and way of life.

Extreme manifestations of exclusive and intolerant religious identities can be seen in the phenomena of religious fundamentalism and extremism. Fundamentalism, in general, refers to movements that seek a return to the "foundations" or literal interpretation of sacred texts and religious traditions, rejecting modernism and pluralism. Fundamentalists often see the world as an arena of moral struggle between good and evil, in which their group represents the absolute truth. When this fundamentalism develops into extremism, it involves a willingness to use violence—physical, structural, or symbolic—to achieve religious goals or impose their views on others. Religious extremist groups, such as ISIS or Boko Haram, not only define their identity exclusively but also view those who disagree with them as enemies to be fought, justifying violence in the name of their beliefs.

Therefore, while religious identity can be a source of positive meaning and solidarity, its potential for exclusion should not be overlooked. When this identity is reinforced by intolerant ideologies and absolute "us versus them" narratives, it can become a very dangerous trigger for conflict. Understanding how strong religious identities can transform into bases for intolerance and violence is key to analyzing the role of religion in social conflict. This requires a careful examination of the socio-political context in which these identities are formed, how religious narratives are interpreted and mobilized, and how leadership plays a role in accelerating or defusing tensions arising from identity differences.

Religion and the Legitimation of Violence

One of the most disturbing aspects of the relationship between religion and conflict is its ability to provide sacred legitimacy to acts of violence, even war. Sacred texts from various religious traditions, laden with symbolism and profound meaning, can often be selectively interpreted to justify extreme aggression, retribution, or self-defense. Verses that speak of holy war, divine punishment, or struggle against enemies of the faith can be extracted from their context and used as theological justifications for violence. Certain doctrines can also be interpreted to portray conflict as a test of faith, a struggle between good and evil, or a divine obligation to defend the faith from external threats, thus eroding the moral constraints on the use of violence and even rendering it praiseworthy in the eyes of God.

The role of religious leaders is crucial in this process of legitimizing violence. Charismatic and influential religious leaders have a unique capacity to mobilize their followers to participate in conflict. They can articulate narratives that connect political or social struggles with spiritual dimensions, transforming secular conflicts into holy wars. With their moral and spiritual authority, religious leaders can interpret sacred texts, issue fatwas or declarations justifying violence, and promise spiritual rewards for those who fight for the "right" cause. Their rhetoric often exploits fear, anger, and a sense of injustice to garner

support, creating a strong sense of solidarity among followers, and instilling a commitment to sacrifice for a greater cause.

This phenomenon demonstrates that religion, in the hands of certain interpretations and in the context of simmering conflict, can be a highly dangerous force. Religious legitimacy not only provides moral justification for violence but can also manifest extreme cruelty. When violent acts are perceived as part of divine will, perpetrators may feel liberated from conventional moral constraints, escalating the intensity and brutality of the conflict. Understanding the mechanisms by which religion can be used to legitimize violence is key to analyzing the roots of religious-based conflict and developing strategies to prevent such escalations in the future.

Sectarian and Inter-Religious Conflict

Sectarian and interfaith conflict refers to disputes in which differences in religious affiliation become the primary dividing line between opposing groups. These conflicts are not simply about doctrinal differences, but are often manifestations of broader struggles for power, resources, or identity recognition. A classic example is the Catholic-Protestant conflict in Northern Ireland, known as "The Troubles." Despite its strong political and nationalist dimensions (the issue of unification with the Republic of Ireland versus remaining part of the United Kingdom), the religious identities of Catholicism as a symbol of Irish nationalism and Protestantism as a symbol of British unionism were used to mobilize the masses and reinforce polarization. Church differences became markers of the opposing groups' identities, overriding any other similarities between them.

Another prominent example is the Sunni-Shia conflict in the Middle East, which has sparked civil wars in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, as well as tensions in many other countries. This historic schism within Islam, which originated over the issue of succession to leadership after the Prophet Muhammad, is now often exploited and exacerbated by the struggle for regional hegemony between Sunni-dominated states (such as Saudi Arabia) and Shia-dominated states (such as Iran). Here, pre-existing theological differences become a catalyst for conflict when they overlap with geopolitical, economic, and identity politics. Communal violence involving Hindus and Muslims in India, or Christians and Muslims in parts of Indonesia, also demonstrates how religion can become the primary label that differentiates warring groups, even when the underlying issues may lie in competition for resources, economic injustice, or political manipulation.

It is important to note that in these conflicts, the religious dimension rarely exists in isolation. Social, economic, and political factors often overlap and mutually reinforce the religious dimension. Poverty, inequality, structural discrimination, land disputes, or manipulation by political elites can be underlying triggers that are then "religiousized." Political or religious leaders may deliberately exploit religious differences to garner support, distract from deeper socioeconomic issues, or divide opponents. Therefore, sectarian conflict should not be understood simply as a clash of beliefs, but rather as a multicausal phenomenon in which religion serves as a catalyst, justification, or primary symbol of a more complex conflict. Analyzing the interplay between these factors is crucial for developing comprehensive solutions.

Case Study: Poso Communal Conflict, Indonesia

As a relevant case study to explore the complex relationship between religion, conflict, and social movements, we will analyze the Poso communal conflict in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, which erupted in late 1998 and continued into the mid-2000s. This conflict, often portrayed as a Muslim-Christian clash, was in fact far more complex than purely religious differences. Initially, tensions were fueled by local economic and political competition over access to resources, bureaucratic positions, and business opportunities, which were later exacerbated by migration and demographic change. However, as tensions escalated, religious identity became the most salient and deadly dividing line, with each group mobilizing followers based on religious affiliation.

In its escalation, the Poso conflict demonstrated how religion was used as a source of exclusive identity and legitimacy for violence. Local leaders, both civil and religious, played a central role in garnering support and justifying acts of violence in the name of their respective communities. Narratives of "defending the faith" or "holy war" began to spread, transforming local disputes into conflicts with sacred dimensions. Religious texts and symbols were used to strengthen internal solidarity and demonize opponents, creating a cycle of retribution and violence that was difficult to break. The mobilization of resources, including weapons and fighters, was also often organized through religious networks, both locally and with support from outside Poso.

The Poso analysis also highlights how this conflict fueled the emergence of faith-based social movements. When the state fails or is unable to provide protection and justice, religious communities become the only structures capable of providing security and organization for their members. The emergence of religious militias, both Muslim and Christian, is a concrete example of how conflict forces communities to mobilize through religious frameworks, not only for defense but also to demand justice and claim their rights amidst the chaos. The Poso conflict, therefore, is a clear example of how underlying political, economic, and social factors can be exacerbated and sacralized by religious dimensions, leading to widespread communal violence and fueling the emergence of faith-based collective actors.

5. Conclusion

From the discussion that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the relationship between religion, conflict, and social movements in contemporary society is a highly complex and ambivalent phenomenon. Religion, as a system of beliefs, practices, and institutions, has a significant dual capacity: on the one hand, it is a powerful source of identity and essential social cohesion, providing meaning and solidarity for its adherents; on the other hand, the exclusive nature of religious identity, coupled with intolerant interpretations (especially in fundamentalism and extremism), can create sharp boundaries between "us" and "them," potentially triggering identity conflicts and even legitimizing violence. Case studies such as the Poso conflict confirm that conflicts rooted in social, economic, or political issues can easily be amplified and sanctified by the religious dimension, turning them into brutal communal clashes.

Furthermore, conflict itself often serves as a catalyst for the emergence of faith-based social movements. When existing socio-political structures fail to meet the needs or protect communities, religious institutions and narratives can provide a vital framework for mobilization. Religion not only provides moral legitimacy to challenge injustice and demand change, but also offers organizational structures, strong social networks, and transcendent motivations for actors in social movements. Religious

leaders, through their authority and charisma, play a crucial role in mobilizing and directing followers, both toward violent causes and nonviolent struggles for justice and peace.

Ultimately, understanding these dynamics requires a multicausal and nuanced approach. Religion is neither a single trigger of conflict nor a force for peace. Its role is highly dependent on doctrinal interpretation, socio-political context, elite manipulation, and societal responses to injustice. Conflicts that appear to be religiously based often have deep roots in secular issues such as struggles for power and resources. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis must consider the complex interplay of religious, social, economic, and political factors to more accurately understand why religion can contribute to conflict escalation, fuel social movements, and provide legitimacy to the actors involved.

Suggestion

Based on the above conclusions, several suggestions can be put forward:

1. For Further Research: Further in-depth research on the role of religious mediation in conflict resolution is recommended, as well as comparative studies on how faith-based social movements can transform from violence to peaceful advocacy. Future research could also explore the role of technology and social media in amplifying or mitigating religiously motivated conflicts and social movements.
2. For Policymakers and Peace Practitioners: It is crucial for policymakers and peace practitioners not to reduce religious-based conflicts to purely theological issues. Instead, approaches must be multisectoral, addressing the underlying social, economic, and political issues that overlap with religious dimensions. Constructive interfaith dialogue needs to be facilitated, and the positive role of religious leaders in promoting peace and justice must be supported and empowered.
3. For Communities and Society: Communities need to improve religious literacy and be critical of divisive narratives. Education that promotes pluralism, tolerance, and intercultural and interfaith understanding can help mitigate the potential for exclusivity in extreme religious identities. Strengthening civil and democratic institutions is also crucial to providing channels for peaceful expressions of discontent and social mobilization, reducing reliance on religiously motivated violence as a means of redress.

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