

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Mass rallies involving the Sino-Christian governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), who ran for the Jakarta's gubernatorial election in 2017, become widely discussed by public. Ahok's statement which was accused of blasphemy towards Islam had generated strong response from 'hardline Muslim groups' (The New York Times; The Wall Street Journal; The Guardian; 2016) resulting in mass rallies called *Aksi Bela Islam*. The mass rallies were divided into six series: *Aksi Bela Islam I* (October 14th 2016), II (November 4th 2016 or 411), III (December 2nd 2016 or 212), IV (February 11th 2017 or 112), V (March 31st 2017 or 313), and VI (May 5th 2017 or 505).

The case began when Ahok uttered a comment in which he cited Al-Maidah: 51 to the fishermen during his official visit to Pramuka Island, part of Seribu Island, to conduct a review of his program on Kerapu fish farming. On October 6, 2016, Buni Yani, a lecturer at the London School of Public Relations Jakarta ("Buni yani," 2016), uploaded Ahok's speech video record in his Facebook account with the title 'Penistaan Terhadap Agama?' along with Ahok's speech transcription but eliminating the word 'by' ("Pidato di kepulauan," 2016). The video featuring footage of Ahok's visit to the Seribu Island but eliminating the word 'by' itself was then circulating in social media such as Whatsapp, Facebook, and Twitter. It sparked a variety of responses from the public.

On October 14, 2016, thousands of mass, led by Rizieq Shihab, leader of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), demonstrated around the Jakarta City Hall. In this first series of *Aksi Bela Islam*, they asked for the imprisonment of Ahok due to his statement which was considered as insulting the Koran. Before the mass dispersed, Rizieq conveyed the threat of another demonstration in the Jakarta City Hall and the State Palace if there is no progress to the investigation of the blasphemy case within 3 weeks (Siswanto & Raharjo, 2016).

On October 28, 2016, PBNU released its stance regarding 411 action. The declaration signed by NU officials including Ma'ruf Amin as Rais Aam or the supreme leader in NU's organization, asked for all NU committee and followers to pro-actively appease and not exacerbate the situation by spreading provocation. They also asked police to perform act according to law and fulfill citizen's sense of justice without neglecting the presumption of innocence (Fathoni, 2016).

Aksi Bela Islam continued to the second series on November 4th 2016 (411) with the escalating number of demonstrators estimated to be more than 100,000 people (Agence France Presse, 2016). The mass rally initially ran peacefully but ended in an uproar, leading the police to detain 10 people accused to be the cause of riot. At midnight press conference on State Palace, President Joko Widodo stated that the legal proceedings against Ahok would be implemented firmly, quickly, and transparently. Jokowi also added that political actors had taken part in the rally that day which made the demonstration became violent (Waluyo, 2016). Several times after the rally, former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, whose son was also the candidate in the first round of gubernatorial election, declined the rumor that he

was behind the rally, but added that he supported the protest “300%” (Otto & Rachman, 2016). Following the 411 rally, on November 2016, Ahok was named as a suspect in a case of alleged blasphemy by the Criminal Investigation Police (*Bareskrim Polri*).

Islamic organizations had various responses towards Ahok’s blasphemy case and *Aksi Bela Islam*. Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, expressed different stances on *Aksi Bela Islam*. Abdul Mu’ti, General Secretary of the Muhammadiyah Central Board stated that his organization did not approve the upcoming demonstration in December. He argued that law enforcement should not be intervened either by authorities or mass. The Secretary General of the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board, Helmy Faisal Zaini, through a press release, urged NU’s citizen not to demonstrate against Ahok’s case. Meanwhile, Deputy Secretary General of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), the Indonesia’s Top Muslim Clerical Body, Muhammad Olives Rasmin stated he did not encourage Muslims to join the protest about Ahok’s alleged blasphemy case, but at the same time could not prohibit people from doing so (Rahayu, Faiz, Hidayat, Paskalis, & Kodrat, 2016). Naqsyabandi (2016), a follower of NU submitted an opinion in NU’s official website claiming that PBNU has chosen to counter *Aksi Bela Islam*. His statement was criticized by a public policy lecturer Indiahono (2017) that track record of NU’s stance regarding *Aksi Bela Islam* cannot be said as ‘cons’. NU’s stance can be paralleled to Muhammadiyah’s. Both organizations, structurally, didn’t state their followers to join the action, however, still, both contributed in letting their followers to proclaim aspirations in the rallies.

In National Movement to Guard the MUI Fatwa (GNPF-MUI) official website, a poster released about the upcoming *Aksi Bela Islam* asserted that GNPF-MUI would hold *Safari 212* in 34 provinces and called for ulema(s) to hold 212 action in both cities / regencies / provinces level. Sympathizers declared that they were ready for jihad, some had already made “wills” for the family in case of death (“*Aksi Bela Islam*”, n.d).

On November 28th 2016, the Police and GNPF-MUI held a meeting attended by police chief Tito Karnavian, MUI’s Chairman Ma’ruf Amin, and FPI’s leader Rizieq Shihab, to discuss the third series of *Aksi Bela Islam*. They agreed that the rally will be held at the National Monument by doing joint Friday prayer, dhikr, and pray (Amelia, 2016). *Aksi Bela Islam* Series III (December 2, 2016 / 212) led by FPI and GNPF-MUI was a response towards the Police Headquarters who had not detained Ahok yet. President Jokowi, who was not present at the two previous rallies, along with the vice president Jusuf Kalla, unexpectedly came and joined the Friday prayers with the mass.

Aksi Bela Islam continued to the fourth series on February 11th 2016 (112). The event held by The Indonesian Ulema Council and several Islamic organizations (FPI, FUI) in Istiqlal Mosque was done in the form of joint pray and dhikr. Three prominent challengers of Ahok in gubernatorial election, Anies Baswedan, Sandiaga Uno, and Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono attended the rally and were seen hand in hand during the pray and dhikr (Rudi, 2017).

Chief of MUI, Ma'ruf Amin, requested Muslims not to hold the 313 event. He argued that the protesters' aspiration towards Ahok's alleged blasphemy case has been heard by the government and therefore there is no need to hold another action (Sutrisno, 2017). PBNU's chairman, Said Aqil, strictly forbid Nahdliyin (NU's followers) to join the rally yet let those who want to do so. He deplored the demonstration proclaimed as on behalf of religion for the sake of defeating the protesters' opposing candidates to raise their favorable candidates (Rochmat & Fathoni, 2017). Despite the controversy, *Aksi Bela Islam* continued to the fifth series on March 31st, 2016 (313) with protesters long marched to the State Palace demanding President Joko Widodo to discharge Ahok from his position as governor of Jakarta. This time, leader of FPI, Rizieq Shihab, was ascertained not to lead the rally. Yet, FPI did not prohibit the action led by *Forum Umat Islam / FUI* (Badriyanto, 2017). There were 17 trials of Ahok's alleged blasphemy case as of April 4, 2017. He was charged with Indonesia's blasphemy law in Article 156 and 156a of the Criminal Code (KUHP).

Despite the case, Ahok was still running for the second round of Jakarta's gubernatorial election. The election which arguably operated in patronage-based political system with three main political powers such as Prabowo (backing Anies-Sandi), Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (backing Agus-Sylvi), and Megawati (backing Ahok-Djarot) resulted to victory of Ahok-Djarot securing 42.96% of the vote. Meanwhile, Anies-Sandi secured the second place with 39.97% and Agus- Sylvi ranked third with 17.06% ("Hasil hitung TPS," n.d.). During the balloting, KPU's website could not be accessed for several moments. Netizens were worried it was

caused by hacker's attempt to raise one of the candidates' votes. Juri Ardianto, KPU's Chairman, confirmed that someone attempted to hack the site but it had been overcome (Purnamasari, 2017).

The second round of the voting was held on April 19 2017. The result showed the victory of Anies-Sandi with 57,95% votes and Ahok-Djarot lost with 42,05% of votes (Tashandra, 2017). The result of the election gained various responses from media. Aljazeera ("Governor Ahok", 2017) stated that "Jakarta's Christian governor in capital city" lost after "a campaign that opened religious and racial divides in the world's most populous Muslim nation". On the contrary, The Sydney Morning Herald (Topsfield, 2017) framed that "many poor Jakartans" who supported Ahok in 2012 gubernatorial election stated that "It didn't matter to us Ahok was Christian and Chinese". They would not choose Ahok in the 2017 election mainly for his policies, especially what they consider as eviction.

Several moments after the heated voting ended, another mass rally was held on May 5th 2017, organized by GNPf-MUI. Kapitra Ampera, advocate team member of GNPf stated that as for GNPf, it was the last rally. Two major points of the rally were first, to demand the independency of the judge and second, ask for the judge to act based on the fact of the court and inner heart ("GNPF MUI", 2017).

The fragmented opinions towards the rally can be seen through local and international media coverage. Republika framed the rally as "*aksi damai bela Islam untuk menegakkan hukum terhadap penista agama*" (Aminah; Nasrullah, 2017) and to "demand the imprisonment of Ahok" (Mansur, Handayani, & Dwinanda,

2017). Okezone framed it as *“aksi super damai”* (Septianto, 2016; & Purnama, 2017) to *“menuntut penonaktifan Ahok sebagai gubernur”* (Lestari, 2017). Tribunnews framed the rally as *“aksi sangat politis untuk memberhentikan Ahok”* (Wulandari, 2017). BBC Indonesia framed it as action which becomes *“amunisi baru bagi kalangan penentang Ahok yang dipimpin kelompok garis keras FPI pimpinan Rizieq Shihab”* (“Lima hal”, 2016).

Seword framed it as *“penuh bermuatan kampanye politik untuk memilih gubernur Muslim dan tidak pilih Ahok”* (Darmawan, 2017). Rappler framed it as *“mobilisasi masa untuk kepentingan politik merebut kursi gubernur 2017”* (Lubis, 2016). PribumineWS framed it as *“aksi murni panggilan hati untuk membela Islam yang dinistakan dan tidak terkait agenda politik”* (“Ketua GNPF MUI”, 2017). Swamedia framed it as *“peristiwa sejarah besar bagi umat Islam yang menggambarkan ukhuwah Islamiyah yang sangat kental”* (Subiakto, 2017).

Aljazeera framed it as "an extremely big show of force by Islamist groups who have been gaining importance in Indonesia over the years" and "religious sentiments are being creatively used by politicians to gain support ahead of regional elections" (“Indonesians rally”, 2016). Meanwhile, The New York Times, The Guardian, and The Wall Street Journal framed the case as “rally that brought back fears of creeping Islamization in the world’s most populous Muslim-majority nation” (Cochrane, 2016), “rally by hardline Islamist groups against the city’s non-Muslim governor” (Holmes, 2016), and “a rally called by hard-line Muslim groups against the most prominent politician among the country’s often persecuted ethnic-Chinese minority” (Otto & Rachman, 2016). Following the case, issue of a coup

d'état attempt has also circulated on media. On 212 rally, police detained 10 people accused for treason against Jokowi's presidency. The second arrest was performed moments before 313 rally, with 5 people detained including FUI's General Secretary, Muhammad Al-Khaththath.

The verdict released on May 9th 2017 sentencing Ahok two years in prison has drawn attention of both citizens as well as media. Supporters of Ahok gathered in front of *LP Cipinang*, stating support for Ahok as well as protest against the judge's decision to charge Ahok with two years in prison ("Para pendukung", 2017) despite the public prosecutor's 1 year in jail and 2 years trial charge (Sari, 2017). The result of the court, through the perspective of Tribunnews ("Vonis Ahok", 2017) was interpreted by Aljazeera as *"betapa mudahnya melakukan tuduhan penghujatan terhadap lawan-lawan lain -terutama jika mereka kebetulan berasal dari minoritas di negara ini"*, The Guardian as *"Hukuman mengejutkan setelah kelompok garis keras berhaluan Islam menyerukan pejabat Kristen dipenjara karena merujuk ayat Al Quran"* and added that the judiciary *"dilihat secara meluas sebagai ujian bagi toleransi dan pluralisme agama di negara dengan mayoritas Muslim terbesar di dunia"*.

The religious conflict portrayed in media on *Aksi Bela Islam*, in this sense refers to Muslim vs Christian, cannot necessarily be perceived as a brand new phenomenon. During the late 1990s to early 2000s, Christian-Muslim relation in various areas in Indonesia has experienced severe clashes which was also influenced by the financial crisis (Lim, 2008). It has been years after the 1998 riot yet issue of Ahok's ethnicity as Sino-Indonesian is brought back to the media on

news about *Aksi Bela Islam*. It may as well raise challenge to Turner (2003)'s finding about Sino-Indonesian's rather positive alternative discourse of identity presence. Another research on discourse conducted by Hamrita (2014) using Critical Discourse Analysis contends that politico-religious discourse used by "hardline Islamist Tunisian politician" could harm Tunisian political sphere. Differing from the three related previous research, this study employs two theories: transitivity system of Systemic Functional Linguistics postulated by M.A.K. Halliday and judgment aspect as part of attitude in Appraisal Theory postulated by J.R. Martin and P.R.R. White. The two theories are employed to analyze how the discursive contestation in *Aksi Bela Islam* is fabricated in The Guardian, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times.

The data from October 2016 – May 10th 2017 among 6 Western mainstream media on the top 10 list most read newspapers both printed and online across the world by Trending Top Most (2016) on news about *Aksi Bela Islam* and its aftermath shows as follow: Daily Mail (20 articles), The Guardian (46 articles), The New York Times (25), The Washington Post (12 articles), The Wall Street Journal (14 articles), and The Daily Telegraph (5 articles). The Guardian, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times as three media on the list intensely publishing news about the case will be the corpus of the research.

1.2 Research Question

How discursive contestation in *Aksi Bela Islam* is fabricated in The Guardian, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times?

1.3 Purpose of The Study

This study seeks to analyze the fabrication mechanism of the discursive contestation in *Aksi Bela Islam* from the perspective of The Guardian, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times.

1.4 Scope of The Study

This research focuses on news about *Aksi Bela Islam* II (412 rally) and III (212 rally) from the period of November – December 2016 from three western media such as The Guardian, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times. The two mass rallies are chosen since both appeared to attract the most attention from the aforementioned Western media compared to the other rallies. Moreover, the battle of discourse portrayed by the three media was at its tense within those two mass rallies.

1.5 Significance of The Study

Since the case being analyzed can be perceived as new and no research on the issue has been conducted, thus practically, this study contributes an originality of the analysis.