Candy Left: Youth Movement in Postmodern Era

Siti Aliyuna Pratisti

Department of International Relation, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia
aliyunapratisti@gmail.com

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Abstract: Postmodern paradigm surely brings many consequences. One of the most significant phenomena is the emergence of an abstract political aspiration that moves further away from the conventional political platform. The Occupy Wall Street movement and the Arab Spring are suitable examples of how the distribution of political aspirations is no longer based on the political party system. Today, in line with the evolution of social media - politics are embedded in self-identity. Anthony Giddens indicates that in late modernity era, political identities resulted from self-actualization process in post-traditional contexts. Therefore, identity is in constant battle with global influences in the reflexive project of The Self. The process took place in cyberspace with social media as a new channel the political platform. As the result, most of this political movement trapped in the illusion and drowning in superficiality. For example, youth leftist movement in Indonesia, a Candy Left – who run revolutionary movement in confusion. This global wide phenomenon also will be elaborated by comparing Giddens' views on political identity and the postmodern context. Paralleled with analysis of social media, this paper attempts to illustrate how the youth movement in Indonesia today took a different form of political identity.

1 INTRODUCTION

The idea of this paper took its form about a year ago when *"Festival Belok Kiri"* (Turn Left Festival) organized in Jakarta. Held in March 2016, *"Festival Belok Kiri"* raises a certain controversy considering Indonesia's dark history associated with the left ideology. This event attracted the younger generation to get to know the alternative history of their country that has been repressed during the New Order period. However, when media extensively review the national fuss about how Pancasila ideologies being threatened, the spectator of the festival seems doesn't have a clue on how this event affected their self-reflexive construction in the social world. This festival becomes an apparent character, as Robinson's depiction of postmodern perspectives on how symbolic interaction changed today youth political conception (Robinson, 2007).

Another interesting phenomenon of the youth identity nowadays is the gap between theories and the actual reality, which often leads to contradictions. For example, some of the youth communities initiated discussions regarding Anarchism and Marxism in striking cafes. Both of these symbols, striking cafes and leftist ideology, belong to a different set of ideas.

For the purpose of understanding this phenomenon, this paper will compare the construction of the youth movement in Giddens's late modernity with the form of youth movement constructed in postmodern conditions. The comparison will be done through diverse literature review, media monitoring and informal interaction with the "left-leaning" movements on various occasions. Of course, in reality, deep-rooted movements and radical understanding of Marxism still exist. However, when compared them with the growth of left-wing youth movements who boisterous the social media, these radical thinkers have distance voice and hard to be found.

2 POLITICAL IDENTITY TODAY

Identity is one of the most challenging concepts in social science. It is a character, feeling, or outlook, which can be differentiated to other groups or individuals. In the study of identity, Anthony Giddens has a strong influence in establishing basic merit to explain the formation of non-traditional political identity that moves away from the conventional political party's platform. Giddens formulates his

ideas based on two pillars: the predictive nature of society explained by Durkheim and Weber's view of the importance of individual narratives. This amalgam of thoughts makes Giddens' theory of identity, bridging the two classical dichotomies in sociology. According to Giddens (1991), the interaction between macro and micro level are shaping the pattern of individual behavior. He also stated that the structure of society basically affected by the behavior of its individuals. Based on this reflective relation, Giddens (1991) argues that the social condition occurs today is the repetition of modernity that undergoes some changes. Cyberspace undeniably brings significant change to social construction and brought up the term of postmodernism. But Gidden disagreed on the term postmodern society – he insisted the term of late-modernism to describe the current situation. His reluctance to move further from modernity, made his reflexive theories constantly being challenged to explain the current phenomena which lie in the stream of postmodernism.

In theoretical development, Giddens's view of late-modernism faces many criticisms. Stjepan Metrovic is a sociologist known as anti-Giddens for initiating the polemics. In his book entitled Anthony Giddens: The Last Modernist (Metrovic, 1998), he criticizes Giddens's view which he thinks is far too rational. Metrovic mentions that in the formation of national identity, for example, includes an important determinant of emotional factors (Metrovic, 1998). As for Giddens, emotion is part of the traditional value structure of society that has no significant role in the formation of modern political lifestyles. However, the current reality appears to be on the side of Metrovic because the narrative of emotion begins to remerge in social and political discourse. A number of conflicts between identities (ethnic, racial or religious) has its roots in the emotional context. Also, the peculiar phenomena of Post-truth which based on the fanaticism to particular ideas or figure often lead to a biased truth that has a strong relation to emotion.

Post-truth is one indication that irrationality has replaced rationality that highly valued in modern society. Public opinion is no longer driven by logic, but personal preference. This phenomenon leads to the next consequence of the loss of reflexive process in the forming of one identity. Reflexive, in Giddens' study of the identity, has two main functions: First, is to show the fluidity of changing identity to the point of a daily basis. Second, it refers to the ability of an individual to reflect on the conditions of society. Self-identity, according to Giddens, is a person's own reflexive understanding of their biography (Giddens,

1991). The flexibility of identity goes linearly with the development of cyberspace, but the ability of individual reflection upon the Self and social context is somehow lost in oblivion. Today communication does not provide fixed identity but offers the possibility of constant recontextualization (Prosman, 2011). With this changing pattern of interaction, political identity is no longer the result of one's rational choice.

Another view on identity by Bernea (2003) provides an alternative reading of the current actuality. An identity which is resulted from the lacking of authenticity leads to the natural discontent of pseudo-identities. This blurry reading of the text (of Self and social phenomenon) brings a huge impact to the changing of social norms. Without the existence of moral consciousness, the social system of society is fragmented, generate social conflict based on emotional ties and subjectivity. Regarding this development, Giddens's theory of conscious reflexive had the lack of acuity in capturing reality. Therefore, identity requires a new reading. Goffman (in Allan, 1997) predicts this condition by argues that the Self, awaits individuals in every situation and every situation is multi-situated activity system. The virtual realities, as a multi-situated activity, bring the greatest impact on identity in the term of atomism. Lyon (in Hossain and Karim, 2013) describes atomism as the replacement of social ties by a sense of uncertainty and loss of direction. A portrait of today identity – trapped in the illusion of connectedness in an unconnected reality.

3 YOUTH MOVEMENT IN POSTMODERN ERA

The dynamic evolution of society has brought us to a previously unimaginable political mode. The postmodern political movement itself is not something new. Formed in the 1960s, these movements emphasis on transforming the public sphere and transform social institutions on the basis of their subjectivity (Best and Kellner, 1991). But only in the late 20th century, when the world wide web is accessible for all, micropolitics formed into political practice on a daily basis. The transformation of communication technology has articulated the new pattern and distribution of social forces in shaping a postmodern political identity. Nowadays, political discussions are open for the participants from various backgrounds who shared the same political "cyber

stage". This transformation also has global impacts for marginal identity to voice their own narratives.

This virtual political space is a milestone in the youth movement in today's postmodern era. There are two main forms of the youth movement in their agenda to spread their agenda, namely through activism and art performance. Activism is a form of political participation in response to the existing problems. In social theory, the youth movement has its own place. Youth political perspectives who often perceived as emotional and irrational, become distinctive characters that distinguish them from another socio-political identity in the other age groups. In history, some of the robust movement is driven by young people, including anti-war pacifism to social transformation. At first, the youth movement took the form of protest or disobedience to build awareness and shaping the public opinion. The presence of world wide web enables the youth to spread their ideas by sharing, posting, or voice a petition. This is how the social media changed global activism operates, by gives way to the alternative narratives driven by youth movements – ranging from *truthout.com* that voiced the liberal social narrative, *rainforest.arkivert.no* who speak out and concern toward the burden of environmental protection, *fear.ink* that discusses various issues of Islamophobia, to *mipex.eu* who pay attention to the process of integration of refugees with the community.

In addition to the website, networking between the youth movement also play a significant role in the form of civic organization. Within a virtual basis, youth organizations are able to have members from various countries (de Jong, et al, 2005). This new political platform brings specific character to the youth movement today, that is a new form of non-hostile civil disobedience in shaping public opinion and convoy policy change. A civil disobedience can be performed by cyber-based organizations known as "electronic civil disobedience". These tactics conduct by hacking certain websites, or by flooding a certain company with millions of emails (Pickerill 2001). This new pattern of civil disobedience is very effective in spreading ideas and building awareness among the wider community. Such tactics transform the internet infrastructure from a means of communication into an instrument of action (Wray, 1998).

Another form of youth political movement comes in the form of art, especially street art. Gravities inscribed by Banksy, for example, are able to raise social awareness of crucial matters such as child labor to war criticism. The streets are chosen to be a battleground to challenge government policy as well as the hegemony of multinational companies. After Trump won the presidential election, the streets in the United States are filled with gravity protesting Trump's anti-immigration policy. Or the gravity that scattered in Berlin during the WTO meeting in mid-2017. The spirit of street art captured the essence of force within post-modernism politics. They are the cutting edge in methods, attacking corporate hegemony and their ideology (Suzuki, 2013). Street art, by definition, is grassroots movement who trying to expose various forms of abuse of power that occurred. It seeks to expand the consciousness of the average citizen to the harsh realities of our time. By doing their "city guerillas" they mean to break barriers between high and low culture, in order to show our common humanity (Suzuki, 2013).

Street art showed a new process of political articulation, transmission and dissemination of the youth experience in the of these new spaces to various audiences bring new sensibilities into everyday practices (Featherstone, 2007). It is becoming what Aronson called postmodern design, a juxtaposition of elements within the unifying structure of the stage frame, creating a referential network within the mind of the viewer that extends beyond the immediately apparent world (Aronson, 1991). These two forms of youth movement speak the same language – the language of moral consciousness. The Youth movement has evolved into a global movement capable of shaking the hegemonic order.

4 CANDY LEFT: A PERCEPTION OF PROFANITY

Studying political identities can be very amusing, but in the age of postmodern politics, political identity shifts into a mere scene of profanity. Imagery is an important point in postmodern which refers to entirely cut off of any original meaning, from any supporting base (Brann, 1992). Since it is only half measured on thought or meaning, the image of identity has never intact. This condition of profanity in the postmodern movement has become two sides of the same coin: on one side, it can become a very resourceful social power, but on the other side, it becomes the very base of the recent social problem. Arab Spring, Occupy Movement, and the youth left movement in Indonesia face similar dilemmas.

Arab Spring and Occupy Movement are bringing the awareness of how profanity gives a thick color to postmodern politics. Both of these movements

managed to gather the masses in unbelievable amounts to take action on the streets. At the demonstration in Tahrir Square, there are more than ten thousand people who join the rally and voiced for democracy in Egypt. For those who watched only from the television screen, this demonstration indicates a major shift in the narrative of Egyptian political power. However, when the news takes a closer look by interviewing the activists and provide depth report on the event, a profane reality burst to the surface. Most of the participants did not have holistic ideas or solutions about what kind of government system they really wanted - they were on the streets for a very simple reason: to be part of a historic movement (Bayat, 2009). Of course, various critics have been cynical to protest by declaring it as a futile political movement with "a standstill dialectic". Or in other words, the movement goes in vain. At some point, this criticism is irrefutable. The absence of a common view on the Arabs Spring movement gives an opportunity for political parties to represent and revive the old narrative (now, the military regime has regained control of political power in Egypt). Occupy movement channel at the same frequency - though it echoes in various parts of the world, there is no significant change in the current capitalist system. However, referring to the history of the political movement, the condition of profanity is a consequence of the stagnant political party system. The disappointment leads to an anti-ideological form of political participation and societies increasing the distance from party procedures.

Indonesia is not immune to this contagious effect of profanity. The most prominent example is the left movement that emerged after the fall of the New Order. The regime under Soeharto's held a very strong political control so that any alternative narrative that emerged would instantly repressed and the left ideology, specifically in the context of communism, is considered dangerous. After the fall of the New Order in 1998, the previously silenced narrative, having been able to breathe fresh air through a democratization and recognition of the freedom of expression. Driven by the dissemination of information, the leftist regains its space in political discourse (although in some extent it is still monitored and restricted). One of the controversy when abrupt when *"Festival Belok Kiri"* is organized in Jakarta. By using this festival as an example, we can illustrate how the study of the political identity of Indonesian finds its way in the postmodern form. While the term "Candy Left" is a self-made term to distinguish these profane leftists with the radical leftist.

"Belok Kiri Festival" gained much attention from the younger generation shown by their enthusiasm to attend the festival. Most of the attendance, ranging from high school to college student, saw the event with a different perspective. They came, took a selfie and uploaded it on social media. The "only to be seen on the scene" behavior that we found amongst the Tahrir Square demonstrators, also visible at the Festival. The narrative is functioned more as an image than meaning. This is certainly different from the purpose of the initiators. Yet, the result of the event it is precisely trapped in the paradox of subjectivity: that the morally conscious and the profane, are sharing the same political stage. Subsequent to the *Belok Kiri Festival*, there are several other events that carry a similar idea, *rangi* (Placeholder1) from street educational activists to anarchical discussions spread in many cities in Indonesia. However, although the left narrative is increasingly popular among Indonesian youth, the risk of a self-image - a candy left - still overshadowing the youth understanding of political identity. This is obviously the side effects of profanity – that the spread of political ideas nowadays, can no longer be the basis of a reading of political identity as proposed by Giddens. In the process of understanding the recent phenomena, we have to deal with the ugly truth - that we are also responsible for social problems since the biggest problem of postmodern age is our failure to uphold the moral consciousness.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The current study of political identity stands on two footholds - modernity and postmodernism. Giddens's modern view is still very relevant to measure the social dynamics. However, there is a fundamental change in communication patterns that turns reality into virtual mirrors. The similar condition also exists in the context of the youth movement. When modernity has a steady structure by provides templates form of lifestyle, the transformation of the postmodern society rests on the individual's subjectivity in imaging the lifestyle. Faced with these changing conditions, a new synthesis form is needed to grasp the basic social relations patterns of our current era. Both views, of course, have advantages and limitations, and it is possible that through the understanding of both can emerge a new construction as what Hegel calls "differentiated unity". The dynamics of social science provide space for the existence of new constructs that are born out of social and historical context. By taking the example of the

development of youth movement, it is expected that the changing in social paradigm can be clearly outlined.

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