

EXPLORING THE 212 REUNION MOVEMENT: LACK OF TACTICAL INNOVATION AND DECLINING MASS PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRAK

After the 2016 Islamic Defense Action, the 212 Reunion Movement emerged to maintain the euphoria of the December 2, 2016 movement. However, why did this movement decline, and what factors explain it? To answer this question, this research used qualitative methods and process tracing analysis to compare the events of the 212 Reunion Movement from 2017 to 2023. The 212 Reunion Movement declined because they lost momentum to strengthen political influence. For instance, in 2016 and 2017 their momentum was the blasphemy case and the Jakarta elections. Then, in 2018 their momentum was the presidential election. This phenomenon occurred due to several factors, such as the lack of tactical innovation, the strengthening of government repression in restricting the 212 Reunion movement, the decline in government facilitation of the 212 Reunion movement, and the decline in mass participation.

Keywords: Movement; 212 Reunion; Political Influence

INTRODUCTION

The 212 Movement (December 2, 2016) was part of a series of Islamic Defense Actions (Aksi Bela Islam) that aimed to demand the blasphemy case carried out by Basuki Tjahja Purnama (Ahok), the former Governor of Jakarta Province, Indonesia. It emerged as the culmination of previous Islamic Defense actions. In addition, this movement can be considered one of the largest social movements in the history of the Republic of Indonesia because it was organized several times from 2016 to 2017 with a mass number of thousands of people.

After the 212 movements in 2016-2017, some parties tried to capture the momentum of 212 by forming several formal organizations, such as the 212 Alumni Brotherhood, and the 212 Sharia Party. However, the 212 Sharia Party show a declining trend, after being declared they did not participate in the elections, thus reflecting an inconsistent political movement and cannot be a political channel for the previous 212 mass movement. Meanwhile, the 212 Alumni Brotherhood movement tends to consistently build a mass movement called the 212 Reunion, which is a movement held every December 2. Therefore, the 212 Reunion is a movement that continues the spirit of the December 2, 2016 action, struggling

for Islamic values and advocating for justice, including in politics. Thus, the 212 Reunion movement is considered a symbol of unity and struggle for Muslims, especially in social and political aspects. The 212 Reunion continued the Islamic defense movement by bringing issues that were relevant to Indonesian Muslims.

212 Alumni Brotherhood initiated the 212 Alumni Reunion movement which was regularly held (2017-2023). The 212 Reunion movement was successfully held at the National Monument (Monas) in 2017, 2018, and 2019 and was attended by thousands of people. However, in 2020 it was held virtually due to COVID-19. Then in 2021 this movement was not successfully held in the Central Jakarta area because it did not receive support from the government. Likewise in 2022, this movement no longer organizes reunion activities at Monas, but at the At-Tin Mosque, East Jakarta. Starting from 2019-2023, the 212 Reunion movement showed a declining trend regarding participants and political influence. Whereas ideally, a movement can maintain its influence after being formalized. As explained by Staggenborg (1988) "formalized social movement organizations (SMOs) help maintain social movements when environmental conditions make mobilization difficult." Therefore, this study aims to explain the declining trend in the 212 Reunion Movement

despite its formalization. The study of the movement after formalization and its declining trend shows a contribution to the development of political science studies, especially in the study of social movements.

Previous studies have shown that formalized movements are more sustainable than non-formalized movements (Gamson, 1975; Jenkins, 1985; Staggenborg, 1988). Likewise, in the case of the 212 Reunion, they have proven consistency in building the movement. However, this study found that the political influence of the 212 Reunion movement continues to diminish. Septiana et al (2020) explained that the 212 Reunion movement tended to strengthen in 2017 due to the blasphemy case of one of the candidates in the 2017 Jakarta regional election. Other candidates tend to take advantage of this momentum to strengthen religious identity-based political support (Fadhlan & Azizah, 2023). Therefore, the issue of religion and politics are interconnected, and the support of Islamic groups is mobilized to win Muslim candidates. Likewise, in 2018, the 212 Reunion was associated with supporting one of the candidates challenging the incumbent, namely Prabowo Subianto. Thus, the 212 Reunion movement can still maintain its political influence because they are supported by the government opposition.

However, since 2019, when Prabowo was defeated in the presidential election and decided to join the government, the 212 Reunion movement has lost its momentum and political support. Government repression has strengthened to restrict the movement. In addition, COVID-19 strengthened restrictions on social movements in Indonesia. Although COVID-19 has been relatively overcome, the tendency of declining political influence is getting stronger because actions cannot be held at Monas and political speeches criticizing the government are eliminated. Therefore, this movement tends to lose momentum to increase its political influence so that its orientation shifts to focus on the spirituality of worship and solidarity actions for Palestine. Thus, this study shows that the decline in the influence of this movement occurred due to several factors, such as the lack of tactical innovation, the strengthening of government repression in restricting the 212 Reunion movement, the decline in government facilitation of the 212 Reunion movement, and the decline in mass participation.

Then, structurally, this paper begins with an introduction that discusses the gap and background to the emergence of the problem. Then, the next discussion is an explanation of the selection of process tracing as a research method. After that, a conceptual framework that focuses on the study of organizing and sustaining a movement. Next, a discussion of the decline of the 212 Reunion movement. Finally, the conclusion is a brief answer to the formulation of this research problem.

METHOD

This research focuses on examining the causes of the declining trend of the 212 Reunion movement in 2019-2022. Therefore, the process tracing method was chosen to understand historical events that have occurred so that researchers can find path dependence and produce causal arguments. The existence of path dependence in a study can explain the process of past events affecting future events, and produce causal mechanism arguments (Pierson, 2000). A causal mechanism is more than just explaining empirical events or descriptive but can produce causal explanations (Beach & Pedersen, 2013: 29-32). Thus, to make this research more empirical, as Jasper, (2010) explains, which emphasizes an empirical approach in the study of social movements, this method was chosen to support the research objectives in developing the study of social movements. In the process, of finding causal explanations and applying process tracing in this study, researchers used data sourced from electronic media, such as Kompas, Detik, Jawapos, Tirto, etc. Technically, the data analysis process in this study follows the stages of Ricks & Liu (2018). However, this research does not explain the counterfactual outcome so the data analysis process ends in finding evidence for the primary hypothesis stage. Thus, technically, the data analysis process begins with making a hypothesis, then making a timeline constructing a causal graph, and finding empirical evidence for the primary hypothesis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The development of social movement studies has produced several paradigms that are recognized as theoretical foundations in studying a social movement phenomenon. Edelman, (2001) explains that "theories of collective action have undergone

several paradigm shifts, from mass behavior to resource mobilization, political process, and new social movements.” Furthermore, Edelman, (2001) emphasizes that each of these frameworks can produce different arguments depending on how researchers place the political side in a movement. Therefore, in this study, the political side is seen from the various political processes that have an impact on the realization of the 212 Reunion in 2017-2023. Thus, the factors that led to the decline of the 212 Reunion movement are part of the political processes that occurred in that period. In addition, this stage explains the theoretical arguments regarding the organization of a movement as a form of sustainable movement. Organizing aims to maintain the existence of a movement, although there is also the possibility that a movement can increase or decrease. Therefore, this stage discusses two things, the organization of a movement and the decline of an organized movement.

How is the movement organized?

The emergence of a movement begins with a general agreement on situations that are unfavorable to certain groups, such as injustice, which causes a protest movement. McAdam (1982: 51) explains that “before collective protest can get underway, people must collectively define their situations as unjust and subject to change through group action.” Thus, a movement can arise if there is awareness from the disadvantaged group to change the situation using collective action. In this context, McAdam (1982: 51) explains it through the stages of broad socioeconomic processes and then has an impact on expanding political opportunities and organizational strength, after cognitive liberation is formed and increases, then a social movement emerges.

However, in the process, the emergence of a movement does not necessarily solve the problems they face. Therefore, a movement can emerge and develop but also emerge and decline. McAdam (1982: 52-58) explains that a movement can develop or decline due to two factors, first the sustainability of organizational strength, second the role of movement control through tactics and goals. Thus, the first step in organizing a movement is to design the movement to continue and strengthen tactics and goals.

In addition, the sustainability of a movement is also influenced by the movement's ability to mobilize and manage mass participation. Klandermans &

Oegema (1987) explain that there are four aspects of mobilizing the masses “formation of mobilization potentials, formation and activation of recruitment networks, arousal of motivation to participate, and removal barriers to participation.” Furthermore, mass mobilization can be successful if it is supported by optimal participation. Klandermans & Oegema (1987) explain that to encourage participation in a social movement, people must be part of the target of potential mobilization, and become motivated to participate and overcome various barriers to participation. However, to mobilize and optimize participation, a social movement must first be organized. The process of organizing social movements can be done by formalization. In this context, social movements can be managed formally or structured, if there is formalization in decision-making and division of labor, setting membership criteria, connectivity with subunits, and movement leadership (Staggenborg, 1988). The decision-making process and division of labor are conducted to determine various strategic decisions and the effectiveness of a social movement. Furthermore, membership management is conducted with the use of membership cards and archiving of organizational membership files. After that, connectivity with subunits is conducted by regulating the authority between the central board and subunits in the social movement process. Meanwhile, leadership describes the type of professional organizational manager to achieve movement goals. These four aspects affect the resilience of SMOs, despite changes in leadership and environmental conditions.

Based on the discussion above, organizing a social movement can begin with formalizing the movement, and then managing mass mobilization and participation to strengthen the sustainability and control role of the organization. Then, if contextualized with this research, the 212 Reunion movement can be said to have been organized, especially with the formation of the management of the 212 Alumni Brotherhood. However, this theoretical framework is not enough to explain the phenomenon of the decline of the 212 Reunion from 2019-2023. Therefore, the next theoretical framework is more focused on answering research problems.

How is the movement declining?

Social movements emerge because they have a goal, so logically the movement will end if the goal

has been achieved. However, if a movement is formalized, the movement will seek new goals, but still be associated with previous goals. Jasper (2010) explains that “goals are as central to strategic approaches as are tactics, despite the common misconception that strategy is instrumental while goals reflect culture and emotions.” Thus, a formalized movement will have adapted goals and tactics, with the main purpose of maintaining the movement's continuity. However, in this context, the movement may have lost its momentum, so even though it has been formalized, it will still experience a decline.

In contrast to movements that still have momentum, various strategies, and tactics can be carried out to maintain the movement, even though the conditions remain dynamic. In this context, McAdam (1983) emphasizes that “this is referred to as a process of tactical innovation.” Furthermore, innovation in this context can encourage the movement to keep developing because the movement continues to adapt to various challenges. Some examples of movement innovation include the bus boycott, the sit-in, the freedom rides, community-wide protest campaigns, urban rioting, etc. Thus, movement innovation can have an impact on the sustainability of the movement to achieve its goals.

However, the contrary can happen, McAdam (1983) explains that movements can continue to decline because there are no tactical innovations that can sustain the movement. In addition, movement stagnation can also encourage the masses to no longer participate in the movement. As explained by Klandermans & Oegema (1987) mass non-participation in demonstrations is caused by a lack of sympathy for the movement, the masses are not the target of mobilization, the masses are not motivated, and there are obstacles. These constraints illustrate that a movement does not innovate and adapt to gather the masses and build a movement that is more impactful than before. Although the number of people is larger than before, it cannot guarantee that the movement's goals can be achieved immediately, but at least the number of people can increase the political influence of the movement in achieving its goals.

Thus, the movement will decline if there is no longer momentum and technical innovation. However, in this context, the technical innovation aspect requires further explanation if applied to the

case of this research. Therefore, this research tends to place political momentum as an independent variable that can influence the development or decline of a social movement. Then, the research phenomenon shows evidence that the 212 Reunion movement has lost its momentum, causing the movement to continue to decline, especially from 2019-2023.

Furthermore, to explain the factors of movement decline that occurred, several previous studies were used to build the argument, such as from Koopmans (1993) and Galli (2016). First, Koopmans (1993) explains the dynamics of various protest waves “the development of action repertoires, levels of repression and facilitation, and the involvement of different types of organizations.” Furthermore, Koopmans (1993) explains that there are internal and external factors that can be taken into consideration, externally the movement needs to consider opportunities, facilitation, and repression, while internally the movement needs to increase innovation, participation, and militancy. Second, research from Galli (2016) more specifically discusses the decline of the movement. Galli (2016) argues that “glitter bombing declined due to many of the same factors that initially provided momentum for its diffusion”. Furthermore, Galli (2016) explains that the decline of movements is caused by limited potential masses, lack of support from civil society organizations, the role of the media, and increased repression. These two studies have similarities and differences, Koopmans (1993) provides more of a foundation argument to explain the dynamics of movements that can grow or decline, while Galli (2016) offers a more recent explanation with the media factor.

However, in the process of building a more adequate argument in explaining the factors of the decline of the 212 movement. This research refers more to Koopmans (1993) by establishing four factors, movement innovation, repression, facilitation, and the participation of other organizations. We argue that these factors are more relevant to explain the situation of a formalized movement that has lost its momentum, resulting in its decline. A movement that loses momentum will tend to stagnate and not innovate. Then, movements that lose momentum will tend to get repressive actions from the government because they lack public and political elite support. Furthermore, movements that lose momentum will

tend not to get facilitation or support from the government or political elite. Finally, movements that lose momentum tend not to get support from other organizations because their relevance and urgency are questioned.

Table 1. Expected Causes of Factors in The Movement Decline

Movement Status	Movement Condition	Movement innovation	Repression	Facilitation	The Involvement of Different Organizations	Affected Condition
Formalized Movement	Losing Momentum	Weak Ties	Strong Ties	Weak Ties	Weak Ties	Movement Decline

Source: Processed by Author (2025)

Dynamics of the 212 Reunion Movement 2017-2023

The 212 Reunion movement was initiated by the 212 Alumni Brotherhood which was formed in 2017. Previously, this movement was called the Presidium of 212 Alumni. This movement began to be called the 212 Alumni Brotherhood in 2018. The 2017 212 Reunion was organized to celebrate the first year of the 212 Movement that took place in 2016.

In 2017, the 212 Reunion was held at the National Monument (Monas) with around 30,000 people attending. In this context, Reunion activities can be said to be an innovation of the 212 movement. The reunion reaffirmed the existence of the 212 movement in Indonesia's political constellation. In addition, there were no cases of repression carried out by the government, but this year the 212 Reunion movement was facilitated by the Jakarta Provincial Government by granting permission to conduct activities in Monas. In addition, this movement still received support from various parties, especially the government opposition. The 2017 Reunion also strengthened the momentum shift from the Governor Election to the 2019 Presidential Election. This movement became part of the opposition forces that criticized the government.

Furthermore, in 2018, the 212 Reunion was again held at Monas with larger participants than before, around 40,000 people. This movement again found its momentum, namely in the 2019 Presidential Election, while strengthening the position of the movement as an opposition to the government which was claimed to have criminalized the ulama. The 212 Reunion in 2018 seemed to show the strength of the government's opposition, this can be said to be an innovation in movement tactics to show the position of the movement in the national political constellation. This year there were also no

repressive actions from the government, but the local government facilitated the organization of activities in Monas. In addition, this movement was also followed by a larger number of participants than the previous year, reflecting the participation of other elements, especially the government opposition preparing for the 2019 Presidential Election.

After that, the 212 Reunion in 2019 showed a decline in participants and influence. The predicted number of participants in the 2019 212 Reunion reached 10,000 people, which is less than the previous two years. The 2019 212 Reunion movement still uses the same format as the previous year's reunion, so this movement has stagnated tactically. In addition, several times this movement did not get repression from the government because the actions were conducted peacefully. Then, this year the movement still received facilitation from the local government to be held at Monas. However, in the context of the participation of other organizations, the decline in the number of participants indicates a reduction in the number of other organizations participating in this activity.

In addition, this year too, the 212 Reunion lost momentum because the 2019 Presidential Election was over and the candidate they declared had lost. After that, the candidate they supported decided to join the incumbent government coalition. Thus, the 212 Reunion movement in 2019 lost the support of political elites or opposition figures who could increase the movement's influence in the national political constellation. Furthermore, the figure of the vice-presidential candidate chosen by the incumbent is one of the central figures in the 212 Movement. Therefore, the dynamics that occurred in the 2017 Governor Election and the 2019 Presidential Election were different, in 2017 there was a polarization between Muslim and non-Muslim candidates, while in the 2019 Presidential Election, both candidates could represent Muslim groups in Indonesia.

Furthermore, in 2020, the world faced the COVID-19 pandemic including Indonesia. Thus, in 2020, the 212 Reunion was organized virtually. In this context, the virtual movement can be said to be an innovation and adaptation of the movement during a pandemic. In this context, there are also no cases of repression because the series of activities are based online. However, before it was held virtually, the 212 Alumni Brotherhood had planned to hold activities at Monas but received a

warning from the police. In addition, although it was carried out online, this activity was also not attended by the leaders of Jakarta, which was considered to have been won by this movement. Then, in 2021, still in the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The 212 Alumni Brotherhood has announced the location of the activity at the Horse Statue, Central Jakarta. However, the government and police did not facilitate the activity and blocked access to the location. Thus, the masses who had moved to the location became scattered in various places and this movement failed to be organized.

Furthermore, in 2022, the reunion activities were no longer held at Monas and its surroundings but were held at the At-Tin Mosque, East Jakarta, with a crowd of around 3,000 to 10,000 people. This activity also does not invite political elites. Thus, the committee explained that this activity was focused on religious activities, not containing political speeches as in previous years' reunion activities.

In 2023, the reunion activities were successfully held at Monas again, but there were significant differences because the committee did not invite political figures to deliver speeches. The absence of a discourse on the direction of the movement's support to side with one of the presidential candidates in the 2024 elections indicates that this movement tends to be limited to continue to appear every year. This is evidenced by the requirement from the Ministry of National Secretariat to not make this action into a political activity to organize activities in Monas. Reunion activities focus more on religious rituals and Palestinian solidarity actions.

Table 2: Predicted Number of Participants in the 212 Movements

Movement Name	Date	Place	Predicted Number of Participants
Islamic Defense Action	October 14, 2016	In front of DKI Jakarta City Hall (Governor's Office)	Thousands (Rahadian, 2017a)
	November 4, 2016	Merdeka Palace Jakarta	Larger than before, reaching hundreds of thousands (Rahadian, 2017a)
	December 2, 2016	Monas and its surroundings	Larger than previous movements,

212 Reunion			estimated at 500,000 - 1.5 million people (Kukuh, 2016; Rahadian, 2017a)
	February 11, 2017	Istiqlal Mosque	Estimated to be around 200,000 - 300,000 people (Rahadian, 2017a; Taher, 2017)
	February 21, 2017	In front of the House of Representatives Building	Less than 15,000 people (BBC, 2017; Rahadian, 2017b; Taher, 2017)
	March 31, 2017	Horse Statue and Monas	About 30,000 people (Taher, 2017)
	May 5, 2017	in front of the Supreme Court Building	About 15,000 people (Sihombing, 2017)
	December 2, 2017	Monas	About 30,000 people (Batubara, 2017; Fatiara, 2020)
	December 2, 2018	Monas	Larger than previous reunions, about more than 40,000 people (Abdulsalam, 2018; Fatiara, 2020)
	December 2, 2019	Monas	Smaller than the previous reunion, about 10,000 people (Fatiara, 2020)
	December 2, 2020	Virtual Meeting	Pandemic COVID-19 (Fatiara, 2020)
	December 2, 2021	Horse Statue	Failed and blocked by the government
	December 2, 2022	At-Tin Mosque	Around 3,000 - 10,000 people (Rachman, 2022)
	December 2, 2023	Monas	There is no exact number, but the media reported a smaller crowd than the 212 Reunion in 2017, 2018, and 2019 (Putra, 2023)

Source: Processed by Author (2024)

The Decline of the 212 Reunion Movement

The 212 Reunion of 2017-2018 still has the momentum of the 2019 Presidential Election. This movement was utilized by government opposition

groups to increase their electoral votes. However, after the 2019 Presidential Election, opposition figures who were also candidates in the 2019 Presidential Election decided to join the government structure. Thus, starting from 2019 the 212 movement lost momentum and support from the political elite. This is also indicated by the decline in the number of participants from 2019 to 2023.

In addition, the loss of momentum further impacted the decline of the movement due to the lack of tactical innovation. The 212 Reunion Movement only formed a pattern of peaceful actions, gatherings of people, religious activities, and political speeches. Thus, parties who feel disadvantaged by this action can read the pattern and take advantage of the momentum of the COVID-19 pandemic to further weaken the influence of the 212 Reunion movement. In 2017 and 2018, the narrative of criticism against the government was strong enough that the winner of the 2019 Presidential Election or the incumbent could also categorize this movement as a threat to the government. This can be evidenced by various attempts to prevent Habib Rizieq Shihab (HRS) from participating in the 2019 elections as he is one of the central figures in the 212 movement. After losing momentum, finally, in 2022, the 212 Reunion movement announced not to invite politicians and did not contain political speeches so it focused on religious activities. This means that politically, the movement has lost its bargaining power with the government.

Furthermore, although the issue of government repression is not prominent, the movement has lost momentum, such as in 2020 and 2021. The government, in this case, the police, announced that it would crack down and disband the movement if the reunion activities were still carried out. On the grounds of the Pandemic, the 212 Reunion movement that was previously planned in Monas was thwarted. This discussion is also in line with the facilitation provided by the government. In 2017-2019, the local government was permitted to conduct Reunion activities in Monas, while in 2020-2021, the local government did not permit the implementation of these activities. Then, based on the awareness of the 212 Reunion Committee, in 2022 the activity was not held in Monas as in previous years. The decline in influence and bargaining power was also recognized by them, that the 212 reunion activities

in Monas tended to be difficult to carry out without the support of the political elite.

Furthermore, the reunion activities in 2019-2023 also decreased due to the diminishing of other parties outside the 212 Alumni Brotherhood network, especially anti-government or opposition groups. In addition, this movement also did not build a solid coalition with civil society or other Islamic organizations that had previously participated in the series of Islamic Defense Actions, especially on December 2, 2016. Thus, the non-participation of different organizations or groups also had an impact on the decline of the 212 Reunion movement.

Thus, the theoretical implication of the findings and discussion, in this case, is the importance of political momentum to the development or decline of social movements. This momentum also describes the political process that occurs during the movement period, if the momentum coincides with the election, then the movement tends to show progress, such as the 2016-2017 Islamic Defense Action which coincided with the 2017 Jakarta Governor Election, then the 212 Reunion in 2017-2018 which coincided with the 2019 Presidential Election. Then, losing momentum and the absence of a political contestation event causes the movement to tend to stagnate, even decreasing if the movement is in opposition to the government, such as the 212 Reunion in 2019-2023.

CONCLUSION

Why did the 212 Reunion movement decline, and what factors can explain it? The 212 Reunion movement declined because it lost political momentum, unlike the 2016-2017 Islamic Defense Action. Although in the first two years, 2017-2018, they gained new momentum to develop the movement, in 2019-2023 they lost momentum, causing a decline in influence and participation. The argument for the decline of the 212 Reunion movement is supported by several factors, ranging from the lack of tactical innovation, the strengthening of government influence, the decline in government facilitation, and the decline in mass participation. In addition, this study also suggests that future research can examine the phenomenon of the 212 Reunion movement with different methods, such as elite interviews or surveys. Different approaches and methods can make it possible to build different arguments and empirical findings. In addition, this phenomenon can also be

studied with a different theoretical approach, especially since the 212 Reunion movement is still likely to continue every year because it was initiated by the formalized 212 Alumni Brotherhood. Then, practically, this movement needs to rediscover its momentum, as was the case at the beginning of the emergence of the Islamic Defense Action movement with the momentum of the blasphemy case by Ahok and the 2017 Jakarta Governor Election. In addition, the 212 Reunion movement can change its purpose as a government control movement or a religious moral movement. On the other hand, the 212 Alumni Brotherhood can also adopt the stages of formalization described by (Staggenborg, 1988), especially in managing the membership of the 212 Alumni and managing the relations of 212 alumni from various regions. This management can be beneficial for the development and resilience of a social movement.

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