

The Construction of Religious Identity of the Crusades: Historical Legacy in Contemporary International Relations

Muhamad Hilmi Pauzian¹

¹*Al-Hayat Islamic Education Foundation, Bandung, Indonesia*

*Email: Muhammadhimipauzian09@gmail.com

Abstrak

Perang Salib (1095-1291) merupakan salah satu fenomena sejarah paling kompleks dalam sejarah hubungan internasional, yang menciptakan pola konflik dan perdamaian yang terus memengaruhi dinamika global hingga saat ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana konstruksi identitas keagamaan, persepsi musuh, dan warisan retorika kekerasan/damai dari Perang Salib membentuk pola hubungan internasional kontemporer. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan teoretis konstruktivis Alexander Wendt, penelitian ini menerapkan metode kualitatif dengan analisis historis dan wacana terhadap dokumen sejarah Perang Salib, pidato politik, narasi diplomatik, dan kebijakan luar negeri. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Perang Salib tidak hanya menciptakan identitas keagamaan yang terpolarisasi antara Kristen dan Islam, tetapi juga menghasilkan mekanisme diplomasi dan perdamaian yang inovatif melalui perjanjian perdagangan, aliansi strategis, dan pertukaran budaya. Temuan-temuan kunci mengungkapkan bahwa warisan Perang Salib telah terinternalisasi ke dalam struktur kognitif para aktor internasional, membentuk persepsi ancaman dan peluang dalam hubungan Barat-Timur Tengah. Kesimpulan studi ini menunjukkan bahwa pemahaman tentang konstruksi sosial identitas dan norma-norma yang berakar pada Perang Salib memberikan kontribusi signifikan terhadap analisis hubungan internasional kontemporer, terutama dalam memahami dinamika konflik dan perdamaian di kawasan Timur Tengah serta hubungan lintas peradaban.

Kata kunci: hubungan internasional, identitas agama; konflik; perdamaian, Perang Salib; konstruktivisme

Abstract

The Crusades (1095-1291) were one of the most complex historical phenomena in the history of international relations, creating patterns of conflict and peace that continue to influence global dynamics to this day. This research aims to analyze how the construction of religious identity, enemy perceptions, and the legacy of violent/peaceful rhetoric from the Crusades shaped contemporary international relations patterns. Using Alexander Wendt's constructivist theoretical approach, this study applies a qualitative method with historical analysis and discourse to Crusade historical documents, political speeches, diplomatic narratives, and foreign policy. The results of the study show that the Crusades not only created a polarized religious identity between Christianity and Islam, but also resulted in innovative mechanisms of diplomacy and peace through trade agreements, strategic alliances, and cultural exchanges. Key findings reveal that the legacy of the Crusades has been internalized in the cognitive structures of international actors, shaping perceptions of threats and opportunities in West-Middle East relations. The conclusions of this study show that the understanding of the social construction of identity and norms rooted in the Crusades makes a significant contribution to the analysis of contemporary international relations, especially in understanding the dynamics of conflict and peace in the Middle East region and cross-civilizational relations.

Keywords: Crusade; constructivism; conflict; international relations, religious identity;; peace

1. INTRODUCTION

The Crusades, which lasted from the end of the 11th century to the end of the 13th century, was one of the most significant events in the history of international relations whose impact is still felt today (Asbridge, 2010). This phenomenon not only changed the geopolitical landscape of Europe and the Middle East at that time, but also created complex patterns of interaction between Christian and Islamic civilizations that continue to influence the dynamics of contemporary international relations (Hillenbrand, 2000).

In the context of the study of modern international relations, the Crusades offer a unique case for understanding how social constructions of identity, norms, and interests shape the behavior of international actors. This phenomenon shows how ideological and religious factors can be the main drivers in conflicts between civilizations, as well as creating innovative mechanisms of peace and cooperation (Maalouf, 2006). As stated by Soetjipto and Yuliestiana (2020), in the era of globalization, non-state actors play an increasingly important role in international relations, including in the process of constructing and reconstructing transnational identities that can be traced back to the Crusade period. This complexity becomes relevant for understanding the dynamics of contemporary international relations, particularly in the context of West-Middle East relations and issues involving the religious dimension and civilizational identity.

A major problem encountered in the study of contemporary international relations is the lack of a deep understanding of how the historical legacy of the Crusades has shaped the cognitive and normative structures of the modern international system. Most of the existing literature tends to focus on purely military and political aspects, without exploring in depth how the construction of identities and norms formed during the Crusades continued to influence the perceptions and behaviors of international actors (Tyerman, 2019).

This theoretical gap becomes even more important when we see how the rhetoric of "crusades" is still often used in contemporary international political discourse, both by Western leaders and groups in the Middle East. The use of Crusade symbolism and narrative in foreign policy suggests that this historical legacy has been internalized in ideational structures that influence the interpretation and response to various international issues (Jackson, 2005).

The main objective of this study is to analyze how the Crusades as a historical phenomenon have shaped patterns of conflict and peace in international relations, as well as to explore their implications for contemporary international relations. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) analyze the construction of religious identity and enemy perceptions formed during the Crusades; (2) identify the mechanisms of conflict and peace that developed in the context of the Crusades; (3) exploring the rhetorical legacy of violence and peace from the Crusades; and (4) analyze the implications of these findings for the understanding of contemporary international relations.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to understand the historical roots of the patterns of conflict and cooperation that are still evident in contemporary international relations. In the era of globalization and increasing interaction between civilizations, a deep understanding of how historical heritage shapes the perceptions and behaviors of international actors is becoming increasingly important to develop effective strategies in managing conflicts and building peace (Huntington, 1996).

A review of the literature shows that the study of the Crusades in the context of international relations has evolved significantly in recent decades. Pioneering works such as those by Runciman (1951) and Setton (1955) provide a strong historical foundation, while contemporary studies such as those conducted by Tyerman (2006) and Phillips (2007) have integrated international relations perspectives in their analysis.

In the context of international relations theory, some studies have used a realist approach to understanding the Crusades as a power politics competition (1972), while others have adopted a liberal approach to analyze aspects of economic cooperation and interdependence (Abulafia, 1993). However, the use of constructivist approaches in understanding the Crusades is still relatively limited, although its potential is immense for providing profound insights into the social constructions of identity and the norms that were formed during this period.

The main argument of this study is that the Crusades not only created a pattern of prolonged conflict between Christianity and Islam, but also resulted in innovative mechanisms of peace and cooperation. The polarized construction of religious identity during the Crusades has been internalized in the cognitive structures of international actors and continues to influence the perception of threats and opportunities in contemporary international relations. The hypothesis put forward is that the legacy of the Crusades has formed an ideational structure that influences the interpretation and response of international actors to issues involving the religious dimension and identity of civilization.

The main theory used in this study is the constructivism of Alexander Wendt (1992), which emphasizes the importance of ideas, identities, and norms in shaping the behavior of international actors. Wendt (1999) argues that the structure of the international system is social and is formed through the practices of repeated interaction between international actors. In the context of the Crusades, this theory allows us to understand how religious identities and norms formed during this period have become part of the social structures that influence the behavior of international actors to date.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with historical and discourse analysis to understand the complexity of the phenomenon being studied (Berg & Lune, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of historical meaning and context, while historical analysis is applied to understand the chronological development and causal relationships of events (Tosh, 2015). Critical discourse analysis is used to uncover the construction of meaning in texts and narratives, both in historical and contemporary documents (Fairclough, 2013; Van Dijk, 2015). The combination of these three approaches allows researchers to track the continuity and transformation of patterns of conflict and peace from historical to contemporary perspectives through comparative historical analysis (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003).

The research data source consists of primary and secondary documents collected through systematic literature studies in various libraries, museums, and digital archives (Hart, 2018). Primary sources include contemporary chronicles of the Crusades such as *Gesta Francorum*, Fulcher of Chartres' *Historia Hierosolymitana*, and William of Tyre, as well as peace treaties including the Treaty of Jaffa (1192) and diplomatic correspondence between Christian and Muslim leaders (Runciman, 1987; Tyerman, 2019). Contemporary sources include political speeches, diplomatic narratives, and foreign policy documents that use symbolism or references to the Crusades in the context of modern international relations (Jackson, 2005; Keohane & Nye, 2011). The data collection process was carried out in strategic locations such as the British Library, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Vatican Secret Archives, as well as digital collections from Cambridge University, Oxford University, and Dumbarton Oaks using systematic search and cross-reference search strategies.

The data analysis technique integrates three main methods to identify central themes and comprehensively understand the construction of meaning. Content analysis is applied systematically to identify and categorize

key themes based on the frequency of occurrence and repetitive narrative patterns (Krippendorff, 2019). Discourse analysis is used to understand the rhetorical structure, underlying ideology, and socio-political context of discourse formation in historical and contemporary documents. The coding process is carried out in three stages: open coding for the initial identification of themes and concepts, axial coding for the grouping of themes based on causal relationships, and selective coding for the development of an interpretive framework (Saldaña, 2021). Hermeneutic interpretive analysis is applied to understand the profound meaning and implications of findings in the context of international relations theory and historical studies (Geertz, 1973).

The validity and reliability of research are guaranteed through triangulation of sources and methods, expert consultation, and systematic researcher reflexivity (Denzin, 2017; Lincoln, Guba, & Pilotta, 1985). Source triangulation is done using diverse types of documents from different periods, while method triangulation combines historical, discourse, and comparative analysis for cross-validation of findings. Consultations with Crusader historians, international relations specialists, and Middle Eastern studies experts were conducted to validate the researchers' interpretation and analysis. The researcher's reflexivity is applied through documentation of initial assumptions, critical reflection on personal biases, and transparency in the interpretation process. The limitations of the research are recognized in terms of the availability of historical sources, perspective bias in ancient chronicles, and subjective elements in discourse interpretation, but are mitigated through the use of diverse sources and multiple validations to ensure the credibility and transferability of research findings.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Construction of Religious Identity in the Crusades

Analysis of historical documents of the Crusades shows that the construction of religious identity became a central factor in shaping the perceptions and behaviors of the actors involved. In the Christian context, the identity as a "warrior of Christ" (*milites Christi*) is constructed through narratives that emphasize the religious obligation to liberate the Holy Land from Muslim "colonization" (Riley-Smith, 2002). Pope Urban II in his speech at Clermont in 1095 used rhetoric that explicitly constructed Christian identity as at odds with Muslim identity, referring to Muslims as a "cursed race" and "enemies of God" (Fulcher of Chartres, 1127).

This construction of identity was not only defensive, but also productive in creating trans-national solidarity among the Christian kingdoms of Europe. An analysis of the Pope's letters and contemporary chronicles shows that the Crusades succeeded in creating a "European identity" that transcended traditional political boundaries (Bartlett, 1993). The concept of "Christianity" that developed during this period became the forerunner of the modern "European" concept that integrated religious, political, and cultural dimensions. Kristiono's (2017) analysis of the role of the Catholic Church in contemporary international relations shows how religious institutions can function as transnational actors influencing global political dynamics, which is an evolution of the role that religious institutions have played since the time of the Crusades.

On the other hand, the construction of Muslim identity also underwent a significant transformation in response to the Crusades. The concept of "jihad" which was previously more focused on spiritual and defensive aspects, developed into a more militant and offensive ideology (Bonner, 2006). Figures such as Nur al-Din and Saladin managed to mobilize support by constructing a Muslim identity as "defenders of Islam" in the face of "Christian aggressors" (Hillenbrand, 1999).

An interesting finding is that this construction of religious identity is not always absolute or permanent. Analysis of peace treaties and diplomatic correspondence shows that pragmatic identities often trump religious identities when political and economic interests call for them. For example, the alliance between Emperor Frederick II and Sultan al-Kamil in 1229 shows how diplomatic identity can transcend religious boundaries (Abulafia, 1988).

3.2 Conflict Mechanisms in the Crusades

An analysis of the patterns of conflict in the Crusades reveals some unique and complex mechanisms. First, conflicts do not only occur between Christians and Muslims, but also internally within each group. On the Christian side, there was intense competition between the various military orders, Crusader kingdoms, and commercial interests (Riley-Smith, 1999). These internal conflicts often weakened the Crusader's military and diplomatic effectiveness.

Second, the mobilization mechanism for the conflict shows significant innovation in terms of mass propaganda and communication. The use of church sermons, papal letters, and religious symbols such as the cross as signs of identification creates an effective communication system to mobilize mass support (Maier, 1994). The system of indulgences developed by the Catholic Church also shows how religious incentives can be used for political and military purposes.

Third, the military strategies developed during the Crusades reflected adaptation to local conditions and lessons learned from conflict experience. Analysis of various battles shows the evolution of tactics from direct confrontation to guerrilla warfare and more sophisticated siege strategies (France, 1994). The construction of castles and fortresses in the Holy Land also showed an attempt to create permanent territorial control.

Fourth, the economic dimension of conflict shows how the Crusades created a complex economic system of war. The financing of military expeditions through special taxes, the sale of indulgences, and contributions from various kingdoms created a new financial mechanism (Constable, 2001). The system also created economic opportunities for traders and bankers, especially from Italy, who played an important role in facilitating trade and the transfer of funds.

3.3 Peace and Diplomacy Mechanism

Although the Crusades are often seen as absolute conflicts, analysis shows that this period also produced innovative mechanisms of peace and diplomacy. First, the peace treaties reached during the Crusades demonstrated the development of sophisticated international law. The Treaty of Jaffa (1229) between Frederick II and al-Kamil, for example, not only regulated territorial divisions but also established the principles of freedom of religion and access to holy places (Powell, 1986).

Second, the trading system that developed during the Crusades created the economic interdependence that was often the basis for peace. Cities such as Acre, Tyre, and Antioch became trading centers connecting Europe with Asia, with merchants of various religious backgrounds working together in complex commercial networks (Jacoby, 2005). The funduq (han) system developed in port cities shows how commercial institutions can facilitate cross-cultural cooperation.

The practice of interfaith dialogue in Indonesian public diplomacy, as analyzed by Rakhmawati (2010), provides a contemporary example of how the interfaith diplomatic tradition that developed during the

Crusades can be reactivated for constructive purposes in modern international relations. Third, the intellectual and cultural exchanges that took place during the Crusades created effective soft diplomacy mechanisms. The translation of philosophical and scientific works from Arabic into Latin, the exchange of medical and technological practices, and the adaptation of architecture and art show how conflict can also be a medium for civilizational dialogue (Burnett, 2001).

Fourth, the evolving role of professional mediators and diplomats during this period indicates the institutionalization of diplomatic practices. Figures such as Patriarch Heraclius, who played an important role in the negotiations between Saladin and Richard the Lionheart, showed how non-state actors could facilitate conflict resolution (Edbury, 1991). Priyandita's (2019) study on the transformation of Sino-Indonesian relations from rivalry to strategic partnership shows how the construction of identity and interests can be transformed through sustainable diplomatic practices, in line with the findings of this study on the flexibility of religious identity during the Crusades when pragmatic interests demanded it.

3.4 The Rhetorical Legacy of Violence and Peace

An analysis of the use of Crusade symbolism and narrative in contemporary political discourse shows that the legacy of violent and peaceful rhetoric from this period continues to influence modern international relations. In the Western context, the rhetoric of "crusade" is often used to legitimize military intervention in the Middle East, by constructing the West's identity as a "defender of civilization" in the face of "barbarism" (Said, 1978).

President George W. Bush's use of the term "crusade" in the context of the "War on Terror" shows how historical symbolism can be activated for contemporary political purposes (Jackson, 2005). This rhetoric not only mobilizes domestic support but also creates a perception of the threat among Muslims who see it as a continuation of historical aggression.

On the other hand, Muslim groups also use the Crusade narrative to construct resistance identities and mobilize support. Organizations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS explicitly use symbolism and rhetoric that refer to the Crusades to legitimize their actions (Gerges, 2005). The use of the term "Crusaders" to refer to the West and "Saladin" as a model of leadership shows how historical heritage can be manipulated for ideological purposes.

However, the legacy of the Crusades also includes a tradition of peace and dialogue that can be activated for constructive goals. Interfaith dialogue initiatives that refer to historical examples of cooperation during the Crusades, such as those undertaken by Frederick II and al-Kamil, show the potential to build alternative narratives that are more conducive to peace (Tolan, 2002)

3.5 Impact on Contemporary International Relations

The findings of the study show that the legacy of the Crusades has been internalized in the cognitive and normative structures of the modern international system in a variety of ways. First, in the context of foreign policy, the construction of identity rooted in the Crusades continues to influence perceptions of threats and opportunities. An analysis of foreign policy documents shows how the "clash of civilizations" frame popularized by Huntington (1996) has deep historical roots in the Crusade experience.

Second, in the context of multilateral diplomacy, the legacy of the Crusades influenced the dynamics in international organizations. The formation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in response to

Western dominance in the international system reflects the continuity of the patterns of religious solidarity that developed during the Crusades (Piscatori, 1986).

Third, in the context of international economics, the principles of trade and cooperation developed during the Crusades continue to influence the patterns of contemporary economic relations. The concept of "Islamic banking" that developed as an alternative to the Western financial system can be seen as a continuation of the Islamic economic tradition that developed during the Crusade period (Kuran, 2004).

Fourth, in the context of international security, the patterns of conflict and cooperation that developed during the Crusades continue to influence contemporary security strategies. The concept of "preemptive war" used in the "War on Terror" has historical precedent in the ideology of the Crusades, while the concept of "peacekeeping" developed by the United Nations can be seen as an evolution of the mediation practices that developed during the period

4. CONCLUSION

This research successfully answers the four objectives set by showing that the Crusades (1095-1291) have shaped patterns of conflict and peace in international relations through the construction of complex religious identities. The identity construct of "milites Christi" versus "defenders of Islam" not only created prolonged polarization, but also resulted in innovative mechanisms of diplomacy as seen in the Treaty of Jaffa (1229) between Frederick II and al-Kamil. Research reveals that religious identity is dynamic and can transcend dogmatic boundaries when pragmatic interests demand it, while evolving mechanisms of conflict and peace include innovations in mass propaganda, the economic system of war, cross-cultural trade, and professional diplomacy. The rhetorical legacy of violence and peace from the Crusades is evidently internalized in the cognitive structures of contemporary international actors, as seen in the use of "crusade" symbolism in the War on Terror and the "jihad" response of Muslim groups.

The main findings of this study confirm the hypothesis that the legacy of the Crusades has shaped ideational structures that influence the interpretation and response of international actors to issues involving the religious dimension and identity of civilization. The theoretical significance of the research lies in the development of the concept of "civilizational memory" as a factor influencing perception and behavior in international relations, as well as the demonstration that the construction of identity is not always adversarial but can facilitate cross-cultural cooperation. Practically, this study provides an in-depth understanding of the historical roots of contemporary conflict patterns as seen in West-Middle Eastern relations, as well as identifying traditions of historical cooperation that can be activated to build peace. These findings are particularly relevant for understanding contemporary phenomena such as dynamics in international organizations (OICs), public diplomacy strategies, and inter-religious dialogue initiatives.

This research opens several directions for further investigation that can deepen our understanding of the relationship between historical heritage and the dynamics of contemporary international relations. First, comparative research on how the legacy of other historical religious conflicts (such as the Reconquista in Spain or the Ottoman expansion in Europe) affects contemporary international relations patterns can provide external validation of the theoretical framework developed. Second, a more in-depth empirical study of how civilizational memory is manipulated in social media and modern communication technologies can provide insight into the evolution of identity construction mechanisms in the digital age. Third, longitudinal research on the effectiveness of counter-narrative strategies and dialogue initiatives that use historical references can provide practical guidance for peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Fourth, a comparative foreign policy analysis between countries with Crusader heritage (such as France and Britain) versus countries with

experience as Crusaders targets (such as Turkey and Arab countries) can reveal how historical positioning influences contemporary foreign policy orientations.

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