

RELIGIOUS TIME AND SYMBOLIC HEGEMONY: AN ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL HOLIDAY POLICY IN INDONESIA



Muhammad Nasir*¹, Dwi Wahyuni²

*Correspondence:

Email:

muhammadnasir@uinib.ac.id

Authors Affiliation:

^{1,2} Universitas Islam Negeri Imam
Bonjol Padang, Indonesia

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Abstract

This article examines the national holiday and collective leave policies in Indonesia as a practice of the religious time that reflects the relationship between the state, religion, and the formation of collective memory. Through a thematic content analysis of the Joint Decree of Three Ministers concerning National Holidays and Collective Leave for the 2020–2025 period, the article demonstrates that the regulation of public time is not merely an administrative instrument but also an arena of symbolic hegemonization representing the dominance of the majority religion. The study employs a qualitative approach based on document analysis, specifically Thematic Content Analysis to uncover patterns of representation, symbolic hierarchies, and the state's construction of religious time. Drawing on Maurice Halbwachs's perspective on collective memory, Murray Edelman's symbolic politics, and William E. Connolly's critique of state neutrality regarding religious representation, the study analyzes how the national calendar functions as a temporal artifact that determines which events are institutionalized as shared memory. Research findings indicate that the distribution of national holidays and collective leave days reveals a pattern of religious time dominance, particularly through the greater representation of majority religious celebrations. The article contributes to the study of state-religion relations by expanding the understanding of hegemony as a form of temporal control, specifically, how the state constructs legitimacy and collective identity through the regulation of social time. The study asserts that the national calendar is not merely an administrative list but a political space reflecting processes of inclusion, exclusion, and the negotiation of religious representation within a pluralistic society.

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji kebijakan hari libur nasional dan cuti bersama di Indonesia sebagai praktik politik waktu yang merefleksikan hubungan antara negara, agama, dan pembentukan memori kolektif. Melalui analisis isi tematik terhadap Keputusan Bersama Tiga Menteri tentang Hari Libur Nasional dan Cuti Bersama periode 2020–2025, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa pengaturan waktu publik tidak semata-mata merupakan instrumen administratif, tetapi juga menjadi arena hegemonisasi simbolik yang merepresentasikan dominasi agama mayoritas. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis analisis dokumen dengan teknik Thematic Content Analysis terhadap kebijakan hari libur nasional dan cuti bersama tahun 2020–2025 untuk mengungkap pola representasi, hierarki simbolik, dan konstruksi waktu religius oleh negara. Dengan menggunakan perspektif memori kolektif Maurice Halbwachs, politik simbolik Murray Edelman, dan kritik terhadap netralitas negara dalam representasi agama William E. Connolly, studi ini menganalisis bagaimana kalender nasional berfungsi sebagai artefak temporal yang menentukan peristiwa mana yang dilembagakan sebagai memori bersama. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa distribusi hari libur nasional dan cuti bersama memperlihatkan pola dominasi waktu religius, terutama melalui representasi yang lebih besar terhadap perayaan agama mayoritas. Artikel ini berkontribusi pada kajian relasi negara dan agama dengan memperluas pemahaman tentang hegemoni sebagai bentuk penguasaan temporal, yaitu bagaimana negara membangun legitimasi dan identitas kolektif melalui pengaturan waktu sosial. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa kalender nasional bukan sekadar daftar administratif, melainkan ruang politik yang merefleksikan proses inklusi, eksklusi, dan negosiasi representasi keagamaan dalam masyarakat plural.

INTRODUCTION

The predominance of religious holidays and collective leave associated with major religious observances in Indonesia demonstrates that the state pursues a deliberate policy toward religious communities while simultaneously revealing the ideological foundations through which it organizes the social time of its citizens. The incorporation of religious observances into the official national calendar reflects the state's active role in structuring social time, determining which occasions merit collective remembrance, and regulating the rhythm of public life within a normative framework imbued with cultural and moral values. Through this policy, the state not only acknowledges Indonesia's religious diversity but also actively participates in allocating spaces for religious memory within the collective life of its citizens.

An analysis of the Joint Ministerial Decrees (Surat Keputusan Bersama, SKB) issued by the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Minister of Manpower, and the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform during the 2020–2025 period reveals a consistent pattern in the designation of national public holidays and collective leave. Throughout this period, the state consistently allocated between 11 and 12 national holidays to religious observances out of a total of 15–16 public holidays each year, representing approximately 69–75 percent of the annual holiday calendar. In contrast, secular commemorations—including New Year's Day, International Workers' Day, and Independence Day—received only three to four public holidays annually. The persistence of this pattern over five consecutive years suggests that the designation of religious holidays is not merely a temporary administrative arrangement but rather an institutional mechanism that reflects the state's long-term priorities in organizing and sustaining national collective memory.

A similar pattern is evident in the designation of collective leave (*cuti bersama*). Between 2020 and 2024, all officially designated collective leave days—ranging from four to eight days annually—were allocated exclusively to religious observances, accounting for 100 percent of the total. This complete segregation between the religious calendar and the secular national calendar within the collective leave policy became an established institutional pattern over five consecutive years. Only in 2025 did a notable exception emerge, when Indonesia's Independence Day was included as a collective leave occasion. This development suggests that, although the institutional structure has exhibited remarkable stability, it is not entirely rigid but remains responsive to evolving political and administrative considerations while preserving the predominance of religious observances within the collective leave framework.

The representation of religious holidays in Indonesia's official calendar reflects both the country's plural religious landscape and the state's recognition of only six officially acknowledged religions. Although the Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB) formally accommodates Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, their representation within the national calendar reveals a clear hierarchy (Budiwanti, 2018). Islamic religious observances, particularly Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, occupy the most prominent position within the national holiday calendar as permanent public holidays. Among these, Eid al-Fitr receives the greatest institutional emphasis, consistently accompanied by an additional three to four days of collective leave each year, thereby extending its official commemoration beyond that of any other religious observance (Yaqin & Khasna, 2024). Christian and Catholic observances, including Christmas, Good Friday, and the Ascension of Jesus Christ, are

recognized as national public holidays, although they receive fewer designated days than Islamic holidays and are not accompanied by additional collective leave. Hindu observances, particularly Nyepi and related rituals, likewise receive considerable recognition for a minority religion, both as religious celebrations and as part of the commercialization and commodification of Balinese culture for tourism purposes (Narottama, 2016).

By contrast, Vesak for Buddhists receives recognition only as a single national public holiday, without any additional collective leave. Confucianism, although officially recognized, is virtually absent from the national calendar. Neither national public holidays nor collective leave are allocated to Confucian religious observances. This hierarchy of representation reflects what may be described as codified demographic representation, whereby the state formally recognizes religious diversity while, in practice, allocating public memory space in proportion to the demographic size of religious communities and their historical prominence within the national order.

This issue, however, extends far beyond the simple question of which religious holidays are officially recognized. A review of previous scholarship indicates that several studies have examined the technical and historical dimensions of Indonesia's calendar system, particularly the state's role in regulating it. Most of this literature focuses on the astronomical aspects of the Islamic calendar, especially the state's involvement in determining the beginning of Ramadan and the celebration of Eid al-Fitr. For example, previous research has analyzed ministerial decisions issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs from the perspectives of human rights and citizens' obligations in promoting the unity of Muslims in Indonesia (Hidayat & Izomiddin, 2019). Similarly, previous studies have examined the contestation of religious authority between Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah in determining the beginning of Ramadan in Indonesia, highlighting its broader public implications. In response to these differences, the government has taken the initiative to mediate between the two Islamic organizations in order to achieve methodological consensus and minimize social tensions (Ridwan & Zain, 2021). While these studies relate religious calendar policy to hegemonic structures of representation in the governance of religious time, their analyses remain confined to the internal dynamics of a single religion, namely Islam.

At the conceptual level, the notion of civil religion has also been employed to explain how the state governs religious communities, as reflected in the works of Robert N. Bellah (2005), Robert Wuthnow (2011), and Eviatar Zerubavel (1981) on temporal solidarity. However, these frameworks have rarely been applied to examine how the state shapes collective temporal rhythms through the distribution of public holidays. A more directly relevant contribution is that of Francis E. Peters (1994), who highlights the role of time in the religious practices of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Nevertheless, Peters does not extend his analysis to a systematic examination of state regulation of religious time across the religious traditions he discusses.

The designation of religious public holidays cannot be understood merely as an administrative response to pre-existing social needs. Rather, it represents a process of institutionalizing religious memory, whereby religious occasions are formally embedded within the official and public system of collective memory. This interpretation is consistent with Maurice Halbwachs' argument that collective memory does not emerge spontaneously but is shaped by social institutions possessing symbolic authority – in this case, the state – to

determine what deserves to be collectively remembered (Halbwachs, 1992b; Olick, 2007). Through the Joint Ministerial Decree of the Three Ministers (SKB), the Indonesian state incorporates religious observances into the national consciousness by formally legitimizing them through bureaucratic procedures and disseminating them via the official calendar. In doing so, the state assumes an active role in defining which religious occasions deserve collective national recognition, including for citizens who do not adhere to a particular religion. This process provides institutional space for religious communities to express their spiritual identities within public time, yet only within boundaries established by the state and according to a hierarchy that is far from neutral.

Nevertheless, this policy is not free from the politics of representation. As Connolly (1999) argues, even within a secular political system, the state is never entirely neutral toward religion. The selection of religious holidays for inclusion in the national calendar reflects particular preferences and political negotiations underlying the policy-making process (Connolly, 1999, p.10-20). In Indonesia, the distribution of public holidays and collective leave remains, in practice, dominated by religions that have historically possessed large numbers of adherents or occupied dominant positions within the state's institutional structure.

The symbolic political dimensions of this policy can be interpreted through M Lance Bennet and Murray Edelman's theory of symbolic politics (1985). Edelman argues that public policies are often designed not primarily to resolve substantive problems but to generate perceptions of representation, order, and legitimacy (Bennett & Edelman, 1985). By allocating public holidays and collective leave to religious observances, the state signals its recognition of citizens' spiritual needs while simultaneously reinforcing a national identity that is both plural and religious. In practice, however, this policy also has the potential to produce a new form of symbolic hegemony, whereby demographically dominant religions occupy a more prominent place in collective memory than minority faiths. Through the consistent selection of particular religious observances for official recognition, the hierarchical allocation of public holidays, and the exclusion of certain religious traditions, the state implicitly redefines who is fully recognized within a religiously diverse society. Those whose religious observances are incorporated into the official calendar enjoy a privileged status—not merely in terms of time away from work, but also through the symbolic affirmation of their identities as members of the national imagined community envisioned by the state.

The changes introduced in 2025, including the addition of public holidays for Christian observances (Good Friday and the Ascension of Jesus Christ) and the inclusion of Independence Day within the collective leave schedule, suggest that the structure of dominance is not entirely rigid. These adjustments indicate processes of negotiation and pressure from specific social actors, even though the overall representational hierarchy remains largely intact. This development opens analytical space to examine how the state, mainstream religious organizations, and minority religious groups interact in shaping the national calendar, as well as the extent to which each can influence policy outcomes within a system of symbolic governance.

Accordingly, the Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB) on public holidays and collective leave should be understood not merely as an administrative instrument, but as a political and cultural artifact that constructs public time and organizes collective memory. The allocation of symbolic recognition to certain religious observances, while limiting or excluding others,

reflects a nation-building project that produces a plural yet hierarchical form of national consciousness. This study therefore asks how the state participates in framing and normalizing religious observances as collective memory, and how representational bias, symbolic strategy, and bureaucratic logic interact in the institutionalization of religious time.

This study employs a qualitative approach using document analysis to examine how the Indonesian state frames religious memory through policies governing national public holidays and collective leave. This approach was selected because the primary objective is to interpret the symbolic meanings and representational structures embedded in public policy rather than to measure its quantitative effects (Bowen, 2009).

The primary data consist of the Joint Ministerial Decrees (Surat Keputusan Bersama, SKB) issued by the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Minister of Manpower, and the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform of the Republic of Indonesia from 2020 to 2025. This study explicitly confines its analysis to the official SKB documents because other potentially relevant sources—such as press releases, official statements, and accompanying policy documents—were not accessible to the researcher. By acknowledging this limitation from the outset, the study avoids claiming a comprehensive understanding of the policy-making process and instead focuses on what can be systematically interpreted from the policy texts themselves.

The SKB documents for the 2020–2025 period were analyzed using thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) through a three-stage coding procedure. First, descriptive coding was applied to extract factual information from each document, including the number of national holidays and collective leave days, lists of religious and secular holidays, and their distribution across religious traditions. These data were organized into comparative tables to enable cross-year analysis. Second, thematic coding was conducted to identify recurring patterns such as differential religious representation, the separation of religious and secular calendars, continuity and change in holiday allocation, and emerging inconsistencies or exceptions. Third, interpretive coding was used to relate these themes to the study's theoretical framework. To ensure analytical rigor, the documents were repeatedly reviewed, and interpretive ambiguities were systematically recorded for reflection.

This study acknowledges several limitations. It is restricted to official SKB documents and excludes internal policy deliberations, governmental archives, and direct empirical data on public responses. As such, it does not reconstruct the full policy-making process, and any inference about negotiation dynamics is based only on indirect evidence, particularly changes in the 2025 allocation. Likewise, it does not analyze societal perceptions due to the absence of surveys, interviews, or comprehensive media datasets. The study therefore focuses exclusively on identifying patterns of religious representation in official documents and interpreting them as expressions of how the state institutionalizes and organizes public memory.

The analysis draws upon three complementary theoretical frameworks. Maurice Halbwachs's theory of collective memory conceptualizes the designation of religious holidays as a process of institutionalizing memory, whereby religious occasions become embedded within the official system of collective remembrance (Halbwachs, 1992a). Murray Edelman's theory of symbolic politics explains how the SKB functions as an instrument of symbolic legitimacy, projecting state concern for citizens' spiritual needs while simultaneously producing a hierarchy of religious legitimacy through selective recognition (Bennett &

Edelman, 1985). Finally, William E. Connolly's perspective on the state's non-neutrality toward religion demonstrates that, although Indonesia is formally secular, the state actively determines which religions are recognized and how they are represented within the national public sphere (Connolly, 1999). Together, these frameworks operate at the level of symbolism and representation, enabling the SKB to be interpreted not merely as an administrative document but as a text of power that reveals how the state organizes collective consciousness and constructs hierarchies of religious legitimacy.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts an interpretive approach to policy texts, drawing on three complementary theoretical frameworks: collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992a), symbolic politics (Bennett & Edelman, 1985; Edelman, 1971), and the state's representation of religion (Connolly, 1999). These perspectives were selected because they provide a coherent conceptual basis for understanding how the state constructs and frames religious observances within the official temporal order as part of a broader strategy for managing collective identity and distributing symbolic power.

First, Maurice Halbwachs's theory of collective memory argues that memory does not exist independently of social structures but is sustained through what he termed the social frameworks of memory (*cadres sociaux de la mémoire*). As Halbwachs contends, "there is no memory without the social groups that sustain it" (Halbwachs, 1992a). In the context of the modern state, public institutions function as the dominant framework through which collective memory is shaped, filtered, and institutionalized. By designating national religious holidays, the state actively determines which religious occasions deserve collective remembrance and public celebration. The institutionalization of religious holidays thus represents a concrete form of archiving collective memory, with the official calendar serving as a mechanism for preserving and disseminating dominant memories. At the same time, Halbwachs emphasizes that collective memory is inherently selective rather than comprehensive. Consequently, religious groups lacking access to institutional decision-making processes risk symbolic exclusion from official memory, with broader implications for their social and political recognition within the public sphere.

In this regard, the institutionalization of religious public holidays constitutes a concrete form of archiving collective memory, with the official calendar functioning as a mechanism for preserving and transmitting dominant memories. Halbwachs further argues that collective memory is inherently selective rather than comprehensive; not all memories can be accommodated within official frameworks. Consequently, groups excluded from institutional decision-making processes face the risk of symbolic erasure, with significant implications for their social and political recognition in the public sphere.

Second, Murray Edelman argues that public policy often serves less to resolve substantive problems than to shape public perceptions through symbols and narratives. From this perspective, the significance of government action lies not only in the distribution of material benefits but also in the meanings it conveys (Edelman, 1971). Religious holiday policy therefore functions as a symbolic mechanism through which the state communicates who is recognized, which values are honored, and what forms of religious identity receive official legitimacy. Religious public holidays may thus be understood as performative expressions of

the state, projecting concern, tolerance, and inclusiveness. Yet, as Edelman emphasizes, political symbols are frequently ambiguous and may create an appearance of inclusion while preserving unequal structures of representation (Edelman, 1971). Within the Indonesian context, the unequal allocation of collective leave across religious traditions illustrates this dynamic: while the policy rhetorically affirms religious pluralism, it simultaneously reproduces structural hierarchies. Edelman's concept of symbolic concession is equally relevant. Limited recognition of minority observances, such as Nyepi and Vesak, without comparable collective leave may be interpreted as a symbolic accommodation that falls short of substantive representational equality.

Although Indonesia is not a strictly secular state, the question of state neutrality remains analytically important. William E. Connolly's perspective is not only a critique of secular liberalism but also a broader argument that state neutrality is itself a political myth. He contends that all states, regardless of their constitutional arrangements with religion, structure public space and public time in ways that privilege certain ways of life over others (Connolly, 1999). In the Indonesian context, this implies that although the state formally recognizes multiple religions, it also determines which religions gain access to official representational arenas such as the national calendar, the extent of symbolic space they receive, and how such recognition is operationalized. State recognition of religion is therefore never fully neutral but instead produces hierarchies of symbolic legitimacy among religious traditions.

Together, Halbwachs, Edelman, and Connolly provide an integrated framework for understanding how the state organizes religious memory and distributes symbolic legitimacy through the national calendar. Halbwachs explains the social construction of collective memory, Edelman highlights the political meanings embedded in policy symbols, and Connolly reveals the persistence of unequal representation beneath claims of neutrality. Within this framework, the SKB is not merely an administrative regulation but a symbolic act through which the state archives dominant values, structures temporal rhythms, and constructs hierarchies of religious legitimacy. The national holiday calendar thus functions as an ideological text continuously produced and reaffirmed through state policy.

NATIONAL PUBLIC HOLIDAYS AS COLLECTIVE TEMPORAL SUSPENSION

Presidential Decree No. 8 of 2024 on Public Holidays (Keputusan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 8 Tahun 2024 Tentang Hari-Hari Libur, 2024) does not provide an explicit definition of the term national public holiday. Instead, it specifies the list of holidays observed nationwide, encompassing both religious and state commemorations. Article One, for example, designates holidays including New Year's Day, Isra Mi'raj of the Prophet Muhammad, Eid al-Fitr, Indonesia's Independence Day, and Christmas. Although the decree does not formally define the concept, it implicitly identifies national public holidays as officially designated non-working days that apply uniformly to all Indonesian citizens. These holidays commemorate significant religious and national events and are observed simultaneously throughout the country.

National public holidays, however, represent more than temporary interruptions of economic activity. They function as moments of collective temporal suspension that reinforce shared historical, cultural, and spiritual narratives. From the perspective of collective memory theory, public holidays constitute an institutional mechanism through which the state

selectively determines which events deserve collective remembrance (Halbwachs, 1992b). As such, they play a significant role in shaping national identity by structuring the temporal framework within which collective memory is produced, maintained, and reproduced.

Collective leave (*cuti bersama*), by contrast, is an administrative policy instrument designed to extend selected public holidays for reasons of bureaucratic efficiency and social necessity. In the Joint Ministerial Decree No. 1017/2/2 of 2024 on National Holidays and Collective Leave for 2025 (SKB 3 Menteri Keputusan Bersama 3 Menteri Nomor 1017, 2, Dan 2 Tahun 2024 Tentang Hari Libur Nasional Dan Cuti Bersama Tahun 2025, 2024) the government designates ten days of collective leave, all of which are linked to religious holidays such as Eid al-Fitr, Christmas, and Imlek Chinese New Year (Joint Ministerial Decree No. 1017/2/2 of 2024 on National Holidays and Collective Leave for 2025, 2024). This policy is explicitly justified as a means to promote domestic economic activity, ensure smooth mobility, and provide sufficient time for citizens to engage in religious observance, social visits, and family-related activities. In practice, collective leave operates as a mechanism that aligns citizens' spiritual and social needs with bureaucratic efficiency. It produces structured periods of temporal suspension that not only serve ritual purposes but also strengthen social networks across communities and regions. From Murray Edelman's perspective (1985), such policies function as affirmative symbolic gestures, communicating the state's concern for balancing spiritual life and administrative demands while simultaneously reinforcing its legitimacy as an inclusive governing authority.

Collective downtime is understood as the combination of national public holidays and collective leave formally authorized by the state. From Eviatar Zerubavel's perspective, collective downtime can be defined as "institutionalized periods socially designated to suspend routine activities simultaneously in order to create a shared rhythm of life that enables temporal solidarity" (Zerubavel, 1981). In *Hidden Rhythms: Schedules and Calendars in Social Life*, Zerubavel explains how time in society is socially constructed, standardized, and regulated by institutions through temporal regularity and temporal solidarity, which are subsequently embedded in calendars.

Thus, calendars and schedules function as mechanisms for synchronizing the social rhythms of life and fostering a sense of temporal solidarity (Zerubavel, 1981). In this sense, when the state designates national holidays or collective leave, it produces mass synchronization of rest time, making "downtime" a cohesive social practice – this is what is conceptually meant by collective downtime. Such time does not merely reflect the need for rest, but also serves as a symbolic marker distinguishing ordinary days from special periods imbued with cultural and spiritual meaning (Zerubavel, 1981).

This time functions not merely as a technical break from routine activity but as a symbolic moment shaping collective experience across spiritual (religious worship and reflection), social (family gatherings and mobility), and administrative (coordination of public services) dimensions. As Eviatar Zerubavel argues, time in modern societies is socially constructed by institutions – especially the state – to determine "when to stop, when to celebrate, and when to remember together" (Zerubavel, 1981). Collective downtime thus becomes a symbolic arena where the state organizes not only work and rest but also collective memory and national cohesion. In Indonesia, public holiday and collective leave policies under the Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB) of the Three Ministers produce a multilayered downtime that enables religious

observance, social interaction, and administrative synchronization (Joint Ministerial Decree No. 1017/2/2 of 2024 on National Holidays and Collective Leave for 2025, 2024), positioning the state as the regulator of national temporal rhythms and rendering holiday policy an expression of civic ideology that affirms majority religious identities while negotiating limited symbolic space for minorities.

STATE RECOGNITION OF CITIZENS' SPIRITUAL SPACE AND TRADITIONS

This thematic reading of the Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB) of the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Minister of Manpower, and the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform No. 1017/2/2 of 2024 employs Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018). This approach enables the identification of key representational themes within policy documents, particularly how the state organizes citizens' social time through the distribution of national holidays and collective leave based on religious, secular, and symbolic-political categories. Based on the official table presented in the decree, holidays and collective leave are divided into two main categories: National Public Holidays 2025 and Collective Leave 2025. Each category specifies dates formally recognized by the state as collective downtime for all citizens across spiritual, social, and administrative dimensions. However, this categorization is not merely technical; it also reflects how the state structures collective remembrance of religious and national events through an official temporal framework.

To examine more deeply how both categories of time—national holidays and collective leave—function as symbolic instruments embedded with the politics of religious representation, this study employs Thematic Content Analysis to identify patterns of dominant religious representation, the administrative rationales underpinning policy decisions, and the implicit symbolic messages encoded in the distribution of official time. The findings are presented in the following table:

Table 1. National Public Holidays in 2025

No.	Date	Day	Description
1.	1 January	Wednesday	New Year's Day 2025
2.	27 January	Monday	The Isra and Mi'raj of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)
3.	29 January	Wednesday	Chinese New Year 2576 Kongzili
4.	29 March	Saturday	Nyepi Day (Saka New Year 1947)
5.	31 March – 1 April	Monday – Tuesday	Eid al-Fitr 1446 Hijri
6.	18 April	Friday	Good Friday
7.	20 April	Sunday	Easter Sunday (Resurrection of Jesus Christ)
8.	1 May	Thursday	International Workers' Day
9.	12 May	Monday	Vesak Day 2569 BE
10.	29 May	Thursday	Ascension of Jesus Christ
11.	1 June	Sunday	Pancasila Day
12.	6 June	Friday	Eid al-Adha 1446 Hijri
13.	27 June	Friday	Islamic New Year 1447 Hijri

14.	17 August	Sunday	Independence Day
15.	5 September	Friday	The Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (PBUH)
16.	25 December	Thursday	Christmas Day

Source: Adapted from the 2024 Joint Ministerial Decree (Decree of Three Ministers), Appendix A.

Table 2. Distribution of National Holidays in 2025

Category	Number of Days	Percentage (%)
Religious holidays	13	81,25%
Secular / State / Neutral Holidays	3	18,75%
Total National Holidays	16	100%

Source: Based on Appendix A of the 2024 Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB 3 Ministers)

From table 1 and 2 of the Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB 3 Ministers), it can be summarized that all 10 collective leave days are rooted in religious holidays, namely: Chinese New Year (1 day), Nyepi (1 day), Eid al-Fitr (4 days), Vesak Day (1 day), Ascension of Jesus Christ (1 day), Eid al-Adha (1 day), and Christmas (1 day). This demonstrates that 100% of collective leave is oriented toward religious occasions, reinforcing the dominance of a religious framework in the state's regulation of social time.

The table and its explanation can be used as an initial coding sheet or analytical matrix in the thematic analysis stage to construct an academic narrative on how the state represents religion and organizes collective memory through public time policy. The findings do not merely stop at identifying the proportion of holidays; they open up a broader interpretation of the state as a symbolic agent of representation through temporal governance, and how such processes may produce hierarchies of visibility among religious communities.

RELIGIOUS TEMPORAL HEGEMONY AND THE POLITICS OF INSTITUTIONALIZING RELIGIOUS MEMORY

The thematic interpretation confirms that the policy on national holidays and collective leave functions as an instrument of state hegemony in regulating religious time and institutionalizing the memory of officially recognized religions. It operates not only as a tool of temporal administration but also as a site of symbolic domination, where the state actively organizes and frames collective meanings through the regulation of public rhythms. The holiday calendar is therefore not merely an administrative document, but a representational structure of the state that shapes social cohesion and constructs hierarchies of intergroup relations based on visibility and symbolic recognition (Connolly, 1999).

Evidence of this hegemonic practice can be observed in contestations emerging in digital public spheres, particularly social media. The dominance of majority religious representation—especially Islam—in the national holiday calendar systematically produces a hegemonic configuration in which certain religious symbols, values, and celebrations are positioned at the center of national temporal consciousness. Meanwhile, Hindu communities are allocated only one public holiday (Nyepi), and Confucian communities likewise only one (Imlek), without proportionate collective leave allocations, thereby symbolically subordinating their religious practices into the category of the “cultural” rather than the “national.” In a multireligious society such as Indonesia, the selection of which religious holidays are officially recognized, and which are not, constitutes a political act that reflects the

tension between symbolic recognition and implicit cultural erasure embedded in the state's organization of time.

One important arena in which this contestation unfolds is social media, which has increasingly become an active and open discursive space. Social media enables citizens from diverse backgrounds to articulate criticism, resistance, and alternative narratives against forms of state-imposed temporal hegemony. On platforms such as Reddit, X, and Instagram, minority communities frequently voice concerns regarding symbolic invisibility resulting from the dominance of majority religious narratives in the official calendar. For instance, in a discussion on Indonesian Reddit, a user critiques the use of the term "Isa Almasih" in naming Christian holidays: "It should be like that. These holidays are based on the Christian faith (birth, death, and ascension), but so far the names used are actually the Islamic versions, which don't really match". (Reddit_user_2022, 2022)

According to the user, the use of Islamic-derived terminology in the context of Christian celebrations illustrates how the state frames other religious observances through a majority-centric lens. This comment reflects resistance to symbolic homogenization and constitutes a form of counter-discourse against the state's hegemonic representational structure. The revision of religious holiday nomenclature, as stipulated in Presidential Decree No. 8 of 2024, indicates that the state responds to such symbolic pressures, albeit cautiously and within a framework of compromise (Keputusan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 8 Tahun 2024 Tentang Hari-Hari Libur, 2024).

From the perspective of symbolic politics as articulated by Edelman, symbols and public policies are never neutral. They are consistently designed to produce effects of representation, legitimation, or even the illusion of equality (Bennett & Edelman, 1985). In this context, social media functions as a mirror in which representational inequalities are reflected, contested, and resisted. Through digital platforms, society not only critiques policy but also generates alternative forms of memory that are not accommodated within the official calendar: local sacred days, indigenous traditions, or non-mainstream minority rituals. This constitutes a form of resistance against the hegemonization of time, whereby the state symbolically determines who is worthy of collective remembrance and who is rendered invisible or forgotten.

Thus, the struggle over representation in the national holiday calendar does not remain confined to bureaucratic arenas or formal texts such as the Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB 3 Ministers). It extends into digital public spaces as a site of symbolic contestation, where the state's symbolic hegemony is met with critique, parody, and counter-narratives. Even when forms of symbolic inclusion for minority groups are present, they are often selective and limited in scale, functioning as symbolic concessions (Bennett & Edelman, 1985) that may soften criticism but do not fundamentally alter the dominant representational structure.

The unequal distribution of religious holidays also generates economic and social implications. The extended Eid al-Fitr holiday encourages large-scale homecoming movements and increased consumption activities, producing economic benefits in regions of origin with predominantly Muslim populations (Hendriyani, 2024), whereas major holidays of minority groups do not exert comparable effects. Even when Christmas leave is granted, its economic impact is more concentrated in specific areas such as Java or major urban centers (Sasikirono & Meidiaswati, 2017). This disparity is not merely a matter of efficiency but rather reflects the uneven construction of collective experience within the national space.

THE HEGEMONIZATION OF RELIGIOUS TIME

Overall, the analysis above demonstrates that the national holiday and collective leave calendar functions as an important instrument in the practice of religious time hegemonization in Indonesia. The state constructs the temporal architecture of society through policies that, on the one hand, appear inclusive, yet on the other hand reinforce the symbolic dominance of the majority. This raises an important question regarding how the distribution of time, which appears administrative in nature, in fact contains dimensions of symbolic power that affect equality, representation, and social cohesion in a plural society.

First, the allocation of extended collective leave for religious celebrations – four days for Eid al-Fitr and one day for Christmas – affects social and economic mobility. The long Eid al-Fitr holiday, for instance, stimulates large-scale homecoming flows that generate economic activity in regions of origin, but also create logistical challenges in transportation and infrastructure burdens (Zerubavel, 1981). Similarly, Christmas leave provides recreational time for families but concentrates tourism consumption in Java and major cities, while minority regions or areas without significant religious celebrations do not experience equivalent economic benefits. Thus, national holidays and collective leave can be read from two perspectives: on the one hand, as an accommodation of religious time and citizens' leisure time; on the other hand, as an expression of state symbolic power in structuring these temporalities and their consequences, as well as a test case of the extent to which state authority is capable of governing and sustaining such temporal arrangements.

Second, symbolic legitimacy derived from the recognition of public holidays can function as an instrument of political stabilization. The provision of symbolic "concessions" to minority religions, albeit minimal, serves to mitigate criticism regarding representational inequality. Bennett & Edelman (1985) refer to this as a "symbolic concession," whereby governments project an image of inclusivity without altering underlying structures of domination. Consequently, such holiday policies may obscure deeper inequalities of representation, reinforce the majority's status quo interests, and hinder the pursuit of symbolic justice for all religious groups.

Third, the distribution of holidays based on religion shapes perceptions of equality and tolerance. Within Indonesia's religious democracy, a calendar perceived as "unequal" may undermine mutual respect if minority groups feel that their sacred days are insufficiently recognized by the state. For example, a social media post by user (@Nclaaave, 2023) on X states: "The Eid holiday can last a week, but Vesak, Chinese New Year, and Nyepi? Just one day and then it is over. If pluralism is truly upheld, why is it not balanced?" Such perceptions may generate cultural resistance or alternative practices, such as internally organized celebrations without official status, which in turn may weaken narratives of national cohesion (Halbwachs, 1992b). In this sense, the state's governance of religious time also becomes a test of its capacity to ensure equality and tolerance among citizens of different religious backgrounds.

Fourth, the expansion of collective leave also has implications for bureaucracy and labor rights. The reduction of annual leave entitlements to accommodate collective holidays, as stipulated in the Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB), places a burden on workers who may experience reduced flexibility for other personal needs. In the private sector, implementation is left to the discretion of individual employers, creating uncertainty for employees outside public institutions and leaving a gap of sectoral inequality in enforcement. One illustration of

this issue is expressed by Kirana, a food and beverage sector worker cited in detik.com. She states: “When you calculate it, collective leave only benefits a small group. Government institutions and state-owned enterprises can take full holidays. Us? We have to carefully count our days” (detik.com / Prasetya, 2025). This indicates that symbolic power over religious time does not only target citizens through religious identity categories but also operates through categories but distinctions – contrasting civil servants with private-sector and informal workers. Additional dimensions, such as holiday allowances and bonuses, further complicate this inequality. From this perspective, questions of justice and equal access to holiday-related economic benefits become a serious challenge in the governance of religious time among citizens.

Overall, this discussion of social implications reinforces that the national holiday and collective leave calendar reflects a form of symbolic policy with tangible consequences for social solidarity, representational justice, and economic dynamics. By engaging more deeply with its theoretical foundations, these findings raise critical questions about how such policies might be further developed to better account for symbolic balance, inclusivity, and the equitable distribution of socio-economic benefits.

Within collective memory theory, Halbwachs (1992b) argues that memory is not spontaneous but socially constructed within frameworks that sustain remembrance. The state, as a dominant institution, functions as an archivist and curator of collective memory by selecting which events are legitimized as worthy of public remembrance. Through the institutionalization of religious holidays in the official calendar, it performs what Halbwachs terms the archiving of memory, ensuring that only institutionally supported events persist as shared collective remembrance. Religious holidays thus serve as temporal anchors that structure collective memory while reinforcing national cultural and spiritual identity. However, Halbwachs also stresses that collective memory is a site of conflict, shaped by hegemonic power relations. In Indonesia’s national calendar, the dominance of the majority religion, particularly Islam, effectively structures and “capitalizes” collective memory, while minority groups are left with fragmented memories or develop counter-narratives of marginalization that form alternative collective memories.

Edelman (1985) argues that symbolic politics involves constructing frameworks of meaning that shape how people interpret social reality. Public symbols, including official holidays, function not to resolve substantive problems but to produce perceptions of legitimacy and consensus. By designating major religious holidays and accompanying collective leave, the state constructs an illusion of inclusivity, even when distributional patterns reveal underlying bias. As Edelman notes, symbols do not merely reflect reality but actively shape it. Connolly (1999) further reminds us that even in self-declared secular states, religious symbolism is unavoidable, as secularism itself is a political value that positions religion within public space. The state is never fully neutral, since its symbolic policies embed historical and demographic preferences. Indonesia’s national calendar, with its emphasis on Islamic holidays, illustrates how state secularism can privilege one religious tradition as the normative framework of collective memory while subordinating others to a logic of symbolic dominance.

Thus, the 2025 Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB 3 Ministers) on National Holidays and Collective Leave is not merely a technocratic product, but an arena where “symbolic politics”

and “memory archiving” converge. The state seeks to maintain pluralism through the recognition of holidays from various religions, yet in practice it employs selective strategies that reinforce the dominant position of the majority religion, reflecting the hegemonic models discussed by Halbwachs, Edelman, and Connolly. The calendar, as a result of symbolic negotiation, encapsulates what is deemed worthy of collective remembrance and, implicitly, what can be ignored (Angenot, 1988, 2004). The state not only regulates the distribution of holidays but also actively affirms the religious identity of the majority through the repetitive representation embedded in the national calendar. This process constructs the perception that the values and celebrations of the majority religion constitute the official identity of the Indonesian nation.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Indonesia’s national holiday and collective leave policy functions not only as an administrative instrument but also as a mechanism for constructing collective memory and regulating public time. The main finding indicates a pattern of religious temporal dominance, particularly associated with Islam, whereby the state calendar reproduces specific symbolic hierarchies. Although the 2025 revision introduced additional recognition of other religious and national holidays, the underlying structure of dominance remains largely unchanged.

Theoretically, this research extends the study of hegemony through the concept of temporal hegemony, showing how the state uses time regulation to construct identity, legitimacy, and social consensus. By integrating collective memory theory, symbolic politics, and state neutrality, the study demonstrates that the national calendar is a political arena shaped by power relations and symbolic inclusion and exclusion. However, the study is limited by its reliance on official documents and limited social media data, without broader empirical insight into policymaking processes or minority experiences. Future research should adopt multi-method approaches, including interviews, historical analysis, public surveys, and socio-economic impact studies, to better understand how public time is negotiated in plural societies and how more inclusive policies can be developed.

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