Heterogeneity, politics of ethnicity, and multiculturalism

What is a viable framework for Indonesia?

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia is a plural society that consists of several hundred ethnic and sub-ethnic groups. One of its generic characteristics is heterogeneity. In the last ten years after the implementation of regional autonomy, we have witnessed the emergence of strong ethnic and religiously flavoured local identity politics in various places in Indonesia that created open and vicious conflicts. This periodical violence exploded especially during the election of district and provincial heads. The intimate relation multiculturalism, with the actual political praxis of everyday life as an alternative to the existing paradigm of the "homogenization" of nationhood, has not been discussed. I believe it is time to discuss the strategic junctures between heterogeneity, politics of ethnicity (and religion) and multiculturalism as well as their possible realization at the local and national levels in order to find a viable framework for a future Indonesia.

KEYWORDS

Heterogeneity, regional autonomy, identity politics, ethnicity, religion, domination, conflict, multiculturalism, hybrid, and policy framework.

INTRODUCTION

In various places in Indonesia over the last ten years after the implementation of regional autonomy (Law No.22/1999 and No.32/2000), we witnessed the emergence of local identity politics that had a strong ethnic and religious flavour. This created open and violent conflicts at the community level that exploded from time to time. The clashes between Muslims and Christians in Maluku (1999/2001) and Poso (2001) are only two examples. Today we continue to hear that people purposely exploit ethnic and religious sentiments for political mobilization, particularly during the election of district and provincial heads, even though the intensity of this form of exploitation is now

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much less felt than in the beginning of the *Reformasi* era.

All this indicates that ethnic and religious issues remain important. Unfortunately, its significance has been undermined by a deeply seated fear that the regional rebellions of the 1950s -- which were based on ethnic and religious differences -- might be repeated. Instead of properly dealing with the issues, the government chooses to suppress them, as did the New Order regime, which prohibited public discussions on issues of SARA (*Suku, Agama, Ras dan Antar-golongan* or Ethnic Group, Religion, Race and Inter Group). As a result, the people were almost totally unaware of the potential threat these issues posed to national integration, until violent conflicts exploded in 1996/1997 -- such as the Dayak-Madurese and Malay-Madurese bloody clashes in Kalimantan -- which showed how big the problem really is. It rocked the foundations of peace the New Order regime was believed to have.

Indonesia is a plural society. The Census of the year 2000 registered more than 1000 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups, each group claiming to have its own language and culture. As such, heterogeneity is an inherent characteristic in Indonesia. However, the New Order government, chose not to consider heterogeneity and diversity as part of the nation's "natural" character; instead they continuously attempted to politically homogenize the people. One attempt among them was the decision to limit the number of political parties to three, namely Golkar (Golongan Karya - representing the working class), PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan with the *Ka'bah* as its symbol - representing Muslim groups) and PDI (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia - representing nationalists and democrats). By so doing, the government marginalized the overwhelming number of voices that could not be included in these categories.

Multiculturalism, as proposed at the end of the New Order's regime as an alternative to the existing "homogenization" paradigm to cultivating nationhood has not yet been discussed in close relation with the actual political praxis of everyday live. I believe it is now high time to investigate the strategic junctures between heterogeneity, politics of ethnicity (and religion), and multiculturalism and their possible implementation at the local and national levels in order to find a viable framework for the future Indonesia.

Heterogeneity and the politics of ethnicity

I believe that plurality is not the same as heterogeneity, although they both refer to a society that consists of a number of varying groups. Plurality is often used as the antonym of singularity, and in this sense, it emphasizes the importance of "numbers". This is exemplified in the statement that "Indonesia consists of more than 1000 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups". Heterogeneity (meaning: diversity) stresses the significance of variation, that is, "Indonesia consists of various ethnic groups, namely Sundanese, Javanese, Batak, Minangkabau, Buginese, Dayak, Papua, etcetera".

We often hear that "Indonesia is a plural society"[1], but we rarely talk about

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[1]   The edited volume of the writings of Ahmad Syafii Maarif, Martin Lukito Sinaga, Siti Musdah Mulia, Eric Hiariej, Afinawati, Budiman Sudjatmiko, Yayah Khisbiyah and Tonny D.

Indonesian society as heterogeneous. I believe heterogeneity is a useful concept in order to understand the relationship between groups that together construct Indonesian society, because the relationship is not only based on the size of the groups involved, but also by group variation. For example, when we say that there are several patterns of relationships between groups in a small Javanese town, for example Jepara, we should not relate it only to the number of ethnic groups living in the area (Javanese, Arabs, Chinese and others), but also to the group variation that exists amongst its population (Muslim Nahdlatul Ulama Javanese, Muslim Muhammadiyah Javanese, Muslim Arab Sayyids, Muslim Arab non-Sayyids, Christian Chinese, Buddhist Chinese, etcetera). Therefore, more types of relationships developed in that town than the actual number of ethnic groups, and these types are associated with the group variation.

Likewise, in Jakarta and other large cities we find a large number of ethnic groups living side by side. Almost all ethnic groups of Indonesia are represented in Jakarta, some with a few members, and others with large numbers. However, the types of relationships that developed are not only determined by the minority and majority division (such as Javanese majority versus Timorese minority), but also by how different ethnic groups within and across socio-economic categories develop their relationships with each other, and these categories may include class, educational level, economic status, etc. All these categories show how complicated so-called "social relationships" are.

For the sake of analysis, we may often simplify it, but that does not change the fact that our everyday lives are constructed by a web of interactions and relationships that vary in intensity and levels of intimacy. This variation is what constitutes the concept of heterogeneity as discussed in this section.

The concept of heterogeneity does not work as a "social tool" in itself, it becomes politically significant only when its various categories are used as boundary markers and a "moral and social limitation" for the relationships between members of different categories. The caste system in Bali may illustrate this situation clearly. The categories of Brahmana, Ksatria, Waisya, and Jaba indicate how each group differs from the others, and that the members of each category are separated, as well as limited by their category to develop

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Pariela compiled by Ihsan Ali-Fauzi and Samsu Rizal Panggabean (2010), for example, uses the word pluralism in its title: *Politik identitas dan masa depan pluralisme kita* (Politics of identity and the future of our pluralism). However, the understanding of the word itself varies. Syafii Maarif defines pluralism as *keragaman budaya* or "cultural diversity" (p. 19). Musdah Mulia uses the word to refer to *keanekaragaman suku dan agama* or the "plurality of ethnic groups and religions", which also means *kemajemukan* or "plurality", and this was strengthened by her statement that, "adalah sebuah keniscayaan bahwa tidak ada suatu masyarakat pun yang benar-benar tunggal, uniter (*unitary*), tanpa ada unsur-unsur perbedaan di dalamnya" (it is a certainty that no society is really single, unitary, without differences in itself) (p. 42). Yayah Khisbiyah (p. 81), and Tony Pariela (p. 95) also define pluralism as *kemajemukan* or "plurality". However, while Khisbiyah sees it as equivalent to multiculturalism (p. 89), Pariela associates it with Furnivall's theory of Indonesia as a "plural society" (p. 96), and with the development of pluralism from primordial to liberal and then to consociational, that is pluralism which is marked by the transformation of primordialism into effective means for pluralistic democracy (p. 98).

intense and intimate relationships with other categories. That is why often we are told, for example, about forbidden marriages between castes. The use of social categories to separate and to limit interaction and relationships between people is what we call "the politics of ethnicity". The result of such politics is ethnic domination, which at the same time may produce ethnic discrimination toward smaller, weaker, and powerless groups.

Ethnic domination and discrimination in Indonesia

The best-known case of ethnic discrimination is that against Chinese Indonesians, and many books relate how the New Order government politically discriminated them to make it difficult for them to work in governmental institutions, and by so doing, forced them to concentrate on the private sector and to limit themselves to the economic sector.

However, we could give many examples of ethnic domination and discrimination among indigenous people themselves. For example, it is easy to find cases where members of a particular ethnic group occupy a local government office, even though various ethnic groups populate the area. Not only that; in some areas we find family connections among high-ranking officials and among members of legislative bodies at the regional level. The latest trend is that while the husband occupies an executive position, the wife becomes a member of the legislative body, or vice versa. At first sight, this does not constitute "ethnic domination", but since the governing process is exactly the same, that is when a group of people or families dominates or controls a particular position or area, they would surely try to maintain their dominant position and control through mobilizing, first kinship relations, and then ethnic associations, so that the result would certainly be ethnic domination and discrimination. Whether they use ethnic affinities or kinship relations as tools to select new members to strengthen their group, the outcome would be the same that they would also discriminate those they consider non-ethnic members and non-kins by categorizing them as "unrelated others", "outsiders", or even "fierce competitors" and "potential opponents". Moreover, we see this very common picture in local and regional governmental institutions around the country. For examples, we may talk about Dayak-Chinese-Malay competition in West Kalimantan, or Christian-Muslim rivalries in Maluku and Poso, as well as "native-son versus migrant" in all urban establishments at the provincial and district levels.

This situation highlights the political significance of ethnic and religious issues within the Indonesian nationhood, which undermines the construction of Indonesia as s*atu nusa, satu bangsa dan satu bahasa* (one homeland, one nation, and one language), as well as what is stated in Chapter 27 of the 1945 Constitution that s*egala warga negara bersamaan kedudukannya di dalam hukum ...* (All citizens have an equal position within the law).

Equality in multiculturalism?

Many people believe that multiculturalism may solve the problem of inequality

brought about by ethnic domination and discrimination. Multiculturalism --which argues for the celebration of, as well as appreciation and respect for diversity-- is seen as the anti-thesis of assimilation, which promotes homogeneity and similarity. This is why multiculturalism became the preferable alternative for the New Order's assimilation policy, which failed to integrate the people into one unified, Indonesian nation.

The assimilation policy was introduced in the beginning of the 1970s particularly to solve the so-called "Chinese problem" (see Coppel 1983). Instead of producing the anticipated results of "harmonizing" the relationships between and among ethnic and religious groups in Indonesia, the assimilation policy created segregated communities, not only between Chinese and Indigenous Indonesians, but also among the indigenous peoples themselves. The issues of Javanese versus non-Javanese, of Muslims versus Christians, of native-son versus newcomer or migrant, are several indicators of the segregation that evolved. Latent conflicts, which had accumulated through and by segregation, erupted into violent ethnic and religious riots during the 1996-2004 periods in West and Central Kalimantan, Maluku, Poso, and other places, and these incidents changed people's perspectives about the benefits of the assimilation approach for national integration. Equality-inequality became a hot issue to criticize this approach and people who attacked the assimilation policy argued that it maintained the existence of "unequal power" relations between the majority and minorities by "forcing" minorities to fully assimilate into the majority.

To balance inequality, multiculturalism is believed to have potential, because it argues for the protection of the minorities' rights to run their lives as they see fit, and to express themselves freely, both culturally and politically, as "equal" counterparts of the majority.

Unfortunately, multiculturalism does not offer a viable solution for the "asymmetrical" construction of minority and majority, which, since its inception, contained power imbalance. Under the circumstances, equality within the framework of multiculturalism merely amounts to wishful thinking.

Moreover, as the critics of multiculturalism indicated (see Hoon 2008), recognition of minority rights is mostly decorative, because even though minorities are able to display their cultural symbols publicly as the celebration of their equal status, politically their representatives may still not have the power and/or capabilities to effectively influence state policies favourable to their interests.

Ethnic factor versus national party system

Since Indonesia consists of more than 1,000 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups, we may safely assume that all these 1,000 cultures and subcultures would demand recognition the moment the state declares itself "multicultural". If our calculation is right, or even if it is partially true, we should ask ourselves the following question: even though by law the Indonesian government should protect the rights of each legally recognized group to maintain, display, and

develop its own cultural distinctiveness, would it really be possible for it to do so when within that framework the government is obliged to provide the financial support entitled to each group due to such recognition? I believe it would be a dilemma the authorities would find difficult to solve.

The situation could become more complicated when state recognition might motivate each group to demand the right to its own political representative, as well as its own territory, within the state system. These demands would be difficult to accommodate as long as the Indonesian political structure remains a party system, because within that system, there is no place for the ethnic factor and/or the cultural derivatives of ethnicity. Under the law, each citizen may become a party member, if they chose to. Therefore, even though the state has agreed to, and legally signed the Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding that the Acehnese are allowed to have a "local party" or an Acehnese party, it does not automatically mean that a non-Acehnese could not become a member of that party. Moreover, the national system dictates the electoral threshold that, to participate in the elections, a political party must have representatives in two-thirds of the country's 32 provinces, as well as in two thirds of the total number of districts within each province. Obviously, a local party would be unable to do so.

Multiculturalism in practice

Even as a mere concept, we should treat multiculturalism with caution because it does not promote the equality we might hope. As a policy, it is more complicated, because we should take into consideration the Indonesian political culture and its structure. Considering the ramifications of Indonesian political culture, we should certainly reconsider several times before we decide to adopt multiculturalism into our national policy in order to promote ethnic and racial equality. We should first ask ourselves the following questions: Could we allow each ethnic group, for example, as part of their recognized rights to have its own "national holiday"? How could we arrange for the application of their right to preserve their cultural heritage (such as language and customs) within the national educational system? Would it be possible to grant the right to self-govern to each and all ethnic groups as stipulated by the International Human Rights Convention?

These questions were raised not to reject multiculturalism outright, but to motivate us to reflect on the problems that might arise during the implementation of multiculturalism as a policy. Several well-known models of multiculturalism have been applied in Malaysia, Canada, and Australia. Each has its own benefits and shortages, and they might not be suitable to the Indonesian case. According to Nurhafilah Musa (2008: 8), "Malaysia's multiculturalism or cultural pluralism can be defined as each ethnic community is allowed to practice its own lifestyle and culture". However, in practice, the Malaysian model of multiculturalism has created an ethnic mosaic that places each ethnic (racial) group in its own particular place. The Malays, Chinese, and Indians, each have their own "box" the size of which has been

predetermined from the outset. The Malays have the biggest box the other two groups cannot compete with. It is their "native rights" that gives the Malays such a privilege, or what Musa refers to as their "indigenous character".

Article 3 of Malaysia's Federal Constitution states that the religion of the Malaysian Federation is Islam; but the same article permits practitioners of other religions to follow their faiths. In this respect, Malaysia is clearly quite unlike Saudi Arabia, where the public display of any faith other than Islam can subject the religious practitioner to censure, ignominy, and punishment. Article 11, however, suggests clearly why Islam in Malaysia might perhaps best be understood as embodying the principle of primus inter pares, the first among equals: Muslims are free to proselytise to adherents of other faiths, but non-Muslims by law are forbidden from preaching to Muslims.[2]

Even though Musa argues that the indigenous character is balanced, because "while it gives preference over Islam and Malay, in Malaysia, other cultures and religions can be practiced in peace and harmony" (Musa 2008: 4), the problem is that within the three fixed categories, there is no place for hybrids. The children of mixed marriage couples (Indian-Malay, Chinese-Indian, or Malay-Chinese) have to choose any one of the existing categories, although they are uncomfortable with all of them. This model might create a bigger problem for hybrids in Indonesia, because there is a much larger variation of possible hybrid combinations than in Malaysia, so the question is whether we could and should put all the hybrids into one category, and by so doing create an identity problem for the people in this category?

The Canadian model of multiculturalism and bilingualism has granted the French-speaking and the English-speaking people equal rights to choose their own language of preference. The Official Languages Policy created in 1969 is a clear indication that the state recognized the language barrier as a social marker that culturally separates and divides the Canadians into two distinct groups, but firmly asserts that politically each group has equal rights as Canadian citizens. It means that the recognition of their cultural rights does not give either of them political privilege(s), except for the freedom to choose their own language preference. The policy of multiculturalism, which was announced in 1971, further established Canada as "the world's first officially multicultural nation" (Geißler 2003). According to Rainer Geißler, "the core principle of multicultural Canadian society is 'living together with differences', 'living together in diversity', 'engaging in diversity'," which is composed of the following seven essential elements:

1. A commitment to migration and to its consequence, to the ethnocultural differences and diversity;
2. The right of minority women and men to be ethnoculturally different;
3. The principle of mutual respect for each other, because all cultures are equally valued;

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[2]   See Vinal Lay 2006.

4. The "multicultural assumption" (the social psychology of multiculturalism): only those who are secure in their cultural background will be open to and tolerant towards others;

5. The principle of "unity within diversity": ethnocultural diversity is not unlimited; the right to be different and to mutual respect ends when differences interfere with core institutional values, with laws, with human rights and the rights of individuals;

6. Social inclusiveness: equality of opportunities and of participation in economic, social cultural and political life for all ethnic groups;

7. Active political management: multiculturalism does not develop by itself, it needs political promotion.

These principles, according to Rainer Geißler (2003), are entrenched in the Canadian Constitution and in several laws, especially in the Multiculturalism Act and the Employment Equity Act. The implementation of these laws is supported by a variety of policies and programs such as anti-racism programs, employment equity initiatives and immigrant settlement policies. However, as Donna Dasko (2003: 8) states,

> [L]arger events outside of the area of language and ethnic diversity can impact and affect attitudes and public acceptance[, particularly w]hen the economy declines, when our larger institutions are being threatened, and when Canadians themselves feel threatened, we see that support for diversity can be challenged.

Therefore, she suggested "to keep the larger institutions strong and stable", because based on the surveys conducted by her institution, Environics Research Group Limited, "[b]ilingualism and multiculturalism cannot rely on … social values alone, regardless of how supportive these values may be". She believes "a strong economy and institutions that support equality of opportunity" are necessary.

Will Kymlicka (2011) also sums up several other important issues. First, based on regional reports from Canada, he intimates that "the place of religious diversity within multiculturalism has not yet been adequately debated or explored". He argues that "the heated debates around religious family law arbitration and the funding of religious schools in Ontario, as well as the reasonable accommodation debate in Quebec, [are] now the most controversial domain of multiculturalism". Therefore, he proposes to consider "bringing religion into multiculturalism" (p. 11). Second, he talks about the role of media in reporting stories because "there have been cases – often of opinion editorials – which have been gratuitously offensive or misleading, leading to human rights complaints". Therefore, he argues about the need "to rethink how to promote and monitor responsible journalism". In his opinion, "[i]t is right and proper … for hate speech to be a criminal offense; it is also right and proper that there be standards of professional conduct for journalists, with regulatory bodies and avenues for individuals to complain about violations of these standards. But in many cases, what is really required

is a broader public debate about editorial policy …" (p. 11). Third, he believes that "the issue of how multiculturalism relates to bilingualism, federalism and Quebecois nationalism has not been clearly addressed". There is also more work that needs to be done to explain how the federal multiculturalism policy and aboriginal rights could work together (p. 12). Fourth, for him, there is still a need to ensure that anti-racism and anti-discrimination programs are tracking … differentiated and evolving patterns of racialization, such as between "victims of racism", between "visible minorities", as well as several very distinct forms of racialization, such as anti-Black racism, anti-Muslim prejudice, because as a matter of fact, "anti-racism initiatives might be working well for some groups, even as prejudice is increasing against other groups" (p. 12). Fifth, the fact that immigrants and the second generation face an "ethnic penalty" —increasing barriers in using their human capital— on the labour market in all countries, and as a result form a sort of "underclass", according to him, is not caused by multiculturalism policy. In his opinion, "the causes generally lie outside the jurisdiction of the federal multiculturalism policy, relating instead to issues such as professional accreditation, the evaluation of foreign job experience, language training, and mismatches between immigrant selection and actual labour market needs" (p. 13). As a final note, Kymlicka (2011: 13) warns that,

> [T]he net result of these trends is neither the utopia celebrated by some defenders of multiculturalism, nor the 'sleepwalking to segregation' scenario predicted by critics. It is rather a complex bundle of factors, each of which needs to be examined on its own terms.

The Canadian model might work nicely in Indonesia because we already have *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) as our national motto, which is quite similar to the Canadian principle that indicates that "ethnocultural diversity is not unlimited". Unfortunately, that is where the similarity ends, because we still have to elaborate on the essential elements of such a motto as the Canadians have done. Therefore, the model might work only if all existing groups in Indonesia could agree to a number of social markers that should be used to recognize and distinguish each of them as separate and unique cultural entities. Of course, if there were too many social markers to be agreed upon it would be more difficult to resolve differences. Considering the heterogeneity of the Indonesian population, obviously we could find many social markers that could be used for negotiation, from language and tradition to cultural symbols and religion. Moreover, Indonesia will have difficulties to support a multiculturalism policy because of its "weak" economy (for example, Indonesia is still in a very slow recovery process from the 1996-1997 financial crisis), and its "corrupted" institutions might fail to support equality of opportunity which is necessary for multiculturalism to work and persist. On the issue of religion, I believe, Indonesia has to work harder to find its way of dealing with the problem.

To celebrate multicultural Australia, the Australian government allows

each racial group to uphold its cultural uniqueness and to preserve its cultural heritage. The following statement (Nicola Henry 2010: 2) clarifies the meaning of multiculturalism for Australians:

> Multiculturalism represents not a melting pot, but rather 'a voluntary bond of dissimilar people sharing a political and institutional structure' (Australian Ethnic Affairs Council). Multicultural strategies include dual citizenship; government support for minority newspapers, television and radio; endorsement of cultural festivals, holidays and celebrations; acceptance of traditional and religious clothing in schools and the military; support for cultural diversity in art and literature; programs that support minority representation in politics, education and the workforce; and programs designed to encourage greater understanding of other cultures.

In drawing their successful stories, some people have highlighted the experience of New South Wales, where "multiculturalism is part and parcel of government policy". In this state, "the multicultural principles are enshrined in legislation" (p. 8).[3] Several indicators used to indicate the success, according to Stepan Kerkyasharian A.M. (1998), Chair of Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW, are that, first, "Australia generally has low levels of racial violence and discrimination" (p. 6). Second, "[the Australians'] linguistic, cultural and social connections are supporting the development of trade links internationally" (p. 6). Third, "multiculturalism has contributed to the rich and vibrant cultural life in Australia. It has made possible the innovative 'fusion' approaches to theatre, dance, cuisine, and music, which are so often commented on" (p. 7). Fourth, the Australians have been able to maintain their social cohesion under stress, particularly during the Gulf War of 1991 (p. 6). The underlying principle of that success is that "[the Australians] were egalitarian" (p. 9). According to Kerkyasharian, "Australia did not adopt the divisive and myopic European 'guest worker' model - our migrants were not migrants, they were Australians from day one" (p. 5). Moreover, there was "bipartisan support and a continuum from successive governments". For example, the Federal Government established and funded The Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, The Office of Multicultural Affairs, and the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research (p. 5.), which helped to "create a policy framework, a body of literature, a bank of research and a reservoir of expertise -- all of those are based on credible impartial academic work -- which made it easier to secure institutional recognition and commitment across Government to the principles of multiculturalism" (p. 6).

In spite of these successes, several concerns have been expressed. One of them concerns the existence of a "Federal Government's policy which [denies] new settlers to this land access to social security benefits - initially for six months under the previous Government, and now extended to two years by the current Government" (p. 9). Kerkyasharian believes that "[that] policy risks

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[3]   See Kerkyasharian 1998.

the creation of a second class of citizens", which could further "undermine [not only] the future of Australian multiculturalism but the stability of [the Australian] society itself" (p. 9).

Obviously, like in Canada, all groups in Australia are first (Australian) citizens. In multicultural Australia, the emphasis is on equal rights for all citizens. Cultural heritage –through the endorsement of cultural festivals, holidays and celebrations, as well as the acceptance of traditional and religious clothing in schools and the military- is the only social marker employed for the recognition of the cultural rights of all (ethnic/racial) groups; even though minority representation in politics, education and workforce are also encouraged.

It would be interesting to see whether all ethnic groups in Indonesia, together with their government could agree on a particular social marker for the recognition of their cultural rights. In the past, the Jakarta Charter argument is for religion, namely Islam, to be accepted as the state religion and as a legal social marker for Muslims and non-Muslims. However, the proposal was rejected, because the majority chose *not to have* any social marker in order to guarantee equal rights for all citizens. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, informally the people continue to use every social marker they have - namely, ethnicity, religion, birthplace, etcetera - to distinguish "in-group" from "out-group" members. As a result, we often see that a particular ethnic group successfully dominates a particular political arena, which leads to asymmetric control of social and political institutions among various social and ethnic groups.

In the light of the ethnic and religious conflicts that took place toward the end of Soeharto's New Order, we could easily assume that ethnicity and religion would continue to be Indonesians' most important social markers. Locality which is strongly emphasized after the implementation of decentralization and regional autonomy through the issue of "native son", in most cases is intertwined with these two variables (namely, ethnicity and religion), socially and politically segregating the community into opposing blocks. That is why we find the ethnic-religious pairing of, for example, Christian Dayak versus Muslim Malay, or Muslim versus Christian in Ambon and Poso. Would it then be possible to establish an ethnic heritage regardless of religion and locality as the acceptable social marker for the recognition of the cultural rights of all Indonesian ethnic groups? If yes, how should it be done?

Multicultural Indonesia: A proposal

Considering the other countries' experiences as well as Indonesia's own complex realities, it would be rather problematic to adopt multiculturalism as a state policy. However, in the present situation when Indonesia is in transition from an authoritarian regime to democratic governance, it is imperative to evaluate our future direction in relation to the contemporary problems of ethnicity and religion arising from the multicultural characteristics of our society. In that case, multiculturalism and multicultural policy are the most

practiced concepts known today. Although, in Indonesia, they may not be the most suitable practices, the experiences of other countries may provide us with clear guidance in how to deal with their limitations, as well as with ways to develop new opportunities according to the advantages they might be able to offer.

I have not yet explored them in detail, so it is difficult to make a list of all limitations, or reversely, all advantages. It would require a group of scholars to do this in a project especially designed to discover the advantages and limitations of multiculturalism as applied in various countries. In this paper, I would like to call attention to such a requirement. For that purpose, I would also like to highlight various important elements in the Indonesian context, which should be considered while we evaluate the present problem of managing our diversity.

First, our history is a story of interaction between cultures and traditions, as well as of hybridism, particularly if we remember how in the past the great traditions of China, India, Middle East and the West have met in the archipelago and created a rich blend of civilizations, which is uniquely ours. Moreover, this is a clear indication that for centuries we have been able to manage our diversity well. Of course, we could continue to do so if we wish to. Therefore, I believe that, with hybridism as the core principle, we might be able to develop a multicultural policy that puts emphasis on such mixtures as the benchmark for our future development as a multicultural nation.

Second, for the Indonesian case, it seems that the most difficult task is to make the representatives of all ethnic and religious groups presented in as well as accountable for the public policy making process. As discussed above, it is impossible to guarantee equality among the various groups in the archipelago because there will always be imbalanced relationships between the majority and minorities. Perhaps the best way would be not to emphasize the number of people who support or reject a particular social, political or cultural issue, but to work on solving the issue itself. There are several examples we can use to show how these issues have attracted supporters, and how they have been successfully implemented public policies over the last twelve years (1999-2010), namely anti-monopoly, anti-discrimination, new citizenship law, and so on. Supporters for these issues came from various fields of life, regardless of their ethnicity and religion, which indicates how particular issues can unite different groups of people.

Third, the difficulties in applying multiculturalism in Indonesia do not generally occur at the level of society, but appear mostly in relation to the state, that is as a reflection of conflicting political interests. However, the difficulties were often brought into the cultural field creating conflicts between different ethnic and cultural groups. They were labelled "cultural", even though they were not always cultural. Therefore, it is extremely important to understand the non-cultural aspects of these so-called "cultural" conflicts in order to reroute related problems back to the political sphere. These problems may be easier to settle in the political arena because in practice all political interests

could, more or less, be negotiated, while culture will take longer to change, particularly when its supporters feel comfortable with their own cultural system and values.

Fourth, as explained in the Canadian experience, special attention has to be paid to religion. The problem we face in relation to religious conflicts, between Islam and Christianity and among Muslims themselves (the case of Ahmadiyah), more or less indicates the difficulties of dealing with religious issues at the state level. Clearly, taking side with a particular religion will destroy the balance that was achieved at the beginning of the republic. Moreover, we certainly cannot follow the Malaysian model of Malay-Muslim domination because our conditions are different. For one thing, the division between the eastern and western part of Indonesia, which runs almost parallel to the religious divide might motivate a "civil war" within the republic, if religion is used as a legally recognized political marker.

Fifth, and the final point, we should talk about equality and equity as the main problems that all countries in the world have to deal with at all times. Under the New Order regime, Indonesia did implement its so-called "*pemerataan*" (meaning: "equality") policy, but ironically, by so doing it undermined the value of justice as enshrined in the concepts of equality and equity. A clear example of this may be seen in the budget system of government institutions that allows those who work less to receive the same rewards as those who work harder. In this case, the principle of equality may well be served, but it certainly hurts our sense of justice.

The points above are not exhaustive by any means. They are the most fundamental issues in relation to the proposed adoption of multiculturalism in Indonesia and they require our serious attention. For our own benefits, I hope that the discussion on multiculturalism should not end here.

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