

FACING THE RELIGIOUS MULTICULTURALISM IN INDONESIA: MULTICULTURALISM WITH A RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

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Abstract

This study examines how multiculturalism has been theorized, implemented, and utilized in Indonesia as a policy, discourse, and practice. The post-Suharto (the 2nd President of Indonesia) democratic process has created fresh room for formerly suppressed identities to be expressed. While much of the research on multiculturalism concentrates on racial and ethnic differences, this article attempts to widen the term's definition to encompass religious differences, as well as assess the feasibility of "religious multiculturalism", especially in Indonesia. It responds to the following concerns: What are the perspectives on multiculturalism? What are the differences between multiculturalism and pluralism? How is diversity perceived and also implemented? What distinguishes the Western concept of multiculturalism from Indonesian concepts of variety, unity in diversity, and heterogeneity? This study uses qualitative research using library research and several scholars were used to enrich this study.

Keywords: Indonesia, Religious, Religion, Multiculturalism

1. Introduction

In the history of Indonesia in 1928, young people from all around the archipelago gathered to take the *Sumpah Pemuda* (Youth Pledge), a symbolic pledge based on the ideas of one nation, one language, and one country. As one of the world's most diverse countries, bringing Indonesia together as a single nation, or as Anderson (2006) puts it, "imagined community" is an impossible feat. Furthermore, Indonesian nation-building is a work in progress, with various important identities continuously colliding (Anderson, 2006).

Pancasila's philosophy is critical in bringing Indonesia's various ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups into one soul. According to Latif in van Doorn-Harder (2011), "Belief in One Supreme God," known as "*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*" became the ideology's first principle, which provides a secure environment for faiths to flourish in, religions will have a public role in

creating and preserving social ethics as the assumption. As long as we know, Indonesia is a country based on Pancasila based on God Almighty. According to Soeharto in (Natalia, 2016), Indonesia admits six religions as legitimate religions to be embraced by citizens country, and there are still growing local beliefs in the outskirts of this country. The six religions are Islam, Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian.

Pancasila can be seen as a model for how the archipelago's varied populations envision themselves as a nation. Each society, and perhaps every single person, is intertwined in a web of different and conflicting social imaginaries, there will always be resistance to any injunctions to comply, to varying degrees. Pancasila, despite being a significant social fantasy, is subject to both acceptance and rejection. As a result, the state ideology of both religious harmony and ethnicity, as enshrined in the national slogan "Unity in Diversity" or *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* is official and institutional involvement over time has to be fulfilled on the ground (HOON, 2013).

2. Theoretical Framework

The research model that was used in exploring this study is qualitative research. The study responds to the following concerns: What are the perspectives on multiculturalism?; what are the differences between multiculturalism and pluralism?; how is diversity perceived and implemented in Indonesia?; and what is the difference between the Western notion of multiculturalism and the Indonesian concepts of diversity, unity in diversity, and heterogeneity?

Pancasila articulates the nation's intellectual underpinning and noble goal on an ideological level, yet it is far from reflecting Indonesia's socioeconomic reality on the ground. This is largely due to the government's use of national ideology by the New Order. Religious and ethnic diversity was never seriously addressed during Suharto's regime (1966–1998). Any public conversation on social inequalities, or what we knew as SARA, was expressly prohibited by the dictatorship (ethnic, racial, religious, and intergroup differences). Pancasila's notion was pushed as the sole basis for all mass organizations and social-political parties to utilize it for political purposes (Morfit in MacAndrews, 1986, p. 42). At the time, the slogan was that Indonesians should merge into a state-defined national identity based on the regime's idea of Pancasila.

The pluralism of religion is hampered by government restrictions, increasing Islamism, and religious intolerance, even though Indonesia has become a more open and democratic country after Suharto's regime (Sakai & Fauzia, 2014). Radical religious groups have endangered religious

concord and freedom of religion in the last decade. Religious fundamentalists frequently regard pluralism with distrust, and extremists use paranoia to further their own goals.

Radical Islamic groups have taken advantage of the new democratic space to promote and politicize their religious agendas, as well as to attack marginalized communities like Shi'a and Ahmadiyya communities and Christian churches, resulting in an alarming rise in intra- and inter-religious conflict and violence (van Doorn-Harder, 2011; Ali-Fauzi in (Hoon, 2017). The rise of conservatism within mainstream Islam is also becoming more visible. Several examples, The Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI), barred Muslims from worshipping and prohibiting marrying non-Muslims in 2005, outlawing the Ahmadiyya Islamic minority group. Pluralism, secularism, and liberalism were all publicly rejected by the Council (Gillespie, 2007); Munawar-Rachman, 2010; Sirry, 2013).

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a literature review on several studies were used to enrich this study. The data were collected through reading material in books, journals, research reports, news media, and other relevant sources. Data is presented in an analytical descriptive to explain the aim of the research.

Through a three-stage paradigm, namely data display, data reduction, data presentation, and verification by many scholars, the data analysis approach corresponded with the data collection process. These three steps, however, occurred at the same time.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Multiculturalism Perspectives

Pancasila articulates the nation's intellectual underpinning and noble goal on an ideological level, yet it is far from reflecting Indonesia's socioeconomic reality on the ground. This is largely attributable to the misuse of national ideology by the New Order regime. During Suharto's New Order (1966–1998), ethnic and religious diversity was never seriously addressed.

Multiculturalism aims to deconstruct cultural homogenization by recognizing inside a nation-state, the cohabitation and equitable representation of many cultures and peoples. Multiculturalism, like pluralism, encourages ethnic and cultural variety. While both discourses are concerned with how different cultures might peacefully coexist, multiculturalism takes a step

further by discussing citizenship rights, such as that is, how cultural collectivities can express themselves freely while still respecting the rights of other groups. Citizens have diverse requirements as members of groups with specific features and social situations in a multicultural policy, but they have equal rights as persons as well (Castles, 1997).

Offers a helpful typology of multiculturalism that helps us recognize the various layers of meaning linked with the discourse (Fleras, 2009). Multiculturalism has 5 degrees of meaning, according to him:

- a) Multiculturalism is a factual statement characterizing an increasingly diverse world.
- b) Multiculturalism is a philosophy or worldview that believes that acknowledging cultural differences and promoting social equality are good things.
- c) Multiculturalism is a government policy and program that encourages people to embrace a diverse range of races and identities.
- d) Multiculturalism is a practice, which represents the convergence of policy and philosophy at the grassroots level.
- e) Multiculturalism is a counter-hegemony to the racist.

The main problem with multiculturalism, as Stuart Hall in Hesse correctly points out, is that "the '-ism' tends to convert 'multiculturalism' into a political doctrine" (Hesse.B, 2000). The objections to multiculturalism are founded on the assumption that multiculturalism is a single idea (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). It's vital to remember that multiculturalism is a work in progress rather than a one-size-fits-all policy; it's a fluid concept that encompasses a variety of discourses, policies, and practices. According to (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010), critics typically combine the notions into a single "-ism" to conveniently criticize the ideology and its proponents, notably liberals and minority activists.

4.2. Pluralism and Multiculturalism Differentiation

According to the religious realm, pluralism is a contentious idea. While the term normally conjures up images of liberalism, relativism, and secularism within religious communities, it frequently conjures up images of tolerance, diversity, and peaceful coexistence among individuals of various backgrounds (Lumintang, 2009; Munawar-Rachman, 2010). Plurality, as the term implies, can have multiple meanings:

- 1) As a fact of life in a diverse society;

- 2) As tolerance for difference and acceptance of diversity;
- 3) As a philosophical pluralism-based normative ideal (Carson, 1996).

These three concepts are not mutually exclusive and frequently overlap, as will be addressed further below. When there are more than two cultural groups in society, pluralism is accepted as truth. To incorporate minority groups inside the political community, recognition, and acceptance of differences should be fostered in such a society.

"Various ways of multiculturalism" include public acknowledgment, education, social services, public documents, law, religious accommodation, food, and broadcasting and media (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). Multiculturalism can be characterized as "a broad set of mutually reinforcing methods or methodologies concerning the assimilation and involvement of immigrants and ethnic minorities, and their modes of cultural/religious difference," despite its complex rubric and definition (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010).

Multiculturalism is frequently translated into laws that manage the richness and multiplicity of multi-cultural civilizations, in contrast to the spontaneous and bottom-up structure of pluralism (Fleras, 2009)). Multiculturalism, according to Foucault, is a type of "governmentality" geared at addressing tensions and conflicts produced by cultural, racial, and ethnic differences (Ang, 2010). "Multiculturalism is clearly beyond toleration and state neutrality for it involves active support for cultural difference, active discouragement against hostility and disapproval, and the remaking of the public sphere to fully include marginalized identities," says Modood, referring to the role of government in multiculturalism (Modood, 2010).

4.3. Indonesia Religious Multiculturalism

Knowledge about different religions is a necessary precursor for the establishment of a tolerance culture, and it aids in the discovery of shared religious ideals. The fact that some religious or philosophical perspectives and beliefs are exclusive does not negate the notion of tolerance. The rejection of the integration program was one of the most fundamental adjustments in post-Suharto government policy. Academics have argued the value of multiculturalism in the Indonesian context for the past decade or so, emphasizing the importance of developing multicultural education (Ujan, 2009). It is impossible to say that Indonesia consistently implements multicultural policies. Through the new curriculum, which was implemented in 2013, the Ministry of Education and Culture has made significant efforts to promote multiculturalism in schools: the explicit inclusion

of the term "multiculturalism" in the objectives of subjects such as Citizenship Studies and Anthropology demonstrates the absolute relevance of multiculturalism to Indonesia and demonstrates a strong commitment to multiculturalism. Moreover, institutions such as the Ma'arif Institute and the Wahid Institute, NU, and Muhammadiyah, which were created by former leaders of the two major mainstream Muslim organizations, have actively promoted multiculturalism, and Muhammadiyah schools have developed a new religious tolerance curriculum.

Multiculturalism is defined differently by each interest group, as previously stated. The vibrant public sphere of the Reformation period allowed previously suppressed voices to emerge. Marginalized groups such as ethnic Chinese, LGBTQ people, and religious minorities who were not formally recognized by the state took advantage of the new democratic atmosphere to demand recognition of their identity and rights. Although the Indonesian state does not have a clear strategy or guideline to institutionalize multiculturalism (except for multicultural education), the democratization process has made such demands conceivable.

The reformation process has benefited the nation's ethnic Chinese the most, as official discriminatory laws have been removed and their cultural and citizenship privileges restored (Hoon, 2017). Along with (Anggraeni, 2011), the Chinese were among the most marginalized ethnic groups in terms of cultural, linguistic, and civic rights. But all the dark stories become lighter right nowadays. Chinese ethnic groups have the right to celebrate their big day and do economic activity safely.

Nonetheless, the optimism in Indonesia about multiculturalism should not be exaggerated. Some Indonesian officials are wary about diversity, fearing that it may reawaken ancient anxieties of federalism, relativism, and divisiveness. Furthermore, (Burhanudin, 2003) advocates of multiculturalism are primarily drawn from the newly created civil society, and multiculturalism as a discourse was presented as part of the post-Suharto democratization and decentralization movement.

Concerning the question of the suitability of multiculturalism to the setting of Indonesia, it is vital to note that although the vocabulary and policy of multiculturalism originated in the West, they are by no means exclusive to the West. Multiculturalism isn't a one size fits all solution that can be applied universally to any society. "Just as there are diverse multicultural civilizations, there are many varied multiculturalisms," writes Stuart Hall in Hesse (2000, p. 210). In other words,

multiculturalism is a process that is "always contextual to particular localities and cultural experiences," rather than a set of hard and fast principles (Nye, 2007, p. 116).

4.4. The Western Concept of Multiculturalism in Indonesia

The main problem with multiculturalism, as Stuart Hall in Hesse correctly points out, is that "the '-ism' tends to convert 'multiculturalism' into a political doctrine" (2000, p.210). In reality, (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010) base their objections to multiculturalism on the assumption that multiculturalism is a single idea. It's vital to remember that multiculturalism is a work in progress rather than a one-size-fits-all policy; it's a fluid concept that encompasses a variety of discourses, policies, and practices. To conveniently attack the ideology and its proponents, particularly liberals and minority activists, critics frequently combine the concepts into a single "ism" (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010).

While dissimilar from migrant societies in the United States, Australia, and Singapore, Indonesia's demographics are no less diverse. While overseas immigration is less common in Indonesia, policies encouraging transmigration, such as those implemented during the New Order, have resulted in a more diverse population. The state neglected the goals of these new immigrants to express their identities as they established themselves as socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable communities because it was more concerned with building a unified national culture (Hoey, 2003) Indonesia needs to build a multicultural framework that meets its objectives and demographic settings, given its growing democracy and rights consciousness. As described by Goh and Holden, this new paradigm must also take into account "postcolonial multiculturalism," or the need to combat colonial racial and economic inequalities (Goh et al., 2009).

5. Conclusion

Multiculturalism's "global discourse" should be taken seriously as a policy practice in Indonesia. The study offers "religious multiculturalism" as a conceptual alternative to "religious pluralism" by highlighting the glaring absence of religion from multicultural theories, which have traditionally favored race, culture, and ethnicity. Meanwhile, integrating the Pancasila national philosophy, religious multiculturalism emphasizes the concept of an active state that defends religious minorities. This approach avoids the baggage and stigma attached to the phrase "religious

pluralism," while simultaneously expanding the scope of existing multicultural theories to include religious identities and religious minorities. Nowadays, the minority has already reached their right to do their religious activity and the others can respect and walk along together through the Indonesian diversity.

In Indonesia, the difference in religion is one of the diversity of nations. It is because religion has sacred values, then it can dominate the awareness and emotions of its adherents. If it is disturbed then it will give birth to a conflict that if not quickly resolved will lead to acts of radicalism. The government sued to be neutral in the sense of not taking sides with any religion. While the specifics of how religious multiculturalism can be institutionalized are outside the scope of this study, religious multiculturalism is likely to be fostered through education and interfaith activities. Therefore, it is necessary to periodically hold dialogue and inter-religious deliberation, and establish regulations regarding inter-religious relations.

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