

# MANAGING PLURALISM, DEFENDING RELIGIOUS MINORITY GROUPS

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***Abstract:** Religious pluralism becomes sociological basic of “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika”, national motto of Indonesia. It demands a politic of religion which is necessary for managing Indonesian pluralism on one hand and defending religious minority groups on the other. Regarding to issue, there are numbers of problem. First inconsistence of governmental regulations against constitutional provisions on freedom of every citizen to follow any religion and worship according to his/her religion and faith. Second, strengthening of religious conservatism leading to violent extremism which shows ineffectiveness of state policies endangering the rights of religious minority groups. Third, politicking of religious identity and sentiment in electoral politics.*

***Keywords:** Pluralism, religious minority, freedom of religion/belief*

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## 1. Introduction

The subcultures amid Indonesian pluralism lead some theorist to define Indonesia not only multicultural country, but also plural-multicultural one (Hefner, 2000). However, the diversity in the religious context becomes an outstanding threat which looks for a precise politics of religious pluralism conforming the construction of Indonesian pluralism.

Several researches conducted by civil society-based research institution concerning tolerance and pluralism promotion as like SETARA Institute and Wahid Foundation revealed that religious pluralism of Indonesia is in crisis. In the last decade, 2.070 event and 2.741 acts of violation against freedom of religion/belief occurred. It meant that had been occurred more than seventeen events per month or almost six acts per week (Halili et al, 2013; Halili and Naipospos, 2014, 2015; Halili, 2016, 2017, 2018). Within the identical research, SETARA Institute records 361 disturbance against worship places in a various level of intensity, for instance burning, destruction, disruption of building due to administrative reasons, etc since 2007. Of all disturbed worship places, 186 acts of disturbance occurred against churches and 128 so did against mosques. Besides, 23 of those against local or traditional religions, while monasteries, temples, pagodas and synagogue became the object of each 15, 5, 3, and 1 acts of disturbance. The huge number of violations against constitutional rights of citizens to freedom of religion/belief reflects that pluralism of Indonesia is in peril (Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2014).

In that context, it is crucial to problematize politic of religious pluralism in Indonesia. This article is intended to discuss the future of religious pluralism basing to several primary and secondary data on freedom of religion/belief and documents of policies concerning religion and belief issue.

## **2. Exprementals, Materials, and Methodology**

This research uses systematic review method which works for identifying, evaluating and interpreting all relevant research outcomes related to specific research questions, specific topics, or phenomena of concern (Kitchenham, 2004). Data resources of the research are persons and paper. The research subject was selected purposively. The document used as secondary data are reports on condition of freedom of religion and faith Indonesia released by SETARA Institute for Democracy and Peace, Wahid Institute, and Cross Religious and Cultural Studies Universitas Gadjah Mada. The technic of data analysis used is qualitative data analysis using inductive approach.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1. Religious Pluralism as the Context**

In the Indonesian context, the national motto of "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" is included in the State Symbol, Garuda Pancasila, sculpted in white ribbons gripped tightly by the sturdy nails of Garuda. The motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" comes from the sentence of Mpu Tantular, a poet of Majapahit Kingdom, "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika Tan Hana Dharma Mangrwa*". "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" etymologically means "Unity in Diversity", while "Tan Hana Dharma Mangrwa" means "There is No Duplicity of truth".

Mpu Tantular statement in more detail can be found in an ancient book called *Kakawin Sutasoma*. The complete verse which contains "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" is written in cubs 139, verse 5, which states:

*Rwaneka dhatu winuwus Buddha Wiswa,  
Binneki rakwa ring apan kena parwanosen,  
Mangkang jinatwa kalawan Siwatatwa tunggal,  
Bhinneka tunggal ika tan hana dharma mangrwa*

The free meaning of the verse is, more or less, "It is said that Buddha and Shiva are two different substances. They are different, but how can they be identified? For the righteousness of Buddha and Shiva is singular. Divide it, but

that one. There is no ambiguity in the truth." (Hamengkubuwono X, 2007).

The history of the slogan "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" and its deepest meaning can be traced from the context of space and time in Majapahit era. The motto of *Bhinneka tunggal ika, tan hana dharma mangrwa* is a phrase that describes and reflects the existence of various elements of trust in Majapahit greatness.

The Buddha and Shiva expressed in the verse above refer to the two great religions of the time. Shiva in modern religion is likely referred to as Hinduism. At the time of Majapahit in addition to the great religions of Shiva and Buddhism, there were also a number of sects that had been known from the beginning. In addition, it is also rooted in the midst of the Majapahit community of what local religions depicted in modern science as animism and dynamism. Even when Majapahit began to be established, Islam, Muslim traders, and spreaders have started to enter the archipelago and live in the western part of the archipelago. In fact, Ricklefs (2005) mentions that it is possible there are servants of kingdom that is Muslim. The situation constitutes a pluralistic society of Majapahit or *bhinneka*.

Thus, in terms of religion and belief of Majapahit is a plural society. At that time the Majapahit community was divided into several structures:

1. The followers of Shiva and Buddhism as the official religion of the kingdom
2. Vishnu's believers
3. Indigenous people whose belief is embracing the spirit of the ancestors
4. Chinese people, especially from Canton who are local and some are Muslims
5. Muslim traders who begin to enter and live in the western part of the archipelago

So more specifically the diversity that is meant in *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, written by Mpu Tantular, the royal poet, is a diversity in term of religion. Majapahit people was united in the plurality of religions. What Mpu Tantular said about *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* affirms and proves the existence of recognition and the provision of proper space and place for various religions. In short, religious pluralism is factually the context of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.

This form of integration at the kingdom level is also shown by the tolerance between religious groups. Inter-religious tolerance appears from religious buildings was collaboratively used by two or more religious groups/sects. The construction and restoration of several temples by the king of Hayam Wuruk, such as Jago temple, Jawi temple, Panataran temple and several other temples that have two or more characteristics of religious groups, are absolutely clear evidence of the religious function.

So, when President Sukarno proposed the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, it

must have been inspired by the spirit of its ancient version in the Majapahit period. Nevertheless, extension of meaning has been certainly occurred, not only pluralism in the field of religion, but also in other aspects in the community and nation.

According to Hamengkubuwono X (2007), the expression of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* contains a more complex national meaning. However, the meaning of the origin of this phrase is urgent for Indonesians to reemphasize, precisely because it is specifically associated with the religion and religious discourse of Bung Karno. The message and the impression Sukarno's capture of Sutasoma about Majapahit pluralism has inspired his moral (preferably political) choice to better submerge himself for the integrity of his beloved nation and country.

In the point of view of complex meaning within the framework of nation and state, it can be interpreted that *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* is a recognition of both diversity and unity. Bung Karno—as well as other founding fathers—seems to be well aware and has a strong will to accommodate the diversity of identities and backgrounds of all communities of nation and country which have been naturally growing over a long period of time, formed and rooted long before the state was formed.

Thus, the ideals of the proclamation state are upheld not for the aim of becoming a new identity and replacing the old identity of society. The state and the nation are merely a new common identity that transcends, accommodates, and protects the religious identities of old identities, such as ethnicity, religion, race, class, and other groupings.

### **3.2. Prominent Issues in Politics of Religious Freedom**

In the Indonesian context, there are prominent issues linking to politics of religious freedom in Indonesia. First, problem of regulation which is inconsistent toward constitutional provisions on freedom of every citizen to follow any religion and worship according to his/her religion and faith. The central weak point in the unscrupulous guarantee of freedom of religion/belief is Law No. 1/PNPS/1965 on Prevention of Misuse and/or Blasphemy. The law is used as the basis for the establishment of several implementing regulations on the sense of religious life, such as 1) Joint Ministerial Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs and Minister of Home Affairs No. 9 and No. 8 of 2006 on Guidelines for Implementation of Duties of Regional Head/Deputy Head of Region in Maintaining Religious Harmony and Empowerment of Religious Harmony Forum (2) Joint Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Attorney General and the Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3 of 2008, Number KEP-033/A/JA/6/2008, and Number 199/2008 on Warning and Order to Adherents, Members, and/or Members of the Jemaah of Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI) and Community Residents (so called SKB of Three Ministers); and 3) Some of the regulations at the local level which become the main triggers of some intolerant behavior and criminal acts of discrimination against religious minority

groups.

The regulatory problem also affects the weakness of the institutional support capacity. The constitutional guarantees affirmed by the 1945 Constitution and its derivative laws should ideally be backed by an institutional structure that reinforces the implementation of the constitutional mandate. However, the fact is that the government conducts the criminalization of religious life in Indonesia through institutional formation that actually negates the constitutional mandate and stimulates the occurrence of intolerance and discrimination practices in the life of religion/belief of citizens.

In the optic of SETARA Institute assumption (Hasani and Naipospos, 2011), the circumstance becomes the main factor which stimulates the occurring of several violation even crimes against freedom of Religion/Belief. So, the situation of religious/belief life in Pancasila country is not conducive enough, even it is strengthened the phenomenon of increasing the practice of religious intolerance in the last six years.

Second, strengthen of religious conservatism leading to violent extremism which shows ineffectiveness of state policies in preserving religious pluralism in Indonesia. Religious conservatism refers to religious teachings that are exclusive and follow a literal interpretation that causes intolerance to those who are considered others which has different identity. The most concrete evidence of an increase in religious conservatism (Islam) is that many public schools in different parts of Java and Sumatra require Muslim students to wear "Muslim" clothes, at least every Friday. The men wore long-sleeved 'koko' shirts (a sort of Chinese traditional shirt which is contemporarily viewed as that reflects Islamic tradition), while the girls wore headscarves, mere leg skirts, and long-sleeved shirts.

In state universities, conservative groups master student discourses and organizations. Lecturers and faculty members, at least in some faculties, tend to be intolerant and radical, and classrooms that should be a safe place for dialogue have turned into a place of indoctrination. Islamic teachings taught in schools and universities no longer represent a comprehensive Islamic view because there is no for diversity, particularly in the sense of religion/belief (Diani, 2018).

Several reports of research confirmed the condition. SETARA Institute for Democracy and Peace previously, in 2015, conducted a survey on students' condition of tolerance throughout DKI Jakarta and greater Bandung worrying findings. It results showed that 8.5% of students believe Pancasila as national ideology should be replaced by Islam. Besides, 9.8% of them supported the ways of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Government based study also justified the same inference when Ministry of Education and Culture conducted similar survey among high school teachers and students in Salatiga, Central Java, and Singkawang, West Kalimantan, in September 2016. This survey detected the increasing of religious sentiment and racial conflict in Indonesia, including the discrimination and dominance of ethnic

majority against minorities. The data showed that 8.5% of respondents agreed on the replacement of Pancasila with religion, while 7.2% of them supported ISIS.

The newest research on the issue done by Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM), a university based civil society at the State Islamic University of Jakarta, through a national survey on diversity in September to October 2017 revealed the similar discomfort. The survey which involved 2.181 respondents, including students/teachers and lecturers at schools or universities across 34 provinces in Indonesia resulted a quite worrying data because 58.5% of Muslim students embraces a radical doctrine of religion and 34.4% of them are intolerant to non-Muslims. Even they are more intolerant (51.1%) against the perceived heretical minority groups, such as Ahmadis and Shiites.

In the same survey, the identical worrying circumstance was as well recorded which regarded to respondents of teachers and lecturers. The data showed that 69.3% of them behaved intolerantly against minority Muslim groups, and almost a quarter of non-Muslim was intolerant teachers. More than 87 percent of them agreed that the government should ban minority groups who were considered heretical. This percentage is slightly higher than that of students while 86.55% of them agreed with the idea.

Third, politicking of religious identity and sentiment in electoral politics. This phenomenon became a trend that re-emerged since the elections of DKI Jakarta in 2017 which left a deep enough injury for democracy. Jakarta local elections are socially splitting communities triggered primarily by practices of religious intolerance, discrimination and hate speech based on religious sentiment as well as race. The extent of reciprocal hostility based on religious sentiments leaves serious social injuries that undermine demos as the material basis of democracy (Halili, 2017).

The result of such politicization requires societal reconciliation which is an uneasy marathon job and in the medium term will drain political resources. The price must be immediately fulfilled by all the national political elites as the cost of using hoax, hate speech, black campaigns, religious and ethnic politicization, xenophobia, and other Machiavellian channels.

Politicking of ethnic and religious sentiment as well involves radical Islam groups which finally impacts their reposition within democratic politics. It is considered that radical Islamic groups and anti-democratic Islamic groups played an outstanding role resulting Anies Baswedan-Sandiaga Uno victory. They consistently imagine Jakarta and as well Indonesia with Islamic doctrines and laws. They express anti-democracy politics, determine Pancasila as *toghut* ideology and promote the *Khilafah Islamiyyah* in leaflets and bulletins which were distributed free of charge in the mosques.

In the context of democratic politics, the political affiliation differences of the various nodes of political power must be maintained to build a competitive and oppositional culture. However, in the electoral politics of DKI, the difference

is projected by demagogues and vigilante Islamic groups who like to play the judges themselves and act most properly themselves into destructive political tensions and divisions. The groups openly present themselves as one of the important political agencies and become one of the winning gears of elected governor-deputy governor couples. Their mismanagement in governance (DKI and Indonesia) in the future has the potential to create political decay of democracy from within.

Religious politicization introduced a new habit of potentially destructing against democracy, in the form of subordination of law under politics. Theoretically, institutionalized democracy places law as the supreme to ensure the realization of a political order and social order. In the context of Jakarta elections, mass mobilization in the name of religion to apply pressure on all stages of legal processes in cases related to electoral politics degrades the role of law in political contestation. The statements of political elites supporting contestants who threaten and intimidate law enforcement officers and pressure the government to intervene in courts, in the name of religion, are truly unjustifiable legal education for the public. They frame public discourse that a just law is a law that satisfies their desires and interests.

### **3.3. Prospect of Political Policy**

In that sense of prominent issues of religious pluralism politic, the discussion on prospect of political policy regarding religious pluralism could be canalized into the work of three agenda. First, formulation of regulation, particularly in national level, which is in line with basic norm of constitution. In that sense, it is urgently required by Indonesia to have agenda of national regulatory reform. Thus, the President must also immediately lead regulatory reforms that contradicts to the provisions of the Constitution, as long as it is within the scope of its authority as head of state and government. Some agenda that should get serious attention, i.e., the abolition of articles of religious blasphemy, through the amendment of Act no. 1/PNPS/1965 and Article 156a of the Criminal Code, which have recently been used by vigilante groups to suppress critical and progressive groups under the pretext of religious blasphemy.

In addition, the review, revision and deletion of ministerial regulations are necessary. Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs and Minister of Home Affairs No. 9 and No. 8 of 2006 (on Establishment of Houses of Worship) and Joint Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs, Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 3 Year 2008 Number KEP-033 /A /JA/6/2008, Number 199 of 2008 (SKB Ahmadiyya) are two ministerial regulations that are urgent to be the object of reform because they often trigger discrimination and intolerance of citizens from different religious backgrounds and few (Hendardi, 2018).

Second, abolition of discriminative regulations in local level. It is generally

recognized that one of the factors that trigger the high number of violations of freedom of religion / belief in Indonesia is the concrete actions of the government to overcome discriminatory local regulations and do not have a diversity perspective.

According to the National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan), from 2009 to 2016, there are 421 discriminatory policies issued by the local government. The number of discriminatory policies in the name of morality and religion has continued to increase over the last ten years. The discriminatory policies have restricted the activity of women and minority groups. The discriminatory policies were issued in the form of mandatory wear of headscarves for woman, night bans and also restrictions against religious minority groups such as Shia, Ahmadiyya and other groups (Wardah, 2017).

Regarding this situation, the government has actually claimed the cancellation of local regulations that impede investment and incompliance with the spirit of unity and diversity or discriminatory regulations that have been widely questioned. However, if checked in details, the cancellation of discriminatory local regulations is very minimalist. Of the 3.143 revoked or revised regulations almost entire involve deregulation to facilitate the inflow of capital flows such as user charges, licensing and so on. Only one discriminatory regulation was canceled, namely East Kolaka District Regulation No. 4 of 2011 on Prohibition of Prostitution because it contains discriminative provisions against women. There is no annulment or revision of the regional regulations containing discrimination against minority groups in the regions, especially religious minorities and beliefs (Halili, 2017).

In short, the political future of religious pluralism is determined, among other things, by the ability of the central government to discipline local regulations or take concrete measures to overturn local regulations which contradict to constitutional provisions that provide assurance to all citizens of any religion/belief group to embrace a religion and worship according to each her/his religion/belief.

Third, formulation of national rule which intentionally prohibits politicking sentiment of ethnic, religion, race, and inter social group (In Indonesia so called SARA, stands for Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antar Golongan) in electoral politics in Indonesia. Religious pluralism is partly determined by how serious the policy is to avoid the politicking of SARA in the electoral politics because the politicization of SARA will potentially pit the people with its primordial sentiment for pursuing the power. In addition, the politicization of SARA will disrupt the harmony of interreligious and interfaith relations in the regions.

In the Law on General Election and Election of Regional Head is actually set about the prohibition for the candidates in the election of regional heads, general elections, and presidential election to conduct sentiment of SARA nuanced campaign. In addition, the Election Supervisory Board, General Election

Committee, the Police of the Republic of Indonesia and other stakeholders have also committed and declared campaign of electoral politics without the politicization of SARA.

Looking at the actual development of the three agendas, many Indonesian observers are fully convinced that the future of political pluralism in Indonesia will improve. This is further strengthened by the growing terrorism development with the murder of five members of the police in detention centers by terrorist prisoners, bombings in Surabaya, and several other cases in Sidoarjo and Riau. The circumstance provides justification for improving the politics of religious pluralism to maintain harmony on the one hand, and preventing the spreads of religious based violent extremism on the other.

#### 4. Conclusion

Since religious pluralism is natural fact and socio-political consensus that be sociological basic of “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” as national motto of Indonesia, politic of religious pluralism should necessarily consistent. However, there are some prominent issues linking to that, namely: 1) inconsistency of governmental regulations against constitutional provisions on freedom of every citizen to follow any religion and worship according to his/her religion and faith, 2) strengthen of religious conservatism leading to violence extremism which shows ineffectiveness of state policies in preserving religious pluralism in Indonesia, and 3) politicking of religious identity and sentiment in electoral politics. The failure to cope with the issues will lead the Indonesian pluralism into peril and jeopardize the religious minority rights, particularly freedom of religion and belief. In that sense, the precise measures should be undertaken. Hence, the article suggests three agenda. First, formulation of regulation which is in line with basic norm of constitution. Second, abolition of discriminative regulations in local level. Third, formulation of national rule which intentionally prohibits politicking sentiment of ethnic, religion, race, and inter social group in electoral politics in Indonesia.

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