Conflict between Groups of Different Religion and Beliefs Posing as Threat to Heterogeneity in Indonesia

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Abstract

After the 1998 political reform in Indonesia, conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs continued to occur, regardless of the fact that attempts to bolster diversity have been carried out legally and formally by the government and the political elites. In view of such condition, this research attempts to disclose conflicts which increasingly pose dangers on national heterogeneity, various factors which create religious-based conflicts, the roles of government and political elites in handling such conflicts and the communication strategy adopted to establish a civilized heterogenous society. The research methodology is qualitative with its main focus on online data related with conflicts in Indonesia. Online data processing was performed to support the description of conflicts based on religions and beliefs in all its forms which potentially threat national unity in Indonesia. The findings of this research are as follows: Increasing frequency of conflicts, powerplay politics as fuel for conflicts, unoptimized roles of the government and political elites and lack of communication strategy substance between groups by those responsible for public security and welfare.

Keywords: conflict between different religions and beliefs, heterogenous society, threats against unity, and communication between groups

1. Introduction

There have been various events of mass invasion and riots in Indonesia which spurred conflicts between different religions and beliefs. Aside from the fact that the Indonesian people have always upheld friendliness and tolerance as a sociocultural power which brings everyone together in a peaceful cohabitation. The rise of conflicts which cause physical and material harm is a negative illustration for a heterogenous society in a country currently enjoying its recently-earned democracy after the 1998 political reform.

As such, conflicts based on differences within sectarian scope must be taken seriously by the government and the political elites from their seat of power. They are, after all, responsible for the security, peace and tolerance between different religious groups with the goals of ensuring prosperity. Busyro Muqoddas once said that generally, the majority of Indonesian people still have high level of tolerance and only small group are opposed to the principle of heterogeneity in Indonesia (Kompas, 11 August 2010). However, the issue is that even though the number of intolerant people is relatively small, these very individuals are dominating public spaces in the political stage at local and national levels.

The increasing number of cases related to religious conflicts have encouraged all entities within the government and the political elites to voice the importance of sense of nationality as a means to attain a just and prosper society. However, in reality, mass viciousness, conflicts and invasion between different religious groups are still occuring in a number of localities in Indonesia.

The attempts to maintain social diversity in terms of religions and beliefs are not only the rhetorics which show one's awareness of heterogeneity. It must be proven through real actions which uphold pluralism in Pancasila (Pancasila is the foundation or the philosophy of the Republic of Indonesia. Pancasila is a formula and guide to national and civil lives of the Indonesian populace) ; the 1945 Constitution of Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and Bhineka Tunggal Ika (Bhineka Tunggal Ika is the national motto found on the state symbol Pancasila, meaning unity in diversity) as guide to the people's daily lives.

Obligations of the government and political elites in their capacity include minimizing conflicts which may harm national heterogeneity. It is of such concern that conflicts based on religions and beliefs may occur at any moment in Indonesia and may potentially harm the harmonious and united lives of its people. There's a tendency that groups which fall into conflicts with one another actually believe that they're exacting political democracy. They control or suppress other groups which are considered unaligned with their ideology. Conflicts based on religious and beliefs may even be accompanied with socioeconomic conflicts, insubordination of the law, bureaucracy and other types of conflicts caused by disagreement between groups.

Within a period of five years from 2010 to 2013, there have been increased number of conflicts in various localities in Indonesia. In 2014, however, the number of conflicts and violences related to religion and beliefs had decreased. Nevertheless, the decreased conflicts cannot be made as presumption that any conflict rooted in religion and belief will decrease thereonafter. It's possible that the number of cases dwindled but the sensitive issues on religious differences in political powerplay continue to exist. Information regarding sectarian conflicts disseminated by means of communication technology in the form of social media and the likes remains harmful to national integrity and diversity.

It's undeniable that unifying various groups with different values, behavior and attitude in their daily lives - at least those related to their religion and beliefs - is no small task. Furthermore, "Indonesia has approximately three hundred sub-ethnicities with around two hundred fifty local dialects throughout its entire territory" (Geertz 1981, 86). Ethnical diversity in Indonesia is closely tied with the distribution of religion and beliefs among its people. However, there's no absolute segmentation in the relationship between ethnicities and religions in Indonesia. In other words, not every ethnic group adopts a particular religion and belief. It's quite possible for a number of different groups to share the same religion, different from the one followed by their majority.

In view of such diversity, religions and beliefs should not have been the root of conflict in Indonesia. On the contrary, religious diversity among its populace is expected to become a source of strength for the common good of its civilization, since different religious views contribute to the common good (Fauzi, Panggabean et al.,2014). Furthermore, "religion is the ensemble of beliefs and practices that bind people together in a moral community" (Samajdar 2015, 46). Substantially, upholding diversity within social, cultural, economic and political heterogeneity in the society has become a significant factor to the continuity of a plural and civilized Indonesia.

Therefore, in order to unify various groups in Indonesia, the government and political elites should take real measures to maintain national heterogeneity. By enforcing regulations and norms on heterogeneity, they must be able to nurture public awareness of the importance of unity as well as establish communication between groups in order to bridge their differences. Indeed, the government is the most responsible organ for the safety and peace of a nation in its pluralism. The same responsibility lies in the hands on the political elites - politicians who are directly involved in legislative capacity and a number of parties with strong positions in state institutions.

However, "the problem grew even more complicated when conflicts and violences involved non-state politicians with strong ties with social, economic and political giants". (Arnaz and Nursahid 2009, 2). Even though political power is strongly related with the political elites in the seat of power. Therefore, the state's accountability in providing justice through transparent public communication during conflict resolution becomes important to examine. The tendency of pushing and pulling between rulers, actors who believe that they have strong political power, victims of conflicts and other elements of the society is often found during conflicts based on religions and beliefs.

In light of the above description, the discussion herein includes the following: First, illustration of conflict between groups of different religions and beliefs in Indonesia from the aspect of quantity, which may harm national heterogeneity. Second, conflict trigger related with alleged cover-up, disregard of conflict trigger, interpretation of democracy for the sake of a certain group's interests and dissemination of information in a sectarian global politics. Third, the roles of the government and political elites in their seat of power which are not yet optimum in handling conflicts of religions and beliefs. Fourth, communication strategy between groups or cultures to establish a heterogenous society with high level of tolerance towards religious and beliefs differences.

The literatures in this research include substances of conflicts, heterogenous society and communication between different groups or cultures. All of the three aspects were used as starting point in discussing conflicts triggered by differences in religions and beliefs in Indonesia.

1.1 Community Conflict

Conflict is a manifestation of disagreement, difference and dispute regarding the characteristics, symbols or actions performed in a group, society or organization. In alignment with the above, "conflict is a social process in which individuals or human groups attempt to fulfill their goals by opposing others through threats or violence". (Soekanto 1993, 99).

In the attempt to unite positive differences, conflict as a process is positioned before the stages of establishment, unification and maintenance of a common sense of belonging within the socioeconomic and political dynamics of a society. Conflicts also show that the society can never be in an eternal state of order due to attempts of dominance and overtaking fueled by differences of interests.

Meanwhile, Dahrendorf stated that a society has two faces: conflict and consensus, also known as the dialectic conflict theory. Conflict theory puts conflict of interests and use of violence in a society to the test. Meanwhile, the consensus theory tests the integration value of a society. There can be no society without both consensus and conflict. Society is unified by a forced disillusion of freedom. This is how a certain position within the society delegates the power and authority to another position (Dahrendorf, 2007).

Of course, a significant subject of concern would be conflicts which determine and maintain the divisive line between two or more groups in a permanent way. In view of the above, "it is imperative that conflicts with other groups should reinforce public identity, which must be protected so as not to assimilate with its social surroundings". (Paloma 2007, 107). "Basic interests in a conflict also occur within the scope of ethnicity, including race, racialism and racism". (Plummer 2011, 46)

1.2 Heterogenous Society

Heterogenous society is a society consisting of multiple groups co-habiting in a single territory but separated according to each cultural line. The heterogeneity of a society must be viewed from two variables: cultural heterogeneity and social heterogeneity. Cultural heterogeneity is defined by the sociogenetic indicators (race, ethnicity, tribe), culture (culture, values, habits), language, religion, caste or locality. "Social heterogeneity is defined by indicators such as class, status, institutionality as power". (Saad 1981, 8)

Characteristics of Heterogenous Society according to Pierre L. Van den Berghe: (1) Segmentation occurs within different subcultural groups. (2) Social structure is divided between non-complimentary institutions. (3) Lack of consensus among members regarding basic values. (4) Relatively high frequency of conflicts among various groups. (5) Relatively speaking, social integration is nurtured by coercien and economic co-dependency (6) as well as political dominance by a group over another. (Nasikun, 2009)

1.3 Communication between Groups

Communication between groups refers to the substance of intercultural communication, namely communication between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, including race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic differences (Tubbs and Moss, 2000). In intercultural communication, both the source of message and its recipient expect some sort of common values, such as experience and perception. However, cultural characteristics tend to provide different experiences. Such difference may in turn cause dissimilar opinions and views between groups in assessing an object.

Cultural difference is even more prominent during communication with other cultures, and members of each culture are often reluctant in trying to understand one another. This attitude, according to Myron W. Lustig, is a manifestation of ethnocentrism, a belief that traditions, actions and cultural values of one's self are superior to those of other people. (Samovar dan Porter,1988). Emphasis on cultural superiority itself is an attempt to preserve the ongoing cultural values and stability. Such condition demands continuous communications between groups in order to mitigate conflicts. Lack of transparent communication tends to cause underground conflicts, creating continuous misunderstanding and hostility. Therefore, "effective communication (including active listening) is a means of preventing, mitigating or resolving disputes". (Scannell 2010, 2)

2. Method

The methodology used in this research is qualitative. "Qualitative research aims to understand or seek the meaning of a particular event and its relations with normal people in a certain situation". (Moleong 2005, 9). Basically, qualitative research aims to disclose the meaning of a human nature phenomenon in their capacity as individuals, groups or the general public and in relation with political communication and participation in the general election. In alignment with the qualitative model, the research also focuses on descriptive case study so that the result may describe events in an orderly manner starting from the object of research.

The researcher must be able to describe the case to be studied, determine the relevance of data to be collected and specify the tasks to be performed on the collected data (Yin 2008, 2). Cases in this study include various events reported by the mass media and online media in relation with conflicts, mass riots, invasion and various other incidents fueled by differences in religions and beliefs in Indonesia.

The attempts of tracing events and symbols in the sectarian conflicts are focused on news tracing on online media regarding conflicts between groups, religions and beliefs, which may harm heterogeneity in the society. From the online media, 12 news were selected for sectarian conflict analysis.

On the other hand, the researcher also dug information regarding the increasing group effort in religious purification, faith as well as unilaterally-interpreted values. Upon examination of such condition, essentially sectarian conflicts in Indonesia cannot be completely eliminated without serious effort on the part of the Government.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Blurred Description of Conflicts in Indonesia

Conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs do not seem to be decreasing in number from year to year during the political reform era in Indonesia. According to Wall & Callister, "conflict is a process in which one party feels concerned about his/her belongings being opposed or harmed by another party". (Ha and Ferguson 2015, 6). Based on records from The Wahid Institute (The Wahid Institute is an institution which aspires to actualize the principles and goals of Abdurrahman Wahid in establishing moderate Islamic mentality to foster democracy, multiculturalism and tolerance among the moslem people in Indonesia and throughout the world), there were 121 conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs in 2009. Whereas in 2010 there were 184 incidents, 267 in 2011 and 274 in 2012 with 363 violations of religious freedom. (Kompas, 29 December 2012). Meanwhile, data from the Public Advocacy Study Institution (ELSAM) also shows similar symptoms. In 2011, there were 63 conflicts related with religious freedom. The numbers are concerning indeed, since Indonesia is widely famed for its cultural diversity. (Susanto in Suara Pembaruan, 5 January 2012).

Year End Report by TWI with the topics of 'Religious Freedom Requires a Protective Leader', TWI revealed that conflicts due to religious differences have been increasing from one year to another. There were 363 acts of violation in the form of assault, vandalism, murder, ignorance, misinterpretation, villification of certain beliefs, ban of religious buildings, religious activities, forced religion and intimidation (Kompas, 29 December 2012). Meanwhile, Fauzi and Panggabean (2014, 96) notes bore similar results. "From 2008 to 2011 there have been 73 incidents regarding violation of religious freedoms related with religious buildings".

Until the year 2013, conflicts of religion and beliefs continue to occur in the heterogenous society which upholds the values of diversity. Based on data from The Wahid Institute, from January to December 2013 there have been 245 cases or incidents of violation and intolerance, among which 106 events (43 percent) involve government actors and 139 events (57 percent) are by non-government actors. Meanwhile, there are 280 actions including 121 incidents (43 percent) by government actors and 159 actions (57 percent) by non-government actors. (Uca News 2014). Upon examining records from various conflicts between groups in Indonesia, it's clear that Indonesian national unity is very fragile.

Threats of disintegration may occur at any time due to sectarianism values claiming superiority of their own group over others. It is more concerning when sectarian conflicts occur due to ethnocentrism, communalism, sub-nationalist views and various behaviors leading to the increased sentiment against groups of different religions and beliefs. Ethnocentric symptoms are even stronger with the freedom of opinion after the political reform. According to Myron W. Lustig, ethnocentrism is a belief that one's own traditions, actions and cultural values are superior to those of other cultural groups (Samovar and Porter 1988, 55). Placing one's own groups superioty above others serves to maintain sociocultural values and stability.

In other words, ethnocentrism is an attitude and behavior of looking at another group from a negative point of view. Meanwhile, culture itself is deemed to have advantages in the lives of a society. Ethnocentric views can never achieve integrative communication for mutual understanding, since in an effective communication, both the source of message and its recipient expect some sort of common values, such as experience and perception. (Kayam in Colleta and Kayam 1987). It's undeniable that the characteristics of groups with different religions and beliefs provide different experiences and therefore carry with itself loose communication impacts in assessing an object of discussion.

Based on data from Wahid Institute, conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs throughout 2014 have decreased by around 42 percent. One of the factors supporting the decreasing number of conflicts is

competition between election candidates in showing to the public that they are the ones who support the issues of tolerance and anti-violence. However, it doesn't mean that the number of conflicts will decrease within the next term. This is due to the fact that in the face of the national political powerplay and the global sectarian politics diffused through communication technology, conflicts will continue to rise and influence the dynamics of public lives.

3.2 Triggers of Conflicts between Different Religions and Beliefs

The rise of conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs is closely related with the existence of the Government and political elites in state politics. The attempts to handle conflicts are detained by the skin-deep communication through verbal messages to the public. As such, there seems to be no resolution to the roots of problem based on the willingness of opposing parties to accept differences for the sake of creating prosperous society. Due to the never-ending conflicts, it's no surprise if the public suspects that there are covert ignorance of sectarian conflicts. Commissioner for the National Commission for Human Rights (Komnas HAM) M. Imaduddin Rahman stated that government apparatus are involved in the increasing number of inter-religious intolerance incidents in Indonesia. The apparatus are often accused of deliberately ignoring cases of violence. (tempo.co 2015).

Based on google search, there are 654,000 topics related with the key word of conflict ignorance (google.co.id 2015). It is not impossible to attain such goals, but it highly depends on the power of opposing parties for support in local and national political competitions. Furthermore, due to the politics of bureaucracy, there's a rhetorical tendency of verbal and non-verbal communication pattern developing in state institutions which is also closely related with the development of diversity values.

Such condition is aligned with the statement made by Sidney Jones from the International Crisis Group in the Public Lecture on Human Rights at KontraS (KontraS is the Commission for Disappeared and Victims of Violence, a task force established by a number of Non-Governmental Organizationspada tahun in 1996. As a commission working to monitor the issues of Human Rights, it often receives complaints and inputs from the public, including victims or witnesses who dare to voice their aspirations on local Human Rights issues), during an event in Jakarta in 2011. "Jones said that Human Rights activists lack the aggressiveness to approach bureaucrats and politicians in the attempt to actualize democratic ideals which uphold heterogeneity". (Kompas, 5 July 2011, p. 4). As a result, political elites in the government and state politics tend to acommodate sectarian communities with larger mass who can support them in their political struggle, rather than governing in the interests of all parties without differentiating between groups. Such statement is, of course, not entirely correct, because government apparatus have been making attempts to support heterogeneity. However, it's never easy to compete with the message of differences in the political bureaucracy of the state, which is fueled during political competitions for public office.

In light of the above, Komaruddin Hidayat on Kompas Daily Newspaper (5 August 2011) stated that "government officials in the central and local governments instead make use of religious symbols to create positive public image of themselves". As such, there's a relation between the actions of political elites in the government and the spirit of heterogeneity in the community. Heterogenous rhetorics often appear, but upon further exploration they are indeed voiced during mass events from the perspectives of various religions and beliefs. This is contrary to the nature of heterogenous behavior, which is a message of tolerance that should be conveyed during homogenous gathering events. A homogenous group's members have many similarities with one another (Verderber and Verderber 2008). A message of tolerance within one's homogenous group serves to reinforce public trust that the government and the political elites are truly supportive of national heterogeneity.

Since tolerance is assumed to be attached to the Indonesian heterogeneity, government officials and political elites tend to seek the cause of conflicts between religions and beliefs in the emotions of masses who commit riots, assults and widespread violence. Such opinion appears in various cases in Indonesia. 'In the Sampang conflict which created refugees in their own country, violence is often seen as personal and not related with religious differences. The conflicts in South Lampung are often stated by a number of local and national political elites as shallow disagreements between local youths that are completely blown out of proportion on social media and mass media. Mass invasion in Cikeusik Banten is considered a force majeure beyond human control. Meanwhile, the riots in Temanggung, Central Java, are deemed by the government elites as personal conflict. (Susanto 2013, 2015)

Amids denial of the substance of a conflict, we cannot disregard actual facts, much less with a goal to suppress future conflicts. This is due to the fact that in the era of communication freedom, there are various sources of public information which are not dominated by the government or the political elites in their seat of power.

Disregard of conflicts shows the weakness of the government and the political elites in enforcing heterogeneity, which is supported by the four pillars of nationality: Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, Republic of Indonesia and Bhineka Tunggal Ika. Ideally, those who are responsible for harmony in national civil lives must admit religious conflicts occurring in various localities in Indonesia.

It is only through transparency and communication between groups with equality on the forefront can the government and political elites build public awareness of the dangers of national disintegrity today. After all, the message which spreads denial of the roots of conflict potentially breeds more conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs in the future. Reducing the facts on the cause of conflict is clearly disadvantageous to the attempt of developing national heterogeneity, which is often identified as utterly tolerant towards other religions. Therefore, in a democratic state, honesty and transparency must live side by side with public trust towards the government and political elites in their seat of power to voice the importance of religious tolerance.

However, the issue at hand is democracy which should have been used as a foundation to create a civilized and prosperous society, but was interpreted to suit the interests of a certain group. This is a violation of the democratic ideals to appreciate differences, in alignment with multiculturalist politics which acknowledge the equivalency of different groups to survive and cohabit in the society (Taylor 1994 in Nugroho et al. 2012).

In a national democracy interpreted according to their own personal interests, parties involved in a conflict often reason that they are running a democracy to control groups which do not share the same religious values and beliefs. This action does not only disadvantage certain communities, but also endangers Indonesian national unity which is widely known for its tolerance.

It is undeniable, according to the opinion of Lynch and Mc. Goldrick, that the democracy which upholds freedom was rapidly developing after the 1998 political reform in Indonesia. The fall of Soeharto's regime in 1998 paved a way for measured democracy in the government (Hanitzsch, Loffelholz & Mustamu 2008, 109). Indonesia became the only country in South East Asia classified as 'free' in the index issued by Freedom House. However, several observers viewed "Indonesian democracy as having low quality and requires further development". (Supriatna 2009, 13). As such, the quality of democracy in Indonesia requires serious attention from the government and political elites. President SBY, during an event in Jakarta in 2014, stated that even though Indonesian democracy has made some achievements, it is still ridden with various challenges such as overdone freedom, political campaigns which are full of black campaigns, etc (actual.co, 2015)

Democracy should not be limited to freedom of acting suppressive upon those of different religions and beliefs, instead rewarding groups of society with various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Democracy as one of the supporting pillars for communication freedom runs parallel with the freedom of access to information from various sources. Various events throughout the world within the scope of conflicts between groups can be easily found out by the people and used as reference to rally solidarity within communal ties by disregarding national heterogeneity. Ronnie D. Lipschutz who discussed global communication reiterated that "the global communication network has significant role in transnational political activities as manifestation of the world's civil society". (De Jong, Shaw and Stammer 2008, 17).

Indeed, "the globalization of information grows rapidly and is now able to connect all entites throughout the world". (Baylist and Smith 2005, 24). Unfortunately, under the influence of globalization, a number of political elites in the government and those with political powers may exploit the issues of religious differences to strengthen their supporters base in order to secure a public office or a seat in the government. This is contrary to the fact that on one side, 'Religion is hope for the future as well as the spirit that drives us towards better changes' (Abdurrahman in Noviani 2012, 123). On a global scale throughout the world, religions still uphold peace in human interaction (Reverend Moon 2011, 236). Substantially, religions should not be used as tools of conflict or source of conflict between groups of different faith.

Despite the fact that some conflicts do come from without, in the perspective of communication between different cultures or groups, there's an internal blockage from both sides for reasons of maintaining their respective characteristics, religions and faith. The hindrances are as follows: (1) Difference of purpose in communicating with other groups. (2) Increasing Ethnocentric sentiments, deeming one's own group values superior to the sociocultural aspects of other groups. (3) Lack of trust in other groups which are deemed opposed to the values of their own. (4) Withdrawal from communication with the assumption of being ineffective (5) No empathy to place one's self in the shoes of another (6) Stereotypes, generalizing the characteristics of other groups (7) Gap of power, in which one groups feels more politically superior to others from a subjective point of view (Samovar, Porter and Jain 1981, 192-200). In communication between different groups or cultures, all seven factors are deemed as potential issues which may cause open conflicts within a heterogenous society.

Among the seven factors, stereotype, which is closely related to prejudice, is prominent among relationships between different groups (Samovar, Porter and McDaniel, 2009). Indeed, "the effects of stereotypes and prejudice in a heterogenous society such as Indonesia are prevalent in public lives". (Mulyana and Rakhmat 2012, 153). Both opinions are aligned with that of Scott and Power, that stereotypes rapidly bear prejudice in support of or against an individual. Meanwhile, prejudice is a rigid behavior of a social group based on a mistaken belief system and preconceptions which relatively breeds distrust towards other groups. (Samovar, Porter and Jain 1981). Stereotypes are used to generalize the characteristics of other groups, both positive and negative, and are difficult to eliminate. Furthermore, prejudice is a negative attitude towards other groups due to lack of interactive experience (Hybels and Weaver II 2009, 67). Various conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs in Indonesia seem to be closely related with the stereotypes and prejudices maintained to distrust other groups, regardless of the fact that negative prejudice in communication between groups in Indonesia, which is highly heterogenous in terms of ethnicity, religions and beliefs, may potentially divide the renowned national diversity.

Meanwhile, the manifestation of prejudice is as follows: (1) Antilocution, which discusses another group from a negative and disadvantageous point of view. (2) Avoidance, which is avoiding contact with a disliked group due to differences, (3) Discrimination, an act of isolating or differentiating a person from another group. (Samovar,Porter and Jain,1981). If all three factors arise, there will be violence, which is an act of physical assault against an individual or group due to emotional dislikes. The next stage, which is the most dangerous one, is extermination - gradual or mass genocide through widespread violence in conflicts between different groups. Such is the case in Kalianda district in Lampung province, when hundreds of people from Agom village in Kalianda district and several other villages made a move against Balinuraga village in Way Panji district. The mass intended to invade Balinuraga, predominantly of Bali ethnicity, who follow a different religion than that of the local group. (beritasatu.com 2012). It is also the case in Sampang, Madura island, in 2012 where 5 (five) people were gravely injured in a religious conflict. (detik.com 2012).

Despite the decreasing mass violence, negative stigma is often left behind. Conflicts between groups in a number of localities in Indonesia are also closely related with continuous distrust upon gauging other groups of different religions and beliefs. Therefore, using the "transactional communication model which creates a spirit of common sense of belonging between the speaker and its audience" (Jafee 2010, 11) it is only reasonable that the government and political elites act as communicator of peace and heterogeneity programs to develop a collective conscience which may prove helpful in establishing close relationships between groups of different religions and beliefs.

It is no small feat, because there will always be challenges and rejections by those who feel that their personal interests are being threatened. Furthermore, when a democracy is interpreted to serve personal interests, the attempts of ensuring mutual respect are often difficult, seeing that the differences are exploited as source of political power to secure a seat in the government and other public offices.

3.3 Criticizing the Roles of Government and Elites in their Seat of Power

The State is the most responsible organ for public security, yet it seems to be helpless in handling various conflicts caused by different religions and beliefs. Various government policies which attempt to put differences in the context of upholding Human Rights seem to be ignored by those who are directly involved in the conflicts. All public policies based on Human Rights must emphasize on the level of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and direct correlation with the people. Non-discrimination policy especially must give undivided attention to the issues of discrimination, equality, equivalency and marginalized groups - including the minorities, traditional societies and citizens under custody or undergoing legal process. "Marginalized groups must be managed in accordance with local condition". (Haryanto 2011, 32).

The inability to provide a sense of security to people who are undergoing religious conflicts is prevalent in the polling held by Kompas Daily Newspaper in its article 'Reviewing the Roles of the State in Diversity (Kompas, 10 December 2012) which shows that only 32.3 percent respondents stated to be satisfied with the roles of the State in maintaining diversity, whereas 60.8 percent were unsatisfied and the remaining 6.9 percent were uncertain. Essentially, the people are still expecting much from the government in giving the necessary sense of security in a heterogenous society which can unify the nation and state in a civilized manner. Wilbur Schramm who conducted an in-depth study of peaceful interaction between humans stated that "the Government is the main actor responsible for bridging different groups by nurturing a sense of co-dependency on one another". (Mulyana dan Rakhmat 2012, 7).

It is interesting to quote the Human Right Watch Asian Division's report in early March 2013, titled 'Violation

against Religious Minorities in Indonesia', which shows that the government has failed to protect minority groups from violence in the name of religion (Kompas, 1 March 2013). Ideally, such assessment must be used as constructive criticism against the government and the political elites to prove themselves by building factual tolerance instead of merely pointing fingers at each other as well as exploring the jargons of heterogeneity as justification for religious democracy.

In the attempts to handle such conflicts, there are already several interconnected regulations on social conflicts. Law of Republic of Indonesia number 7 year 2012(Law of Republic of Indonesia number 7 of 2012 is a statutory closely tied with the handling of social conflicts in various public issues) regarding the Handling of Social Conflicts provides a guide to mitigating, ceasing conflicts and post-conflict recovery. Instruction by the President of Republic of Indonesia No. 2 year 2013 regarding Home Security Disturbances also delegated government's liability in handling conflicts to the local government. In other words, the government and political elites at central or local levels must give full support to any attempt of reducing conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs which may pose harm to national unity. (Law of the Rupublic of Indonesia No.7/2012).

Various parties in the government and political elites who voiced their support for religious tolerance should refrain from communicating such support solely for propaganda or to attract sympathy and increase their electability in the local and national political competition. They should voice the importance of diversity and religious tolerance in all situations, especially within their own group. During his governance, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) continued to voice the necessity for religious cohabitation for the sake of the entire nation and governance. President SBY also reiterated the importance of religious tolerance for the sake of peaceful and just Indonesia. (kemenag.go.id 2013).

However, amidst various conflicts between different religions and beliefs, President SBY's statement seemed to fall on deaf ears. Such ignorance is also aligned with the assumptions of appearance of covert rhetorics and communications by government officials and the political elites, which seemed to fuel differences in their respective political support base. Such behavior is harmful to the nation, because in such a paternalistic society, the government and political elites are often referred to by the people in taking actions. Such ambiguity towards heterogeneity has created various statements leading to the unilateral justification of a certain group - it gave rise to sectarian behavior, communalism and sub-nationalist view in disregard of national heterogeneity.

To prevent conflicts between different religions and beliefs, the Government and political elites seek support from public figures who are aware of the importance of national heterogeneity. For example, in Borobudur on 4 March 2015, Islamic and Buddhist public figures from around the world shared a commitment to mitigate extremism and reject the misuse of religion for violence. (Kompas.com,2015). A number of religious figures from the Indonesian Church Association (PGI), Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP), Indonesian Buddhist Community Representatives (Walubi), Indonesian Confusionist Supreme Council (Matakin) and Indonesian Church Representatives Conference (KWI) also held a meeting at the Nahdatul Ulama Grand Council (PBNU) in December 2012 in response to the high number of violent acts in the name of religion. The meeting concluded in an agreement to bolster mutual understanding and discussions of the poor people who are still facing poverty, suppression and injustice. (okezone.com 2011).

Awareness of public figures shows that the issues of conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs are still a great concern to the Indonesian national heterogeneity/Pluralism as a state principle is upheld through the motto Bhineka Tunggal Ika, but it's still far from expectations. In their national lives, Hindu people have taught us much about the importance of upholding pluralism. (liputanindonesia.co 2015).

In view of the blurred conflicts, it is no wonder that conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs still continue in Indonesia. Therefore, the government and political elites must open communication between cultures to be used as basis for increasing understanding of a common sense of belonging in the face of different religions and beliefs. From regulatory aspect, the rights to practice one's religion without discrimination is already guaranteed by the constitution, along with respect of Human Rights in Indonesia.

In the 1945 Constitution Article 28I (1), it is stated that 'the rights to live, to be free from torment, to voice one's opinion and conscience, to practice one's religion, to be free from slavery and to be acknowledged as a person by the law as well as the rights to not be persecuted based on retroactive law are basic human rights which cannot be compromised under any circumstances. (National Commission for Women's Rights / Komnas Perempuan 2012) Another supporting law is the Law of Republic of Indonesia number 39/1999 regulating Human Rights. It forbids direct or indirect discrimination based on religion, tribe, race, ethnicity, group, class, social status, financial standing, gender, language and political views.

On the Kompas Daily Newspaper (28 February 2015), Halaqah Fikih Kebhinekaan held by Maarif Institute

(Maarif Institute for Culture and Humanity is an aspiring institution in cultural movement within the context of Islam, humanity and Indonesia) in Jakarta discussed the importance of diversity, considering that there are still many religious violence caused by misunderstanding of religious dogma, often interpreted unilaterally, as well as villification of other groups, leading to conflicts. In essence, conflicts between different religions and beliefs in Indonesia must come to the attention of the government and political elites in their seat of power, considering that conflicts may lead to local or even national disintegration. "The handling of social conflicts may take a formal resolution by legal means, such as conciliation, mediation and arbitration, often used to resolve issues". (Kotler and Roberto 1988, 165). However, attempts must be made to handle conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs, including communication between cultures which are able to establish similar mentality among those who have different backgrounds in their daily national lives.

3.4 Implications: Developing Heterogeneity through Communication between Groups

Conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs are linear with the post-political reform freedom. National democratization is interpreted subjectively to serve the interests of a certain group. There was even a partial integralistic thinking with the purpose of developing the strength of a minor group for reasons of faith purification. In truth, the concept of integralistics as voiced by Soepomo during the early days of national independence is macro, meaning that it consists of the entire scope of Indonesia. Despite the fact that information transparency and universal democracy cannot attain significant consensus. In the concept of integralism, the state has a special advantage in terms of its social history and dynamics. "The Indonesian development politics must be adjusted to its real social structure of the present as well as challenges of the era, for example its national goals in the Great East Asia environment". (Soepomo, in Herbert Feith and Lance Castles 1988, 180).

Since the post-political reform of 1998 saw an increase in narrow integralistic group mentality, it is reasonable to say that heterogeneity remains a critical challenge to a nation which upholds pluralism. The awareness of importance of pluralism in Indonesia has already existed since before the national independence day of 17 August 1945. In March 1945, Sukarno in his spontaneous speech on 1 June 1945 in front of the Independence Preparation Investigative Board established by the Japanese occupation government revealed that Indonesia as a whole is the entirety from the ends of Sumatra to Irian, with its various ethnicities and religious who support each other in order to actualize prosperity of the people (Herbert Feith and Lance Castles 1988).

Indeed, in every government era, developing national heterogeneity becomes a never-ending issue. In the era of President Soeharto, the rhetorics of elites who voiced the harmonization of public lives which are constantly related with ethnicity, religion, race and political views SARA (an acronym for Suku (ethnicity), Agama (religion), Ras (race) and Antar-golongan (inter-group relations)) must be eliminated. In the event of such conflict, all state subordinates from the central government down to village administrations must immediately voice their disdain. However, religious conflicts still occur among the society with rhetorics on the importance of living in harmony and balance in their respective community.

After the 1998 political reform, the government has made attempts of reducing or eliminating conflicts altogether by issuing various regulations on the handling of conflicts between different groups. As such, national security actions have been taken by state apparatus according to their respective duties and responsibilities. On the other hand, the rhetorics of pluralism continued to be present in public speeches in various political competitions. (Susanto, on Kompas, 31 March 2008) However, as is prevalent among the people, conflicts continue to occur in various localities. (Susanto, on Suara Karya, 23 July 2013). Message of diversity in various political competitions is ignored and conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs continue to arise in various localities. Therefore, notwithstanding legal and security approaches made by the government and political elites who are responsible for public welfare and security, it is only reasonable that various elements within the government and the political elites from their seat of power implement an intercultural communication strategy for different groups of religions and beliefs in the society.

Intercultural communication strategy aims to minimize or eliminate conflicts to nurture a common sense of belonging as well as a sense of security and mutual respect. Within this context, intercultural communication also includes issues between religious groups. This is due to the fact that in communication approach, culture is a deposit or collection of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitude, meaning, hierarchy, religion, allegations of time, roles, spatial connection, universal concept and material objects obtained by a group of people from one generation to the next through individual and group efforts. (Samovar dan Porter, 1988). Based on such opinion, the strategy for improving communication between groups of different religions and beliefs can be carried out through intercultural communication or cross-group communication. In fact, culture has vast baselines which

include all aspects of human lives, including religion and beliefs. Culture is also a form of activity and behavior which serves as models for self-adjustment and public communication styles able to survive through the ages.

In developing communication between groups, there are a number of actions which must be taken by the government and the political elites with vast communication network in the society. "Communication is simply the relationship between various attitudes or descriptions arising out of the behavior of two interacting parties". (Bowers dan Bradac 1982, 15). From various definitions of communication, a particular opinion states that "communication is a process which operates systematically, in which individuals interact with one another using symbols to create and interpret meaning" (Wood 2006, 9). Communication process runs continuously without beginning or end as well as systematically, meaning that interconnected parts may influence one another during or before communication. Meanwhile, symbols used in the interaction represent the entity, language or particular actions which may be interpreted differently by the message recipient.

In order to create an on-target communication between groups, there must be a common understanding between the message sender and recipient, with all of the attached attributes such as different values, beliefs, social organization and world view, and there must be an understanding of human communication oriented towards common interests. However, communication between groups of different religions and beliefs in indonesia can be carried out according to the given context.

Other surrounding events may critically affect the message conveyed in the communication. This situational context includes social roles, introduction to territorial borders and knowledge regarding the type of events, programs or activities'. (Bower dan Bradac 1982). Communication is also defined not only as an exchange of news and message, but also as individual and group activities performed to exchange data, facts and ideas with one another. Its functions in the social system include information, socialization, motivation, debates and discussion, education to advance culture, entertainment and integration (MacBride 1983)

Regardless of the different patterns used to convey messages "the understanding of meaning is an essential factor in human communication". (Susanto 2010, 11). In the perspectives of Pearce and Cronen, the management of synchronization of meaning is a comprehensive approach to social interactions using complex structure of actions and meanings, coexisting harmoniously in communication (Littlejohn, 2008). Mutual understanding cannot be possibly achieved if the interacting parties rely on individual or group characteristics deemed superior to those of its interactive partner.

To establish awareness of importance of diversity in a heterogenous society, the government and political elites must implement and disseminate communication patterns between groups in the hopes of creating unity. Hope is also a public responsibility driven by the dreams of establishing a better society based on past experiences (Olkkonen and Luoma-Aho, 2015).

After all, heterogeneity is an Indonesian character bound by diversity. Therefore, in order to build communication between different groups, an understanding of sociocultural characteristic must be established between interacting groups. Brent D. Ruben highlighted the importance of understanding the characteristics of a host, a native or local people. In order for communication to be directly on target, smooth and efficient, the following attempts must be made: (1) Creating capacity with respect towards the sociocultural values of other groups, (2) Refraining from forcing one's own opinion, (3) Personal knowledge capable of understanding other people, (4) Making empathy the forefront of human interactions, (5) Acting flexibly (6) Maintaining relationships; (7) Developing tolerant behavior (Samovar and Porter 1988, 331 -339). Basically, an understanding of other different groups is highly important in communicating for the purpose of creating harmony in a heterogenous society such as Indonesia. The Government, in its communication program policies to handle conflicts, must refer to such aspects.

To improve the effectiveness of communication between different religious groups, the government and political elites in Indonesia must diffuse the principles of communication between groups to achieve piece in a heterogenous society. The principles include (1) Knowing yourself, in all its aspects, to create awareness of difference. (2). Using a common language in communicating and interacting (3). Taking time to give an opportunity for conflicts to die down, (4) Calculating settings which may create opportunity to understand the message of other groups, (5) Improving communication style with different groups, (6) Providing feedbacks to ensure that communication runs interactively in equality (7) Developing empathy towards other groups (8) Examining similarities between different cultures to establish close relationships (9) Upholding ethics in communicating (Samovar, Porter and Jain 1981, 202-210).

All nine aspects should be used as basis in peace projects to build heterogeneity by the government and political elites in their seat of power in Indonesia. It is not easy to do all of the above in a single case of conflict resolution

between different groups. However, with sincerity in conducting communication between groups, it is expected that the society can trust the government's ability to resolve conflicts which pose harm to its diversity.

However, the communication pattern used to develop close relationships and harmony among heterogenous society must be disseminated to the general public, especially groups which are prone to conflicts, mass mobilization and other forms of anarchy which may harm Indonesian unity. Strategy for disseminating communication practices between groups must of course be driven by the government and political elites in view of their public influence.

Major campaigns must be carried out on communication strategy between different groups in every government program, both formal and informal, for the sake of increasing public awareness on the importance of maintaining religious tolerance as a national diversity character in Indonesia. In a more specific context, public figures must participate in voicing social prosperity and justice based on heterogeneity.

On the other hand, as a communicator in heterogeneity program, the government and political elites must empathize with conflicting groups in order to build a common sense of understanding of peace. According to Milton J. Bennet, empathy is emotional and intellectual imaginative participation in another person's experience, or simply defined as putting one's self in another person's shoes. "Lack of empathy leads to the development of conflicts between different communities". (Mulyana and Rakhmat 2012, 87). Upon examining various political rhetorics by those who are responsible for national diversity and justice, it is not impossible that statements will be made, covered in awareness of tolerance and upholding diversity, but with a covert agenda of supporting a conflicting group and villifying the other in certain conflicts cases in Indonesia. As a matter of fact, honesty and ethics when communicating in front of the public must be maintained in order to encourage trust in the state as well as its political organs. Basically, the focus on communication strategy between groups is to enforce absolute diversity for the sake of preserving the heterogeneity in Indonesia from threats of conflicts in various localities.

4. Conclusion

Conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs in Indonesia continue to occur and may increase in number due to political competition between the elites to secure government offices, for reasons of religious purification as well as other actions which reinforce communalist values. Triggers of conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs in Indonesia include: covert ignorance by the government and elites in their seat of power, ignorance of cause of conflict, democracy interpreted solely for the interests of a group and the impact of political globalization which explores religious conflicts in other countries to rally sectarians.

The Government and Political Elites are not yet working optimally to handle conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs according to the applicable regulations. Legal and national security approaches within the framework of social democratic harmony must compete with the dissemination of sectarian values which dominate the communication patterns of public officials and political elites to secure public sympathy and support in their political competition. The attempts to develop national heterogeneity through religious tolerance have been made since before Indonesia was independent, but to this day it still has the potentials of dividing the heterogeneity of Indonesian society.

Furthermore, to reduce and mitigate conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs, the government and political elites must be committed to maintain heterogeneity and refrain from using religion to secure public offices or support amidst the escalating political dynamics. The Government and political elites must be firm in their actions to resolve conflicts, acknowledge that conflicts may be triggered by differences of religion despite the fact that they may remain personal daily issues. They must give understanding that democracy means respecting others of different views and refrain from using religious conflicts in other countries as tools to rally sectarians.

The Government and political elites must give their best effort to resolve conflicts between groups of different religions and beliefs in accordance with the applicable regulations and avoid sectarian messages which may induce social divisiveness among the Indonesian heterogenous society. In developing national heterogeneity through tolerance, the government and political elites should refer not only to the applicable regulations, but also follow it with an attempt to improve communication between different groups and continuous socialization to the public on the necessity of living peacefully in a diverse community.

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