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Kees van Dijk

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RELIGION AND DIALOGUE IN INDONESIA:
FROM THE SOEHARTO PERIOD TO THE PRESENT

Mujiburrahman

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Mujiburrahman

Religion and Dialogue in Indonesia: From the Soeharto Period to the Present

Abstrak: *Meski berpenduduk mayoritas Muslim, penduduk Indonesia juga terdiri dari para pemeluk agama selain Islam, di antaranya Protestan, Katolik, Hindu, Buddha, Konghucu, dan agama-agama lokal lainnya. Kenyataan bahwa Indonesia terdiri dari multi-agama ini berimplikasi perlunya dialog lintas agama sebagai salah satu cara untuk membangun kerukunan antar-umat agama serta mencegah terjadinya konflik agama.*

Artikel ini membahas perkembangan dialog agama di Indonesia, terutama dari masa awal Orde Baru pada tahun 1960-an, saat ketika aktivitas dialog antar-agama di Indonesia dimulai, hingga sekarang. Perkembangan wacana dialog antar-agama di tingkat internasional, mempengaruhi perkembangan dialog antar-agama di Indonesia. Selain itu, kebijakan politik Orde Baru yang mengutamakan stabilitas politik, berakibat perlunya pemerintah menyelenggarakan proyek-proyek dialog dengan tema kerukunan sebagai bagian dari upaya tertib politik.

Bagi pemerintah Orde Baru, harmoni antar-agama sangat penting untuk mempertahankan stabilitas sosio-politik yang menjadi keniscayaan bagi keberhasilan program-program pembangunannya. Oleh karena itu, isu utama yang didiskusikan dalam dialog yang diselenggarakan oleh pemerintah ini adalah bagaimana para pemimpin agama, didasarkan pada ajaran agama mereka masing-masing, dapat mendukung dan melegitimasi program-program pembangunan pemerintah.

Salah seorang tokoh penting dalam proyek dialog antar-agama masa Orde Baru adalah Menteri Agama Mukti Ali, yang memulai dialog antar-agama pada 1972. Dalam menjalankan proyek kerukunan antar-umat beragama ini, Ali mengangkat aktivis Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (HMI), Djohan Effendi, sebagai ketua proyek dialog tersebut. Menurut Effendi, dari 1972-1977, terdapat 23 dialog antara para pemimpin agama yang diselenggarakan di 21 kota di seluruh Indonesia. Pesertanya meliputi pejabat pemerintah, pemimpin Islam, Protestan, Katolik, Hindu,

Buddha, Konghucu, dan bahkan penghayat kebatinan Jawa dan agama-agama lokal lainnya.

Inisiatif pemerintah melaksanakan dialog ini kemudian diimbangi oleh inisiatif masyarakat sipil, terutama oleh tokoh-tokoh agama. Berbeda dengan dialog yang digagas pemerintah, dialog non-pemerintah ini cenderung kritis pada kebijakan-kebijakan pembangunan Orde Baru, dan pada saat yang sama berusaha menciptakan sikap saling memahami dan bekerjasama lintas agama guna mewujudkan Indonesia yang demokratis.

Dialog antar-agama yang digagas oleh masyarakat sipil ini setidaknya dimulai sejak akhir 1960-an, di antaranya digagas oleh pendeta Katolik Cletus Groenen di Sukabumi, dan yang lain digagas oleh Mukti Ali di Yogyakarta. Pada 1970-an, beberapa pemimpin agama juga berpartisipasi dalam dialog internasional yang diorganisasi oleh World Council of Churches (WCC). Upaya serius kelompok masyarakat sipil dalam mengembangkan dialog antar-agama baru terlihat pada awal 1980-an, digagas oleh Dewan Gereja Indonesia (DGI) yang mengadakan pertemuan antar-agama. Selain itu, terdapat pula upaya yang dilakukan oleh Nurcholish Madjid yang mendirikan Paramadina pada pertengahan 1980-an yang mengembangkan diskursus teologis Islam inklusif dan toleran. Upaya ini terus berlanjut pada tahun 1990-an melalui berdirinya Institute for Interfaith Dialogue (Interfidei) di Yogyakarta yang diprakarsai oleh Th. Sumartana pada 1992. Lahir pula Majelis Dialog Antar-Agama (MADIA) di Jakarta pada 1995, yang didukung oleh para aktivis Muslim, Katolik, dan Protestan.

Setelah jatuhnya kekuasaan Soeharto pada 1998, berbagai konflik berdarah bernuansa agama menandai lanskap sosial-politik Indonesia. Muncul sejumlah kelompok-kelompok Muslim militan dan radikal yang tidak toleran terhadap non-Muslim bahkan terhadap sesama Muslim yang berbeda pandangan. Seiring dengan itu, semakin banyak organisasi masyarakat sipil yang mengusung dialog antar-agama. Interfidei mengembangkan jaringannya di luar Jawa melalui "Forum Dialog". Berdiri pula Wahid Institute yang memiliki program "Islam dan Pluralisme". Sementara pemerintah mengeluarkan kebijakan mendirikan Forum Kerukukan Antar-Umat Beragama (FKUB) di tingkat kabupaten/kota dan provinsi.

Terbukanya keran kebebasan dalam demokrasi semakin menandakan perlunya dialog, bukan saja antar-agama, tetapi juga intern penganut agama. Selain itu, munculnya kelompok-kelompok radikal juga menjadi tantangan serius bagi pendukung dialog antar-agama. Pengalaman dialog antar-agama di Indonesia selama ini dapat menjadi pelajaran penting bagi pemerintah dalam merumuskan kebijakan yang tepat untuk menciptakan kehidupan berbangsa yang lebih damai di tengah-tengah kondisi masyarakat Indonesia yang pluralistik.

Mujiburrahman

Religion and Dialogue in Indonesia: From the Soeharto Period to the Present

خلاصة: على الرغم من أن غالبية سكانها من المسلمين ، كما يتكون سكان إندونيسيا من أتباع الديانات الأخرى غير الإسلام ، بما في ذلك البروتستانتية والأديان الكاثوليكية والهندوسية والبوذية ، والكونفوشيوسية ، ومحلية أخرى. حقيقة إن إندونيسيا تتكون من الدين متعددة تعبر عن الحاجة إلى الحوار بين الأديان كوسيلة لبناء مجتمع متناغم بين الأديان ومنع وقوع الصراع الديني.

هذا المقال يناقش تطوير الحوار الديني في إندونيسيا ، وخاصة منذ الأيام الأولى للنظام الجديد في السنة ١٩٦٠ ، وقت أنشطة الحوار بين الأديان في إندونيسيا فقط ، حتى الآن. يتأثر الخطاب تنمية الحوار بين الأديان على الصعيد الدولي ، وتطوير الحوار بين الأديان في إندونيسيا. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك ، فإن سياسة النظام السياسي الجديد الذي أعطى الأولوية لتحقيق الاستقرار السياسي ، مما أدى إلى الحاجة إلى مشاريع الحكومة لإجراء حوار مع موضوع الانسجام كجزء من جهد من النظام السياسي.

للحكومة النظام الجديد ، الانسجام بين الأديان أمر بالغ الأهمية للحفاظ على الاستقرار الاجتماعي والسياسي يصبح ضرورة لنجاح برامج التنمية. ولذلك ، فإن القضايا الرئيسية التي نوقشت في الحوار الذي نظمته حكومة هذا هو كيف يمكن للزعماء الدينيين ، استنادا إلى تعاليم دينهم ، لدعم وإضفاء الشرعية على برامج التنمية الحكومية.

واحدة من الشخصيات المهمة في مشاريع الحوار بين الأديان خلال النظام الجديد هو وزير الدينية موكتي علي ، الذي بدأ الحوار بين الأديان في عام ١٩٧٢. في تنفيذ مشروع للتنعيش الديني ، ورفع الطلاب علي الناشط الإسلامي جمعية (HMI) ، جوهن

(Djohan) أفندي ، بصفته رئيساً للمشروع الحوار. وفقا للأفندي ، في الفترة من ١٩٧٢-١٩٧٧ ، كان هناك ٢٣ الحوارات بين الزعماء الدينيين الذي عقد في ٢١ مدينة في أنحاء إندونيسيا. المشاركون بينهم مسؤولون حكوميون وقادة الإسلام والبروتستانتية والكاثوليكية والهندوسية والبوذية ، والكونفوشيوسية ، والعلاج النفسي التي تلقاها حتى جافا والديانات المحلية الأخرى.

ويوازن ثم حوار تنفيذ الحكومة بمبادرة من مبادرات المجتمع المدني ، ولا سيما من جانب شخصيات دينية. وعلى النقيض من الحوار التي بدأها الحكومة وغير الحكومية والحوار أمر هام المحتمل لسياسات تطوير النظام الجديد ، وفي الوقت نفسه محاولة لخلق التفاهم المتبادل والتعاون بين الأديان من أجل تحقيق الديمقراطية إندونيسيا.

الحوار بين الأديان الذي بدأه المجتمع المدني على الأقل بدءاً من أواخر السنة ١٩٦٠ ، بين الذي بادرت به الكاهن الكاثوليكي جرونين (Groenen) كلينوس في سوكابومي وغيرها التي بدأها علي موكتي في يوجيا كارتا. في السنة ١٩٧٠ ، وبعض القيادات الدينية كما شارك في الحوار الدولي الذي نظمه مجلس الكنائس العالمي) مجلس الكنائس العالمي). جدية الجهود التي تبذلها منظمات المجتمع المدني في وضع جديد للحوار بين الأديان ينظر في أوائل السنة ١٩٨٠ ، التي بدأها مجلس كنائس إندونيسيا (DGI)، الذي الاجتماع بين الأديان. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك ، هناك أيضا الجهود التي تبذلها نورشوليش مجيد الذي أسس بارامادينا في منتصف السنة ١٩٨٠ الذين طوروا الخطاب اللاهوتي الإسلامي شامل ومتسامح. واستمر هذا الجهد في ١٩٩٠ من خلال إنشاء معهد للحوار بين الأديان إنترفيدي (Interfidei) في يوجيا كارتا التي قررت عن طريق الملوك. في عام ١٩٩٢. ولد أيضا حوار بين الأديان المجلس (ماديا) في جاكرتا في عام ١٩٩٥ ، بدعم من الناشطين المسلمين والكاثوليك والبروتستانت.

بعد سقوط سوهارتو في ١٩٩٨ ، شهد العديد من الصراعات الدينية الدامية على الساحة الاجتماعية والسياسية في إندونيسيا. وهناك عدد من الجماعات المتشددة والمسلمين المتطرفين الذين لا تسامحا تجاه غير المسلمين وحتى ضد إخوانهم المسلمين من وجهات نظر مختلفة. إلى جانب ذلك ، فإن منظمات المجتمع المدني التي تحمل مزيد من الحوار بين الأديان. إنترفيدي (Interfidei) توسيع شبكتها خارج جافا من خلال "متندى الحوار". الدائمة

وحيد المعهد أيضا برنامج "الإسلام والتعددية". في حين أصدرت الحكومة سياسة ثابتة لمنندى المجتمع المتفق بين الأديان (FKUB) في منطقة / مدينة ومحافظه. فتح الصنوبر الحرية في ظل الديمقراطية وشدد على نحو متزايد على الحاجة إلى الحوار ، ليس فقط بين الأديان ، ولكن أيضا للمؤمنين الدينية الداخلية. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك ، فإن ظهور الجماعات المتطرفة أصبحت أيضا تحديا خطيرا لدعاة الحوار بين الأديان. تجربة الحوار بين الأديان في إندونيسيا اللحم ، يمكن أن يكون هذا درسا هاما للحكومة في صياغة سياسات ملائمة لخلق حياة أكثر سلاما للأمة في خضم ظروف التعددية في المجتمع الإندونيسي.

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Religion and Dialogue in Indonesia: From the Soeharto Period to the Present¹

Indonesia is home to the largest Muslim population in the world, but it is also a place for followers of other religions. Before the spread of Islam in the thirteenth century, the inhabitants of the archipelago had become acquainted with Hindu and Buddhist traditions of India. Many Chinese migrating to the archipelago introduced Confucianism. Christianity also made inroads along with the appearance of Catholic missions in the sixteenth century under the patronage of the Portuguese. The Protestant missions arrived in the wake of the Dutch colonialism. The Protestant and Catholic missions were more successful in the second half of the nineteenth century that was when the Dutch colonial authorities allowed and even supported their missionary activities.² As a result, Christianity became the largest religious minority, which according to the statistics in 2000, Christians comprises about 8.92% of the total population followed by Hinduism (1.81%) and Buddhism (0.84%). In certain areas like East Nusa Tenggara, Papua, North Sulawesi, Maluku and North Sumatra, Christianity is the religion of the majority. Similarly, Hinduism is the majority religion in Bali (Suryadinata et.al, 2003, 104).

The fact that Indonesia is a multi-religious country may lead us to question if there have been initiatives among different religions to dialogue, and if so, who have been the main advocates of this dialogue, what were the issues being discussed and what are the results of the dialogue? This paper tries to answer these questions by analysing the development of religious dialogue from the Soeharto period to the present. The historical overview will hopefully give us some lessons to learn for the future of dialogue in Indonesia and perhaps also in the neighbouring countries.

Religious Dialogue under Soeharto

Based on the fact that Indonesia is a multi-religious country, one may assume that there have been inter-religious encounters in the Archipelago. Perhaps, we could also find some early examples of inter-religious dialogue in the region even before the colonial period. However, it is safe to claim that the so called 'inter-religious dialogue' has become an important issue in Indonesia only after the second half of the 1960s.³ This was related to the call for dialogue from the Christians at the international level. Due to the influence of modern liberal ideas and the new challenges faced by the Christian missions, the Vatican Council II (1962-1965) urged the Catholics to engage in dialogue with other faiths. Likewise, in a consultation held in Ceylon in 1967, the World Council of Churches (WCC) decided to promote inter-religious dialogue. After that, many Indonesian religious leaders have been invited to participate in dialogue at the international, national or local levels.

The socio-political backgrounds that eventually led to the rise of the New Order in 1967 was also very significant for the development of inter-religious dialogue. After the 1965 coup, the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) was banned and many communists supporter were brutally killed. The collapse of the communists gave way to the increasing significance of religion in national politics. The important implication was that every Indonesian should formally embrace a religion recognised by the state or otherwise he or she could be accused of being a communist. As a result, a high number of conversions to the state's recognised religions (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism—the last one was dropped in 1979 from the list, and has been included again after the fall of Soeharto) occurred in the early years of the New Order. The new converts were mostly nominal Muslims called '*abangan*' of the Javanese (the largest ethnic group in the country comprises more than 40% of the population), and the followers of tribal religions.

Although all of the recognised religions shared the new converts, the highest number of conversion was to Christianity. This has made the Muslim leaders worried. One of the reasons was the provocative news in Western media boasting about 'mass conversion' to Christianity and about a huge amount of money was sent to Indonesia for missionary activities. Not least significant, some missionaries, particularly those of the evangelical background, preached the Bible through door-to-door visits to Muslim homes, and this was considered too aggressive for the Muslims. Moreover,

the Islamic groups were politically frustrated towards the new regime controlled by the army. The army, in alliance with the secular oriented Muslims and the Christians, were opposed to the attempts of the Islamic groups to include explicitly the state responsibility to apply shari'a in the Constitution. In addition, the reformist Muslims became more frustrated when their hope to rehabilitate their party, Masyumi (banned by Soekarno in 1960), was thwarted by the ruling army (Samson 1968 and 1971).

It was in the above socio-political context that in 1967 many Muslims involved in closing and/or attacking churches and other Christian buildings, such as the one happened in Meulaboh (Aceh) and Makassar (South Sulawesi). In response to these incidents, the government invited religious leaders, particularly those of Islamic and Christian backgrounds to attend the so called 'Inter-religious Consultation' in November 1967. The government was worried about the danger of political instability caused by inter-religious conflicts. Through Consultation, the government tried to accommodate the demand of the Muslim leaders, namely to restrict the target of religious missions only to those outside the recognised religions. For the Christians, however, this restriction was against religious freedom, and that the government would become unfair mediator if the latter accommodated the Muslim demand. The Consultation finally ended with a deadlock. It finally hardened the existing tensions between the two religious groups.

The Proponents of Dialogue

Apart from the deadlock of the Inter-religious Consultation, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a positive socio-political development for the promotion of religious dialogue. As discussed above, the communists, particularly those affiliated with the PKI, was the main enemy of the New Order regime. The religious groups, particularly Muslims and Christians worked with the army (the main power behind the New Order regime) in crashing the Communists.

When the communists were abolished many Islamic group leaders were confident that they could pursue their ideological ambition to insert shari'a into the Constitution. In reality, however, this eventually made the Islamic group leaders were frustrated. The army, the secular Muslims and the religious minorities, particularly Christians and Hindus, were strongly opposed the idea of sharia implementation. As a result, the Muslim demand

for shari'a to be implemented and need to be regulated in the Constitution was rejected by the majority of the parliament.

In addition, some prominent activists of Muslim Students Association (HMI) started to develop a new discourse on Islam and national politics. These activists promoted what was called a 'non-ideological view of Islam'. Most prominent among these activists was Nurcholish Madjid, who was the chairman of HMI. Madjid argued that Islam cannot be interpreted as an ideology because it is a religion revealed by God while ideology is a product of human thought. He also argued that Islam does not require Muslims to establish an Islamic state. Islamic values are more important than formal political institutions. In this context, he created a slogan: "Islam Yes, Islamic Party, No?" Madjid was supported by other HMI activists in Yogyakarta such as Djohan Effendi, Dawam Rahardjo and Ahmad Wahib.⁴ The patron of the Yogyakarta activists was A. Mukti Ali, a McGill graduate of the Institute of Islamic Studies.

Madjid and his friends were of Islamic reformist background while the movement of the non-ideological view of Islam among the traditionalist Muslims, particularly among the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) activists, only started a decade later, namely in early 1980s. This was because NU was actively involved in the Islamic political party called PPP (United Development Party) which was based on Islam. By early 1980s, NU withdrew its formal affiliation with the PPP due to several factors. It was by this period that under the leadership of Abdurrahman Wahid, NU also promoted the non-ideological view of Islam.⁵

The rise of the non-ideological view of Islam was significant in the development of inter-religious dialogue in Indonesia. Most of the religious minorities in the country were afraid of the Muslim ambition to establish an Islamic state or to apply shari'a. The non-ideological view of Islam helped minimise this fear, and therefore, mutual trust and cooperation could be develop. It is not surprising, therefore, that the proponents of dialogue in Indonesia are generally the proponents of the non-ideological view of Islam and supported by the leaders of religious minorities, especially among the 'ecumenist' Protestants and the 'humanist' Catholics.

Inter-religious Dialogue Organized by the Government

As has been discussed, in 1967 the Soeharto government organized an Inter-religious Consultation. Despite the deadlock, the Consultation was the first inter-religious dialogue organised by the government in

Indonesia. When the New Order government became more established following the great victory of the government party, Golkar, in the 1971 elections, it became more serious in sponsoring inter-religious dialogue. The main aim of the dialogue was to establish the so-called 'inter-religious harmony' (*Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama*), that is, peaceful inter-religious harmony. The government argued that inter-religious harmony was very important to maintain the socio-political stability necessary for the success of its development (or modernization) programs. The major issue discussed in the dialogue was how religious leaders could support and legitimise government development programs.

It was A. Mukti Ali, the patron of the activists promoting the non-ideological view of Islam who was appointed by Soeharto to be the Minister of Religious Affairs, who started the inter-religious dialogue project in 1972. Inter-religious dialogue, he argued, would be an effective means to increase the participation of religious groups in development and to prevent conflicts to occur. This preventive function of the dialogue was certainly parallel with the government view that socio-political stability was necessary for development. His project on inter-religious dialogue, therefore, was strongly related to what he frequently referred to as "the harmony of religious life". He explained:

The harmony of religious life is a social condition in which all religious groups could live together without losing their basic right to perform their respective religious duties. Everybody lives as a good religious believer in a harmonious and peaceful condition. Therefore, the harmony of religious life cannot emerge from blind fanaticism and indifference to the rights and feelings of the others.... The harmony of religious life can only be obtained if every religious group becomes open-hearted [*lapang dada*] to one another (Mukti Ali, 1975, 70).

Mukti Ali then appointed the former HMI activist and the proponent of the non-ideological view of Islam, Djohan Effendi, to be the head of the project. According to Effendi, from 1972 to 1977, there were 23 dialogues among religious leaders held in 21 cities all over the country. The participants of the dialogues included government officials, religious leaders of Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and even of Javanese mysticism and local beliefs (Effendi, 1978, 172-173). In general, the dialogue was still far from Mukti Ali's ideal of agreement to disagree but it was quite different from the debate in the Inter-religious Consultation of 1967 mentioned above. Djohan Effendi explained:

The goal of the dialogue was not to discuss theological issues, but social issues as a common concern, or the so-called development issues. These were to be discussed from the perspective of every religion. The important thing in the dialogue was not the decisions taken in it but personal contacts and friendships among the participants. Within two or three days, they stayed in the same place, had the same meals together and shared jokes. Thus, they became close to one another (Effendi, interview, 29 August 2002).

Private Dialogue Initiatives

Some religious leaders, however, felt unhappy with the government initiatives. They saw the dialogue which was organised by the government, was more like a formal meeting among religious leaders rather than a forum for a true dialogue. For the critics, the aim of the dialogue should not only focus on the 'inter-religious harmony' but also on 'inter-religious understanding and cooperation'. Moreover, some prominent religious intellectuals argued that religious groups should not only become supporters but also critics of the government development projects. Influenced by liberation theology of Latin America in the late 1970s, a few Catholic and Protestant intellectuals suggested that the government development programs helped widen the gap between the rich elites and the poor masses (Sumartana, 1973 and 1985). Therefore, instead of talking about 'development' or 'modernization', these critical intellectuals were interested in developing a discourse on 'social justice'. Some Muslim intellectuals also tried to find an Islamic version of theology of liberation. In the early 1980s, some Indonesian Muslim intellectuals found that the ideas of the leftist Muslim thinkers like 'Ali Syari'ati from Iran and Hassan Hanafi from Egypt were parallel with the Christian theology of liberation.⁶

Up to the late 1970s, most of the inter-religious dialogues in Indonesia were organised by the government. There were certainly a few exceptions. In the late 1960s, there was a dialogue privately initiated by religious leaders like the one organised by a Catholic priest, Cletus Groenen, in Sukabumi, and another initiated by Mukti Ali in his own house in Yogyakarta. By 1970s, some important Indonesian religious leaders also participated in international dialogues organised by the WCC. However, it was only in the early 1980s that a serious non-government effort of developing inter-religious dialogue started in Indonesia. This effort came from the Protestant intellectuals of the Indonesian Church Council (DGI)

who organised the inter-religious meeting called 'Seminar of Religions' (*Seminar Agama-Agama*). Started in 1981, this seminar provided the opportunity for religious leaders to talk more openly and freely about social, political and cultural issues from religious perspectives. Likewise, upon his return from his study at the University of Chicago, in the mid 1980-s Nurcholish Madjid established Paramadina, an institution in which he developed a tolerant and inclusive Islamic theological discourse (Madjid 1992). Some non-Muslim religious intellectuals were sometimes also invited to participate in Paramadina's activities.

By the late 1980s, Soeharto shifted his political alliance from secular Muslims and Christians to the Islamic groups, particularly the Muslim reformists. This was particularly because Soeharto had conflict with some influential army generals. In 1990s, Soeharto became closer to the Islamic groups. He supported the establishment of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI) and several members of the ICMI became his cabinet ministers (Hefner 1993 and Liddle 1996). The religious minorities were understandably worried about this political development. It was in this context that in 1992, the prominent Protestant intellectual, Th. Sumartana, with support from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and other intellectuals, establish the Institute for Interfaith Dialogue (*Interfidei*) in Indonesia, based in Yogyakarta. The major discourse develop by the Institute was how religious traditions could contribute to the development of democracy and religious pluralism in general. In his speech at the *Interfidei* book launch in 1993, Sumartana explained:

The Institute [*Interfidei*] wants to show its concerns with the movement for changes in society towards a more autonomous, democratic and creative common life. This is probably the most important mission of this Institute, namely to create a communicating, mature and democratic society that is used to questions and able to have different opinions [i.e.,] an open and pluralistic society. This pluralistic nature would in turn become the most human way to solve our social problems together peacefully (Sarapung, 2000, 37).

In 1995, another private institution specifically concerned with dialogue was established in Jakarta called 'Majelis Dialog Antar-Agama' (MADIA). This institution was initially supported by Protestant, Catholic and Muslim activists and then followed by others of different religious backgrounds. In the beginning, MADIA often organised discussions among its members on theological issues, but later it engaged in socio-

political issues. One interesting thing in MADIA's activity was that they usually closed their meetings with prayers, offered alternately according to the respective religions of the participants. The MADIA activists became much more responsive to socio-political issues by the late 1990s when incidents involving religious symbols happened in the country. MADIA sometimes made public statements voicing religious tolerance and cooperation and received strong support from Abdurrahman Wahid.

In the dialogue programs initiated by the private institutions, sensitive theological issues were also discussed. Some of the Muslim intellectuals tried to find similarities, parallels and common ground with other religions. An important example is the late Nurcholish Madjid who argued that Islam does not only mean a religion revealed to Muhammad, but also a religion revealed to other prophets, including Jesus. In this regard, the term Islam is understood in its generic meaning, that is, a total submission to God. According to this interpretation, although the form of Islam revealed to Muhammad is the perfect one, it does not abrogate the other 'Islams'. Those who believe in other 'Islams', therefore, can attain salvation. Who are they? To answer this question, this group refers to the Qur'anic term *ahl al-kitāb*, which means 'people of the book'. According to the classical Qur'an exegesis, the term refers exclusively to Jews and Christians, but Madjid argues that the term also includes Buddhists, Hindus and Confucians.⁷

During the late 1990s, several riots occurred in different places in the country in which a lot of churches were burned. Some studies indicate that the riots were not perpetrated by Muslims but operated by other groups. Many rumour suspected that the generals might be involved in providing logistical to support the rioters. In any case, these riots increased the concern of many intellectuals to the importance of dialogue. In Situbondo, where one of the riots occurred,⁸ Muslim and Christian leaders could successfully prevent further violence in their society. On the other hand, the government spent a lot of money in organising national and international inter-religious dialogue in order to repair the bad image of the government abroad. There were at least two international inter-religious conferences financed by the Government in 1997, one was held in the luxurious Horison Hotel, Jakarta, with the participation of the Hartford Seminary and Temple University; and another was held in Leiden, the Netherlands.

Dialogue in the Post-Soeharto Period

After the fall of Soeharto, we bitterly witnessed the bloody conflicts coloured by Islamic, Christian and ethnic sentiments in different parts of Indonesia. Both government and private institutions were actively organising dialogues for people affected by the conflicts. It was in this period that a number of NGOs who work for religious dialogue were established. It was also in this period that Interfidei developed its network outside Java through the so-called 'Forum Dialog' (Forlog). Some of these dialogues have contributed to establishing peace in the regions but it seems that dialogue in the sense of 'talking about religion and peace' was not enough. Some studies of the conflicts suggested that the socio-political and economic context in the region in question was the most important issue to take into account (Mas'ood et. al. 2000).

The fall of the New Order regime in 1998 marked the rise of democracy in Indonesian politics. In this political context, dialogue seems to find its momentum, because one might say that dialogue is the most important part of democracy. In a multi-ethnic and multi religious society such as Indonesia, dialogue is no doubt a necessity. In addition, within the present free public sphere, many of the ideologically oriented Muslim groups previously suppressed by the New Order regime now re-emerge. There are also a few militant and radical Muslim groups who are not tolerant to non-Muslims and even to Muslims of another group.⁹ The emergence of these groups is a serious challenge to the proponents of dialogue.

Faced with these challenges, the proponents of dialogue continue their efforts to develop mutual understanding and cooperation among activists of different religious backgrounds. An example of the efforts is the program organized by the traditionalist Muslim NGO, the Wahid Institute, called 'Islam and Pluralism'. The program is attended by Christian Ministers and teachers of the Indonesian Christian Church (GKI). It is noteworthy that most of the GKI members and ministers are Chinese. The program invited Muslim leaders and intellectuals to present a paper on some important religio-political issues. By the end of the program, the participants were given the opportunity to observe the activities in Islamic boarding schools.¹⁰

From the government side, probably the latest important government policy related to dialogue is the establishment of "Inter-religious Harmony Forum" (FKUB) at the district and provincial levels. This is dictated by the Joint Decree of the Minister of Home Affairs and Religious Affairs No.8 and 9/2006. According to the Decree, the FKUB members are appointed

by people consist of representatives of recognized religions and facilitated by the government. The main duty of the FKUB is to cooperate with the government in developing inter-religious harmony and mutual understanding in society. It also has the authority to give recommendation to the government regarding religious issues, including the permission to build new places of worships. In several places, the FKUB has been established, and we need to wait and see whether it function effectively.

Critics say that inter-religious dialogue both sponsored by government and non-government institutions is not effective in building inter-religious harmony because it turns to be elitist activities. It seems that this criticism is only partially true, because in a 'paternalistic' society like Indonesia, the attitude of a leader is quite significant in forming public opinion. In fact, only a few Indonesian religious leaders have been seriously interested in inter-religious dialogue. As has been mentioned, the proponents of dialogue among leaders of the Islamic groups have been the proponents of the non-ideological view of Islam. During the Soeharto period, these leaders became dominant in the public sphere particularly because the government supported them and opposed the Islamic ideologically oriented groups. After the fall of Soeharto, however, the Islamic ideologically oriented groups re-emerged, and they have become outspoken in the public sphere. Therefore, the proponents of the non-ideological view Islam became less dominant among the Islamic groups in the country. Moreover, not all leaders of religious minorities were interested in dialogue either. For instance, among the Protestants, the evangelicals have little interest in dialogue as a means to establish mutual understanding and cooperation.

If we observe the religious scene of the present Indonesia, the most critical problem is apparently not inter-religious but mainly intra-Islamic community. There have been more and more Islamic groups emerge and we find that they frequently compete against each other. On the other hand, the government often does not show its seriousness to guarantee the civil rights of a small Islamic group like Ahmadiyah. There are also new emerging religious groups considered heretical by orthodox Muslims and their leaders were taken to the court and were put in jail.¹¹

If we look at the history of internal Muslim conflicts in Indonesia, we can find that in early 1900s, there were serious theological controversies between the reformist and traditionalist Muslims, particularly between the reformist Muhammadiyah and the traditionalist NU. Books and magazines were produced during the controversy, and in some cases, there were

open public debates between the leaders of the two groups. In some certain places, the conflict even led to violence, particularly when it is strengthened by political and economic interests. However, it seems that the conflict between the reformists and the traditionalists has gradually become less and less. Most of the leaders of both sides have tried to respect one another. Besides Indonesian political and cultural transformation in the last century, one of the reasons behind this 'peace' was that both the traditionalists and the reformists have become established and strong in society.

However, one might learn from the above experience. In the present democratic Indonesia, we have a free public sphere in which debates, including theological debates, can be conducted freely. The questions remain: Can Indonesian Muslims of different groups talk about their differences without ending with violent actions? Can Muslims find the common ground for which they all struggle? So far, our experience in public discussions and seminars has indicated that the answer to the questions is apparently negative, especially if we look at the debates between the liberals and the radicals. The attack of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) against the activists of the National Alliance for Religious Freedom and Beliefs in June 2008¹² made us become pessimist to expect that culture of religious tolerance will be hold by the radical Muslim groups. However, the reality of the socio political forces in the country apparently will push ambitious and ideologically oriented Muslim groups, at least some of them, to take a compromise. The efforts of the Islamic party, PKS (Prosperous Justice Party) to show itself as an open party (not exclusively for Muslims), while in fact it has been led by former campus activists with strong Islamic ideological orientation, can be seen as an example of this compromise.

Lessons of the Past and Future Challenges

Indonesians should look back at the historical development of dialogue in their country from which they may take some lessons, especially in the previous efforts to find a common ground for different religious groups in society. The New Order government called for the national development or modernization as the common ground, while the critics of the regime found that social justice should be the common concern of all religious groups. The religious intellectuals also tried to formulate theological ideas in which the others are embraced and that democracy and human rights are the things all believers and even non-believers should struggle for. Dialogue was not only organized by the government but also by private

institutions. This means that both the state and civil society have seen the importance of dialogue.

In addition, the results of the dialogue have not been satisfying. Several inter-religious dialogues organized by the Soeharto government were certainly a good initiative that helped open the door for religious leaders to communicate was not truly achieved, partly because of the fact that issues discussed in the dialogue were generally dictated by the government, and partly because not all participants were actually interested in the programs. Many participants attended the programs just to show up and made the government happy. The emergence of dialogue programs initiated by private institutions was very significant in developing a more effective dialogue among religious leaders. In those programs, the religious leaders can decide their own agenda and struggle for their common interest.

Following the fall of Soeharto in 1998, dialogue has become a normal activity in Indonesia that can be seen in the media everyday. Among the Southeast Asian countries, Indonesia is probably the only Muslim country where people can fully enjoy freedom of speech and association. This freedom and openness sometimes lead people to violent actions and breaking the law. In some cases, religious sentiments have been involved in the violent actions, including violence by a Muslim group against another. This fact may urge us to question if democracy in Indonesia can lead the country to peace or not. Most Indonesians apparently still believe that the present political democracy should be maintained and developed. The problem now is that political democracy is not supported yet by strong democratic culture. In this context, there is no doubt that dialogue is one of the best ways to nurture democratic culture in society. Violence is a concrete result of the failure to have dialogue. To do this, people do not have to start from zero. The previous initiatives of dialogue, both from the state and civil society, should be continued and developed.

As noted earlier, recent conflicts in the country have occurred among the Islamic groups themselves rather than between Muslims and non-Muslims. Apart from the difficulties of having an effective dialogue among the Islamic groups, in particular between the liberals and the radicals, dialogue is still necessary. In the past, Soeharto administration suppressed the Islamic ideologically oriented groups and appeased the non-ideological one, so dialogue between the two was aborted before they could find a consensus or a compromise. The present democratic Indonesia should be a good opportunity to continue the dialogue. Indonesians should learn

from the past that Soerhato's policy to suppress one group against another would not lead to a good result. Of course, dialogue is not the end in itself. It is simply a means to diagnose our problems and to find recipes to resolve them. It is often that the so called 'religious' or 'ethnic' conflicts are actually triggered by economic and social injustice. Dialogue is expected to uncover the real problem behind the conflicts.

As a big and important country in Southeast Asia, the Indonesian experiences can also be taken as lessons for other countries in the region. The Indonesian experiences are important for Malaysia because Muslims are the majority in both countries and share similar language and culture. Likewise, for the Philippines, the Indonesian experience in dealing with the problems of Muslim majority vis-à-vis Christian minority could be mirrored by the Philippines as the problem of Catholic majority vis-à-vis Muslim minority. Finally, Australia is not an exception, at least for the fact that most of the victims in the Bali bombing of 2002 were Australians. Terrorism can be solved not by the American "war on terror" but by uncovering the real problems behind it through dialogue.[]

Endnotes

1. The paper is originally presented at the International Workshop on 'Conflict, Religion and Culture: Domestic and International Implications for Southeast Asia and Australia' on 20-22 October 2008, organized PPIM, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta. I would like to thank the participants of the workshop and an anonymous reader for their critical comments on this paper.
2. For the history of Christianity in Indonesia, see Steenbrink and Aritonang (2008).
3. The following description of dialogue during the Soeharto period is a short summary of Chapter 6 of Mujiburrahman (2006).
4. Madjid's papers in question were published in Madjid (1987). For a study of this reform movement, see Hassan (1982) and Effendy (2003).
5. On development of NU in early 1980s, see Bruinessen (1994).
6. It should be noted here that Hassan Hanafi's idea of 'Islamic left' had become more widely discussed in 1990s, particularly following the publication of a translation of his *al-Yasār al-Islāmī*. This book was published by an NGO established by young traditionalist Muslim activists called 'Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial' (Institute of Islamic and Social Studies) based in Yogyakarta. See Kazou Shimogaki (1992).
7. There are other similar Muslim theological reflections. For a short observation, see Mujiburrahman (2004). For an example from the Christian side, see Mujiburrahman (2001).
8. For the Situbondo case, see Hefner (2000, 190-3).
9. The term 'radical Islam' in Indonesia usually refers to the Islamic groups advocating Islam as a totalizing political system. The radicals may include the Bali bombers as well as activists of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, Front Pembela Islam, Lasykar Jihad, and Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia.
10. I was invited to this program as a speaker twice. I cannot judge how significant the program is for establishing cooperation between Muslims and Christians, but it is certainly a serious initiative.
11. For a preliminary study of the cases, see Rumadi (2008).
12. For this case, see *Tempo* (15 June 2008).

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