

MAINTAINING MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY IN THE MALAY WORLD OF INDONESIA: STRATEGIC AGENDA

Ismail

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang

Email: *ismail_uin@radenfatah.ac.id*

Abstract

The fact that Indonesia's Malay world is a very multicultural country is often the reason for the emergence of various conflicts in the name of ethnicity, religion, and race (SARA), such as the Poso, Ambon, Papua, Kalimantan, Ahmadiyah, and so on. This paper explains about various efforts that can be sought to maintain stability and harmony in pluralism of Indonesian Malay world. Existential awareness as a multicultural nation is a social and ideological capital that must continue to be grown, developed, and maintained so that Indonesia is more just, prosperous, safe, peaceful, and prosperous. Therefore the strategic agenda that must be carried out is to encourage increased strategic role of religious leaders, encourage the growth of mutual understanding between religious communities, seek social cooperation between religious groups, promote multicultural education, and incorporate elements of democratic principles and human rights (HAM) in curriculum.

Keywords: *stability, multicultural society, Malay world*

Introduction

Pluralism and diversity in life are a necessity, a *sunnatullah*. These two terms are sometimes equated with the term multicultural (diverse culture). The term multicultural or multicultural originally referred to the term multiculturalism which in the context of the Canadian state (where this term was first popularized) was used as a synonym of pluralism. The term multicultural society was first used in Canada (circa 1950s). The United States (US) itself uses the term melting pot society for its plural society, while India uses the phrase composite society. Indonesia itself introduces the slogan of unity in diversity to show the diversity of tribes, religions and races in Indonesia (SM and Mukti 2000).

The meaning of multicultural society referred to here is horizontal plurality (ie the existence of various kinds of ethnicity, nation, ethnicity, language, religion, customs and others) and vertically (ie from various community groups that can be sorted sort on the basis of the mode of production, which boils down to differences in its adaptability) (Rando, Danusiri, and Alhaziri 2003). Multiculturalism is also interpreted as a recognition of the existence of small groups (minorities) and their rights to live their lives, both in public and private matters.

Understanding of this term can be divided into several levels [level] (Sahrodi 2006a). *First*, popular understanding as understood by most people. They understand the phenomenon of multiculturalism as increasingly easy to find Chinese restaurants, Hoka-Hoka, Bento, Salero Bagindo, McDonald's, Jet Kundo, Yoga courses, boutique Versace in an area that was previously homogeneous. *Second*, political understanding. The group of politicians understands multiculturalism as a cultural compounding of

society which raises various social problems that demand certain policies [immigration tightening, data collection, to assimilation programs]. *Third*, academic understanding. Academic understanding of multiculturalism bases itself on the development of the philosophy of postmodernism and cultural studies that emphasizes the principle of paralogism above monologism, pluralism over unity.

However, the most important of the concepts understood from the term multicultural society is the spirit that is behind the term itself, namely living together as one society. This spirit is motivated by the fact that the world, since fifty years ago, has moved to become a global village. Today's world is no longer a place where a region is only inhabited by one particular ethnic, cultural and religious group. This diversity arises and becomes *conditio sine qua non* a global society (Sahrodi 2006b, 221). Globalization is the reality of human life that cannot be denied. According to Nurul Asna (Asna 2003, 22), "Indonesia is a plural society, both horizontally and vertically". Although there is a provincialism spirit due to regional autonomy, preserving monoculturalism is not a wise attitude for the time being (Asna 2003).

The Reality of the Multicultural Society of the Indonesian Malay World

Factually, Indonesia consists of various tribes, customs, religions, languages and so on. This reality stretches from Sabang (Nangro Aceh Darussalam Province) to Merauke (in Maluku Province). There are no less than 200 tribes in Indonesia, and 300 kinds of regional languages. While in terms of religion there are six major religions recognized by the Indonesian constitution, namely Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Indonesia's diversity is not only a sociological, cultural and theological reality, but even has an ideological basis. This fact has long been an awareness of the Indonesian people even before Indonesian independence. However, this pluralistic awareness is also followed by determination and enthusiasm to unite into a nation. For example, we can understand this from the Youth Pledge pledge that was first echoed by Indonesian youths on October 20, 1928: one nation, Indonesian, speaking one Indonesian language, and homeland of one Indonesian homeland.

The recognition of diversity in the Indonesian context is also reflected ideologically in the slogan "Unity in Diversity", which means "different but still one". This slogan even becomes an icon and is embedded in the symbol of the Indonesian state; Garuda Pancasila. In other words, the diversity of the Indonesian people (ethnicity, religion and race) has even become an ideological awareness of the majority of the Indonesian people. Not only being aware, but also followed by natural attitudes and behaviors shown by this nation for a long time: mutual respect and respect for other people of different ethnicity, religion and race. Helping each other difficulties, mutual respect for the rights of fellow children of the nation and so on.

Indonesia's diversity if managed effectively will certainly be an extraordinary constructive force. In the context of national development diversity is a *condition sine quanon* for the achievement of justice and prosperity of the nation. But on the contrary if not managed properly diversity will actually lead to conflict and division which results in chaos in the social, cultural and political order of the Indonesian nation and state. A further consequence, of course, is setback and the difficulty of achieving the ideals of justice and prosperity as a result of the success of national development. History shows that in a certain period of time the Indonesian nation's diversity had

been a trigger for the emergence of conflicts in the name of ethnicity, religion, and race. However, if explored further it turns out the root of the problem lies not in the differences themselves, but in the momentary interests of certain parties both in the political and economic fields.

Distability and Security of Multicultural Communities: Root of the Problem

In any world, the reality of multiculturalism in society often creates problems if the reality of the plurality of society is not well managed. Ethnic, racial, and religious differences often trigger prolonged conflicts. This is a reality that occurs in almost all parts of the world. History has proven that excessive feelings of superiority among certain adherents of religion, culture, race and ethnicity have resulted in the process of discrimination, dehumanization, marginalization of the lives of other human groups that are considered inferior. The Aryan chauvinism in the case of the Nazi movement during World War II had resulted in the emergence of ethnic cleansing efforts on the Jewish nation. Likewise, a similar case was experienced by ethnic Albanians and Bosnian Muslims due to Serbian and Croatian Chauvinism in the early 90s. In the Indonesian context, a number of cases can be cited here such as the Dayak and Madura ethnic conflicts in Kalimantan in the 1996s; religious conflicts in Ambon and Poso; sweeping Ahmadiyya congregants who have different religious backgrounds; etc.

The fact that conflicts often arise due to diversity in various parts of the world, especially in Indonesia, shows that the stability of a multicultural society in a country that is still learning democracy is very vulnerable. If examined carefully, there are several problems that are thought to be the roots or causes of conflict in multicultural societies. *First*, there is a feeling of being superior and superior to certain groups compared to other groups. Even more worrying is if the group that feels superior is by chance a majority in an area (for example a country or province) or controls the economic and political resources that are the livelihood of many people. It is certain that power and wealth will only be used to grow the group. From here, surely injustice will emerge from the majority against the minority.

Second, there are gaps and disparities in several aspects of the economic, social and political life of the community. This injustice can arise because of oppressive economic, social, cultural and political structures; or because of abuse of power, high levels of corruption, collusion, nepotism; mismanagement, mismanagement, and so on. In the Indonesian context, for example, before the era of regional autonomy (when centralistic policy was still dominant) a gap between the center and the regions emerged. Local people feel that the central government is only exploiting the wealth of natural resources in their area but that very little is returned to the region. Very little development has been done in the regions. The State Budget (APBN) is disbursed more to develop Jakarta than Aceh and Papua, for example. This kind of injustice, discrimination, and alienation then gave rise to ethnic sentiment. For example, the phrase "the Javanese colonized the Acehnese" in the past is not uncommon to come out of the mouths of the Acehnese people. Likewise the issue of separatist movements in Papua and Maluku was also more or less triggered by a sense of 'regional people' injustice towards the treatment of 'central people'.

Third, the attitude of some religious communities who are intolerant of religious differences and religious understanding. This kind of attitude is not infrequently caused by excessive claims of truth towards the understanding of religion. That every

religious adherent believes that the 'religious truth' that he believes is absolute, is of course legitimate, especially at the level of his belief as a good religious adherent. But at the same time he must respect and respect others who also hold the same opinion (believe in his religion as the most correct). If belief in religion is not followed by tolerance and even denies the existence of other religions, must be isolated, or 'saved' in any way according to 'our way', then this is what is called an excessive claim of truth. The elimination of the existence of religious adherents or different religious understandings is certainly not the right action. Instead tolerance and willingness to exist together (coexistence) is the attitude of true religious adherents.

Fourth, the efforts of certain parties in the name of ethnicity, religion and race for their momentary interests, both ideological and political power interests, wealth and economic hegemony, ideological-cultural interests, and so on. These parties intentionally use ethnicity, religion, and race as a means of triggering and the media to obtain their true goals (power, wealth, etc.).

Maintaining the Stability of Multicultural Communities in the Malay World

To overcome or at least eliminate conflicts that occur in multicultural societies, first of course, is to understand the real root causes of conflicts in the name of ethnicity, religion and race. This can be done through in-depth research involving all interested parties (government, community, NGOs, social and religious organizations, etc.). If the root causes of the conflict that give rise to instability and the low level of community security have been found, the next step is to seek a systematic and complete solution by involving broader parties. However, preventing conflict in multicultural societies is much better and wise, rather than finding solutions after conflicts occur. Therefore, several strategic agendas that can be carried out to maintain the stability and security of multicultural societies are as follows.

If the root of the frequent conflicts is allegedly rooted in religious issues, then efforts to prevent conflicts in multicultural societies can be done in the following way.

Encourage Increasing the Strategic Role of Religious Leaders

In multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious societies, religious leaders have strategic roles and functions. In the context of Indonesia, which upholds religious values (even though it is not a religious state) religious leaders are still deeply heard by their fatwa. Therefore religious leaders must be aware of their strategic role and use it effectively to maintain the stability and security of the community. Among the roles that religious leaders can play are providing a true understanding of religion, free from worldly interests (free from momentary political and economic interests), and contextual social change. Normatively, in principle there are no religious teachings that encourage and encourage adherents to commit violence (violence) and unrest (unrest) against adherents of other religions outside the group, or even against those of the same religion but differ in understanding and interpreting religious teachings (Amin 1996, 69). In addition, culturally, religious teachings also teach people to know each other (ta'aruf) because of differences in backgrounds such as culture, nation, language, and gender. Such teachings must always be widely campaigned by religious leaders.

As people who have higher authority in understanding sacred texts, religious leaders should also endeavor to continually make efforts to interpret religion that is relevant to universal human values such as the values of human rights, human rights

human to other human beings, the values of civilized society (civic values), wisdom and local traditions.

In addition, religious leaders must also be at the forefront in promoting a culture of peace, non-violence, and religious dialogue and cooperation between religious communities. What is also important to be done by religious leaders is the search for a convincing religious foundation for the concept and practice of religious dialogue and cooperation with other religious communities and encouraging people to collaborate through programs that exist in the institutions or organizations they lead.

Encouraging the Growth of Understanding Between People of Religion

Misunderstandings often trigger religious conflicts. Misunderstandings can be caused by many factors, such as the lack of information about other religions, the existence of bad imaging about certain religions or religious groups by deliberate or unintentional provocation and provocation (leaflets, mass media, electronics, etc.) or even a lack of understanding of a religious adherent against the teachings of his own religion. If the latter is the cause, then there is no other way to do it except religious adherents must be taught a true and complete understanding of their own religion. In Islam, for example, misunderstanding often arises in Muslims themselves in understanding jihad which is perceived as an offensive attack against adherents of other religions. In this case religious leaders, religious education institutions have a great role and responsibility to educate their people with the correct understanding of religion.

Lack of understanding of other religious traditions can be eliminated through efforts to promote religious dialogue that is academic in nature. Academic principles, namely scientific, honest, not blaspheming, objective, and so on must really be upheld in dialogue. Dialogue must also begin with sincerity. This kind of dialogue will enlighten followers of different religions, as the experience of a student at Hartford Seminary USA stated:

I had come to Hartford Seminary with skepticism in my heart and now after a year and a half, having lived with Muslims and studied together with Muslims and Christians, it has been an eye opening experience for me as I have learnt that dialogue does not begin with the other but in knowing and understanding myself. The inner dialogue which one has with one's self is as important as the external dialogue with others. In daily engaging with each other, my Muslim classmates and housemates have become like my "brothers" and "sisters" away from home. In the dialogue with others, the heart needs to be engaged as well. And when both heart and mind are one, then action can follow (See 2005, 213).

Efforts to foster mutual understanding between religious communities can also be done through academic studies of other religions (at the S1, S2, or S3 level) or a shorter crash program (2 months to 6 months). Other efforts can also be made through exchange programs for visiting students, students, religious leaders, and so on. The most effective is indeed living in a different religious community for a certain period (a little longer might be better) so that people will increasingly understand the religious traditions of others in their daily lives and feel the warmth of their tolerance and hospitality.

Seek Social Cooperation among Religious Groups

Fostering mutual understanding between religious believers that has implications for the coexistence and harmony of fellow religious adherents can also be pursued through promoting cooperation in the field of social life. Many humanitarian issues can be addressed jointly by followers of religion. In Indonesia, for example, there are issues of natural disasters, issues of education, issues of international terrorism, issues of corruption, issues of the Middle East war, and so on which have been addressed jointly by followers of religion. In the context of the importance of fostering education awareness in Indonesian society, for example, a joint declaration has been held between religious adherents with the theme "Education is Worship". Education is worship for any religion and therefore every religion must prioritize education. When the tsunami struck Aceh Province, religious communities from various parts of the world competed to help the people of Aceh without thinking about any religion they professed. Islamic organizations in Indonesia such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama (NU) in Indonesia often take important roles in such interfaith cooperation.

Humanitarian social actions are also often carried out by leaders and adherents of different religions in the US, for example in addressing the issue of terrorism in the tragedy of the World Trade Center (September 11, 2001), natural disasters in several States (Hurricane Catherina, etc.), etc. -other.

Efforts to maintain the stability and security of multicultural societies and prevent conflicts can also be pursued through education. Among the strategic agenda that can be pursued are as follows.

Promoting Multicultural Education

Until now education is still considered as an effective means to instill ideal values of life. In the context of pluralism and multiculturalism education becomes a strategic medium to instill the values of humanism, human equality, tolerance, religious, cultural and ethical pluralism, as well as other main attitudes towards students. Therefore promoting multicultural education is one of the important and strategic efforts to maintain the stability and security of a plural society.

In simple terms the term multicultural education can be defined as "education for or about cultural diversity in response to demographic and cultural changes in a particular community's environment or even the world as a whole" (Ma'hady 2004, 4). Based on the definition above, it can be understood that multicultural education is an educational format based on respect for differences and diversity in society, both ethnic, religious, and racial diversity. Multicultural education also contains ideas about the importance of social justice (fair sharing) and equal rights (respect for others) in education. Islamic doctrine itself does not discriminate between ethnicities, races, etc. in education (Afriantoni 2005, 137).

In the context of the United States, the origin of multicultural education began in the early 1980s. Spearheaded by a number of intellectuals, the education system and curriculum are evaluated to make room for experiences and expressions of diversity; history is rewritten to recognize the reality of diversity in society. In the field of literature and art, writers and artists from various backgrounds discuss cross-cultural issues experienced by countries of origin and in America (Sahrodi 2006a, 219).

Incorporate Elemental Principles of Democracy and Human Rights in the Curriculum

Universal values in the principles of democracy and human rights such as tolerance, egalitarianism, deliberation, consensus, equality in the field of law, respect for basic rights (property rights, the right to believe and practice religion, rights life, etc.), need to be a part of the understanding and awareness of people of religion everywhere. Only with this understanding and awareness of universal values will everyone appreciate the different ethnicities, religions and races that are really the sunnatullah. These universal values are actually compatible with the teachings of any religion in the world.

In other words, the universal values of democracy and human rights and civilization (civic values) that are part of the awareness of multicultural society have a big contribution to the creation of a balanced social order, safe and stable. Because one of the functions of education is the formation of national character (character building) through values, universal values must be part of the curriculum and learning process at all levels (kindergarten to tertiary), types, and education pathways. Educational institutions are very effective means of transferring knowledge and internalizing good values from the older generation to the younger generation.

Efforts to maintain the stability and security of multicultural societies can also be carried out by the government. This effort can be done structurally or culturally. Structurally, for example, reducing social, economic, and political gaps between communities and government or between communities. This effort can be done by improving government economic-financial performance, enforcing the law fairly, combating corruption, providing adequate and fair employment, making fair regulations for the interests of the center and the regions, and so on. This effort is indeed more oriented towards improving the socio-economic welfare of the community. This effort is of course very important if we remember that one of the roots of conflict is social, political and economic inequality. Increased prosperity, prosperity and the rule of law are usually positively correlated with achieving security and order and community stability. Thus the issue of ethnicity, religion, and race is not easy to use as a scapegoat.

Efforts that maintain stability and security especially in the context of religious diversity can also be undertaken by the government through a cultural approach. Constitutionally and institutionally the government, especially the Indonesian government, has made the issue of harmony among religious communities an important concern. However, this kind of structural effort seems to be accompanied by a cultural movement, for example, launching the "National Religious Harmony Movement" in Indonesia. Or even launched "National Day for Religious Harmony". This will be a kind of annual memory that everyone will remember. Community collective memory management is important because people often forget about heartbreaking past events and when they suddenly occur again they are not ready to anticipate them. A culture of peace and tolerance must be pursued widely and systematically, through dialogue, talk shows, filmmaking, songs, art, slogans in mass and electronic media, and even roadside posters.

Conclusion

These are some ideas about important and strategic agendas that can be carried out by the community and nation wherever they are for the sake of security, harmony, stability and peace. Ethnic, cultural and religious diversity is not something that should be questioned because diversity is life itself. Diversity is the necessary sunnatullah in the creation of the universe by Allah SWT. Well-managed diversity actually breeds peace and beauty in life, like a colorful rainbow on the horizon.

In the highly multicultural context of Indonesia several important and strategic agendas need to be undertaken to maintain stability and security. These efforts are: promoting the strategic role of religious leaders, encouraging the growth of mutual understanding between religious communities, seeking social cooperation between religious groups, promoting multicultural education, incorporating elements of democratic principles and human rights in the curriculum.

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