

ISLAM, MULTICULTURALISM AND NATION-BUILDING IN THE POST-TRUTH AGE: THE EXPERIENCE OF INDONESIA

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Abstract

Nation-building in postcolonial Asia, including Indonesia, was concerned most notably with drawing and imagining the boundaries of the nation. This process was and is an intriguing process. The notion of 'natives' and 'non-natives' is part of this complex process of nation-building. It is of significance to explore the role of Islam in nurturing nation-building and multiculturalism in Indonesia, since Islam is the religion of the majority of the population, and accordingly constitutes a dominant societal culture. A particular attention is given to the role of the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama, the mainstream Islamic civil society organisations in the country. This paper examines the interplays between Islam, multiculturalism and nation-building in the present-day Indonesia, by looking specifically to the context of post-truth age which poses both challenges and opportunities to the country. I argue that the prospects for multiculturalism and nation-building in Indonesia are in some ways determined by the role and agency of Islamic civil society organisations in dealing with the new era which consequently alters the contours of religious authority.

Keywords: nation-building, societal culture, multiculturalism, post-truth, Islamic civil society

Introduction

There are at least two elements in constructing the nation, namely the cultural-symbolic and the civic-instrumental. The cultural-symbolic dimension is concerned with the generation of cultural-symbolic capital within the society and the reorganisation of collective identity and its symbolic substances.¹ In this vein, one may see that nations represent socio-cultural and geographical constructs which plainly have to be built from the ground up.² The second facet, namely the civic-instrumental, deals mostly with the material and the utilitarian, and the problems of resource management and administration.³

Nation-building is construed as the process of developing a collective identity which may serve as the foundation for people to live together, to acknowledge laws and to share resources. It is further argued that without the nationhood the state would adhere to use authoritarian and forcible measures to uphold its authority and it would trim down state-citizen relation to a sheer contractual and juridical one.⁴ The process of synthetic nation-building is constructed by intellectual minorities, but aimed at the entire community.⁵ Nation-building is aimed at manufacturing and maintaining national cohesion, and accordingly it incorporates such features as strategy, mobilisation, recognition and appeal. National cohesion is to be a product that obviously goes beyond the idea of separation in a fragile or divided state. It is the responsibility of the government to deliver the features of 'product design'.⁶ Besides, nation-building aims at shaping and reinforcing national identity.⁷ This allows us to conclude that the nation-building implies two inter-related notions: national cohesion and national identity.

The process of nation-building is never ending and constantly needed for the formation and sustainability of the state. This can be observed for instance from the case of America which goes to build or rebuild itself. It had contrived to integrate succeeding generations into the huge imagined community that is the American nation.⁸ In Europe, nation-building is based on single dominant culture, namely a shared language, religion and common history. In Europe, building the nation was much more self-identification or self-construction rather than externally imposed act of construction.⁹ In addition, nation-building in this region is based on principle of

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¹ Michael Hill and Lian Kwen Fee (1995), *The Politics of Nation-building and Citizenship in Singapore*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 22.

² Jim Mac Laughlin (2001), *Reimagining the Nation-State: The Contested Terrains of Nation-building*, London: Pluto Press, p. 2.

³ Michael Hill and Lian Kwen Fee (1995), *The Politics of Nation-building*, p. 22.

⁴ Rene Grotenhuis (2016), *Nation-building as Necessary Effort in Fragile States*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 12-31.

⁵ Michael Hill and Lian Kwen Fee (1995), *The Politics of Nation-building*, p. 13.

⁶ Claudia Derichs and Thomas Heberer (2006), "Introduction: Diversity of Nation-building in East and Southeast Asia," *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 5, no. 1, p. 4.

⁷ Wayne Norman (2006), *Negotiating Nationalism: Nation-building, Federation and Secession in the Multinational State*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 7.

⁸ Wayne Norman (2006), *Negotiating Nationalism*, p. xiv.

⁹ Wang Gungwu (2004), "Chinese Ethnicity in New Southeast Asian Nations," in Leo Suryadinata (ed), *Ethnic Relations and Nation-building in Asia: The Case of Ethnic Chinese*, Singapore: ISEAS, pp. 3-4.

viability, namely the capacity to stand on its feet with regard to resources.¹⁰ Nation-building in Asia is distinct to that in Europe, in the sense that some nation-states in this region are more artificial. These states emerged from current imperial and colonial experiences during which boundaries were sketched by outside interests.¹¹ The boundaries of post-colonial Asian states were sketched without any reference to, and at times without the information of their inhabitants.¹² In this sense, nation-building in postcolonial Asia was connected most notably with drawing and imagining the borders of the nation, which was mostly imposed by external interests.

It is of interest to explore the strategies of nation-building in such a multinational state as Indonesia. Nation-building in Indonesia involves some actors and institutions. The role of Islamic civil society organisations in deepening nation-building and nurturing multiculturalism cannot be neglected. This paper strives to unravel the role Islamic civil society organisations most notably the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama in strengthening multiculturalism and nation-building within a new context, namely the post-truth age. Some works have been devoted to investigating aspects of nation-building in Indonesia, but to the best of my knowledge, there is no detailed study which assesses the challenges of and prospects for nation-building and multiculturalism in Indonesia in the context of post-truth age. This study aims to deal with this lacuna.

Islam, State Ideology, and Nation-Building

Nation-building in Indonesia began in the period of Dutch colonialism, most specifically during the Indonesian nationalist movement before the Second World War. The modern Indonesian nation is accordingly a result of nationalism which came out as reaction to Dutch colonialism.¹³ Indonesia did not establish Islam as the basis of the state even though Muslims constitute the majority of the population. The first president of the country Soekarno (r. 1945-1967) instated Pancasila as the basis of the newly born Republic.¹⁴ In the case of the foundation of the state, Soekarno sought a new platform which could serve as the philosophical basis of the state. This platform was regarded as the crystallisation of the Indonesian philosophy, and for that reason could serve as the integrating power of all components within the society.

This does not mean that the relationship between Islam and the state in Indonesia is in harmony. There has been dispute most particularly in pre-independent Indonesia between the activists of political Islam (led by Mohammad Natsir (1908-1993)) and the nationalist group (led by Soekarno). Soekarno aspired towards 'deconfessionalised' nation-state, whilst Natsir was convinced that "Islam and the state are integrated religious-political entities".¹⁵ Effendy argues that the tensions between Islam and the state are grounded on two factors. First, differing visions among the founding fathers pertaining what makes up an ideal Indonesia, some opt for 'Islamic state' whilst others prefer 'nationalist state'. Second, the modes in which Islam are expressed politically, economically and culturally in the country. Some Muslims choose formalist articulation of Islam, whilst others favour substantialist one.¹⁶

On June 22, 1945 a small committee comprising some political Islam activists and some nationalist activists was formed. The committee came to an agreement which was named 'Jakarta Charter'. This charter sanctioned the Pancasila state ideology, with the addition that its first principle read as "Belief in God with the obligation to carry out Islamic law (*shari'a*) for its adherents". Nevertheless, on August 18, 1945 the Jakarta Charter was abolished. The majority of political Islam activists concurred to remove the phrase "with the obligation to carry out Islamic law (*shari'a*) for its adherents," and as a substitute they stressed the monotheistic principles in the first pillar of Pancasila which then read as "Belief in One God".¹⁷

The regimes of Soekarno (r. 1945-1967) and Suharto (r. 1967-1998) watched over and tried to domesticate Islamic forces in the country. The two regimes consider Islamic parties as challengers which could menace the nationalist foundation of the state.¹⁸ Suharto took an exclusivist approach to Islam, although he changed his policy in the late 1980s by demonstrating rapprochement with Islam.¹⁹

¹⁰ Michael Hill and Lian Kwen Fee (1995), *The Politics of Nation-building*, p. 16.

¹¹ Wang Gungwu (2004), "Chinese Ethnicity," p. 4.

¹² Michael Hill and Lian Kwen Fee (1995), *The Politics of Nation-building*, p. 18.

¹³ Leo Suryadinata (2000), "Nation-building and Nation-destroying: The Challenge of Globalization in Indonesia," in Leo Suryadinata (ed), *Nationalism and Globalization: East and West*, Singapore: ISEAS, pp. 38-42.

¹⁴ Kikue Hamayotsu (2002), "Islam and Nation Building in Southeast Asia: Malaysia and Indonesia in Comparative Perspective," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 75, no. 3, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵ Bakhtiar Effendy (2003), *Islam and the State in Indonesia*, Singapore: ISEAS, pp. 26-27.

¹⁶ Bakhtiar Effendy (2003), *Islam and the State in Indonesia*, pp. 8-14.

¹⁷ Bakhtiar Effendy (2003), *Islam and the State in Indonesia*, pp. 32-33.

¹⁸ Bakhtiar Effendy (2003), *Islam and the State in Indonesia*, p. 2.

¹⁹ Kikue Hamayotsu (2002), "Islam and Nation Building in Southeast Asia," pp. 3-8.

Throughout the Suharto's regime, plurality was sacrificed in the name of unity by the suppressing the discourse on "ethnicity, religion, race and social relations" (SARA).²⁰ The situation is now changing, in the Post-Suharto Indonesia, ethnicity, religion, race and social relations are no longer regarded sensitive issues and accordingly could be discussed in public.²¹

Nation-Building and Plurality: Always Compatible?

Nation-building and plurality are not always in line. This is due to the fact that nation-building presupposes a unity and a common identity that allows a society to form a nation. While plurality refers to the varied components that exist within the society, which often becomes an obstacle to bind together into a nation, if the existing groups prefer their respective identities and interests, without wanting to build a basis of solidarity or a common identity.

It is of interest to see the issue of nation-building and diversity in the perspective of such a medieval Muslim thinker as Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), who is considered the father of sociology. For Ibn Khaldun, *'asabiyya* (social solidarity, social cohesion) comprises three features: (a) kin relationship (b) a socially cohesive religion that affords a shared idiom justifying the chieftain's aspirations for royal authority, and (c) the vigour of the chieftain by way of booty, trade, pillage and subjugation.²² Pertaining to nation and diversity, Ibn Khaldun²³ reveals that a dynasty hardly ever establishes itself securely in lands with numerous different tribes and groups. He goes on to explain:

The rationale for this is the differences in viewpoints and requests. Behind each opinion and desire, there is *'asabiyya* defending it. At any time, therefore, there is a good deal of resistance to a dynasty and insurgence against it, even if the dynasty holds *'asabiyya*, since each *'asabiyya* under the dictate of the ruling dynasty thinks that it has in itself sufficient strength and power.

In this sense, a high stage of diversity with no social cohesion is regarded as a peril rather than a promise, most particularly to the stability of the state or dynasty. It is worth remarking that Ibn Khaldun did not perceive that ethnic diversity *per se* as the threat to stability of the state. His statement should be understood within the context of his major notion of 'social cohesion'. Ethnic diversity could menace the stability of the state if there is no social cohesion among these ethnicities and tribes, whether this enforced by the dominant tribe or by the religious values.

There are some nation-building strategies that can be taken by countries whose citizens are composed of varied ethnicities (multi-national states) and possess a dominant majority group. *First*, nation-building is based on a dominant 'societal culture'.²⁴ *Second*, nation-building is grounded on a new platform agreed upon by the founders of the nation. In the context of Indonesia, Pancasila can be considered as the new platform underlying nation-building.

Multi-national countries that do not have a dominant majority group can take at least three strategies in nation-building. *First*, nation-building is primarily based on the dominant minority group. *Second*, creating a common identity, which may serve as a basis of nation-building. *Third*, seeking a basis for solidarity, which allows all citizens to work together, and thus build mutual trust among citizens (trust-building). Weinstock²⁵ and Norman²⁶ underline the need for searching a basis for solidarity within multinational, divided societies. Instead of attending to endorse a common identity, one should search for policies and institutional arrangements that will instigate trust between the communities.

The Challenges of Multiculturalism in Contemporary Indonesia

German scholar Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde (b.1930) states that "a free secular state depends greatly on premises which it alone cannot guarantee". These premises embrace such virtues as commitment to public order and morality. In this train of thought, we may say that the constitution desperately needs strong and healthy civil

²⁰ Chang Yau Hoon (2006), "Assimilation, Multiculturalism, Hybridity: The Dilemmas of Ethnic Chinese in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *Asian Ethnicity*, Vol. 7, no. 2, p. 153.

²¹ Kendra Clegg (2010), "Redefining ethnic identity in Indonesia," in Nicholas Tarling and Edmund Terence Gomez (eds), *The State, Development and Identity in Multi-ethnic Societies: Ethnicity, Equity and the Nation*, London and New York: Routledge, p. 179.

²² Syed Farid Alatas (1993), "A Khaldunian Perspective on the Dynamics of Asiatic Societies," *Comparative Civilizations Review*, Vol. 29, no. 4, p. 31.

²³ Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun (n.d.), *Al-Muqaddima*, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, pp. 164-166.

²⁴ Will Kymlicka (2001), *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 39-42.

²⁵ D. Weinstock. (1999), "Building Trust in Divided Societies," *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vo. 7, no. 3, pp. 287-307.

²⁶ Wayne Norman (2006), *Negotiating Nationalism*, p. 69.

society so as to sustain the wellbeing of the state. Civil society may serve as 'social capital' for the society or country in question. Religion may also play a part both positively and negatively to the civil society.

We observe challenges towards multiculturalism in the present-day Indonesia. This include for instance 'majority with a minority complex'. In this vein, Indonesian Muslims often come across this feeling. Some politicians during the election often exploit this feeling, by framing the news in mainstream media and social media. Overtheologisation of socio-political phenomena could also challenge the multiculturalism, since this standpoint will simplify the socio-political phenomena, and consequently hinder us from understanding the complexity of socio-political phenomena. Reducing this complexity into merely theological will narrow our understanding and will often lead us to oppose those which differ from us. Prejudices and misunderstandings also constitute a challenge to multiculturalism. Intolerance and tensions are often triggered by prejudices and misunderstandings. This is in line with the Arabic saying, *al-insan a'da' ma jahula* (a person is the enemy of those he/she does not know).

Another challenge to multiculturalism would be the politicisation of religion. Politicisation is conceived as the utilising of an issue by politicians for the sake of taking full advantage of their votes. There are three notions which involve in politicisation of religion: revival-reaction-politicisation. The 'revival' signifies the condition in which religion turns to increase its visibility in public sphere, its influence in society as well as its autonomy. The 'reaction' designates the process of counter-mobilisation by civil society actors, and repression by the state actors, against revivalist projects. The 'politicisation' refers to the stage in which religious activists establish a strong confessional party, in response to the negative reaction from civil society and state, by benefitting such capitals as well-built religious identity, solid organizational web and powerful religious authority.²⁷ The politicisation of religion could be observed for instance from the case 'hate spin', which could menace democracy and multiculturalism. Hate spin is conceived as calculative and deceptive propaganda which involves both 'offence-giving' and 'offence-taking', which aims at utilising group identities to assemble supporters and force opponents. Hate spin agents are political entrepreneurs who play with the communities' sentiments, most notably religious sentiments.²⁸

An essentialisation could hinder the society from enduring a genuine multiculturalism. This standpoint acknowledges essentialised features of ethnic identities, and does not recognise varied (often overlapping identities) within the individuals. This viewpoint runs in counter to the idea of recognising the diversity at the micro level, which is thought to be able to lead people into 'genuine multiculturalism'. A person, for instance, could become Javanese, Indonesian and Muslim at the same time. Another person, for instance, could become Chinese, Indonesian and Muslim at the same time. The persons which embody multiple identities within themselves and realise that these identities are fluid will easily develop multicultural skills, for instance by appreciating and acknowledging the diversity with the society.

Indonesian Islamic Civil Society, Nation-Building, and Multiculturalism

At the present time Islamic Civil Society in Indonesia is represented most specifically by the Nahdlatul Ulama (The Awakening of Religious Scholars) and the Muhammadiyah (The Followers of the Prophet Muhammad). The Muhammadiyah was founded by a businessman and religious scholar Ahmad Dahlan in 1912 in Yogyakarta. This particular movement represents the modernist tendency within Islam in the Indonesian Archipelago. It has a major contribution to Indonesia, especially in managing modern schools, colleges, orphanages and hospitals, as well as in guarding and influencing public policy. This contribution is in line with the ideas of the founder of the Muhammadiyah,²⁹ which stressed from the very beginning the moral and intellectual responsibility of Muslim as well as the need for accommodating Islam to modern science and education.

A few years later, in 1926, another organisation called the Nahdlatul Ulama was established. This particular organisation embodies traditionalist tendency within Islam in the Indonesian Archipelago. The years 1983-1984 was crucial in the development of the Nahdlatul Ulama, since the major change of social and political orientation of the Nahdlatul Ulama took place during this period. Nahdlatul Ulama once participated as a political party during the first Indonesian general election in 1955.

²⁷ Ateş Altınordu (2010), "The Politicization of Religion: Political Catholicism and Political Islam in Comparative Perspective". *Politics and Society*, Vol. 38, no. 4, pp. 521-525.

²⁸ Cherian George (2016), *Hate Spin: The Manufacture of Religious Offense and its Threats to Democracy*, Cambridge: MIT Press, pp. 3-6.

²⁹ Azyumardi Azra, Dina Afrianty and Robert Hefner (2007), "Pesantren and Madrasah: Muslim Schools and National Ideals in Indonesia," in Robert Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (eds), *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 184.

The 1984 National Congress decided that the Nahdlatul Ulama should return to its original feature (*khitta*) as non-political religious and social organisation. This decision was met by considering the fact that a number of conflicts with the government pertaining issues of religious concern (marriage legislation, formal recognition of heterodox religious movements) took place. In addition, there was also the phenomenon of sidelining of outspoken Nahdlatul Ulama politicians.³⁰

Islamic civil society organisations in Indonesia are different from those of some Muslim countries (most particularly the Jamaat-i Islami in Pakistan and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt), in the sense that Indonesian civil society organisations exhibit their loyalty to Indonesian nationalism and constitutional governance.³¹ This can be observed for instance from the involvement of the Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union), the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama in the 1928 Indonesian Youth Congress which materialised Indonesian nationalism by promoting the idea of “One People One Nation and One Language”.³²

The commitment of Indonesian Islamic civil society organisations towards nationalism can be observed most notably during the Post-Soeharto era. This era signifies a freedom of opinion, including in assigning ideologies other than Pancasila for any organisations in the country. A few Islamic civil society organisations and Islamic parties established Islam as their ideology. However, most Islamic civil society organisations (most notably the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama) and Islamic parties (most specifically the National Awakening Party (PKB) and National Mandate Party (PAN)) continue to uphold Pancasila as their basis. Suryadinata³³ reveals that these organisations are conscious of the threat of religious polarisation and accordingly prefer a Pancasila state.

The struggle between the advocates of ‘Muslim civil society and democracy’ and the promoters of ‘anti-pluralist Islamic state’ constitutes the main facet of Muslim politics in contemporary Indonesia. These two factions are designated as ‘civil Islam’ and ‘anti-democratic *regimist* Islam’.³⁴ The proponents of ‘civil Islam’ are hailing from, and associating themselves with, various Islamic trends and associations. The major trends (from which the proponents of ‘civil Islam’ originate) include: traditionalism, modernism, neo-modernism, and liberalism.

In the context of Indonesia, multiculturalism should not be necessarily juxtaposed with ‘modernism’ and ‘liberalism’. In my opinion (and based on my research), multiculturalism can be smoothly coupled with ‘traditionalism’, so that it may gain great credibility in grassroots communities. Within this framework, traditionalist Muslim leaders and traditionalist Muslim organisations are likely to play an important role in promoting multiculturalism in society, in general, and within anti-multiculturalist circles, in particular. The prospects for multiculturalism in Indonesia thus in some cases depends on the agency and role played by traditionalist Muslim leaders and traditionalist Muslim organisations.

In my opinion, the versatility of multiculturalism with ‘Islamic traditionalism’ is one of the characteristics of ‘Indonesian Islam’. This characteristic may complementary or enrich the ‘characteristics of Indonesian Islam’ which has been formulated by Azyumardi Azra. For Azra, these characteristics include: (a) non-violent spread (b) experiencing cultural enrichment without losing its own cultural roots; (c) rich cultural heritage; (d) the state of Pancasila; (e) the involvement of women in the public sphere; (f) mainstream organisations that hold tight to their moderate views and moderate attitudes; (g) a small but vocal radical group; (h) the empowerment of moderates, as a counterweight to radical discourse and praxis.³⁵

The Nahdlatul Ulama has played a significant role in rebuilding the nation and nurturing multiculturalism. Its commitment to Indonesian nation-building can be observed from their current rejection of anti-Pancasila mass-organisations, like the Indonesian Party of Islamic Liberation (HTI). The Nahdlatul Ulama’s exemplary role for deepening multiculturalism and nation-building could be observed from the activism of Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009). He once served as the executive director of the Nahdlatul Ulama and the President of Indonesia (r. 1999-2001). He was acknowledged as one of the personages who acknowledged minorities, either in terms of

³⁰ Martin van Bruinessen and Farid Wajdi (2006), “Syu’u’n Ijtima’iyah and the Kiai Rakyat: Traditionalist Islam, Civil Society and Social Concerns,” in Henk Schulte Nordholt and Ireen Hoogenboom (eds), *Indonesian Transitions*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, pp. 205-206.

³¹ Robert Hefner (2013), “Indonesia in the Global Scheme of Things: Sustaining the Virtuous Circle of Education, Associations and Democracy,” in Jajat Burhanudin and Kees van Dijk (eds), *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting Images and Interpretations*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, p. 58.

³² Adam Schwarz (1999), *A Nation in Waiting: Indonesia’s Search for Stability*, Colorado: Westview, pp. 2-4.

³³ Leo Suryadinata (2000), “Nation-building and Nation-destroying: The Challenge of Globalization in Indonesia,” in Leo Suryadinata (ed), *Nationalism and Globalization: East and West*, Singapore: ISEAS, p. 53.

³⁴ Robert Hefner (2001), “Public Islam and the Problem of Democratization,” *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 62, no. 4, p. 491.

³⁵ Azyumardi Azra (2013), “Distinguishing Indonesian Islam: Some Lessons to Learn,” in Jajat Burhanuddin and Kees van Dijk (eds), *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting Images and Interpretations*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 63-74.

ethnicity or religion. During his presidency, Confucianism has been recognised as religion along with Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism and Hinduism.

The commitment of the Nahdlatul Ulama's new leadership board towards nation-building and multiculturalism is observable from the fact the post of 'supreme authority' (*rais 'am*) has been assigned to Ma'ruf Amin (b. 1943), who has been recognised as conservative figure. Amin substituted A. Mustofa Bisri (b. 1944) who is most likely amongst the most progressive religious authority within the Nahdlatul Ulama. Nevertheless, Amin has proclaimed after his appointment that he was in sympathy with the idea of *Islam Nusantara* (archipelagic Indonesian Islam) and that he supported the coexistence among varied ethnicities and religions in the country. In addition, the post of executive director, the second most central one in the organisation, has been ascribed once again to Said Aqil Siradj (b. 1953) who shows his disagreement with religious fundamentalism and who has driven for the Nahdlatul Ulama's current communication campaign against radicalism.³⁶

The Muhammadiyah has also played a strong role in rebuilding the nation and in deepening multiculturalism. A great number of personages within the Muhammadiyah (most notably Ahmad Syafii Maarif (b. 1935), Din Syamsuddin (b. 1958) and Amin Abdullah (b. 1953)) have shown their commitment and have been involved in activism in supporting nation-building and multiculturalism.

The Muhammadiyah's new leadership board (2015-2020) demonstrates its commitment to multiculturalism and nation-building. This can be observed for instance from the statement of the chairman Haedar Nashir (b. 1958) that the Muhammadiyah needs to "do more to protect religious minorities". It is worth mentioning that only two members (out of thirteen) of the Muhammadiyah's leadership board who are hailing from conservative side.³⁷ This suggests that the majority of Muhammadiyah's leadership board is moderate and accordingly will contribute positively to the fate of nation-building and multiculturalism in the country.

The Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama not only exhibit their dedication to nation-building and multiculturalism, but also their close relationship with the current ruling regime Joko Widodo (r. 2014-now). Looking at this consideration, Amin Abdullah³⁸ points out that these two Islamic civil society organisations represent 'official Islam', which stay in contrast with 'oppositional Islam'. Oppositional Islam in the context of Indonesia refers to those Islamic civil society organisations which oppose the current regime and the country's nation-building, which include such organizations as the Front of Defender of Islam (FPI), the Indonesian Islamic Liberation Party (HTI) and the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS).

The Prospects for Nation-Building and Multiculturalism in the Age of Death of Expertise

The digital era or cyber era is characterised by the emergence of the internet as a new communication tool, which challenges the former means of communication. The internet as a communication tool in turn shapes new culture and new pattern of social relations. The digital age is often thought as the 'age of the death of expertise', since the pattern of communication in the internet age (especially with its social media) is egalitarian, and therefore necessitates an egalitarian pattern of social relations. In this new pattern of social relations, everyone is entitled to write and voice his or her own thoughts in a virtual cyber space, which in turn has an impact on the 'death of expertise', since everyone in the virtual world is regarded as equal, or in other words, everybody is an expert.

Such circumstances also penetrate into the realm of religion. In the cyber era, everyone is able to voice his/her religious opinions, even issuing his/her *fatwas* (authoritative legal opinions). In the digital era, a person who had studied religion only a few months ago, but he/she felt that he/she has mastered religious teachings and consequently felt worthy to issue a *fatwa* related to the teachings of his/her religion.

The digital era is also often regarded as a 'post-truth era' (German: *postfaktische Zeitalter*). This era shows the circumstances in which 'objective facts' become less influential in shaping public opinion, than the appeals of 'emotions/ sentiments' and 'personal beliefs'. Daniel Boorstin³⁹ reveals the tendency of the post-truth age by indicating that 'truth' has been replaced by 'believability'.

³⁶ Gwenaël Njoto-Feillard (2015), "Ripples from the Middle East: The Ideological Battle for the Identity of Islam in Indonesia," *Perspective*, Vol. 42, p. 10.

³⁷ Gwenaël Njoto-Feillard (2015), "Ripples from the Middle East," p. 9.

³⁸ Discussion with Amin Abdullah, September 18, 2018.

³⁹ Ralph Keyes (2004), *The Post-truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life*, New York: St. Martin's Press, p. 3.

Post-truth is frequently taken to signify ‘post-fact.’ It is not so much that facts are fruitless, it is just that they take a while to gather and assemble into a knock-down argument. By the time the facts are collected the media moment has gone, the headline has been grasped, and the lie can be amended, apologised for or substituted by another.⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that there have been discussions on ‘post-factual’ age among the scholars of communication, as can be observed from the work of James S. Ettema on “Journalism in the ‘post-factual age’” which was published in 1987.⁴¹

The post-truth age has an impact on the fragmentation of society. Due to social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, people easily create and disseminate provocative or hoaxed information, which would be acceptable to most people, not because the information is true, but because it has the potential to attract personal sentiments and beliefs of the community. For some people, it is not important that the information is in accordance with facts or not, what is more important is that the information is in line with their personal beliefs.

Social media contribute to the creation of a ‘bubble world’, where algorithmically chosen news sources merely strengthen prevailing prejudices hence compromising the capability for moral thinking.⁴² There has been a strategy to deal with the plethora of information in the post-truth age, namely that if journalism of verification is to endure in the new Information Age then it has to develop into a force in empowering people to mould their own communities based on verified information.⁴³

Post-truth is often employed within the political framework, where public debates and discourses are more shaped by emotional appeal, which is often detached from the details of existing government policies. Post-truth politics is distributed by way of video and social media, which are not perfect media for reflection, argumentation, disputation, and fact-checking and verification. Post-truth politics is an expansion of progressively privatised and disjointed public news.⁴⁴

The amalgam of populist movements with social media is frequently held liable for post-truth politics. Individuals have growing opportunities to mould their media expenditure around their peculiar outlooks and prejudices, and populist are prepared to promote them.⁴⁵ It is worth mentioning that populism is understood as political scheme by which a personalistic leader looks for or employs power based on straight, unmediated, uninstitutionalised espousal from great numbers of chiefly unorganised followers.⁴⁶

In this vein, some questions come up. Is authority is still needed in the cyber era? What is the prospect of nation-building and multiculturalism in the digital age? Before we investigate further into this problem, it is better to first look at the notion of authority. Authority, according to Zambrano,⁴⁷ refers to existing relationships between individuals in which an individual, driven by his circumstances, accomplishes something indicated by another individual, or something he would not accomplish without such an indication.

The digital age in some ways affects social relations, including its relation to authority. In this era new forms of authority emerge, such as the number of followers in social media, and the extent to which an idea (from a social media user) is disseminated by, and crafts the influence to other users, in cyberspace.

In order to comprehend more about authority on social media, I will explain about A. Mustofa Bisri and the Twitter. Twitter can be considered as a form of communication and social organisation. When we look at traditional Islamic scholarship, we realize that the term ‘followers’ in the Twitter is comparable to the term ‘mustami’un’ (audience). When we move specifically to the followers of Bisri’s Twitter account, we may also confirm that some of these ‘mustami’un’ may fall into the category of ‘muqallidun’ (followers, adherents to Bisri’s major ideas). ‘Mustami’un’ is a generic term which is addressed to those who follow Bisri’s ideas. The term ‘muqallidun’ is more specific and refers to those not only read Bisri’s ideas, but also consider him as authority, and therefore consult him on some religious issues, as well as retweet his posts. Some of these

⁴⁰ A. Michael Peters (2017), “Education in a Post-truth World,” *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 49, no. 6, p. 565.

⁴¹ Nora Martin (2017), “Journalism, the Pressures of Verification and Notions of Post-truth in Civil Society,” *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal*, Vol. 9, no. 2, p. 42.

⁴² A. Michael Peters (2017), “Education in a Post-truth World,” p. 564.

⁴³ Nora Martin (2017), “Journalism, the Pressures of Verification,” p. 51.

⁴⁴ A. Michael Peters (2017), “Education in a Post-truth World,” p. 564.

⁴⁵ William Davies (2016), “The Age of Post-Truth Politics,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/24/opinion/campaign-stops/the-age-of-post-truth-politics.html>

⁴⁶ Ewen Speed and Mannion, Russell (2017), “The Rise of Post-truth Populism in Pluralist Liberal Democracies: Challenges for Health Policy,” *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, Vol. 6, no. 5, pp. 249–251

⁴⁷ Eduardo Zambrano (2001), “Authority, Social Theories of,” in Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

‘muqallidun’ are treated by Bisri as the ‘elite followers’ (*khawwas*) whom he follows and whose tweets are sometimes retweeted. If we take an analogy with traditional Islamic scholarship, ‘retweet’ is analogous to ‘iqrar’ (confirming, agreeing).⁴⁸

The intrusion of social media has an implication on the nature of religious authority, which becomes more fragmented, due to egalitarian nature of social media. In this digital era, Indonesia witnesses a number of young preachers who attract a significant number of followers in social media, and consequently are considered by their followers as authorities pertaining Islamic teachings. These preachers include for instance Felix Siau (b. 1984), Jonru Ginting (b. 1970) and Salim A. Fillah (b. 1984). Siau’s Twitter account (@felixsiau) succeeded in attracting 2.8 million followers as of October 8, 2018. Ginting’s Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/jonru.page/>) attracted 1.46 million followers as of October 8, 2018. Fillah’s account (@salimafillah) gained 518,530 followers as of October 8, 2018.

The emergence of these new religious authorities poses a challenge to the established authority which has been enjoyed by the Muhammadiyah and, most specifically, the Nahdlatul Ulama. Thanks to the existence of the Pesantren and local Muslim clerics, that the Nahdlatul Ulama has exerted a great portion of authority among Muslims at the grassroots. The Muhammadiyah has also enjoyed a great part of authority among Indonesian Muslims due to the existence of modern schools and universities run by the organisation. The new religious authorities which base their influence on social media could threaten the position of the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama, since these new authorities have the potentials in influencing millennial Muslims (most of whom were born into the parents who adhere to the Muhammadiyah or the Nahdlatul Ulama). What is worth remarking pertaining to these three new religious authorities (Siau, Ginting and Fillah) is their support to ‘transnational Islamic movement’ and consequently they are reluctant towards the country’s nation-building and multiculturalism. Such a viewpoint runs in counter with those held by the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama.

The Nahdlatul Ulama felt the growing significance of the social media, accordingly encourages its members to be active in social media to disseminate positive contents based on the teachings of the Nahdlatul Ulama, as a counter to the negative contents. The national board itself created a Twitter account (@nu_online), which attracted 339,062 followers as of October 9, 2018.

We could also find the Twitter account of the executive director of the Nahdlatul Ulama, Said Aqil Siradj (@saidaqil) which attracted 286,314 followers as of October 9, 2018. He also takes a part in promoting the virtues of nation-building and multiculturalism as observable for instance from his quote which was posted on August 22, 2018: “Pancasila is not a religion. Islam does not disturb the Pancasila. The Pancasila does not lessen our Islam. Hence, a good Muslim has to be good citizen, committed to the Pancasila and the 1945 National Constitution, and respecting ‘Unity in Diversity’”.

The exemplary role of the leader of the Nahdlatul Ulama in preaching the virtues of multiculturalism and nation-building could be observed from the social media accounts of A. Mustofa Bisri (b. 1944). Bisri is a senior leader of the organisation and once served as the ‘supreme authority’ (*rais ‘am*). He is traditional Muslim cleric (with the educational background of the Pesantren (traditional Indonesian Islamic boarding school) and Al-Azhar University) who composes short stories and poetries and produces paintings. This unique combination and his ability to adapt with the social media allow him to become a religious authority, both online and offline. His Twitter account (@gusmusgusmu) attracted 1.89 million followers; whereas his Facebook account (Simbah Kakung) was followed by 303,465 followers. He belongs to the Muslim scholars who are committed to multiculturalism and nation-building; and actively preaches these virtues. He belongs to the few Nahdlatul Ulama scholars who become authority in virtual and real world.

One of Bisri’s well-known quotes reads “We are Indonesian people who embrace Islam, not Muslims who were accidentally born in Indonesia. These two statements have their respective consequence: the first phrase necessitates Muslims to love the country, whereas the second phrase implies that there is no necessity to love and defend the country”. His quote which was posted on September 2, 2018 reads as “Let us occasionally stop taking about practical politics, legislative election and presidential election; and feel the breadth of your heart”. This quote has been shared by 709 people and has been loved by 2,100 people.

⁴⁸ Asfa Widiyanto (2016), *Religious Authority and the Prospects for Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: The Role of Traditionalist Muslim Scholars*, Berlin and London: LIT Verlag, pp. 102-103.

The leaders of the Muhammadiyah are also aware of the growing importance of the social media, most particularly among the millennial generation. The Twitter account of the national board of the Muhammadiyah (@muhammadiyah) was brought in response to this tendency and need. This particular account attracted 133,582 followers as of October 9, 2018.

One may also observe the existence of Dr. Haedar Nashir's (b. 1958) Facebook page (DrHaedarNashir/) and Twitter account (@HaedarNs). Nashir's postings also appear on the Facebook page of Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah (PeryarikatanMuhammadiyah). It is worth remarking that Nashir's Twitter account attracted 17,992 followers, whilst his Facebook page was followed by 9,406 people, as of October 9, 2018.

I observe that Nashir's quotes in Facebook attracted more attention (as can be seen for instance from the number of 'shares') than long postings or reportages. His quotes on nationhood and political contestation are worth remarking. His quote which was posted on August 28, 2018 reads as "The general election in Indonesia is a routine democratic process, which should not be seen as an emergent condition. Hence, this political contestation should not become a harsh struggle which involves violence. It would be a pity if this political process damages the brotherhood and national cohesion". This particular quote has been shared 160 times.

Nashir's other quote which was posted on July 7, 2018 reads as "Nowadays Indonesia is in need of mutual visits and contacts among the country's stakeholders to develop together the vision and viewpoints, which could solve disputed problems. We should develop smart and mature dialogue among the country's components in order to achieve the goals of the country". The latter quote has been shared 91 times.

Azyumardi Azra (b. 1955) belongs to the few senior Muhammadiyah personages who actively their ideas through Twitter. His Twitter account (@Prof_Azyumardi) attracted 20,326 followers. His quote which was posted on April 16, 2018, reads "Pancasila has been accepted by diverse religious communities including Muslims who constitute majority". This quote has been shared 126 times. Another senior Muhammadiyah figure who is active in Twitter is Din Syamsuddin. His Twitter account (@OpiniDin) attracted 126,902 followers. One of his Tweets was concerned with the role of religions for peace-building, namely: "religions, most notably Islam, should contribute to peace and prosperity which are the goals of religions" (November 17, 2011).

We observe a number of young scholars within the Nahdlatul Ulama who actively promote multiculturalism and nation-building through social media. We may name for instance: Sumanto Al Qurtuby whose Facebook account (Bungmanto) was followed by 215,243 people; Mohamad Guntur Romli (b. 1978) whose Twitter account (@GunRomli) drew 157,298 followers; Akhmad Sahal whose Twitter account (sahal_AS) attracted 155,262 followers; and Nadirsyah Hosein (b. 1973) whose Twitter account (@na_dirs) gained 137,313 followers. Ulil Abshar Abdalla deserves specific remarking. His Twitter account (@ulil) was followed by 760,503 followers; whilst his Facebook account (ulil67) was followed by 69,965 people. He organises a virtual session on studying al-Ghazzali's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, which attracts a large number of audience. The existence of these young Nahdlatul Ulama scholars and their active involvement in social media indicates a bright future of the mainstream Indonesian Islam which are committed to nation-building and multiculturalism.

On the side of the Muhammadiyah, we come across a number of young progressive activists who actively disseminate their ideas through social media. We may mention such names as David Krisna Alka (b. 1980) whose Twitter account @DavidKrisnaAlka attracted 25,950 followers; Alpha Amirrachman (b. 1970) whose Twitter account @AlphaARachman was followed by 18,684; Muhamad Ali (b. 1974) whose Twitter account @muhamali74 obtained 10,309 followers; Fajar Riza ul Haq (b. 1979) whose Twitter account @fajar7919 attracted 5,363 followers; and Ahmad Najib Burhani (b. 1976) whose Twitter account @najibburhani got 4,116 followers, as of October 9, 2018.

It seems to me that young progressive Muhammadiyah scholars and activists, who have been influenced by Ahmad Syafii Maarif, only got a limited number of followers in social media. Consequently they could not become new authorities in social media, which are of significance in directing and disseminating positive contents on Islam, multiculturalism and nation-building.

There are actually some young Muhammadiyah members who possess a great number of followers in social media. One may mention Mustofa Nahrawardaya (b. 1972) whose Twitter account, @AkunTofa, was followed by 53,458 people. This young Muhammadiyah activist has a great influence on social media, but it seems that his Tweets are less supportive towards multiculturalism.

Nevertheless we observe that both the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah are lacking of young Muslim scholars who are able to communicate in popular language, on the one hand, and master one of the arts (painting, music, poetry, and the like), on the other hand, which could help them in disseminating their ideas among millennial Muslims and countering the viewpoints of oppositional Islam.

By looking at the above explanation, I argue that authority is still needed in the digital age. However this authority undergoes transformation and adaptation, for example in the case of Twitter, which we have discussed earlier. Indonesian Islamic civil society organisations (particularly the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama) unquestionably still have the opportunity to have a strong role in nurturing nation-building and multiculturalism. Nonetheless, both organisations have to realise that there is a transformation of authority in the digital age, and of there is an increasingly fragmentation of authority due to social media.

The prospects for multiculturalism and nation-building lies in the ability of these two mainstream Islamic civil society organisations to adapt with the changing landscape of religious authority in the digital age. There are promises for the bright future of multiculturalism and nation-building in Indonesia, if we look at most the activism of scholars of the Nahdlatul Ulama, most particularly its young scholars. They exert a great influence in social media, as can be seen from the number of their followers, which help them to disseminate their progressive ideas which support multiculturalism and nation-building among the netizens, in general, and among millennial generation, in particular. There is also indication for the bright prospects for multiculturalism and nation-building if we look at the activism of the Muhammadiyah scholars and activists. The Muhammadiyah scholars, most notably the young ones, nevertheless, have to work a bit harder to become new religious authorities in virtual world, by increasing their influence, which help them to disseminate their progressive ideas on multiculturalism and nation-building most specifically among their fellow Muhammadiyah members, on the one hand, and countering the arguments of oppositional Islam, on the other hand. It is worth remarking that some groups of oppositional Islam often target the members of the Muhammadiyah.

Conclusion

The course of nation-building and multiculturalism in Indonesia cannot be detached from Islam, since Muslim constitutes the majority of populace. Since the beginning of nationalist movements in the country, Islamic civil society organisations (most particularly the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama) have played a significant part in constructing nation-building and multiculturalism. The strong role of both organisations in deepening nation-building and multiculturalism in Indonesia would continue in the digital age, if these organisations could develop new strategies, by employing the internet, and hence could reach the millennial generation.

The prospects for nation-building and multiculturalism in Indonesia, thus, lies in the ability of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama to adapt and deal with the new patterns of social relations and changing patterns of authority. Both organisations to a great extent need figures that possess solid credentials of authority (which are indispensable to gain credibility from the public), on the one hand, and have the ability to adapt and to be active in social media, so as to transform itself as an authority in cyberspace, on the other hand. The influence coverage of such personages is thus getting wider, not online the influence in the real world (offline), but also in the virtual world (online). Their audience are accordingly also bigger, reaching out both real world and cyberspace.

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