

Conclusion

Muslim-Christian relations have been an important element of the social and political dynamics of Indonesia during the New Order period, and an ever sensitive object of Government policy. In this study, I have focused on the discourses and political behaviour of Muslim and Christian leaders as well as the state elites concerning inter-religious relations in order to better understand the nature of these relations and their development over time. These discourses were analysed through a reading of utterances on a wide range of occasions and in different socio-political contexts, including Parliamentary sessions, Government organised meetings, religious sermons, meetings of religious organisations, demonstrations, conferences and seminars. The development of power relations between the Islamic groups, the Christians and the state strongly influenced the features of the discourses. There were antagonistic as well as common discourses between the Muslims and the Christians. In response to the Muslim-Christian antagonistic discourses, the state often adopted an ambiguous position that eventually led to further controversies between the two religious groups. On the other hand, the state determined and imposed a certain discourse as a common discourse for all. Some Muslim and Christian leaders responded positively to this state-imposed common discourse, while others opposed it and proposed an alternative common discourse. The Muslim-Christian discourses certainly influenced the mutual perceptions and actions of the two religious communities. The discourses also shaped state policies on religio-political issues, and how they were implemented in reality.

The relations between Muslims and Christians have been tense because of mutual suspicions existing between them. These mutual suspicions have been reflected in, and exacerbated by, the antagonistic discourses in which the Muslim and Christian leaders perceived each other as a threat against their respective religious communities. Among the Muslims, the Christian threat has been called 'Kristenisasi' (Christianisation). In the Muslim discourse, Christianisation meant unfair and aggressive efforts to convert Muslims to Christianity such as by offering money, food, education, and health care to the poor Muslims; building a church in a Muslim majority area; encouraging Christians to marry Muslim partners in order to convert the latter; inviting Muslims to participate in Christmas celebrations under

the pretext of religious tolerance; and teaching Christianity to Muslim students in Christian schools. In the Muslim discourse, Christianisation could also mean a political conspiracy of the Christians with other enemies of Islam, particularly the secularists, inside and outside the country, to weaken the Islamic groups culturally, politically and economically. Christianisation was therefore described as a 'new style of crusade', 'religious expansionism', 'foreign intervention', 'arrogance of cultural superiority' inherited from the West, and 'intolerant to Muslim feelings.'

The discourse on the threat of Christianisation sometimes led several Muslims to violent action, by attacking church buildings and Christian schools. Moreover, the Muslims also demanded that the Government control and restrict Christian missions by (1) making strict requirements for obtaining permission to erect a new place of worship; (2) restricting religious propagation only to those outside the five recognised religions; and (3) controlling foreign aid for religious institutions; (4) prohibiting inter-religious marriage; (5) requiring that religion classes given at schools should be taught by a teacher whose religious background was the same as that of students. The Muslim leaders also tried to intensify Islamic propagation (*da'wah*) programmes to compete against the Christian mission. To protect the Islamic community from the perceived threat of Christianisation, the Muslim leaders developed exclusive interpretations of religious doctrines, such as a total rejection of freedom to convert from Islam by reaffirming the classic Islamic doctrine on apostasy (an apostate could be killed, though it was noted that this could not be applied in a non-Islamic state like Indonesia); prohibiting Muslims from participating in Christmas celebration by emphasising that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity could endanger Muslim monotheistic belief; prohibiting inter-religious marriage between a Muslim and non-Muslim based on the idea that the prevention of possible harm (conversion from Islam of the Muslim partner and his or her children) has priority over obtaining benefits of marriage. The political marginalisation of the Islamic groups by the regime apparently helped increase the Muslim exclusive religious outlook.

The Christians, on the other hand, denied the existence of what the Muslims called Christianisation efforts. Moreover, for the Christians, the five aforementioned Muslim demands to the Government were opposed to the idea of religious freedom. For the Christians, religious freedom meant: the freedom to build churches in all regions of Indonesia, including the Muslim majority areas, the freedom to preach religion to anybody, the freedom to change religion, the freedom to cooperate with co-religionists outside the

country (that is, to receive foreign aid), the freedom to participate in religious celebrations of another religion, the freedom to follow religious teachings without any pressure from the state; and the freedom to teach Christianity to all students in Christian schools, as long as they or their parents agreed. The Christians used two important arguments to support their understanding of religious freedom, namely nationalism and human rights. Nationalism for them meant that all citizens are equal before the state on the basis that all of them shared the same nationality. Other allegiances such as religion, race, geographic origin, should be submitted to nationality. In this sense, nationalism is in line with individual human rights, particularly the right to religious freedom. Thus, for the Christians, the five aforementioned Muslim demands to the Government were against nationalism and human rights. Moreover, although in terms of religious doctrines, inter-religious marriage (and probably conversion from Christianity too) was a controversial issue among the Christian Churches, as a religious minority, they never hesitated to support religious freedom. Likewise, it was the idea of religious freedom that led the Christians to demand state recognition of marriages based on Javanese Mysticism, while the Muslims opposed it. Certainly, we cannot also ignore that the supporters of Javanese Mysticism (who were mostly *abangan*) were the likely political allies for the Christians. In contrast, for the Muslim leaders, the adherents of Javanese Mysticism were actually Muslims (but less Muslim than the *santri*), and therefore, they should marry according to Islam. This case apparently reflects the Muslim struggle against local religious customs and beliefs.

The responses of the regime to the Muslim discourse on Christianisation and the Christian defence of religious freedom were always ambiguous. In certain periods, when the regime felt it the need for reconciliation with the Islamic groups, the former accommodated certain demands of the latter in the Government decrees. However, because the Christians consistently opposed these decrees, they were not strictly implemented. This was because the interest of the regime lay neither in curbing Christian missions nor in enhancing religious freedom, but in maintaining political power and controlling socio-political stability. The joint decree of the Ministers of Religion and of Home Affairs in 1969 clearly accommodated the Muslim demand to control the erection of new places of worship. This decree has created difficulties for Christians wishing to build a new church, especially in Muslim majority areas (as Muslims also had difficulties in erecting a mosque in Christian majority areas). However, there were also some cases in which new churches were built without permission and the Government did not

react, until the Muslim protests emerged. Likewise, in 1978 the Government issued decrees to restrict missionary activities only to those outside the recognised religions, and to control foreign aid for religious institutions. In practice, however, the decrees were loosely implemented. With regard to inter-religious marriage, the compromise between the regime and the Islamic groups resulted in a strange decision: the Marriage Law of 1974 does not clearly mention whether inter-religious marriage is allowed or not. In practice, whether inter-religious marriage was possible, difficult or even impossible, depended very much on the socio-political development in the country. While up to the 1980s inter-religious marriage was still possible, though sometimes difficult, in the 1990s when the regime was close to the Islamic groups, it became almost impossible. Last but not least, in the Education Law of 1989, the regime eventually accommodated the Muslim demand to require that teacher and students had to be of the same religious background, but because of the Christians' objection, this rule was not implemented in private schools.

Apart from the Government ambiguity, did Christianisation truly happen? In the Introduction, I noted that according to the Government statistic for the year 2000, the percentage of population that is Muslim is 88.22% (177.5 million), and this was almost similar to the previous Government statistics. On the other hand, the Christian population has increased from 7.39% (8.74 million) in 1971 to 8.92% (17.95 million) in 2000 with an average rate of growth of 2.4% annually, and this is higher than the rate of growth of the whole population (1.83%). If the statistics are reliable, then we can say that Christianisation of those who already adhered to Islam did not widely happen because the Muslim population was generally stable. The increase of the Christian population was probably due to the success of Christian missions directed to the people living in several remote areas of the country, that is, to those who did not belong to one of the recognised religions.

Despite the statistics, after the fall of Soeharto, the Muslim discourse on Christianisation continued influencing Muslim-Christian relations. During the making of the Education Law of 2003 there was a hot controversy on the issue of religion classes. Despite strong opposition from the Christians, the Islamic groups successfully included in the Law a provision stating that students are entitled to religious education in their own religion and to be taught by a teacher of the same religion. This was obviously a culmination of what had happened on this issue during the New Order period. Likewise, based on the Government decree of 1969 on the rules of erecting new places of worship, in October 2004, a group of Muslims barricaded a Catholic

school in Cileduk, Jakarta because it was illegally used for religious services, and for the same reason, 23 churches were closed by Muslims in West Java in September 2005. There has also been a controversy on the Muslim proposal for what is called the 'Religious Harmony Bill' (RUU-KUB), which is actually an effort to enhance the legal status of the Government decrees of 1969 and 1978 to the position of law ratified by Parliament. By the end of September 2005, the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) reaffirmed its earlier fatwa on the prohibition of inter-religious marriage and at the same time it prohibited Muslims from participating in a common prayer in which believers of different religions come together to pray alternately for the sake of a common interest. The MUI also declared that pluralism, liberalism and secularism are against Islam. In contrast to what happened during the New Order period, however, there have been more Muslim activists and intellectuals who openly opposed these Muslim exclusive religious attitudes.

Whereas the Muslims felt insecure and threatened by Christianisation, the Christians were afraid of the threat of an Islamic State. For the Christians, to have to live under an Islamic state in which the shari'a law was implemented would mean that they would be turned into second-class citizens. As a religious minority, the Christians preferred the secular political view of separation of religion and state. After the Communist Party (PKI) was physically and politically destroyed in the late 1960s, the Islamic groups felt more confident in pursuing their ideological ambition. On the other hand, to protect themselves from the threat of the Muslim ideological ambition, the Christians decided to ally with the emerging power of the army. This political choice was apparently natural for the Christians because, like the politically secular-oriented Muslims among the civilians, the army was known as the strongest proponent of the nationalist (as opposed to the Islamic) ideological outlook.

The Christian political choice eventually produced certain consequences. One was that the Christians became the supporters, or even contributors to the making of the authoritarian New Order regime. While T.B. Simatupang, the leader of PGI, still hoped that the military regime would willingly support democracy, an important group among the Catholics established a strong alliance with the regime in some important political institutions, namely in the state intelligence operations, in the Government party, Golkar, and in the think tank called the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). The CSIS intellectuals were involved in developing the official interpretation of the state ideology, Pancasila, in which the secular political view was combined with Javanese ideals of family-ism. They also

played an important role behind the Government secular policies on education and culture.

Although the CSIS, at least to the mid-1980s, actually represented much more the state than the Catholics, the involvement of the Catholic intellectuals in this think-tank helped create a bad image of the Catholics among the Muslims. It often happened that the Muslim political frustration with the regime manifested itself as a strong negative perception of the Catholics. On the other hand, when the regime became more accommodating to Islamic ideological demands, the Muslim-Christian antagonism did not stop because while the regime was *not* always consistent with its ideological position, the Christians were consistent in their opposition to the Islamic ideology. When the regime accommodated the demands of the Islamic groups during the controversy on the marriage bill in 1973, or when the regime proposed the Religious Court Bill in 1988, both Catholic and Protestant leaders cooperated to oppose it.

The Muslim-Christian antagonism also continued in the 1990s, the period when the regime allied with the Islamic groups. In the late 1980s, Soeharto had a conflict with some important army generals who had previously supported him. In order to maintain his power, Soeharto then allied with the Islamic groups, particularly the reformist Muslims. In 1990, Soeharto supported the establishment of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI). Many of the ICMI activists then became the representatives of the Government party, Golkar, and some of them were appointed as ministers in Soeharto's cabinet. Just as in the early 1970s a certain group of Catholics in cooperation with the military had established the CSIS, so now ICMI established the Centre for Information and Development Studies (CIDES) which was also intended to become a think tank for the Government. It was said that certain ICMI leaders felt it was the time to take 'revenge' on the Christians. There is no doubt that the Christians and other religious minorities were very scared of this political development. Moreover, the favouring of Muslims over Christians in this period had disturbed the old balance of power between the two communities in such places as the Moluccas. The civil war in the Moluccas which occurred after the fall of Soeharto was partly because the Christian elites try to regain what they have lost.

It should be noted, however, that although the regime accommodated some Muslim demands, it never tolerated the idea of Islam as an alternative political ideology to Pancasila. The New Order regime continuously prohibited people from speaking publicly about support for an Islamic State or the Jakarta Charter, and by the mid-1980s it forced all social organisa-

tions, including religious ones, to adopt Pancasila as the sole basis in their respective constitutions. Through an indoctrination programme started by the late 1970s, the state tried to impose its own interpretation of Pancasila based on family-ism and corporatism. This official interpretation was then opposed to three other ideologies: Islam, Communism and Liberalism. It is not surprising that under these political circumstances, the non-ideological view of Islam became dominant in the public sphere.

The non-ideological view of Islam, however, could not be simply perceived as a temporary political option, particularly for its proponents who took this view out of long internal discussions since the early 1970s. After the fall of Soeharto in 1998 and the rise of democracy in Indonesia, we can see that, unlike the situation in the 1950s and the late 1960s, the Islamic ideology is not the common cause for all Islamic groups anymore. It is the nationalist outlook rather than Islam that has become the official basis of the two important Muslim political parties: PKB (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa) established by the Muslim traditionalist leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, and PAN (Partai Amanat Nasional) established by the Muslim reformist leader, M. Amien Rais. In addition, although after the fall of Soeharto the top leader of Golkar have been reformist Muslim activists (Akbar Tanjung and then Jusuf Kalla), this party has never changed its nationalist ideology into the Islamic one. Without support of these three important political parties, it is certainly difficult for the other Muslim political parties officially based on Islam such as PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan), PBB (Partai Bulan Bintang) and PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera) to realise their ideological ambitions. In other words, the threat of an Islamic state is not as serious as before.

Besides the antagonistic discourses on the threat of Christianisation and the Islamic State, there were also Muslim-Christian common discourses imposed by the state or developed by Muslims and Christians themselves. The state claimed that the common cause for the nation after the fall of the Soekarno regime was economic restoration. Therefore, the common discourse for the state was development and modernisation or the so-called 'Pembangunan'. State officials often emphasised the claim that the development programmes could not work without political stability, and therefore, they urged religious leaders to avoid conflicts and to create inter-religious harmony, that is, peaceful inter-religious co-existence. State officials also encouraged religious leaders to engage religion as a supportive force for the development programmes. The Government project on inter-religious dialogue in particular and religious harmony in general was primarily directed to these ends.

In the early years of the New Order, the Christian leaders appeared to be quite supportive of the Government discourse on development, while the Muslim groups were still sceptical, if not opposed to it. By the mid-1970s, however, critical voices against the Government development programmes emerged in Christian and Muslim intellectual circles. Influenced by the Catholic liberation theology of Latin America, these intellectuals tried to develop a critical religious discourse on development, by emphasising the universal value of social justice. Thus, social justice became the common cause for all, and this idea was developed further among several younger Muslim activists in the 1990s, and became their ideology of social action.

The Muslim-Christian common discourse developed primarily because of the emergence of the non-ideological view of Islam in the early 1970s that became stronger in the following decades. This view of Islam certainly provided a religious justification for the regime, but at the same time it showed a peaceful face of Islam for the Christians who had been afraid of the threat of an Islamic State. Like the Christians, the proponents of non-ideological Islam considered Pancasila as the best ideology of the state. Thus, when the state imposed Pancasila as the sole basis for social organisations, they did not have any problem. However, along with some Christian and other intellectuals, these Muslims tried to oppose the state interpretation of Pancasila. In the 1990s, in response to the Soeharto' political alliance with the Muslim reformists, some prominent Muslim and Christian intellectuals cooperated in developing a common discourse on democracy and pluralism.

All in all, our discussion demonstrates that religion in Indonesia was (and is) very much a public issue, and had been increasingly so during the New Order period. The ideological compromise between the secular and the Islamic oriented group, that Indonesia is neither secular nor Islamic, certainly provides a grey area for debates, negotiations and compromises between the secular and the religious. This study also indicates that Muslim and Christian leaders have been involved in debates on almost all important socio-political issues, including state ideology, law, culture, education, democracy and development. The significant political influence of both religious communities in Indonesia is indicated by the fact that the state could not totally suppress either the voices of the Muslims or the Christians in those debates, and even it tried to accommodate both, resulting in the ambiguities. Thus, the issues of Muslim-Christian relations are too important to neglect for anyone who wants to understand this country and who expects the best for its future.

Because most, if not all, of the Muslim-Christian issues are in fact political problems, they should be resolved, I believe, through a 'suitable' political system and culture. Perhaps, the current democratic political system is one of the answers, but a democratic system will not work without support of democratic culture in society. The respect for human rights and the mutual trust between groups in society will certainly not come out of the blue. Mutual trust between religious groups cannot develop if their leaders make a protest when their own group is discriminated against but become silent when it happens to another group. The religious leaders not only should support and develop the discourses on the principles of democracy and human rights but also should prove, in response to actual cases, that they truly hold these principles. I believe that both Islam and Christianity also teach these principles.

