THE IMPACTS OF INDIGENOUS-CHINESE RELATIONS ON MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS: ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Tensions between the Muslims and the Christians have been high in the 90s. The tensions, this writer believes, are strongly confounded by ethnic prijudice beween the predominantly Muslim poor indigeneous and predominantly Christian wealthy Chinese. Relaxing the just mentioned tensions, therefore, should precede any other attemls to relax the tensions between the Muslims and the Christians. This writer proposes Malaysian model of affirmative programs for the Indegeneous to relax tension between the Indegeneous and the Christians, and therefore the Muslims and the. Christians

DEMOGRAPHIC PICTURE

Table 1 shows the distribution of Indonesian People across a geographical areas x religions matrix, based on the last population census of 1990. Table 2 is a modification of table 1, supposed to reflect a more typical distribution, where non typical provinces (Bali which is predominantly Hindus, East Timor which is predominantly Catholics, North Sulawesi which is predominantly Protestants, East Nusa Tenggara which is predominantly Catholics, Man Jaya which is predominantly Protestants, and Maluku which has Christian population far above national average) are excluded. Table 3 shows the distribution in the non-typical provinces.

It is in this writer's opinion that muslim-christian relations in Indonesia have been so far heavily confounded by the tensions, sentiment, and prejudice within the context of Indigenous-Chinese relations. It is therefore advisable to introduce the very sensitive variable —ethnic— into our analysis in order to get a sharper conclusion. Chinese population in Indonesia is approximately 3% of total

Table 1
Clustering of Indonesian Population
Across Geographical Areas and Religions

Geographical Areas	Religions					
	Muslims	Christians	Hindus	Buddhists	Others	Total
Urban	47,608,304 (26.56%)	5,523,258 (3.08%)	714,582 (0.39%)	1,456,458 (0.81%)	134,188 (0.07%)	55,433,790 (30.93%)
Rural	108,710,306 (60.65%)	11,712,305 (6.53%)	2,572,727 (1.44%)	384,235 (0.21%)	434,420 (0.24%)	123,813,993 (69.07%)
Total	156,318,610 (87.21%)	17,235,563 (9.62%)	3,287,309 (1.83%)	1,840,693 (1.03%)	568,608 (0.32%)	179,247,783 (100%)

Table 2
Typical Clustering of Indonesian Population
Across Geographical areas and Religions

Geographical Areas	Religions					
	Muslims	Christians	Hindus	Buddhists	Others	Total
Urban	46,259,274 (27.67%)	4,460,270 (2.67%)	143,047 (0.09%)	1,439,300 (0.86%)	131,091 (0.08%)	52,956,879 (31.37%)
Rural	106,436,207 (63.66%)	5,851,303 (3.50%)	608,915 (0.36%)	376,325 (0.23%)	265,036 (0.16%)	114,227,389 (67.91%)
Total	152,695,481 (91.33%)	10,311,573 (6.17%)	751,962 (0.45%)	1,815,625 (1.09%)	396,127 (0.24%)	167,184,268 (100%)

Most of the Chinese are Christians, Buddhists, or Confucians which in table 2 is included in the "others" category. Just very few Chinese are Muslims. Table 4 modify table 2 by introducing the ethnic dimension, and assuming some

simplifications that 1) no Chinese is Muslim, 2) all Buddhists are Chinese, and 3) all of those categorized as "others" are Confucian Chinese. The Indigenous, Muslims as well as Christians, are about 30% urban, far less than the Chinese which is 75.3% urban. In terms of religion only 4.6% of Indigenous people in the typical provinces are Christians, while as for the Chinese, 55.67% of them are Christians. The decade of 1990s has been characterized with strenuous tension between the generally poor Indigenous majority which are predominantly Muslims and the wealthier Chinese minority which are predominantly - Christians.

Table 3
Clustering Across Religions and Non-typical Provinces

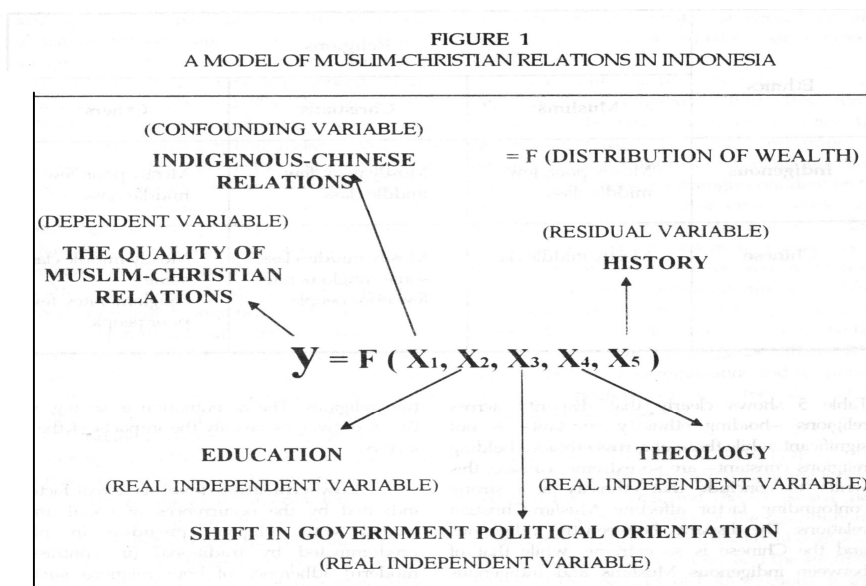| Provinces	Religions					
	Muslims	Christians	Hindus	Buddhists	Others	Total
Bali	224,990 (8.10%)	29,136 (1.05%)	2,588,527 (90.32%)	14,283 (0.51%)	420 (0.02%)	2,777,386 (100%)
East Nusa Tenggara	298,180 (9.12%)	2,812,063 (86.05%)	6,219 (0.19%)	1,310 (0.04%)	150,147 (4.59%)	3,267,919 (100%)
East Timor	28,212 (3.77%)	701,897 (93.89%)	3,853 (0.52%)	2,825 (0.38%)	10,770 (1.44%)	747,557 (100%)
North Sulawesi	1,179,219 (47.60%)	1,278,892 (51.63%)	12,370 (0.50%)	3,448 (0.14%)	3,262 (0.13%)	2,477,189 (100%)
Maluku	1,052,112 (56.79%)	791,162 (42.10%)	1,494 (0.80%)	1,301 (0.07%)	6,714 (0.36%)	1,852,723 (100%)
Irian Jaya	331,229 (20.32%)	1,293,192 (79.33%)	2,884 (0.18%)	1,901 (0.12%)	901 (0.06%)	1,630,107 (100%)

Source : Population census 1990 (BPS, 1990)

In general Muslims and Christians relations up to the decade of 1980s is good. Tensions and prejudice did exist, but they are still at normal and tolerable level and the government in general was able to control them. In the 1990s

tensions and prejudice have been dramatically increasing up to an alarming degree and some times were characterized by sporadic social amoks, inducing the Department of Religious Affairs to campaign on the necessity of dialogues - including this conference- between the two religions in order to maintain peaceful relations.

CONTROLLABLE FACTORS

In identifying factors contributing to the accumulation of tensions between the Muslims and the Christians in the 90s, one should differentiate confounding factors from real factors.

Real factors contribute directly to the formation and accumulation of tensions, while confounding factors only contribute indirectly to the formation and accumulation process or only accentuate the tensions. On this writer's judgment, one major confounding factor is extreme unequal distribution of wealth between the Indigenous and the Chinese, and the main real factors are low education level, shift in political orientation of the Government, and the aggressive nature of both religions in spreading their respective beliefs and teachings. Figure 1 is a model of the causal relationships between these variables with Muslim-Christian relationst he dependent variable-, adding history as a residual variable.

FIGURE 1
A MODEL OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN INDONESIA

(CONFOUNDING VARIABLE)
INDIGENOUS-CHINESE RELATIONS = F (DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH)

(DEPENDENT VARIABLE)
THE QUALITY OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

(RESIDUAL VARIABLE)
HISTORY

$$Y = F (X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4, X_5)$$

EDUCATION
(REAL INDEPENDENT VARIABLE)

THEOLOGY
(REAL INDEPENDENT VARIABLE)

SHIFT IN GOVERNMENT POLITICAL ORIENTATION
(REAL INDEPENDENT VARIABLE)

Extreme unequal distribution of indigenous and the predominantly Christian wealth between the predominantly Muslim Chinese is illustrated by the following matrix:

Table 5
Distribution of wealth

Ethnics	Religions		
	Muslims	Christians	Others
Indigenous	Mostly poor, few middle class	Mostly poor, few middle class	Mostly poor, few middle class
Chinese	Mostly middle class	Mostly middle class, some conglomerates, few poor people	Mostly middle class, some conglomerates, few poor people

Table 5 shows dearly that disparity across religions -holding ethnicity constant- is not significant, while those of across ethnics —holding religions constant— are so extreme, causing this writer to conclude that ethnicity is a strong confounding factor affecting Muslim-Christian relations. The disparity between the indigenous and the Chinese is so extreme, while that of between indigenous Muslims and indigenous Christians is not so apparent, even though in general probably indigenous Christians are a bit better off than indigenous Muslims, due to a difference in average education level. As the indigenous are predominantly Muslims while the Chinese are predominantly Christians, the difference in ethnic accentuates strongly the tension between the two religions. The causal relationship among disparity of wealth, ethnicity, and religion is that extreme unequal distribution of wealth severely increased the tension between the two ethnics, and the tension between the two ethnics accentuates a lot the tension between the two religions. The accentuation is so big, such that it outweighs heavily the impacts of the real factors.

Low education level as a real factor is indicated by the occurrences of social amoks loaded with religious prejudice in places predominated by traditional (in contrast to modern) adherence of both religions such as Situbondo and Tasikmalaya which are predominated by traditional Muslims and East Timor and East Nusa Tenggara which are predominated by traditional Christians. Low education level tends to correlate positively with extremity and exclusivity, while higher education level tends to induce dialogue and therefore religious tolerance.

Shift in political orientation of the Government is so apparent when the government, which in the 70s and 80s were relatively more accommodative to the Christians, suddenly in the 90s stretched it's benign and warm arms to the Muslims, causing frustration and envy on the part of the Christians accustomed to dose and warm relationship with the government. *The* same sentiment, frustration, and envy were of course experienced by the Muslims in the 70s and 80s. On this writer's opinion, the frustration and envy, or even anger, that were experienced by both Muslims in the 70s and 80s and Christians in the 90s, are due to a perception that the relative closeness to the government in both cases were not results of a democratic political process. If democracy was enhanced, the relative closeness would be perceived as some thing natural and fair, and therefore the envy, frustration, and anger on either part would be significantly relaxed.

Disparity in wealth distribution, education level, and quality of democracy are controllable factors to the government, while ethnicity is not. It is therefore of this writer's opinion that the quality of relationship between the Muslims and the Christians, and even among all the adherence of all religions in the broader spectrum, could be significantly improved by the government by :
- improving wealth distribution
- improving education, and
- enhancing democracy in political life.

All of these three big steps are beyond the control of the Department of Religious Affairs. However, the Department could still play a very strategic role since it is the Department responsibility to make the President, all members of the

Cabinet, and the Congress (DPR) fully aware that the problem to a significant degree was resultant effects of unequal distribution of wealth, low education level, and low quality of democracy.

It should also be noted that the three steps are related. Significant improvement of education on the part of the indigenous people, Muslims as well as Christians, will hopefully increased their income level and therefore reduce the disparity of wealth distribution. Enhancement of democracy should improve access to information, other resources, and opportunities on equal basis, and that will promote more equal economic growth to every body.

The only factor controllable to the Department of religious Affair, this writer believes, is the last real factor, namely the aggressive nature of both religions in spreading the religions. Theologically both Abrahamic religions are strongly confident on the divine truth of their respective beliefs and teachings, and therefore strongly urge then-adherence to call for others to join. What is needed in this case, is laws and regulations, produced by transparent and democratic political process, that govern the behavior of all religions in spreading their beliefs and teachings. The task of the Department of Religious Affairs is to enforce the laws and regulations and to monitor and give sanctions as to the observance of the laws and regulations.

HISTORY-A RESIDUAL FACTOR

As suggested above, the alarming tensions between the Muslims and the Christians, have been induced by disparity in the distribution of wealth, low education level, quality of democracy in the existing political system, and the aggressive nature of the theology of both religions. Is there still any residual factor that may significantly explain the alarming relationship? According to the terms of reference of this conference, yes there is. The terms of reference hypothesizes, by implication, that history has some significant bearings on the quality of relationship between the Muslims and the Christians, which this writer does agree. An analysis of the impacts of colonial period on Muslims-Christians relations is certainly of this writer's academic interest, and it will certainly enhance our

understanding of the problematic relations, but will not strategically affect the effectiveness of our effort to improve the relations, simply because history is a *taqdir,* things of the past that can not possibly be changed. For that matter, this writer treats history as a residual variable in Figure *1.*

To be consistent with previous thought the analysis should distinguish between the impacts of colonial period on muslim-christian relations in general and the impacts of the period on the relations between the predominantly Muslim Indigenous and the predominantly Christian Chinese. Islam was used by the Indigenous as an identity in their independence struggle against the Christian colonial Dutch (Ibrahim, 19%; Rahardjo, 19%). This observation was supported empirically by, for example, the Diponegoro War, the Aceh War, the Minangkabau War, the Sultan Agung War, and many independence movements in the early up to mid twentieth century. Due to this historical reasons, it was easy that the Indigenous enmity against the colonial Dutch shifts into enmity against the Christians. A similar situation exist currently in East Timor. The Portugal and East Timorese who don't agree with integration into greater Indonesia used Catholic as their struggle identity, and therefore their enmity against the predominantly Muslim Indonesia could easily shift into enmity against the Muslims, causing the East Timor conflict heavily loaded with highly sensitive primordial sentiment.

In the Dutch side, Onghokham (19%) noted, their colonial population policy contributed to the formation of religious prejudice between the Muslims and the Christians. The so called *"stelsel'* population policy did discriminate people based on ethrric and religious background. Onghokham hypothesizes that it was this very policy that lead to *apartheid in* South Africa.

Aside from the Islamic identity on the part of the Indigenous and the discriminative population policy on the part of the Dutch, there was still, in this writer's judgment, another colonial factor that may had contributed to the accumulation of religious prejudice between the Muslims and the Christians. The Dutch population in the colony was very small compared to that of the Indigenous. Due to the size factor, the Christian Dutch missionaries could not

possibly touch all layers of the Indigenous population. As a result, only a small portion of die educated Indigenous able to communicate in Dutch was successfully converted into Christians. It was this educated Indigenous Christians who then spread Christianity further to the less educated Indigenous. Therefore, this writer suspects, currently the Indigenous Christians are relatively more educated than the Muslim Indigenous, which then could be implied that on relative term there must be currently more Christian Indigenous middle class than Muslim Indigenous middle class. This, in turn, causes dass difference and conflicts in Indonesia could be easily loaded with religious prejudice. However, Class difference and conflicts in Indonesia were not so apparent until recently when during the political campaign just a month before the general election in 1997 many cars, which are the soda! status symbol of middle class, were attacked by the campaigners of the grass root layer in the population.

The impacts of the colonial penod on Indigenous-Chinese relations are even more pronounced than those on Muslims-Christians relation. The Dutch, for some security and political reasons, discriminated the Chinese and other non-indigenous as second class citizens buffering the first dass Dutch minority from the threats and enmity of the third dass Indigenous majority (Rahardjo 19%; Onghokham, 19%; Wibisono 19%). The *stelsel* population policy localized the Chinese to stay within city boundaries only which, in effect, caused the Chinese to currently own most economically strategic lands. Coupled with their entrepreneurial talent these policies in the long-ran produced a much better off minority which are socially, culturally and physically exclusive apart from the Indigenous majority. Furthermore, christianization by the Dutch missionaries was apparently much more successful on the traditionally Buddhist or ConfucianChinese than on the traditionally Muslim Indigenous, such that currently 55.67% of Chinese in the typical provinces are Christians as compared to only 4.6% in the case of the indigenous. Thus, in effect the predominantly Muslim Indigenous have many reasons to envy or even to hate the Chinese, namely differences in social and economic status, physical and cultural exclusiveness, an ethnic difference, and a religious difference.

When the new order started economic and social development in the late 60s, the Chinese were much more prepared to benefit the development opportunities than the Indigenous. The development was launched, unfortunately, in a political environment characterized by early stage trial and error developing democracy, causing information and access to resources asymmetry as between the economically and socially retarded indigenous and the more prepared Chinese. As a result, the indigenous were continually marginalized, while the Chinese well-offness grow fast.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Tensions between the Muslims and the Christians in Indonesia is, this writer strongly believes, heavily confounded by the highly flammable tensions between the Indigenous and the Chinese. Relaxing the just mentioned tensions is, therefore, should precede any other attempts to relax the tensions between the Muslims and the Christians. In this case, Indonesia should take a lesson from its neighbor, Makysia. In this writer's

judgment, the affirmative programs launched by the Mahathir Government is currently the most effective affirmative programs in the world. The programs are even more effective than affirmative programs in developed countries such as affirmative programs in the US for the Blacks and the Indians, affirmative programs in Canada for the Indians, and affirmative programs in Australia for the Aborigines. The key success factors of the Malaysian programs are strong political commitment of the Government, clear and attainable targets, dear time frame, consistency, and legality. One should not be worry that such programs will induce restlessness in the Chinese community. On the other hand, as long as the programs are made legal, are consulted with the Chinese up front, and are not camouflaged in any way with any kind of hypocrisy, the Chinese wiU accept them and even benefit the reduced threats and enmity from the indigenous and the resulted certainty in business environment

The magnitude of the problem is so big currently such that only affirmative programs can stop and redirect the marginalization process of the

indigenous majority. The programs in effect should be fundamental, major, structural corrections to the already established and institutionalized asymetry made by the colonial Dutch and innocently perpetuated by the Indonesian Government for 5 decades, as between the Indigenous and the Chinese. One may has a reservation with respect to the Malaysian model of affirmative programs on the ground that eventhough the Malaysian affirmative programs do improve the well-offness and do empower the Indigenous, the Indigenous-Chinese relations in Malaysia are still not very good. This observation is indeed true. This writer does believe, however, that Indigenous-Chinese relations in Malaysia currently is much better than those of the 60s and 70s. Without the affirmative programs the current relations would have been even worse. In addition to that, the relations between the Indigenous and the Chinese in Indonesia, especially in Java, historically had been much better than those in Malaysia, until in the 90s when the disparity of wealth became so extreme. There are two factors explaining the better relations in Indonesia. Firstly, in Indonesia Chinese population is only 3% of total population campared to that in Malaysia which is about 40%. Secondly, Indonesian culture, which is thickly flavored by Javanese culture, is much more tolerant to primordial differences than Malaysian culture, eventhough genealogically both cultures are of the same Malay cultural heritage.

One may stil has another reservation with respect to the Malaysian Model of affirmative programs on the ground that the Government currently undergoes several programs to empower the marginalized Indigenous such as the Poverty Elimination Program *(Program Pengentasan Kerrdsldnari),* the Business Partnership Program *(Program Kemitraan Usaha),* the Credit for Small Business Program *(Program Kredit Usaha Kecil),* and the National Movement of Sponsor Parents *(Gerakan Nasional Orangtua Asufi).* These programs are of course produce some affirmative effects, eventhough they don't bring any "Indigenous" tabel, and accordingly the Government deserves recognition and appreciation. However, among these programs only the Poverty Elimination Program which is really a part of the Government formal political commitment as indicated by it's inclusion in the State Course Broad Outline *(Garis BesarHaJuanNegara-GBHN-)*

and the series of Five year Development Plan stating dearly targets to be achieved within a specific time frame. The proposed affirmative programs, in this writer's opinion should have the following characteristics: 1) large scale, 2) comprehensively empower the Indigenous, 3) become the ruling party and the Government major formal political commitment as indicated by pronounced indusions in the State Course Broad Outline and the Five year Development Plans, 4) having clearly stated ambitious targets within specific time frame, and 5) fundamentally and structurally stop the perpetuation of information and opportunities asymetry as between the Indigenous and the Chinese.

The alternative programs should indude improvement in and equal access to education for the indigenous. Not only that education will empower and therefore increase the earning capacity of individuals, it will also improve their ability and propensity to dialogue on a rational level, reducing their potential to prejudice and be in a conflict with others of different primordial sentiment.

Another strategic step to be taken is democranzation, induding improvement of the legal environment. Democratization will produce transparency which in turn will reduce significantly any kind of prejudice. The transparency and the check and balance control inherent in democracy will also give some equalization effects on distribution of wealth.

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