

CONCEPTUALIZING AND POSITIONING RELIGIOUS HARMONY WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS DISCOURSE

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Introduction

Maintaining religious harmony is not only related to the issue of religion but also to the issue of politics, power, and economy. Therefore, governments have a role to play in creating religious harmony and many governments have adopted different methods to deal with the challenges of religious plurality. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs is especially concerned about maintaining religious harmony. Since this Ministry was established in 1946, its Ministers have given speeches emphasizing the need for religious harmony and highlighting the government has been involved in efforts to create religious harmony in Indonesia.

Despite that emphasis, significant conflicts involving religious issues continue to occur in some regions of the country. Although the conflicts were caused by many factors, they are also regarded as a part of the failure of the Ministry to deal effectively with religious plurality. The Ministry is often perceived as failing to address the authentic needs of Indonesian civil society for religious harmony.

The above facts lead to some questions on how the Ministry has conceptualized and positioned religious harmony; what kind of language has been used by Ministry of Religious Affairs in stating these conceptualizations and positions, how this language represents the Ministry's own ideological views on religious harmony. In my study, I ask what kind of power relations have

been involved in these conceptualizations. This research tries to answer such above questions by applying Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to the speeches of the Ministers of Religious Affairs throughout the period under study (2009). By using this approach, the issue can be examined through looking at the Ministry's own institutional ability to transform concepts and ideologies into policy.

In 1960s, religious tensions and conflicts occurred in some regions in Indonesia and required the government to find a solution. The term 'religious harmony' was addressed as the answer for the solution by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. K.H.M. Dachlan, the Minister of Religious Affairs at that time, in his speech November 30, 1967, emphasized that religious harmony is needed for creating the stability of the state. The next minister, Alamsyah Perwiranegara continued this emphasis by adding three types of religious harmony, i.e. (1) intra religious harmony, (2) interreligious harmony, (3) interreligious harmony and the government.

The next years, the Ministry of Religious Affairs often mentioned the term 'religious harmony' in the speeches. They have also reminded Indonesian civil society of the role of the Ministry on creating religious harmony in Indonesia. Therefore, although the conflicts involving religious issues were caused by many factors, they were also perceived as the failure of the Ministry to create religious harmony in Indonesia. This fact leads to some questions such as What kind of language have been used by Ministry of Religious Affairs in conceptualizing and positioning religious harmony in Indonesia? How this kind of language does show Ministry's ideologies on religious harmony? What kind of power relation does imply in the Ministry's concept? In other words, what kind of religious harmony discourse developed by the Ministry?

In 2009, there are 91 speeches of the Ministry of Religious Affairs but not all these speeches concerned or talked about religious harmony, many of them related to the speeches for opening religious events such as religious festivals and religious programs in society. Since in Indonesia general election is conducted in every five years, 2009 is the last year before the election in 2010. Generally, many policies were created at the end of five years governmental period; therefore we find several policies by the Ministry in this year.

Concerning conflicts involving religious issues, the issue of heresy seems to become a central issue in 2009. In its annual report on religious life in Indonesia, Center for Religious and Cross Cultural Studies demonstrated 25 cases on the issue of heresy and 11 cases of violence towards the members of Ahmadiyah. This fact leads to the need for the exploration of the Ministry's concept of religious harmony described in the speeches of the Ministry in 2009 and how this concept dealt with religious cases in Indonesia.

As mentioned above, the analysis method of these speeches is Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. For Fairclough, discourse is the combination of text, discursive practice, and social practice. Therefore, the analysis of discourse means the analysis of the three combination and their interrelations (Fairclough, 1995: 74) which then he called as three dimensional framework. In this paper I use this three dimensional framework by focusing on wording, intertextuality, and power and ideology. Wording has the ability to capture 'a great many overlapping and competing vocabularies corresponding to different domains, institutions, practices, values and perspective' because it involves processes of wording the world which occurred in different ways, in different times and places, and for various groups of people (Fairclough, 1992: 76-77).

Intertextuality shows the historicity of a text that the text is related to other outside texts which bring to interpretation process (Fairclough 1992). Meanwhile Fairclough believes that political and ideological practices are connected because ideology is significations which are produced in power relations and it functions as a dimension of the implementation of power and struggle over power (Fairclough, 1992: 67).

Plurality as Potential for Conflict

In its speech, the Ministry asked people to think that the big population of Indonesia with its diversity in terms of ethnicity, culture and religion often brings problems in Indonesian society:

“Jumlah penduduk yang besar dan kebhinnekaan bangsa Indonesia dalam suku, budaya dan agama, seringkali menimbulkan permasalahan dalam kehidupan beragama di negara kita. Dalam

hubungan ini, potensi konflik horizontal dan gangguan kerukunan antar umat beragama harus selalu menjadi perhatian kita bersama di era perkembangan demokrasi dan otonomi daerah yang luar biasa seperti sekarang ini” (12 September 2009)

Big population and diversity of Indonesia in terms of ethnicity, cultures and religion often emerge problems on our religious live in our country. Related to this fact, the potency of horizontal conflict and disturbance of religious harmony among the followers of different religions have to become our mutual concerns in remarkable development era of democracy and local autonomy today (September 12, 2009)

The quotation above shows that for the Ministry not only diversity is potential for conflict but also democracy and local autonomy provide its own effects to contribute to come out a conflict. This statement shows the Ministry’s emphasis i.e. the Ministry cannot control the power of democracy and local autonomy in society which can bring a conflict in society. The statement also describes that changing power relations have occurred in society, i.e. democracy and local autonomy power, which is not available previously.

Religious Harmony and Religious Freedom

The fact above leads the Ministry to reemphasize the need for religious harmony. The Ministry stressed that religious harmony is asset for Indonesia by wording it with various kinds of asset, *harmony is **fundamental asset** for us to develop dreams of the state*¹ (Februari 26, 2009); *religious harmony that we have now is truly **precious asset** for our survival as a nation*² (March 20, 2009); *..not only mean to avoid conflict but also have a broad meaning to develop **a strong social asset** to achieve a collective progress of a nation*³ (June 29, 2009). In other words, religious harmony is a must for Indonesia which has diverse religions to be survived as a nation and to achieve good development.

Beside stressing the importance of religious harmony, the Ministry also related religious harmony to the issue of conversion and religious freedom.

¹ kerukunan adalah modal dasar bagi kita untuk membangun cita-cita bangsa

² kerukunan umat beragama yang kita miliki sekarang adalah modal yang amat berharga bagi kelangsungan kehidupan kita sebagai bangsa

³ bukan hanya berarti menghindari konflik, melainkan memiliki makna yang luas membangun modal social yang kuat untuk meraih kemajuan bersama suatu bangsa

Harmony may not and will not abolish religious freedom (“Kerukunan tidak boleh dan tidak akan membatalkan kebebasan beragama”) (March 20, 2009), *To become a citizen who is care about religious harmony and state unity does not mean to convert from his/her own religion*⁴ (February 2, 2009). These statements were addressed to response opinions which regarded the ministry’s concept of religious harmony had sacrificed religious freedom in Indonesia or religious uniqueness for the sake of harmony. The Ministry also stressed the balance of religious harmony and religious freedom by mentioning a program which is aimed to maintain and develop religious harmony.

“Certainly, no wise person rejects the maintained harmony. If there a person who stated that PBM 2006 is to reduce the rights of religious freedom, this is not wise opinion. I want to stress here, religious harmony may not and will not abolish religious harmony. On the contrary, religious freedom does not ever case the collapse of religious harmony. Religious freedom and religious harmony have to be placed in the context of unity and oneness in inseparable and undividable Indonesia⁵ (March 20, 2009)

This speech shows that the Ministry offered the culture, social relationships, and social identity for Indonesian citizens. The identity of wise person means not to reject the Ministry program of religious harmony; in culture and social relationship, Indonesians are inseparable and united. Besides, the Ministry also emphasized that the power of religious harmony and that of religious freedom in the society should be balanced and put in the name of unity.

As mentioned above, the Ministry asserted that *religious harmony may not and will not abolish religious freedom. On the contrary, religious freedom does not ever case the collapse of religious harmony*. As the result, the Ministry sees cults such as Lia Eden, Ahmad Mosadeq, Satrio Piningit (people who believed that they got directly God’s Revelation but used some Islamic terms) as the phenomenon of thinking pragmatically. According to the

⁴ Untuk menjadi warga negara yang peduli pada kerukunan beragama dan keutuhan bangsa, tidak berarti murtad dari agama yang kita anut

⁵ Tentu tidak ada seorangpun yang bijak menolak terpeliharanya kerukunan. Kalau ada orang yang menyatakan bahwa adanya PBM 2006 ini mengurangi hak-hak kebebasan beragama, itu pendapat kurang bijak. Saya ingin menegaskan di sini, kerukunan umat beragama tidak boleh dan tidak akan membatalkan kebebasan beragama. Sebaliknya, kebebasan beragama jangan sekali-kali menimbulkan hancurnya kerukunan umat beragama. Kebebasan beragama dan kerukunan umat beragama harus diletakkan dalam konteks persatuan dan kesatuan bangsa di dalam Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia yang tidak terkotak-kotak dan terpisah-pisah.

Ministry, this phenomenon makes the Ministry realized that the challenge of the Ministry is to provide development, understanding, and appreciation of religious values to society (June 25, 2009).

On other speech, the Ministry stressed that one of fundamental religious problem in Indonesia is *'increasingly developing of new thoughts and religious beliefs which tend to be different with religious mainstream'*⁶ (Mei 22, 2009). For the Ministry, this phenomenon of thinking pragmatically is also regarded as a social factor which brings to various tensions and often to intra and interreligious conflicts. Due to this fact, religious harmony in Indonesia cannot be created ideally until the present (June 25, 2009). Then, to increase religious quality and service to the followers, the Ministry created policies and programs (Mei 22, 2009).

The statement above shows that the Ministry provides the identity of mainstream and cults in Indonesian society. By providing the definition of the two, the Ministry has the institutional power to determine the development, understanding, and appreciation of religious values for Indonesian society and to create policies and programs. Such phenomenon above also demonstrates that there is a changing of social power relation in Indonesian society and the Ministry has the right to deal with changing since the Ministry is who has the institutional power.

Concerning religious freedom. In Indonesia, UUD 1945 (Regulation 1945) mentioned that the Government guarantees religious freedom and freedom of practicing religious teaching (verse 29). However, the Government only acknowledges six religions in Indonesia i.e. Islam, Protestant, Catholic, Hinduism, Buddha, and Confucianism. This acknowledgement has brought a big implication in religious life in Indonesia. For instance, in Citizen Card, there is a religious column. Before 2008, people should choose one of acknowledged religions although they are actually not the followers of the religion. Today, people who do not belong the acknowledged religions, they can leave the column empty.

Nevertheless, the problem also relates to the acknowledgement of the state on the marriages which are not conducted based on the acknowledged religions because people who get married in Indonesia need to have a note

⁶ makin berkembangnya berbagai pemikiran dan aliran keagamaan baru yang cenderung berbeda dengan agama mainstream.

from the government which in turn leads to the problem of the certificate of the birth. People can find other problems concerning the acknowledged and unacknowledged religions in Indonesia.

In new Era, religious harmony is stronger than religious freedom. Religious harmony is convinced as the most important role in maintaining a political and economical stability. Therefore, if there is a certain interpretation of religion which is different with the mainstream of the six religions, the followers of the interpretation will get a problem (Sairin, 2002). Thus, the limitation of what is true and untrue as religions is determined by the mainstream. In 2009, if we see the speeches of the Ministry and the cases of conflict mentioned earlier, there is no changing in this phenomenon. Although the Ministry emphasized that religious harmony may not and cannot abolish religious freedom, it also emphasized that religious freedom should not bring a religious chaos which threatens religious harmony. The questions are Who does determine which one is threaten and not? How does this issue not lead to the issue of religious discrimination and violation?

The Cause of Conflict and the Role of the Ministry

The fact that Indonesia is pluralistic state in the term of religion and that religious harmony is a must leads the Ministry to identify the cause on religious conflicts and the role of the Ministry in creating religious harmony. In the speeches, the Ministry described the condition of religious harmony in Indonesia by reminding the achievement, *However, with the good and the bad, religious harmony in Indonesia is regarded as the best in the observation of international society*⁷ (March 20, 2009).

Nevertheless, the Ministry reminds us that religious harmony in Indonesia has not been yet perfect (March 20, 2009) or ideal (June 20, 2009). The reason is various social factors, *...because it relates to various social factors which cause diverse tensions and often end with internal conflict and intra religions* (June 20, 2009). Unfortunately, the Ministry did not explain what those various social factors are, but we can find one

⁷ Namun dengan segala suka dukanya kerukunan umat beragama di Indonesia dianggap sebagai yang terbaik dalam pengamatan masyarakat internasional. Bahkan Indonesia dinilai sebagai laboratorium kerukunan umat beragama

of those social factors in other speech, ...*increasingly developing of new thoughts and religious beliefs which tend to be different with religious mainstream*⁸ (Mei 22, 2009).

Based on these social factors which caused changes in society, the Ministry reminded Indonesian civil society that religious harmony is *very dynamic and can change rapidly* (March 20, 2009), but *eternal in nature* (March 20, 2009). As the result, the Ministry needs to make continuously efforts to create religious harmony and brings the issue of maintaining interreligious harmony in the governmental goal. To reemphasize the Government role, the Ministry stated, *we cannot forget the effort of the government in maintaining religious harmony as the pillar of national stability*⁹ (July 4, 2009). The Ministry, then, believed that those efforts have brought good results and provided three phenomena as the evidences, i.e. religious conflicts decreased; interreligious harmony increased; and interreligious collaboration was developed properly (January 17, 2009).

Although the Ministry mentioned that the main task of the Ministry is maintaining religious harmony, it also emphasized that the task is more on the religious followers, *essentially the responsibility of maintaining religious harmony at first is in the followers of religions themselves*¹⁰ (Sept 2, 2009). For this reason, the Ministry reminded that religious leaders have a significant position to create religious harmony, *especially religious figures, it is an increasing challenge and demands their togetherness and solidness in overcoming and preventing the negative accesses which can disturb harmony that we maintain all this time*¹¹ (Sept 2, 2009). The Ministry also stated:

Nevertheless, dealing with diversity is uneasy. On the one hand, every follower as the component of the state has its interest on maintaining the foundation of belief and identity as well as on struggling religious

⁸ makin berkembangnya berbagai pemikiran dan aliran keagamaan baru yang cenderung berbeda dengan agama mainstream.

⁹ kita tidak boleh melupakan upaya Pemerintah dalam membina kerukunan umat beragama sebagai tonggak stabilitas nasional

¹⁰ pada hakekatnya tanggung jawab pemeliharaan kerukunan umat beragama itu pertama-tama adalah di tangan umat beragama itu sendiri

¹¹ Terutama pemuka agama, semakin tertantang dan dituntut kebersamaannya dan kekompakan mereka dalam mengantisipasi dan mencegah terjadinya eksese-eksese negatif yang dapat mengganggu kerukunan yang selama ini kita bina

inspirations in national life. On the other hand, every follower is also demanded to provide a contribution to maintain harmony and the unity of the nation¹² (February 2, 2009).

The Ministry related the above issue to *Penetapan Presiden* (president decree) No. 1, 1965 concerning 'Pencegahan Penyalahgunaan dan/atau Penodaan Agama'¹³ (combating abuse of religion) and convinced that this regulation is for guaranteeing a social harmony (September 9, 2009). By mentioning this decree, it brings people to the event of 1965 when the decree was created. At that time, Communists actively made a cult (*aliran kepercayaan*) in grass-root level. This phenomenon led to a tension between Communist and Nahdatul Ulama. Nahdatul Ulama regarded the Communist's movement as a something bothering and to overcome this phenomenon, the Minister of Religious Affairs who was from Nahdatul Ulama 'pushed' the President to create this decree (Mujiburrahman, 2007). This decree has still been applied in Indonesia until today.

The Ministry also mentioned the Letter of Decree by the Minister of Religious Affairs no 3 2008, Attorney General No Kep-033/A/JA/6/2008 and the Minister of Internal Affairs no 199-2008 in the speech. This decree consists of warning and commanding to the followers or the members of Ahmadiyah. As mentioned in the beginning of this paper, we found at least 11 cases of Ahmadiyah in 2009 when the members of Ahmadiyah were attacked by some people. The same incidents can also be found in previous years.

Some Points for Discussion

If we look at again how the Ministry conceptualized and positioned religious harmony in Indonesia in 2009, at least three points need to be discussed. *First*, we can see how the conceptualization and position brings strong ideologies such as religious harmony is the most important in creating stability.

¹² Namun demikian, mengelola kemajemukan bukan persoalan yang mudah. Di satu sisi, setiap umat beragama sebagai komponen bangsa berkepentingan untuk memelihara asas keyakinan, identitas dan memperjuangkan aspirasi keagamaan dalam kehidupan berbangsa dan bernegara. Di sisi lain, setiap golongan umat beragama juga dituntut untuk memberi andil dalam rangka memelihara kerukunan dan keutuhan bangsa.

¹³ Setiap orang dilarang dengan sengaja di muka umum menceritakan, menganjurkan atau mengusahakan dukungan umum, untuk melakukan penafsiran tentang sesuatu agama yang dianut di Indonesia atau melakukan kegiatan-kegiatan keagamaan yang menyerupai kegiatan-kegiatan keagamaan dari agama itu; penafsiran dan kegiatan mana menyimpang dari pokok-pokok ajaran agama itu.

Then, in the practice, religious harmony seems to be defined as long as the religious conflicts are stopped. Thus, certain expressions of religion will be erased from Indonesia if the mainstream states that it is ‘heresy’. Then, we can question who the mainstream is. Although, sometimes, the Ministry tried to make a balance between religious harmony and religious freedom, it is more on religious harmony. What would be frightening is that if what the Ministry called as religious harmony is no religious conflict, then the Government can do anything in the name of stability and religious harmony, as Sairin wrote:

“Harmony resulted from discrimination, segregation and apartheid is false, evil and amoral because it is not based on love, truth, justice and freedom... the right and good harmony is on one hand it does not relativize differences, such as trying to acculturate and fuse religious beliefs and religious harmony, on the other hand it is not absolutize differences that close the door of relation, conversation and collaboration”¹⁴ (Sairin, 2002: 26)

Second, the problem of religious freedom also inherently relates to the issue of the abuse of religion. As mentioned in the speech of the Ministry above, in Indonesia there is a regulation of combating the abuse of religion (1965):

In public space, every person is forbidden to tell, suggest or do efforts to get public supports, to interpret about certain religion which is adherent in Indonesia or to conduct religious activities which imitate the activities of that religion; the interpretation and the activities which deviate from the main teachings of that religion¹⁵.

This issue of religious freedom will relate to the acknowledged religions since in the explanation of the regulation mentions that the religions which are acknowledged by the Government are Islam, Protestant, Catholic, Hinduism,

¹⁴ Kerukunan yang dihasilkan diskriminasi, segregasi, dan apartheid adalah kerukunan yang palsu, jahat dan amoral sebab tidak didasari oleh kasih, kebenaran, keadilan dan kebebasan. Kedua, kerukunan yang benar dan baik adalah kerukunan yang pada satu pihak tidak menisbikan perbedaan, perbedaan yang ada, misalnya dengan mencoba meleburkan atau mencampur adukkan keyakinan agama-agama dan kerukunan yang, di lain pihak, tidak pula memutlakan perbedaan-perbedaan yang ada sedemikian rupa sehingga menutup pintu hubungan, percakapan dan kerjasama

¹⁵ Setiap orang dilarang dengan sengaja di muka umum menceritakan, menganjurkan atau mengusahakan dukungan umum, untuk melakukan penafsiran tentang sesuatu agama yang dianut di Indonesia atau melakukan kegiatan-kegiatan keagamaan yang menyerupai kegiatan-kegiatan keagamaan dari agama itu; penafsiran dan kegiatan mana menyimpang dari pokok-pokok ajaran agama itu.

Buddha, and Confucianism. It is also stressed that it does not mean the followers of other religions cannot live in Indonesia. We then can find how this issue relates to the issue of cults and heresy as described in the beginning of paper. Unfortunately, then, many religious violence and conflicts in Indonesia emerged by providing the abuse of religion as the reason. The question is how this decree can bring Indonesian society to religious harmony and avoid religious violence and conflict among the followers? How is this decree not used as the legitimacy to do religious violence?

Third, concerning the cause of religious conflict and the solution, we found 25 cases of heresy and 11 cases of Ahmadiyah in 2009 and the Ministry said that the reason is various factors in society especially a part of society think pragmatically. This is related to the phenomena of Lia Eden and other figures. This statement seems to emphasize that the cause of conflict is not in the side of the Government, but that of Indonesian civil society. On the one hand, the Ministry stated that Indonesian civil society is who causes the religious conflicts. On the other hand, the Government/the Ministry asserted that conflicts which involved different followers of religion actually are not religious conflicts; it is caused by many factors especially economy and politics. This seems to be contradictive since we can find that the Governmental regulation has also play a role to cause a tension among the followers of different religions/beliefs. In addition, if the religious conflict actually related to the issue of economy and politics, this means that the cause of religious conflicts was also related to the Government.

The speech also mentioned that the cause of religious conflict is because of the phenomenon of thinking pragmatically so that the Ministry has a task to improve and increase the society's understanding on religious values. In addition, one of fundamental religious problems is the increasing of new thoughts and beliefs which tend to be different with mainstream. The questions are what is the measure of different understandings considered as abusing religion? And who will determine this?

Conclusion

From the discussion above, we can take some conclusion how the Ministry of Religious Affairs conceptualized and positioned religious harmony in Indonesian

in 2009. Firstly, from the analysis of the speech texts, we found that the Ministry uses some words to define religious harmony, that is 'fundamental asset', 'precious asset', and 'strong social asset'. This shows how the Ministry wants to strongly remind of religious harmony has significant role to in Indonesian life. Nevertheless, the Ministry also stresses that religious harmony 'does not mean to convert to other religion.'

That statement aims to reject the opinion that for the sake of religious harmony, people have to combine their own religion to others' religion. In addition, the Ministry asserted that religious harmony 'does not lead to abolish religious freedom.' By saying this, the Ministry stressed that religious harmony will not sacrifice religious freedom because Indonesian Regulation states that Indonesian Government guarantees religious freedom for all citizens.

By having this definition, the Ministry determines its role i.e. doing efforts to create religious harmony and to decrease conflicts among religious followers. The efforts are forming Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (FKUB, Religious Harmony Forum) and warning and commanding to the followers of Ahmadiyah. The Minister convinced that the efforts are successful by giving the decreasing of religious conflicts and increasing religious harmony as the evidences. Besides, the Ministry stated that the cause of religious conflicts is various factors in society which lead to internal conflicts and interreligious conflicts.

Although the Ministry does not mention clearly what the various factors are, in other time it mentioned a phenomenon of thinking pragmatically in Indonesian society such as Lia Eden, Ahmad Mosadeq, and Satria Piningit who believed that they had got God's revelation and they have the followers. This fact led to conflict since part of Muslims believed that it is heresy. The Ministry regarded that this phenomenon causes religious harmony cannot be created ideally and perfectly.

Secondly, the concept of religious harmony above still brings to the problem on the issue of religious freedom, the abuse of religion, and the real cause of religious problems in Indonesia. Moreover, it seems that the solution is still top down approach. The Ministry is who decided when certain religious interpretation is threatened and when it is not. This leads to another issue that Ministry seems to create a centralization of power concerning religious issue.

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