Ethnic Conflict Theory, Religiosity, and Cultural Bond: Approach to Resolve Religious Intolerance in Ambon

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ABSTRACT

This study tries to investigate religious intolerance, namely intergroup contact avoidance in Ambon by using i.e. ethnic conflict theory, religiosity, and local wisdom. Ethnic group conflict theory suggests that ethnic and religious identification are more likely related to religious exclusionism due to perceived group threat. Intrinsic religious values and local wisdom owned by certain communities tend to increase religious harmony, to reduce religious identification, and to increase the social boundaries between different religious groups. Ethnic group conflict theory mentions that the stronger the actual competition between ethnic groups at an individual as well as a contextual level, and/or the stronger the perceived ethnic threat, the more the mechanisms of social (contra-) identification will be reinforced, inducing stronger nationalist attitudes and exclusionist reactions. Religiosity in this study refers to concept of pluralistic views of religion and hermeneutic interpretation. Individuals who possess strong religious identification tend to support for religious intolerance due to extrinsic values of religious convictions may contribute to creating intergroup bias. As theoretical implication of this study is that resolving religious intolerance should use interdisciplinary approaches that consists of cognitive, religious, and cultural dimension.

Keywords: conflict theory, religiousity, cultural bond, and intolerance.

INTRODUCTION

Although there have been tensions between Muslims and Christians since the middle of the 16th century, until the end of last of the century, members of both groups lived relatively harmoniously, side by side in different neighbourhoods of the city. After the communal violence period between 1999 and 2004, daily interaction became distorted and the tendency to avoid members of other religious groups became stronger (Pariela, 2007:104; Yanuarti et al., 2005:82). The conflicts led to the resettlement of a huge number of inhabitants in the city of Ambon as well as Maluku province. Gradually, people decided to live in quarters with people from their own religion only.[1] Religiously residential segregation became the norm in the city, as was already common in the village structure for centuries (Chauvel, 1990:4-7). Muslims no longer wanted to stay in predominantly Christian areas, while Christians did not want to live in predominantly Muslim areas. Ambon city now consists of twenty urban villages and thirty rural villages. Only in two of these villages, Wayame and Suli Atas,

[1] In 2008, 1,050,764 of the 1,200,000 inhabitants of the Moluccas lived in residential religious segregation (Subair et al., 2008:186).

Muslims and Christians live together.[2] Both residential segregation and contact avoidance have aggravated rivalry and competition between Muslims and Christians.

Ambon was again the site of incidents of religious violence in 2011. The first incident erupted in September 2011, after a Muslim motorcycle driver died in a traffic accident in a Christian village. In riots following this accident, three people were killed and hundreds of houses were burned down. The second incident was in December 2011, after a Christian shuttle-bus driver was stabbed in a Muslim area. The troubles erupted only in the city and did not spread to rural areas, because both Muslims and Christians felt that these incidents were instigated by political elites. Also it was due to the roles of peace provocaterus from both groups in preventing conflict by using social media and mobile phone (ICG, 2012:2). Apparently, military officers and political elites profited from these violent incidents, which erupted before the 2011 mayoral election, and again before the 2013 gubernatorial election. For that reason, some people argue that these incidents were engineered to promote the idea that the governor-elect should be a figure with a military background. Others argue that the incidents cemented religious identifications among Muslims and Christians to influence the mayoral election (ICG, 2011:6-7).

Western and Indonesian scholars have conducted several studies to analyze why and how an increase in communal violence took place in Ambon. Bertrand (2004:7-9) uses an institutional historical approach to theorize that inter-communal violence is a specific characteristic of transition periods.[3] Similar to Bertrand, Van Klinken (2007) relates violence in Indonesia to the power relations between political elites.[4] Other research on conflict in North Moluccas by Wilson (2008:195) demonstrates that macro-structural forces and changes in those structures play a role in conflict. These studies emphasize that local elites attempt to make use of ethno-religious identities in order to realize their political claims, and to acquire political positions and access to resources. Different from these studies, this study is addressed to describe cognitive, religious, and cultural dimension of several forms of latent conflict between Muslims and Christians in Ambon to resolve religious intolerance.

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[2] In several villages, such as Latta, Nania and Waiheru, inter-religious interactions still exist but the two groups live separately. The residential segregation was also followed by personal differentiation of language. Before the conflict, the same terms, '*bung*' and '*usi*' were used for men and women regardless of their religious identity. However, after the conflict, Muslim groups developed words such as *abang* (older man) and *caca* (older women) that indicated the referent's religious affiliation.

[3] In the period of transition to democracy, state institutions were weakened when the processes of contestation and allocation of power between groups was more publicly observable. This encouraged ethno-religious groups to renegotiate the structure of the state's institutions because of the unfair distribution of power and resources during the New Order.

[4] Van Klinken argues that democratization and decentralization has weakened the national government, encouraging local elites to mobilize ethno-religious groups in bids for regional control.

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS CHANGES IN AMBON

Traditional cultural relationships in Ambon dating back to pre-colonial times are still relevant, even so when these villages do not share the same religion (anymore). Among all the traditional forms of inter-village relations, the *pela* was the only one that was to a certain extent respected by the Dutch. Entering into new *pela* relationships was even permitted, but only under the supervision of the Resident. *Pela* is a form of alliance and cooperation between two or more villages. As mutual mechanism for cooperation, three types of *pela* (lit. blood) can be distinguished: *pela keras*, *pela tempat sirih* and *pela gandong*. *Pela keras* ('hard' pela) is established when leaders from participating villages swear an oath to unite as brothers and to help each other. This strong bond is symbolized by the ritual of drinking blood together. *Pela tempat sirih* ('soft' pela) is based on friendship between villages. *Pela gandong* (kinship pela) is a form of brotherhood between two or more villages claiming common ancestry (Bartels, 1978; Adam, 2008:228; Bartels, 2003:133-135; Sterkens and Hadiwitanto, 2009:67).

These three kinds of *pela* are mechanisms that bind and create peaceful relationships between villages of either the same or the different religions. In the past, *pela* consisted of rules, customs, prohibitions and punishments that had to be observed by the villagers involved. For example, marriage between men and women from the villages participating in *pela gandong* was strictly prohibited (Huwae, 1995:78-79). People in villages participating in a *pela* relationship were considered to be related by blood, and had to help each other at all times, during both war and peace. The villagers of participating villages were brothers and sisters, and although members of pela eventually had different religions, their relationship was based on a long history of trusted social interactions (Coolley, 1962:71). Thus, *pela* minimized the threat of aggression between Muslim and Christian villages, while it strengthened common interests and shared values between them (Lowry and Littlejon, 2006:410-411). Besides *pela*, *adat* or traditional customs also minimized religious rivalries, since regional and cultural identification was stronger than religious identification (Bartels, 2010:246-247). Despite having many similarities, *pela* is distinguished from *adat,* as *adat* includes all traditional values and laws within a specific community (Sterkens and Hadiwitanto, 2009:69).

After independence, both government policies and the activities of preachers from outside the Moluccas contributed to the erosion of these traditional cultural bonds (Lowry and Littlejon, 2006:410-411). During the New Order era, the government imposed law No. 45/1979 on village government that changed traditional villages into administrative units who had to adhere the new national state ideology. Consequently, it discouraged local leaders from

maintaining the *adat* system and traditional local bonds between villages. At the same time, many of the preachers, who were among the wave of new migrants to the Moluccas, were members of global religious communities or denominations. They introduced Islamic beliefs that reduced the significance of local cultural bonds and customs. For example, in the 1980s, attendance of religious celebrations with people from different religious groups was prohibited. At the time of the recent conflicts (1999-2004), *pela* had already lost its meaning and had become an ineffective method for preventing violence (Pariela, 2007:104; Sterkens and Hadiwitanto, 2009:67). Another reason that *pela* was ineffective in preventing violence was that the bond only applies to participating villages (Iwamony, 2010:104-106).

The changes in cultural tradition are related to several changes in religious tradition. This section provide illustration of the arrival of religions in Maluku. Similar to the spread of Islam in other parts of the Indonesian archipelago, Muslim traders and Islamic preachers were responsible for introducing Islam to the Moluccas. Islam reached the Spice Islands in the 13th century and became popular after the kings of Ternate, Tidore, Bacan and Jailolo converted to Islam around 1460 (Pires, 1944:212-214; Chauvel, 1990:16-17). In the 16th century, Islam gained more followers in Ambon and the Lease Islands. People who lived in *ulilima* villages of northern Leihitu converted to Islam, while people who lived in *ulisiwa* villages of southern Leihitu and the Leitimor Peninsula retained their animistic beliefs (Aritonang and Steenbrink, 2008:32-35). There was a similar evolution on the Lease Islands: inhabitants of Hatuhaha in northern Haruku and of Iha in northern Saparua converted to Islam. The introduction of Islam by Muslim traders in Hitu exposed Ambonese, who before the 16th century lived in isolation and were considered to be less civilized than people in the northern Moluccas, to external influences (Chauvel, 1980:43-45). In the middle of the 16th century, Europeans, first the Portuguese who brought Catholicism, and later the Dutch who introduced Protestantism, challenged the spread of Islam.

In the 17th century, Islam spread gradually from the northern to the southeastern regions of the Moluccas, although Islamic beliefs and practices were still mixed with traditional beliefs. During the VOC period, Muslims in the Moluccas were relatively isolated from the rest of the global Islamic community because they were prevented from leaving their villages, and Asian spice traders were, to realise a trade monopoly, eventually banned from visiting the Moluccas (Chauvel, 1980:53; Leirissa et al., 1982:246). At the beginning of the Dutch colonial state, influential Muslims from outside the Moluccas (e.g. Prince Diponegoro and Tengku Imam Bonjol) became political prisoners and were forced to live in Ambon. They hardly had any contact with the island population. Restrictions imposed by the Dutch made it

impossible to teach Islamic religion systematically in the Moluccas. At the end of 19th century, advances in interisland transportation allowed Muslims to go on pilgrimage and study outside the Moluccas. Islamic preachers from outside the Moluccas also arrived, introducing modernist Islamic beliefs, but without much success. In the 1930s, a branch of Muhammadiyah was set up in Ambon. However, most Muslim Ambonese rejected the new Islamic ideas being promoted by this progressive organisation, as they felt their traditional beliefs were being attacked (Bartels, 2010: 248-249). After independence (particularly during the New Order) migration increased, and with it, in particular in the 1980s and 1990s the pace of Islamisation in the Moluccas. Among the migrants were Islamic preachers who brought Muslims of Ambon into contact with different interpretations of Islam. After several years, many of the younger Islamic preachers who adhered to modernist Islamic beliefs replaced religious leaders who had a more syncretic belief system.

The Portuguese were the first to bring Catholicism in the Moluccas. They first introduced it in the villages in southern Leihitu, and later in Leitimor Peninsula and the Lease Islands. By the middle of the 16th century, most native communities in southern Ambon and the adjacent islands of Haruku, Saparua and Nusa Laut had nominally converted to Catholicism.[5] Between 1575 and 1605, Catholicism was the main religion in the city of Ambon. However, when the Portuguese left in 1605, the indigenous Catholics had to convert to Protestantism, as the Dutch declared all Christian villages to be Protestant villages (Bartels, 2010:241). Between 1605 and 1800, Catholic missionaries were forbidden from spreading their faith in the Indonesian archipelago. Only from 1912, onwards Catholic missionaries were allowed again to undertake activities in Ambon. However, Protestant clergy and government officials in the city prevented the establishment of a Catholic Church and school until 1925 (Steenbrink, 2007:221-226).

Initially, the VOC did not pay much attention to religious education and the pastoral care of the Christian Ambonese (van Fraassen, 1983:13-14). Since 1605, the company sent religious ministers to serve only the Dutch in the Moluccas. However, in 1633, ministers started to provide lessons on Protestantism in confessional schools to the Christian Ambonese, and trained a few of them to become religious teachers, sacristans and church guardians. In 1633 there were 32 schools with 1,200 pupils, rising to 54 schools with 5,190 pupils by the year 1700 (Aritonang and Steenbrink, 2008:105). Between 1625 and 1775, the

[5] Three villages of Ambon Island accepted Catholicism in 1538, and the prominent Spanish Jesuit father, Franciscus Xaverius, was part of missionary activities in Hatiwe, Tawiri, Nusaniwe, Killang, Ema, Halong and Soya in 1546. The Christian villages regarded these conversions as challenges to the power of Ternate; while Ternate perceived that these villages had switched their political loyalty to the Portuguese (Alhadar, 2001:13)

VOC sent 41 Protestant ministers to Ambon, Lease, Ternate and Banda, where they served as both religious clergy and teachers (2008:103). During the British Interregnum (1810-1817), the British Resident sent more missionaries to Ambon to work in churches and schools. This practice was continued by the Dutch colonial state (van Fraassen, 1983:35). From the beginning of the 19th century, Dutch missionaries, funded and controlled by the colonial government, managed the spread of Protestantism more systematically. For example, missionaries founded schools for local Protestant ministers to introduce Protestantism across the archipelago. The language used in churches and schools was Malay-Ambon, which gradually led to the loss of local languages in many Protestant villages (Chauvel, 1990:6-7).

In the middle of the 19th century, all Protestant churches in the Moluccas merged into the state church (*staatskerk*) of the Moluccas.[6] In 1935, these churches were united under the autonomous synod of the Protestant Church of the Moluccas *(Gereja Protestant Maluku, GPM).* This synod is now the biggest religious organization in the area, and its hierarchical structure is parallel with the structure of the provincial administration.[7] As previously mentioned, Christian Moluccans succeeded in securing positions at all levels of the insular bureaucracy due to their higher levels of education and privileges they had received from the Dutch. They also profited from this elevated station after independence, as many Christian Moluccans obtained prominent positions in education and politics. Although new Christian denominations, such as Pentecostal and charismatic churches appeared in the city, the vast majority of Protestants are still affiliated with GPM. New denominations attract younger generations in particular, mainly through their varied and modern liturgy.

ETHNIC GROUP CONFLICT THEORY

Social identity theory fails to address both the context and consequences of prejudice and discrimination, particularly in regards to group differences in power (Sidanius et al., 2004:846). According to realistic conflict theory, out-group rejection derives from intergroup conflict over real issues such as jobs, power, and economic benefits. Meanwhile, social identification theory shows that unfavourable attitudes towards an out-group flows from the social comparisons that maintains one's self esteem, self-worth, and social identity (Insko et al., 1992:273-4). Ethnic group conflict theory comprehensively addresses aspects of

[6] In 1814-1864, *Rotterdamsche Zendelingen Genootschap* got authority to carry out missionary activities (*zending*). The most famous minister was the so-called *'Apostel der Molukken'* J.C. Kam. All missionary activities were controlled by the *Commissie voor de Zaaken der Protestantsche Kerken in Nederlandsch Indie*.
[7] In 2010, the GPM had 575,000 followers, spread over 27 branches and 725 churches (http://profilgereja.wordpress.com/2010/05/11/gereja-protestan-maluku/).

intergroup contact avoidance. Referring to previous studies, avoidance of intergroup contact between ethno-religious groups is one dimension of ethnic exclusionism in the framework of ethnic group conflict theory. Upon further inspection, this theory appears to be a combination between realistic conflict theory and social identity theory (Scheepers et al., 2002:18). Realistic conflict theory and social identity theory are complementing each other. Both of those theories emphasize realistic conflict and the social processes of identification of ethno-religious group members. Furthermore, both theories can be seen as "ethnic group conflict theory" or "ethnic competition theory," which we will explain in detail below.

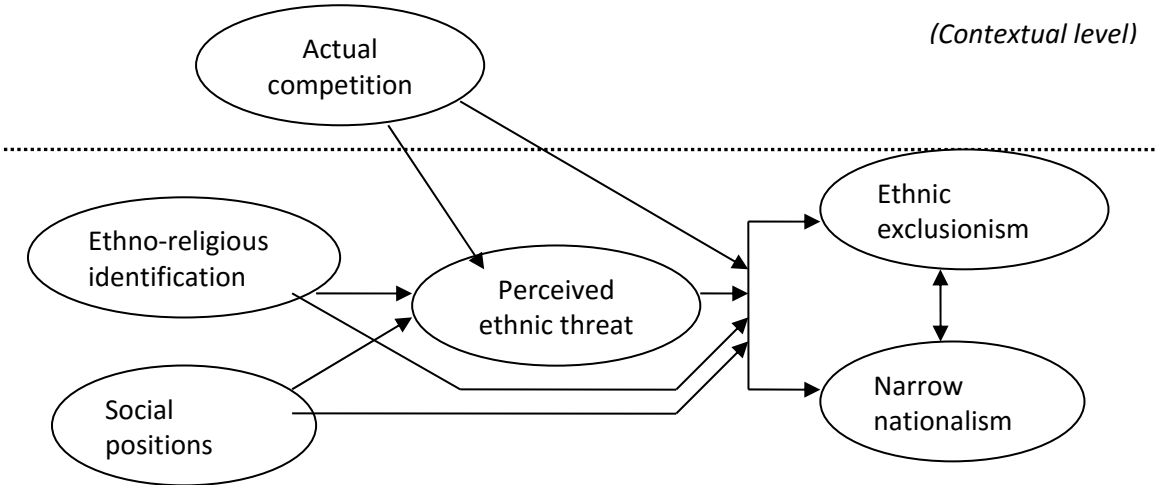
Ethnic group conflict or competition theory has two basic assumptions. First, the competition over scarce resources between social groups becomes the main catalyst of antagonistic intergroup behaviour. Sociological perspectives emphasize that such competition has always existed in every society (Coser, 1956). Psychological perspectives explain that competition between groups improves solidarity within the in-group and increases hostility between groups (Sherif and Sherif, 1969). The second assumption refers to social identity theory, in which individuals have fundamental needs to perceive their in-group as superior to out-groups. This pertains to favourable characteristics that they perceive among members of the in-group and apply to themselves through a mental process called social identification.[8] Moreover, they estimate out-group characteristics negatively through the mechanism of social contra-identification.

Experimental research conducted by Jetten et al. (2001 cf. Coenders et al., 2007: 217-44) shows that threats to social identity can increase in-group identification under competitive conditions, as explained by realistic conflict theory. The more participants perceived discrimination against their group, the more the meaning of group membership was primarily based on collective dissimilarity. Consequently, they emphasize that social identity theory can be complementary to propositions from realistic conflict theory. Both theories constitute ethnic group conflict theory. Furthermore, in respect to competition, Coenders et al. (2007:217-44) provides an explanation that the competition take place at the contextual and individual level that is both observable and measurable. The competition at the individual level often refers to perceived threat of competition that mediates effects of social identity on different dimensions of ethnic exclusionism.

[8] Social identity theory was developed to analyze group behaviours when social comparison is cognitively salient. It is applicable to behaviours through which individuals pay attention to intra-group structure. Yuki (2003:177) explains that cognitions at both the intergroup and intra-group level may affect an individual's group behaviours.

A comprehensive argument for regarding the importance of perceived threats in mediating between intergroup competition and ethnic exclusionary attitudes is provided by Olzak (1992, cf. Scheepers et al., 2002: 30). Olzak (1992: 35) says that whenever ethnic threats increase, whether it is due to macro or meso-social conditions, a majority group will react with exclusionary measures in response to the threat. In this sense, perceived threat enforces a mechanism of social identification, providing a theory of the dimensions of ethnic exclusionism under certain individual and contextual conditions.[9] The theory contains this crucial proposition: "*the stronger the actual competition between ethnic groups at an individual as well as a contextual level, and/or the stronger the perceived ethnic threat, the more the mechanisms of social (contra-) identification will be reinforced, inducing stronger nationalist attitudes and exclusionist reactions"* (Coenders et al., 2007, Gijsberts et al. 2004: 18). Figure 1.1 describes more completely the theoretical discussion on ethnic group conflict theory. This figure is an adaptation of the theoretical synthesis in Gijsberts et al. (2004:18)

Figure 2.1 *Ethnic competition theory: theoretical-conceptual model*



Source: Gijsberts et al. (2004: 19).

The terms of ethnic exclusionism and narrow forms of nationalism are strongly rooted in ethnocentrism, and relate to social (ethno-religious) identification, intergroup competition,

[9] Schneider (2008:54) differentiates the economic interpretation of ethnic competition theory from a cultural viewpoint, analysing the pattern of social relations between majority and minority groups involving conflict over values in contrast to material resources.

and power difference. Both can result in a set of perceptions, individual attitudes, and social practices that are characterized by in-group favouritism and out-group hostility. Ethno-religious identification as derived from social identity theory seems to contribute directly to ethnic exclusionism based on prejudice and perceived ethnic threat (Allport and Kramer, 1946; Blalock, 1967; Hood et al., 1996 cf. Capucao, 2009:6). Moreover, the social positions of individuals are rooted in actual competition. In reality, the level of competition varies between social categories of conflicting groups. The rationale behind this is that members of the dominant group who share a position with, or live near, members of the minority group tend to display more widespread participation in ethnic exclusionism (Scheepers et al., 2002: 19).

RELIGIOUSITY

In certain cases, there is some indication to suggest that religions have contributed to communal violence in places like Russia, India, Nigeria, and United Sates ("In God's name," 2007 cf. Inzlicht et al., 2009: 285). Some religious beliefs may encourage tolerance, such as the doctrine of election and revelation (Allport, 1966:447). However, religious particularism may lead to prejudice when followers regard their religion as the only true religion (Eisinga et al., 1990:56; Scheepers et al., 2002). Referring to social identity theory, Sterkens and Anthony (2008:35) mention that religions have a tendency to produce religiocentrism, because religions establish their own identity. According to them, religiocentrism can be defined as the combination of favourable attitudes towards the in-group and unfavourable attitudes towards out-groups. However, religiocentrism is sometimes also associated with religiously based sentiments of exclusiveness – the belief that one should prefer members of one's own religion above others (Ray and Doratis, 1971:170). Some believers refuse the truth of other religions and hold to the absolute truth of their own religion (Abu-Nimer, 2004:497). Religiocentrism tends to contribute to exclusion and discrimination towards other religious groups while regarding one's own religious group as superior.

The term 'religiosity' theoretically refers to religiocentrism, different attitudes towards religious plurality, and interpretation of sacred writing. Religiocentrism is the combination of favourable attitudes toward the in-group and unfavourable attitudes toward out-groups. Religiocentric attitudes represent an evaluation by individuals regarding their own religion and other religions. Meanwhile, different attitudes towards religious plurality points out individuals' interpretations of different religions as sources of truth and values (Anthony et al., 2005:154-86). These attitudes entail inclusive monism, exclusive monism, commonality pluralism, differential pluralism, and relativistic pluralism. Finally, interpretation of sacred

writing, i.e. the pair of intra-textual fundamentalism versus hermeneutic interpretation, refers respectively to a literal or contextual interpretation of Holy Scriptures. Research by Duriez et al. (1999) explains that exclusive truth claims (exclusive monism) and literal interpretations in general (here specified in religious intra-textual fundamentalism) closely relate to discriminatory behaviour. Both believers and non-believers who have literal ways of thinking are associated with ethnocentrism (Hutsebaut, 2007:177). Therefore, religiocentrism, attitudes towards religious plurality, and the way believers interpret sacred writings are all part of the broad dimension of religiosity that mediates the relationship between ethno-religious identification and intergroup contact avoidance.

Some theoretical propositions mention that ethno-religious identification in most cases is more likely to induce some exclusionary attitudes. Weber (1978:342 cf. Vertigans, 2007:304) claims that certain ethno-religious groups exclude other groups by making use of ethno-religious identities to maintain and enhance their position in intergroup relations. Another explanation given by Turner (1999:6-34) is that a group employs their identities in an exclusionary manner when individuals categorize themselves related to membership in a relevant group, the group identity is salient in relation to comparative judgment, and both the in-group and out-group are interrelated in a field of competition. The dimensions of intergroup comparison are related to differences in intergroup status, and out-group statuses are related to the particular comparative judgment.

Several arguments says that religious identification leads to religious intolerance at the individual level. First, individuals who possess strong religious identification tend to support exclusionary reactions because extrinsic values of religious convictions may contribute to creating intergroup bias (Allport, 1966:456). In addition, some religious practices and doctrines of *particularism* are related to prejudicial attitudes towards minority groups (Scheepers et al., 2002a:242-265).

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN PRACTICES

In this section, we present several examples of religious tolerance in the city of Ambon both in formal and informal settings. Following Bogardus (1925b:1-2) I propose several indicators of religious intolerance, namely intergroup contact avoidance such as the rejection of members of religious out-groups serving as city mayors, policemen and civil servants, or as neighbours, housemates, and close friends. In the interviews, we found many examples of religious intolerance between Muslims and Christians.

Muslim respondents are more likely to avoid the appointment of city mayors and police commanders from religious out-groups than Christian respondents are. In Ambon, this

attitude is related to the fixation on equal religious representation in government. Muslim respondents disagree when Christians simultaneously fill both the position of mayor and the position of governor. Quite a few of them emphasize that the Muslim population is bigger than the Christian population at provincial level (50% according *Sensus Penduduk 2010*). More than once Muslim respondents complained about the numeric imbalance between Christian and Muslim police officers, because they worry that officers are likely to side with members of their own religious group when a conflict occurs. A female Muslim informant in Ambon, Fatima, explained:

> "In my view, for positions of mayor, governor, and governmental offices, those officials prefer their own people [Christians] over us [Muslims]. There is no justice there. They do the same on the police force. In a moment of conflict, it is possible that some Christian policemen would shoot [Muslims] secretly. A Christian policeman, on 11th September 2011, shot a friend of my brother."

She added:

> "I do not mind actually [if a Christian becomes mayor], however, I wish that the power distribution between Muslims and Christians would be equal. It is fine that the governor is a Christian, but I want the mayor to be a Muslim. The fact is, now all high officials are Christians."

Another Muslim informant, Ayesa, stated:

> "If the [government] official is a Christian, he will only develop facilities for Christians. Churches will be built everywhere and nothing will be done for the allocation of mosques. However, if the official is a Muslim, he will only work to develop Islam. I dislike having more Christians than Muslim policemen because if there is a conflict, the Christian policemen will only protect Christians. Also, Muslim policemen will protect Muslims."

Discussing relationships between students at the university, several informants described how they avoid members of religious out-groups on campus after classes. The students in Universitas Pattimura usually gather in religious and ethnic groups after class sessions ends. Lucas, a Christian student from Universitas Pattimura, said:

> "If people sit together, they are grouped according to ethnic belonging or they cluster according to the village communities they are coming from. This group consists of students from Eastern Seram [Muslims]. That group is made up of students from the Southeast Moluccas [Muslim], and their members come together, sit, and socialize only with people of their own ethnic group. The other groups are students from Christian ethnicities; their members sit together under the trees."

Another indicator of contact avoidance is segregation in boarding houses. Most respondents mentioned that they live in boarding houses where that are restricted to members of a particular religious group. Some respondents shared that they feel religiously

homogenous houses are necessary to preserve religious relationships and customs. many Muslim respondents in Ambon are afraid of having board mates from different religions for security reasons. A Muslim informant in Ambon mentioned: "I cannot assure that they [Christian board mates] would have no idea to kill me. I am afraid that a religious conflict could possibly erupt in the night, while I am sleeping at my dorm." During our interviews, we did not find any Christian informants who said that they are reluctant to have Muslims as their housemates.

The second dimension of contact avoidance is the avoidance of future spouse from a different religion. Individuals in Indonesia could do not always individually choose their spouses. Parents, families, religious norms, and cultural traditions often determine who an individual's spouse will be, rather than the decision about who to marry being a personal choice. Marriages are deemed appropriate if they are arranged and conducted according to the religious regulations (UGM, 2010). Indeed, many interpretations of religious law in Indonesia forbid inter-religious marriage. In the interviews, many Muslim respondents said that they are worried about being converted to Christianity. Fatima mentions that "I do not want to marry a [Christian]. I am afraid of being indoctrinated, as my faith is not firm yet." Similarly, Peter, a Christian informant, said:

> "By having the same faith, there will be peace and togetherness. For example, when we go to church or celebrate events together, we could feel this togetherness. I learn it from my brothers [who married Muslims]. They respect each other's religion, but they still have many conflicts. I want a harmonious life."

The third dimension of contact avoidance is the support for residential segregation. Muhammad, a Muslim informant in Ambon, said:

> "For me, nothing is greater than *akidah* [faith]. That is why I live in a neighbourhood with one religion. Besides, if there is religious violence, there will be many friends to defend us against aggressors before the troops arrive. Since the violence in 1999, housing is divided by religion, for example, the area from Kebun Cengkeh to STAIN is a Muslim area and the area from Karpan to STAIN is a Christian area. It is better to have prejudices and keep people at a distance than [to have] them living side by side. When the religious violence breaks out again, the violence will be greater if we [Muslims and Christians] stay side by side."

Several respondents say they have a negative image of religious out-group members. A Muslim informant, Muhammad, clearly states her negative view of Christians, "Now, the governor is Christian, so the majority of positions in government are occupied by them [Christians]. So, I believe that Christians are the cause of religious conflict." Another Muslim

informant, Fatima, provides another negative view about Christians, related to a bad experience she had with Christians in the past. She noticed that Christians seem to denigrate Muslims when she attended a socialization program held by the Indonesian Red Cross. She said,"Once, they [Christians] laughed me at an event on drug counselling. A Christian student stated that the [intellectual] capacities of Muslim presenters are bad. His statement humiliated us [Muslims] and regarded the Muslims as lower than the Christians." The same views are heard on the other side. Apparently, Christian students generally see Muslim students as too emotional and supportive of violent conflicts. When asked about his image of Muslims, Lucas, a Christian informant from Unpatti, said, "What I fear are the stupid groups among the youth of Moluccans. For example, we Moluccan youngsters are emotionally aggressive. We do not like to be told to study. However, when we are told to fight, we get very excited. Like what happened at the last demonstration [when Muslims burned the university registration's building]."

Apparently, most Muslim respondents prefer to monistic religious views. A Muslim informant, Hakim, said: "The sources of Islam are the Quran and Hadith. The sources of Christianity are the Bible, but the Bible is not true. Men have modified it, so it is not the original Bible given by Jesus. Buddhism and Hinduism are even worse. They worship statues. What can a statue do for them? It is illogical. They have no common sense." Based on his statements, Hakim seems to have stronger a monistic attitude, which claiming that the only true religion is his religion.

Unlike Muslim respondents, several Christian respondents expressed pluralistic views. When asked about religious pluralism, quite a lot of Christian respondents answered that religious truth exists in many religions. A Christian informant, Elisabeth, said: "If Christianity is the only true religion, why did God create other religions? We can learn from others. For example, our Muslim brothers, they pray five times a day. I have observed what others consider not important. Muslims wake up at 05.00. They sell yellow rice at 07.00. Before they get on the bus, they say *bismillah* [in the name of God]." Another Christian informant, Peter, said: "What I admit is Jesus, who is the one who guides the way to live and the one who saves me. I am open to the possibility that other religions also have the way to salvation. For me, however, Jesus is the way to salvation. I do not mind people who say that they also find salvation in their religion; it is a reflection of their faith." His statements indicate that he has a pluralistic view. "I like saying that religions are the same in an abstract level. I believe that [all] religions teach all good things" he said.

Another characteristic of religiosity is intratextual fundamentalism. The interviews demonstrate that several Muslim respondents interpret the Holy Scriptures literally. For example, a Muslim informant named Muhammad said, “The Holy Scriptures should be interpreted literally.” When asked about the interpretation of the Quran, a Muslim informant, named Hakim said, “The Quran is the way of life and guidance for us. There is an absolute truth, which we have to believe in it, so no need to interpret the verses.” Another Muslim informant, Najib, answered, “The Quran for a Muslim is ‘*qalamullah*’ (God’s writing). It is given directly by God. In Islam, it is considered God’s word, so the truth is absolute and cannot be denied. Other people perhaps will use their logical thinking to question it, then, they believe it. For me, I need to believe it first, and then I shall find the truth.”

DISCUSSION

Ethnic group conflict theory posits that the stronger the actual competition between ethnic groups, the stronger the perceived ethnic threat will be. This, in turn, due to stronger social identification, will then tend to induce exclusionary reactions. However, the level of actual competition and perceived group threat, which may vary between groups, apparently influences exclusionary reactions (Gijsberts et al., 2004:18). Many studies on exclusionary reactions in Western countries provide evidence that these reactions affect certain groups more than others. For example, avoidance of inter-ethnic marriages is more prevalent among lower social classes (Tolsma, Lubbers, and Coenders, 2008) and people with lower education levels tend to support for intolerance compared to those with higher education levels (Coenders and Scheepers, 2003).

Based on that theory, we can put competition between groups, perceived group threat, and religious identification as determinants that affect on religious intolerance. Theoretically, the balance of power between groups through power sharing is a key element to reduce perceived group threat that later on will lower religious identification. Finally, religious intolerance will be resolved conceptually. Here is example the efforts of political elites to minimize perceived group threat, religious identification, and religious intolerance thorugh power sharing. To achieve a workable local government that would be acceptable by both communities, and that would be able to overcome the tensions in the city, some parties with different religious orientations or religious followers formed temporary political coalitions. This strategy was used for the first time in the election campaigns for a governor in 2008 and for a city mayor in 2011 (Pariela, 2007:107). These political coalitions were also created to address the fact that some parties had not more than 15% of the chairs (the threshold) in the provincial or city parliament. To achieve their goals, all parties or coalitions nominated a pair

of candidates, one Muslim and one Christian, for the position of governor and vice-governor as well as for the position of mayor and vice-mayor In the 2008 the gubernatorial elections were won by a coalition of PDI-P, *Partai Demokrat*, PDK, PKB and PBB, who had nominated a Christian for governor and a Muslim for vice-governor. In this gubernatorial election, PKS which collaborated with PAN, and PPP which allied with PDS, lost the gubernatorial election, like *Golkar* which did not enter into a coalition.

The same strategy also was used in the mayoral and and vice-mayoral elections in 2011, when a Christian candidate became the mayor and a Muslim candidate became the vice-mayor. The elected candidates were nominated by *Golkar*, PPP, PBR, PDS and *Gerindra*. In this mayoral election, *Partai Demokrat* collaborated with *Hanura*, PDK and PKPI, while PKS allied with PAN and PBB. In this election, the PDI-P did not join a coalition.

In the gubernational elections of 2013, a Muslim and Christian who were nominated for the position of governor and vice-governor by *Golkar*, PKS, PPP and PAN were elected. In this gubernatorial election, *Hanura* allied with *Gerindra*, PBB, PBR and PKB. PDI-P and *Partai Demokrat* proposed candidates without entering a coalition.

Not only the positions of governor and mayor were settled in this way, some parties also wanted to balance the number of Muslims and Christians in the city administration, both with regard to the top officials and the lower echelons. In 2006, 84.07% of the civil servants in the city administration were Protestants, while Muslims and Catholics constituted only 14.48% and 1.30%, respectively. A significant discrepancy, as Protestants constituted about 60% of the city's population in the same year (Tomagola, 2007:27-28). No information on the religious affiliation of the civil servants in 2011 can be found, but it is likely that Christians still constitute the majority. Of the top twenty-two city officials in 2012, only two were Muslims, and the rest were Christians. A balance is also sought in the allocation of the city budget for Muslim and Cristian education.

While there is economic division along ethnic lines, religious distinctions actually does no longer matter for choice of profession. Since the 1999-2004 conflicts, Christians also work in sectors that were previously dominated by Muslims, such as transportation (pedicabs and motorcycle taxi drivers) and shop keeping. Entrepreneurship has increased among the Christian Ambonese, and medium-sized business activities have grown in Christian areas. On the other hand, Muslim Ambonese and migrants also work in sectors that were dominated by Christians in the past, such as education and government. However, both Muslims and Christians tend to work within their own religiously segregated areas, except for people who work in hotels, shops and offices at the city centre and in the border areas of Muslim and

Christian neighbourhoods. Government jobs at the provincial level were shared equally between Muslims and Christians, while those at the city level were still dominated by Christian Ambonese. Religious segregation is still apparent in security industries, with the police force employing mostly Christians, and the military dominated by Muslims.

Besides using ethnic group conflict theory, religious and cultural traditions in Maluku have been proven as effective instruments to resolve religious intolerance. After the conflict ended in 2004, and in the meantime, decentralization had become a spearhead of political reformation, village heads and the regional government tried to reactivate *pela* to prevent further religious violence. Up till now without much success, as migrants and younger generations showed little enthusiasm for a reestablishment of this traditional institution. *Pela* is hardly effective to avoid or resolve conflicts when migrants are involved. On the one hand, they are excluded from traditional cultural bonds. On the other hand, they feel not obliged to commit to these forms of solidarity (Iwamony, 2010:108-109). The younger generations of Moluccans that stick to modernist religious beliefs also question *pela* because it is a traditional cultural bond instead of a religious one. Nevertheless, the reactivation of *pela* has encouraged Christians and Muslims to further a spirit of mutual trust and cooperation that is central to *pela* practices. For example, during the National Quran Recitation Festival (*Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran, MTQ*), in 2012, Christians were involved by providing accommodation to the participants of the festival. During the national church choir festival, some Muslim schools participated and had their choir teams performed traditional Moluccan songs.

CONCLUSION

Based on above description, we can summarize that cognitive and cultural dimension of intergroup relationship can be used to resolve religious intolerance. Ethnic group conflict theory can be employed as an analitical tool to provide explanation on exclusionary attitudes including religious intolerance. Perceived group threat, which raise from both actual and symbolic competition, is an important determinant that mediate between religious identification and exclusionary attitudes. Also, cultural bond in Ambon, namely pela and adat system, have been activated to prevent conflict between religious groups. As have been mentioned in the previous section that the revival of *pela* has inspired Christians and Muslims to further a spirit of mutual trust and cooperation that is essential to *pela* practices. In addition, the findings of religiousity shows that only pluralistic views of religion support for peaceful relationship between Muslims and Christians in Ambon. As theoretical implication,

both knowledge, culture, and pluralistic views of religions can be employed to develop peaceful relations between religious groups.

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