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From Selfism to Indifferentism: Challenges Facing Indonesian Society and Culture, 2015–2045

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Abstract

As Indonesia as adapted to changes in its regional and global environments, its transformations have produced both progress and threats. Society has changed in the face of three major forces, namely increased mobility, greater technologization, and diverse mediations in all parts of life. These forces have laid the foundation for significant transformation, which has only rarely been analyzed comprehensively. This article is a projective one, intended to examine these changing contexts' implications for Indonesia's security and insecurity over the next three decades. The concepts of threats, challenges, obstacles, and disturbances are used as the framework for analyzing projected situations and conditions. Keeping in mind the lengthy consequences of insecurity, three phenomena should be anticipated: selfism (a deification of the self); greedism; and indifferentism. Expected future insecurities include excessive egotism, exclusive greed, and broad indifference. This article offers four anticipative scenarios: accommodating difference and disparity, developing inner potential, promoting public participation in problem-solving, and understanding social perspectives about problem-solving.

Keywords: Cultural Dynamics; Quality of Life; Indifferentism; Selfism; Indonesian Society

1. Introduction

Indonesia's future will be determined by changes in the strategic environments that have positioned the country as an arena for the dynamic exchange of ideologies, values, and social practices, as well as products of modernity. This objectification process is unavoidable, given that global forces have promoted the creation of a coordinated world system and global network (Wallerstein 2011). This concept of global cooperation positions everything as subordinate to a shared interest that Elias calls the civilizing process (Elias 1994; Mennell 2009). As such, Indonesia has found itself

needing adaptation.

Indonesia's ability to adapt to continuously changing global situations will be determined by whether subjectification can not only be used against objectification, but also to position Indonesia as the subject of global transformation (Frank 1983; Buzan and Lawson 2015). While dealing with global social and political phenomena, at the macro and regional level Indonesia must attempt to increase its resilience and competitiveness. Its greatest challenge is guaranteeing domestic stability, which will aid the country in articulating its potential and seizing future opportunities. Presently, Indonesia is ranked 36th on the global competitiveness index, having risen from 41st.

Various new ideologies have emerged that threaten Indonesia's socio-economic and political stability. At the same time, diverse values are being backed by various powers and interests that seek to transform the character and identity of the nation (Triandafyllidou 1998). Various social practices, both desired and not, have received legitimacy from groups with specific agendas and global politico-economic goals. Local dynamics must be recognized as part of the grand design of global transformation, as the society created may ultimately be far removed from the desired socio-cultural unity.

As a consequence of increasingly permeable borders, society has moved towards more open values. Countries have lost control of political and economic forces at the regional and global levels, and the resulting disorientation has laid the foundation for facts, events, and phenomena that threaten "security" and "prosperity". Difficult—and often mistaken—decisions have frequently been made in response to these shifts, indicating that certainty and clear analysis is needed. Sincere dedication and sharp analysis of the changing times are paramount.

This article, after mapping projected trends in Indonesia, also recommends several policies that will enable the country to anticipate the situations and conditions it will face. Discussion will begin by mapping the socio-cultural conditions in various strategic environments, both regional and global, and be followed by predictions of future threats, challenges, obstacles, and disturbances. It will conclude by recommending a number of strategies that can be formulated into policies for anticipating the threats, challenges, obstacles and problems that may emerge. This article is based not only on a review of the literature, but also the authors' experiences, including their involvement as consultants for various institutions and their observations of Indonesian society and culture since 1994.

2. Method

This article projects Indonesia's future situation and measures its security situation by using threats, challenges, obstacles, and disturbances as its conceptual framework. Threats are defined as efforts to conceptually transform policy through criminal and political activities. Meanwhile, challenges are understood as endeavors to limit the country's capacity for development and progress. Obstacles are concerns that emerge internally and limit the country's activities through non-conceptual means. Disturbances, meanwhile, are external issues that weaken or end the country's activities (Prayetno 2015).

These four concepts are used to distinguish between the three different decades that will be considered in this article: 2015–2025, 2025–2035, and 2035–2045. The end point of this study, 2045, was chosen as it represents the hundredth anniversary of Indonesia's independence. As this article is intended to examine Indonesia's achievements over its 100 years of independence, from 1945 to 2045, this periodization will be used in assessing Indonesia's security situation.

This article applies a socio-cultural projection, meaning that its analysis cannot ignore economic and political factors. Recognizing that national and regional elections are but one factor in predicting the future of society and culture, this article understands socio-cultural phenomena as responding to historical material and non-material conditions and reflecting the complex processes that have occurred within Indonesia's plural society. In Indonesia, some 815 ethnic groups—each with its own language—are spread across an archipelago of 17,804 islands; this ethnographic map has integrally guided this article's analysis.

3. Results

3.1 *Indonesia in Its Changing Strategic Environments*

Transformations in Indonesia's national, regional, and global strategic environments have pre-conditioned its socio-cultural situation. As environmental changes do not only affect social life, but are also derived from it (Roudometof 2014, 2016), a contextual understanding is imperative for any exploration of short-, medium-, and long-term socio-cultural developments. Such national, regional, and global contexts must be articulated using different approaches.

First, environmental changes have consequences for the conceptualization and practices of space (Roudometof 2003; Robertson 1995). Space has become more open as mobility has increased and technology has advanced, producing diverse new practices and values—which sometimes contrast with existing ones. This has created fertile ground for ideological threats that require a clear and measured response. Indonesian society, meanwhile, has occupied a weak bargaining position, being unable to improve its competitiveness or the quality of its human resources (Svensson 2001). This is a major challenge that must be overcome before space can be transformed, as otherwise involved actors may be positioned as nothing but consumers of the values that could potentially threaten their identities.

Second, as borders have become increasingly permeable, concepts such as sovereignty and nationalism have been questioned (Roudometof 2014). In its interactions with its neighbors, Indonesia faces numerous threats that require careful consideration and handling. Permeable borders require the legal power to ensure that national sovereignty is respected. As shown by Womack, the nationalism of communities in border regions may be eroded by asymmetrical relations, as well as the state's affirmative activities (Womack 2016). In the current era of open borders, more flexibility is needed; this can cultivate nationalism in border communities, including in Indonesia's outermost islands and isolated communities. In turn, this will allow Indonesia to deal with the threats it faces by showing its concern for border regions' interests—such as by providing much-needed public services.

Third, the collectivity that has long characterized Indonesian society has been eroded as individualism has taken root as an effect of democratization (Gilbert 1986; Zakaras 2007). At the same time, the skills needed for communal living have become less common as socio-cultural and political actors have focused on creating alliances that can further their own interests. As a result of increased politicization, aulture-based community groups have had their growth stymied (Abdullah 2018). At the same time, differentiation and distinction—facilitating individual authority—have become increasingly common. Only the creation of shared bonds, particularly by combing communal culture with individual empowerment, can address this problem and allow society to better protect itself from outside threats (Puusa, Hokkila, and Varis 2016; Dar 2002).

Fourth, Indonesia's social structures have experienced considerable shifts in their horizontal and vertical relations. Polarization has emerged as ownership has transformed, with primordial bonds becoming prioritized even as interactions between persons with different values and ideologies become more common. The ways resources and capital are distributed have transformed in the face of international socio-economic and political realities as well as increased economic and political deregulation. Horizontal distinctions and vertical class structures do not only differentiate within a social hierarchy, but also between people with different ideologies and values. The bonds connecting members of society are often weak, and as a result the potential for deep-rooted social tensions is tangible (Olzak 2011; Miller 2014; Nissanke and Thorbecke 2010).

Fifth, changes in Indonesia's social order have created new values of appropriateness. In many places, interactions between people of different generations are tense, while informal community leaders receive less attention. This indicates issues with social compliance, something that social scientists have long warned about. Likewise, the ethical guidelines that facilitate social harmony are increasingly ignored. Meanwhile, attempts to maintain the previous social order have become limited, as the egalitarian ideology being developed has demanded new social realities. Given that the Indonesian people have relied on structured family, religious, and traditional relations to guarantee order, egalitarianism requires broad social transformations to ensure its new code of

conduct is accepted. Until these are realized, challenges to the existing structure have met opposition, up to and including rebellion (Elliott and Lemert 2005; Pieterse 2003).

Sixth, the center of power has begun to move from the State to the people. While the State had previously enjoyed near monolithic power in determining social values and behaviors, today power is wielded by the people. Increased concern for the legitimacy of the government's activities has given the common people the ability to reject its power. However, as power is not concentrated within a single institution, relativism has been unavoidable. Members of Indonesian society have sought the political legitimacy not only to challenge the state/government, but also to oppose other members of society (Brysk and Shafir 2004; Shafir 2004; Bertucci and Alberti 2003). As the common people have rejected government policies either implicitly (through symbols) or explicitly (through violence), various new powers have collided as they have sought to assert their own truths. In response, the government has issued repressive policies, which have further tainted state–citizen relations (Hidayat 2008).

Seventh, increased objectification has led to high levels of crime, murder, and trafficking, as well as the widespread abandoning of existing values. Material structures have been reinforced, shaping new systems and transforming social relations. Changing lifestyles have brought about transformations in traditional notions of idealism and obeisance. As a result, subjectivism has become less important. Materialism has reoriented society towards new patterns of obeisance that emphasize capital, eroding the nationalism and shared identity of the Indonesian people. As such, many have felt ignored owing to their limited access to capital (Kasser et al. 2014; Belk 1985; Connolly 2013).

These ongoing transformations have laid the foundation for the future dynamics of Indonesian society. The following section provides a projection of Indonesia's next 30 years.

3.2 *Social and Cultural Dynamics: The Next 30 Years*

Indonesia's long-term development will be shaped by three key trends: increased mobility (Field 1999; Sheller 2011), rapid technological advancement (Feibleman 1966; Andersson et al. 2015; Kranzberg and Pursell 1967), and increased media influence (Couldry 2004; Couldry and McCarthy 2003; Downey and Fenton 2003).

Mobility is no longer limited to the upper and middle classes; it has spread across all of Indonesian society. This has transformed not only individual lives (i.e. through increased economic capital), but also communities' entire landscapes. New buildings are always being built. Meanwhile, the service sector has become more dominant, resulting to a fundamental shift in ownership patterns and class structures. This has been marked by widespread migration from rural to urban areas, as well as smaller-scale international labor migration (Hugo 2012, 1993). This mobility has not only provided Indonesians with new experiences, but also introduced new values that have eroded and replaced traditional ones (Freeman 2005; Amiel et al. 2015).

Technology, similarly, has had increased—indeed, almost unlimited—reach. It is no longer limited to the upper classes. Rather, it broadly considered appropriate for dealing with various issues. Not only is computer and information technology a common sight; it is highly integrated into everyday life (Clausen 2009). At the same time, new dependencies have emerged; for example, while calculators have made life easier, their prevalence has resulted in basic arithmetic becoming a lost skill (McCulloch 2011). It is undeniable that humans have become increasingly reliant on technology, even as they have minimized their interactions with other human beings. Where technology has become a medium for human interaction, it has worryingly weakened values of kinship, family, friendship, and togetherness (Bostrom 2009; Reumann 2010).

Likewise, the media has created distance between people. Despite being created to facilitate communication and connect people, it has increased social segmentation and divided people into distinct ideological groups. Despite the media's mandate to help people make decisions that are (seemingly) rational and correct, its truth is relative. Social media in particular has strongly informed how people live their lives, as well as the values and (relative) truths that they practice (Kegley 2013; Viner 2016). As such, to borrow from Bourdieu, (social) media has become a "structure that structures reality". Life choices and truths are media realities, rather than (empiric) social realities

(Bourdieu 2005; Zeedijk and Smits 2010). Order, thus, is created by the media, shaped by the desires of those controlling the media. Today, many turn to the media before family and friends when making decisions. This has created a sort of fanaticism towards certain media.

Given these three trends—mobility, technology, and media—it can be projected that Indonesian society will take different forms in different periods: a period of freedom from 2015–2025; a period of abundance from 2025–2035; and a period of apathy from 2035–2045.

3.2.1 *Socio-cultural Dynamics, 2015–2025*

Between 2015 and 2025, the Indonesian people will be swept away by the euphoria of freedom and democracy, particularly the transfer of power from the top (elites) to the bottom (the people). I view this as a bad sign for democracy itself, as Indonesia's democratization has been "plundered" rather than developed naturally in accordance with cultural norms. In Indonesia, the concept of democratization was introduced by the elites. It was entrusted to a conceptual "middle class", understood as possessing high levels of education and moral standards; the ability to work together; the technological skills to manage Indonesia's democracy; and the awareness of the need for development (Cheeseman 2014; Lu 2005). However, such an independent middle class has never developed in Indonesia; Indonesia's middle classes have always been pressured by the upper classes while simultaneously exerting pressure on the lower classes.

Democratization—and the accompanying euphoria for freedom—will promote an excessive "selfism", as a result of which existing values and sensibilities will be abandoned. The current selfie culture is but a small part of a broader cultural problem, wherein human beings are losing their ability to connect with others because of their inflated sense of importance, which promotes a lack of sensitivity to others' individual and collective needs (Postmes and Jetten 2006; Simmel 1971). Ultimately, the legitimacy of social values and truths, rather than measure through general standards, will be considered using the particular standards of specific sub-groups and sub-cultures. As a logical consequence of the firm division of society into specific sub-groups and sub-cultures, each with its own problems and tensions, the shared Indonesian identity will be eroded; "us" will appear to be a foreign concept. When this occurs, truth values will be relative, with each sub-group or sub-culture having its own truth. Incompatibilities between these truths will provide fertile ground for broader communal conflict.

3.2.2 *Socio-cultural Dynamics, 2025–2035*

The decade between 2025 and 2035 will be one of abundance and rapid economic growth (over 5% per annum), thereby easing vertical mobility. The successful production and commodification of resources will be followed by greed, as well as a work ethic rooted in long-term economic pressures. At this time, certain elements of society will begin seeking satisfaction in all their activities, without any disturbances. Various virtues will disappear as discipline and obeisance become less common and shared goals begin to be forgotten. Those benefiting most from economic growth will build walls around themselves, hoping to ensure that their own wealth and peace is not disturbed (Rojek 2000, 2006) and assuming that others desire only to interrupt their private pleasures.

Economic growth, promoted by hard work and a series of policy breakthroughs, will be enjoyed excessively by its beneficiaries, blinding society to the need to build firm foundations for the future. Social isolation will occur not only in border and isolated communities, but also in urban areas. As such, members of these communities will be unable to comprehend the events around them (Crisp 2010). A lack of empathy will lead to a rise of crime as people seek to maintain continued access to a decent standard of living as well as recognize their rights as citizens.

At this time, society will be characterized by a clear distinction between those at the top (capitalists) and those at the bottom (workers). This will be reinforced by exploitive industrial relations; the upper classes will not recognize that their positions and the benefits they enjoy stem from the sacrifices of those in the lower class (Kraus, Piff, and Keltner 2011). The lower classes, meanwhile, will feel as though they and their right to a decent standard of living are being ignored,

resulting in widespread dissatisfaction. At the same time, both social groups will lack the necessary skills to communicate, negotiate, and consolidate. As such, various forms of inter-class tensions and even conflict will be unavoidable (Scott 1990).

3.2.3 Socio-cultural Dynamics, 2035–2045

Between 2035 and 2045, Indonesia will enter a situation of apathy, in which people lose their passion for work as the country's economic growth fails to benefit them. Bonds between different social groups, having been weakened by increased individualism, will prove too weak for collective reasoning, and as such privatization and personalization will dominate almost every transaction. Developing any sense of togetherness will require continuous work, as capitalistic systems and structures will have long replaced emotional and personal interactions. Members of Indonesian society will not be bound by traditional principles, and social relations will not support continued human welfare. Widespread social unrest will be apparent, and as such a thorough and detailed reading will be needed to provide a contextual response.

This increased sense of apathy will present itself through a widespread indifference rooted in the loss of primordial ties. People will not be involved in, or even withdraw themselves from, their collectives; as a result, intense inter-group/inter-class communications and exchange will be impossible. Class and group will no longer significantly affect inter-personal relations or individual rights; likewise, they will be seen as unable to meet the needs of the populace. At this time, a belief will emerge that individual endeavors are the only means of obtaining a decent standard of living. This insecurity will become a political commodity at the hands of actors seeking to promote their economic and political interests.

4. Discussion

These three periods in Indonesia's development (2015–2025; 2025–2035; 2035–2045) are projected to fundamentally transform the values, behaviors, and thoughts of the Indonesian people. Change will not only occur in social practice, but also in social space and organization. At the same time, the state will require that citizens commit to accommodating environmental demands as well as global pressures. The consequences of these socio-cultural dynamics and global transformations for Indonesia's security will be discussed below.

4.1 Portrait of Insecurity, 2015–2025

In 2015–2025, members of Indonesian society will view themselves through the lens of selfism; this is likely to result in various fundamental problems. This will not only promote a shift from a central model to one based in self-interest, but also lead to people being incapable of understanding and imagining themselves as part of a fluid social system.

During this period, the greatest threat will come from democracy movements that promote various forms of individualism. Freedom of expression may prove threatening when it is used to justify the severing of social bonds. Systematic segregation and distinction, based on strong senses of individual awareness, will underly the creation of new groups within a social structure that lacks a legitimate basis for their values and moral codes. As a result, the societal system will remain vulnerable to conflict.

Facing the challenge posed by this freedom will require an appropriate attitude, one in which freedom can provide the opportunity to realize noble goals. An open society may foster creativity and promote competitiveness. However, this will require a social system in which freedom can be transformed into creativity and offer space for new ideas that can help reach shared goals. In this situation, it is necessary to frame freedom as a national energy through an act of social engineering.

The greatest obstacle remains psychological, as there is a tendency to ignore social environments and ignore others as sources of power. Egotism will cause many problems during this period. Selfism, aside from creating social tension, may foster a competitive climate that can

prolong the processes through which mutual agreements are reached. Recognizing others is difficult when excessive criticism limits the progress of social processes and transformations.

Serious disturbances and tensions may emerge as the bonds between different groups weaken. The self will become so important that empathy for others will erode into near-nothingness. The weakening of communal bonds (rooted in kinship, ethnicity, religion, place of origin, and collective understandings) will disrupt communications processes, while obedience to existing structures and systems will be limited. The mobilization of diverse groups towards shared goals will be difficult to realize.

4.2 *Portrait of Insecurity, 2025–2035*

Between 2025 and 2035, Indonesian society will tend to emphasize hedonism and pleasure as a result of rapid economic growth (as well as pro-development economic and social policies). This will promote widespread greed among the upper classes, who will distinguish themselves clearly from the lower and middle classes. In this situation, inter-class communications will be nigh impossible.

A serious threat will emerge from class movements, with the lower classes attempting to mobilize their resources as they seek to seize power from the hedonistic upper classes. In the name of promoting an egalitarian society, democratic political institutions will be involved in this class struggle. Democracy will become a tool, manipulated by persons demanding their long-ignored rights. Given Indonesia's strategic position, it is quite possible for such class struggles to be exploited by global interests.

Indonesia's greatest challenge will be creating economic development that is capable of absorbing the labor force and preventing high unemployment rates; in 2017, for comparison, Indonesia's unemployment rate peaked at 7 percent. When economic participation is limited, radicalism tends to follow; as such, profit-sharing and wage systems are needed to ensure that economic benefits are enjoyed by all. Mechanisms are needed to redistribute wealth and thereby anticipate class issues and conflict. Meanwhile, an entrepreneurial orientation will emerge among the lower classes as they seek to enjoy the same luxuries as the upper classes. Despite the proven problems with the upper classes' practices, they will be reproduced by these lower-class entrepreneurs.

Obstacles during this period will include the difficulty of satisfying all parties, the forgetting of goals, and the eroding of discipline; in other words, the loss of the traits needed to promote progress. This will be particularly prevalent among the elites, and this in time will threaten social stability. The elites, not wanting their pleasure disturbed, will frame the lower classes as simple transgressors, thereby creating further friction. At the same time, the lower classes will contest these same pleasures. Such class struggles will be difficult to contain, and as such measures are necessary to ensure that development and progress are not hindered.

During this period, disturbances will primarily take the form of suspicions and prejudices against the ruling classes and those they support, which will limit public involvement in development efforts. Class awareness will also develop among workers, who will realize that the elites' pleasures would be impossible without the sacrifices—i.e. hard work and loyalty—of those in the lower classes. There will thus emerge social movements that seek to seize the pleasures of the upper classes, creating a significant disturbance that would hinder the cultural accommodation processes in Indonesian society.

4.3 *Portrait of Insecurity, 2035–2045*

Between 2035 and 2045, Indonesians will experience a sense of deep-rooted indifference; this will present a number of dangers that will require various responses. This widespread apathy will be rooted in the previous decade's class struggles, which will have failed to provide the lower classes with a decent standard of living—let alone prosperity.

Such apathy will threaten development, as it will frame development as an extra-social process. The failure to include the public in development programs will promote increased division. Good intentions will no longer be seen as capable of answering the problems being faced,

Meanwhile, the widespread rejection of national development projects will pose a serious threat, as will the underlying lack of belief in the state's interests and abilities.

Another challenge posed by this widespread apathy will be mobilizing the public to participate in the development process. Public involvement in development cannot occur when it is not promoted through collective activities. At this point, it will be necessary to re-examine the development process to ensure that society's needs are accommodated and the state's credibility is maintained. Public participation is a prerequisite for successful development, as are sufficient resources and adequate maintenance. Social conflict may damage the infrastructure being developed, thereby negating the projects' benefits and squandering the hard work involved.

This widespread apathy will also hinder various development processes. As this apathy will reflect the limited accountability of those in power, the public will not support government-backed development efforts; rather, they will actively hinder them as an expression of their disillusionment. As a result, it will be impossible to mobilize the resources needed for development. It is thus necessary to recognize the importance of public support and education while promoting widespread public participation.

The limited availability of resources will cause a major disturbance, taking the form of protests over perceived marginalization of the lower classes. The sense of neglect and marginalization will spread, resulting in various state activities being rejected through a range of cultural and class mechanisms. The increased recognition of groups outside the social system will further disturb society and present a moral obstacle to the dynamic processes of development.

5. Conclusion: Four Scenarios

The various threats, challenges, obstacles, and disturbances that could be faced by Indonesia should become part of the collective knowledge of those expected to handle problems. This article has identified a number of clear dangers that must be addressed wisely, over the long term, and require policies and programs that are not simply curative, but anticipative. Resolving these problems, four approaches may be used.

First, the ability to "accommodate" broad differences and inequalities is sorely needed. Persons in marginalized, isolated, and border regions, as well as different social groups (including ethnic and religious groups) and strata, require greater accommodation to ensure that strong ties are maintained. This may mean involving people from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds in the same socio-economic and political space, thereby ensuring that their fundamental needs are fulfilled.

Second, actors recognize Indonesian society's "potential" to use "cultural bridges" to connect different and disparate groups. (Local) cultural wisdom will provide an intelligent mechanism for solving problems, including socio-cultural, economic, and political ones. Difference must be transformed into a national power through which communities have the shared commitment and desire to realize collective goals. Indonesia's various ethnic and religious groups must unite in the promotion of national development.

Third, all involved parties require the sensitivity and concern to keep their fingers on the pulse of society and recognize its problems. To address the various threats, challenges, obstacles, and disturbances faced by Indonesian society, shared attention and commitment are needed. To ensure moral policymaking and policy implementation, long-term sustainability and the shared interests of the Indonesian people must be considered.

Fourth, an ability to examine issues from different social perspectives is necessary to read the current situation and anticipate potential dangers to the security and unity of Indonesia. Such perspectives will promote the creation of policies and programs that can ensure that development benefits all elements of Indonesian society. By applying such social perspectives, national development will focus not only on economic growth, but also promote social and human development. In other words, social perspectives will highlight the complex needs of Indonesian society while simultaneously recognizing local communities' own problem-solving approaches.

To anticipate the threats, challenges, obstacles, and disturbances identified in this article, such approaches should be embraced not only by the Indonesian government, but also by institutions

that are directly or indirectly mandated to promote the country's continued security. Universities, for example, must be included in the collection of data, in the reading situations, and in the prediction of future conditions; social and military institutions must prepare anticipative measures as part of an integrated early warning system; and the government/state agencies must conduct policy advocacy dedicated towards addressing short-, medium-, and long-term issues.

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