Article

Bhikhu Parekh's Thought on Multiculturalism: A Relevance to Indonesia's Management of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts

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Article Information	Abstract
	Bhikhu Parekh's conceptualization of multiculturalism offers a significant contribution to the theoretical and practical debates surrounding multiculturalism in highly diverse urban societies. In the realm of theory, Parekh's notions of multiculturalism provide an alternative discourse to the prevailing emphasis on individual and minority rights within liberal frameworks. Conceptually, Parekh categorizes cultural diversity in modern/urban societies into three forms: 1) subcultural diversity; 2) perspectival diversity; 3) communal diversity. Furthermore, he divides multiculturalism into several models, including isolationist multiculturalism, accommodative multi-culturalism, autonomous multiculturalism, interactive multiculturalism, and cosmopolitan multiculturalism. This philosophical perspective on multiculturalism holds relevance in the context of managing ethnic and religious diversity in Indonesia. It underscores the emergence of awareness and 'sensitivity' to differences, starting with political and religious leaders becoming more attuned to the diversity of distinctions.

INTRODUCTION: BIOGRAPHY AND KEY CONCEPTS

The discourse on multiculturalism has emerged in recent decades, starting from Canada (Barry, 1996; Fleras, 2015), the United States (Ng & Bloemraad, 2015), to mainland Europe (Crowder, 2013) There has been a considerable debate surrounding its emergence, development, and current state. For instance, Murphy argues that multiculturalism lacks a clear definition and can be defined by anyone according to their objectives (Murphy, 2013). Among the scholars who have discussed multiculturalism is Bhikhu Parekh, a British political theorist of Indian origin.

Bhikhu Parekh was born in the village of Amalsad in the Gujarat province of India on January 4, 1935. He is a British political theorist, academic, and a life peer in the House of Lords. Parekh's higher education journey began at the age of 15 when he was admitted to the University of Bombay (B. C. Parekh, 1989). After completing his Master's program in 1956, Parekh went to the United Kingdom to further his studies. In 1959, he enrolled at the London School of Economics and obtained his Ph.D. in 1966. Following that, Parekh worked briefly at the University of Glasgow before securing a long-term position at the University of Hull from 1982 to 2001. From 2001 to 2009, he served as a professor of political philosophy at the University of Westminster.

Bhikhu Parekh's concept of multiculturalism encompasses at least five models, including Isolationist Multiculturalism, where various cultural groups in society live autonomously and have minimal interaction with each other (B. Parekh, 1999). Accommodative Multiculturalism refers to a society with a dominant culture that makes certain adjustments and accommodations for the needs of minority cultures. This society formulates and implements laws, rules, and provisions that are culturally sensitive and grants freedom to minority groups to maintain and develop their cultures without challenging the dominant culture (Gordon & Newfield, 1996). This model has been applied in several European countries. In addition to Europe, Canada is one of the countries that officially adopts multiculturalism as a state policy (Barry, 1996; Chandra & Mahajan, 2007; B. Parekh, 2001).

Autonomous Multiculturalism describes a pluralistic society where the main cultural groups strive for equality with the dominant culture and seek autonomous lives within a collectively acceptable political framework (B. Parekh, 1997). The primary concern here is to preserve their way of life on an equal footing with the dominant group. They challenge the dominant group and aim to create a society where all groups can coexist as equal partners.

Critical/Interactive Multiculturalism refers to a pluralistic society where cultural groups are not primarily focused on autonomous cultural life but rather contribute to a collective creation that reflects and asserts their unique perspectives (B. Parekh, 1992). Cosmopolitan Multiculturalism describes a pluralistic society that seeks to eliminate cultural boundaries entirely to create a society where individuals are no longer tied to a specific culture and can freely engage in intercultural experiments while developing their own cultural lives (Azra, 2007; B. Parekh, 2002).

According to Parekh, there are three components of multiculturalism: culture, cultural pluralism, and specific ways to respond to this pluralism. Multiculturalism is not a pragmatic political doctrine but a way of looking at human life (B. Parekh, 2003). Since almost all countries in the world consist of a variety of cultures - meaning that differences become their essence - and human movement from one place to another on the face of the earth is becoming more intensive, multiculturalism must be translated into multicultural policies as the politics of managing citizens' cultural differences (B. Parekh, 1992).

There are at least three models of state multicultural policies in dealing with the reality of cultural pluralism (B. Parekh, 1997). First, the model that emphasizes nationality. Nationality is a new identity that is built together without considering the various ethnic groups, religions, and languages, and nationality works as an integrative adhesive. In this policy, every individual - not collectively - has the right to be protected by the state as a citizen. This model is seen as a destroyer of ethnic cultural roots that are the basis of state formation and makes it a thing of the past (Citrin et al., 2001). This multicultural policy model is feared to fall into authoritarianism because the power to determine the elements of national integration is in the hands of a certain elite group.

Second, the ethnic-nationality model based on strong ethnic collective consciousness whose foundation is blood and kinship relationships with the national founders. Additionally, linguistic unity is also a characteristic of this ethnic-nationality (Ng & Bloemraad, 2015). This model is considered a closed model because outsiders who do not have a blood relationship with the ethnic national founders will be marginalized and treated as foreigners.

Third, the multicultural-ethnic model acknowledges the existence and collective rights of ethnic citizens. In this model, diversity becomes a recognized and accommodated reality by the state, and citizens identities and origins are considered. Issues arising from the implementation of this policy are not only collective and ethnic diversity but also majority-

minority issues, dominant-non-dominant issues (May & Sleeter, 2010). The issue becomes even more complex because it turns out that the majority does not always mean dominant, as various cases show that minorities are actually dominant in the economy. If the state's power is weak because the power is delegated to various collectives as a consequence of state recognition, the state may be plagued by prolonged internal conflicts that will ultimately weaken the state itself (B. Parekh, 2003).

The management of ethnic and religious conflicts has been a persistent challenge for many nations around the world, including Indonesia (Panggabean, 2017). With its rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and religions, Indonesia is a diverse archipelago that has had to grapple with complex issues of identity, coexistence, and social harmony. In the pursuit of effective conflict management and the promotion of a harmonious multicultural society, the insights of scholars and thinkers from various disciplines have been invaluable.

One such scholar whose ideas have garnered attention in the discourse on multiculturalism is Bhikhu Parekh. A prominent philosopher and political theorist, Parekh's thoughts on multiculturalism offer a nuanced perspective on the dynamics of diversity and the ways in which societies can navigate the challenges posed by ethnic and religious differences (B. Parekh, 2003). While Parekh's work has primarily been grounded in European social contexts, his philosophical framework holds relevance for nations like Indonesia, which grapple with their unique multicultural landscapes (Sianturi et al., 2018).

This article delves into Bhikhu Parekh's philosophical contributions to the understanding of multiculturalism and explores their applicability to Indonesia's context. By examining key concepts such as 'cultural sensitivity' and the roles of religious and political leaders in conflict resolution, this article seeks to shed light on how Parekh's ideas can offer insights and guidance in Indonesia's ongoing efforts to manage ethnic and religious conflicts effectively. As Indonesia continues to evolve as a diverse and pluralistic society, a critical examination of Parekh's thoughts could provide valuable perspectives for fostering social cohesion and harmony amidst diversity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Multiculturalism in the Indonesian Context

The development of studies on urban society and its connection to the upheaval of cultural and religious identities has given rise to what is known as multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is the concept of embracing diversity and expressions stemming from culture and religion (B. Parekh, 2002). Factors of interaction and shared identity within a social group subsequently lead to a "we attitude" or a sense of belonging among its members. According to Harold Lasswell's perspective, when these interaction factors reach a level of cooperative bonding, they generate a "we feeling," which fosters a willingness to work together and make sacrifices for the group's interests (Lasswell, 1951). In the next stage, a sense of solidarity develops, encompassing the notions of "doing together" and "thinking together." Members of a group share similar perspectives, whether about themselves or other groups (Wach, 1958).

As previously mentioned, one of the formative factors and shared identities binding humans is religion. According to Emile Durkheim, religion serves as a unifying force for society. Religion represents a collective power within society that transcends individual members. Additionally, religion addresses the problems, issues, and personal needs of specific individuals (Durkheim & Swain, 2008). Within religion, individuals find strength to cope with suffering, frustration, and misfortune. Through religious ceremonies, individuals can establish a special connection with the Divine, and these rituals provide assurance of life, freedom, and

responsibility for moral values within society. Moreover, religion also functions to uphold and strengthen the feelings and collective ideas that characterize social unity (Tuomela, 1984; Turner, 2006). It is evident today that our world is divided into different cultural environments due to religious factors. In one part of the world, societies are shaped by Islamic teachings, while in another part, they are shaped by Christian teachings. Simultaneously, due to the global spread of religions and the mobility of their followers, people of various faiths can easily be found in various parts of the world (Ichwan & Muttaqin, 2012).

As a result, coexistence among followers of different religions or faith communities cannot be avoided, with all its consequences, including conflicts between religions. In the past, religious life was relatively peaceful because religious communities were isolated like camps, separated from the challenges of the outside world (Gottlieb, 2001). Conversely, these walls of isolation are continuously being torn down, and different religious and cultural groups now live together without boundaries, which is inevitable.

The diversity (pluralism) of religions that exist in Indonesia, including the diversity of religious beliefs within religious communities, is a historical fact that cannot be denied by anyone (Rochimah, 2018). The emergence of religious pluralism can be empirically observed in historical contexts (Abdullah, 1996). In the realm of culture, pluralism and religion bring about different models of interaction and their related issues.

Culture is articulated at various levels. At the most fundamental level, culture is reflected in language, proverbs, symbols, customs, traditions, and forms of greetings. At a slightly different level, culture is embedded in literature, arts, music, oral and written literature, moral life, and visions of a good life (B. Parekh, 1992). Culture is also articulated in rules and norms that govern social relations in community life (B. Parekh, 2006).

Multicultural Indonesian society, which is moving towards modernization, faces dilemmas. Since the downfall of the New Order regime, the political structure has shifted from centralization to decentralization. The centralized pattern tends to inadequately accommodate the roles of various regions, each of which has its unique potential (Munir, 2005). Since the reform era began, regions across the archipelago have demanded changes in the recognition of regional cultures and rights (Geertz, 1993) .

Religion is also a part of multiculturalism, and it plays a different role in this context, where culture and religion influence each other at various levels. Religion forms a system of beliefs and practices within a culture, and when individuals convert to another religion, their way of thinking and living undergoes significant changes (B. Parekh, 2003). In different aspects, culture affects how religion is interpreted, rituals are performed, and more. This is evident in the case of the same religion but with different models, such as Indonesian, Indian, and Iranian Muslims (B. Parekh, 2003).

Multicultural life in Europe, for example, becomes a crucial issue when countries declare themselves multicultural societies, but discrimination persists, particularly against minority cultures and peripheral cultures. However, the hallmark of multicultural societies is equality. Even demands for multiculturalism emerge from the grassroots, advocating for equality between minority and majority rights. Every individual or group has the right to manage their identity (B. Parekh, 2002). Multiculturalism is more accommodating to both dominant and minority groups.

In a specific community, individuals, influenced by natural conditions and their surroundings, establish a system that emerges from interactions and dialectics, both among individuals and with the natural environment. This system becomes the rules and foundations governing daily life activities, often referred to as culture or cultural practices. Sir Edward

Tylor defined culture as the totality of knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and all other capabilities and habits acquired by an individual as a member of society (Tylor, 1958). Culture consistently demonstrates its adaptive side when facing new realities encountered by society.

In various contexts of life, cultural diversity or cultural pluralism is an undeniable fact. These differences are adapted to where a culture thrives and develops within a society. Koentjaraningrat asserts that every culture existing within a village, city, group, kinship, or other community possesses a distinct pattern due to various reasons, including a unique pattern that sets it apart from other cultures (Koentjaraningrat, 1987). Culture is articulated at various levels. At the most fundamental level, culture is reflected in language, proverbs, symbols, customs, traditions, and forms of communication. At a slightly different level, culture is embedded in literature, arts, music, oral and written literature, moral life, and visions of a good life. Culture is also expressed through regulations and norms that govern social relationships in community life (B. Parekh, 2002).

Indonesia, as a multicultural society in the process of modernization, faces dilemmas. Since the fall of the New Order regime, the political structure has shifted from centralization to decentralization. The centralized pattern tends to inadequately accommodate the roles of various regions, each of which has unique potential . Since the reform era began, regions across the archipelago have demanded changes in the recognition of regional cultures and rights.

The decentralization of power in the form of regional autonomy has led to a new issue: the issue of national integration (Drake, 2019). This is because each region feels entitled to determine its policy direction, in contrast to the past when every policy was determined by authoritarian centralized political decisions. Currently, the problem that arises pertains to the dynamics between majority and minority groups, dominant and non-dominant groups, characterized by the complexity of the issues (Maksum, 2011).

Another issue arises when different culturally diverse communities reside in the same territory. This situation carries a high potential for conflict (Panggabean, 2017). This is due to the fact that indigenous communities have different cultural patterns, strong cultural exclusivity, and an inability to actively communicate and understand the culture of newcomers as part of what Bikhu Parekh calls communal diversity (B. Parekh, 2002). Discrimination, cultural superiority, and inferiority is therefore strongly evident in various aspects of life. For multicultural societies, multiculturalism becomes a crucial agenda to determine the direction of balanced living by adapting it to their context.

Religion is also a part of multiculturalism, and it plays a different role in this context, where culture and religion influence each other at various levels. Religion forms a system of beliefs and practices within a culture, and when individuals convert to another religion, their way of thinking and living undergoes significant changes (Hoon, 2017). In different aspects, culture affects how religion is interpreted, ritual practices, and more. This is evident in cases where the same religion is practiced differently, such as among Indonesian, Indian, and Iranian Muslims (B. Parekh, 1997, 2002).

In Indonesia, for example, the events of 1965 left complex issues that continue to cause injustice, and the historical trauma remains fresh in the memories of the victims' families. The issue of disintegration, where many regions seek independence, such as Aceh, Papua, Maluku, and other conflict-ridden areas, has led to groups of people suffering from historical trauma and cultural discomfort or facing certain threats (Abdurahman, 2006; Panggabean, 2018). In this regard, a multicultural approach emphasizing equality needs to be prioritized.

Indonesia, with its vast archipelago and diverse population, stands as one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse nations in the world. The Indonesian society is characterized by a multitude of ethnicities, languages, religions, and cultural practices, making it a prime example of a multicultural nation (Hefner, 2017). As such, the concept of multiculturalism holds immense significance in understanding and navigating the complex dynamics that shape Indonesian society.

One of the fundamental aspects of multiculturalism in the Indonesian context is its rich ethnic diversity. The nation is home to hundreds of distinct ethnic groups, each with its unique languages, traditions, and ways of life (Zarbaliyev, 2017). This diversity is not confined to a single region but is spread across the entire archipelago, creating a mosaic of cultures. The coexistence of Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Batak, Acehnese, and many other ethnic groups within the same national framework underscores the multicultural nature of Indonesia.

Religion further amplifies the complexity of multiculturalism in Indonesia. The country is predominantly Muslim, with Islam serving as the majority religion. However, it is also home to significant religious minorities, including Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and adherents of indigenous beliefs (Asrori, 2016). The interactions and intersections between these religious communities contribute to the intricate tapestry of Indonesian multiculturalism. Moreover, even within Islam, there is a diversity of beliefs and practices, ranging from the more conservative to the syncretic traditions found in parts of Java and Sulawesi.

The multiculturalism of Indonesia extends beyond ethnicity and religion to encompass linguistic diversity. Bahasa Indonesia, a standardized form of Malay, serves as the national language and a unifying force in this linguistically diverse nation. However, Indonesia boasts over 700 living languages, each linked to distinct ethnic groups and regions (Jayadi et al., 2022). This linguistic diversity is not only a reflection of the country's multiculturalism but also presents both opportunities and challenges in the realms of education, communication, and cultural preservation.

The Indonesian government's approach to multiculturalism has evolved over the years, aiming to strike a balance between preserving cultural diversity and fostering national unity (Baidhawy, 2013). Policies promoting the Pancasila, the state philosophy emphasizing principles of unity in diversity, have been instrumental in this regard. However, the management of multiculturalism remains a complex and ongoing process, especially in addressing issues related to social justice, minority rights, and intergroup relations (Munandar, 2019).

Multiculturalism is at the heart of Indonesia's national identity. The nation's rich ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity shapes its unique social landscape. While this diversity is a source of strength and vitality, it also presents challenges that require careful navigation. Understanding and appreciating the complexities of multiculturalism in the Indonesian context is crucial for policymakers, scholars, and society at large to work collectively towards a more inclusive and harmonious nation.

Dynamics of Multicultural Society: Negotiation and Adaptation

Every human being possesses their own inherent nature, just as cultures are inherently distinct. They all share a common human identity, but their behavior is mediated culturally. They are both alike and different; their commonalities and differences do not coexist passively but rather complement and enrich one another. Humans have diverse capabilities, and as a result, the fulfillment of their needs is interdependent. However, different cultures shape and structure these differences and develop new needs for them. As long as humans are both similar and different, they must be treated equally (B. Parekh, 2002).

Equality involves the freedom or opportunity to be different and treating humans parekh hefnerequally necessitates considering both their commonalities and differences. Every difference requires a distinct treatment. Equal rights do not mean identical rights; these differences may require different rights to enjoy the content of those rights (B. Parekh, 2006). In multicultural societies, equality is articulated at various interconnected levels. At the most basic level, equality involves respect and rights; at a slightly higher level, it encompasses opportunities, self-confidence, self-esteem, and more. At a higher level still, equality involves power, well-being, and the basic capabilities necessary for human development.

Efforts to respect equality of opportunity need to be culturally sensitive, meaning that when striving for cultural equality, one must consider the cultural practices of a particular community to avoid prejudice and stereotypes. For instance, a former member of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), for example, should be granted the same rights as other citizens, both fundamental rights and political rights (Hefner, 2017). This is easily achieved when approached with cultural sensitivity.

Equality before the law and equal legal protection also need to be defined in a culturally sensitive manner. For instance, while the formal law in the United States bans the consumption of wine (alcohol), the government shows cultural sensitivity when it comes to the use of wine in the rituals of Jews and Catholics (B. Parekh, 2002). In multicultural societies, clothing often becomes a heated and intense issue. As a symbol of dense cultural identity that is visible, clothing becomes an important issue for anyone involved. Bhikhu Parekh illustrates how the issue of clothing identity became a national issue in the UK and France, especially for Muslim and Sikh communities who have different and conflicting clothing identities and were at odds with the law (B. Parekh, 2006).

In Indonesia, such issues often arise even though they may not become national issues. For example, regulations in some workplaces that require specific clothing, such as mandating miniskirts for women and not allowing the hijab (headscarf) for Muslim women, become problematic for Muslim women seeking employment. Although it may not be a formal company rule, it often becomes a judgment criterion.

In discussing the application of the principle of equality in a multicultural society, several important points need to be highlighted. When we consider cultural differences, as we should, equal treatment often involves differentiated treatment, which raises questions like how do we ensure that differentiated treatment is not discrimination or privilege? There is no easy answer to this (B. Parekh, 1992, 2002). A simple example provided by Parekh is that a Sikh in the UK is allowed to carry a small ceremonial dagger in front of his stomach because it is considered part of his religious doctrine, and a Christian is not treated differently but equally because both are exercising the same rights in different ways.

In a multicultural society, some individuals or governments may need to go further and provide not only different but additional rights to certain groups or individuals. This is necessary to equalize them with others or to achieve valuable collective goals such as political integration, social harmony, and the spirit of cultural diversity (B. Parekh, 2002). For example, in Indonesia, there are still unresolved issues related to the victims of the 1965 tragedy, and the reconciliation process has not been clarified. The additional rights, such as special representation, consultation rights, and even the right to reject laws related to them, are required to integrate these affected groups into mainstream society and give substance to the principle of equal citizenship.

Perhaps there are also community groups that have long been marginalized or oppressed, lack self-confidence, and face strong assimilation pressure. In such cases, providing

them with rights that others do not have, such as special representation, the right to consult, or even the right to reject laws related to them, may be necessary to convince them, enhance social harmony, provide a place in the political stability of the state, and maintain a sense of common ownership. Born out of the trauma of state disintegration and inter-group violence, these additional rights are aimed at including the relevant groups in mainstream society and embodying the principle of equal citizenship (B. Parekh, 2002). Examples of countries that guarantee constitutional rights to cultural minority groups include India, which wisely provides additional rights to minority groups. Canada, the United States, and Australia also provide additional rights to minority groups to enable them to develop and advance. However, this is not yet seen for Muslim minority groups in these countries.

The Relevance of Bhikhu Parekh's Multiculturalism in the Context of Indonesian Society

The philosophical root of conflict lies in differences, which can manifest in various forms such as ethnicity, skin color, religion, economics, politics, language, knowledge, gender, social class, and so forth. Such differences represent potential grounds for the onset of conflict, and they inevitably exist alongside the conflicts that ensue. In a simplified manner, the sources of conflict can be elucidated through the following schema:
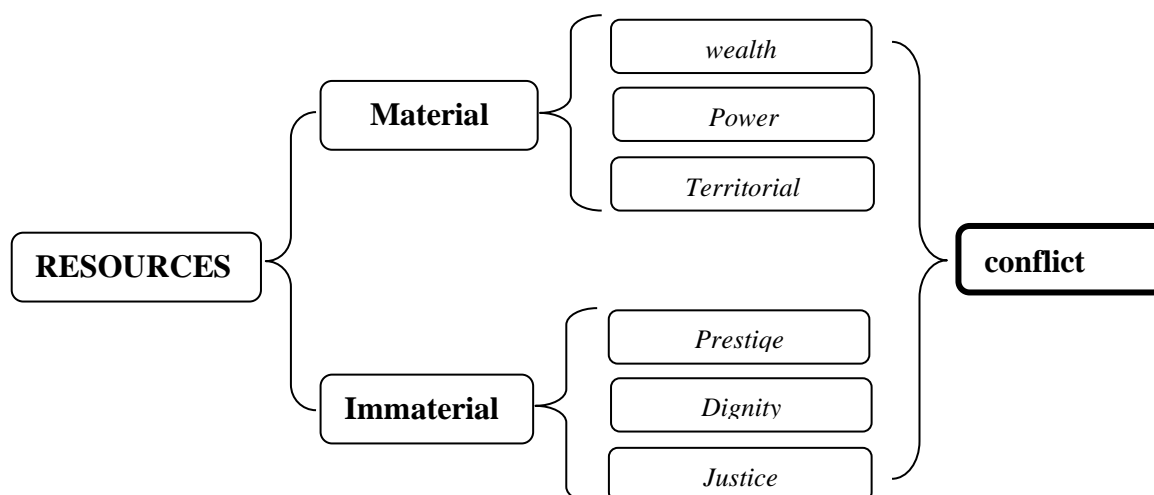

Figure 1. Philosophical scheme of the root of conflict

If we examine the schema above, we can see that various aspects of life are interrelated in mapping the sources of conflict. This means that one source will influence another, especially when it comes to conflicts, as material issues will inevitably intersect with immaterial ones. Therefore, addressing the complexity of conflict requires multiple approaches or multidimensional knowledge.

Conflicts arising from material factors (wealth, power, territorial) result from clashes in the structures of a dynamic society, between dominant and nominal structures. The motives may include the control of resources within society, both politically and economically (Salert, 1976). Additionally, the competitive processes that occur due to monopolies, resource competition, and resource limitations create fertile ground for social conflicts (Seneviratne, 2008).

On the other hand, conflicts identified with religious conflict, where religion plays a role as a source or an instigator, or as a tool for legitimization, religion is a distinct entity with a different role compared to other entities (Svensson, 2007). Religion possesses exceptionally strong values that can escalate conflicts. This means that the role of religion cannot be easily dismissed, especially when religion serves as a way of life that touches upon the deepest aspects of human activities. In a simplified manner, the relationship between conflict and religion can be explained through the following schema:
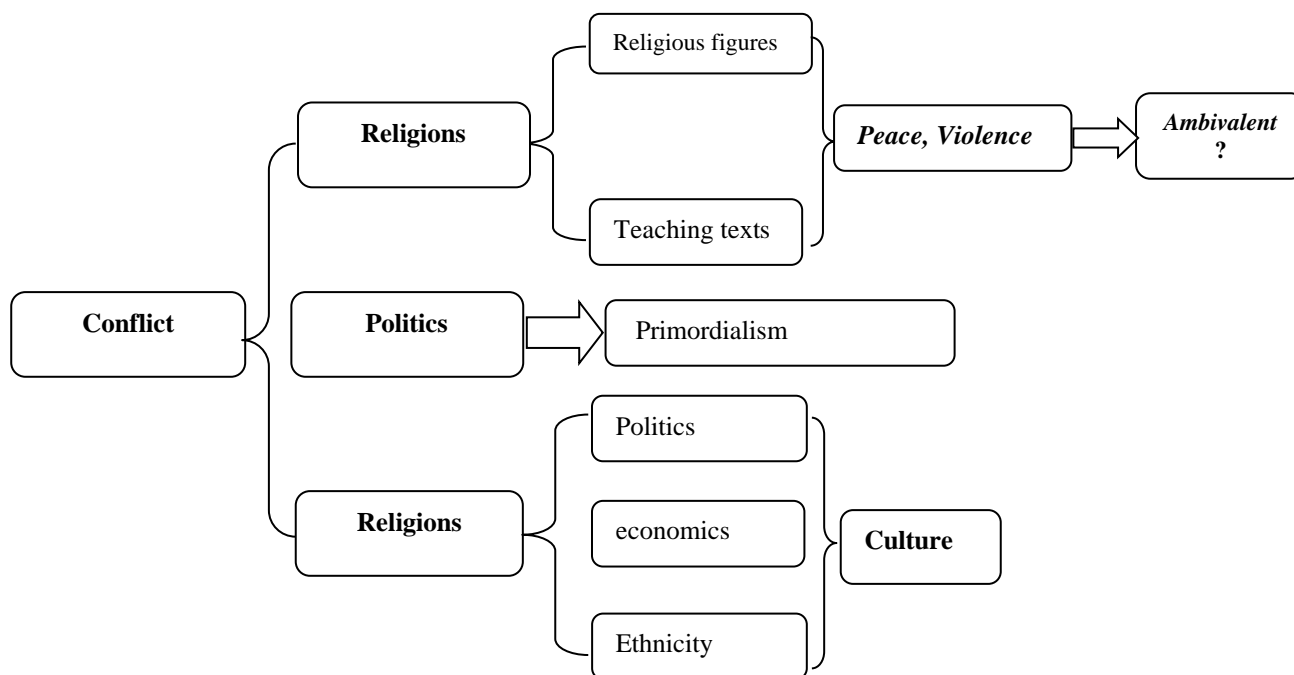
Figure 2. Scheme of conflict with socio-religious nuances

As previously explained and emphasized, conflict is a part of life, like day and night, alternating constantly. Therefore, what needs to be prepared when conflict arises is mental readiness, thinking, and sensitivity. Sensitivity is crucial in detecting conflict in everyday life. Sensitivity does not aim to avoid conflict, which is impossible for humans to do, as dialectics of conflict will always exist in any situation.

On a micro scale, every individual should possess sensitivity to conflict (B. Parekh, 2002). This will facilitate the process of managing or handling existing conflicts. On a macro or global scale, there are two crucial elements that must consciously possess conflict sensitivity: political leaders and religious leaders. This is because, collectively, these two elements play significant roles in social life.

Political Leaders

In modern life and the era of multiculturalism, where the boundaries of ethnicity, religion, and ways of thinking can no longer limit the level of communication and interaction, collective life in a diverse society must be managed proportionally and fairly. The intensity of conflict will be significant in a multicultural society where every individual and collective identity holds an equal position in social spaces (B. Parekh, 2002).

In such conditions, the role of political figures or leaders (i.e., the government) as representatives of various groups responsible for governing the direction, policies, and rules for coexistence must be more sensitive to the potential for both horizontal and vertical conflicts. Amid the vulnerability of a society that easily resorts to conflict through acts of violence, the lack of conflict sensitivity among political leaders becomes evident.

The conflict sensitivity of elites or political leaders should encompass an understanding of the potential triggers of conflicts, enabling them to easily de-escalate conflicts when they arise. The intervention of political leaders in societal conflicts is aimed at empowering conflict resolution for a better outcome. The role of leaders in dissecting the anatomy of conflict and explaining it to the conflicting parties is crucial, as it helps them formulate their own solutions.

The attitudes and actions of political figures should be oriented towards recognition, respecting dignity, engaging in dialogue, and seeking consensus. These attitudes are essential as a form of readiness to resolve conflicts. Additionally, aspects such as access, opportunity, facilities, empowerment, and budget should also be taken into account, as they are perspectives that political leaders must possess (B. Parekh, 2007).

Usually, the primary issues at the core of conflicts are related to livelihood, security, justice, honesty, and even more complex matters such as the need for recognition, respect, autonomy, and self-determination (Abdullah, 1996). Therefore, conflict sensitivity is mandatory for elites and political leaders to ensure the continuity of peaceful coexistence within society.

Religious Leaders

The second element after political figures that plays a significant role in a community is religious leaders. Their words and actions will be heard and followed by their congregation or followers. Specifically, religious leaders are those who can mobilize people, whose arguments and opinions are listened to. This category includes teachers, parents, professors, religious scholars (kyai), preachers (da'i), leaders of student movements, leaders of social-religious organizations, and religious-based political leaders. All these religious elite leaders have a substantial influence in determining the direction of religion, whether it will be directed towards compromise, consensus, peace, or conflict, mutual distrust, confrontation, and violence (Idi, 2019). It is already understood that religion is paradoxical or two-faced (ambivalent); it can be peaceful or turbulent, soft or hard, conciliatory or confrontational. Because of its ambivalent nature, religious leaders must be extremely cautious in delivering the teachings of religion.

Conflict sensitivity, which must be possessed by religious leaders in a multicultural society, involves, firstly, the ability to build mutual trust among diverse communities in terms of religion, thoughts, ethnicity, race, and more. Only through mutual trust among the different communities can cooperation be established to meet their economic, social, and cultural needs. Mutual trust is crucial to prevent society from being vulnerable and easily provoked by parties with an interest in conflict and violence, especially regarding emotional religious issues that are highly susceptible to manipulation as a force outside the true spirit of religious teachings. If mutual trust is not achieved, and instead, mutual distrust prevails, friction, clashes, and conflicts will quickly spread and flourish everywhere. It begins with dissatisfaction, disagreement, and non-consensus, which are all natural aspects of life (B. Parekh, 2002). However, if these feelings are accompanied by a refusal to acknowledge the existence of others, along with an accumulation of intolerant, hateful, angry, threatening, and discriminatory attitudes and actions, it will breed a condition known as prejudice toward other groups that differ in beliefs, faith, sect, ethnicity, organization, and more. This will create a society where communities or groups do not trust each other.

Secondly, conflict sensitivity that religious leaders must possess is what Amin Abdullah terms "bilingualism." Here, the ability of religious elites/leaders to master the "language" of the interfaith community they lead and simultaneously the "language" of people outside their religion is implied (Hati et al., 2023). The function of this bilingualism is to facilitate the easy acceptance of spiritual messages from their religion by others. In a multicultural and diverse society, religious leaders who possess the ability to communicate in two languages are highly necessary: the first language for their own religious community and the second language for people outside their religion. This is to simplify the process of mutual understanding among different groups.

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CONCLUSION

Bhikhu Parekh's conceptualization of multiculturalism offers valuable insights for managing ethnic and religious conflicts in Indonesia. His models of multiculturalism, emphasizing cultural sensitivity and the crucial roles of political and religious leaders, are particularly relevant. By fostering dialogue, understanding, and respect for diversity, Indonesia can navigate its complex social landscape more effectively. Parekh's ideas underscore the need for policies that recognize and accommodate ethnic and religious differences, aiming for a harmonious and inclusive society. This approach is essential for addressing the challenges of a diverse nation and promoting social cohesion amidst diversity.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Suryo Adi Sahfutra: Writing, Methodology, Conceptualization; Supartiningsih: Review & Supervision; Agus Himmawan Utomo: Review & Supervision.

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