ELABORATING CONFLICT IN MALUKU BASED ON DIALOGICAL LIBERATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Iqtamar Muhammad
UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta
iqtamarmuhammad99@gmail.com

Andi Alfian
Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies (CRCS),
Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta
andialfianx@gmail.com

Abstract

The conflict in Maluku is one of the largest religious conflicts that has ever occurred in Indonesia. This study aims to elaborate the relationship between conflict in Maluku and interreligious and cultural dialogue based on a dialogical-liberative perspective. By using the library research method, relying on books and journals related to research questions, this study attempts to discuss forms of interreligious dialogue and pre- and post-conflict culture in Maluku with a liberative dialogue approach. This study argues that liberative dialogue is a relevant approach for inter-religious dialogue in Maluku. The results of this study indicate that liberative dialogue can be an alternative for elaborating the conflict in Maluku, Indonesia.

Keywords: Interreligious Dialogue; Liberative Dialogue; Religious Conflict.

Abstrak

Konflik di Maluku adalah salah satu konflik agama terbesar yang pernah terjadi di Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengelaborasi relasi antara konflik di Maluku dengan dialog antaragama dan budaya berdasar pada perspektif dialogis-liberatif. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian library reseach, dengan mengandalkan buku-buku dan jurnal yang berkaitan dengan pertanyaan-pertanyaan penelitian, penelitian ini berusaha mendiskusikan bentuk-bentuk dialog antarumat beragama dan budaya pra dan pasca konflik di Maluku dengan pendekatan dialog liberatif. Penelitian ini berargumentasi bahwa dialog liberatif adalah pendekatan yang relevan bagi dialog antar agama di Maluku. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dialog liberatif bisa menjadi alternatif untuk mengelaborasi konflik di Maluku, Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Dialog Antaragama; Dialog Liberatif; Konflik Agama.

I. INTRODUCTION

Len Swidler and Paul Mojzes, in *The Study of Religion in an Age of Global Dialogue*, explain that a religion must have four structures which are summarized by the four Cs. First, there is a creed of something Absolute true for human life. Second, the code of action (ethics) that arises as the fruit of belief. Third, cult as a human effort to align himself with what he believes. Fourth, the people (community) who have the same belief. When these four structures exist in a social institution, the social institution is a religion (Alfian, 2022b; Pomalingo, 2016, pp. xv–xvi).

Robert N. Bellah once said that religion is a human spiritual force that is expected to be able to answer various problems in people's lives, such as social, economic, political, humanitarian problems, religious conflicts, and so on. Bellah in his broad view, wants religion not only to dwell on the eschatological aspect (ritual), but also to play an active role in liberating society from the shackles that can affect its adherents in the universal "cradle". Therefore, in this way, society is expected to continue to survive in order to progress and transform, without having to be permissive due to the dogmatic control of rigid religion (Pomalingo, 2016).

Talking about dialogue between religions in Indonesia must recognizes the concept of tolerance between religious believers and other terms, such as friendship between followers of different religions and believers. Tolerance and friendship between religious

people and believers are a manifestation of the ability that build a dialogical, open, and mutually understanding relationship with one another. However, this is not easy. For example, after the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998, Indonesia, which was previously mentioned by most people as having tolerance and harmony in religious matters, was then hit by various conflicts, both ethnic and religious. Several disputes that occurred in Indonesia can be mentioned, such as the events in Ketapang, Kupang, Sambas, Sampit, Papua, Aceh, Poso, and Maluku (Mujib & Rumahuru, 2010, pp. 1–2).

Based on a report from the *Kompas* daily newspaper, the Maluku region, particularly in North Maluku, is divided into a population who adheres to Christianity and adheres to Islam (Kompas, 2000). The southern part of Morotai is inhabited by Muslims, and the northern part is inhabited by Christians. Ternate Island has a Muslim majority population. Based on this, between villages in North Maluku that inhabit several areas with different religions experienced severe conflicts, causing damage to certain areas inhabited by people of other religions who are more dominant. The pattern of conflict is the majority displacing (finishing) the minority.

Maluku (Ambon), which was later recorded as a conflict area, is an example of a dialogue community that requires mediation by various relevant stakeholders, such as local and central government, the community, from social, political, economic institutions, to the personal and community level. Local non-governmental organizations, from the various stakeholders, at least must have the awareness that there are locality dimensions that can be played in conflict management and the establishment of a peaceful dialogue that is desired by the two warring parties. Therefore, a society with potential conflict basically has the potential for peace, by going through the bases of an approach that is thought to be culturally rooted by the community (Mujib & Rumahuru, 2010).

Inter-religious dialogue then became an effective means of dealing with inter-religious conflicts that occurred in several regions in Indonesia, as previously explained, particularly Maluku (Ambon). The importance of dialogue is in order to be a means to achieve harmony. The dialogue offered in this case is a dialogue that is basically practical, meaning that inter-religious dialogue is not only limited to a series of ideas and concepts formulated from the dialogues so far, but is also more directed to action, as Farid Esack called it as *interfaith solidarity* to fight oppression and uphold justice across religions. In

substance, liberative dialogue has an epistemological basis and the same goal as liberation theology to free humanity from the crisis it faces (Pomalingo, 2016).

Engaging in interfaith dialogue means having the courage to take the risk of profound personal transformation. When a person ventures into the search for knowledge and understanding simultaneously with colleagues from other religious traditions, then he is involved in the process of '*becoming*'. The deepest dimension of inter-religious dialogue, as Hasan Askari referred to individuals who have religious sensitivity, is a dialogue that not only leads to a new epistemology, but also to something called a new ontology (Askari, 2003, p. xi).

Based on the background that has been explained, it is quite interesting that interreligious and cultural dialogue can be carried out liberatively in a multicultural society, not only based on the dialogical aspect, but can also be based on other aspects, such as historicity, ethnography, epistemology, and so on. This paper attempts to provide answers regarding the relation of interreligious and cultural dialogue with a liberative perspective in religious studies, then attempts to describe liberative interreligious and cultural dialogue, and provides answers regarding the forms of interreligious and cultural dialogue in a liberative approach.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This library research conducts various references, such as books, journals, websites, and etc. The data from this paper is collected by means of documentation, namely based on documents that are considered relevant in discussing conflict in Maluku. This paper is also analyzed by means of content analysis, critical discourse analysis, deductive, and inductive. The content analysis was carried out with the purpose of reading numerous references based on their essence (Alfian, 2021a). Deductive and inductive analysis methods seek to obtain the data through searching at the beginning and the end of the data which can provide specific conclusion (Creswell, 2014; Neuman, 2014).

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Dialogical Liberative as an Alternative in Interreligious Dialogue

Dialogue must be recognized as an important way for fellow human beings, because dialogue is inevitable in human life. We are now in an era of heterogeneous globalization and plurality, so it is important to build dialogic relations. The phenomenon of globalization with the effect of bringing human life into a *universal village* (global village) requires dialogic interactions as well. Universal village is a village with a shared future that can only be achieved by dialogue and cooperation between human beings. Therefore, religion must be lived in the spirit of dialogue, both vertical dialogue (between individuals and their God) and horizontal dialogue (between human beings).

Vertical dialogue will produce a life that is holy, beautiful, and far from misery, while horizontal dialogue will create order, balance, harmony, harmony, peace, and cooperation. Dialogue in the second form is a dialogue that cannot be avoided in human life that is related to each other or in Hans Küng's term as *everyday dialogue* (Küng, 1991, p. 138). A discussion on inter-religious dialogue can only be started by assuming the openness of religious adherents to adherents of other religions (Kleden, 1978, p. 1). Dialogic openness and personality are important prerequisites when someone wants to have a dialogue with his dialogue partner, because openness will lead to a healthy and constructive dialogue condition (Howe, 1963, p. 85).

Dialogue of religions, in a macro context, requires prerequisites from many things. There are at least five basic keys in dialogue. First, knowledge of dialogue. Second, the awareness of dialogue. Third, the media of dialogue. Fourth, the model or form of dialogue that is carried out and understanding the model of dialogue. Fifth, the dialogue approach. The statement from Hans Küng, "*there is no dialogue between religions without entering into the foundations of religions*", emphasizes that understanding the foundations of religions is a reality that is needed from the start to build a dialogue of religions. Practices from this reality include: how the theological construction in a particular religion is understood by its people. In addition, how certain ritual practices are also carried out by certain people, including how for example humanitarian values play a role in the mission of these religions (Mujib & Rumahuru, 2010, pp. 7–8).

Based on a more conceptual study, discussions related to dialogue between religions have been shown in various forms and models, including dialogue developed through the pluralism model, religious inclusiveness approach, dialogue is also offered under the umbrella of spirituality, dialogue can also be approached with a transformative

approach (Mujib & Rumahuru, 2010). However, what about dialogue that uses a liberative approach?

In essence, inter-religious dialogue is an attempt to release excessive single truth and salvation claims by self-correcting the exclusive attitude and all its forms that are often used in viewing other people's religions. Furthermore, dialogue is used as an effort to expand inclusive theological views. Meanwhile, religion has an important role in the future in building the spiritual basis of civilized society, where all religious adherents will meet on the same road of life. This fact exposes religious people to an epistemological condition, as Paul F. Knitter puts it:

> *"All religions are relative-that is, limited, partial, incomplete, one way of looking at thing. To hold that any religion is intrinsically better than another is felt to be somehow wrong, offensive, narrow minded."* (Knitter, 1985, p. 23).

The liberal view of Paul F. Knitter is clearly a good development in an effort to change the form of relations between religious believers from an exclusive theological attitude to an effort to understand, accept, and respect the existence of other people's different religions (Alfian, 2022a; Knitter, 1985). By understanding and accepting the existence of others, it can help in building and realizing a pluralist theological view. The pluralist theological paradigm is the beginning of an appreciation of the existence of adherents of other religions who are more open (Mujib & Rumahuru, 2010). Furthermore, Paul F. Knitter later said that:

> *"…the diversity of many religions must be recognized and maintained, and because this diversity is held up be potentially valuable and important for all persons, then the many valuable contents of the religions must be shared, communicated. The religions of the world must dialogue. If I recognize that you are really different from me, and if I also recognize that what is different can also be true and valuable, I cannot ignore you.."* (Knitter, 2008, pp. 31–32).

Based on this perspective, that in fact there is no barrier for interfaith adherents to build a dialogue. Dialogue is intended as a medium to bring together religious adherents in a forum, sitting side by side, having dialogue with each other, regardless of the differences that exist. Another implication of this view is that actually religious people come from one human being and from the same one and the same God, so that there is no visible difference between religious adherents (Pomalingo, 2016).

Frithjof Schuon said, actually every religion has similarities at the esoteric level (*universal values*). Meanwhile, at the exoteric level, each religion is different. That means that basically behind the exoteric differences, there are essential similarities that can actually unite us all, which Schuon calls the heart of religions. (Schuon, 1975). Thus, it is important to find common ground in the aspects of similarities and develop tolerance in aspects of differences. This perception is considered a kind of agree in disagreement (Ali, 1972, p. 118). Because, in general, every religion teaches a pluralistic life and provides guidance in dealing with this plurality (Pomalingo, 2016, pp. 19–20).

Analyzing Conflict in Maluku with Dialogical Liberative Perspective

There are several factors that can trigger a conflict. However, conflicts that occur in society may arise due to differences in values and/or interests that arise. The conflict in Maluku cannot be separated from the conflict of interest of political elites at home and abroad. Meanwhile, the conflict that occurred in North Maluku was actually motivated by the competition between the two sultanates, namely Ternate and Tidore in fighting for hegemony in the North and Central Halmahera regions. The two conflicts later developed into a horizontal conflict with a religious background (Dimyati, 2012). Clashes, crises, or conflicts can arise due to conflict or competition from different perceptions (Alfian, 2020, 2021b; Dimyati, 2012).

Communal violence that occurred in North Maluku mostly occurred in remote places. But the media made it easy for it to spread everywhere and fill the whole of Maluku. The violence that occurred in the end sparked hatred spread by the media. This ensures that it doesn't have the same shock value among the general public, even though it does bother Indonesia's most sincere Muslims. The battle was savage. The death toll here is the worst of all post-New Order communal violence episodes; nearly 2,800 people or a quarter of the total non-segregated death toll across Indonesia (Varshney et al., 2004).

Horrifying video footage of a bulldozer pushing hundreds of bodies into mass graves at two mosques outside Tobelo, North Halmahera, has been circulating across Indonesia on VCD. The Muslims, including many women and children, had taken refuge in the mosques in late December 1999, when Christian forces overwhelmed their fighters and massacred the people inside. Two hundred thousand people were displaced (van Klinken, 2007).

There has never been a war like this in northern Maluku. Why did it happen at that time and like that? Van Klinken then asked questions about local leaders. Be it members of the DPR, civil servants, lecturers, religious leaders, and businessmen, they have all been part of the moderate center in North Maluku for many years. After getting along well for quite a while, how and why are they now moving separately in such extreme directions? The dynamics of contention calls the process "*polarization*" and defines it as "*the widening of the political space between the claimants in the controversial episode and the gravity of actors who were previously uncommitted or moderated to one or both extremes. It leaves the center of moderation*" (Mc.Adam et al., 2001, p. 322).

The conflict that occurred in Maluku has been clearly seen by how perception plays an important role, so that a dispute between two youths, which was purely a criminal act, developed into a violent social conflict with religious and ethnic backgrounds. A Moluccan Christian youth with the initials JL who is an *angkot* driver, was asked for money by a Bugis Muslim youth with the initials NS. The two of them, ran to Batu Merah Village. Residents from Batu Merah Village asked NS what had happened, to which NS replied that he would be killed by Christians. The chronology of the events is based on what was told by the Sala Waku Maluku Foundation, a local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). From there, religious sentiments became the trigger for the emergence of large-scale conflicts (Dimyati, 2012).

The Maluku war, first of all, must be seen as a major failure of the state to provide security to its citizens. At the simplest level, the problem is the lack of capacity typical of the Third World, especially on the periphery. The Ambon police station only had room for twenty detainees; there was only one new fire engine and one very old and practical fire engine, no hydrants for the city of 300,000 people at the time of the fighting; The provincial disaster management coordination service, which is in charge of counting victims, does not own a motorcycle, let alone a car (van Klinken, 2001).

The distinction between state and society becomes blurred when security forces reproduce factionalism in society. Sectarian monies raised locally can also provide important incentives for *cash-strapped* troops (the question of how the Moluccan battle was financed has not been adequately researched). Underfunded troops, of course, did little to create trust when, from the start, they began to charge huge fees for transporting passengers to or from airports and ports (van Klinken, 2001).

Meanwhile, they confiscated several firearms used by rival militias. However, they frequently suppressed Ambonese fighting by imposing a curfew and operating armed checkpoints at all major crossing points. Major General Suadi Marasabessy, who was in charge of the high-strength Team 19, persuaded the center to deploy large army, navy and air force resources to patrol the area.

Politically, too, the government had little idea other than forming teams to talk to religious leaders, while lamenting the passing of the "traditional" reconciliation doctrines of *pela gandong* (in Ambon) and *larvul ngabal* (in Southeast Maluku). When Abdurrahman Wahid and Megawati prioritized a visit to Ambon after they were elected president and vice president in October 1999, they arrived empty-handed, and Megawati soon afterwards traveled to Hong Kong for a vacation (van Klinken, 2001, p. 10).

Maluku urban communities are unusually young, where contemporary industrial societies, sometimes substantially, less than 40 percent of the population are under twenty-five years of age, and where Java is about 50 percent, that figure in Maluku is just under 60 percent, and locally, may rise even higher (van Klinken, 2001). Moreover, many of these young people are not working. Unemployment data, even before the 1998 economic crisis, were difficult to find and subsequently difficult to interpret. However, some statistics for urban areas in Ambon show the figures are high. Benteng, for example, on the western outskirts of Ambon city, had 73.2 percent of the population registered as unemployed in 1994. Such a high figure includes children, who are numerous (33 per cent under the age of fifteen). However, it still appears to be a large number of unemployed (Alfons, 1994, pp. 39, 45).

Such statistics clearly need to be refined. However, at least they suggest that Ambon city has (a) many young people, (b) many of them are unemployed. Moreover, (c) those who are employed are often employed as civil servants, especially, (d) if they are Protestant, whereas Muslims tend to work in the private sector. The potential for conflict grows when young, energetic Protestants and Muslims compete for limited jobs knowing that opportunity depends less on ability than on one's connections.

If one adds (e) the economic crisis of 1998, which may have placed a greater burden on Protestants who depend on civil servants than Muslims who depend on the private sector, then one senses the potential for considerable tension between youth in neighboring suburbs, and the tension will be religious. Both Benteng and Batumerah,

each located near the outskirts of a city with a different religious majority, experienced a lot of fighting in 1999 (van Klinken, 2001).

The "communal competitor" model of the Maluku war, according to van Klinken, implies that any conflict resolution must be sought within the framework of a common Indonesian state (Alfian, 2021b; van Klinken, 2007). This means that ways must be found, (a) to democratize the country, especially at the local level, thereby eliminating the legitimacy of the war elites, and (b) to make the state effective for all its citizens, especially by providing a sense of safety. The prescriptions of the two parts are sometimes prescribed in similar situations elsewhere (van Klinken, 2001).

The unstable clientelistic relationship between the state and society in Indonesia, said van Klinken, must move in a more democratic direction. Olle Tornquist has written papers on stimulating agenda setting along these lines, focusing on political parties and drawing on the ideas of Nicos Mouzelis and Sidney Tarrow (Tornquist, 2000). Most of the political and religious organizations in Maluku, said van Klinken, were involved in the fighting, but there were several groups, mostly young people, who wanted to proceed such agenda and who should have played an important role in the post-conflict phase.

Making the state effective at the local level for all citizens, means depoliticizing the police and armed forces, paying them exclusively through the state budget, strengthening the independence of the judiciary, and making recruitment procedures to the bureaucracy transparent; just to name four of the most pressing needs of a series of needs famous. Without such reforms, added van Klinken, it is impossible to restore a sense of safety and eliminate communal militias (van Klinken, 2001). Obviously, the agenda of the two parts is a long-term project, and may not work. However, there is no viable alternative, and it demands the support of the international community (van Klinken, 2001).

Based on liberative dialogue, dialogue participants do not begin with a conversation about doctrine or ritual, not with prayer or meditation, but with an encounter that begins at the level of praxis, namely liberation. Dialogue participants are required to show examples of human suffering. Then, together, they do something to suppress the realities of poverty, hunger, exploitation, and environmental destruction. Because, what is emphasized in inter-religious relations is pro-existence rather than just co-existence (Pomalingo, 2016).

Dialogue that begins with the praxis of liberation, is realized in human community by acting together to carry out analysis. The venue for this kind of globally responsible dialogue is not in a place that is usually carried out by professionals or participants in religious dialogue, but is located where the practice is held. Liberative dialogue is not merely a conversation between individuals and religious adherents, but also for mutual enrichment and building cooperation in dealing with and solving problems for human survival (Pomalingo, 2016, p. 59). This is in line with what was said by Sarundajang who said that:

> *"This is in line with the results of studies from several researchers who concluded that the root causes of conflict in Maluku and North Maluku, among others, were the issue of social inequality, the struggle for natural resources, as well as conflicts between the political elite and the bureaucracy, which were the factors that wrapped the "religious conflict". There are two things that I did in Maluku and in North Maluku, namely resolving conflicts with a conscience approach and understanding local wisdom that exists in the community. To me, these two things are essential, requiring courage, determination, and perseverance. I am obliged to study local wisdom in the midst of warring communities; understand the character, customs, and culture of the local community"* (Dimyati, 2012, p. 9).

Based on Sarundajang's explanation regarding the conflict that occurred in Maluku, this has reflected the existence of a liberative dialogue and meeting with various related parties, although it is complex and will probably fail, it can be admitted that there are various analyzes and different solutions, there will be a context, or an atmosphere, or a new sensitivity in this way, the parties involved in the conflict in Maluku are able to understand each other in a new, different way (Knitter, 2008, p. 200).

IV. CONCLUSION

Dialogue must be recognized as an important way for fellow human beings, because dialogue is the most difficult thing to avoid in human life. Dialogic openness and personality are important prerequisites when someone wants to have a dialogue with his dialogue partner, because openness will lead to a healthy and constructive dialogue condition. When talking about dialogue between religions, in a macro context, it requires prerequisites from many things, there are at least five basic keys in dialogue. First, knowledge of dialogue. Second, the awareness of dialogue. Third, the media of dialogue.

Fourth, the model or form of dialogue that is carried out (understanding the model of dialogue). Fifth, the dialogue approach.

With regard to the conflict that occurred in Maluku, using a dialogue-liberative approach, the conflict can be analyzed in an effort to resolve the problems that initially arise from one party to another in aspects that have nothing to do with religion, until eventually widening and involving religion. The importance of conducting liberative dialogue in efforts to resolve the conflict in Maluku can give birth to a mutually liberating attitude towards each other's widening problems. Thus, the involvement of the competent authorities, such as local officials and religious leaders in the vicinity who then hold a forum for dialogue with parties experiencing conflict, can be a step in minimizing the resulting conflict, without any victims falling between one group and another. in Maluku (Ambon) and North Maluku.

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