

***Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: Threats and Opportunities for Democracy.* Edited by Chiara Formichi. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2021. Softcover: 261pp.**

Pancasila is often described as the ideological glue that cements social cohesiveness in Indonesia, a vastly diverse country with many religions, ethnicities and languages. Its centrality in the nation's psyche becomes more salient when we consider that both the nationalist-secular and Islamist political camps accept Pancasila as a fundamental ideological structure of the Indonesian nation-state. The secular camp does not reject Pancasila so long as Islam does not become the basis of the state, while the Islamist camp tolerates it because Muslims, as the majority religious group, receive preferential treatment. In the popular imagination, Pancasila serves as the ideological basis to construct Indonesia as a "common home" that is tolerant of all faiths and religious practices.

However, in the course of the nation's journey, it became evident that Pancasila had inherent limitations in ensuring that religious pluralism could flourish. *Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: Threats and Opportunities for Democracy* gathers specialists from various disciplines—anthropology, sociology, history, political science and religious studies—to highlight the contradictions in the implementation of Pancasila.

A common theme highlighted in the various chapters is the ambiguity surrounding Pancasila. While the ideology seeks to integrate majority and minority groups through basic guarantees of fair treatment, Pancasila has also accommodated the exclusivist nature of Islamic majoritarianism, which discriminates against both non-Muslims and non-Sunni groups (p. 2). Consequently, the claim that Pancasila has succeeded in bringing about a tolerant Indonesian Islam, which is adaptive to local culture and less Arabized, belies the fact that there are glaring instances of intolerant practices in the country. This is well argued in Chapter One by Chiara Formichi on the limits of Pancasila as "a framework for pluralism".

In Chapter Two, Robert Hefner argues that even though the Islamic turn in Indonesia has not translated into electoral support for Islamist political parties, intensifying religiosity has had a profound impact on the micro- and meso-politics of the quotidian, including in interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims (p. 16). Hefner also points out that Islamist actors have succeeded in exploiting fault lines between Muslims and non-Muslims to drive the Islamist

narrative back into the forefront of mainstream political discourse (p. 16). A case in point is the 212 Movement, which succeeded in unseating the Chinese-Christian elected governor of Jakarta, Basuki T. Purnama (also known as Ahok).

In Chapter Three, Sidney Jones charts the rise of religious populism in India and Indonesia, which is marked by the spirit of majoritarianism. In the case of Indonesia, Islamists argue that Muslims, as the majority religious group, should be entitled to more exclusionary privileges, in terms of social, political, economic and religious rights (p. 38). Pancasila, given its ambiguity, has been interpreted in ways that suit the agendas of Islamist groups. While such majoritarian views seem to be at odds with Pancasila, they are justified by narratives that espouse notions of Islam being under siege by Christian-Catholic minority groups, Communists or global conspiracies (p. 39).

Kikue Hamayotsu in Chapter Four explains in detail how majoritarianism in the name of Islam was promoted by “uncivil society” (p. 59) in collaboration with West Java religious elites. Hamayotsu argues that decentralized democracy in the post-Suharto era was exploited by radical Islamic actors who actively formed “intolerant coalitions”. These coalitions involved traditional religious authorities who fought hard to foment intolerant ideologies (p. 58). These authorities also benefit from this alliance because active campaigning by Islamist movements strengthened their influence at the grassroots level. As these coalitions grow to dominate state-sponsored religious institutions such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), intolerant ideologies that marginalize non-Muslims and non-Sunni Muslims become increasingly institutionalized, in what Formichi calls the “institutionalisation of intolerance” (p. 8). The growing influence of Islamist groups has led politicians, even those from nationalist-secularist parties, to become more inclined to accommodate their demands in order to garner electoral support.

After a lengthy discussion about the rise of majoritarianism, the book’s narrative shifts towards discussing the civil rights of officially recognized religious minorities, such as Protestants, Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists and Confucians, and religious communities that are not sanctioned by the state, such as local belief sects and animists. Evi Sutrisno, in Chapter Five, discusses iconoclasm against the Kwang Kong Statue in Tuban, East Java and how the Chinese community express their religious and cultural identity amid growing Islamic conservatism and hyper-nationalism in the post-authoritarian era. In Chapter Six, Mona Lohanda highlights the tragic downfall of

Basuki Purnama, the Chinese-Christian Governor of Jakarta who holds double minority status.

Chapter Seven, by Lorraine Aragon, reviews the legal and social issues that come from the non-recognition of animist beliefs. Animism is viewed as a “non-religion” (*bukan agama*) by the state and believers are required to choose one of the six officially recognized religions if they wish to access public goods and services. In Chapter Eight, Silvia Vignato discusses the case of Tamil Hindus and their mixed neighbourhoods in Medan. Meanwhile, James Hoesterey in Chapter Nine describes the problem of using moderate Islam as a selling point for Indonesia’s foreign policy amid the rise of Islamic conservatism. In Chapter Ten, Michel Picard explores how the Balinese religion is constructed in such a way that enables its legitimation under Pancasila. Finally, Chapter Eleven by Christopher Duncan discusses interfaith relationships in Maluku and North Maluku.

Overall, this volume provides a groundbreaking analysis of the limitations of Indonesia’s institutionalized pluralism under Pancasila. By taking various case studies from across the social sciences, the authors succeed in convincing readers how Pancasila—which was previously considered a formula for religious tolerance and diversity in Indonesia—in reality, contains the spirit of exclusivist majoritarianism. With deep and nuanced analyses, this edited volume is worth reading for anyone interested in closely following the lively development of post-authoritarian Indonesia.

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