Interfaith dialogue in Indonesia: from the revival of tradition to its international projection

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Interfaith dialogue in Indonesia: from the revival of tradition to its international projection[1]

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[1] The second part of this article is largely extracted from a PhD thesis entitled "*Recomposition des politiques internationales sous l'effet du facteur religieux: une comparaison des cas indonésien et malaisien*" and defended by the author at Sciences Po, Paris, in 2011. An expanded and updated version of these developments, taking into account the evolutions which ensued from the emergence of ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) and its potentially destabilizing effects on the Indonesian context, will be published by Routledge in 2015 (Alles, 2015).

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"Slam dan Serani,
Pegang tangan-tangan ramai-ramai"
"Moslems and Christians, hand-in-hand, have great fun".[2]

"'ning tang wala ainga sia-awar jaga,
ing ' tela wala ainga bu-mat jaga.
Bu-mat enang koang se jadi ba niang,
sia-awar enang koang di jadi ba niang'"
"We coastal peoples guard salt and lime,
you inland peoples, guard betel peppers and areca nuts;
Betel peppers and areca nuts by themselves are useless,
just as salt and lime alone are useless".[3]

■ **INTRODUCTION**

Since the beginning of the 2000s, Indonesian leaders have had to deal with the image that international observers and actors thrust upon them: the image of "the greatest Muslim country in the world",[4] a qualification often accompanied by remarks on the rise of religious intolerance that sometimes leads to tensions.[5] The issue is both national and diplomatic: on the national stage, the radicalisation of a section of the population seems to undermine the continued existence of the Indonesian model of cohabitation and denominational freedom; on the diplomatic front, it has become important to promote the strong characteristics of pluralism and democracy, also relevant in the archipelago. One of the solutions found by the Indonesian authorities in order to meet this dual challenge is the promotion of interreligious dialogue, largely based on the action of great Indonesian Muslim organisations.

The notion of interreligious dialogue has been studied since the end of the 80s. However, there has been an increase in scientific production on the topic since 2001, in parallel with the emergence of the religious factor on the world stage following the attacks of September 11. Reina Neufeldt identifies three dimensions of interreligious dialogue, in different academic fields, as follows: theological dialogue, political dialogue and peace building.[6] Since the 2000s, Indonesian leaders have

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[2] Poem written in Ambon (Moluccas, Indonesia). Translation by Bartels, Dieter Bartels, 2003: 128-153.

[3] Quote from *adat* (customary law) of Belagar (Moluccas), referring to the complementarity between coastal peoples, in the majority Muslims, and inland peoples, in the majority Christians. Translation by Syarifuddi, 2006: 473.

[4] The presidential visit of Megawati to Washington D.C. on September 19, 2001, scheduled before the attacks, marked an evolution of the name of Archipelagic State in the media and among international partners: formerly presented as "the largest country in South-East Asia", Indonesia became the "most populous Muslim country in the world" in the context of increased attention to the religious factor. Sukma, 2008.

[5] The case of the Ahmaddiyah sect attracted attention on the international stage since 2008, after a multireligious gathering organised in Jakarta on June 1st was attacked by the militia coming mainly from the FPI (*Front Pembela Islam,* Islamic Defenders Front). On June 9, an anti-Ahmaddiyah decree was adopted by the government, forbidding the adepts of the sect to profess their religion outside their home. Repeated violence against Ahmaddis has been deplored since 2008 in Indonesia. See Pearson, 2011.

[6] According to the author, the notion of religious peacebuilding "goes beyond interfaith dialogue" because it "refers to action taken by people acting with an expressed religious mandate (individuals or institutional representatives) to constructively and nonviolently prevent, reduce or transform inter-group conflict" Neufeldt, 2011: 346-347.

been striving to position themselves accordingly, with a view to reinforcing national cohesion and improving the country's international image.

Whereas the religious matter has long been confined to domestic politics, reflection on the topic is hardly new in Indonesia. Interreligious dialogue is part of a long tradition[7] assuming different shapes in the various provinces of the archipelago, ranging from Javanese syncretism (Geertz, 1976) to inter-village and interreligious pacts in the Moluccas (Bartels, 1977). It is precisely on the use of these traditions that Indonesian governments have been relying since the democratisation of the country after 1998, in order to pacify intercommunity relations within the country and promote abroad what has since been presented as the Indonesian model. For a better understanding of the context in which these traditions are today being reinvented and spread, it is worth, however, reflecting on the reasons for interreligious conflicts that brought bloodshed to certain regions of the archipelago shortly after the democratisation of the country. Since independence, the institutionalisation of Indonesia has raised issues as to the definition of Indonesian identity and the respective place of the different religions, unevenly spread across the territory of the archipelago.[8] Four decades of authoritarianism and administrative centralisation subsequently weakened the local customs that encouraged intercommunity dialogue. It was particularly in order to solve the conflicts that arose at the end of the 90s in the Moluccas that the authorities have been striving to highlight and reinvent these traditions of interreligious dialogue. The temporary settling of the situation inspired numerous writings that mentioned Indonesia as an example when approaching interreligious dialogue or the resolution of intercommunity conflicts.[9]

This chapter follows the trajectory of a tradition that today constitutes one of the key elements of the international promotion of Indonesia, after its weakening and reinvention. The first part of the text reminds us that, while the practices of interreligious dialogue now promoted by the governments rely on long-standing customs ingrained in the traditions of the archipelago, their weakening is largely linked to the politics led by the governments of Sukarno and later Suharto. These traditions were reintroduced in the 2000s to facilitate the return to peace in the Maluku region, in a context of open tensions between Christians and Muslims. A decade later, renewed tensions in the region seems to call into question the efficiency of these reinvented practices (International Crisis Group, 2011, 2012). The second part of the text shows, however, that the promotion of interreligious dialogue, greatly valued as part of the Indonesian identity, has become a driving force behind the international projection of democratised Indonesia and contributes to the appeasement of domestic tensions.

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[7] It must be underlined from the beginning that even before the colonial era, the co-existence of religions has not always been synonymous with peaceful syncretism. This chapter does not aim to analyse the conflicts triggered by the successive conquests of the territory of the archipelago by Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms, Islamic Sultanates and later, European colonists. On this theme, a particularly insightful overview is given by Ricklefs, 2008.

[8] Muslims make up about 86 percent of the Indonesian population. Nevertheless, their practices are diverse in the absence of an organisation holding the monopoly of the definition of practices and beliefs in agreement with Islam. Source: CIA World Factbook, information based on a 2000 census.. It is worth noting that, as agnosticism is not statistically measured in Indonesia, and participants in a survey must choose between the six religions recognised by the State, some of those who declare themselves Muslims are Muslims in name only, without actually practicing the religion.

[9] Torfin Shoemake, Noel, Hale, 2007: 137-144; Noel, Torfin Shoemake, Hale, 2006: 427-446; Lowry, Littlejohn, 2006: 409-426; Gomang, 2006: 468-489; Brauchler, 2009: 872-891; Brauchler, 2009; Muwahidah, 2008: 79-92.

■ FROM THE UNIFICATION OF THE INDONESIAN NATION TO THE REINVENTION OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

THE CONSTRUCTION OF MODERN INDONESIA AND THE WEAKENING OF TRADITIONAL INTERCOMMUNAL DIALOGUE

In June 1945, the fathers of Indonesian independence laid the constitutional foundation of the Archipelagic State, officially independent since December 29, 1949[10]. Pancasila, a five-principle doctrine that remains to this day the foundation of the Constitution and state action in Indonesia, establishes the unusual exception of a Monotheistic state but without a state religion: the first principle lays down faith in a single God, without mentioning either his name or any other particulars concerning the practice of worship. The Indonesian State recognises six religions without officially favouring one above the others,[11] and guarantees freedom of worship and conversion. These principles, according to the national motto "Unity in diversity",[12] are presented as a source of pluralism and mutual respect, promoted as a solution to the tensions that may arise in a State where the population is for the most part Muslim, but where ethnic as well as religious minorities also reside.[13] Nevertheless, the Pancasila was not adopted with the sole aim of favouring tolerance. Above all, the founding fathers imposed the religious neutrality of the Constitution in order to prevent the autonomist claims from external islands, some of which are predominantly home to people belonging to religions other than Islam.[14]

In parallel with the institutionalisation of these principles, tensions arose surrounding the place of the various religions. Since the time of the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence (PPKI), several Islamic movements have considered themselves mistreated. They raised the argument that they were treated as a minority while they claim to represent the Muslim majority.[15] It is in

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[10] Independence was proclaimed by Sukarno and Mohammed Hatta on August 17, 1945. The Republic of Indonesia was founded since August 18, 1945, but it was not fully recognised by the international community until December 27, 1949, after the formal transfer of sovereignty of the Netherlands over the territory of the former Dutch East Indies.

[11] The five principles are: faith in a single God (*Ketuhanan*), nationalism (*Kebangsaan*), humanism (*Perikemanusiaan*), social justice (*Keadilan sosial*), and popular sovereignty (*demokrasi*). They are meant to allow the inclusion of all political and religious tendencies, in order to win the widest possible support. The recognised religions are Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism and Buddhism, to which added in 2000 Confucianism in parallel with the abolition, by the government of Abdurrahman Wahid, of the discriminations imposed on the Sino-Indonesians by the previous regime.

[12] The motto "Bhinneka tunggal ikka", translated freely as "unity in diversity", seems to have been used for the first time in the XIVth century by the Javanese poet Mpu Tantular to preach unity and tolerance among adepts of Shaivist, Hindu and Buddhist religions.

[13] There is no dominant ethnic group in the archipelago: the Javanese, the main population listed, represent about 40.6% of the Indonesian population. The other main groups are the Sundanese (15%), the Madurese (3.3%), the Minangkabau (2.7%), the Betawi (2.4%), the Buginese (2.4%), and the Bantenese (2%). Source: CIA World Factbook, information based on a 2000 census. Information available online: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/id.html [last access, October 9, 2011].

[14] The population is in the majority Hindu in Bali, and in the majority Christian in Flores and in West Papua, as was the case with the Moluccas at the moment of independence.

[15] The group favourable to an Islamic State drafted an annex to the Constitution proposed by Sukarno, called the Jakarta Charter, which stipulated that the function of president should only be occupied by a Muslim and imposed Sharia law on Muslims. After having initially yielded to the adoption of the Jakarta Charter, Sukarno

order to limit the potentially destabilizing opposition based on religion,[16] that the authoritarian governments of Sukarno (in power from 1945 to 1967), and later Suharto (from 1967 to 1998) implemented measures designed to channel the expression of religion. One of the tasks of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, created on January 3, 1946, was precisely to make sure religions were in agreement with the Pancasila while guaranteeing their place within the national identity that was being built. On the territories where the frontier between religion and tradition was difficult to define – and was not subjected to debate prior to this intervention – these measures resulted in a weakening of local practices, which disappeared beneath a controlled version of Indonesian identity. Under Suharto, who also wanted to escape the risks of religious tensions, a strict system of control of interethnic and interreligious relations was set up, forbidding the expression of disagreement corresponding to the "SARA" acronym (*Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar-golongan* – ethnicity, religion, race, and interclass). The regime imposed restrictions on the expression of Sino-Indonesian identity, perceived as being linked to the communist militancy backed by Beijing. It also forbade the use of religious symbols by political parties or associations, which had to affirm their commitment to the Pancasila as the sole basis of their ideology from 1985 on.[17]

Whereas they were officially meant to limit the sources of tensions, these measures also suppressed any opportunity to express difference, introducing a taboo where dialogue was once possible (Marcoes-Natsir, 2003: 128). In the Maluku region, which is the most frequently mentioned case, converging factors that appeared after the fall of Suharto caused tensions to evolve into open conflict. The risks of intercommunal dissent were however traditionally limited by the presence of a generally flexible maze of relationships, strengthening friendship and family relationships between Christian and Muslim communities. These inter-village alliances, called *pela* (pacts), established a system of social integration based on symbolic ties valued as family relationships or even, for Dieter Bartels, as true religion.[18] *Pela*,[19] traditionally concluded after incidents (wars, crises, accidents) during which villages had helped each other, established a family-like tie which excluded marriages, as the latter were considered incestuous. *Pela* partners undertook to help each other in times of crisis or to implement important projects, including the construction of places of worship or sharing food (Brauchler, 2009: 878-879). They symbolically contractualised the division of labour between the agricultural inland communities, for the most part Christian, and coastal villages, mostly inhabited by Muslim fishermen (Bartels, 2006: 468-489). While they did not attain the same degree of formality, other Indonesian provinces benefited from intercommunity ties based on mutual aid and the division of labour. Clifford Geertz has observed the importance of social relationships governed by the notions of *gotong-royong* (communal work, or the sharing of burdens), *rukun* (mutual adjustment) and *tolong-menolong* (mutual assistance), that facilitate the interactions around shared objectives irrespective of religious affiliation (Geertz, 1993: 211). Whether it is building a place of worship or joining together following natural disasters, *gotong-royong* provides a cultural basis for solid mutual aid practices.

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changed his mind and abandoned the idea on the exact day of the proclamation of the Constitution, August 18, 1945, following the declaration of Christians from the East of the country that refused to join an Islamic State.

[16] Faced with the adoption of the Constitution, neutral on the religious matter, conservative Islamic movements rebelled in the 1950s and joined military officers dissatisfied with the centralisation of the military apparatus, which deprived them of their decision-making capacity. They were galvanised by what was perceived as an unfair redistribution between Java and the islands off the coast, rich in natural resources, that took away their autonomy. It is precisely the case of Darul Islam (House of Islam): three branches were formed between 1945 and 1949 in West Java, in the south of Sulawesi and in Aceh.

[17] Law 8/1985 imposed to all of the organisations the adoption of Pancasila as reference ideology. See Lindsey, 1999: 270.

[18] Bartels mentions especially the common veneration of the ancestors, all of them native to mount Nunusaku. D. Bartels, 1977, 1980.

[19] We can identify *serang* (friendship and reciprocity between people), *bela baja* (vow between villages) and *pela gandong* (that establishes a tie between villages similar to blood ties). Gomang, 2006: 486.

The regime of Suharto, while restricting possibilities for spontaneous discussions on religious difference, also set up initiatives designed to encourage dialogue, again with the aim of easing tensions. The first formal initiative, called the Interfaith Council, was organised in 1976 shortly after the incidents in south Kalimantan (Borneo) took place (Marcoes-Natsir, 2003: 129). The main outcome of this dialogue was to ask Protestants as well as Muslims to reduce their proselytising activities. Regulations were subsequently adopted in order to curb the activity of missionaries in the regions where no religion was thought to be practiced (animistic cults, unrecognised by the State, were in fact being practiced in these areas). In 1980, a forum entitled "Place for interreligious dialogue" was created on the initiative of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, with no concrete outcome. It is nevertheless important to note that, through these initiatives, the State under Suharto grew into a monopolistic arbiter of interreligious relations (Marcoes-Natsir, 2003: 129). Whereas local traditions previously enabled dialogue and concrete cooperation, without the religious factor being mentioned as a criterion, the preliminary consent of the Ministry of Religious Affairs or of the Direction for political and social affairs of the ministry of the Interior became the prerequisite for such initiatives.[20] Spontaneous dialogue enabled by local traditions surrounding concrete projects (*gotong-royong*), or the celebration of common identity beyond religious differences (*pela*) were kept in check by the regime.

Complaints of a religious nature added to these administrative constraints. The regime, which had been suspected of backing Christian entrepreneurs in its early days, was accused, in the 1990s, of favouring Muslims in order to compensate for the weakening of its military support. In this context of degradation of the social fabric and interreligious cohesion, Christians and Muslims no longer looked at each other as neighbours and partners in improving a shared fate, but as members of their respective religious communities, therefore prone to symbolically carrying a sense of mutual grievance.[21]

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[20] *Ibid.*

[21] It is worth noting however the initiatives launched during this period in order to combat this trend: for example, the MADIA organisation (*Masyarakat dialog antar agama*, Society for Interreligious Dialogue), founded in Jakarta in 1994 under the aegis of Amanda Soehamoko, that brings together several religions. One of its founding members, Ulil Abshar Abdalla, was involved in the creation of *Jaringan Islam Liberal* (JIL, Network of Liberal Islam) in 2001. The strength of this type of group, Lies Marcoes-Natsir stresses, resides in their functioning in an informal manner, without government interference. This asset has nevertheless become a limitation, as they were unable to develop in a significant way under Suharto. Marcoes-Natsir, 2003: 132.

THE REINVENTION OF PELA-GANDONG AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR PACIFICATION IN THE MOLUCCAS

The sources of the conflict that broke out in the Moluccas at the end of the 1990s were many. They can nevertheless be directly linked to the governmental restrictions on the expression of traditional and religious identities, and the weakening of the systems of exchange that facilitated cooperation between the various communities and religions. A number of scholars have underlined several aspects of this governmental responsibility. By denying the differences between these communities without trying to suppress them, the authorities weakened their ability to dialogue and exchange, when the differences themselves constituted one of the bases of their interactions. Other circumstances have undermined intercommunal consensus in the Moluccas, leading to the outbreak of the conflict in Ambon in 1999[22]. Governmental support to migration from Java towards the outer islands (*transmigrasi*), with the aim of balancing population distribution in Indonesia, changed the preexisting religious distribution[23] and caused frustration among the population. Christians, who up until then had been in the majority, found themselves in the minority. The fall in economic interdependence between inland and coastal peoples, together with the economic success of the newcomers supported by Jakarta, led to resentment that took on a religious connotation. Christians, because they were generally farmers, were the first to suffer from the redistributions of land, which had been confiscated without significant compensation for the sole benefit of the newcomers, who happened for the most part to be Muslims[24]. François Raillon explains the reasons of the weakening of *pela-gandong*, destroyed by these artificially stimulated migrations. While it brought together people of different faiths that shared the same ethnic or traditional local identity, the arrival of Muslims and people belonging to different ethnic groups united Muslims, now in the majority, on the basis of their religious affiliation (Raillon, 2002 : 140). The tradition they shared with the Christians in the Moluccas began to lose its significance. It was weakened, firstly, by the regime's distrust of local practices, considered an obstacle to development by the authorities. Secondly, the spread of global and normalised Islamic and Christian identities[25] also contributed to erode these local specificities which used to be shared by the inhabitants of different faiths. For Dieter Bartels, the veneration of common ancestors, shared by the Christian and Muslim villages, was one of the bases of *pela* and the "*nunusaku* religion" (Bartels, 2003: 128-153). The administrative centralisation that characterised the successive regimes of Sukarno and Suharto, weakened the social system in Ambon, based on succession. By replacing the traditional hierarchy with structures of authority that followed a centralised planning system applied to the whole country, and by substituting national law for *adat* (customary law), the authorities lessened the role of the elderly, who had also been the vehicle for traditions such as *pela*.[26]

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[22] On January 19, 1999, conflict was triggered by an altercation between the Christian driver of a minibus and two Muslim migrants, which degenerated into a religious vendetta. In three years, the conflict is estimated to have caused more than 6,000 deaths and resulted in 500,000 refugees. See Raillon, 2002: 113-150.

[23] Almost 4 million people were displaced in the 20th century in the *transmigrasi* program.

[24] Raillon, 2002: 139; Gomang, 2006: 487; Bartels, 2003 : 128-153.

[25] Some of the representatives of Indonesian Islam, following in the footsteps of the former chairman of the Muslim organisation Nahdlatul Ulama and former president of the Republic of Indonesia (1999-2001) Abdurrahman Wahid, as well as the members of Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL), advocate, conversely, the "localisation" of Islam as a means for greater tolerance. While preserving its universal scope, religion should, according to the adepts of "localisation", be adapted to local characteristics and conditions. On the compatibility between *adat* and Islam: Ali, 2011 : 1-35

[26] Law 5/1979 replaced *adat* and local structures of authority, based on succession, by a unified system throughout the entire archipelago, imposing the election of the village leader, *kepala desa* (the Javanese term *desa* replaced the term *negeri* formerly used for villages).

Shortly after the fall of Suharto in May 1998, the time bomb of *transmigrasi* exploded alongside the eradication of traditional structures (Lowry, 2006: 411). The context was characterised by the loss of authority and control by the State, and the ties formerly established by *pela* had been nearly extinguished. As such, the regions where *adat* had been the least weakened, such as the Kei islands in the south-eastern part of the Moluccas, were less affected by violence. In order to transform the conflict, the authorities of Indonesia, on its way towards democratisation, strove to reinvent forgotten traditions, as the main element of dialogue for the return to peace. In the Moluccas, the idea of (re)creating a "Moluccan identity" beyond religious divides[27] re-emerged at the core of the peace initiatives. Thus, in Mars 2001, the "National Dialogue on Revitalising Local Culture for Rehabilitation and Development in the Moluccas towards a New Indonesia" was organised, with the participation of 1,500 government, community and religious representatives, students, businessmen and members of Moluccan NGOs (Brauchler, 2009: 877) Although this initiative had no concrete outcome, it illustrates the idea that a return to tradition could contribute to resolve new conflicts. The notion of *pela*, in this sort of initiative, was "reinvented" and given a new scope, more adapted to the ongoing conflict. Tradition was thus revived by introducing *pela-gandong* to the young generation, to whom the meaning of the pacts had not been passed on, (Lowry, 2006 : 409-426) in order to initiate the revival of a local identity beyond the religious split. Some changes were incorporated in these new *pela*, in order to adapt them to the then-ongoing issue. Whereas interreligious alliances used not to go beyond the level of the village, the new ties were meant to involve the whole of the province. In order to integrate the newly arrived population, they were no longer based on the veneration of common ancestors, as was the case with the *Nunusaku* religion studied by Bartels.

The theoretical and practical limitations of this reinvention of traditions must be underlined, in that they lead to reflect on the capacity of local pacts to erase conflicts. Their rehabilitation attempts, certainly, at reintroducing the idea that the strongest and most structuring primordial identity is ethnicity rather than religion (Brauchler, 2009: 883). Would the conflicts in the Moluccas over the *transmigrasi* program have been impossible if *pela* had not been done away with by years of administrative centralisation? Perhaps they would have assumed a different shape, opposing the indigenous people bound together by the pacts and the newcomers carrying a new identity, instead of Christians and Muslims. Nevertheless, nothing indicates that violence would not have broken out anyway, given the dual context of economic and social upheavals brought about by *transmigrasi*, and the political void created by the fall of the regime. The notion of ethnicity is widened in the context of the new *pela,* as it explicitly involves building communities, as described by Anderson, (Anderson, 2006) by integrating the recent newcomers. Yet, emphasising one's belonging to a community carries new risks of conflict: new tensions may arise, for example, between the members of a *pela* and participants in a new wave of immigration.

In concrete terms, the situation was only temporarily stabilised despite the optimism that had followed the Malino I Accord, and later the Malino II Accord, signed in February 2002. Signed by thirty-five delegates of Christian factions and thirty-five delegates of Muslim factions, under the aegis of President Megawati Sukarnoputri and her Coordinating minister for People's welfare Jusuf Kalla, these accords had created the expectation of a long-term resolution of the conflict. Yet, crises have been arising regularly since the mid-2000s (International Crisis Group, 2011). Memories of the conflicts of 1999-2002 seem to aggravate these tensions as they provide a reference, according to the International Crisis Group, even for the participants in workshops designed to promote peace (International Crisis Group, 2012) As Reina Neufeldt states, it is worth underlining, however, that one of the limitations of interreligious dialogue has to do with the discretion of its success: obvious failures make scepticism stronger, whereas success is immeasurable in the sense that it is generally part of a larger process within which it tends to appear as a minor element (Neufeldt, 2011 : 345).

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[27] The term is used by B. Brauchler, in Brauchler, 2009: 873.

Despite these limitations, the idea of the value of local wisdom and practices as an element of peace was established at least at a symbolic level. Thus, in 2006, the International Centre for Islam and Pluralism (ICIP – Jakarta) organised a series of workshops in Jakarta and Ambon on local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) and its importance for peace. The new version of *pela-gandong* was promoted in the international media and various academic writings, making it a potential basis for developing the techniques of peace building between groups of different religions. Michelle Carnegie, observing the case of the coastal village of Oelua in Rote, East Nusa Tenggara, for example, underscores the success of cooperation between Christian and Muslim communities in this province that she describes as a "low conflict community". Underlining that the members of this community insist upon their heterogeneity in order to better accept it, contrary to the restrictions imposed by the Suharto system, (Carnegie, 2010: 481) she considers that her observations of this region's practices could be expanded to other contexts, thus providing a basis for a research programme designed to foster cooperation while embracing differences (Carnegie, 2010 : 451).

In 2001, when the situation in the Moluccas seemed to have calmed, *adat* and *pela-gandong* became the preferred explanation for a relatively fast appeasement compared to other conflicts having a religious component like those in Northern Ireland or the Philippines (Brauchler, 2009: 883). Encouraged by the success, if only symbolic, of this experience, and noting the renewed interest in the traditional bases of interreligious dialogue, the Indonesian administration seized the opportunity to promote this expertise nationally but also beyond the archipelago. Interreligious dialogue henceforth became part of the rationale behind the promotion of Indonesia on the international stage.

■ **PROMOTING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: A DIPLOMATIC AND DEMOCRATIC ASSET OF POST-SUHARTO INDONESIA**

Since the beginning of the 2000s, interreligious dialogue has been promoted not only by the Ministry of Religions and the authorities of the provinces involved, but also by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Directorate General for Public Diplomacy, making it one of the pillars in spreading a positive image of post-*Reformasi* Indonesia. By promoting a tolerant Indonesia and relying on interreligious dialogue, the Ministry pursues a double objective: reinforcing Indonesia's position on the world stage by responding precisely to international political demand; and promoting this conception within the country precisely when it seems weakened. While the success of radical discourses is growing, a positive image must be conveyed of tolerance, which is now valued and presented, as shown in the first part of the text, as an Indonesian cultural characteristic.[28]

ACKNOWLEDGING RELIGION IN INDONESIAN FOREIGN POLICY

After having long avoided the religious factor when considering the formulation of foreign policy, (Sukma, 2004), Indonesian leaders are henceforth striving to integrate it in their diplomatic narrative in order to control its repercussions on the local stage. The Directorate General for Information and Public Diplomacy, located on the last floor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2003, with a budget of 28 billion rupees (28 million dollars) in 2008, aims to fulfil this task, for which the promotion of interreligious dialogue is the best instrument. The authorities must therefore spread the image of a democratic and moderate Muslim State, by resorting to private organisations likely to convey this message to their Indonesian members as well as their partners beyond the country's borders. By encouraging the international projection of non-state actors labelled as moderate and considered loyal, public diplomacy aims at combating radicalism through civil society. This policy contributes, according to representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to take the wind out of the radical organizations' sails, without directly confronting them or legally forbidding their activities.

The objective is also for Indonesia to return to the world stage by improving its image in the eyes of its western partners, who had grown concerned by the radical excesses seen during the demonstrations against the American intervention in Afghanistan as well as the Bali bombings of 2002. The Indonesian authorities, badly prepared, had previously denied the existence of a terrorist threat from the archipelago. It was therefore urgent, for the government, to send a more positive message to partners in search of symbolic gestures from the world's most populated Muslim-majority country. In a context in which the supposed antagonism between the West and the Muslim world had been increasingly highlighted, managing to restore this image of moderation also provided Indonesia with the opportunity to return to the international stage, after years of exclusion mainly due to the abuses committed by the Suharto regime in East Timor. Having acceded to democracy in 1998-1999, and exited East Timor after the referendum of self-determination held in 1998, Indonesia could count on the promotion of its moderate Islam to become an international partner particularly courted by its peers.

Regarding the organization of international interreligious dialogues, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was able to rely on the expertise of the Ministry of Religions and on the initiatives carried out until then at national or local levels, presented as the expression of a specifically Indonesian tradition. The

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[28] This perspective allows us to go beyond the conception that religion corresponds exclusively to a border guard. On this idea of a border guard, see the contribution of Brigitte Vassort-Rousset in the present review.

first Asia-Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogue was organised in Yogyakarta (central Java) in December 2004. The initiative had at that time raised questions among numerous Indonesian commentators, who were sceptical of the revolution represented by the fact that the traditionally very secular Ministry of Foreign Affairs should provide a forum of discussion to religious actors. The success of the event was nevertheless confirmed. Asia-Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogues have since been held annually in one of the countries in the region, bringing together an increasing number of participants. This type of initiative has become a key instrument of Indonesian diplomacy that has multiplied its commitments. The first Asia-Europe Interfaith Dialogue, organised by ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting), was held in 2006 in Bali. This forum is also held every year. The theme of the sixth edition, held in Madrid in April 2010, was "the consolidation of religious freedom and mutual knowledge of societies through interreligious and intercultural dialogue". It brought together 200 participants from fourteen member countries of the ASEM, along with the Vatican and Indonesia's OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) partners. Bilateral dialogues were also established with several European countries, especially Austria and Finland, equally committed to the theme of interreligious dialogue. Michael Weninger, an official at the Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs who took part in the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue in Seoul in 2009, explains that these dialogues are an essential venue for the West, in its search for a mode of functioning of what is now a post-secular world (Bayuni, 2009). Encouraged by the audience that these initiatives gave Indonesia on the world stage, the Indonesian-US Interfaith Cooperation Meeting was also launched in January 2010 in Jakarta with the participation of a delegation of twenty Americans presided by Pradeep Ramamurthy, the Director General for World Cooperation (*Global Engagement*) at the White House National Security Council (NSC). The Indonesian delegation, headed by the Director General for Information and Public Diplomacy, Andri Hadi, was made up of thirty diplomats and members of religious organisations, with notably Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah.[29] The idea for this last edition was proposed by Minister Hassan Wirajuda during his meeting in Washington D.C., in June 2009, with the American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Marty Natalegawa, who took over from his predecessor at the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in September 2009, contributed to the concretization of the project, demonstrating the new minister's wish to continue the policy led by the previous administration.

Of course, the declarations adopted in the context of these forums often cause frustration among the commentators in the sense that the most problematic themes, especially the construction of places of worship, international financing or proselytising, are generally left aside. Maintaining a very consensual atmosphere has even become a central concern, after the heated discussions which opposed clerics on religious issues during the first forum held in Bali in 2006. Even though they may not lead to concrete outcomes, interfaith dialogues enable Indonesia to reaffirm its resolve to appear as an example of a multicultural and multireligious country, striving to ease tensions through peaceful exchanges. This position presents a double advantage for the Indonesian government. It strengthens its resolve to appear as a mediator on the world stage, helping it avoid the negative effects of tensions that persist at home, where attacks on places of worship and brawls between radical Muslims and minority sects still take place regularly.[30]

After five decades marked by an attempt to ignore the religious factor as much as possible, the introduction of interreligious dialogues within Indonesia's foreign policy practices has renewed the country's classical diplomatic doctrine. In an international environment where non-alignment seems obsolete in the absence of an East-West divide, Indonesia uses a position similar to the principles of "independent and active" diplomacy formulated in 1948. By drawing inspiration from the self-

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[29] Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, founded in 1926 and 1912 respectively, are the two main international Muslim organisations in Indonesia. Standing for the traditionalist and modernist trends of Indonesian Islam, they have each between 25 and 45 million members.

[30] See the case of repeated attacks on the members of Ahmadiyyah, mentioned in the first section of this chapter.

fulfilling prophecy of the clash of civilisations, Indonesia's renewed strategy consists in positioning itself as a bridge between "the rest" and "the West". Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono presented this vision during a speech at the Kennedy School of Government, on September 29, 2009, (Yudhoyono, 2009), in response to President Obama's speech to the Muslim world (Obama, 2009). Dismissing the clash of civilisations, he instead proposed the "Indonesian way" of resolving conflicts, echoing the reinvention of traditions addressed in the first part of this paper. Indonesia thus tries to consolidate its position in the Muslim world by striving to emerge as an example of a peaceful and democratic state, as well as among Western partners, by highlighting its unique qualities as a moderate Muslim-majority ally.

ENCOURAGING THE DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES OF MODERATE RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs encourages a limited number of religious organisations to act, both at home and abroad, as direct relays of Indonesian diplomacy in the fields of mediation and interreligious dialogue. According to the Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy, synergy must be created between state and non-state actors, so that the Indonesian identity (and the practices spread by the transnational networks of Indonesian actors) corresponds to the government's priorities. The transformations of Indonesian Islam have resulted, in recent years, in competition between the religious organisations loyal to the State and those that challenge or compete with the principles of the Indonesian Constitution. Despite the concerns over the development of the latter, the government is trying to maintain in principle freedom of expression in the new Indonesian democracy. Therefore, instead of outlawing organisations that go against its message, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tries to reinforce the role and to encourage the international action of organisations that are independent but loyal to the State. To this end, the Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy cooperates closely with the large civil society organizations Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, whose leaders take part in ministry initiatives or co-organise certain activities linked to dialogue and religious mediation.

In February 2003, for example, the chairmen of these organisations were sent on state visits to the Vatican, Australia and the European Parliament, as members of a delegation made up of representatives of each of the religions officially recognized in Indonesia. The objective was to form a coalition with other militants opposed to war, in order to point out to the Indonesian people that, as the war in Iraq was not a crusade against Islam, opposition to this conflict should not serve as a pretext for attacks on religious minorities. A declaration from Pope John Paul II and the Indonesian religious leaders was published on February 20, 2002, quoting the Pope, according to whom "war is a defeat for humanity. It is also a tragedy for religion". The Directorate General for Information and Public Diplomacy subsequently circulated the photograph taken with the Pope during the voyage, accompanied by a quote according to which all religions seek peace. While the direct impact of this sort of initiative cannot be measured, it is very likely that they contributed to appeasing the climate prior to the war in Iraq. Contrary to the rest of the world, Indonesian demonstrations against the American operation took place in a more serene atmosphere than those following the conflict in Afghanistan that arose with no prior preparation of public opinion.[31]

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[31] In October 2001, students of the Makassar Indonesian Muslim Society demonstrated, for example, in front of the Japanese consulate, requesting the withdrawal of the Japanese support to the United States government and menacing to expel the Japanese from the region. The same year, in November, following the bomb attack on the Australian International School in south Jakarta and on the Petra Protestant Church in the north of the town, the police recognised that Muslim groups had been involved for political reasons "probably linked to the war".

In July 2006, the Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy financed the visit to London of a delegation of imams and Muslim intellectuals to present the different aspects of Indonesian Islam, notably at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House). The government took the initiative to form an Islamic Advisory Council with the United Kingdom that aims to promote moderate Islam in the two countries. Other similar visits were organised in November 2006, in New Zealand and Slovakia, then in 2007 in the United States, in Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland. Participants were free to present the situation in Indonesia, and they could address and criticise its limitations, in order to demonstrate the democratic and pluralist nature of the country (Anwar, 2008; Republika, 2008). Nevertheless, all of the participants displayed a view of religion that complied with that of the authorities.

This cooperation, a good example of the outsourcing of Indonesian public diplomacy, also involves the organisation of international non-governmental forums. Since 2006, the Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy has been the main provider of financial and logistic support to the biannual organisation of Muhammadiyah's World Peace Forum of and Nahdlatul Ulama's International Conference of Islamic Scholars. The first brings together academics, NGOs and religious representatives of different religions from all over the world, in order to present themes related with religious tolerance similar to those addressed by the intergovernmental forums of interfaith dialogue. The first World Peace Forum was held in Jakarta in 2006. The International Conference of Islamic Scholars, organised by Nahdlatul Ulama, is attended by Muslim participants alone as it is meant to create dialogue between the tenants of often-conflicting interpretations of Islam. It also focuses on the compatibility between Islam and the Western world, and religion's contribution to creating a peaceful and more cohesive humanity. The first ICIS was organised in March 2004, bringing together 200 Muslim intellectuals from 26 countries. The mandate of the conference, reproduced every two years, focused on the "promotion of the true image of Islam as a religion of peace and tolerance that brings welfare to all of humanity". The logo of the Ministry is not displayed during the event, but diplomats provide technical and diplomatic advice in the drafting of the resolutions adopted during the last session. "Ulamas without borders", the key motto of the 2008 Conference, was thus born out of a joint proposal with a diplomat. It evoked the therapeutic and transnational dimensions of religion. The conference thus displayed a message that was fully coherent with the image that the Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy aims to promote. The phrase, which was suggested during a meeting organised before the conference with NU leaders, remained in the final act of the International Conference of Islamic Scholars of 2008.

Senior Indonesian political leaders, including the president and state ministers, as well as a number of eminent figures from the opposition, such as former president Megawati Sukarnoputri, follow one another up on to the stage during the opening and closing ceremonies of these events, in order to promote the Indonesian model of tolerance and interfaith dialogue to an occasionally sceptic international audience.

From the Ministry's standpoint, these initiatives have the double merit of presenting a positive image of the country –the forums bring together hundreds of participants from all over the world – and of contributing to increasing the visibility and the audience of organisations considered "moderate" or "loyal" to the principles of the Indonesian State, at the expense of other organizations who pursue an Islamist agenda. For the Indonesian government, the aim is also that these organisations articulate the terms of Islamic solidarity that it will not officially pronounce. In this way, these organizations conduct what could be considered as a form of parallel or second-track diplomacy on issues that are addressed very cautiously by state actors. It is especially the case when religious solidarity comes into play, but comes up against the constitutional neutrality of the institutions.

This delegation of part of its exterior action enables the Indonesian government to support the organisations that seek to maintain a relationship between Islam and the State that complies with that of the leaders, and to spread among international partners, Muslim or otherwise, the image of a Muslim civil society that promotes a moderate discourse, compatible with democratic institutions. Conversely, while the Indonesian government cannot afford to Islamise its foreign policy beyond the claim of this image of a moderate Muslim country, delegating the domain of Islamic solidarity to private organisations enables the authorities to include it in their international policy without compromising their definition of a foreign policy in accordance with Pancasila.

■ **CONCLUSION**

Since 1998, Indonesia has witnessed political and social upheavals that have altered the relationship between the State, its people and religion. Shortly after the fall of Suharto, the Indonesian authorities faced conflict which openly brought the religious variable into play. In this context, they have striven to reintroduce the ancient traditions that facilitated contact and concrete relations between communities of different faiths. Undermined by the administrative centralisation and standardisation pursued during forty years of authoritarianism, these practices were weakened, and had not been able to prevent the violent explosion of the frustration caused especially by the too-rapid demographic changes. The idea of reintroducing and reinventing the ancient inter-village alliances took shape in the context of activities created to facilitate the appeasement of violence in the Moluccas, in order to turn them into the source of new dialogues between Christian and Muslim communities. The return to calm three years later, which was a relatively rapid victory for a conflict involving religious narratives, was attributed to these practices of interfaith dialogue, henceforth promoted in the resolution of other conflicts. The efficacy of these government-encouraged initiatives cannot be guaranteed in the long term, as recurring tensions still threaten to end the peace in the Moluccas. Yet, these initiatives are now promoted as part of the national identity. They have been integrated to the country's renewed diplomatic practices, leaning on civil society to promote interreligious dialogue not only within the country but also beyond its borders. At a time when the international context no longer allows Indonesian diplomacy to ignore the religious variable, the promotion of interreligious dialogue by the most populous Muslim-majority country in the world constitutes a double asset: the heritage of non-alignment between the Eastern and the Western blocks, so dear to Sukarno, was succeeded by the idea of posing as a bridge between Islam and the West. By promoting a positive image of dialogue and tolerance, the contemporary Indonesian authorities aim not only to strengthen their position on the world stage, but also to reinforce the internal stability of the archipelago.

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INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN INDONESIA: FROM THE REVIVAL OF TRADITION TO ITS INTERNATIONAL PROJECTION

The practice of intercommunal and interreligious dialogue is deeply rooted in the ancient customs of various Indonesian regions. It dwindled under the authoritarian rule of Sukarno and later Suharto, who weakened local traditions in order to better control them, and favoured the uniformization of national law over local custom. In the 2000s, especially as part of the search for a solution to interfaith violence that had brought bloodshed to the Maluku region, some of these practices were restored and redefined in the form of interreligious dialogue, presented as an integral part of national identity. Ever since, the authorities have been striving to promote Indonesia's experience of interreligious dialogue on the international stage, encouraging above all the action of Muslim actors abiding by the constitutional principles of the Indonesian State.

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