

The Roots and Evolution of Nationalism in Indonesia

Asal Usul dan Evolusi Nasionalisme di Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of nationalism in Indonesia began at the dawn of the twentieth century, which ultimately led to the birth of a new nation-state in 1949. The seeds of national consciousness were sown, and roots of Indonesian nationalism reached its apex during the Revolution (1945-49), manifesting most profoundly in the fight against the oppression of Dutch colonialism. The Revolution was central to the Indonesian republic's perception of itself and has been influential in fostering nationalism during the post-independence period. This article examines the roots and evolution as well as dynamics and manifestations of Indonesian nationalism, throughout the different phases of Indonesia's modern history. In doing so, it addresses three salient questions, namely i) how the seeds of national consciousness were sown; ii) what were the underlying factors/dynamics shaping the nature and development of nationalism; and iii) how nationalism and nationhood manifested in a geographically divided, ethno-culturally diverse state like Indonesia, whose citizenry has remained strongly attached to their traditional ethnological and adat communities. Emphasis is given to both state-oriented and popular manifestations of Indonesian nationalism, to highlight the state/elite-centric nature, and populist drive behind its discourses, agenda, and manifestations.

Keywords: Indonesia; nationalism; national identity; state nationalism; popular nationalism

ABSTRAK

Kebangkitan nasionalisme di Indonesia bermula pada awal abad kedua puluh, yang berkesudahan dengan kelahiran sebuah negara bangsa pada tahun 1949. Bibit-bibit kesadaran nasional telah disemai dan akar umbi nasionalisme Indonesia mencapai kemuncaknya semasa era Revolusi (1945-49), dalam mana ianya dimanifestasi sepenuhnya dalam perjuangan menentang penjajahan Belanda. Sesungguhnya, Revolusi tersebut merupakan teras kepada pembentukan persepsi diri Republik Indonesia dan amat berpengaruh dalam menyemarakkan nasionalisme semasa era pasca-kemerdekaan. Artikel ini menganalisis asal-usul, evolusi, dinamika dan manifestasi nasionalisme Indonesia dalam pelbagai fasa pentadbiran di sepanjang sejarah moden Indonesia. Ia membincangkan tiga persoalan penting, iaitu i) bagaimana bibit kesadaran nasional disemai; ii) apakah faktor / dinamika yang membentuk sifat dan perkembangan nasionalisme; dan iii) bagaimana nasionalisme dan idea kebangsaan dimanifestasikan dalam sebuah negara yang agak terpisah dari segi geografi serta memiliki kerencaman etno-budaya seperti Indonesia, yang mana warganegaranya masih cenderung terikat dengan masyarakat tradisional yang berlandaskan etnologi dan adat. Penekanan diberikan kepada manifestasi nasionalisme Indonesia yang berbentuk rasmi dan popular, untuk menonjolkan sifat elitis dan pemacu populis di sebalik wacana, agenda, dan manifestasinya.

Kata Kunci: Indonesia; nasionalisme; identiti nasional; nasionalisme rasmi; nasionalisme populis

INTRODUCTION

Nationalism is an idea, or movement that broadly refers to the consciousness and desire of a group of people that have a commonly shared identity, lifestyle and destiny for themselves, under the auspices and notion of nationhood. It is essentially a product of modernity resulting from the political consciousness, ideological enlightenment, and geopolitical transformation in medieval Europe that ultimately led to the emergence of the

modern 'Westphalian' nation-state system, and the prevalence of the correlated concepts of 'nation' and 'national identity'. Scholars define nationalism as 'a state of mind' (Kohn 1946), or a psychological condition that cultivates sentiments of belonging, and unites a collective group of people (Guibernau 1996), or an 'imagined community' known as 'nation' (Anderson 1983). From the perspective of politics, they also deemed it as a political ideology/principle that identifies the 'nation' with the 'state' (Gellner 1983); and a political instrument utilised

by the state/state-elites for mass mobilisation and other domestic political expediency (state/official nationalism) and by nationalist groups as political pressure on the governmental decision-making process (popular nationalism). The aforementioned definitions of 'nationalism' highlight its multi-dimensional and nebulous nature; it is intrinsically psychological, socio-cultural and profoundly political in essence, while also emotional and instrumental in disposition. As such, 'nationalism' has been considered as one of the most salient and pervasive, yet enigmatic forces in modern world, and a primary denominator of political identity for most people (Lai 2014).

For the Netherland East Indies, which had been under the yoke of Dutch colonialism since the 1800s, the emergence of nationalism at the dawn of the twentieth century, would ultimately give birth to a new nation-state known as the Republic of Indonesia in 1949. Indeed, the seeds of national consciousness were sown and the roots of Indonesian nationalism were planted, nourished and reached their apex during the Revolution (1945-49), manifesting most profoundly in the fight against the oppression of Dutch colonialism. The Revolution was central to the Indonesian republic's perception of itself and has been influential in fostering nationalism during the post-independence period.

The main aim of this article is to examine the roots and evolution of Indonesian nationalism, as well as its dynamics and manifestations throughout the different phases of Indonesia's modern history. More specifically, it addresses three salient questions pertaining to the 'national' phenomenon in Indonesia. Firstly, it provides an understanding of why and how the seeds of national consciousness were sown, including the conditions that provided the fertile ground for the growth of Indonesian nationalism. In doing so, the article also identifies the underlying dynamics shaping the nature and development of nationalism. Lastly, it elucidates how nationalism and nationhood manifest in a geographically divided, ethno-culturally diverse state like Indonesia, whose citizenry has remained strongly attached to their traditional ethnological and *adat* communities. Emphasis is given to both state-oriented and popular manifestations of Indonesian nationalism, to highlight the state/elite-centric nature, and populist drive behind its discourses, agenda, and manifestations.

THE EMERGENCE OF INDONESIAN NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND NATIONALISM: ROOTS AND EVOLUTION

The roots of Indonesian nationalism could be traced back to the Ethical Policy period, where the greatest changes in the Indonesian community took place in the political arena. The first half of the twentieth century was regarded as the 'Indonesian national awakening' period, during which people from many parts of the archipelago first developed a national consciousness as 'Indonesians' (Kahin 2003). Early twentieth century nationalism was a consequence of new imperialism, and part of the wider currents of unrest affecting the African and Asian continent. In Indonesia, the attributes of nationalism were quite distinct: it focused not only on the resistance to Dutch colonialism, but also on how nationhood was to be perceived, in view of the ethnic diversity of the archipelago and the restructuring of traditional patterns of authority to allow the creation of a modern Indonesian nation. The rise of nationalism was also the result of specific discontents, colonial economic discrimination, psychological injuries and trauma arising from social discrimination, and a new sense of awareness towards Dutch authority. Equally significant was the emergence of the new elite, educated, but lacking adequate employment opportunities commensurate with their educational background, as well as Westernised, but widely connected to the traditional society. These elites eventually became the primary agency/driver of the Indonesian pre-independence nationalist discourse and movement (Kahin 2003).

The nationalist discourse mostly identified the beginnings of the Indonesian nationalist movement with the efforts of Western-educated local elites via the formation of the Budi Utomo on May 20, 1908. However, the organisation failed to attract mass popular support (Bertrand 2004). Early national consciousness was also fostered by religious and ideologically-inclined movements, in the likes of Sarekat Islam (1912), and the Indies Social Democratic Association, which subsequently metamorphosed into Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) in 1924. Nascent Indonesian nationalism was likewise, heavily influenced by international stimulus, notably Japan's victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, which dispelled the myth of western superiority over Asians; the rise of

radical nationalist political movements in Europe, and World War I. After 1925, the new nationalist movement emerging in Indonesia reflected the changes in the structure of the intellectual élite. The Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI) was formed in 1927, becoming the first all-Indonesia secular party devoted primarily to independence without any pre-commitment to a particular post-independence political or social order.

The advent of the Second World War and its epoch-changing outcomes, nevertheless, led to geopolitical realignment and the recasting of power dynamics in world politics. Imperial Japan's three-year long occupation of Indonesia further facilitated and boosted Indonesian nationalism, in both ideological and organisational senses. Indeed, with its "Asia for Asians" propaganda, and the call for the establishment of a Greater East Asia Co-Prospersity Sphere, Japan provided the Indonesians with the ideational and organizational dynamics of national liberation (Kahin 2003). The total mobilisation of Indonesians through movements endorsed by the Japanese went hand in hand with intensified radicalisation of the Indonesian youth and nationalists. Therefore, when the Japanese withdrawal resulted in a power vacuum in Indonesia, the opportunity presented itself and was seized upon by pre-war nationalist leaders, such as Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta to establish the Indonesian republic. Their preparedness in leading the country towards sovereign statehood saw them very quickly declaring independence and form a national government (Weber 2020).

On 17 August 1945, Sukarno read the declaration of independence and the Indonesian republic was born with the *Pancasila* as its main ideology, focusing on five principles – Indonesian nationalism, internationalism; consent, or democracy; social prosperity; and belief in one God. Soon after, the revolutionary war between the Republic and the Dutch took centre stage in Indonesian politics from 1945-1949. Expectedly, nationalism became a predominant driving force during the Indonesian revolution. The bloody struggle was aimed at realising three goals; to gain independence and a strike against the imposition of Dutch rule; to foster 'national' unity by focusing on common goals; and to promote greater equality and justice. Indeed, the Indonesian revolution significantly impacted on the politics, demography and agency that ultimately shaped the national political landscape and dynamics in post-revolution Indonesia. The Dutch

left Indonesia in 1950 after granting the sought-after independence on 27 December 1949. Indonesian nationalism emerged victorious at the expense of Dutch colonialism.

To surmise, from the mid-1920s, the consolidation of secular-civic nationalism, in contrast to forms of Islamist, or communist nationalism, represented a more limited and narrowly focused opposition to Dutch rule. PNI's ideological contribution emphasised the importance of securing the unity of all nationalist opinions in pursuit of political independence. The party's task was to mobilise popular support to maintain continuous pressure on the colonial authorities. Nationalism was appropriated to promote the Indonesian national identity and nationhood, while the means/methods towards realising the national vision and mission were as much ideational as material in essence, namely through propaganda and 'active' resistance/revolution.

EVOLUTION AND MANIFESTATIONS OF NATIONALISM IN POST-INDEPENDENCE INDONESIA

Indonesia's experience in the pursuit of independence has had a tremendous impact on shaping the perceptions of Indonesians towards nationalism and their national identity during the post-independence era. Indeed, the revolutionary path taken in gaining the country's independence has become an important element in any discourse on the evolution and manifestations of Indonesian nationalism. Following the removal of the Dutch and the achievement of political independence, Indonesian nationalism went through several changes. Basically, post-independence nationalism aimed to achieve two mutually reinforcing goals: to build a modern Indonesian nation-state, in which various ethnic groups would be integrated into an Indonesian nation; and to achieve economic independence.

Scholars generally divide nationalism in post-independence Indonesia into three important eras; i) the Sukarno era (1949-1965), ii) Suharto's New Order era (1965-1998), and iii) the era of democracy and reform (1998 to the present). It is worth noting that Indonesian nationalism during these eras was shaped and re-shaped by both domestic and external dynamics that affected its form as well as manifestations.

THE SUKARNO ERA – POST-INDEPENDENCE TO GUIDED DEMOCRACY (1949-1965)

Although political independence had been realised with the withdrawal of the Dutch, Sukarno and other Indonesian state-elites remained skeptical of Indonesia becoming genuinely independent in the overall scheme of the postwar international system and capitalist-driven international political economy. Indeed, some Indonesian leaders believed that the revolution had fallen short of its objectives, and that the struggle against foreign dominance and for Indonesian independence had not ended, but simply entered a new phase. The initial struggle had been against formal institutions of colonialism, but this time around, nationalists strongly believed that they needed to flush out all unwanted foreign influence: political, economic and cultural. Their frustration, especially with the continuing economic dependence on the Netherlands, even after independence, inspired Indonesian leaders to promote economic nationalism. From the viewpoint of Indonesian nationalists, until they had transformed the colonial economy they inherited into a national economy owned and controlled by their own nationals, the national revolution would be incomplete (Barker 2008). Hence, the Indonesian state began prioritising Indonesian national interests, and started taking drastic measures to ensure the people benefitted from the new system.

Post-independence economic nationalism placed greater emphasis on preferential treatment of indigenous Indonesian businessmen, and countering Chinese and Dutch economic interests. Economic nationalism was directed especially towards the Chinese, even though some of them were Indonesian citizens, because ethnic Chinese business continued to dominate the intermediate trade in the rural areas and retail trade in the urban areas, just as in the colonial period (Thee 2010). Here, official nationalism converged, where the government implemented affirmative policies to promote indigenous Indonesian entrepreneurs while simultaneously cutting-off or reducing foreign domination. In February 1959, approximately 179 Dutch enterprises were nationalised and turned into state-owned enterprises. A government decree also stipulated that from 1 January 1960, all foreign nationals would be banned from rural trade, and would have to transfer their business to Indonesian nationals (Thee 2010).

Indonesian nationalism during this period also focused on safeguarding the newly achieved independence, and projecting a strong image to the outside world, particularly by having a workable administrative and political system. A provisional constitution of 1950 was enacted, political institutions were up and running and the state was not facing any immediate threat. The next few years witnessed political leaders from various orientations agreeing to abide by the political rules, and to focus on building national unity, which had been agreed upon in 1950 (Bertrand 2004). This was to ensure that solidarity within the newly established Indonesian nation-state was strong enough to counter any potential internal and external threats. State nationalism pushed for consensus, whereby political elites accepted the primary principle of a unitary state and rejected federalism introduced by the Dutch in the late 1940s, which they saw as an attempt to undermine the unity of Indonesia. Liberal democratic principles became the basis of the provisional constitution, and the latter also included a strong parliament with relatively limited presidential power (Bertrand 2004).

Indeed the pluralistic political system experimented with by the Indonesian government was temporal and had the strong backing of the political elite. Nonetheless, it turned out that the institutional structures created reflected the objectives of the secular nationalists, which led to the interests of Muslim groups and communists being sidelined. Obviously, ongoing campaigns against the government by the Darul Islam, which still harboured for an independent Islamic state, reflected the manifestation of popular religious nationalism. Popular nationalism became more salient as tensions erupted surrounding the issue of the basic foundation of the state, which saw different nationalist groups trying to enforce their own ideas of what the state should be like, and what kind of ideology, or policy it ought to follow. The secularists supported *Pancasila* and the more general criteria for the state, whereas Islamist parties called for the formation of an Islamic state, and used Islam as a vehicle for securing votes. Elite/secular nationalists opposed religious nationalism as it could “destroy the foundation of the Indonesian state, due to its sectarian and primordial sentiments” (Intan 2006).

A different form of popular nationalism equally manifested through ethnic and regional sentiments/conflicts. The inhabitants of the Outer Islands –

effectively outside Java – expressed strong regional discontent over the centralisation of government control in Java, and over Javanese predominance. For example, the Acehnese, who regarded themselves “politically more conservative”, blamed the central government for allowing itself to be heavily influenced by the left, especially the PKI, when it was supposed to be representing state/official nationalism. They also blamed the government for practicing economic protectionism, by looking after the interests of consumers in Java. Additionally, rebellions erupted in Sumatra and Sulawesi/Celebes in 1956-1957 with military comrades seizing power from local administrators appointed by Jakarta. Consequently, the Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRRI) was established on February 1958 with the intention of seeking reform rather than separatism from the Indonesian state (Federspiel 1973). Ethnic nationalism also came to the fore, coinciding with regional conflicts. For instance, ethnic Sundanese of West Java and Minangkabau of West Sumatra denounced “Javanese imperialism”, and very much resented the increasing migration and dominance of the Toba Bataks (Bertrand 2004).

There were two diverging expressions of nationalism during the Sukarno phase; the first being the establishment of a strong state/official/secular nationalism to preserve national unity based on consensus. The second phase was the manifestation of popular, mass-based ethnic and regional nationalism. By the end of the 1950s, state/official nationalism was translated towards the curbing of disturbances and conflicts with the use of a fortified military force and presidential decrees to suppress popular nationalism. Sukarno denounced liberal democracy, which he perceived as a Western concept, and blamed it for the recurring crises in Indonesia. The Indonesian president established a new political regime under the aegis of Guided Democracy, or *Demokrasi Terpimpin*, that would eliminate the problematic party-based cabinet governments, and instead grant immense power to the President, the military and “functional groups” (Kus & Sity 2020; Suryadinata 2001) The Constituent Assembly was suspended in 1959, and Sukarno decreed a return of the 1945 Constitution (which provided the President with extreme power since he served as both the head of government and the head of state) and *Pancasila*. Hence, with strong constitutional backing and the help of the armed forces, Sukarno used a heavy-handed approach

to secure the unity of the Indonesian nation and stability of the state, while seeking for a resolution to the fundamental problem afflicting Indonesia. From then onwards, the Indonesian political system was dominated by Sukarno himself, who was backed by the communists under the aegis of the PKI (Bunnell 1966).

During the Guided Democracy period, expressions of nationalism manifested most succinctly in Sukarno’s foreign policy, particularly in the Indonesian state’s increasingly militant policy of struggle, or confrontation against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism (*nekolim*), which gained strong support from the PKI. Nationalist discourse suggested that this policy had its roots in Indonesia’s traumatic emancipation from Dutch colonial rule. Additionally, Sukarno’s psychological need for self-respect after the humiliation of colonialism also played a significant role in determining Indonesia’s state nationalism, given his great design for portraying Indonesia as the leader of ‘the new emerging forces’ (NEFOS) against Western capitalists in the international stage (Bunnell 1966). Sukarno opposed the establishment of the Malaysian federation on 16 September 1963, which he saw as a neo-colonialist plot. Sukarno launched the *Ganyang Malaysia* (Crush Malaysia) campaign, whipping up “anti-Western sentiments that grew into a frenzy of xenophobia” (Thee 2010). He mobilised the nation, and propagated aggressive nationalism by embroiling the military in a series of jungle battles against British Commonwealth forces during the almost three-year-long Malaysia-Indonesia Confrontation. Sukarno’s ploy to ‘wag the dog’ by fanning aggressive nationalism, nevertheless, failed to suppress the rising domestic political discontent against his ‘communist infiltrated’ administration, which ultimately led to Sukarno’s political downfall, following the alleged PKI-driven *coup d’etat* in 1965 that was suppressed by Indonesian troops under the command of General Suharto. The subsequent ‘anti-communist purge’ saw Suharto eventually wresting power from the founding president in 1967.

SUHARTO’S NEW ORDER (1965-1998)

Following the succession of President Suharto, Indonesian nationalism became silent in its public expression and focused on regime maintenance and authoritarian legitimation (Aspinall 2015). Externally, Suharto ended the confrontation with Malaysia, rejoined the United Nations, froze

diplomatic relations with China, and established regional cooperation in the guise of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in September 1967. Domestically, Suharto appropriated nationalism for pragmatic purposes by focusing on economic rehabilitation through a centralised authority (Legge 1968).

Nationalism during this period manifested through strong government control and became very statist, elite-driven, and top-down in orientation. Similar to Sukarno's last years, the Suharto era also rejected liberal democratic institutions established in the 1950s and supported the return of a strong central authority. This centralisation of power was seen by Indonesia's leaders as necessary in a fragmented geographical and highly plural, ethnic setting with a history of ethno-regional rebellion. The military served as the backbone of Suharto's administration, controlling both central and regional governments, and adopting the doctrine of *dwi-fungsi* (dual function), which allowed it to actively participate, not only in defence and security, but also in political and socio-economic activities. Broadly speaking, Suharto controlled Indonesian political life successfully, reducing civil society to a point of weakness and dependency on the state, and preventing the emergence of any viable alternatives, either to him as President, or to the New Order system of government. The regime effectuated this objective by manipulating the *Pancasila* ideology and giving it a new interpretation for the 'common good'. It became mandatory for all mass organisations (political parties, interest groups, professional associations, religious organisations, etc.) to adopt the new version of the *Pancasila* as the exclusive ideology. The political maneuvering strategy impeded independent political activities because societal groups were prohibited from adopting their own ideology (Suryadinata 2001). Not only that, a strong governmental grip on the mass population, especially civil servants, could also be seen through the *Golkarisasi* strategy, whereby the government demanded unreserved loyalty from civil servants to secure votes for Golongan Karya, or Golkar, the government's political machinery, in the general elections.

Official-state nationalism under Suharto was inward looking and aimed at self-development. It promoted *pembangunan* (development) as a means to create a 'modern' Indonesian nation. By using the logic of political stability as the prerequisite of economic development, Suharto justified his authoritarian rule (Sato 2003). Suharto projected a

pragmatic outlook, whereby national pride was not allowed to get in the way of economic priorities. Hence, Suharto's nationalism reflected a willingness to accommodate to economic interdependence, instead of repudiating it like Sukarno, so much so that the nationalist discourse centred on economic rather than foreign policy endeavours. State nationalism was recalibrated to mobilise the population towards restructuring, in line with the key policy objective of the New Order, which was to push for economic growth.

One of the most visible policy turnarounds by President Suharto was the overturning of economic protectionism policies, particularly on the role of the Chinese in the Indonesian economy. Realising that the Chinese were essential to the success of the *pembangunan* doctrine, various restrictions on Chinese economic activities were lifted, giving them wider opportunities in business activities, such as large-estate agriculture, manufacturing, real estate and banking. Thus, the Indonesian Chinese prospered more than they ever did before. Additionally, from the late 1970s, the state pursued an affirmative policy to promote indigenous Indonesian entrepreneurship through legislations and aided the development of cooperatives as means to reduce the economic gap between the indigenous group (the economically weak) and the Chinese (the economically strong) (Thee 2010). These policies, complemented by abundant natural resources, as well as the post-1973 oil boom and the rising inflow of foreign investments, brought the Indonesian economy to great heights until 1997. Arguably, the mutually reinforcing effect of state 'developmentalism' and 'nationalism' during the Suharto period became the driving force catapulting the Indonesian economy as one of the economic miracles of Asia (World Bank 1993). Externally, it also facilitated the development of the confident nationalism discourse, particularly when Indonesia's standing as a Third World leader was enhanced in 1985, following the hosting of the second Asian-African Conference to commemorate the one held in 1955 (Perwita 2007).

Likewise, Suharto's economic policies, particularly the attempt to spread development more evenly across the archipelago, contributed to reducing the strong regional and communal feelings of the 1950s. Any matter that had attributes the government considered would lead to disharmony, or unrest (including ethnic unrest) was confronted and 'nipped at the bud'. The government took strong measures to counter opinions and actions that might be seen to be against the state's official interpretation

of 'nationhood'. Under these conditions, primordial sentiments tended to weaken. Nonetheless, the New Order's *pembangunan* programmes did not eliminate ethnic-related concerns. There remained perceptions that the regime was dominated by Java, particularly amongst the people of Irian Jaya and Kalimantan, who felt marginalised by the central government, due to their 'backwardness' and 'traditional' lifestyles (Bertrand 2004). The main cause of the rise in support for ethnic sentiments during the New Order was neither solely ideological, nor was it political, but more to do with economic disadvantages and the unregulated exploitation of natural resources that brought no benefits to the local population, and over which they had little control.

Popular ethno-nationalism persisted, and issues of integration remained in East Timor (Timor Timur), Irian Jaya, and to a lesser extent, Aceh, with actual outbreaks occurring in these areas in the late 1970s. Popular ethno-nationalism gained salience throughout the 1990s, as displayed by acts of violence and secessionist movements in the archipelago. Additionally, dissidence, strikes, demonstrations, and riots by workers, press, students, communities, and human rights and environmental NGOs proliferated in response to Suharto's experimentation with 'democratization from above' policy in the early 1990s, following the call for more 'openness' (*keterbukaan*) about the future of Indonesia and the succession of power (Sato 2003). Official-state nationalism clashed with popular nationalism when the 'democratization from above' backfired, and at the end of the spectrum, 'democratization from below' exposed the contradictions of the regime and awakened the people politically (Crouch 2010).

Eventually, the New Order regime's demise occurred in May 1998, following Suharto's resignation. The Asian Financial Crisis that saw the drastic devaluation of regional currencies, including the Indonesian rupiah, devastated the Indonesian economy and disrupted the normal course of affairs. The country was forced to accept the International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment programme by cutting the state budget, which resulted in the rise of oil and electricity prices. The crisis also unwittingly disclosed the rampant corruption, nepotism, cronyism, and the inefficiency of business practices in the Indonesian economy, allegedly controlled by Suharto's family members and friends. Finally, pressure from his own inner circle of confidants forced Suharto to tender his resignation, and the presidency was transferred

peacefully and constitutionally to his deputy, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, marking the end of the New Order.

ERA OF POLITICAL REFORM/ DEMOCRATIZATION (1998 TILL PRESENT)

The fall of Suharto brought profound changes in the manifestations of nationalism in Indonesia during the era of democratic reforms. The era of democratisation in Indonesia witnessed mass participation in the political arena, contributing to the resurgence of nationalism, especially at the popular level (Alfarabi et al 2019). Indeed, popular nationalism became ever more dynamic in the *reformasi* period. Facing a huge legitimacy problem, B.J. Habibie, who succeeded Suharto, opted for 'democratic' reform as an attempt to attract popular support to ensure his political survival (Bertrand 2004). The *reformasi* became the tag line of the new era replacing *pembangunan* of the New Order. To Habibie, the constant occurrence of popular demonstrations could lead to unpredictable and undesirable consequences, such as a reassertion of military power. Thus, to diffuse such a potential threat to the established civilian government, Habibie pacified and gained significant support from the civilians by introducing liberalising measures that became the mainstay of the *reformasi* era. These measures included the lifting of restrictions on the press and other media, a total disregard of the law pertaining to the limitation of political parties to just three, the removal of controls on mass movements, and the release of political prisoners, comprising dissidents, communists, and leftists (Crouch 2010).

Most importantly, the authoritarian political system of the yesteryears was substituted by a democratic system of government, which prior to this was sidelined, at the expense of state developmentalism or *pembangunan*. Popular nationalism called for improvements to the negative aspects of the previous administration. There was a confluence of interests between popular and state nationalism, with political reforms being implemented by the government within a year after regime change. Political laws that had served as the core of Suharto's authoritarian system were abolished and replaced by new laws, which allowed the conduct of free and fair general elections. The first genuinely free general election since 1955 was held on June 7, 1999. The People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Pemesyuaratan Rakyat*—MPR) also elected Indonesia's President by vote for the

first time in Indonesian history in October 1999. This development indicates that Indonesia has departed from the authoritarian system and shifted to a democratic system (Sato 2003). Similarly, democratisation featured the establishment of a multiparty system, and party activities were legalised right down to the village level. Civil servants were also granted political freedom to support/vote for political party that appealed to them, rather than the common expectation of having to vote for the incumbent ruling party (Moh Ilham et al 2019), such as Golkar during the New Order era.

Furthermore, Indonesia's democratisation encompassed the decentralisation of a highly centralised political system in which political power was, to a large degree, concentrated in the hands of Suharto, and channelled through his vast patronage network. Post-Suharto democratic reforms witnessed the increasing power of the parliament. The House of Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* –DPR) has become very active in drawing up, discussing and ratifying drafts of laws, initiated by the parliament itself. As a result, those who were previously suppressed made full use of the newly acquired freedom and sought better political institutions and representation. Evidently, the reversal of power between the DPR and the President has become more pronounced. The former, through the Provisional MPR, had the right to appoint, or dismiss the President of Indonesia, as demonstrated in the dismissal of President Abdurrahman Wahid before his term expired (Sato 2003). The President, on his/her part, had no power to dissolve the DPR. Additionally, amendments made to the 1945 Constitution in November 2001 and August 2002, again stipulated that the President and Vice-President were to be elected directly by public vote, effective on the 2004 presidential election (Sato 2003).

Post-Suharto Indonesia has seen several changes of government, and legislatures and courts have gained formal independence from the central government. Indonesians also enjoy extensive political freedom, while countless civil society organisations and other pressure groups try to exercise some sort of a 'watchdog function' over the elected governments in the national and local levels (Nyman 2006). Along these lines, Indonesia possesses many attributes of a consolidated democratic political system and has remained largely stable during the post-Suharto era. This also suggests that both the 'nation' and the 'state' have become, what Gellner (1983) opines as, increasingly confluent in interest,

as they are powerful and influential in disposition. All these developments contributed to 'confident' and 'feel-good' nationalism, as Indonesians became increasingly assured of their position.

The 2004 presidential election was a landmark in the reform of Indonesia's political institutions that ended the 'transitional period' that began in 1998 (Crouch 2010). Since Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono took office as president in 2004, Indonesia has gradually emerged from the shadows of the collapse of the Suharto regime, as well as the economic and financial crisis. Successful economic and democratic reforms have brought about a new national mood in Indonesia. National confidence has heightened and there has been a new assertiveness in the guise of 'confident nationalism', as Indonesia has increasingly become more aware of its pre-eminent position in Southeast Asia, and also potentially in world politics. This 'confident nationalism' has its respective domestic and international foundations. In terms of overall economic strength, Indonesia is the largest economy in ASEAN and the sixteenth largest economy in the world. Indonesia's growing economic might is an important dynamic in shoring up support for the country's diplomacy. In the course of ASEAN integration, Indonesia's role as the largest member-state has become increasingly conspicuous. Indonesia also voices its unique views in global governance mechanisms, such as the Group of 20 (G20). In June 2012, to jointly overcome current economic difficulties, Indonesia agreed to provide a USD1 billion loan to the IMF, when the latter's liquidity was weak. This was a move that demonstrated Indonesia's rising profile as a regional power, and a testament to its growing economic strength (Basri 2012).

Additionally, President Yudhoyono also succeeded in putting an end to the political division within the Indonesian nation by ending decades of separatism in Aceh, when the Indonesian parliament approved the Aceh self-rule law in 2006, endowing the provincial government with more political autonomy. The Yudhoyono administration also improved the law provisions on counter-terrorism and formed a special police force to accelerate the pace of anti-terrorism policies, following the orchestration of several terrorist attacks in Indonesia by the al-Qaida affiliated group, Jemaah Islamiyah. Terrorist threats have been reduced substantially, Indonesia's social order has been restored, and Indonesian politics has been more stable than at any time since the Suharto regime was overthrown (Rašwān 2007).

Meanwhile, Indonesia under the incumbent presidency of Joko Widodo, or Jokowi, has further consolidated the foundations of reform laid by his predecessor, to drive the country's domestic and external development agenda to greater heights under the auspices of 'confident' nationalism. Taking cue from Yudhoyono, the Jokowi administration has since sought to further advance Indonesia's sense of regional entitlement as the largest state in Southeast Asia, by not only leveraging on its position within the ASEAN, but equally Indonesia's geopolitical salience as a maritime nation, to make Indonesia the so-called regional as well as global 'maritime fulcrum' (*The Diplomat* 11 June 2019). Nonetheless, Jokowi's 'global maritime fulcrum' grand strategy for the Indonesian republic has inevitably led to either a potential confluence of interests, or even competition vis-à-vis China's Maritime Silk Road and/or Belt-and-Road Initiative (Lai 2017). Indeed, such a 'cooperation-versus-competition' scenario may be saliently shaped by the dynamics of popular and state nationalisms in Indonesia and China, as both countries jostle for predominance in the sub-regional maritime domains. Another highly visible policy decision by the Jokowi administration that carries potential implications for the recalibration of the nature, dynamics and manifestations of Indonesian nationalism, was the announcement of the relocation of the Republic's administrative capital from Jakarta to an urban location in East Kalimantan (Kalimantan Tengah – KALTIM) (Associated Press, 26 August 2019). Indeed, the planned relocation of the capital from Java to Kalimantan/Borneo may very well reshape the future of Indonesian nationalist discourse and narratives as well as national identity, which have had previously been perceived to be overly Java-centric and dominated by Javanese ethnocentrism.

The post-Suharto era has, thus, witnessed a revival of both state and popular nationalism. This resurgence is due to the changes triggered by external-cum-domestic pressure, such as globalisation, democratisation and decentralisation that have affected the perceptions of national identity amongst the Indonesian people, not to mention, the government's realisation regarding the importance of reinvigorating official nationalism (*Pancasila* and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*) as an ideological glue to sustain Indonesia's nationhood. There were also domestic and international issues that had sparked nationalistic sentiments. For example, popular nationalism was strong during the era of President Abdurrahman Wahid (October 1999 – July 2001)

in reaction to the separation of Timor-Leste. Under President Megawati Sukarnoputri (July 2001 – October 2004), attempts to develop nationalism in an orderly manner (state/official nationalism) took place due to her background (being the daughter of Sukarno) and the policy of the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (PDI-P), which placed emphasis on fostering nationalism. Additionally, issues pertaining to Sipadan-Ligitan, Aceh and Papua, have all caused nationalist sentiments to soar during the Megawati administration. Meanwhile, during the Yudhoyono and Jokowi periods, maritime-territorial sovereignty issues, in the likes of the Ambalat/Sulawesi Sea and the South China Sea, and the cultural heritage dispute have triggered the occasional popular Indonesian nationalism directed against the related disputant-states, such as Malaysia and China.

Hence, popular nationalism became more dynamic in the post-Suharto era because of domestic and international issues that increased the people's nationalistic sentiments. Political reforms initiated a process of democratisation that increased freedom of speech, expression of civil rights, and emancipation of civil society, all of which have allowed more non-governmental actors to have a voice, and also rejuvenated popular nationalist organisations/movements, e.g. the formation of new groups, such as Benteng Demokrasi Rakyat (Bendera) and Laskar Merah Putih (LMP), etc. To be sure, media liberalisation has enabled the Indonesian media to be free in reporting what is happening on the ground and make issues visible to the public. Unavoidably, it has made it difficult for Indonesian state-elites to not deal with highly visible nationalistic issues. Indeed, scholars have commonly associated the emergence of 'reactive nationalism' among Indonesians to media role and manipulation, where the mass media saliently influences foreign policy through agenda setting, and its role as a 'pressure group' or 'agent provocateur'. Evidently, not all media agencies in Indonesia are independent, with several being controlled by political groups from both political divides, i.e. MetroTV and *Kompas* (Golkar). Hence, there is the possibility of mass media manipulation by political elites for domestic political expediency.

STATE AND POPULAR NATIONALISM IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

The preceding analysis highlights Indonesia nationalism's state/elite centric nature, and

populist drive behind its discourses, agenda, and manifestations. Indeed, throughout Indonesia's history, the state has appropriated nationalism as an instrument for domestic mobilisation towards various ends. For instance, the Sukarno government employed state-driven revolutionary nationalism directed externally to whip up domestic popular sentiment and political support in a competitive political context (Leifer 2000). Meanwhile, Suharto's domestic rejuvenation agenda rendered it necessary to formulate a nationalism that was internally-driven, where state/official nationalism was appropriated to mobilise the Indonesian public towards supporting the domestic/government policies and programmes of internal self-strengthening. Evidently, Indonesia kept a low-profile in the international arena, preferring to focus on strengthening itself and resolving internal problems. As a consequence, popular nationalism was subdued to ensure the official-state nationalist discourse remained predominant in driving the Indonesian people towards achieving national economic development goals.

Conversely, the post-Suharto period witnessed a shift towards popular modes of nationalism, where the nationalist agenda and discourse has become increasingly bottom-up in orientation. To be sure, state nationalism remains intact, albeit more pragmatic and national interest-driven. Meanwhile, popular nationalism tends to be idealistic, virulent, spontaneous, vocal, and can be the bulwark of support for state nationalism, when their objectives coincide in defending and advocating for economic reforms (Lai 2014). However, popular nationalism can become a major challenge to state nationalism, when the state fails to champion/defend the interest of the nation. For instance, the Indonesian state has been occasionally perceived by the masses to have failed in adopting a strong, assertive stance vis-à-vis Malaysia, especially when managing the maritime dispute over the Ambalat/Sulawesi Sea (Lai 2013).

Indeed, non-official popular nationalism has gained salience in contemporary Indonesia. Previously, during the periods of Sukarno and Suharto, discourse on nationalism, particularly on how nationalism should be appropriated, was fully controlled and dominated by the state for specific purposes. However, in the post-Suharto era, nationalist discourse has become more convoluted, bottom-up, and populist. Different versions and understandings of what nationalism is, and should be, have emerged and evolved. In view of this expansion, the state no longer holds dominion over

the nationalist discourse, and popular nationalism is now challenging the orthodoxy of state nationalism.

Nonetheless, state nationalism can find support and be abetted by popular nationalism, when there is a confluence of interests, i.e. defending national pride, prestige and integrity. The elite-led, state-driven nationalism can also be pragmatic, insofar as it can be utilised to shore up the state's and/or state-elites' nationalist credentials, i.e. the state/state-elites are steadfast in defending Indonesia's national(ist) interests. Conversely, popular nationalism can be critical of official/state-oriented nationalism, when the latter is perceived to be overly pragmatic and/or have failed to defend national pride and integrity (cf. Lai 2014). Occasionally, the Indonesian government has been put in 'sticky' situations, where it has to defend its nationalist credentials, while concurrently seeking to be pragmatic, for the sake of the broader national interest. Yet, because narrow nationalist issues can also be at stake, and must be protected simultaneously, politicians state-elites are therefore required to delicately balance, or play the so-called "two-level game" – at the domestic and international levels (Lai 2014). Domestically, they project the necessary rhetoric and act accordingly to portray to the masses that they are fighting for the nationalist cause, to shore up their nationalist credentials. Meanwhile, at the international level, state-elites tend to take more conciliatory and moderate actions, and project a nationalism that is pragmatic and national interest-driven. To be sure, state-nationalism can contradict, and does not necessarily align with populist considerations (Lai 2014).

Henceforth, when the Indonesian state's nationalist agenda is aligned with popular nationalism, popular nationalists tend to dovetail and support the cause of the state. However, if the state's nationalist agenda contradicts with that of its popular counterpart, then popular nationalists may put pressure on state-elites to be more assertive, or aggressive. In such a scenario, state-elites would have to look at their situation domestically, whether risking a more moderate approach towards a disputant-state involved in nationalistic conflicts, or otherwise, would undermine their nationalist credentials, popularity and domestic political legitimation. Evidently, popularity, electability and respectability are important aspects in Indonesian politics because of the high turnover of elected representatives in the parliament. Elections in Indonesia are one of the most open and competitive among new and vibrant democracies. That is why the Indonesians are very proud and deemed themselves

as proponents of true democracy in Asia, apart from Japan. Since elections are strongly contested, Indonesia's political elites must appear to be in line with the domestic popular sentiment, in order to safeguard their political survival. Failure to do so may result in the risk of being attacked by political rivals, or losing credentials and the possibility of re-elections. Such dynamics clearly highlight the correlations between democracy and the efficacies of nationalism.

The advent of democracy and democratisation have increased the salience of popular nationalism in Indonesia, as national leaders have become increasingly vulnerable to domestic nationalist pressure to advance a foreign policy, which is more assertive and in-line with popular nationalist sentiments. These are the challenges Indonesian leaders have to encounter in the presence of such contemporary manifestations of nationalism. Popular nationalism is, indeed, putting a lot of pressure on state nationalism; and the latter has to be increasingly aligned with the expectations of the popular nationalist agenda, discourse and rhetoric. This means that it is no longer the Indonesian state telling the people what nationalism is, or should be like. Instead, it is the Indonesian people, who are informing the state about how it should behave, when it comes to meeting nationalist expectations/demands, if the state intends to remain in office and maintain the domestic political status quo. This is one of the main reasons why the bilateral relationship between Indonesia and its neighbour, Malaysia, has starkly worsened since 1998, whereas their so-called 'brotherly relationship' was much more friendly, stable and manageable, previously (Lai 2013).

CONCLUSION

The seeds of Indonesian national consciousness and nationalism were sown at the dawn of the twentieth century. Inspired by external and domestic events, nationalism grew rapidly during the 1930s, spurred on by the dynamism of a new group of indigenous intellectual elites. Indonesian nationalism also thrived during the Second World War with Imperial Japan's wartime policies during its occupation of the Dutch East Indies providing the fertile ground for the ideological and organisational emancipation of an effervescent postwar nationalist movement. Such developments led to the advent

of the national revolution (1945-1949) that saw Indonesian nationalists fighting a bloody war of independence against the returning Dutch authority, which ultimately ended colonialism altogether. Post-independence nationalism remained strong, following its appropriation by the Sukarno government to shore up Indonesia's image as a newly independent nation, and position Jakarta as the champion of the 'new emerging forces' in the foreign policy front. Nonetheless, the transfer of power to Suharto saw a dramatic change in the manner nationalism was projected and utilised. State-centric nationalism under the Suharto regime reflected a willingness to accommodate to economic interdependence, with the nationalist discourse recalibrated towards domestic mobilisation and economic rehabilitation, rather than external endeavours. Meanwhile, post-Suharto's Indonesia witnessed the resurgence of both state and popular nationalism. Nationalism's revival during this *reformasi* period was triggered by both external-domestic dynamics, such as globalisation, and the processes of democratisation, and decentralisation, which have not only affected the popular perceptions of national identity, and the national psyche, but also Indonesia's foreign policy orientation.

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