

Muhammadiyah and the Indonesian Government's Peace Diplomacy toward the Rohingya Conflict

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Abstract. This study aims to explain the relationship between Muhammadiyah and the Indonesian Government in the efforts to realize peace for the Rohingya conflict. Further, the study explain the tidal tide between Muhammadiyah and the Indonesian Government in realizing peace for the Rohingya in Rakhine, mainly concern to peace diplomacy strategies. The Indonesian government emphasized silent diplomacy as a strategy for ethnic Rohingya conflict resolution. This is very reasonable because ASEAN still adheres to the principle of non-intervention. Muhammadiyah, in a statement, strongly rejected silent diplomacy, arguing that the absence of political pressure from Indonesia to Myanmar to stop the genocide. Using Faith-based Diplomacy approach, the main argument of this study is that although the interests of Muhammadiyah (religious organization) and Indonesia (government) are the same namely the realization of peace, but with the differences in the views of diplomacy (instrument) strategy exerts the difference in the meaning of the results of peace diplomacy itself.

Keywords--Muhammadiyah, Rohingya, Faith-based Diplomacy

1. Background

Continuous conflicts in international system encourage the state to seek solutions other than coercion and violence. After the Cold War, peace building became a major discourse of the world peace agenda. Resolution and Transformation of Conflict become major theme of Peace Studies. Louise Diamond and John McDonald through the Multi-Track Diplomacy approach, asserts that the government is not the only party to resolve the conflict (Diamond and McDonald, IMTD). This approach explains that the peace process is a living system that connects the activities of each individual, institution and community in an effort to achieve a common goal of a peaceful world. One of the paths in multi-track diplomacy is the religious path, or the creation of peace through the role of community or religious spiritual organization.

It is explained by Berchovich and Orellana that the realization of peace carried out by the organization of the religious community is largely determined by the legitimacy that is accompanied by the use of other traditional mediation channels such as the presence of

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the state (Berchovich and Orellana, 2009). This means that the position of the state with official peace diplomacy remains the main but not the only one. War and peace, which were originally as a state affairs, have now shifted into all sides and become complex problems. Conflict resolution is not only the domain of a state or the official government, especially in some cases, the state often uses the legitimacy of military force that prove the fail and instead show the inefficiency of diplomacy and peace negotiations.

Based to the above explanation, this research will explore deeper about the relationship between Muhammadiyah and the Indonesian Government in conducting peace diplomacy for the Rohingya's conflict. Muhammadiyah has a great opportunity of the embodiment of peace for the Rohingya by utilizing Indonesia's strategic position for the Myanmar government. Indonesia is the only country in ASEAN to be accepted by the Myanmar Government and has the opportunity to provide feedback on the handling of the Rohingya conflict. The trust given to Indonesia is not separated from the non-megaphone diplomacy strategy or quiet diplomacy that has managed to attract Myanmar.

Indonesia's position in Myanmar can be the entrance for Muhammadiyah to build communication between parties in the conflict. However, something actually happened is that there is a distance between Indonesia and Muhammadiyah related to the silent diplomacy that has been applied to Myanmar. Muhammadiyah with a clear stance through the official statement push the government of Indonesia to revise silent diplomacy. Muhammadiyah emphasize that the government was not firm to force Myanmar to stop the genocide against ethnic Rohinngya (Muhammadiyah Central Chief Statement stated in the letter numbered: 396/PER/I.0/H/2017).

Based to the background, this research aim to answer the question why Muhammadiyah has a different view to the Indonesian government in conducting peace diplomacy on the Rohingya conflict?

2. Research Method

This research adopts a type of qualitative research where this type of research intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the research subject such as behavior, perception, motivation, and social influence holistically and by describing it in the form of words and language, in a special natural context and by utilizing various scientific methods. By using the analytical descriptive method, this research will describe the results of the analysis of the object of research, namely the Muhammadiyah association in carrying out its role as a peacemaker which is influenced by other entities, namely the state, in this case the Indonesian government.

The literature used as a reference in this research comes from statements made by Muhammadiyah leaders, central administrators and figures in print and electronic media. In addition, academic articles in the form of journals written by Muhamamdiyah figures as a manifestation of ideas and ideas of the union are also sources of literature. Furthermore, the data analysis technique is using the interactive method that rest on three component; data reduction, data presentation, drawing and testing conclusion (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

3. Reading the Rohingya Conflict

The conflict between Myanmar and Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine area has adorned media reports since 1991. This episode of ethnic-nuanced conflict came to the momentum of massacres by Myanmar's military against the Rohingya in 2012 and 2017. There was an ethnic cleansing effort through the genocide committed by Myanmar against the Rohingya who have been not recognized for decades, no legal guarantee for the fulfillment of its basic rights, making the Rohingya as a nation without state while making this ethnicity vulnerable to violence and oppression (Setiawan and Suryati, 2021). The United Nation calls the Rohingya ethnicity is the most suffering on earth.

The humanitarian tragedy experienced by the Rohingya was responded by various steps and strategies of conflict resolution. ASEAN as a regional organization has been prioritizing diplomatic means through high-level official meetings such as ASEAN Member Meeting, ASEAN Foreign Ministerial Meeting, and ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Right. Meanwhile, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) further promotes humanitarian actions through bilateral and multilateral schemes (Jati, 2017). Although efforts to handle the Rohingya conflict have been done well through the mechanisms of official diplomacy by ASEAN and humanitarian efforts by the OIC from 2012, it seems that it has not shown the maximum results about what we expect to achieve a peace agreement.

We must then re-agree that the official actor of government or state through the framework of its international organization in resolving the conflict, not to touch the root of the problem. The principle of non-intervention embraced by ASEAN is a factor in inhibiting conflict resolution. The OIC plays good role, but to force Myanmar to adopt ways the OIC becomes difficult because Myanmar is not a member of the OIC. Continuous conflicts show that countries through traditional means are unable to handle and manage the conflict. Thus, as described in the early part of this writing, it is necessary for other entities to be able to achieve peace; peacemaking and peace building.

4. Faith Based-Diplomacy Muhammadiyah : Opportunities and Challenges

Bruce Nichols (1997) explains that religious norms can be the linking door to deeper emotional and spiritual reality for those involved in conflict as well as in the lives of their own negotiators. Martin Marty said about the importance of religion on the peace process impacts the growing awareness of religious actors in the context of war and peace. Therefore, the synergy between actors in the peace process carried out by state or religious organizations strongly determines the sustainability and acceptance of the values carried out. Douglas Johnston (2003) called the new diplomacy a new conceptual framework in the field of diplomacy as a non-governmental channel for the realization of international peace. Faith based diplomacy is defined as a way of realizing peace through the application of religious values.

Muhammadiyah as Indonesia's largest religious organization has shown success as a faith-based peace facilitator in various conflicts in national, regional and international levels. Muhammadiyah peace diplomacy practice is based on the standard of activism, namely the advancement of education, social services and improvement of welfare. So in many peace missions including in the Rohingya case, Muhammadiyah focused on the distribution of humanitarian aid such as fund donations, recovery of the health of victims, building schools and educational facilities. Logistics and health assistance are well channeled despite in the field, Muhammadiyah volunteers have to face the challenge such as forbidding entering Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

Based on the successful experience in the resolution of Muslim Pattani conflict in Thailand and also the brilliant achievements of reconciling the Government of the Philippines and Moro People, it is clear that the model of peace approach carried out by Muhammadiyah is the elaboration of Peacemaking and Peace building.

As a comparison, it was at first clear that Muhammadiyah's role against the Pattani conflict was performed in peacemaking format through communication by Muhammadiyah's leadership against the Thai government and Islamic religious figures that even began in the 1990s. Communication initiatives continued to be carried out against the Thai government until Muhammadiyah was trusted and given a mandate by King Bumibol to help the Thai government resolve the conflict in Southern Thailand.

However, Muhammadiyah's peace approach to the conflict in Rohingya has become different. Muhammadiyah is very prominent in terms of humanitarian intervention (peace building) in the form of logistics channeling rather than making significant political maneuvers in an effort to stop violent conflict (peacemaking).

Muhammadiyah in peacemaking format has not taken any real steps on the political dimension as an embodiment of peace in the Rohingya conflict. There is still no dialogue initiative from Muhammadiyah leaders to the Myanmar government. If there were Muhammadiyah figures such as Din Syamsuddin who made a visit to Aung San Suu Kyi in 2018, Din then represented Indonesia as the President's Special Envoy for Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation and Civilization (UKP-DKAAP) but not the representative of Muhammadiyah. In fact, if it refers to the conflict in Pattani, Muhammadiyah's active involvement in establishing intensive communication to the parties to the conflict becomes a very decisive factor in the achievement of peacemaking (Latif and Natsir, 2020).

5. Muhammadiyah's criticism to the Indonesian Government Peace Diplomacy for Rohingya Conflict

In order to respond to the Rohingya conflict, the President of the Republic of Indonesia implied that silent diplomacy was a necessary strategy. In a state speech at the Presidential Palace on September 3, 2017, Joko Widodo revealed:

"I and all the people of Indonesia regret the violence that happened in Myanmar's Rakhine State. It is necessary to take a real action not only a statement of condemnation and the government to continue to help address the humanitarian crisis in synergies with the power of civil society in Indonesia and the international community."

Indonesia's silent diplomacy received praise from many parties both domestic and foreign. This diplomacy strategy was assessed effective and managed to take attention of the Myanmar government which then made the country open to humanitarian aid from Indonesia. Myanmar's government through a spokesman for Foreign Minister Aye Aye Soe appreciated Indonesia's silent diplomacy. Indonesia is welcome to use constructive and inclusive ways to help handle the Rohingya conflict. On the same occasion, a spokesman for Myanmar's foreign ministry confirmed that Myanmar was open to humanitarian aid from Indonesia.

Indonesia's position in Myanmar can be the entrance for Muhammadiyah to build communication between parties in conflict. However, there is a distance between Indonesia and Muhammadiyah related to the silent diplomacy that has been applied to Myanmar. Muhammadiyah with a clear stance through the official statement push the government to revise silent diplomacy. Muhammadiyah said the government was not firm to Myanmar government leads Indonesia's inability to force Myanmar to stop genocide against ethnic Rohingya.

The same statement was also made by the Chairman of the Head of Muhammadiyah Youth Center, Dahnil Azhar Simanjuntak. Dahnil has asked the Indonesian government to implement a firm foreign policy against Myanmar, even if necessary, Indonesia must do a political diplomacy pressure or political pressure by cutting diplomatic relations with Myanmar. Persona non-grata or expulsion of the Myanmar ambassador and the withdrawal of the Indonesian ambassador from Myanmar are actions that should be considered a violent response because Myanmar's actions against the Rohingya are no longer conflicts but massacres.

It seems that Muhammadiyah's maneuver was taken seriously by the Indonesian Ambassador to Myanmar, Ito Sumardi, stated that non-megaphone diplomacy or silent

diplomacy is a culture of Indonesian diplomacy that has been done long time against Myanmar. The conflict in Rakhine, Myanmar is not simple, even very complex, where the country is heading for a steep path of democracy, followed by the increasingly intensifying issue of terrorism. Silent diplomacy is a great choice because Myanmar still refers to the use of state sovereignty in conflict resolution, while regional mechanisms have not been a full concern. Ambassador Ito Sumardi offended several domestic parties who called the Rohingya issue excessively without no basis. Furthermore, Ito spared the narrative on the termination of Indonesia's diplomatic relations with Myanmar. The disconnection of relations will make it difficult for Indonesia to convey the message of Indonesian people or to channel humanitarian aid to Rohingya.

6. Conclusion

From the above exposure, we come to the conclusion that there is a difference of views between Muhammadiyah and the Government of Indonesia over the application of silent diplomacy. The government on the one hand views Myanmar's security complexity in the transition to democracy does not allow the Indonesian government to take diplomatic steps that are pressing and condemning. For Indonesia, it is necessary to promote a constructive and inclusive way to attract Myanmar government through silent diplomacy. Meanwhile Muhammadiyah push the government to be tougher and firm against Myanmar through the revised silent diplomacy that has been applied by the Government of Indonesia. For Muhammadiyah, it is time for the Indonesian government to use political channels that are more than just logistics channels.

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