



Universiteit Utrecht



## **The position of religious minorities in a diverse archipelago: the Indonesian government's framing of the Ahmadiyya- minority and its effects**

Doenja Abel

A thesis submitted to the Humanities Faculty of Utrecht University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree in Bachelor of Arts in Political History & International Relations.

24 April 2013

Name Doenja Abel  
Student number 3341194  
E-mail [d.abel@students.uu.nl](mailto:d.abel@students.uu.nl)

University Utrecht University – Faculty of Humanities  
Course BA Thesis Conflictstudies  
Course code GE3V12013  
Professors Dr. Mario Fumerton and Lauren Gould, MA

Date 24/04/2013

Words 10.187

"What everyone wants is to become a citizen of one free state, the United Republic of Indonesia. It is the same with me, with the ulamas [clerics], the youth, the officials, everyone without exception: everyone wants to be citizen of the Republic of Indonesia, everyone, without any minorities or majorities."

- Sukarno, first president of the Republic of Indonesia from 1945 until 1967<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sukarno, "A speech at the University of Indonesia, in Herbert Feith and Lance Castles eds., Indonesian Political Thinking 1945-1965, pp. 168-69.

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# I. Introduction

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February 6, 2011. A crowd of hardline muslims breaks out to protest against the Ahmadiyya-community, a 'deviant sect' according to the government and the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI)<sup>2</sup>, in Cikeusik, situated in the Banten province of Java. Video footage of the incident shows the passive stance of the police and the inflammatory rage of the mob.<sup>3</sup>

The last decennium religious tolerance in Indonesia has been highly disputed, while the influence of Islam in politics and society has increased. The Cikeusik incident against the Ahmadiyya has been one in a series of many. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, since 2004 in power and now sitting for his second term, has not been able to narrow down the number of violations on freedom of religion or belief.<sup>4</sup> On May 18, 2011 the United Nations' High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay urged the government to review its laws restricting religious expression and practice, aiming in particular at the 1965 Blasphemy Law, several ministerial decrees on the construction of places of worship and the 2008 Joint Ministerial Decree on Ahmadiyya.<sup>5</sup> The Indonesian government responded to the UN's demands that it 'was unable to support' as these laws and decrees were guaranteed by the Constitution, therefore could not be changed and ought to be respected.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, religious minorities continuously encounter discrimination.

The Ahmadiyya-community is one of several religious groups that suffer from these violations. The Ahmadiyya are originally rooted in Pakistan and date back to 1889. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad founded the Ahmadiyya-movement and placed himself in the centre, as he thought to be the next prophet to inspire the people. After Ahmad's death in 1908, the movement split in two of which the Lahore movement believed Ahmad not to be a true prophet but more a reformer. The Qadiani movement, however, had more radical thoughts and did actually assume Ahmad to be a prophet in line with Mohammed. In 1925 the Ahmadiyya-movement spread out to other countries, one of which was Indonesia. (Beck 2005: 215-219) Initially accepted by the Muhammadiyah and in 1953 formally recognized with a decree by the Ministry of Justice, no conflicts arose until 1980. The MUI, at that time still under government control, issued a fatwa on the Ahmadiyya, both Lahore and Qadiani divisions. When the New Order-regime of president Suharto lost support, in 1998 Indonesia finally turned into a democracy. Muslim organizations claimed the restoration of the 1980 fatwa and demanded the government to ban the Ahmadiyya completely. (Avonius 2008: 48)

Two regulations and one event have been crucial for the condemnation of the Ahmadiyya: firstly, specifically directed towards the Ahmadiyya, in 2008 the government issued a joint ministerial

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<sup>2</sup>KEP033/A/JA/6/2008, Joint Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Attorney General and the Minister of the Interior of The Republic of Indonesia. (09/06/2008) MUI fatwa No. 11/Munas VII/MUI/15/2005 (29/07/2005).

<sup>3</sup> Parts of this video were broadcasted on BBC, CNN and Al Jazeera. (06/02/2011) <http://www.aljazeera.com/video/asia-pacific/2011/02/201127135519920416.html>. Full video available on YouTube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWHzc8ZxRuQ&feature=player\\_embedded#!](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWHzc8ZxRuQ&feature=player_embedded#!).

<sup>4</sup> The Setara Institute, an independent Indonesian research institute monitoring religious freedom, reported in 2012 264 cases of violation on religious freedom/belief, in 2011 244 cases were reported and in 2010 216 cases. "Report on freedom of religion and belief." (28/01/2012) *Setara Institute*.

<sup>5</sup> "UN tells RI to review laws restricting religious freedom." (18/06/2011) *The Jakarta Post*, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/05/18/un-tells-ri-review-laws-restricting-religious-freedom.html>.

<sup>6</sup> "RI refuses to comply with UN human rights." (18/09/2012) *The Jakarta Post*, <http://www2.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/09/18/ri-refuses-comply-with-un-human-rights.html>.

decree freezing certain activities of the Ahmadiyya.<sup>7</sup> This decree was, however, close to becoming an official and complete ban of the minority group. Secondly, the Blasphemy Law which had existed since 1965 but was only used in practice since the transition to liberal democracy, remained intact in April 2010, when a coalition of human rights watchdogs had insisted on the annulment of the law. (Crouch 2012: 1) Finally, the Cikeusik incident of 2011 had been the most recent blow to religious tolerance in general, and the position of the Ahmadiyya in specific.

Yet, both on the political level and among scholars, no solution has come to the horizon that would stop the harassment of Ahmadiyya and would bring a new perspective on religious tolerance in Indonesia. Bernhard Plattdasch (2011) blamed the growing intolerance on the disproportionate influence of the Islamist civil society groups on the Yudhoyono-government, approaching the Ahmadiyya-case from the perspective of the anti-Ahmadiyya movements and their influences. Erni Budiwanti (2009) labeled the persecution of the Ahmadiyya in Indonesia as the collapse of pluralism. Melissa Crouch (2007) analyzed the consequences of the New Regulation, a joint ministerial decree implemented to restore safety but restrict religious minorities even further. However, when diving deeply into the debate regarding religious freedom and the Ahmadiyya, primarily analysis has been done from a historical perspective (Beck 2005, Budiwanti 2009).

Therefore this BA thesis will discuss this conflict of the Ahmadiyya from the perspective of the Indonesian government, but through the theory of framing. The central question throughout this research is in **which way the Indonesian government frames the Ahmadiyya-minority in society and how this affects the freedom of religion in a democratic Indonesia under President Yudhoyono**. In order to answer this question the three above mentioned key events will be analyzed based on the government's framing of the events, the labeling of the Ahmadiyya and the implications of these together. As these were decisive moments on which the Indonesian government either committed or omitted intervention, the framing process of the government is very much on the surface.

The analysis of the framing process will be according to the theory of framing, the concepts of narratives and master frames, and political opportunity structures. When looking at the process of different types of framing, the frame articulation as well as amplification will be analyzed based on which governmental decisions were made, how these have been articulated and how these have affected the position of the Ahmadiyya. I will conclusively take a closer look at the political opportunity structure of the Indonesian government itself. Because if the government has been and still is involved in the framing of the Ahmadiyya and the influencing of the victimization, then what are the reasons why the government does not respond to the growing concerns of the decline in religious tolerance?

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<sup>7</sup> KEP033/A/JA/6/2008, Joint Decree on Ahmadiyya.

## II. Theoretical approach

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The core basis from which this research stands is framing theory from the field of sociology. Moreover, I will also draw upon the concepts of narratives and master frames, to discuss the perception of religious tolerance in Indonesia, and political opportunity structures. What happened, how was it interpreted, in which religious climate and why did these events happen this way are all questions that can be answered through the use of these theoretical concepts. For a better understanding, this chapter will elaborate on the theoretical approach.

### *Framing theory: the illusion of truth and the power of perception*

Frames are interpretative schemata 'that enable participants to locate, perceive, and label occurrences' (Snow et al. 1986: 464), 'selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment' (Benford and Snow 1992: 137). Frames are used to give meaning to life and all its actions in relation to its environment. Without a frame, meaning does not exist. Therefore frame analysis is used to research how events in everyday life are organized or made sense of in coherent ways (Goffman 1974 in Stout & Buddenbaum 2003: 1). It is a structuring mechanism that can be deconstructed through the process of frame analysis.

Benford and Snow have worked on the decomposition of ideology by naming three core framing tasks, diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing. (Benford and Snow 2000: 615) Diagnostic framing questions in which way problems are narrated and identified and to what extent a form of blame assignment takes place. Prognostic framing refers to the suggestion of solutions and tactics to a problem, while motivational framing is primarily aimed at motivating for action. Hunt et al have added to this the tasks of boundary framing and adversarial framing, referring to the Manichaeian way in order to frame protagonists and antagonists (Hunt et al. 1994: 194). According to Benford and Snow (2000: 623) all these different types of frames and tasks take place by way of three sets of overlapping processes: the discursive process refers to the communication of movement members occurring in the context or in relation to movement activities. Strategic processes contain deliberative and utilitarian processes in order to achieve a specific goal. Contested processes refer to these processes that polarize identities and interpretations. (Benford and Snow 2000)

### *Research perspectives: the use of frames, narratives and political opportunity structures*

The goal of the present research is to show the way in which the Indonesian government frames the Ahmadiyya community and the influences these frames have on victimization and discrimination. Therefore, this research is concentrating on issue frames, such as the 2008 Joint Ministerial Decree on Ahmadiyya and the 2011 Cikeusik incident, as well as frames on identity and relationships, such as how the Ahmadiyya community is portrayed by the government and what the relationship is between the government, mainstream religions and religious minority groups. (Dewulf et al. 2009) Both the events and the relationships are viewed from the perspective of the government and in which way the government constructs its narratives. These frames are then examined on their frame articulation, the connection and alignment of events and experience, and frame amplification, the accenting and highlighting of some issues, events or interpretations (Benford and Snow 2000: 623).

The research of framing according to above mentioned processes, brings about a perspective that leans towards the existence of boundary framing or adversarial framing by the Indonesian government. How this boundary framing is formed, can be deconstructed by studying the implemented laws and regulations, the committed or omitted actions and the politics of labeling. Using the concept of boundary framing explains the influences of the government's actions or lack of actions and, thus, leads to the effects of framing on the emergence of violent events against the Ahmadiyya community. The narratives, discourses, languages and labels that are used could all constitute a determinative part of the justification of victimization and the opportunity structure for the government.

Next to the framing theory, the concepts of narratives and master frames should be distinguished serving as an umbrella over all sorts of interpretations and framing processes. Narrative analysis, according to Paul Ricoeur, researches the foundational stories that members of a community routinely use when addressing their collective problems. (Ricoeur 1980: 174) Narratives provide the fundament of the thinking and acting in social life. Framing theory provides a similar, but even more overarching concept with master frames. Doug McAdam identifies three of these master frames or meta narratives: liberal individualism, seeing the individual as an ontological entity, ethno-nationalism, emphasizing the integration and construction of identity through the cultural framework of modernity (Greenfeld 1999: 93), and harmony in nature, attributing an intrinsic worth to nature. (McAdam 1996) Therefore, in this research not only will be discussed in which way the Indonesian government frames the Ahmadiyya community, but also will be looked at in which narrative the interpretations, framing and identity come to exist. The concept of narrative, but also the existence of master frames will, thus, mostly apply to the understanding of religious tolerance and religious freedom, the case of which the Ahmadiyya are only one component. (Fischer 1979 in Benford and Snow 2000: 622)

In addition, this research will cover the question why the Indonesian government has acted and still acts on the Ahmadiyya rupture. In order to analyze this, the concept of political opportunity structure will be used. Political opportunities refer to "those aspects of the political system that affect the possibilities that challenging groups have to mobilize effectively." (Guigni 2009: 361) McAdam examined the theory of political opportunities and distinguished four dimensions: "political openness, divisions within elites, the availability of elite allies and diminishing state repression." (McAdam 1994 in Meyer 2004: 132 and Guigni 2009: 361) Considering this research is focused on the political opportunity of the government itself instead of the analysis of a social movement, the idea of political opportunity structure is worthwhile to answer the question why the government committed or omitted actions.

In the following chapters this set of theory and concepts will be applied to the case study of the perceptions and treatment of the Ahmadiyya community. As in recent years has become clear that the Sunni Muslims are not the only ones condemning the Ahmadiyya, it will be most interesting to concentrate on the Indonesian government's share in the Ahmadiyya case as well as in the broader spectrum of the debate regarding religious tolerance.



### III. Understanding religious freedom and tolerance

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Religion in a pluralist and diverse archipelago as Indonesia has been a matter of discussion ever since the country gained independence in 1945. How is religious freedom and tolerance understood according to the Pancasila, the 1945 Indonesian Constitution and the implementations in the light of a growing influence of Islam? What is, in other words, the narrative and master frame from the debate on religious freedom departs?

*On paper: equality with a few restrictions*

Five pillars constructed the fundament of the state: Belief in one God, Humanitarianism, National Unity, Representative Democracy and Social Justice. Scholars have called *Pancasila* a 'compromise between secularism, where no single religion predominates in the state, and religiosity, where religion becomes one of the important pillars of the state'. (Hosen 2005: 424) The absence of predominance of one specific religion is also stated in the Indonesian Constitution of 1945, as Article 2 in the paragraph 'Religion' of the Constitution "guarantees each and every citizen the freedom of religion and of worship in accordance with his religion and belief."<sup>8</sup> In the first and second Article of Paragraph 28 I of the 1945 Constitution is read that "every citizen has the right to follow his/her religion and worship according to his/her beliefs..." and that "the right to practice religion, [...] is a human right that cannot be reduced under any circumstance". Religious freedom is defined as a human right and the government's responsibility of protection reaffirms this: "the protection, progress, implementation, and fulfillment of human rights are the responsibility of the state, in particular the government"<sup>9</sup> Further qualifications, however, indicate the limitations to religious expression:

"In carrying out his or her right[s] and freedom, every citizen has the responsibility to abide by the restriction[s] set out by laws with the sole aim to guarantee the consideration and respect for the right[s] and freedom[s] of other citizens and to fulfill a just cause in accordance with moral consideration, religious values, [public] security, and public order in a democratic society."<sup>10</sup>

The connection made between freedom of religion with the moral considerations and public security and order, offer restrictions allowing religious groups to be desecrated if another group, when practicing their religion, is disturbed by the existence of the other religion.

When focusing on the meaning of 'religious freedom' another limitation occurs concerning the recognition of certain beliefs. Indonesia recognizes six official religions (Islam, Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism) are recognized by the state, which hardly leaves any space for religious minorities that are not recognized by the state. These six main religions benefit from protection by law, whereas the unrecognized ones may only register at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism as social organizations.<sup>11</sup> The existence of unrecognized religious minorities or 'deviant sects' of recognized religious groups, therefore, remains difficult. While the

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<sup>8</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945, certified English translation, paragraph 29 (2)

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, paragraph 28 I (1,2, 4).

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, paragraph 28 J (2).

<sup>11</sup> Report on International Religious Freedom written by the United States Department of State (2011).

*Pancasila*-ideology and the Indonesian Constitution do not oblige one to adhere a specific belief, Indonesia does not acknowledge atheism either. The people of Indonesia are obliged to believe in a god and, consequently, prohibited to have no religion at all. (Crouch 2012: 3) Religious freedom is limited in the way that freedom is present, religion is obligatory, but atheism forbidden.

On the one hand restrictions are present, but on the other hand in 2005 Indonesia did ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which provides under article 18 that “[n]o one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice,” and under article 27 that “persons belonging to [...] minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion.”<sup>12</sup> The Indonesian Constitution and the government’s commitments to international treaties show that religious freedom and tolerance are a human right, although there are certain restrictions. These ambiguous statements and restrictions, however, might not have become relevant, if dominance of one religion above others had remained absent.

### *Islamic influences in politics and society*

Even though the *Pancasila* nor the Indonesian Constitution of 1945 includes any specificity about the dominance of certain beliefs, the Islam was close to explicit mentioning in the Constitution. At the last moment in August 1945, however, seven words were removed from the Preamble to the Indonesian Constitution. The sentence ‘dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluknya’ (with the obligation for adherents of Islam to follow syari’ah, or Islamic law) was omitted, which left aside Islamic influence in politics. (Hosen 2005: 419) To compensate the Muslim organizations for their defeat, the Ministry of Religion was founded in 1946. This body was held accountable for the supervision of religious education and religious social life. Each of the six main religions was assigned a separate directorate, but the Muslim directorate soon positioned itself as the most significant of all. (Van Bruinessen 1996: 28) Rapidly the Muslim directorate of the Ministry of Religion integrated into politics, but never did they have any significant influence on government policy. As a result, the Islam has had a considerable share in politics that was especially focused on the Muslim society.

Added to this, in 1975 the government established a national council of ulama, the *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI) which had three main tasks: ‘strengthening of religion (understood in the *Pancasila* way), as a basis of national resilience, participation of ulama in the development effort, and maintenance of harmonious relations with the other religions’. (Van Bruinessen 1996: 29) Yet another coordinating body serving as the representative of the Islamic society in Indonesia and advising the government in religious affairs. Conversely, instead of improving the harmonious relations with other religions, the MUI has regularly condemned ‘deviant’ sects and unrecognized religious minorities. Not only had there been important institutions embodying Indonesian Muslims in politics, in 1990 the shari’ah became implicitly part of the Indonesian legal system, which gave them the same authority as the national civil and military courts. Whereas the Old and New Order had always tried to prevent Islam and shari’ah to integrate into the legal system, perspectives have

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<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Committee, General Comment 22, Article 18 (Forty-eighth session, 1993), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4 (1993), reprinted in *Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies*, U.N. Doc. HRI/GEN/1/Rev.6 at 155 (2003), para. 2, accessed through <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/gencomm/hrcom22.htm>, April 7, 2013).

changed in the past decennia. The current government under President Yudhoyono is hardly consistent on religious matters, whereas the Ministry of Religion and the MUI do have taken a firm position in protecting Islam from deviant threats. The 1965 Blasphemy Law that, for example, was rarely used in the past, since 1998 has brought many to court because of religious practices and beliefs deviating from mainstream Sunni Islam. (Crouch 2010: 2) The distinction of religion and politics is seemingly in erosion, but what does this mean for the tolerance and position of (un)recognized religious minorities?

#### *Implications for religious minorities and the narrative of religious pluralism*

The paradox caused by the aspired religious pluralism and the great influence of Islam in society and politics, entangles unrecognized religious minorities or 'deviant sects' of recognized religious groups. Identity cards are obliged and demand to have one's religious preference registered. The easiest way out, as many do who adhere to various traditional beliefs collectively labeled 'Aliran Kepercayaan', is to register under one of the six main religions, while in private remaining loyal to ones true belief. (Report on International Religious Freedom 30/07/2012) Retrieving the official governmental recognition is difficult, but religion continues to be an important element of the acceptance of an individual. The difficulties of recognition are clearly shown in the increased religious violence since the fall of Suharto's regime. During the presidency of Yudhoyono, there has been an increase in violence targeting religious minorities such as the Ahmadiyya, Christians and Shia. A sixteen percent increase in cases of religious intolerance were reported between 2010 and 2011.<sup>13</sup> A study by the Setara Institute recorded around 200 discrimination cases against religious minorities nationwide in 2012.<sup>14</sup> Religious tolerance, according to these statistics, is in decline and the position of religious minorities all the more at risk. What, then, is the overall narrative of religious freedom and tolerance in such a diverse archipelago?

From the historical perspective, Indonesia has endured a long struggle finding the right direction concerning religious freedom and tolerance. Yet the government's initial aim for an all-encompassing *Pancasila* that stands above all sorts of religions and beliefs lacks consistency and equality when put in practice. The narrative from which the government and the society depart is one in which an eternal search for a balance between a state-secular, Islam dominated, multi-religious unified country is most present. The questioning of religious impartiality, tolerance of minority groups and dominance of majority religions has been at the fundament of the Indonesian Constitution and remains a highly disputable issue today. Pluralism can only be captured in the narrative of the necessity of tolerance and equality in order to coexist. Turning towards master frames, ethno-nationalism could be considered the umbrella perspective in which this battle over religious freedom is fought. (McAdam 1994: 41-43) Striving for unity and integration of all, through the construction of the overarching *Pancasila* ideology, Indonesia is now struggling to find a way to define and, thus, regulate religious freedom and tolerance. The measures taken and (absence of) interventions performed on the Ahmadiyya community demonstrate this.

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<sup>13</sup>"Indonesia turns blind eye as religious tensions rise" (19/07/2012) New York Times, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/19/world/asia/indonesia-turns-blind-eye-as-religious-tensions-rise.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/19/world/asia/indonesia-turns-blind-eye-as-religious-tensions-rise.html?_r=0).

<sup>14</sup>"Activists condemn increasing persecution of minorities" (11/12/2012) *The Jakarta Post*, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/12/11/activists-condemn-increasing-persecution-minorities.html>.

## IV. The 2008 Joint Ministerial Decree on the Ahmadiyya

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A great example of the consolidating of religious regulations is the 2008 Joint Ministerial Decree on the Ahmadiyya. Not only was this a new regulation restricting the practicing of religions or beliefs, more remarkable was that this decree was directed at one minority group in specific. Why did the government do this, when the Ahmadiyya was already victim of religious conflicts? Did the government find itself a solution for these ongoing interfaith matters or was there more on board when issuing this decree? And what did this eventually mean for the way the Ahmadiyya were portrayed in society? Was this still in accordance with the government's responsibility and duty to protect and treat equally or had they offended their own law? In this next paragraph will be analyzed how the decree found its existence, what influences were present and mainly, how the government framed the Ahmadiyya through this specific decree.

### *Muslim recommendations*

The Joint Ministerial Decree had endured a few years of revision and extension, because already on 18 January 2005 the Attorney General's office responsible for monitoring religion and beliefs had called a meeting to discuss three issues of concern: Confucianism, the Chinese sect Falun Gong, and Ahmadiyya. The country had faced several clashes concerning these religions/beliefs and therefore released a ten-page analysis and a one-sentence recommendation: "based on the above analysis, we recommend to the government and president of the Republic of Indonesia that the organisations, activities, teachings and books of Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (Ahmadiyah Qadiyan) and Gerakan Ahmadiyah Indonesia (Ahmadiyah Lahore) be banned in all areas of Indonesia through a presidential regulation."<sup>15</sup>

In July of the same year, the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), that had already issued a fatwa on the Ahmadiyya in 1980 and 1998, now recommended that according to the fatwa on 'Upholding Islamic Law and Attitudes and Actions toward the Efforts of Spread Deviancy, Blasphemy and Apostasy' it was about time that political and legal steps should be taken against such efforts.<sup>16</sup> Later at the 7<sup>th</sup> National Congress at the end of July, the MUI, again, officially issued a fatwa against the Ahmadiyya, which notably received support from president Yudhoyono, who had opened the Congress and backed their standpoint. In 2007 talks began between the leaders of the Ahmadiyya, representatives of the Ministries of Religious Affairs and Interior, Police Intelligence and the Attorney General's Office.<sup>17</sup> The JAI was proposed four options: (1) dissolution by the government; (2) dissolution by the courts; (3) categorization as non-Muslims or; (4) acceptance as one stream of Islam within the broader Muslim community. The Ahmadiyya, of course, preferred the latter.

### *Policy of compromising*

Consequently, the government ordered them to 'submit a written position paper' that stated why they deserved to be considered Muslims. On 14 January 2008 the JAI released a twelve-point statement to the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These points all stated their belief in the final Prophet

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<sup>15</sup> Djamaluddin 2007: 125 in: International Crisis Group. "Indonesia: implications of the Ahmadiyya Decree" (07/07/2008), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 5.

Muhammed and illustrated Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as not more than a teacher and mentor.<sup>18</sup> A period of investigation by Bakorpakem (the Coordinating Agency to Oversee People's Beliefs) followed in which the Ahmadiyya was given the opportunity to prove their declaration in practice. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, however, the Bakorpakem had decided that based on the investigation period and the twelve-point statement, they recommended a ban on the activities of the Ahmadiyya.

Meanwhile, a polarization had arisen between hardline Muslim groups demanding the ban of the Ahmadiyya and civil rights groups insisting on religious freedom and tolerance. Several clashes had occurred, but the biggest and decisive one was on 1 June 2008. The AKKBB (National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Belief) organized a demonstration for freedom of religion in support of the Ahmadiyya. This demonstration, however, was brutally interrupted by Muslim militia attacking the crowd and shouting anti-Ahmadiyya slogans. The attack turned out to have been instigated by the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). One of the leading perpetrators went into hiding and released a video on which he promised to turn himself in if the government would ban the Ahmadiyya. The government's response was quick: in the morning on 9 June the drafting team of the Decree was assembled and in the afternoon they officially released their Decree, which turned out to be a compromise that pleased no one.

What had become clear during the process of constructing the Decree, was that the Islam was, through Bakorpakem, the MUI and the Ministry of Religious Affairs well represented, in discussions concerning the deviancy of the Ahmadiyya. The Ahmadiyya itself was only allowed from the moment on which was already confirmed that the Ahmadiyya formed a problematic religious group, based on the recommendations presented in the meeting on 18 January 2005. The starting point, therefore, was ambiguous and less impartial already. It implicated the way in which power and representation in politics was designed. If the government had not responded to the demanding of the decree, it would have lost credibility of its Muslim citizens. But if the government had chosen to completely ban the Ahmadiyya, it would not have had the legitimization to do so as it would symbolize the definitive ending of the state-religion separation. A compromise, however, offered the government the most 'neutral' stance it could have in the situation. The framing through this regulation still had reasonable implications for the Ahmadiyya's position and identity in society.

#### *Institutionalization of the unrecognized*

On 9 June 2008 the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Attorney General and the Minister of Interior of The Republic of Indonesia issued a 'warning and order to the followers, members, and/or leading members of the Indonesian Ahmadiyya Jama'at (JAI) and to the General Public' that included four keypoints.<sup>19</sup> First of all, 'members of the public are warned not to support or conduct activities that deviate from the teachings of official religions.' Secondly, 'the followers, members, and/or leading

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<sup>18</sup> The twelve-point statement declared the following: we recite the declaration of faith that there is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet; we believe that Mohammed was the final prophet; we believe Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be a teacher and mentor, who inspired his followers to strengthen the teachings of Islam as brought by the Prophet Mohammed; in the induction oath of Ahmadiyah we use the word "Mohammed" before "Prophet of Allah"; we do not believe that divine revelation of Islamic law took place after the Holy Koran was revealed to Mohammed; and we follow the teachings of the Koran and the Prophet Mohammed; and the Tadzkirah is not the holy book of Ahmadiyah but a series of notes on the spiritual experience of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that were compiled in 1935, 27 years after his death. (ICGA 2008: 5)

<sup>19</sup> KEP033/A/JA/6/2008, Joint Decree on Ahmadiyya.

members of the Indonesian Ahmadiyya Jam' at (JAI) are warned and ordered to discontinue the promulgation of interpretations and activities that are deviant from the principal teachings of Islam'. The third rule implied that anyone who does not comply, shall be liable to penalties as prescribed in regulatory laws. Fourth, it stated that vigilantism is prohibited and will be penalized. All in all, the decree was directed primarily at the Ahmadiyya, but also entailed warnings towards other minority religions or beliefs. If Ahmadiyya's religious practices and activities had already been criminalized through this warning, what would be the future for other religious minorities? The decree, however, did not denote a total dissolution of the Ahmadiyya, something that was feared ever since Muslim organizations had started lobbying.

However, by turning the rejection of the recognition of the Ahmadiyya into an institutional regulation, the government had sent a clear signal towards its citizens. The government's decision for the implementation of the decree indicates the presence of boundary framing. Through this decree the government has drawn a strict line between the Sunni Islam, which is officially a state-recognized religion, and the Ahmadiyya. By explicitly calling the Ahmadiyya a 'deviant' sect the government underscores that religions and beliefs carry rules and restrictions that are also confirmed by the government through these kind of legislations. Also, according to Human Rights Watch the government violates the rules set in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Indonesia had ratified in 2006 and protects the right to freedom of religion and to engage in religious practice "either individually or in community with others and in public or private." The treaty also protects the rights of minorities "to profess and practice their own religion."<sup>20</sup> What could be concluded from this, is that the government had understood this Covenant in a way that it would not hold for citizens that go against the Indonesian legislation. Again, this emphasizes the boundaries that are drawn between 'normal' citizens and the Ahmadiyya.

Apart from the government's own sense of justification, the institutionalizing of the decree had also been a request towards the civil society to help implement the decree through social control. Despite the fact that the government had warned the public not to engage in any violent actions against the Ahmadiyya, the decree was a solid invitation to vigilantism.<sup>21</sup> In a popular tv-show the spokesman of the Ministry of Religious Affairs revealed the implicit intention of the government: "we'll let the public act as the watchdog. They can file reports to law enforcers whenever they see JAI followers violate the decree. Whether or not the latter are guilty of violations will be decided by the courts."<sup>22</sup> In other words, the government encouraged an increase of social control, with the only qualifying agreement that they would do no harm, but merely file reports. Amplified here is the public image that was created by the decree and the way the government promoted its implementation.<sup>23</sup> It has been a strategic process in which the articulation of the anti-Amadiyya thoughts of the majority Muslims, has been extended through the amplification of the Indonesian government.

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<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Watch. "Indonesia revoke decree against religious minority" (02/07/2011) <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/02/07/indonesia-revoke-decree-against-religious-minority>.

<sup>21</sup> International Crisis Group. "Indonesia: implications of the Ahmadiyya Decree" (07/07/2008), p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> "Ahmadiyah decree 'bans propagation, not private prayer'." (14/06/2008) *Jakarta Post*, <http://igtv.thejakartapost.com/index.php/read/news/171906>.

<sup>23</sup> The Wahid Insitute. "Monthly Report on Religious Issues: MUI's Guidelines on Deviant Sects Encourages Religious Violence." (2007)

This also indicates the identity that the Ahmadiyya was given through this decree. From 2008 onwards, they have been carrying the label of 'deviant sect' as acknowledged by the MUI, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, but most importantly by the government itself. Their religious identity was not recognized at all, and instead the given identity only served as an amplification of the rule of law against them. Nonetheless, at this point the Ahmadiyya have not been labeled as perpetrators of violence or discrimination, they have only been warned that if they would avoid the restrictions, their acts would be judged as criminal. The Ahmadiyya are identified as non-equals and framed as a minority group that is deviant in its religious activities and, thus, should be closely watched by the authorities as well as the society.

## V. The 2010 upholding of the 1965 Blasphemy Law

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"Any person who deliberately, in public, expresses feelings or commits an act: which principally has the character of being of hostility, hatred, or contempt against a religion adhered to in Indonesia; with the purpose of preventing a person adhering to any religion based on the belief of the Almighty God shall be punished up to a maximum imprisonment of five years."<sup>24</sup>

There are several laws and decrees that limit the rights and freedom of religious minorities such as the Ahmadiyya. The Blasphemy Law, which is partially quoted here above, is considered one of them, a law that had existed since 1965. The law had not been in practice until 1998, when Suharto's regime fell along with its restrictions on freedom of expression and opinion. Thereafter the law has brought many individuals to court for the conviction of blasphemy by offending one of the officially recognized religions. (Crouch 2012: 2-3) In this paragraph will be discussed to what extent the 1965 Blasphemy Law and its upholding in April 2010 take part in the government's framing process and how this has potentially changed the image of religious minorities, such as the Ahmadiyya.

### *Amplification of protection and the denial of secularism*

In various reports of human rights organizations and also stated by the UNCHR, the upholding of the 1965 Blasphemy Law in 2010 has been a trigger for the victimization of religious minorities and a restriction on their rights and freedom. The first president of Indonesia, president Sukarno, had issued the decree on blasphemy, which gave the still existing Coordinating Agency to Oversee People's Beliefs (*Badan Koordinasi Pengawas Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat*, also known as Bakorpakem) its legal fundament.<sup>25</sup> In the religious conflicts over the recent years, according to the Wahid Institute, an independent institute for human rights, Bakorpakem revolved in an influential body serving as 'police', 'attorney' and 'judge' in religious matters. Bakorpakem has also been of much effect to the Ahmadiyya community regarding the 2008 Joint Ministerial Decree.

In April 2010 human rights watchdogs requested the Constitutional Court to review this law and called for its annulment. The government rejected, reasoning that the state, explicitly not being an atheist country, would 'not recognize atheism or the right of an individual not to have a religion' (Crouch 2012: 3). On several grounds, such as public order and religious values, the court and thus the government dismissed the arguments that were brought to bear. The Court stated that Indonesia's state-religion relations characterized a unique social and historical development of the recognition of religions and beliefs. In this sense, the practice of religion in Indonesia and the practice in the West should be distinguished clearly. 'Indonesia [is] essentially a compromise between a secular State and an Islamic State' (Crouch 2012: 2). On the grounds of public order, the court reasoned that by cancelling the Blasphemy Law it would leave the country in disorder.

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<sup>24</sup> "Penetapan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 1/Pnps Tahun 1965 tentang Pencegahan Penyalahgunaan dan/atau Penodaan Agama" signed by President Sukarno in Lembaran Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1965 Nomor 3. Human Rights Watch unofficial translation of Criminal Code article 156a, in: 'In Religion's Name: Abuses against Religious Minorities in Indonesia', Human Rights Watch Report, February 28, 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/02/28/religion-s-name>.

<sup>25</sup> International Crisis Group. "Indonesia: implications of the Ahmadiyya Decree" (07/07/2008), p. 3.



Regarding the argument of 'religious values', the Court stick to the *Pancasila*-ideology recognizing six official religions(Crouch 2012: 4). The refusal of the revision of the Blasphemy Law turned out crucial for which path the Indonesian government under president Yudhoyono had chosen for the future of the country. The importance of religion as well as the denial of secularism are both very straightforwardly articulated and amplified. In the current climate of religious tolerance in the country, this also shows a sign of the more influential presence of conservative Muslims. By the perpetuation of the Blasphemy Law individuals can still be prosecuted for the offence of blasphemy. The government still maintains the authority to issue legal warnings to religious groups who have deviated from principal recognized teachings of a certain religion.

#### *Pulling the ties of religions*

The government's decision also exemplifies its maintenance of power and the existence of an aligning power frame. The 2008 Joint Ministerial Decree on the Ahmadiyya was issued by the Minister of Religion, the Minister of Home Affairs and the Attorney General. During the Court session in April 2010, the validity of the law was examined, to which the Court responded that, although the Joint Ministerial Decree was not an official law, it was considered legitimate but subordinate to the law. This statement, thus, ascertains and amplifies the government's power to judge on the legitimacy of religions or beliefs. Not only has the 2008 Joint Ministerial Decree been an example of how the government keeps holding the strings tight, again by maintaining the Blasphemy Law they refuse to give away power. The frame the government therefore presents regarding the relationship between itself and the Ahmadiyya, is one of hierarchical positions: the government amplifies their rule over the Ahmadiyya by controlling them with laws and decrees and places the Ahmadiyya in a subordinate position with acceptance of their fate as the only option.

#### *Chaos from deviancy*

While the government decided on the dismissal of the request, the Ahmadiyya had already been sanctioned with the 2008 Joint Ministerial Decree against proselytizing. Thus, the context in which the government had refused listening to human rights groups, the UN and those in favor of and fighting for more religious tolerance was already one in which the government played a decisive role. By the upholding of the Blasphemy Law, therefore, several aspects of framing of the Ahmadiyya have occurred, however implicitly.

What first could be noticed is the way the Indonesian government has articulated the importance of the law. By stating that the law is important in a country in which the sacredness of religion is emphasized, the attention is primarily drawn towards the protection of the six official religions. The purpose of the law is to maintain religious order in society focusing only on the one's that are governmentally recognized. Thus, the government has portrayed a frame of religious tolerance by averting from the issue concerning rights and freedoms of minority groups such as the Ahmadiyya and by amplifying the protection of the major religions.

Secondly, the Court stated that by annulling the Blasphemy Law, 'chaos' would erupt out of delimiting of religions and beliefs. Melissa Crouch understands this as the support to the idea that 'religious 'deviancy' leads to social disorder'(Crouch 2012: 3-4). The government again articulates the deviancy of certain religions and beliefs to be the cause of trouble and discerns these deviant sects from other religious groups. Religious protection by law reaches only as far as the legality of a

religion holds, which could be considered as a form of boundary framing. By drawing a strict border between legitimate and illegitimate religions or beliefs, the government also limits its own responsibility. Prevention of deviancy is, thus, considered the protection of religion, that responsibility and implementation lies in the upholding of the Blasphemy Law.

The government heavily relies on the Blasphemy Law, to hold on to the strings and out of fear of the decline of the coherence of religions and beliefs. The prognostic aspects are mostly directed at a solution of restrictions. Expanding the freedom of religion and offering religious minorities more ground of existence, would from the government's perspective only encourage discrimination, vigilantism or other activities that could be considered blasphemy. The problem is identified in a way that puts the blame on the minority groups.

## VI. The 2011 Cikeusik incident

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Whereas the Joint Ministerial Decree as well as the upholding of the Blasphemy Law are both considered governmental measures that have been taken in order to calm the situation, the so called Cikeusik incident is worth analyzing for the omission of any action. On February 6 of 2011, three years after the implementation of the Joint Ministerial Decree, a mob of 1500 people attacked twenty members of the Ahmadiyya community in Cikeusik district, Banten province, West Java. Due to severe beating three Ahmadis were killed and five were heavily injured which was captured on film by an amateur videographer.<sup>26</sup> Most shockingly on this video was that the police was present at the scene, but did not intervene. The government's passive stance urged for explanation and human rights organizations jumped up on it. Why did the government avert intervention and to what extent has this event contributed to the framing of the Ahmadiyya as a deviant sect?

### *The eruption of social control*

Ever since the decree on the Ahmadiyya had been carried out, the Ahmadiyya has remained under threat of violence and harassment by Muslim hardliners.<sup>27</sup> The Ahmadiyya decree called for a greater social control and awareness of the public realm. Hence the increase in violent attacks on the Ahmadiyya, radical Muslims might have taken the Decree's demand up as the government's approval for them to take steps when the Ahmadiyya community did not abide by the decree.<sup>28</sup> In 2011, again radical Muslims undertook action to halt the Ahmadiyya community from blasphemizing by attending a service held at one of the Ahmadi's households. They were outraged by the fact that the Ahmadiyya bypassed law and the government turned away responsibility to intervene. The attack was initiated by militant Sunni muslim groups and was aimed at alarming the Ahmadiyya of their seriousness, but the event turned out to be more than only a warning for the Ahmadiyya.

The attack left three dead and five severely injured. During the following week twelve suspects were arrested and put for trial. All twelve suspects were convicted for maltreatment, joint assault and incitement and sentenced for a three to six months' imprisonment.<sup>29</sup> One Ahmadiyya member, Deden Sudjana, was sentenced to six months imprisonment.<sup>30</sup> Sudjana was detained since May 2011 for allegedly inciting the attack, but eventually the court stated that "he had disobeyed a police order to leave the scene, and had been filmed punching another man."<sup>31</sup> Therefore, he was convicted for resisting state officers and maltreatment.

The Cikeusik attack had been one attack in a series of many other incidents of discrimination or violation against Ahmadiyya members. Various NGO reports have marked an increase in abuses and discrimination. On August 14 the Ahmadiyya were also victim of an attack instigated by hardline Muslims of the FPI when they broke into an Ahmadiyya complex in Makassar, South Sulawesi. At this

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<sup>26</sup> Full video available on YouTube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWHzc8ZxRuQ&feature=player\\_embedded#!](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWHzc8ZxRuQ&feature=player_embedded#!).

<sup>27</sup> United States Department of State, 2011 *Report on International Religious Freedom – Indonesia* (30/06/2012), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/502105b35f.html> (accessed 17/01/2013).

<sup>28</sup> Setara Institute (28/01/2012) "Report on freedom of religion and belief." *Setara Institute*, <http://www.setara-institute.org/en/content/report-freedom-religion-and-belief-2011-0> (accessed 20/04/2013).

<sup>29</sup> Asian Human Rights Commission, "Indonesia: Courts verdict encourages further attacks against religious minorities." (29/07/2011).

<sup>30</sup> "Leadership deficit fuels intolerance" (23/03/2013) *The Jakarta Post*, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/03/23/leadership-deficit-fuels-intolerance.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Asian Human Rights Commission, "Indonesia: Conviction of Ahmadiyah victim undermines constitutional protections." (08/18/2011).

incident, the police was unable to repress them and the eventual unhurried court proceedings still continued in 2012. The Cikeusik incident, therefore, had not been the first severe attack on the Ahmadiyya, but was the first one in which people were killed. According to the special rapporteurs of the US Report on International Religious Freedom and several NGOs, “local authorities ignored warning signs of impending violence and did not take proper precautions before the attack.”<sup>32</sup>

#### *Adversarial framing through double standards*

The government’s passive role in the prevention of the attack, that was through certain ways already announced with the police, and the eventual continuation of the government’s non-action twisted the narrative and brought up the question whether the government was actually willing and able to protect the Ahmadiyya members, also considered citizens of the Republic of Indonesia. Immediately after the attack, the government publicly condemned the attack and was disappointed in the failure of intervention. President Yudhoyono ordered for a special investigation and “called for harsh punishment of those involved, including any government officials or police officers found to be negligent.”<sup>33</sup> The National Police explained “they had done everything in their power to prevent violence between villagers and Ahmadi, which had been simmering for days.” The police clarified they were outnumbered and surprised.

The way the event is framed by the government, points at their intentions on preventing such violence from happening, but also indicates a signal of the impossibility or inability to prevent. The way the incident and the omission of action by authorities are articulated, shows powerlessness and even blame is attributed on individual police officers that might have been negligent. As Yudhoyono had already mentioned investigation in the regional and provincial police staff took place and led to several charges being brought against nine police officers for neglecting their duties. This investigation appears a strategic process in support of a frame in which the government reassures its citizens that the police are there to protect citizens and do just. The image on the videotapes of police officers passively watching the mob attack was something the government immediately had to put straight. Whereas this is principally amplified, the reasons behind the overall negligent stance of authorities is not addressed.

Apart from the government’s dismissal of accountability, also the ultimate conviction of the involved was a process of double standards. Convicting an Ahmadiyya member for attempting to defend himself with the same amount of months imprisonment as the twelve perpetrators of the mob killing, signifies that judgment was done with double standards. Not only do these judgment offer a signal towards the Ahmadiyya community and their apparent lack of governmental and judicial protection, it also provides an insight in the way this matter is judged by the government itself. The distinction between victims and perpetrators has been erased and perhaps even exchanged. Although the government says otherwise, the outcome of the sentencing, reveals even more the adversarial framing that has been taking place since 2008 and the sense of justification of violence for Muslim hardliners. Adversarial framing, the framing of a clear opposition between certain groups, has been brought to a higher level since the judgment of this incident: perpetrators

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<sup>32</sup> United States Department of State, 2011 *Report on International Religious Freedom – Indonesia* (30/06/2012).

<sup>33</sup> “Indonesian Authorities Vow Inquiry After Attack” (02/08/2011) *The New York Times*, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/08/world/asia/08iht-indo08.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/08/world/asia/08iht-indo08.html?_r=0).

and victims are judged with double standards and this results in the uncomfortable position for the Ahmadiyya.

*Citizenship undermined and violence justified*

The incident, thus, is being framed by the government as a matter in which two parties are involved and doing wrong. This incident is eventually more described and narrated as a conflict between these two parties rather than an attack from one party against the other. This implies that both parties were actively involved, while in reality the attack was instigated by the anti-Ahmadiyya villagers.<sup>34</sup> Adversarial framing is amplified, because the government admits that the solvability of the conflict lies in the hands of the Ahmadiyya. Because of their deviancy, violence erupts and the safety of the Ahmadiyya community is at risk. The government had been unable to prevent this and put both the perpetrators and the victims on the same level. Indirectly this has given the Ahmadiyya an identity of being a perpetrator as well.

The identity which the government has given the Ahmadiyya, apart from the equal labelling of hardline muslim attackers and Ahmadiyya defenders, is even more worrying. As nor the police nor the court did protect them from harm or provide them with equal justice, they have been given the label of unequal citizens, or even outsiders. This identity offers the government the freedom of indifference: it is not responsible for the protection of the Ahmadiyya as long as the Ahmadiyya is implicitly 'asking' for violence by holding on to their belief. Their citizenship is undermined and they are attributed blame for the situation, as long as they do not live in accordance with restrictions, such as the 2008 Joint Ministerial Decree on the Ahmadiyya. While the government is amplifying the perspective that the Ahmadiyya are the ones that bypass law, the government itself averts the attention from their responsibility of protecting the constitutional rights of Indonesian citizens.

Another implication of the court's verdict concerning the Cikeusik incident, is that the perpetrators and other groups either discriminating or violently harassing the religious minorities are given the sense of immunity by law. The unequal conviction, "the openly taking side on the majority if not being silence and failing to take any adequate response" gives the majority groups the legitimization and justification of victimization and the use of violence.<sup>35</sup> The conflict between the Ahmadiyya and the majority of Muslims, but primarily the hardline Muslim groups, has become a conflict in which the government is playing a significant supportive role. The position of the Ahmadiyya is further neglected while at the same time the government is implicitly posing only one solution to the problem as part of the prognostic frame they have posed reluctantly: the Ahmadiyya should better stop their activities and give in to the demands of the majority. If not, it is only a matter of time before another attack will take place.

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<sup>34</sup> "Indonesia Ahmadiyah attack: outrage over victim jailing." (15/08/2011) *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-14526299>.

<sup>35</sup> Asian Human Rights Commission, "Indonesia: Courts verdict encourages further attacks against religious minorities."(29/07/2011).

## VII. Political opportunity structure of the government in the religious debate

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The policy on the Ahmadiyya community is inconsistent and discloses the Indonesian government's struggle in finding its position in the religious debate. As to the Ahmadiyya case religious tolerance is an eroding element in society, politics and the justice system, but how in fact has it been possible that the government was actually able to articulate its favoritism for mainstream Islam and the aligned negligence of unrecognized religious minorities? In this chapter will be discussed to what extent the political opportunity structure of the government essentially influenced the government's actions in the Ahmadiyya case within the broader context of religious tolerance. Whereas not all of Sidney Tarrow's political opportunity structures are at present (1998), some are decisive for the religious debate.

### *Democracy and religion as a political tool*

First, the transition to democracy with fair elections in 1999 have been crucial. The possibilities it enabled regarding the freedom of expression and opinion direct towards an increased access on the political level. (Tarrow 1998) Indonesia had experienced several *reformasi* periods in which attempts at implementing different forms of democracy were done. However, none of them had actually determined a democracy in which a multiparty-system was included and in which every four year the president was to be elected by its citizens. The end of the New Order period of president Suharto was, therefore, a new beginning for a liberal democracy. (Bhakti 2004: 196-199)

Yet questions lingered "whether it would be able to channel religious sentiment into the political process in an orderly way or whether it would become victim to rampant expectations and youthful idealism expressed in an excessively radical and non-constructive fashion." (Barton 2010: 474) Now more than twelve year, four presidents and five terms have passed and the climate in political and societal spheres have changed. Concerning religions, the government and president Yudhoyono in specific, has explicitly showed itself a supporter of the mainstream Sunni Islam by attending in 2005 and 2007 two major summits of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) and supporting the MUI's campaign against 'deviant' Muslim sects. (International Crisis Group 2008: 8-10) An expected consequence of liberal democracy in a Muslim-dominated country is that the winning party, after having won votes mostly coming from Indonesian Sunni Muslims, ought to keep its supporters satisfied. Due to the democratic dependency and the majority position of Islam, the government has become more reluctant in matters involving Islam as compared to other religions.

A supporting argument next to the transition towards a liberal democracy is the further integration of Islam into politics and social life. In 1990 under the New Order regime, Islam had already expanded its weight in the justice system as a new law was passed, positioning Islamic courts on the same level as the civil and military courts. Although Islamic courts were still only intended for Muslims and disaffected Muslims in specific, it was indefinitely a first step towards a further integration of shari'ah in the Indonesian legal system. (Van Bruinessen 1996: 17-18) Back then under the reign of president Suharto, the incorporation of Islam in law and politics received a boost when Suharto's power among the military moderated. This already exemplifies the significance of religion: it was an easy way of heaving a huge amount of voters to your side. Religious adherence has become a political tool for winning votes. The increase of access to the political domain has on the one hand

opened up for the enabling of just representation of society in politics, but has on the other hand narrowed down the flexibility of the government itself, as difficulties have been found in contesting majority opinions.

### *Politics of compromising*

Finding a balance between listening to the majority's opinion and at the same time governing in the name of an extremely pluralist society, has carried along difficulties. In divergence with Suharto's suppressing regime in which Islam gained territory and advocating for religious freedom was forbidden, president Yudhoyono now has to handle a group that is opposing the current policy on religious tolerance. The path the government thus has chosen until now is one of compromises and moderation. The hastily but compromising decision of the 2008 Joint Ministerial Decree shortly after the Monas incident two weeks earlier and the ambiguous sentences after the Cikeusik attack exemplify this. Although the government has stated that the Ahmadiyya decree was fully based on comprehensive research, the most rational explanation is that it was out of fear for an escalation between Muslim conservatists against Ahmadiyya and the supporters of religious freedom backing up the Ahmadiyya. Liberal democracy has brought something along that the government perhaps had not been prepared for: well organized activists not planning to back off due to provocative acts by the opposing party.

The compromising policy, however, seems rather a balance between the demands of the Ahmadiyya and the demands of the hardline Muslims. All the more, politics have still been influenced much by the mainstream Muslim society. Slowly but surely the Muslim society had started to win territory with the Islam department of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, despite the fact that the Ministry does not have any authority on political level. The gradual integration of Islam in politics is succeeding at its best due to this Ministry. Initially it served the official task of providing extra legislation and recommendations for the Muslim community, primarily through these Islamic courts. The way this Ministry has been incorporated in the margins of politics by explicitly not having authority but at the same time affecting politics with heavy recommendations, for example against minority religions. The political opportunity, therefore, is established by the framing of the Ministry of Religious Affairs as a consultative body towards the government and a controlling one towards the Muslim community.

The favoritism of Islam was also present in lobbying parties and societal organizations, such as the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI). Although much had been done in the past to restrict the influence of Muslim organizations in politics, nowadays the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), responsible for the issuance of fatwa's, has become an unofficial consultant of the government regarding religious matters as well. President Yudhoyono has regularly and publicly proclaimed his support to the MUI, while that same Council condemned religious minorities such as the Ahmadiyya or the Shiites. MUI presents itself as the representative of the mainstream Muslim society and therefore are the expected negotiator with the state.

Thus, the political opportunity structure for the current government is primarily due to the fact that Islamic influence has increased over the years and therefore has become a stakeholder that cannot be undermined. Islam has become the power elite, or the influential ally according to Tarrow, that the government has been unable to resist. (Cederroth 1996: 357) Empowerment of the

resistance against Islamic influences in politics have only encouraged the government to settle matters with compromises that do sustain the identity frames of minorities, such as the Ahmadiyya.

#### *Decentralization of accountability and the spreading of ambiguity*

Another development of big importance for the rule and implementation of law concerning religious freedom is the decentralization of the governmental authorities. In 2004, the Indonesian parliament passed the Autonomy Law which empowered regional authorities. However, on paper 'religion' was not decentralized, together with the mandates of foreign affairs, defense, security, justice and monetary plus fiscal.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, it did not hold back local regulations to rule on matters such as religion or ethnicity. During 2012, more than 26 regional governments enacted restrictions on the Ahmadiyya community.<sup>37</sup> Although the Ministry of Home Affairs does hold the authority to review and revoke local regulations that are not in accordance with national legislation, most of these local regulations violating religious freedom have not been revoked. The Wahid Institute, one of the biggest human rights organizations in Indonesia, reported 93 government-instigated violations of religious freedom throughout 2011, in comparison with 64 in the year before.<sup>38</sup>

Local regulations and the reluctance of the national government have left the country with an inconsistency in policy on all levels of authority. Decentralization has given the national government the opportunity to lose some of its responsibility and attribute blame elsewhere. Consistency on the national level is absent through the irregular ownership of the implementation of regulations. In other words, the facilitation of ambiguousness and inconsistency through the decentralization of governmental authorities is another component through which the political opportunity structure for the government to act accordingly has come to exist. Regional and local authorities have taken up this chance to mobilize by enacting religious restrictions and further contribute to the erosion of religious tolerance in Indonesia.

#### *Filling the gap*

Conclusively, the image the government has created for itself is one of paradoxes and inconsistencies. Their ambiguity has established a state of detachment. While the transition to democracy had created a power gap and a changing of impact of majority and minority groups, the Islam had soon filled the political space that had been left. Their establishing throughout the years through the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the increasing influence of Muslim social organizations such as the MUI and Bakorpakem, had gradually become a means of power. Power not only over the Muslim community in Indonesia, but power over the general image of others as well. The government's decision to decentralize certain mandates unluckily turned out to be supporting the ambiguity that already existed. The government has been provided a political opportunity structure through the increased access into politics, the growing influences of Islamic allies and the facilitation or attribution of accountability to regional and local authorities.

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<sup>36</sup>“The 2004 Autonomy Law, Article 10 (3)”, [http://www.kpu.go.id/dmdocuments/UU\\_32\\_2004\\_Pemerintahan%20Daerah.pdf](http://www.kpu.go.id/dmdocuments/UU_32_2004_Pemerintahan%20Daerah.pdf) (accessed 07/04/2013).

<sup>37</sup> United States Department of State, 2011 *Report on International Religious Freedom – Indonesia* (30/06/2012).

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem.



## VIII. Conclusion

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As quoted in the beginning of this thesis, in 1953 president Sukarno spoke straightforwardly about the position of the Christians specifically, but more in general about the value of religious pluralism for Indonesia. The use of words such as 'minority' and 'majority' should not become part of the Indonesian vocabulary. More than fifty years later, tensions between the Sunni Muslim majority and the Ahmadiyya minority have reached a level at which the Indonesian government itself has played and is still playing a significant role. This BA thesis highlighted three key events in the Ahmadiyya conflict and focused on the Indonesian government's framing process and its effects on the identity of the Ahmadiyya as well as the religious tolerance in the country.

The institutionalizing of the position regarding the Ahmadiyya community has been of great influence. The 2008 Joint Ministerial Decree on the Ahmadiyya not only prohibited its members from proselytizing, perhaps more importantly it was a first sign of boundary framing by the government serving as a legitimization of victimization by anti-Ahmadiyya groups. The hierarchical arrangements of religions and beliefs indicated an imbalance in power and representation in politics, from which the anti-Ahmadiyya decree was merely a compromising governmental decision. The 2010 upholding of the 1965 Blasphemy Law supported the governments' intention of preserving a power frame towards religions. It amplified the importance of the protection of religion and attributed blame on religious minorities such as the Ahmadiyya. The 2011 Cikeusik attack, again, proved the presence of adversarial framing through the failure of the judicial system and the ambiguity of the government's policy. Once more, violence by the perpetrators was justified, while the citizenship of the Ahmadiyya underwent a process of erosion. The identity the Ahmadiyya had been given by the government is one of unequal citizens, almost violators of law.

The effects of the government's framing of the Ahmadiyya's position are immense. The implications for religious tolerance are even bigger. A univocal understanding of what religious freedom and tolerance consists of has been one of the major issues since the Indonesian independence in 1945. The narrative of the necessity of tolerance and equality in order to coexist, within the master frame of ethno-nationalism, has especially opened doors after the fall of Suharto and the beginning of a liberal democracy. Islam continued infiltrating in politics and society more rigorously than before and religion turned into a politically strategic tool for winning voters. Instability of the democracy, an increasing influence of Islam throughout the country and the decentralization of governmental authority have eventually provided the current Indonesian government the political opportunity structure to explicitly favor Sunni Islam. The Ahmadiyya case is considered only one, though crucial, case in the growing religious intolerance.

The conflict of the Ahmadiyya has not ended yet, nor have the international demands for change concerning religious tolerance in Indonesia stopped. Although in this BA thesis the framing of the Ahmadiyya and the political opportunity of the government itself have been addressed on the national level, further research could be done on Indonesia's position on the international level. In 2005 Indonesia ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This illustrated a willingness to improve human rights standards, but violence has only increased. In May 2008 the Indonesian government ignored demands of the United Nations' High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanathem Pillay to review laws restricting religious freedom and invite UN special

rapporteurs on minorities and indigenous groups to the country.<sup>39</sup> In June 2011 the European Parliament sent a letter to president Yudhoyono underlining Pillay's requests.<sup>40</sup> Interesting will be how this situation will evolve, to what level the Indonesian government will be able to sustain its political structure and if, when and how resistance will strengthen. Will the 'religious freedom fighters', with the potential support of the international community, organize themselves strong enough to become a competent opponent of the Islamic majority?

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<sup>39</sup> "UN tells RI to review laws restricting religious freedom." (18/06/2011) *The Jakarta Post*,

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/05/18/un-tells-ri-review-laws-restricting-religious-freedom.html>.

<sup>40</sup> "European Parliament Resolution of 7 July 2011 on Indonesia, including attacks on minorities." (07/07/2011).

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