

Netizens and Social Media: A New Arsenal in Grounding the Values of the Pancasila in the Current Era

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Opening

The Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia together form the conceptual paradigm of the state in its endeavour to generate happiness and prosperity for the people. To that end, the Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution represent a combination of the spirit, logic and fundamental values that nurture and protect the core Indonesian identity. The Pancasila provides guidance in the activities of the state, ensuring that it refers at all times to the ideals that the state was founded on.

The Pancasila represents the very conception of the state and sits at the plenary level, possessing guidelines and instruments¹ that inform the implementation of the conceptual paradigm and the management of the state. The five values offer moral ethics on which to base the management of the state, such that all activities will be good, right and fair. The Pancasila provides a normative foundation to promote humanity, order and civility. The Pancasila lays the foundation for the culture and engenders a sense of unity throughout the nation. Furthermore, the Pancasila forms the basis for democracy in Indonesia, birthing state policy in the interests of the people and cementing a duty of care towards social justice in the culture.²

¹ This is adapted from the terminology popularised by Moh. Mahfud MD when defining parameters of the problem of pluralism and tolerance in Indonesia. See Moh. Mahfud MD, *Political Environment and Reform in Indonesia beyond 2014*, delivered during a public lecture at Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore, 7 February 2013.

² See Bernard L. Tanya, dkk, *Pancasila Bingkai Hukum Indonesia*, Genta Publishing, Yogyakarta, 2015, pg.

As a conceptual paradigm, the Pancasila is tried and proven; it has stood the test of time and has led the state through challenges at the operational–implementative level. Over a period of more than a decade, a time when we have seen significant advances in technology and freedom of information, the challenges have been ever present and increasingly concrete. As such, it is appropriate to establish an agenda of revitalised awareness and actualisation of the values of the Pancasila through contemporary channels and methods.

Demise of National Integration

It may be that the current concern has reached a tipping point. Time and again, we see in audio, visual, and literary media that the values of Pancasila are becoming undoubtedly and increasingly marginalised. Pancasila gets a "show of rhetoric",³ but its essence is not reflected in the behaviour of the nation's children.

In various corners of life, the noble values of Pancasila have been displaced. Politeness, tolerance, consideration, mutual cooperation, and courteousness are hard to find, while ethical and legal violations are close to normal. The economic sector paints a clear picture of the consequences of capitalism: exploitation of the environment and natural resources in many places cannot be reined in; though they still exist, nationalism and patriotism are constantly battered by a pragmatic mentality; love for the nation is displaced by an indifference towards others. Some of these values have been pushed away by liberalism, radicalism and extremism. The overwhelming tide of globalisation, democratisation, science, technology, and information media has created unprecedented problems on a national scale.

³ This phrase was used by political writer Radhar Panca Dahana dalam satu tulisan mengenai nasib demokrasi yang selalu mengundang kritik, perdebatan, diskuruis tiada habisnya, baca Radhar Panca Dahana, *Kebudayaan dalam Politik: Kritik pada Demokrasi*, Penerbit Bentang, Yogyakarta, 2015, hlm. 364.

One serious problem is the wide-scale crisis of tolerance,⁴ or rather intolerance.⁵ Many problems originate from intolerance, namely a lack of respect for those of different faith, politics or ethnicity.⁶ This is certainly serious given that intolerance is diametrically opposed to the very foundation of the state's conception, namely diversity whether in thinking, ideology, ethnicity, language, tradition, culture, gender, politics, faith or religion, resulting in a compromise and mutual agreement. The founders of the nation did not let their differences get in the way of uniting to free Indonesia.

But today, tolerance has taken a hit. Now, diversity is a sensitive issue, threatening conflict amongst fellow citizens. Groups are labelled as "others" or "them", often being placed in the role of opponents to be defeated. This condition is widespread, penetrating the social, political, cultural and other spheres of life. A simple example is the growing roar of social media users—"netizens"—replete with insults, ridicule, bullying and attacks because of differences in perspective, opinion and life choices. The worst of these amount to hoaxes, hate speech, provocation, and even calls for conflict on a greater and more concrete scale.

Slowly but surely, these conditions are undermining our Indonesian-ness, shaking the social cohesion. We see the signs in the growing distrust and suspicion amongst citizens and the crumbling empathy and social solidarity. There is a rising call to impose certain dominant truths upon everybody regardless of their own views. Such a movement can

⁴ According to Diana L. Eck, tolerance arises from parties in a position of strength. Diana says, "I can be tolerant towards many minority groups if I am in power, but if I am from a minority group myself, then what meaning does tolerance have?" Diana L. Eck "A New Religious America: Managing Religious Diversity in a Democracy: Challenges and Prospects for the 21st Century" in the MAAS International Conference on Religious Pluralism in Democratic Societies in Kuala Lumpur, 20–21 August 2002. In defining and implementing tolerance, there are two possible interpretations: negative and positive. Negative tolerance involves ignoring, avoiding, not intervening or not harming members of an out-group. Positive tolerance means helping or supporting the existence of such a group. Masykuri Abdullah, *Pluralism and Harmony in Religion*, Kompas Publishing, Jakarta, 2001, pg. 13

⁵ Likewise, intolerance can be interpreted both positively and negatively. Positive intolerance is consistent and strict observance of impartiality. Meanwhile, negative intolerance covers disrespectful behaviour to others, including violence, burning down places of worship, prevention of religious practice or persecution.

⁶ This distinction is according to Italian philosopher Norberto Bobbio, in F. Budi Hardiman, "Toleransi Atas Intoleransi", *Harian Kompas*, 30 May 2012.

only give rise to an unwinnable war amongst groups. Perhaps the greatest loss will be the shattering of national integration.

At some point, these attitudes stand firm in the way of attaining the vision held by the founders of the nation and carry us further and further from the very values promoted by the Pancasila. Soekarno said on this matter,⁷

"...The Indonesia that we have founded must be built upon cooperation. In other words, the very foundation of all values of the Pancasila is cooperation. This is to say that the principle of faith must itself contain the spirit of mutual cooperation (a faith that admits of varied cultures, that is accommodating and tolerant) not a faith of exclusion and aggression...".

Thus, it is important to recognise that the erosion of tolerance has a causal relationship (*causa verband*) with the nation's extraordinary difficulty to return to a state of unity in the face of the differences found amongst society. The noble values of the Pancasila are fading from view in both the mentality and the behaviour of the Indonesian people. In almost all walks of life, Indonesia appears to be diverging from its founding values and distancing itself evermore from the vision and mission enshrined in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution.

Tolerance and the Pancasila as a Working Ideology

To overcome the problems described above, inevitably, the key is in educating the nation's children of the importance of the Pancasila. The valuable role that difference and diversity has played in Indonesia's history, in its journey to independence, must be emphasised. Moreover, diversity was an inherent trait amongst the framers of the 1945 Constitution themselves, which represents a triumph in unity over division. It is well documented in the literature that the nation was founded by a diverse group who were brought together by

⁷ Yudi Latief, *Negara Paripurna: Historisitas, Rasionalitas dan Aktualitas Pancasila*, PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Jakarta, 2011, pg. 19

their shared vision of freedom for their nation. They had their differences beforehand, but they were able to reach an agreement and form a nation, not by denying their diversity but simply by not highlighting it.

In the formulation of the constitution, the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Independence (*BPUPKI*) demonstrated just how the challenges of diversity can give way to unity when helped by a shared attitude of tolerance. With their different backgrounds and schools of thought, the framers of the constitution unsurprisingly had a variety of views regarding the characteristics of the nation they hoped to build. Nevertheless, the race of ideas ultimately reached common ground owing to the mutual willingness to respect one another and their respective differences.

It was from this context that the five founding principles of the state, as contained in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, were born and contained tolerance for diversity as one of their main bases. The first principle, faith in the one and only God, emphasises the character of Indonesia as a religious nation state. The second, a just and civilised humanity, means that every Indonesian citizen receives fair and civilised treatment and that human rights will be upheld so that everyone has the same rights and obligations without being discriminated against. The third principle, a united Indonesia, emphasises unity based on awareness and respect for differences and diversity of backgrounds. This principle was held dear precisely because, from the very beginning, it was understood that diversity was at the heart of the establishment of the nation. The fourth principle, democracy guided by wisdom in consultation/representation, represents a distinctive character and value of the nation, namely togetherness and prioritisation of deliberation when determining something for the common interest. The fifth principle, social justice for all Indonesians, is the ultimate hope of the Pancasila and what can be achieved under its guidance.

These principles signify that the Pancasila stands for tolerance. The nation is a home to citizens from all walks of life, or as Soekarno said, “a nation for all by all”, meaning that there is simply no room for the ego of any one party to take hold and grow. And this must be upheld and actualised continuously so that the values of tolerance and of the Pancasila live on and perpetuate as a “working ideology”.

Nitizens: The Fifth Estate

It is a duty that runs through all elements of the nation to actualise and proclaim the value of tolerance in the Pancasila and ensure its presence in all dimensions of life. The goal, of course, is for the Pancasila to exist as a solution and a point of reference in every challenge faced by the state. Thus, collaboration and synergy amongst all components of the nation are needed to present an effective strategy in accordance with the current situation.

It must be stressed that the actualisation of the Pancasila and its values should not solely be the job of the government. All components of the nation have a shared responsibility. Besides the sheer immensity of the task making it impossible for the government to achieve alone, we have also observed over time as the government has experienced a reduction of powers. Once all-powerful, the government has gradually shared more and more of its powers with other components of the nation.

In the realm of state administration, power is divided into the three branches of state, namely the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. These three branches of power are appointed to carry out their respective functions within the limits determined by the constitution. It is through these three branches that state policy is produced to be implemented at all levels of the state and by all components of the nation. In this light, the state certainly appears powerful.

Since the earliest development of human rights law and democracy in the 17th and 18th centuries, the presence of the press and mass media has been influencing the three branches of power and their policies. From the perspective of Libertarian Theory and Freedom of Press, the role of the press is to monitor the actions of the government and hold its institutions accountable. Freedom of the press is necessary to ensure that citizens have greater access to the truth and that they be protected from arbitrary policies.⁸ Thus, the press applies an element control to the government, earning it the unofficial title, “The Fourth Estate”, essentially the fourth pillar of power. Consequently, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government cannot be considered all powerful as they were before the advent of a free press.

Furthermore, the emergence of a civil society through the establishment of non-government organisations has also contributed to the reduction of powers of the three pillars of state power. As with the free press, civil society has a certain influence over the government and its policies and is often referred to as a form of pressure group. As a pressure group, civil society attempts to influence government policy without attempting to control the government directly. Thus far, the free press and civil society have both helped oversee the implementation and administration of government.

In the past decade, state administration has entered a new era with the development of digital information and communication technology. The rise of online social media created a new demographic of *netizens* who wielded a new power to influence state policy. An article by Hermawan Kertajaya from 10 years ago called these netizens “a new power of the new wave”.⁹ In his article, Kertajaya tells how the netizens were born of a dream of

⁸ S. Siebert, Fred, et al. *Empat Teori Pers*, Jakarta, Intermassa, 1986, pg. 2

⁹ Hermawan Kertajaya, *Netizen: Kekuatan Baru di Dunia New Wave*, kompas.com, 1

Michael Hauben in 1995. As the Internet was beginning its rise, Hauben dreamt of a community made of members connected via the Internet.¹⁰

Hauben's dream certainly came true. Now, a person no longer holds only an identity as a citizen, but also a global identity as embodied in life through the Internet, a netizenship. The term 'netizen' is derived from the words 'Internet' and 'citizen'. The netizen is a resident in the virtual world, complete with a civilian identity in the form of avatars and usernames, a home in the form of a homepage or profile, a postbox for correspondence in the form of e-mail addresses, and telephone lines in the form of VoIP: Voice over Internet Protocol. Netizens can navigate the internet with a browser, such as Firefox, Internet Explorer and Opera, as their vessel.¹¹

The article confirmed Geoff Livingstone's position that "social media has assumed its place in the larger media mix. It has become the fifth estate."¹² Social media, according to Geoff Livingstone, has taken on an active role in the great media organism; it has become the fifth power. Thus, the community of Netizens conducting their lives on the Internet constitute the Fifth Estate alongside the executive, legislative, the judicial branches of government and the press.

A top-down system of policy, truth and opinion cannot sustain in a digital world. This is the era of free and open, pervasive communication; anyone can produce information or news. These netizens are not merely consumers but can become content creators and providers of information. By simply uploading videos, photos or other media relating to government policy, netizens "have a voice", which they can use to express their identities, opinions and aspirations and disseminate information of all kinds.

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ *Op. cit.*

¹² Geoff Livingstone, *Welcome to The Fifth Estate: How to Create and Sustain a Winning Social Media Strategy*, Bartleby Pr, 2011, pg. 9

Backed by the content-based economy of social media, netizens can muster the strength and amplify their voices to affect mass opinion. If a post or upload is responded to or shared by enough people, then their potential to influence the attitudes and behaviour of the citizenry at large and even to influence the policy makers grows commensurably. In various public sectors, the collective voice of netizens on social media creates significant pressure, which is proven in shifts and progress in the nation's policies.

What's more, there is now a sub-category of netizens known as "influencers", netizens who have amassed huge numbers of fans or followers. These Internet celebrities, who can be found on platforms such as Youtube, Tik Tok, Instagram and blogs, can heavily influence whether their followers engage or don't engage in certain activities, even becoming role-models for their followers. As such, influencers represent a new power for spreading and promoting ideas as well as products and services to other netizens.

Influencers: A New Conduit for Grounding the Pancasila

Generally speaking, influencers are netizens whose abilities, skills, or expertise along with their unique personas and interesting content have garnered them a large number of followers. The more followers the wider distribution their content sees. Not surprisingly, influencers have strong bonds with and influence over their followers.

Influencers gain their followers with consistent output of content that suits their style, character and taste. It cannot be denied that the current generation has a unique style, best characterised by expressive, simple, creative content with a clear message. Whatever the influencer uploads attracts more followers and makes them more perceptible to influence.

With this in mind, if the goal is to ground the values of the Pancasila, in particular to promote tolerance among others, collaborating with social media influencers, or at least involving them in the project, is the right step to take.

Appealing to the influencers who embody the style of today's youth is an essential strategy for returning the Pancasila to the mainstream in the digital era. Partnering with influencers will increase awareness of the values of Pancasila. In the hands of influencers, content that contains Pancasila values, especially the value of tolerance, can be packaged and displayed in an original, innovative, attractive, and contemporary way. Not to mention the value of having these ideas presented to the public by the celebrities they idolise and imitate.

The hope is that collaboration with social media influencers will become a new conduit in the effort to re-emphasise the Pancasila, providing new power to overcome the challenges that have marginalised these important values and raise them instead to the operational-implementative level. Thus, through collaboration with "The Fifth Estate", it is hoped that the values of tolerance in the Pancasila will find new momentum in the digital era, receive greater acceptance in the mainstream and ultimately penetrate the collective mindset and attitude of the nation's youth.

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