

Indonesia: A Godly Nation

Arief Hidayat¹

One night before 1st June 1945, Soekarno spoke with KH. Masjkur, Wahid Hasyim, Kahar Muzakir, and Yamin. From this conversation, it is clear that values of divinity played an important role in determining the basis of the state right from the start. On this, Soekarno said,

“...throughout history, Indonesians have sought God. Without knowing where God is or who God is, they have looked to trees, to wood and to stones. Thus, our country has always been divine. The Javanese era was a divine era. Divine. And Islam? Divine. If the Indonesian nation is a divine nation, write that. Record that divinity. And what is next for the Indonesian people?”

This discussion paints a picture of Indonesia’s history as a nation built upon the founding fathers’ belief that the Indonesian people are a religious people, which is expressed in the phrase, “almighty essence (*dzat yang maha kuasa*)”. Certainly, this phrase arises from a fundamental belief that the Indonesian people are God’s creatures, which is ontologically founded in observable and logical truth.

Furthermore, if we look deeper, this prioritization of divine values coloured the framing of the 1945 Constitution. In BPUPKI sessions, divine values were the axis and foundation. Making decisions, especially by voting, is almost always preceded by prayer. Likewise, after agreements have been reached, prayer and thanksgiving to God are always performed. For example, before voting to determine whether the state would be unitary or federal, Moezakir invited the members of the BPUPKI to first observe a moment of silence, asking God that the decisions made not be subject to unholy influences.

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Thoughts of the divine accompanied the founding fathers throughout their discourse. Agus Salim, for example, who contributed to the planning of the preamble of the Constitution, was very well aware that no one among the BPUPKI members harboured any doubts about their belief in the one and only God. In his work, entitled *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* Salim states that belief in the One and Only God provided the basis for faith that the independence of the nation and the motherland would be obtained through the grace and strength of God Almighty in accordance with His will.

Soekarno shared this view. In his speech on 1st June 1945, he invoked God by name repeatedly throughout the speech. Soekarno put forward divinity as an essential part of the nation and state that he wished to build, asserting that the proclamation was God's destiny. The event of the proclamation was to fall on a holy day, the 17th. The night before his speech, Soekarno asked for God's mercy as the Creator and as the Divine Source of Guidance and Inspiration.

From this description description, we have a picture of a nation of godly people who wished to establish a state that would also be godly. This article intends to affirm the conception of Indonesia as a godly state with manifest, divine values and attributes. All citizens of the nation, both state administrators and citizens, have equal opportunity to contribute to the divine virtues both of the state and of the Indonesian nation.

The *Pancasila* and Divine Values

The strength founding fathers' belief in the divine and their desire to establish a godly state was clearly encoded into the state ideology of belief in the One and Only God, which we can find in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution. The expression, "Belief in the One and Only God" Soekarno is said to have received when visiting Sheikh Abbas Abdullan, a warrior cleric in Padang Japang, during the period of transition from Dutch rule to Japanese. When Soekarno asked about what would be best for Indonesia if the nation were to achieve

independence, Shaykh Abbas replied, "The country should be founded upon belief in the One and Only God."

So it was that belief in the One and Only God became the first principle of *Pancasila*. As the first precept, this faith is the very spirit for all other principles of *Pancasila*. According to Jimly Asshiddiqie, the first and precept illuminates the other four precepts. Hazairin wrote, that of the five principles of *Pancasila*, there is one precept that has a special position, namely the precept of belief in the One and Only God. Why? Because this precept lays outside the creation of the human mind. Only this first precept arises not out of human culture. Thus, said Hazairin, it is something immortal, eternal, unchanging; it cannot be influenced by humans, nor can it be subjected to human will and desire. Therefore, the first precept of *Pancasila*, belief in the One and Only God, provides the foundation for the Republic of Indonesia.

Belief in the One and Only God contains an explicit acknowledgment of the existence of God as the Creator. This divine value of *Pancasila* shows that the very existence of the state, the nation and the Indonesian people originate in God, the source of all goodness. It is the moral foundation and the religious dimension of the very worldview of the state.

The values of *Pancasila* are read and interpreted hierarchically. The value of faith is the highest value because it is absolute. All other values and goodness are derived from this value. An action is said to be good if it does not conflict with God's values, rules and laws. In reading *Pancasila* too, the principle of faith is manifested in the character of the Indonesian nation, which is just, civilised and humanitarian. In Jimly's view, faith in the One and Only God determines the quality and degree of a person's humanity amongst others, just as a just and civilised society make a nation respectable amongst nations.

The values inspired by Pancasila, to borrow the words of Soekarno, are cultural and civilized divinity. That is, ethical values derived from the prophetic values of religions and national

beliefs, namely liberty, justice, brotherhood, godliness and tolerance. Accordingly, Hatta revealed that the principle of faith would give rise naturally to truth, justice, kindness, honesty and brotherhood. The principle of faith invites the Indonesian people to develop social ethics in public-political life by fostering a sense of humanity and unity, developing deliberation and social justice.

Faith in the One and only Godhead is not a principle exclusive to the space of religious belief, but rather facilitates living together in a country and in a society with a variety of religions and beliefs. The founding fathers did not interpret the principle of faith in a purely theological or philosophical sense; it was not presented as pertaining to a certain religion or specific philosophical claims. God is interpreted in the context of practical life, and the value of faith is practiced in everyday life, through, for example, being fair to others, being honest and being hospitable, so that conflict or alienation may be avoided. The fundamental characteristics of the state are derived from these principles and values.

If *Pancasila* is likened to a tree, the first principle is its root, the second its trunk and the third its fruit. The fourth principle is the fruit after it has been processed, whereby this processing is an analogy for the representative deliberations that give rise to government. The fifth principle is perhaps the seed of that fruit, containing the very goal of the nation: social justice for all Indonesians. The main essence of these values of *Pancasila* lies in the value of faith in the One and Only God. Without that value, all of the others are void of meaning. As such, the value of faith contained in the first principle is the glue that holds together all of the values contained in the following principles and the spirit that animates them.

From this it is clear, in the context of *Pancasila* and the value of faith, that everything grows from the divine. This is what Yudi Latief calls the illumination perspective. That is, the Indonesian people hold the view that all things in the universe arrange into pairs and are interdependent, which is the emanation of a single power, namely the One and Only God.

Divine values used as the basis or spirit of state administration do not come from only certain religions or beliefs, but are based on universal principles of religious teachings and beliefs. All religions and beliefs in Indonesia, of course, teach the values of goodness. That is the essence of the value of faith.

The 1945 Constitution: Recognising the Presence of God in all Aspects of National Life

The recognition of God's existence is further stated in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution: "...by the grace of Allah the Almighty and driven by a noble desire...". This demonstrates precisely Agus Salim's claim that no one doubts faith in the One and Only God. The preamble to the Constitution contains this divine dimension, which is then embodied in its articles.

In that context, the Constitution can be said to adhere to the notion of theo-nomocracy, in that it is based on the rule of law and inspired by values of faith in God. The Constitution contains both a foundation of morality and a direction for the nation–state that refer to faith as a source of ethics and spirituality in state life. Reading Paragraph IV of the Preamble of the Constitution, with a hierarchical interpretation, as Hazairin said, the precept of faith in the One and Only God is the source and of other precepts. Thus, the 1945 Constitution implicitly and explicitly provides a directive that Indonesia is a devout nation, but neither a religious state nor a secular state. This means that all beliefs, actions and behaviors of both state administrators and citizens are lit by divine light.

In this regard, the Indonesian Constitution has a unique character. In liberal countries, the constitution tends to emphasise the regulation of political life and human rights. Its constitution has the character of a political constitution. In communist countries and other countries, the constitution emphasises social and economic policy.

In Indonesia, the 1945 Constitution emphasises not only the regulation of these matters but also provides guidance for all aspects of the administration of state life. In this understanding, the 1945 Constitution bears three characters, namely a political constitution, an economic constitution, and a social constitution. Indeed, Jimly Asshiddiqie also wrote of the 1945 Constitution as a cultural constitution.

The 1945 Constitution is a political constitution. This is because the 1945 Constitution contains provisions regulating the composition of the state, the relationship between state institutions and the relationship between the state and citizens. This means that all political activities are carried out solely based on the Constitution. It also contains the principles of democracy and of nomocracy, which have finally become common political choices. For this reason, the constitution as the highest law serves as a political guide on the limitation of power and the application of political ethics.

Indonesia's Constitution is also a social and economic constitution, providing guidance for society and relationships amongst citizens. In addition, because the 1945 Constitution also regulates how the national economic system should be structured and developed, the Constitution is also undeniably the guideline for all activities of the economic system. In particular, Article 33 of the Constitution prioritizes the common interests of the community, without neglecting the interests of individuals.

The function of the Constitution should also be understood in a cultural context. Article 32 of the 1945 Constitution, for example, stipulates, "The state shall advance the national culture of Indonesia amongst the civilisations of the world by assuring the freedom of society to preserve and to develop cultural values. (2) The state shall respect and preserve local languages as national cultural treasures." The provisions of Article 32 paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution were developed in line with the provisions of Article 36, which states, "The State Language is Indonesian". This means that the implementation of Indonesian as the

state language must not supersede the obligations and responsibilities of the state to respect and maintain various regional languages throughout Indonesia.

This view of the Constitution as a political, social, economic and cultural guide recognises that there is not a single aspect that is not regulated in the Constitution. On that basis, given that the 1945 Constitution is inspired by *Pancasila*, then all aspects of state administration in turn are guided by God.

Thus it follows from the first precept that the state is the embodiment of the goal of the Indonesian people as creatures of God. Therefore, all matters relating to the implementation and administration of the state, whether in the political, legal, economic, social, or cultural fields, must all be imbued with the values of the One and Only God.

Politics must be godly, prioritising morals and ethics. As such, bringing religion or national beliefs into political matters as a state process is a legitimate act. The most important thing is that this is conducted under the auspices of *Pancasila*, which underlies Indonesia as a godly country. In law, both the formulation and enforcement of laws, including the formulation of state policies, must be based on divine values. This is what distinguishes the main elements of the rule of law in Indonesia from other legal states. Divine values provide a yardstick to determine whether law is good or bad, constitutional or unconstitutional.

Divine values that represent honesty, ethics and justice should be the main pillars in all economic activities. Similarly, culture, science and thought must all observe God's guidance. The acceptance of God's truths leads man to understand the limitations of himself, which are reflected in behavior illuminated by divine light.

There is No Room for Ungodliness

The implication of the Constitution is imbued by *Pancasila* with divine values as its very roots, such that in the practice of national and state life, faith must be a source of ethics and

spirituality. Therefore, in Indonesia there should be no attitudes nor any acts in opposition to faith or godliness. Within the framework of divine values, there is no space that can be occupied by godless thoughts of any kind or origin.

The devout Indonesian state demands every citizen to act right, in accordance with the truth of God's word, which manifests in the values of the nation. Being right in this case not only refers to the correspondence theory of truth, the coherence theory of truth, and the pragmatic theory of truth, but moreover it unites the three theories under the umbrella of divine truth. Thus, if the ultimate hope for our state is social justice for all Indonesian people, "*toto tentrem kertoraharjo, baldatun toyyibatun*", there should be no attitudes or behaviors that anger God. A concluding text produced by the BPUPKI, contained the following interesting statement:

"Almighty God [...] gives life to just and good conduct [...] whereas any time the way is lost, there is a divine guidance back to the right path."

Finally, an excerpt from the poem *Kemana Indonesiaku (Where has my Indonesia gone?)* by Emma Ainun Najib:

God's intense diligence reflects in every drop of dew that He holds in a leaf,
God's endless love embraces every speck of dust that occupies His realm in space,
But we love our fellow beings,
We care not for values,
Even to God, we are not committed.

The line, "... even to God, we are not committed" truly awakens us to the reality of our present. Thus, the actualisation of divine values must be promoted continuously as the basis of morality. The principle of faith that we find in *Pancasila* commands all Indonesian citizens to behave as beings of faith in the One and Only God. The principle is a meeting point, a stepping stone and a destination, so that in every activity, Indonesian people always act as

God desires and refrain from that which angers God. It should be remembered that all of our thoughts, words, and deeds as human beings, as God's caliphs on Earth, in time will be held accountable before God. That is the true foundation of the divine state of Indonesia.