

# Demilitarism : An agenda of reproducing Tolerance and Human Rights In Indonesia

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## **Abstract**

*Praktik mekanisme pemerintahan yang bersifat militeristik di Indonesia, yang bisa terjadi karena peran yang ekstensif dari militer di negeri ini, mewarisi kita dengan realita yang merusak, yaitu bahwa militerisme diterima secara luas dan mendalam di Indonesia. Dalam pengertian apa ia merusak? Mengapa demikian? Artikel ini berusaha untuk menjernihkan bahaya yang telah ditinggalkan oleh militerisme bagi pelembagaan demokrasi dalam negara pluralistik atau menekankan pentingnya membalikkan proses reproduksi militerisme. Dengan menunjukkan bahaya militerisme yang menghalangi proses demokrasi secara umum, dan memajukan toleransi serta perlindungan Hak Asasi Manusia secara khusus, artikel ini berusaha untuk menawarkan beberapa model untuk memajukan proses demiliterisasi.*

**Keywords:** *demilitarism, human rights, political education*

## **Introduction**

The prolonged exercise of militaristic mode of governance in Indonesia, which has been possible due to the extensive role of the military in the country, leaves us with a disturbing reality, namely that militarism is widely and deeply accepted in Indonesia.<sup>28</sup> In what sense it is disturbing? Militarism is a disturbing reality in that it hinders our attempt to institutionalize a democracy, that is a peaceful instrument for managing conflict in a pluralistic society. Why is that so? Militarism is a living social construction which provides a practical reference for dealing with a particular issue in a militaristic way. The reproduction of militarism in our community has made us overstate the importance of force in dealing with public affairs, and hence pose us with severe problems of tolerating political-religious differences and protecting of human rights.

This article attempts to shed a light on the danger that militarism has been leaving for institutionalising democracy in the pluralistic country or underlying the importance of reversing the process of reproducing militarism. Having demonstrated the severity of militarism in hindering the process of democracy in general, and the

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<sup>28</sup> Purwo Santoso (ed.), *Melucuti Serdadu Sipil: Pengembangan Wacana Demiliterisme dalam Komunitas Sipil*, Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2001.

promotion of tolerance and protection of human rights in particular, this article attempt to offer some model for advocating a process of demilitarism.

### The military role and militerism

The prevalence of militerism in Indonesia explicates the problem of reviving tolerance as among different factions in the society, as well as tolerance within the state society relationship. The severity of the problem shall not be understated given the fact that Indonesia is religio-culturally very diverse. Ethno-nationalism at local level, that is the mobilization of solidarity within a particular ethnic-group, has created tread and tension with the civic-nationalism at national level.<sup>29</sup> Some ethnic groups equipped them selves with some kind of military wings –as it appears in Papua and Aceh –in defending their ethnic nationalism.

Militerism also guard religious solidarity, even within each faction in a particular religion. Both the so-called modernist Islam have their own military -like organizations, ready to take firms actions against each other. The mobilization of religious solidarity was seen as the easiest pathway for channeling people's political participation within the banner or representative democracy. The obsession to have political representatives at the House of Representatives from their own ethnic or religious group has been facilitated by a military-like group protection. So within the tradisionalist Islam "faction" there is a military-like organization, appear in public to defend their political faction. The same thing applies to the modernist faction.

Each of the major political parties owned their own task force, known as *satgas*.<sup>30</sup> The main religious-based mass organizations also have their own *satgas*. Each of them, i.e. the *satgas* and the *hansip* appear in public almost exactly as the military. They, not only use military symbols and uniform, but more importantly, represent the solidarity and the militancy of their own group. The point of the matter here is that the militerism facilitates the need for mobilizing solidarity for competing in public arena. The government's bureaucracy is expected to be the principle agent for civilian defiance known as *pertahanan sipil* (*hansip*).

The above mention stories underlines an interesting phenomena, not only the state rely on the use of militaristic way of doing things. Indonesia's religio-cultural diversity has been marked by the existence of fragmented socio-political grouping, each of them prepares to defend their own group by employing a method which has been deployed by the state : militerism.

The Indonesian state has been engaging in an effectively process of socializing set of values –such as nationalism and patriotism –which make citizen loosing sense of the danger of militerism for institutionalizing democracy. Moreover, the deep-rooted militerism in Indonesia not only makes the military easily gain political supports and

<sup>29</sup> Antony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1971.

<sup>30</sup> Each of them has their own name, but people call them general term as *satgas*.

leverages but also makes the citizen has no constraint in utilizing a militaristic means for achieving their collective goals.

It is important to be clear that, any nation state is bound to have a military, as an agency responsible for exercising the privilege in monopolizing the use of violence as the last resort in managing public affairs. I need to make myself clear that notion of demiliterism in this article is not to refuse the existence of the military for establishing a democratic state, but rather, to constraint, if not to completely stop, the reproduction of military way doing thing within the civilian community. We, indeed, need a strong military for effectively governing the state, yet, the state need to restraint the use of military unless it is inevitable.

Democracy become an unthinkable if the civilian community thinks and behaves in an exactly the same mode with that of the military. If the civilian share the authority of the military to use violent as a legitimate way of solving political problems, the notion of the 'state as the only agency authorize the use of violence' becomes meaningless. Long time ago, Marx Weber advised us to characterized the state as the only agency authorized to deploy violence as a means of governing the society. Nonetheless, it is also important to recall that excessive reliance of sate on the use of violence eventually undermine its legitimacy to govern.

With regard legacy of the military role and influences, Indonesia faces two interrelated problems : militerization and militerism. The first manifest in the exercise of military controls on the extra-military, if not specifically civilian post: such as cabinet, bureaucracy, financial institution and so on. It is a matter of the sitting of the military officer in the civilian post.<sup>31</sup> The second issue, militerism, is a matter of reproduction of the military way of doing things on the extra-military affairs. Such a reproduction is taking place both within the government agencies as well as within the society/community.

The significance of the terms of militerism within civilian community emphasizes the fact that, the military will be able to maintain the military's dominant role in public live. The most explicate example is the idea of sparating the police from the military organization (previously known as ABRI or Indonesian Armed Forced). The public has heavily applauded such a separation, but in fact it is merely an organizational separation. The police retain its militaristic ways of doing things, and hence such a separation is culturally insignificant.

In the rest of this article, the notion of militerism or demiliterism denote the deployment or withdrawal of militaristic mode of thingking and doing things within the civilian community. Democratic society shall restrain the use of militaristic mode of thingking and doing. Since tolerance and protection of human rights are meant to be

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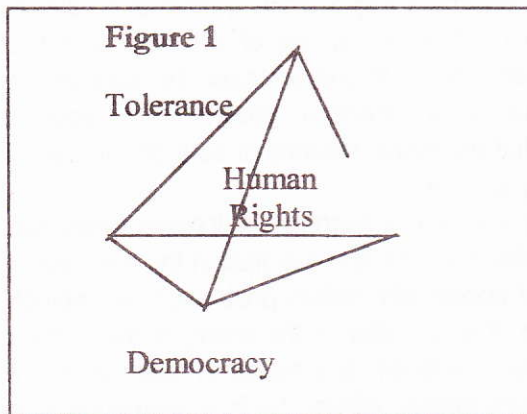
<sup>31</sup> In this regard, the military during the post-Suharto government has been a significantly engaging in the process withdrawl. Even though some cabinet member are having military background and the military retain its seat un the representative institutions both at the local as well at the national levels, the appearance of the military officers as public figure has been decreed under the banner of military reform.

the pillars of democratic society, militarism is contra-production to the attempt to revive tolerance and human rights. The section discusses this issue in more detail.

### Demilitarism, tolerance and human rights

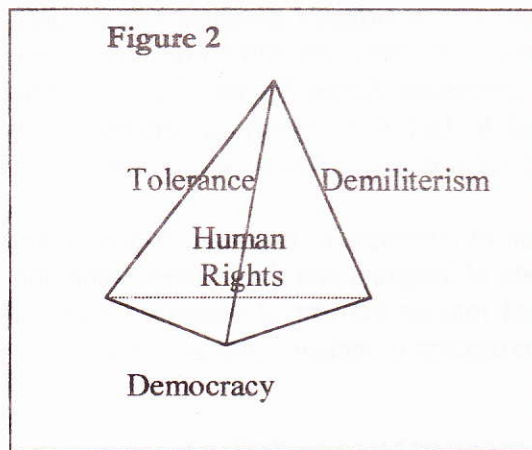
This article suggests the importance of linking the issue of promoting tolerance and human rights for two reasons. First, demilitarism is an important pillar, which joints the two separate issues. Second, it offers us a more realistic frame for dealing with the issue, namely by approaching those two issues in an indirect way. These two points will be spelled out in the following.

#### *Demilitarism as a supporting pillar*



Both tolerance and human rights are the necessity element for institutionalizing democracy. They in themselves are reinforcing one another.

Protection of human rights requires strong commitment to tolerance, and being tolerance is much easier to do if we accept the importance of protecting human rights for ourselves. If we may state it negatively, the failure to reproduce both tolerance and human rights manifest in the expression of militarism. The interrelationship of the two issues can be presented in figure 1.



The fact that the two issues are mutually reinforcing does not mean that they are self-sustaining. Militarism become the best choices for everyone if there is no guarantee that our tolerant will not be responding by the other's tolerance, and our respect of human rights is met with violation of human rights. For this reason, demilitarism is an imperative for allowing the elements of democratic society operates in a synergic mode. Figure 2 shows that demilitarism, in fact, provide a necessity

support for allowing the self-propelling mechanism between promoting tolerance and human rights can be sustained.

Militerism is expression of intolerance. It is unproblematic only insofar as there is no need to respect human rights. By putting forward the issue of militerism in public eyes, it is hoped that we can approach the issue of tolerance and human rights in an indirect way. Such an indirect approach to deal with the issue of tolerance and protection of human rights, however, is not necessarily worst than the current attempt to deal with those issues in a direct manner. Why is that so?

The direct approach to those issues has been heavily normative. The explicate on is the predominantly legalistic approach to human rights issues. The protecting of human rights in Indonesia has been primarily relying on legal provision of various rights. Ironically, many of us have failed to learn that legal provision is not self-implementing. Some thing beyond legal provision are need to be done in order to make the law works, yet very few of us dedicated ourselves to do so. Obviously, we need to have a collective action to allow mechanism, infrastructre and resources as deployed to make human rights are self-propelling. The point here is that albeit if the normative scenario of protecting human rights is to be sought, we still need an indirect approach to the issue.

The way we approach the issue is as if the prevalence of intolerance and the disregard to human right are caused by the absence of people's understanding of the impotance of being tolerance or protecting human rights. Surely, it s not simply a cognitive problem, and therefore, giving the problem cognitive understanding on that issue give no guarantee that people will committed to tolerance and human rights. The prevalence of intolerance is deeply seated in society's socio-cultural construction, and hence various intermediate actions are required to deconstruct it. Advocating a process of demiliterism is one among them.

By approaching militerism/demiliterism as a cultural issue which is explicitly manifest in our daily life, we on the one hand be able to pin point the real and daily practices which we want to avoid or enhance. This is possible in one condition, namely that we militerism become a public concern.

### **Militerism as Problem of Political Education**

it is reasonable to perceive militerism as a partial expression of Indonesian political culture. As such, militerism is nurtured –intentionally or unintentionally –through the embedded process of education, particularly the political education. As Prof. Mochtar Buchori suggests, our education system, shapes at least indirectly our political culture. It is through political socialization that militerism became a “standard” of collective behavior in out political live. For this reason, our attempt to abandon militerism inevitably involves a process of restoring our political culture through educational means.

Given the fact that militarism is embedded in both our educational as well as our political system, it is important to note demilitarism process targets all political actors committed to militarism but also all of the stake holders within the educational community. Our schools has been played a critical role is shaping what kind of citizen we should be according to the government design. It is through this means that the state reproduces militarism.

The fact that the state maintains a great-deal of control of educational system in the country makes us unrealistic leave the process of educating demilitarism to the state. Moreover, the state is politically more beneficial to main militarism rather than not. Yet, leaving the process of demilitarism to the society is not easy either. Not only do the society expect the state plays a leading role as it has been, the general public feels nothing wrong with the prevalence of militarism. Demilitarism is shared by only a small minority of the public. They mostly the well-educated intellectual working mainly at the university which seed militarism as barrier to the ongoing process of democratization.

Putting demilitarism, as a public agenda is even more difficult if we keep thinking education means simply schooling. The notion of education has been oversimplified as formal education within which a formal authority in charge of designing what and how to teach. Many critics argues that the current model of formal education system alienates, instead of becoming more aware of, their environment. Inspired by Paulo Freire, Agustinus Mintara suggest that school be presented to the public as prison. Supratiknya describe education appears in public in a very threatening fashion like a ghost. This is because education has been understood as "transmitting a particular content (curriculum)", instead of "uncovering a reality" by habituating an independent thought.

Demilitarism is justifiable to be seen as educational problems in two separate ways. First, it is an educational issue at school because the state has been reproducing militarism within the current schooling system. The idea of nationalism, for example, has been presented in militaristic fashion. We have to put demilitarism as agenda for reforming the school system. Secondly, it is educational issue at general public, embedded in our daily life. In this regard, demilitarism falls under the category of informal education (instead of the formal or the non-formal one). Even though the first dimension of the problem is not less important, this article confines on the second one.

### **Searching for a model**

Many routes can be traced for searching a sosio-pedagogic model for allowing demilitarism an integral part of enhancing tolerance and human rights. This article only attempts to take one without implying that the other are worst. The model being offers is quite political, simply because the authors mastery is on that field.

Bearing in mind to the point being discussed so far, it is important to restate the characteristic of the pedagogy for demilitarism. First, it should be community-based rather than state-based. This means that we have to reverse our political framework of political education. In the past, the state responsible (actually enjoyed privileges) for designing or denying political education for the citizen. Political education has been devoted to impose compliance to government's wants, instead of enhancing the autonomy a citizen. People are being treated as object of governance instead of citizen to which their rights shall be fulfilled. In the future it is up to the people who are in charge of deciding what sort of government we want: that is the democratic one. Obviously, political education is also a matter of shaping government as well as shaping citizenship.

Second, it should relate education with daily life of the community. In this regard, different profession has different target and different method in engaging to the process of demilitarism. The academics can take part in widening and intensifying the discourse of demilitarism, up on which other social groups will be able to take their own part. Religious leaders, for example, would be significantly contributing to the process of demilitarism when they attempt to delegitimize militarism within their own religious community. Political leaders, which always claim to be agent of democracy, shall take part in delegitimizing militarism within their own political wings. In this regard, public participation in advocating demilitarism is highly contextual.

Suppose each social group is aware of the importance of fighting against militarism within their own competence, how can we be sure that they are willing to do so? It is important to bear in mind that militarism so far is favorable to each social group due to the absence of guarantee that other group is not threatening their own group. Militarism is a rational response to insecure group-feeling. This point leads us to underline the important of having a strong state, but the strength is not due to its ability and authority use violence to solve the socio-political problems, rather it is due to its ability to gain public trust and confidence. This means that the advocacy of militarism shall be in line with the consolidation of public trust to those who rule the state. This is the third element of the model. Trust is public investment that all the citizens need to invest in order to allow democratic mechanism works.

The fourth element is inter-group dialogue. Distrust among different social groups easily escalating into suspicion and hostility due to the almost absence of inter-group dialogue. The word "SARA" has been used by the government in the past to deny the importance of inter-group dialogue. We eventually left with a situation in which house of representative performs their role with a weak capability to dialogue their difference in order to manage their conflict.

The fifth element is the sense of public. We have been accustomed to manage collective interest under the banner of group identity. Our imagination of the public quite rarely goes beyond group's interest. There, however, many different way of organizing social entity: according to the religious affiliation, political affiliation, ethnic identity and so forth. The narrow sense of public we been accustomed to, make it difficult for us to engage in inter-group dialogue and building trust. I think; by now we have to learn the fact that the prevention of inter-group conflicts is more valuable than devoting ourselves to make own group win.

**Figure 3**



The social dynamics resulted from the actualization of the values described as element of demiliterism is presented in figure 3. The key issue here is to put learning process at the center pint of political education.

Having identified the fundamental and conceptual elements required for advocating demiliterism, it now the time to sell out the pedagogic model. The broadness of the scope of advocacy for demiliterism above mention shall not theathened us, because what we need is not to deliver the content of curriculum to the public. What we need is a process in within which each social-groups learns to understand the importance of those elements.

Pedagogic model we need for advocating demiliterism lays in the second box from the left in figure 3, that it learning from the existing socio-cultural reality, particulary the danger of militerism in defending public interest. The contemporary pedagogic theories emphasized the importance of education process to target the capability to learn. Since each individual or group more or lest is rational, the improvement of the learning capacity of the public will provide energy for changing their own live. That is to include the abandonment of militerism embedded in their own life.



### **Concluding notes**

This article has offered a somehow indirect, if not meandering, approach yet sensible, approach to deal with the issue of tolerance and human rights. Demiliternism provide a framework to deal with those issues simultaneously. Moreover, political perspective employed in this article offers a comprehensive framework for targeting strategic issue, which hopefully contribute to the broader agenda: democratization.

The phenomena of militerism in Indonesia society indicate the mix picture of civil society. It on the one hand shows the potential of the society to the independent to state, and on the other hand show the danger to democracy. Demiliternism can be seen as operational measure to nurture the civility of the public. In this case, demiliternism lead to the same destiny to hat of the enhancement of tolerant and protection of human rights.