

## Globalisation, Nationhood, and Religiosity: A Personal Experience

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### **Abstract**

*Nationhood is a learned response to globalisation, while nationalism may be a mere unproductive tribal glorification. Religiosity can significantly help a nation to make positive sense of globalisation and build up nationhood. Religiosity necessitates a long-ranging, learning, creative mind-process. This will eventually lead to the finding of the unique role of generations in space and time in the ever changing global landscape. Young generations shall take the risk of exercising their creative mind in finding their own unique role in history. Indonesian unique, positioning, role will largely be based upon its natural destiny as an archipelago with its vast diversity of natural resources —both terrestrial and marine-, and other social capital as an innovative sense making of those endowed natural resources. Neglecting this natural destiny has proved to be detrimental to its own development as imposed during Dutch colonization —the most rudimentary form of globalization-- of Indonesia for more than 300 years. Meaningful learning is key to nurture religiosity. It will help creating a more joyful, if difficult, Indonesian experience that shall lead to a healthy and productive nationhood. And at last, this kind of nationhood that will help Indonesian to benefit from globalization : becoming the winner, not the loser, of the globalization game.*

**Key words:** *Indonesia, globalization, nationhood, religiosity*

### **Introduction**

As we left the first decade of the the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the world is entering a different kind of crisis that will shape a new global landscape. Zakaria called it a post-American world. It would seem to be a post-European world as well. The US and Europe fell into a state financial crisis and suffered a significant contraction in economic growth. While Friedman said that this is merely a crisis of globalization, other global thinkers like Stiglitz said that this is a crisis of capitalism. In the mean time, China took a new role as the locomotive of global economic growth, together with the other BRICS (Brasil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) states. It is intriguing to ask where is Indonesia in the new global landscape ?

The global environment looks no better. The fight to reduce global warming proved not to be an easy one. Major agreement on the mechanism —like the Kyoto Protocol- to control environemt deterioration are now challenged. China, and the USA refused to adopt. We have seen its impacts in extreme weather, major floods in different places. This has put global food production into difficult situation since expected global harvests of food failed to achieve the target. Food scarcity may happen in countries not prepared to adapt with this climate changes. The CEO of Unilever recently said in a TV Program that if we are to live at European standard, we need 3 earths, and if to live at US standard, we will need 5 earths. This means that both Europe and US economcs model are things of the past.

In the face of these global landscape, Indonesia has been reforming itself since 1998, especially in politics, and economy immediately after the fell of the New Order. Direct election democracy and decentralization are two most distinct features of the era “reformasi”. However, we observed that both democracy and decentralization have failed to bring their promises : prosperity, and

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justice for all. Corruption is rampant, and many political figures and beurocrats have become criminals and put to jail. Although in the short-run Indonesia seems to be politically unstable, in the long run this democracy investment may prove to be positive for a stable investment climate.

Men are mean-seeking creatures, and as such I will explore the meaning of globalisation and nationhood from a personal experience perspective. In the last two years, I travelled to England toward the end of 2009 for a RINA Conference on Historical Ships in London. In the summer 2010, I accompanied 16 ITS students to Midland, Canada, for the Atlantic Challenge 2010, a Seamanship Contest. Then, I was involved in the Tremolino Project, a global, cross-cultural endeavour to promote maritime tradition amongst the young generation.

### **Nationhood: Assuming Significant Role in the New Global Landscape**

Nationhood is for me about Indonesia assuming a significant and meaningful role in the new global landscape. To take a significant role in the new world where Asia is the centre, Indonesia has to transform itself into a new powerhouse. States and regions compete to attract investments and skilled workforces. They compete for the best talents available for them. However, countries cannot compete only on the basis of their endowment factors like un-renewable natural resouces that will deplete quickly. At least they have to rely on renewable natural resources. Even better and highly preferred, they shall compete on the basis of human capital : their knowledge, attitude and creativity.

Florida has stipulated that national creativity depends much on three T factors : 1) technology infrastructures, espescially information Technology, 2) Talents, and 3) Tolerance. I would like to add Trust as the 4<sup>th</sup> factor. In this case, universities play major role in nurturing young talent not only technologically, but also culturally. A culture of tolerance and trust has to be promoted in education, and more importantly, in universities. Tolerance is not only good in an education context, ie. to promote inclusiveness, but also important for creativity growth. Investing in trust will make transacion costs minimal and the process swift. People working in a multi-cultural and mutual-trust context will find more opportunities to find and develop new ideas. Different cultures expose different ideas, perspectives and approaches. Innovation usually starts with combination or mating of exisiting ideas leading to new ideas and perspectives.

The USA has been the most creative place in the world during the last 100 years, espescially in the 20th century. However, since the attack on the World Trade Centre, known as the 9/11 event, the USA has been loosing its creativity and competitiveness by becoming less tolerant. Indeed, in the first decade of this 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are living in an increasingly less tolerant world, demonstrated primarily by the USA. The invasion of the US and its allies without the UN endorsement on Afghanistan, then Iraq, is well documented.

Quality higher education in the USA has been one major factor of its global dominance. Many students from different countries have been admitted into universities in the US making them to be the most plural universities in the world. This also explains why the US has been the most creative place on earth. However, since 9/11, the US has become less and less tolerant to immigrants. During the last 10 years, Europe has benefitted from this trend and admitted more non-european students into Europe, and therefore becomes more creative.

In these contexts, nationhood, is therefore finding our unique, conributive, nation role in the new global, post-american-and-europe landscape. It will not be an easy search for a really meaningful role. As nation is only a state of mind, nationhood is a never ending, and creative mind-process to find that role in the dynamic history of mankind. In a marketing paradigm, nationhood is a positioning problem. This has to be firstly based upon our bestowed nature of archipelago with a long, time-honored maritime tradition. To be a maritime nation is, I believe, our natural destiny. Secondly, our unique role has to be significantly contributive to solving global problems.

### **Atlantic Challenge: A Personal Global Experience**

Tasting what it means to be globalised, my almost 10 years involvement in the Atlantic Challenge is interesting to tell. The Atlantic Challenge is a biannual event of Boatbuilding Festival and Seamanship Contest for the young. ITS has participated in this event since 2002 in Rockland, Maine, the USA. Since then, the events have been organised in Toulon, France (2004), Genova, Italy (2006), Jakobstadt, Finland (2008), and Midland, Canada (2010). Several European countries (England, Wales, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Russia, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Basq/Spain), Canada, and the USA have actively participated in this international event. The USA team sometime included Japanese, Chinese, or Mexican. ITS is presently preparing for the Atlantic Challenge 2012 in Bantry, Ireland. I observed that alumnae of ITS Maritime Challenge have proved to be more mature graduates and highly employable, but also entrepreneurial.

However, the Atlantic Challenge is much more than just a race –rowing, sailing, etc-. it is more of preserving and revitalizing the maritime tradition in different parts of the world. Maritime tradition is in fact a global heritage of mankind. Building of traditional boats is an important part of the challenge, in addition to the seamanship skills development. For ITS as a technological university, building the wooden boat –makership- is considered to be essential in engineering education. I consider making small crafts like boats in workshops is key to meaningful learning and character building. Design and drafting alone is not enough for good training of future engineers. For the Atlantic Challenge 2012, ITS team is building Baruna employing some bamboo material innovation for the boat.

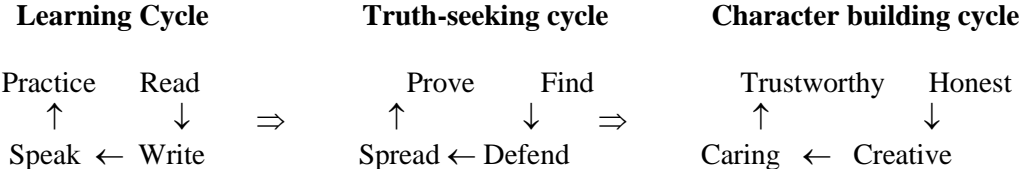
Mutual understanding between participants through the many activities during the 2-week events was a major feature of the Atlantic Challenge. Youngsters from different background in cultures and religion interacted actively to learn from each other of their diversified languages, aspiration, and values. It may prove to be an important investment in future global peace. Maritime tradition and the love to the sea eventually united them all.

During these cross-cultural, mutual respect interactions, we have found the importance of our own self-identity. We began to examine and reflect who we really are and what is unique about ourselves. We also began to ask what contribution we can share to help promote our common, maritime tradition. A new initiative, The Tremolino Project as proposed by Lance Lee, the founder of the Atlantic Challenge, was the by-product of the Atlantic Challenge activities. ITS has contributed two wooden boats in the project: Garuda and Lanceng Madura. The two boats are now exhibited in Rockland, Maine, the USA.

The Tremolino Project attempts to develop network of maritime tradition centres globally in which exchanges of apprentices, skills, and information are promoted. The maritime tradition centre is a facility in which maritime tradition can be learned, practiced and developed, especially for the young. The centre is aimed to be a model of sustainable, coastal community development.

**Religiosity**

The search for meaning is called learning. Learning can be defined as making (new) sense of our traditions (as accumulated experiences). If religion is to guide us in our search for truth, we may further define learning as nurturing the faith for truth in ourselves, and inspiring courage to take action in serving others –or creating new tradition-, then this kind of learning cannot be more religious. A learning cycle may look like the following : (experience/practice – read – write – speak). Now, true faith is based upon honesty, and truth cycle may look like this : (prove – find – defend – spread). If these two cycles are simultaneously exercised, characters of (trustworthy -- honest – creative – and caring) are built up gradually. See Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1. Cycles of learning, truth seeking, and character building**

We need at least three concepts to structure –or make sense of - our experiences. The first is the concept of space. The second is time, and the third is the concept of “I”. It should be immediately mentioned that these three are just concepts, not a concrete, or physical, entities. The meaning that we are looking for in any experience is beyond our sensual experiences. What we see, hear, smell, and perceive is not the complete reality, or do not arrange themselves for us to be meaningful. Meaning is found from interpreting these realities. Liberal arts may promote better understanding of space and time.

It is important to note that the problem in I (self-identity) will make learning difficult if not impossible. But since our presence, our “I”, is not the result of our own decision, we need another concept : He, to complete our meaning structure. He is the source of truth, or at least truth inspiring source. Religiosity is therefore a sufficient condition to complete our search for meaning. However, religiosity is a creative, mind-process that may be enhanced through the two previously mentioned cycles without which religiosity will be superficial and hollow of meaning. Religiosity is therefore different from religion symbolism. Religiosity rarely can be found in the noisy, demonstrative, ritual communion and congregation in grandeur mosques or churches in the presence of elites, but may be found more easily in the silence of individual contemplation, and impromptu actions in impoverished slums amongst the poor.

### **Conclusion**

Nationhood is a learned response to globalisation, while nationalism may be a mere unproductive tribal glorification. Religiosity can significantly help a nation to make positive sense of globalisation and build up nationhood. Religiosity necessitates a long-ranging, learning, creative mind-process. This will eventually lead to the finding of the unique role of generations in space and time in the ever changing global landscape. Young generations shall take the risk of exercising their creative mind in finding their own unique role in history.

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