<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>The role of media in facilitating a culture of peace - Indonesian case.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Nasution, Zulkarimein.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10220/3105">http://hdl.handle.net/10220/3105</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Paper No. 5
The Role of Media in Facilitating a Culture of Peace

- Indonesian case

Zulkarnain Nasution

1) Background.

Being the largest archipelago in the world, Indonesia consists of 13,677 islands which have a total land area of about 735,000 square miles stretching across a territory some 3,200 miles from east to west and 1,100 miles from north to south.

Indonesia is also the most populous country in Southeast Asia, with about 210 million people of diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. The population is not only separated geographically, but is also separated by its ethnic values, religion and culture. Administratively, Indonesia is divided into 31 (3 of which just recently declared) provinces, but ethnically it is divided into about 170 different ethnic groups which individually has its own tradition, language, dialect and history.

There are 250 different dialects still actively used throughout the nation. From religious perspectives, around 90% of the population are Muslims, 6 percent Christian, 2 percent Buddhist and 1 percent Hindu.

Cultural diversity and sheer size, however, present formidable obstacles. First, it is requires a really strong commitment from every elements of the society to build and maintain sense of unity. Secondly, there is an absolute need for mutual understanding among all ethnic and social groups in order to establish harmonious relationship.

Indonesia was occupied by the Dutch for 350 years until its independence in August 17, 1945. For more than half a century now, the country has been endeavoring to promote a national identity built upon its traditions and to improve the standard of living through various program of development.

Over the past few decades, Indonesia has experienced growing economic and social inequalities, particularly among the rural Javanese. By the mid-1990s a large slice of
Indonesia’s wealth was concentrated in the hands of the president’s family members and their associates. The economic inequalities have been exacerbated by the growth of the population, and in the 1990s resulted in rioting in several Indonesian towns.

Since the 1970s, several parts of Indonesia have also faced severe political instability. In late 1997 a collapse in Asian financial markets caused widespread antigovernment demonstrations. A legislative assembly appointed Suharto to a seventh term as president in March 1998. However, Suharto yielded to continued public pressure and resigned in May, ceding power to Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie, who had served as his vice president. Since 1999 Abdurrahman Wahid elected as a new president.

Peace pursuit has a special ties with Indonesian nation both historically and contextually. Since the beginning of its existence, this country already placing peace as one of main goals it is try to achieve. In the preambule of 1945 Constitution mentioned explicitly that the nation’s goal is to meet peace in the world.

In the contemporary situation, peace issues become especially relevant to the nation because of some problems it facing now. Inter-ethnic conflicts, political ruins, and economic crises are problems that really creating needs for peace, tolerance and mutual understanding.

This research topic on promoting culture of peace is also specially relevant with recent situation in Indonesia where in some areas conflict among people with different ethnical background still happened.

2) National ideology and efforts at promoting national unity and harmony.

Indonesia has its five principles or Pancasila which is consists of (1) Belief in One and Supreme God, (2) Just and civilized humanity, (3) the unity of Indonesia, (4) Democracy led by the wisdom of deliberations by the representatives, and (5) Social justice for the whole Indonesian people.

Pancasila is the only philosophy and ideology of the state and nation, whose basis is to guide and direct the nation. Formulated after the long and arduous struggle of national emancipation of the Indonesia people, Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution embody the...
integrated concept of the state in Indonesian society. Within this framework, the state promotes and strengthens the development of unity and harmony between the government and people, and in the life of man as an individual and in his relationship with society.

To put it in brief, the concept stresses the enhancement of unity and the harmonious relationship between government and people. This means harmony in the life of man as an individual as well as in his relations with God, society and nature, and in fulfilling his material and spiritual needs.

Since its cultural and geographical diversity are obvious, from the beginning Indonesian society really aware of their imperative needs to encourage the spirit of unity among them. This awareness could be traced back even to 72 years ago, on October 28, 1928, known as Sumpah Pemuda (Youth Oath) when Indonesian youth leaders take oath for their unity in country, nation, and language.

One of the most important ingredients for social integration is to have a communicative medium which in Indonesian case is the adoption of Bahasa Indonesia as the national and official language which is really functional. It is actively used as the language of education as well as the official language for government administration, mass media communication and any others function. It is the language that promotes national integration.

Our great religious traditions too have accrued a great deal of cultural elements that sometimes, as in the case of Islam, ran afoul of the strict tenets and teachings of the religion. The religious observances have actually acquired cultural significance, for the spiritual basis of religion is relegated to the background while the cultural traditions and practices have come to the fore.

It is this social tendency of our religious observations that has served the cause of Indonesian national integration positively. Today, for example, the “open house” held at all major religious cum cultural festivals is becoming institutionalized as Indonesian way of life.

In fact, cultural borrowing has been a feature of cultural contact in Indonesia. Looking at Indonesian culture today, it reflects an age-old experience in cultural contacts. In other words, this experience could also viewed as an earlier effort to promote peace and harmony between intercultural groups here.

3) Recent communication situation

Recent situation in Indonesian mass communication could be viewed from qualitative and quantitative aspects. Qualitatively, the situation is totally different with what it has to be
in the past. Although formally there was no censor, certainly there was many limitation exists. In the last two years period, mass media in Indonesia are enjoying its freedom that never happened before. The new Press Act No.40/1999 which is signed by President Habibie on September 23, 1999 eliminate censor and licences. This act also makes it possible for every citizen to establish a press publication.

Quantitatively, recent situations in mass communication makes the industry really competitive. It could be said that media industries in the country now just starting its blossom period. Thousands of new tabloid and magazines publication trying their fortunes. The new political era means a freedom to publish so that many investors put capital into the printed media business, including both daily and weekly newspaper.

The number of newspaper has been manifold since during the year 1998-1999 a total of 1397 licences has been issued for new publications. Even though not all of the licences has been implemented by the applicants, anyhow the number of printed media significantly added.

As a matter of fact, those addition have not change the position of the big media as it were.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ten big newspapers in Indonesia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kompas (Jakarta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos Kota (Jakarta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jawa Pos (Surabaya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pikiran Rakyat (Bandung)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republika (Jakarta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Indonesia (Jakarta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suara Pembaruan (Jakarta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suara Merdeka (Semarang)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Jakarta Post (Jakarta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakyat Merdeka (Jakarta)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total circulation of printed media (daily and weekly newspapers) now are around 4.5 million exemplar per day. Unfortunately, even though with such an extraordinary growth, the latest available data shows that circulation per 1000 population in Indonesia is still the lowest among the ASEAN countries i.e. 25 (compare to Malaysia: 118, Philippines: 50, Thailand: 73, and Singapore: 337).

Although still in the beginning, "online newspaper" already started its business in Indonesia. Most of the big publications now already has their own websites.

Radio broadcasting also developing well. A recent data shows there are around 700 AM and FM radio stations operating commercially throughout the country. This number certainly undermine the government owned radio (Radio Republik Indonesia / RRI) which has 50 stations altogether.

Television was first introduced in 1962 when Indonesia was under Sukarno's Guided Democracy. The moment was directly linked to the sports event known as the Asia Games. Indonesia was honored as the host country for the Fourth Asian Games in Jakarta at that year. The inauguration of Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI) thus coincided with the opening ceremony of the 4th Asian Games.

The change in Indonesian politics, from Sukarno's Guided Democracy to Suharto's New Order has resulted in drastic alterations to the content of mass media including television programs, especially its news. The same thing happened again when Suharto's New Order has changed with the new government.

Today there are five private TV stations (RCTI, Indosiar, SCTV, ANTV, and TPI). There is also one cable-TV company (Kabelvision) operating in certain areas of the capital city, Jakarta. From the perspective of investors, television broadcasting in a country as huge as Indonesia is predicted to be profitable. As soon as the opportunity was available, investors immediately took advantage. With five private plus one state-owned TV stations, the needs for human resources are really flourishing.

On November 1999 it was just announced that government has granted the licences for another five private TV stations to operate in this coming future. On the other side, as a consequence of growth in the number of television stations, there are hundred of production houses now operating, which means another job opportunities in communication field. The rise of private television certainly brought new creativity and innovation in advertising. This is obvious because most of TV operating cost comes from advertising.
4) **Role of media.**

Media role in promoting a peace of culture could be referred to its *correlation* function as well as *socialization* function to borrow what Charles R. Wright have stated long time ago. By correlation function means, that media really aware of their roles when they reporting a conflict to their audience, so that it will not make things worse. In this way, media can create ways of explaining events in a peace perspective. At the same time this could be functioned as educating people to solve problem by using peace perspectives. This what is called as socialization certain values, in this case unity and harmony, and tolerance.

Many examples could be cited on how media in Indonesia could help in conflict resolution and promotion of religious understanding and tolerance. In some situations, where every institutions in the society tend to get stuck with their routinities, media could come up with a fresh approach to help solving the problem.

Some examples of good practices could be presented here as how media could promote a culture of peace. For broadcast media, these activities could be called as *on-air* and *off-air* activities. What I mean as on air activities are when media broadcast a wide range of programme that are promoting peace such as via news, documentary, interactive talk-show, drama, and public service announcements. Through all of this, media can play a contributive role toward achieving a culture of peace.

While off-air activities are actions done by broadcast agencies which directly or indirectly bring the message of peace, such as gathering donations, pay a visit to refugees camp etc. This activities in fact already done by at least three TV stations in Jakarta regarding some natural disasters and social conflict that happened recently.

Newspaper and magazines could do the same things. For example, *Kompas* daily already gathered a significant sum of money donated by its readers to help the victims of natural disasters and social conflict. This donation already used to build some houses, schools and mosques to help the victims. This I would call *off-print* activities.

While in its *on-print* activities newspapers and magazines had tried their best to publish and report in a careful ways so that the news and other published items would not harm the society.
It has been stated in many occasions that the media are the agencies that reflect the agenda of public discourse. Thus they become key players both in aggravation and resolution of national conflict. It must of course be realized that the media are also social institutions. So the media themselves subject to the pulls and pressures that exist in society.

The deliberations did not provide nor were they expected to—a clear and unambiguous statement of acceptable values or possible action. It was recognized that the media must report “truthfully, objectively and comprehensibly to enable society to be fully informed of affairs and events”.

But there are some hindrance to this goodwill. Some of it, in fact, comes from within the media tradition itself. Journalism, as we know it today, strives on differences and conflict. In short, newspapers are filled with more bad news than good news. “Good news, is no news” generally applies, rather than “no news is good news”. News about national development progress in general, while important, do not draw as much readers’ attention as news about wars, natural disasters, demonstrations, or even murders and rapes.

Besides, everyone in the media industry is in the business of selling news. The way they select and present news is affected by commercial considerations. Some newspapers run bombastic and sensational headlines. All of these with the intention of attracting readers. They have to sell news. Everybody is under pressure, television stations for ratings, and newspapers and magazines for readerships.

However, in the context of promoting a culture of peace, media needs to do more than just disseminate information. Depending on the nature of the crisis, media needs to practice restraint based on public interest reason. For in a crisis, media becomes both an intellectual and/or emotional life support, feeding messages to the masses and influencing their ideas, opinions and experiences.

5) Preliminary findings

Following are some of finding on how media promoted a peace of culture during the sample period.

- A number of television and radio stations has been broadcast some program that could be considered as promoting peace. Although there is no special item of peace promotion in their newscast, they do have some others program format to do this intention. Beside their regular programme, they also broadcast some sort of PSAs or jingle that contains appeal for mutual understanding, tolerance and reconciliation.
In television, this PSA describes people from different backgrounds talking to each other in their own dialect. But then this closeness creates a sense of unity that although came from many backgrounds, they are still united in one nation.

In the radio, it takes a format of short narration where the narrator asks the audience to pay attention and lend their hand to help those people who have become victims of social unrest.

In the newspaper, it is obvious that the reporter and the editor really concern with the impact of their coverage. Media could play a positive role in promoting peace among others through the way of treating the news or events, choice of words, and choice of angles. (See Appendix)

6) Conclusion and the future

Media actually can play a significant role in promoting a culture of peace. In fulfilling this role, media should itself build some competencies such as:

- Selective ways of interpreting events that potentially can trigger conflict among society
- Trying to put itself into a place of peace builder, rather than only as an 'attractive' reporter
- Wise ways in explaining what happened to the public so that the audience could comprehend things proportionally.
- Practicing "off-air" and "off-print" as well as "on-air" and "on-print" activities which directly or indirectly help promote a culture of peace.

To some extent this means that media need to equip themselves with certain skill and knowledge on how to apply this role into their daily activities. Without trying to intervene those well developed journalistic traditions, hopefully media can accept this expectation

It is time now for the mass media to reevaluate their role and examining what they can do to resolve and perhaps prevent the non-peace situation. As what Robert Manoff, director of New York University Center for War, Peace and the Mass Media noticed of what the moral responsibility of journalist is, with respect to genocide or other forms of mass social violence. It is a question of how to cover, where to cover, and what to cover that isn't covered.
Furthermore, Manoff arguing that journalism's culture "thrives on conflict" and he want the profession to rethink its impact on society. In several articles he has proposed new roles for the media, such as

- providing a "channel of communication between parties"
- engage in "confidence building"
- serving as an emotional outlet and
- acting as a "solution builder" among others

Although Manoff himself admit that these ideas are considered controversial, but it seem that the idea are worthtrying. Of course the ideas need to be explored and elaborated further. Here it is I think, where a more detailed study and research are needed so that the idea could be transformed into real day to day media activities.

In addition to that, it is necessary to note from the beginning that whatever can be done by the media should be perceived as only one of the total community effort to achieve this goal. It should be considered of course, the role of any others leader, organization, and the whole society to meet this objective.

Reference


Appendix

Kompas daily, November 10, 2000 (Friday)
At least there are 6 news item that contained peace-relevant matter.

1. Page 6: Entitled: "President: Religions should function as guard of plurality". In his lecture at State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) in Surabaya, Mr President said that religions in Indonesia has proofed their ability in developing democracy at the time when other organizations were only considering their own interest. "At that time, different religious movement perhaps keep up our spirit, that is spirit for unity, spirit for solving problem collectively", he said.

Meanwhile the Rector of the institute, Ridwan Natsir stressed that plurality in a religio-politic and culture is an absoluteness. "There is no such a monotoneous life with a high degree of homogeneity. So that pluralism is basically matched with the nature of humankind that is heterogenous."

2. Page 6. Entitled: "Anas Saidi: Inter political elit conflict should be passed through". In his interview, Anas Saidi, a researcher at Center for Society and Culture Research and Development here in Jakarta, said that recent inter political elites conflict in Indonesia should be perceived as a "childhood" period of a democracy process that should be passed through. This kind of crisis is needed in achieving a new balance situation.

3. Page 7. Entitled: "Arief Budiman offered a general pattern for national reconciliation". Speaking at a panel discussion here in Jakarta, Arief Budiman who teach and chaired Indonesian studies at an Australian university exploring the possibility of solving four big conflicts in this country. He mentioned the four conflicts as conflict between: central and local government, Islam and Christian, Chinese and native, and anti communist propagandized by New Order regime. Arief suggests that solutions to begin with identification and clarification for each conflicts by inviting the victims and the actor, and a concrete action membatalkan all discriminative laws and regulations.

There are three newsfeatures in pages

1. The first entitled (p.37): "Pro and cons facing refugees relocation" As a solution toward East Timor refugees which is now reside in West Timor, Indonesian government planned to relocate them to an island at Northwest
Maluku. This newsfeature reports when the advance team visited the island, they found a mixed feeling among the inhabitant between supporting and resist the relocation plan. The team even welcomed by a banner with a message: We reject the refugees.

2. The second newsfeature (p.38) entitled: “Relocation changes refugees fate” explore the possibility of change that will took place in the island of Wetar when it will home East Timor refugees. Both sides (the inhabitant and the refugees) will get benefit from the relocation program.

3. The third newsfeature (p.40) entitled “MS Mina explore isolated area” is about the motorship Mina which now links the area of relocation with outside world that is used to be isolated.

*Kompas* daily, November 12, 2000 (Sunday)
There are three items that could be viewed as promoting peace culture.

Frontpage:

Headlined by: “Ask for referendum and peace in Aceh: The masses has a parade peacefully”. This newstory reports about gathering of hundred thousands Acehnese people who were peacefully assembled and perform a parade around Banda Aceh city (the capital of the province) on Saturday (Nov,11)

Second paragraph: “It is proofed today that we are in peace. This huge number of people could be controlled”, yelled Nurmasiyah Ali, a speaker at the gathering. She said further that this peaceful action could happened because Acehnese actually longing for peacefulness and not violence done by Indonesian security forces that were witnessed by people through their naked eyes.

Also in the frontpage: “Even my own kid learn Bahasa Indonesia” is the tittle of Kompas reporter interview with Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer. This title could be perceived as expressing ‘the spirit of peace’ since the relations between the two countries has become colder after East Timor independence.

In this interview, Mr Downer emphasizing how important it is for both countries to strengthen their relationship for mutual benefit. He admitted that
Australian learn a lot from Indonesia about its history, culture, and language. He said: "Even my own kid is learning Bahasa Indonesia".

In the fourth page, there is a long interview with Ien Ang an Indonesia borned scholar specializing on cultural studies. This interview took place in National University of Singapore, and part of the subject was on how she feels as a Chinese among Indonesian native.