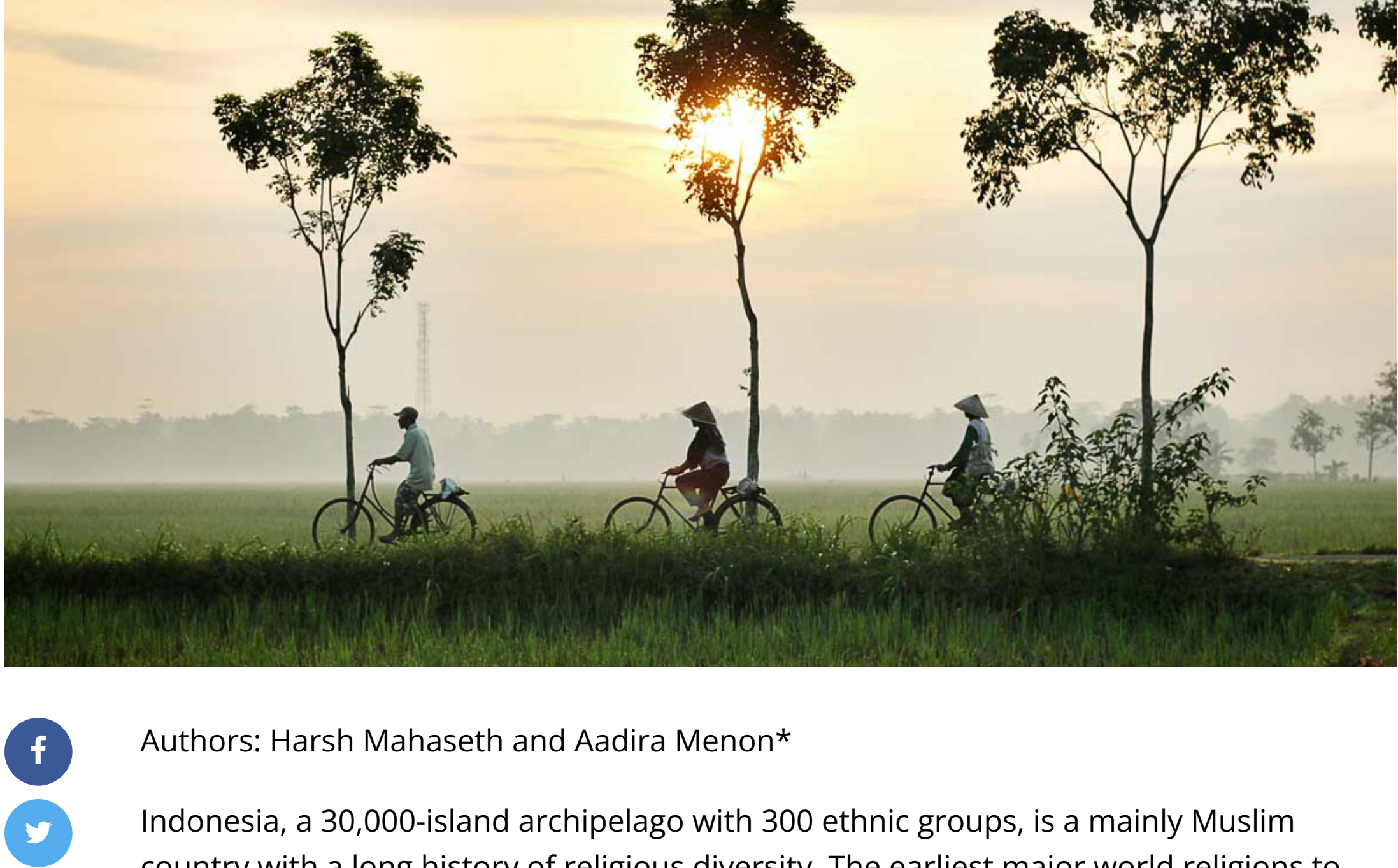


SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Politics of Intolerance and Discrimination: Aliraan Kepercayaan of Indonesia

Published 1 day ago on December 26, 2021
By Harsh Mahaseth



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Indonesia, a 30,000-island archipelago with 300 ethnic groups, is a mainly Muslim country with a long history of religious diversity. The earliest major world religions to arrive in Indonesia were Hinduism and Buddhism, followed by Islam and Christianity. The identity of the "others" is unknown; however, they may be followers of local religions. Indigenous religions, as mentioned later, are not considered "religion," but rather "belief" or "culture," and are governed by the Ministry of Education and Culture rather than the Ministry of Religious Affairs. What complicates matters further is that indigenous religious groups may have various religious affiliations: they may be regarded members of an indigenous religion while also professing to be Muslims, Christians, or members of other religious organisations, and thus be registered as such. This commentary will delve into the issue of religious intolerance and the current state of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in Indonesia.

The Aliran Kepercayaan who make up less than 0.6 per cent of the population in Indonesia and is a traditional faith practice followed by a few hailing from regions such as Java and Papua. The five major faiths followed in Indonesia include- Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism and Buddhism. The problem of the State's relationship with religions and Aliran Kepercayaan in Indonesia is inextricably linked to the debate over Law No. 1/PNPS/1965. Anyone who presents a "deviant" interpretation of religious teachings or commits blasphemy against religion is subject to this infamous rule.

In the 1970s and 1980s, President Suharto backed a number of discriminatory policies such as rejection of the establishment of places of worship for the Kepercayaan community, rejection of such marriage registrations by the community and mainly denial of identity of the members of the Aliraan Kepercayaan, effectively emphasising that Aliran Kepercayaan was not a (new) religion and that Aliran Kepercayaan adherents had to accept a religion recognised by the State. Finally, in 2010, a group of non-governmental organisations petitioned the Constitutional Court for a judicial review of the statute. The repeal of the ordinance was intended to put an end to discrimination and persecution of believers of Aliran Kepercayaan and its minority identity by any of Indonesia's six official faiths. The Constitutional Court issued its decision on October 18, 2017. The Constitutional Court ruled that the word "religion" in Article 61, paragraph (1), and "beliefs" in Article 64, paragraph (1) of the Population Administration Law are in violation of the 1945 Constitution because they do not include "beliefs" in their interpretation. The Constitutional Court claimed that excluding Aliran Kepercayaan from the "religion" section on the Resident Identity Card deprived Indonesian citizens of fair recognition, assurance, protection, and legal certainty, as well as equal treatment before the law. Even though this judgement was celebrated, has it really removed the discriminatory barrier that has haunted the Kepercayaan community for decades now?

The government respects and is following the verdict, according to Arief M. Edie, a ministry spokesman, but only by revising the national ID to include the Aliraan Kepercayaan as a religious status option in the section on religious status. The State's seventh official religion will not be acknowledged.

– (The New York Times)

"It's only recognised as a culture, not a religion," Arief explained. Local administrations in Indonesia's far-flung areas will continue to discriminate in the delivery of public services, according to Aliran Kepercayaan supporters. A number of Muslim organisations were taken back by the court's judgement and denounced it, believing that it went against the "national consensus." Din Syamsudin, the former head of Muhammadiyah and a member of the Indonesian Council of Ulama's Board of Advisors, has definitely asserted that Kepercayaan or indigenous faiths are not the same as (real) religion. Nonetheless, Legislation No. 1/PNPS/1965, which marks the start of the politics of law of intolerance towards Aliran Kepercayaan believers, is still in effect today. The religious-Aliran Kepercayaan dichotomy is still employed as a mental model when dealing with the identity of Aliran Kepercayaan members.

Furthermore, the Prosecutor's Office continues to monitor the Aliran Kepercayaan organisation today. The social setting has little bearing on these two outstanding concerns. The lack of agreement on state-religion interactions has an impact on these issues and warrants additional investigation.

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Vietnamese President Phuc two-day visit to Cambodia

Published 5 days ago on December 23, 2021
By Prof. Pankaj Jha



Then Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc (R) welcomes his Cambodian counterpart Samdech Techo Hun Sen during the latter's visit to Vietnam in October 2019 (Photo: VNA)

Following the meeting of party general secretaries earlier in November 2021, Vietnamese President Nguyen Xuan Phuc completed his two-day state-level visit(21-22) to Cambodia. Cambodia is going to be the chairman of ASEAN and therefore there is concerns with regard to the likely agenda in the forthcoming ASEAN meetings in the year 2022. President Phuc met Prime Minister Hun Sen and deliberated on the issues of mutual interest. Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos are looking for developing complementarities so as to get over the post pandemic phase and develop their economies for the betterment of their citizens. In terms of trade between Vietnam and Cambodia the trade has reached US \$2.69 billion (in the last quarter of 2021) and there

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Vietnam National Assembly Chairman visit to Korea and India

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By Prof. Pankaj Jha



National Assembly Chairman Vuong Dinh Hue (R) presents a gift to Samsung Electronics Vice Chairman and CEO Han Jong-hee (Photo: VNA)

The Vietnam National Assembly Chairman Mr Vuong Dinh Hue visited South Korea and India as part of its six-day official visit (Dec 12-19). The highly successful visits show convergence is with regard to the two important partners of Vietnam. During the visit to the two countries the Chairman of the National Assembly Vuong Dinh Hue made it sure to interact with the businessman of the two countries and invite trade and investment in new sectors in Vietnam.

During his visit to Korea the Chairman of the National Assembly tried to promote business cooperation and look for areas for promoting strategic partnership between Korea and Vietnam. Vietnam itself is emerging as a new middle power and it is looking

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Persuasion in Southeast Asia reveals the United States' strategic egoism

Published 1 week ago on December 17, 2021
By Raihan Ronodipuro



Image source: U.S. State Department

On December 13, US Secretary of State Blinken landed in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, to deliver a speech on America's "Indo-Pacific strategy." His first journey to Southeast Asia after entering office would include stops in Malaysia and Thailand.

According to some sources, Southeast Asia has grown increasingly relevant in the geopolitical rivalry between the United States and China. The rationale is straightforward. In addition to retaining its political, economic, and military influence, the United States prioritizes restraining and constraining China at sea.

As China's national strength grows, the US has upped its containment operations

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