

# Samsu Rizal Panggabean and Views on Ethnic Group Conflicts in Indonesia

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Religion and ethnic group are not the cause of violence and conflict in the country for the past two decades. Instead, both can be the unifier and conflict resolution tool for all to open room for dialogue and communication in the public and increase the role of security forces to prevent conflict from getting into violent and open conflicts.

This emerged in the launching of a book, *Konflik dan Perdamaian Etnis di Indonesia* (Conflict and Ethnic Peace in Indonesia) by Dr. Samsu Rizal Panggabean, on Friday (7/9) at Faculty of Social and Political Sciences UGM. Resource persons that attended the event were International Relations lecturer, Diah Kusumaningrum, SIP., MA., Rev. Jacky Manuputti, and Prof. Mohammad Mohtar Mas'ood.

Diah Kusumaningrum, book editor, said Samsu Rizal Panggabean while a lecturer at International Relations UGM researched conflicts on ethnic groups and religion in Indonesia since the 1990s. The book that was launched a year after he passed away was a collection of his doctoral dissertation.

Diah said in the book Rizal said that ethnic group grouping was not the cause of violence but instead



violence causes ethnic grouping to be more prominent and conflict come to the fore. “Ethnic grouping is not the cause but it is the violence that causes ethnic grouping, hence on the outside it appears as conflict between Islam and Christian or conflict between the indigenous and Chinese population,” he said.

Rizal always revealed the cause of conflict instigation and the spread of conflict from a different perspective. Diah said between years 1990 - 2003, Rizal found that ethnic and communal violence happened in 15 regencies in Indonesia or 6.5 % of all population. “If the cause is mentioned from the national level, ethnic conflict should have happened not just in the 6.5% population,” Diah quoted Rizal from his book.

What was interesting in the book, Rizal made the research by comparative method on ethnic and communal conflicts in some major cities such as Ambon, Manado, Poso, Palu, Jogja, Solo, and Surabaya. “The two cities are studied in pairs in the place where ethnic violence occurred,” she said.

The research resulted that in Manado, religious leaders could persuade the believers to cool down during the Muslim and Christian conflict. In Jogja and Solo between early 1998 - May 1998, there was a different treatment taken by security authorities to reduce the conflict between the indigenous and Chinese ethnic groups. In Solo, the security forces did not carry out their job as they should despite the request from the Chinese ethnic group. “In Jogja, the security forces carried out their duties accordingly because they thought that the demonstration done by students would not make things worse, even the Chinese ethnic group cooperated and asked the security to build security posts in front of their housing complex,” he said.

Rev. Jacky Manuputti, who was a good friend of Rizal and active in peace campaigns, recounted their meeting in March 1999 at the start of the Ambon conflict. The Reverend said Rizal had helped him much in conflict management. Rizal would not hesitate to share his knowledge and books to him. “I truly learned much from Rizal on peace research and studies that they had done,” he said.

Meanwhile, Prof Mohtar Mas’oed said Rizal was his student and later colleague at UGM. In his views, Rizal was a diligent researcher that had different outlook in seeing a conflict. “He had the freedom of thinking with outside-the-box approach,” he concluded.

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