



CRISE CONFERENCE ON DECENTRALIZATION, FEDERALISM AND CONFLICT

Department of International Development, University of Oxford
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PANEL VI: INTERNAL BORDERS AND ETHNIC CLEAVAGES

1. The state format, decentralization and East Sulawesi province: Conflict and the politics of transcending boundaries in Eastern Indonesia Riwanto Tirtosudarmo, Indonesian Institute of Political Sciences

Abstract

Indonesia - an archipelago with the size as large as the whole Europe and the world fourth largest country in population size – is constantly challenged by problems of political integration and striking balance between territories, ethnicities and religions. Recently, conflicts over territory, ethnicity and religion has been intensified as the country enters into a transitional period in which decentralization and regional autonomy become one of the major contentious political issues. Regional and local reassertion and reclamation over territorial boundaries in the name of ethnic and other cultural identities emerged in response to the political and economic opportunities expected to be brought by the implementation of new decentralization policies. In the last five years or so ethnic mobilization by the local elites aspiring for political position and economic benefits flourished rapidly that in turn created havoc and disputes over the boundaries of geographical territories and cultural identities. Social tensions emanating from the mobilization of ethnic identities by the local elites in their attempt to claim a particular territorial boundary however not always resolved peacefully. This paper analyzes the intricate political engineering processes of advocating the creation of new administrative territory (East Sulawesi province) and its deeper implication on the manipulation of ethnic and religious group boundaries in central Sulawesi – a major locus of protracted conflict and conflictual politics of decentralization in eastern Indonesia. Sulawesi is an island of remarkable diverse and complex ethnic and linguistic group of peoples that continually influenced by different external power forces through out its colonial and post colonial historical trajectories. A prolonged violent conflict in Poso – one of the district in central Sulawesi - will be seen within the politics of transcending boundaries in the making and unmaking of this new East Sulawesi province. Finally, the paper reflects on the implications of 'the disintegration from within' processes - especially of the current political development in Aceh and Papua - on the prospect of federalism as a possible alternative solution to achieve stable political integration and balanced development in Indonesia.

2. Creation of Local Government Areas and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria: The case of Warri, Delta State Ukoha Ukiwo, CRISE

Abstract

Using the case of Warri where local government creation triggered bloody violent ethnic conflicts, the article seeks to elucidate the paradox in which decentralization

triggers instead of ameliorating conflicts. It shows that decentralization encourages violent group mobilization when it ignores historic local grievance and is perceived to be biased in favour of some groups. To be effective in conflict resolution, decentralization should be attentive to the history of inter-group relations especially historic grievance against inequalities.

3. The limitations of non-consociational federalism: the example of Pakistan **Katharine Adeney, University of Sheffield**

Abstract

Pakistan has been a federation for most of its history, but possesses a chequered democratic history. The fact that it is not a consolidated democracy should not prevent us from analysing the ways in which the form of its federation has influenced identity formation and articulation. The form of its federation has changed radically, from the One Unit Plan adopted in 1955 to the secession of Bangladesh in 1971 and the reconstitution of the units of the Western Wing. The federal form is also contested, notably because the province of East Bengal/Pakistan contained the majority of the population before 1971 and Punjab has contained the majority of the population after the secession of Bangladesh. Pakistan's federation is also centralised and has experienced several severe ethnic conflicts –in East Pakistan, leading to the secession of Bangladesh, but also in Baluchistan and Sindh. Interestingly however, the community most often associated with nationalist demands, Pashtuns, have been remarkably quiescent. Pashtuns possess a strong sense of identity but they have not seen this as incompatible with their membership of Pakistan. One reason for this is their co-option in one of the institutions of state that matters – the army. Can this be replicated elsewhere in Pakistan? Federalism by itself is not a panacea for ethnic conflict regulation. Many authors and statesmen have questioned its utility as a mechanism of ethnic conflict regulation. But these authors miss the point that it is the particular structure of the federation, in terms of the numbers of units, composition of those units, and additional consociational mechanisms that determines its success or failure, and the extent of conflict. This paper will contend that it is the absence of consociational mechanisms for ethno-linguistic communities throughout Pakistan's history that has caused conflict, but that these consociational mechanisms need not be democratic. It will examine the different processes of accommodation of the different ethno-linguistic communities, and to what extent these processes explain the tensions between communities and against the centre.

4. Decentralisation and conflict in Uganda **Elliot Green, LSE**

Abstract

Political economists have had a long-standing and raging debate about the relationship between decentralization and conflict, with much discussion about how and what functions of government should be decentralized to the local level. There has been little discussion, however, about two key aspects of decentralization: first, to which levels of local government power should be decentralized, and second, on what basis new decentralized districts should be created. In order to understand the relationship between these two aspects of decentralization and conflict I investigate here the case of Uganda, where President Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) government embarked on a radical decentralization programme upon coming into power in 1986. I argue here that Uganda's decentralization programme, while helping to reduce national-level conflict, has nonetheless replaced it with local-level conflict. This process has taken place in two

ways. First, the concentration of local power at the district level has led to struggles over district leadership positions. Second, the huge expansion in the number of new districts has led to local-level struggles in the fight to create new districts, a phenomenon that has become especially pernicious due to the de facto creation of new districts along ethnic lines.

Comments from the discussant: Raufu Mustapha

The key point connecting these papers on decentralisation and district splitting in Nigeria, Indonesia, and Uganda is that boundaries matter. The papers by Green and Ukiwo demonstrate that myths can be explosive and that decentralisation can generate conflict. Shifting the locus of power to the district level can dislocate conflict from the central level to the district level.

The papers also draw attention to the issues of indigeneity and citizenship, which is also the case throughout Nigeria as well as the countries from where the cases are presented. In particular there are no existing local mechanisms for controlling conflict. While these cases demonstrate that conflict can be generated by decentralisation, it will take many more cases to draw a conclusion.

The Tirtosudarmo paper also draws attention to the connection between boundaries (geographic, ethnic, religious) and political processes which are not always to do with better governance. What is unique about the case of forming the new East Sulawesi Province in Indonesia is that religion and ethnicity are deliberately downplayed at the provincial level in coalition building.

The paper by Adeney then looks at Federalism and conflict. There are three key points which are central to this paper: federalism is not a done deal as a form of conflict resolution; consociation is central to conflict dampening mechanisms; and that rules and concepts matter. The paper also demonstrates that Federalism fails to work for a variety of reasons, particularly in the case where it favours Punjabi interests only. This draws attention to the need to examine the nature of representation and demonstrates that the quality of representation is just as important as the type of representation implemented. While the strength of the paper lies in the fact that it looks below the surface of federalism, it implies a little that democracy doesn't matter which may be realistic in Pakistan but not in other countries.

Some comments and questions from the audience

McGarry – Can local governments (centralised or decentralised) involve a form of centralisation in order to weaken regional governments? As is the case in Uganda, power at the local level can be weakened by creating many small units.

Wolff – for Adeney. On the issue of proportionality, has segmented autonomy made a difference? He also noted generally that decentralisation may be the right choice as the same conflict may exist with centralised or decentralised government.

Horowitz – to Ukiwo. Is Warri a good case to study since it is the worst case scenario in Nigeria?

Responses from the presenters

Riwanto Tirtosudarmo: The important thing in the Indonesia case is that it is a unitary state with a tendency towards the federal idea. This is illustrated in the tensions between the two concepts *persatuan* (federation) and *kesatuan* (unifying/unity/oneness) which Indonesia is slowly moving towards, but local people want to have more say and make claims to their diversity.

Ukoha Ukiwo: The key point is NOT that decentralisation leads to conflict but rather that it can sometimes be a trigger factor. People want decentralisation, but how it is created and implemented can actually undermine the demands of the people. This has not just occurred in the Warri case, but others as well, although the Warri case is the worst in Nigeria in terms of casualties. Local peoples can become suspicious if they have been agitating for their cause after being dominated by other groups, and then with the implementation of decentralisation, the local government formed doesn't meet their desires, further complicating the pre-existing historical grievances between groups. The source of the conflict then can shift towards the state being seen as biased.

Katharine Adeney: The key point being made is not that democracy doesn't matter but rather that non-democratic Federalisms can do better. Grand coalitions do exist in the absence of democracy, but are more effective in democracies. Democracy won't work without structural change.

Where there are ethnic divisions of labour, all groups have to be represented. In Pakistan all these groups want to be a part of the bureaucracy. There are coalitions being built and alternations in power, but these are coalitions of parties not of interests. For example the PPP can't come to power without Punjab support. India is a interesting comparator as the Muslim league could have been a stronger force there. Finally, proportionality is one way of redressing grievances.

Elliot Green: the key point is that here is no indigeneity issue in Uganda where there is no migration. Decentralisation can take the heat off the central level and shift it to the local level, reducing the likelihood of secessionist problems. In Uganda, most rural areas have always had rural governments. Further decentralisation weakens the regional governments.