

Blog Media and Civil Society Empowering in Indonesia

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Abstract

Blog is a new media in IT era. Everybody can make blog as to communication and to distribute his/her ideas. Blog also a tool to do civil society empowering process. The presenting of blog is a sign which living in citizen journalism era. Whoever them, actually they are owner, reporter, writer and also marketer for their products.

The equality of relationship between state and people is a final target of civil society empowering process. The state needs strong people. It will give opportunity in defends to face some distresses in the future. There are four stages to build strong civil society. First is defend stage. Second is emergent stage. Third is mobilizational stage and fourth is institutional.

Indonesia has been learning to become the third biggest democracy country since 1998. The best democracy is also required the growth of good civil society. In this article I discribe that there are three patterns of relationship between state and civil society: state centris, civil society centris and the equality relationship.

Key words: blog, civil society, democracy

Introduction

Blog or web blog as a form of manifestation of citizen journalism has broken in conventional media hegemony. In such a rapid era of information technology development, whoever we are, can be materials of news, media of news and pioneers of news. Without exception, whether you live in advanced or progressive countries or backward or under-developing countries, or in the most modern cities or traditional towns as long as there is an access of internet, all the process of publication can be done.

If conventional media (printed media and electronic media) are handicapped by material problems, extent of network, product marketing, and other technical infrastructure support, it is not like blog. Blog in its progressive and revolutionary development has explored throughout this planet, earth. Right now, the news is uploaded from Petra University at Siwalankerto, at the same time, the news has been able to be accessed in Rwanda (Africa) or Vanuatu (Island Country in Pacific) through Kazakstan (Eastern Europe), even wherever you are.

Speed, accuracy and extent of network have created market potency and unrestrained idea distribution instrument. In the context of idea distribution, a variety of ideas can be campaigned or provoked without necessarily feeling afraid to censor institution or state's prohibition.

The state is a censor agent that it has lost authority even has been powerless in facing the technology's operation performance. Even if the efforts are constantly done for a filter of information getting into the certain region, there is always a door or penetrated way unable to be blockaded. The case of film distribution by *You Tube*, entitled *Fitna*, is accessed by almost all preferred people, the state can only block temporarily and in a certain area. The area that is not covered with block site can constantly access freely.

In the illusion (virtual) world, there is no law. Any information will be publicized, there is no regulation for setting up. Furthermore, it depends on the selection capability whether or not the information gives benefit, it is scientific or rubbish. All comeback to the users.

Because the characteristic of blog media is personal, all comeback to the purposes of vision and mission of early blog setting, too. It is essential because public themselves will independently determine and seek what are really beneficial for them. For public that is interested in the economic development, surely they will collect recent information as much as possible about the subject. Likewise, in political problems, it concerns democracy and things related to civil society.

The enormity of information in the virtual nature is not only an advantage but also a disadvantage when in improper or inappropriate exploitation. Blog becomes appropriate means, if it is well-managed. It can also be an effective means to perform socialization of critical ideas including within the efforts to build the awareness of civil society.

The concept of the civil society itself always withdraws if argued with the concept of the state's power. The underlying basic assumption is associated as the party holding *quo status*, which is conservative and anti-reformation. It is a fact certainly opposed to civil society with a role as the party who wants to perform reformation, opposing the power of *quo status* and trying to get similarities in obtaining political rights with the ruler.

Therefore, according to Pelczynski¹, the conceptual gap between the state and public is one of the problems becoming Hegel's attention on civil society closely related to phenomena of European bourgeois society (*bürgerliches Gesellschaft*) of which the growth process with indication of the struggle process for independence of the state domination. Civil society idealizes the creation of space becoming society's domain that the state's interference or intervention within society is illegitimate.

With this fact, the relation between the state and the civil society power is always colored by its dynamics. In certain periods, the state power is very dominant, so it restricts the space of civil power to carry out its role. But, in

¹ Z.A. Pelczynski (ed.), *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel Political Philosophy*, (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1984) p.1 in M. Ryaas Rasyid, "Perkembangan Pemikiran Masyarakat Kewargaan (Tinjauan Teoritik)", *Jurnal Ilmu Politik* 17 p. 4.

another period, due to the capability of consolidating themselves cohesively, civil society can also knock down the state's hegemony untuk perform the necessary reformation.

The Concept of Civil Society

As a concept, according to Hikam², civil society comes from the historical process of Western people. The root of development can be traced from Cicero and even, according to Manfred Riedel, more backward to Aristoteles. Obviously, Cicero started using terminology *societes civilis* in his political philosophy. In European tradition, till the eighteenth century, the meaning of civil society is supposed to be similar to the sense of state, namely a group with power dominating the whole other society group. Thus, the terminologies such as *koinonia politike*, *societas civile*, *societe civile*, *buergerliche gesellschaft*, *civil society* and *societa civile* are applied in turn with *polis*, *civitas*, *etat*, *staat*, *state*, and *stato*. Thus, when Rousseau used terminology *societes civile*, he understood it as a state with one function of ensuring property, life and freedom of members. But, in the next development, the concept, in fact, is not very rigid to be understood. Even several circles of social experts also have each terminology to understand the concept further. Although between the state and civil society previously constitute two things that are always exchanged one another without raising the problems, in fact in accordance with the process of social formation and the change of political structure in Europe as a result of enlightenment and modernization in facing world problems, that both of them also support the eviction of absolute regime. Political thinkers pioneering this difference, such as philosophers of Scotland Enlightenment initiated by Adam Ferguson and several European thinkers such as Johann Forster, Tom Hodgkins, Emmanuel Sieyes and Tom Paine.

Likewise, in the next stage, this conceptualization of civil society is even positioned as anti thesis from the state. Within study of E. Gyimah-Boadi³ in several African countries, it clearly describes that civil society power that is represented by church institution, pro-democracy activists students' movement, the circle of NGO takes openly the position to face the conservative state power. Even though, at the beginning, the roles of two concepts are equalized, it is not denied that their vision is also different.

Nevertheless, in outline if it is studied further about the civil society concept, it is found two large ideologies as a guide so far. First, the ideology developed by Hegelian-Marxian basically contains the power of civil society not only focusing on independence but also requiring better control through the law, administrative and political controls. Second, the reactive ideology to Hegel's idea pioneered by the thinker, Robert Mohl, J.S. Mills, Anne de Stael dan Alexis de Tocqueville. If the first concept gives the superior position for the state, the second group of thinker precisely agrees to return back the dimension of independence and plurality within civil society. Even according to de Tocqueville,

² Mohamad AS Hikam, *Demokrasi Dan Civil Society*, Jakarta: LP3ES, 1996), p. 1—3.

³ E.Gyimah-Boadi, "Civil Society In Africa" in *Journal of Democracy* April 1996 Vol.7 No 2 p. 118—132.

the political and the civil society power make democracy in Amerika have resistance. With manifested plurality, independence and politic capacity within civil society, it will create the power controlling the state power. Therefore, as a guide in understanding the civil society concept, this article will refer to the terminology revealed by de Tocqueville. Civil society is defined as organized social life areas with the features: voluntary action, self-sufficiency and innate strength, high independence confronting the state dan bonds of law norms or values followed by its citizens.

Relation between State and Civil Society

Opposite to the terminology described by de Tocqueville, it can be understood how relation of the state is seen with the power of civil society for several case studies.

In the study performed by Douglas Saltmarsh⁴ in area of Central Asia, it is found the empirical fact that emergence of society's awareness can't really come automatically. But it is really stimulated by the roles of NGO institutions. With more developing and stronger people's awareness, it opens the broader opportunity toward the citizen welfare increase. The end is citizen's participation either in political or social fields indicating the increase.

The state firstly that just plays a passive role in understanding, does not make real efforts so that its citizens will be aware about their political rights, with the active involvement of Society Innate-Supporting Organization as the civil society power forced to be willing to provide broader opportunities to its citizens. In the context of Russian country with totalitarian political system, it is very hard to expect that Russian people are given laxer freedom in either political, cultural or social. The very strict control from Politbiro, Russian Communist Party almost throughout society life areas forces people to loose the most basic individual rights for the sake of obedience to the ruling regime.

In the middle of such situation, the existence of NGO notably running in handling crisis of Aral Sea found its relevance. Therefore, a heavy challenge certainly is faced by the circle of NGO activists when they want to do struggle for the state's hegemony because in Russia it is only known a single political party, namely Communist Party. Out of the party, it is not permitted for another organization to survive in the country.

Thus, what actually is done ny the activists of NGO (Life Environment) other than is also to reflect the civil society's struggle persistence toward the state's power dominance. Slowly, because there is a strong support from the party of Unites Nation Organization (UNEP = United Nations of Environment Program). The struggle of World Bank or foreign Society Innate Effort Organizations for the totalitarian regime suppression manages to provide the results.

⁴ Douglas Saltmarsh, "Civil Society and Sustainable Development In Central Asia" in *Asia Survey*, Vol.15 No.3/4 Tahun 1996 p. 387—398.

In less distinct perspective, the study done by E. Gyimah-Boadi⁵ indicates that the process of democracy especially in several African countries is impossible if it is from the real initiation of ruling political elite. The democratic political climate and system appear because there is struggle done by a group of aware people on the existence of them to fight against the deviate power or authority.

The group of people actually become a pioneer for the genesis of the civil society power. Indeed, the level of their success has different grades. The civil society's struggle aimed to perform democratization ever comes to the deadlock or the stalemate as happened in Nigeria, and Zaire. While in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya and Togo, it is still fully ambiguous. But it is more successful, it can be found in several countries, such as Benin, Malawi, South Africa and Zambia.

The role of this civil society is generally conducted by the educated circles. In Ghana, Kenya, and Togo, the role holders are of medium-class lawyer associations, college professors and student activists. Even in Kenya, the one acting as the strict challenger toward the authoritarian power, President Daniel Arap Moi is National Council of Churches of Kenya. In Republic of Benin, a country speaking French with the important role is civil workers, teachers to traders, demonstrating to end the authoritarian power and economic mismanagement immediately.

With such facts, it seems more obviously the thesis that the civil society power that is activated by a small group of society, however, if they struggle for the sake of downtrodden people interest, it is not impossible that it can knock down a corrupted regime without respecting human rights.

The history also notes that the civil society development especially in Uni Soviet (before collapsed) and several Middle or Central European countries also start to be powerful in accordance with the increase of solidarity group winning in Poland within the period of 1980 – 1981. The further analyses about it can be traced through the study done by Marcia A. Weigle and Jim Butterfield⁶ stating that both in Central Europe (Poland, Hongaria or Czechoslovakia surely before disunited) and in Soviet civil society power that appears is that the circles of reformists trying to fight against the single ruler, The Communist Party.

Primarily in Indonesia, when reformation runs in the past decade, it is impossible to expect all coming from hegemonic Orde Baru (the New Order). The medium-class educated circles, such as college students, activists, pers and the NGO circle have enough role. Likewise, it happens in Philippine, Thailand and this moment it spreads in Malaysia. The power of change agent is always pioneered by the educated circles as a control holder.

The era changes. The method of movement aimed to consolidate the spirit of civil society constantly follow the trend. If at the beginning, the physical forms or modes more predominantly confronting the state and plural power directly,

⁵ Gyimah-Boadi, "*Civil*", p. 118—132

⁶ Marcia A. Weigle and Jim Butterfield, "Civil Society in Reforming Communist Regime : The Logic of Emmergence" in *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 25 No.1 October 1992 p. 1—24.

nowadays precisely promoted in advance is that extending civil society's life awareness.

The media has taken the quite significant role, only through the media life values within civil society can be spread. If at the beginning, it is dominated by the educated medium-grade elite circles, thus it can't be "no", right now it has become an integral part of society on the whole.

Therefore, the educated individuals have to be willing to do transformation and redistribution of democratic life ideas to all circles possibly out of attention so far. Indeed realized, that if they have to depend on the conventional media besides its reach is restricted on economic cost aspect and it is not cheap. Thus, the reached instrument being modest and unworried to be bridled or muzzled by the government (fortunately this role has been abolished) is maximizing the social functions of blog media.

In 2008, in Indonesia there are 600,000 individuals having blog with a variety of mission. The increase is double from the last year (2007) that it has reached about 300,000. Estimated in 2009, the number of bloggers will come to one million more. But, if 10% of the predictive number orients to civil society empowerment, surely the effects will feel so much. Above all, the growth of internet use has been about 28-30 millions of people recently. Surely it is expected for those living with awareness about their right and obligation as citizens will be much wider. It means that the state also pays attention to its people more attentively. Because people are more critical, within each political decision making, accurately have to take into account in order not to make disadvantage for their interests.

The Stage of Strengthening of Civil Society

At least there are four stages⁷ of the civil society development namely the defensive stage, that in personal individual and in independent group either actively or passively, they defend autonomy by fighting the state party. This stage is very crucial for everybody. The alternative ideas opening insight of awareness about citizenship easily abolished. For those living in political condition of the New Order (1966-1997) really felt such restraint.

The emergent stage, that independent social groups or movements try to find the limit of purposes in expanding or extending the public space gained through the reformation of the state party. This condition is like living in a play being obliged carefully to take account of the tactics and the strategies. Uneasily, but it has to be done because citizens are tied to the existed political system. The struggle always has the risks. Thus, the important thing is minimizing the risks to reach the optimal results. A variety of underground movements is like to become the struggle trend to anticipate the situation.

The mobilizational stage that independent groups and movements try to drop the legitimacy of state party through a range of alternative governmental forms by politicizing society. This phase indicating the collapse of President Soeharto on May 21st, 1998 after ruling for 32 years. The huge demonstration

⁷ idem,

movement becomes a main trigger of the state losing the power. Indeed, it is only a "mop" movement (temporary cleansing), it can't be continuous.

The institutional stage that the leader gets public support to legislate for ensuring their social actions related to the connection between the state and the society set up through free election. It means, there has already been awareness that restricting people's space is useless. Meanwhile, it must constantly be expressed in order that the state does not neglect. The broad region autonomy, direct district-head election, multi-party legislative election and direct president election are the real samples of efforts in building democratic life awareness being for a long time and uneasy.

In fact, the roles of civil society in two previous stages haven't really been felt by society, as the party being able to fight for broader public interests. But, people's awareness has risen, so it facilitates the implementation of the two further stages. Both in Central Europe and in period of Russia nowadays or Butterfield said the terminology *posttotalitarianism*, the civil society power consciously really plays active roles in reconstructing the new connection between the state and the society in mutual respective condition. If the certain parts of country in its era with phobia toward democracy, have recently respected its people particularly in Indonesia. Indeed, it is an advantage if Indonesia undergoes better stage of democratic life growth. Many countries try to live with multi-party, but handicapped by massive horizontal conflicts, Indonesia can quite constantly improve itself.

Based on the field study described above, it is very obviously visible that the civil society power always appears and is formed as aware reaction for the state's incapability of accommodating a variety of society interests and even exploiting independence of the basic rights for them as human.

As assumed by J.J. Roseau, the state that should act as the guarantor and safety provider, has undergone the shift of function. Therefore, to return back original function, there must be spirit of back suit manifested in the form of civil society's struggle. Only with this way, the connection between the state and the society as citizens will show the relation of equal cooperation without the existence of superior domination element by manipulating uncontrollably the state power.

However, the state control remains important as Hegel's view, but it is automatically very strict and it does not provide concession for improvement. If at one time later, civil society is not able again to express its basic vision and mission, probably they have been trapped and even buried in the hole, what is called by Michael W. Foley and Bob Edwards or Jeffrey C. Alexander⁸ as the reality of *the Paradox of Civil Society*. Indeed, we don't expect the extreme condition. Thus, all of the potencies at the time of reformation (1997-1998) have taken a lot of roles, until now it is constantly demanded in order to spread the greatness of good practices and terminology of civil society continuously. If blog can be done with media, why isn't it continuously performed?

⁸ Michael W. Foley & Bob Edwards, "The Paradox of Civil Society" *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7 No.3 July 1996 p. 38-52 and Jeffrey C. Alexander, "The Paradoxes of Civil Society" *Journal of International Sociology*, Vol.12, No. 2, June 1997, p. 115—134.

The Pattern of Civil Society Relation

The pattern of relation between the state and the civil society is in developing condition. The measurement of growth level really depends on two major dimensions. *First, how the state and the civil society power* are able to respond the existed development. And second, how the external factors provide their weight and influences.

For the two dimensions above, it will be easily found what kinds of relation patterns will be developed in relating to the connection between the state dan the civil society. There are three general models to become the relation patterns. First is the centric state pattern, namely placing the state in a very superior position and people in a subordinat position. This type of pattern is not very appreciative toward citizen civil right. The form of government developed is authoritarian.

Second is the centric civil society pattern. The genesis of this pattern is as the suit toward the state's domination on its citizen. The main contribution to the emergence of this pattern is the existence of democratization process extending very broadly in the era of 1990-2000. Almost there is no space for the state still settled in the authoritarian governmental system. Consciously or unconsciously, if the state doesn't want to be aligned and isolated of global political constellation, willingly or unwillingly, it has to be brave to take the attitude of welcome toward all of change forms.

Above all, the wave of flooded information spill flowing constantly to the most rural areas really provides stimulation for emergence of society civil right awareness. The power of this information tends to crystallize and behave as the spirit of struggling in articulating civil right interests. In such context, the state position will remain defensive. The change will appear if stamina of activators of civil society power remains fit and the pioneers are able to collaborate with the other pressure groups. And don't be wrong, in the era of information technology nowadays, empowering media potencies has to be able to be done optimally. Isn't it what we can read from the winning of Barrack Obama to Jhon McCain in fighting for the chair of USA President (2009-2012) because the party of Obama is not asleep for internet and optimally takes advantage of Facebook?

If the form of collaboration is consistently preserved, the state firstly will be accommodative and not close possibility, precisely this civil power is very dominant. In this side, the civil society power will find themselves as the entity of state whose presence has to be taken into account and the state, although not in soft state position, does not strengthen the assumption of conservative anymore that the state knows the best things for its citizens.

The third relation pattern is the combination pattern between the state and the civil society. Although they can factually be confronted each other but substantially the basic ides of distinction frequently underlying them, is the applied method or instrument. Hypothetically the writer adopts it as the form of the central axis relation pattern.

However, if the state position is very weak and the civil society position is strong, or otherwise, the civil society position is weak and the state is strong,

basically besides there is goodness, but there is also weakness being able to make them disadvantageous.

The weak state will firmly have tendency of losing itself. Politically and economically it is very disadvantageous, above all, in the context of international relation. Likewise, if the civil society power is neglected, the state will tendentiously not have the sense of who is himself. In such level, there will not be any control for the state. Likewise, it will also not be conducive for the emergence of power with the different ideology or ideas from the government. Indeed, it is very rational if the state and the civil society are placed into the positions having the balance in either social, political or economical fields. With such ways, the state will be able to be avoided from deterioration because there is a control, but it does not raise anarchism since the existed social norms are constantly respected that the state can still apply its role and function well.

Conclusion

From the three relation patterns above, the question appears *what kind of the relation pattern is the best implemented. And what media is strong enough to control the formation of pattern?* Since at the beginning, this article is not in the adjustment position (taking the assessment), so based on the presented knot spots, there are surely superiorities and inferiorities in each the available relation pattern.

Nevertheless, the definite and obvious thing is by maximizing the media potency power that it is certainty. Through the spirit of citizen journalism that the individual is the centre or the focus, thus all have to be professional managed. The optimal result always comes from the optimal work.

The strong and powerful civil society is really advantageous for the state. The state will have high survival power in compliance with the highly rapid neo-liberalism flow currently attacking every country throughout the world. The global economical crisis that recently whips, in the certain level, surely reaches the equilibrium point. In such time, all things will run normally and all people get accustomed. When all of them are seen as normality, so in this time the process of civil society empowerment actually may not be satisfied soon. The process of empowerment constantly has to be done in order that when political depressed situation is getting more severe, all citizens have already been ready to welcome with their own power.

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