

The Critical Intersection Point of a Nation: Reading the Traces of the Concept of the Nation in the Indonesian Novel

Akhmad Taufiq¹, Nanda Saputra²

¹Universitas Jember, Indonesia

²STIT Al-Hilal Sigli, Aceh, Indonesia

Email: akhmadtaufiq@unej.ac.id, nandasaputra680@gmail.com

Abstract:

The phenomenon of the nation, along with its concept, is not stable. It develops constantly and is dynamic. This study aims to describe the traces of the dynamics of the concept of the nation in the Indonesian novel. With an interpretive qualitative descriptive method, which supports data in the form of Indonesian novel texts; namely the novel Salah Asuhan by Abdoel Moeis and Tanah Air Beta by Sefryana Khairil, this study seeks to explain the occurrence of events of change or shifting concepts with regard to the nation. Based on this, the results of this study show that in the text of Indonesian novels, especially the two novels, it was found that the concept of the nation was not stable. The concept of the nation can move, shift, and allow separation, which can result in the occurrence of a critical intersection point of a nation. On this basis, the implication of this study is the importance of continuously observing the dynamics of the concept of the nation. Along with that, it is necessary to maintain continuously the commitment of the nation that has been formed.

Keywords:

the critical intersection points of a nation; traces of the concept of nation; indonesian novels

I. Introduction

The concept of the nation as a historical and cultural momentum is expected to continue to move. It will always try to find its form, according to the conditions and challenges and complexity of the nationality problems faced. For this reason, the grand narrative about the nation is always built according to the challenges and complexity of the nationality problems faced, according to its historicity. It sorts of became an instrument for the concept's long journey to find its own phases (Taufiq, 2016: 316).

As a grand narrative, the nation will further come into contact with various images and symbols, which with these images and symbols the nation seems to be able to live continuously (Barker, 2005:261). The great narrative about the nation will always be built and resurrected in the collective memory of its cultural group. Based on that cultural collective memory, the conceptual construction of a nation is constantly being built, which not infrequently ignores the fact that a nation is moving dynamically according to its challenges.

Thus, the nation will be a possible domain to experience a shift; including in this case a shift in perspective influenced by cultural and historical segments (Taufiq, 2016: 316-317). The shift in the concept of the nation needs to be observed in order to observe the social and political changes of a nation, as well as the commitments that develop by the subject or cultural group of a nation. The premise can further be tested for its correctness when the problem of cultural group identity is in fact relative and therefore not permanent. More crucial than that, it can even be contractual. Such a phenomenon can be expressed as attracting

attention because the assumption of the cultural group is permanent, in fact aborted. The imagination of cultural groups by most traditional (read: conservative) circles that are seen as permanent, turns out to be moving, shifting, and even not impossible to separate.

Such a reality, however, is a harsh reality when viewed culturally. There are serious problems with the reality of the cultural group's identity. It is not a frozen reality, which cannot thaw; rather it is a reality that melts steadily with the currents of its estuary. An estuary of cultural change that is not fixed. The problem of cultural group identity in such a context can perhaps be positioned under such conditions.

For example, this can be seen in the problem of cultural group identity at the nation and state level. At the level of the nation and state, the nation as an imaginative construct as a society that is socially, politically, and culturally bound to the psychological of its cultural subject, also allows movement, shift, and perhaps also separation. Tradition is something that is passed down from the heritage of the ancestors to the next generation in a relay descends performed by the indigenous communities that have become deeply entrenched the culture in life. (Purba, N. 2020). This needs to be proclaimed because the perspective on the nation, both in its narrow and traditional locus, and its broad and modern locus, is also moving, shifting constantly; thus, it also allowed the occurrence of separation in his efforts to find his new construction. In subsequent processes, perspectives on nations may also be contractual; for there is a new contract with what is perceived about the nation. Therefore, the conception of the nation-state is not merely a political formation, but rather as a system of cultural representation in which national identity is constantly reproduced as a discursive act (Barker, 2005:260).

On the other hand, the state as a form of juridical-administrative construction, it is not impossible to experience the same. As a nation that then has a long process of becoming a state (read: state), it also does not close the opportunity for movement, shifts, and separations to occur. Therefore, the state must constantly increase its capacity to be able to accommodate the imagination of the cultural groups that grow and develop in it. If this cannot be done, the cultural groups that exist within the country become a problem in the process later.

II. Research Method

This study uses an interpretive qualitative descriptive method, which aims to describe the occurrence of events of change or shift in the concept of nation contained in the Indonesian novel. Based on data extracted from Indonesian novel texts; namely the novel *Salah Asuhan* by Abdoel Moeis and *Tanah Air Beta* by Sefryana Khairil, the data are further described and interpreted in such a way. Several important things regarding data related to the concept of nation are explored, presented, described, and interpreted.

III. Result and Discussion

3.1 The Concept of a Nation is Not Stable

An important thing that should be noted from the results of this study is the discovery of a fact that departs from the text of the Indonesian novel, that the concept of the nation is not stable. Furthermore, the concept of the nation is moving dynamically, which allows for a shift, even a point of separation. In two Indonesian novels, namely the novel *Salah Asuhan* by Abdoel Moeis and *Tanah Air Beta* by Sefryana Khairil shows this. In that connection, the

matter of the nation, more deeply is to become a problem of the identity of a certain cultural group, which allows for the occurrence of a critical intersection point of a nation.

Relevant to the problem of cultural group identity at the national level, Moeis (2006:56-57; 2006:244) provides a perspective that is able to arouse collective consciousness, that the nation's most important problems are always experiencing its continuous journey. It can move, shift, and allow splitting. Such a process occurs because the term 'nation' can be defined, interpreted, and renegotiated. The term about the nation is not, a dogmatic, standard, and final term.

juga sepanjang hematku, tentu engkau sudah lebih daripada insaf, bahwa aku sangat menyalahi perkawinan campuran itu. Aku heran bagaimana engkau sendiri tidak memikirkan sampai ke sana. Meskipun banyak orang sedang berusaha akan merapatkan Timur dan Barat, tapi buat jaman ini bagi bahagian orang yang terbesar masalah, Timur tinggal Timur, Barat tinggal Barat, takkan dapat ditimbuni jurang yang membatasi kedua bahagian itu.

Jika engkau beristrikan aku, terlebih dahulu engkau harus bercerai dengan bangsamu dengan keluargamu dengan ibumu. Sudah berkali-kali engkau berkata, bahwa engkau tidak mepedulikan hal itu sekalian, tapi janganlah engkau gusar, bila aku berkata bahwa sifat serupa pada hematku amatlah rendahnya teristimewa karena masih banyak kewajibanmu terhadap bangsa dan tanah airmu, terutama pada keluarga dan ibumu. Aku tak dapat mengindahkan dan memuliakan sifat laki-laki yang serupa itu! (Moeis, 2006:56-57).

Bagaimanakah pula pendapat bangsanya, Bumiputra, tentang perkawinan campuran? Meskipun tidak menghinakan, tapi mereka itu pun rata-rata tidak membenarkannya, disebutkannya kesalahan yang amat besar. Maka bagi terdengar-dengarnya pula oleh telinga Hanafi tutur ibunya, waktu orang tua yang dikatakannya bodoh itu, dahulu bernasihat kepadanya, supaya ia jangan meneruskan maksudnya dengan Corrie. Sepatah-patah kata itu sudah terbuktiilah sekarang. (Moeis, 2006:244)

As a term that is not dogmatic, standard, and final, it finds its own historical space. The dynamics of the nation's historical journey will mark and outline its own historical destiny. The fundamental factor as the main contributing factor is the presence of the perspective and orientation of the cultural group towards the nation. It is the perspective and orientation of the nation that guides the path of whether the nation will occupy the most strategic position or not.

The case of mixed marriages that occurred to Hanafi and Corry in the novel *Salah Asuhan* by Moeis, is a form of problem that represents the nation's problems; although, the nation in that context still exhibits a certain ethnolocality. The nation for Hanafi is not something dogmatic, standard, and final. It can move, shift, and allow separation to occur.

Hanafi, who represents the Malay cultural group that is indigenous to Sumatra, as a result of his marriage to Corry which is Dutch and European, experienced a form of shift and separation to the nation. The Malays are positioned as an unstable nation-building. He can renegotiate; even committed a withdrawal that marked a farewell to his people. He parted ways with his people which was followed by the departure of traditional attributes as a nation that had been attached to him.

There is a new perspective and orientation built by Hanafi. Europe for Hanafi was constructed and imagined as something more interesting. Europe was seen as giving much hope to Hanafi life, which was compared back to its Malay-Sumatran people, who were considered incapable of providing any hope of progress and glory. Europe for the Hanafi was synonymous with such progress and glory; thus, marrying Corry parallels the process of creation of progress and glory itself.

Moe is as an author in that context has descriptive constructions and attitudes that are interesting to study. In his imaginative construction, Moeis established an opposition between Dutch-European on the one hand and Malay-Sumatran on the other. The two parties were confronted, contrasted, and confronted with some of the risks. Both parties bear their own risks; that is, psychological confusion for both parties. In fact, according to Hunter, the two characters, namely Hanafi and Corry, experienced tragic biographies. The tragic biography is intended to remind Indonesian readers of the dangers for cultural encounters between West and East. In particular, for Hanafi, such a process caused tremendous psychological alienation (Hunter, 2008:135).

Hanafi's mother as a representative of the cultural group of the Malay-Sumatran nation experienced tremendous psychological confusion when Hanafi had declared separation from her nation. Likewise, Hanafi actually experienced quite a severe psychological confusion. Hanafi's declaration to part ways with his people was not total. There is a side that he psychologically cannot leave behind; that is, the mother who has given birth to him.

It was an event of separation of the nation's children with their nation which both left a confusion of identity problems. The event marked that separation from the nation in any form actually still leaves a very deep psychological problem. Therefore, in every event of separation from the nation, it can be ascertained that there is a problem of identity in it.

No less interesting thing to note is the attitude of the author, in this case Moeis. Moeis has an unmitigated attitude towards the event. Malay-Sumatran was strengthened in such a way and at the same time weakened the Dutch-European position along with the power absorbed in him. Mrs. Hanafi and Rapih as representatives of the Malay-Sumatran cultural group gained a form of reinforcement from the author, by maintaining the subject of the cultural group in her capacity as a socio-cultural basis. On the other hand, Hanafi as a representation of the subject of a cultural group with a perspective and oriented (read: absorbed) in The Netherlands-Europe gets a process of weakening the position of the author. Likewise, Corry's position as a representation of a Dutch-European cultural group was weakened by positional weakness. The latter two characters, even in the novel, experience a great tragedy of life. Corry became ill and died; so is Hanafi. Hanafi even died in a state of suicide by drinking poison into him. A decision for a subject who is already experiencing an extraordinary psychological problem. This phenomenon confirms a form of the author's partiality towards the position of the Malay-Sumatran indigenous people who are constructed as a nation.

Furthermore, Moeis tried to build sympathy/empathy in the reader in Hanafi and Rapih's mother, as a representation of the Malay-Sumatran nation, as well as to build a message to the reader to do the same thing as Hanafi did. On the other hand, with the death of Annelies, Toer tries to arouse the current of resistance of the reader, since the death of Annelies was caused by the arrogance of the colonial power.

3.2 The Critical Point of a Nation's Farewell

The next form of separation from the nation, occurred when East Timor separated from the Indonesian homeland after the August 30, 1999 polls. The historical record of the East Timorese polls corresponds to the information in the introduction to the film Tanah Air Beta. For this reason, the process also marked the loss of the pro-integration side of the party that declared pro-independence. In Bertrand's (2012:231) account, of the 451,792 registered voters and with 97% of these voters casting their ballots, 78.5% rejected Indonesia's proposal for broad autonomy; which means to choose independence. Meanwhile, those who choose integration with the concept of broad autonomy are 21%.

What is interesting to note from this event is that the polls, commonly called referendums, did not merely have an impact on the separation of Timor Leste from Indonesia territorially; however, it also marked the separation of many families as a result of different choices. Therefore, the event clearly has a deep psychological impact on those who are culturally involved directly or not.

Those directly involved, namely those who at the time of the polls and the refugee process were in the region. Meanwhile, those who were not directly involved, that at the time of the polls and the evacuation process were not in the region. They are because of various things outside the territory of Timor Leste or also for those (read: Indonesian people) who have positioned Timor Leste as an inseparable part of the Indonesian homeland. The Indonesian government refers to the region as Timor Timur. The term Timor Timur is to provide a different administrative category from Timor Barat called Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT).

In this regard, the novel Tanah Air Beta by Khairil provides illustrations that record and reflect on the events of the separation of East Timor from the homeland of Indonesia. The event clearly shows an event of extraordinary effect for those involved.

Di sebuah Jembatan, tempat perbatasan Timor Leste dan Indonesia, orang-orang yang mengungsi kembali bertemu dengan keluarganya. Mereka saling berpelukan, saling menangis, penuh haru. Beberapa tentara terlihat berada di sekitar untuk menjaga keadaan.

Di jembatan Montain bukan sekadar penghubung dua wilayah yang telah berpisah. Lebih dari itu, jembatan itu menjadi penghubung bagi sanak saudara yang terpaksa hidup terpisah karena harus mengungsi. Pasca jajak pendapat memang melahirkan duka yang mendalam bagi banyak keluarga. Sayangnya, tidak banyak orang yang mau tahu, atau bahkan memahami nasib mereka yang hidup dalam pengungsian. Sebagian pagar, jembatan itu dipasang kawat berduri dan garis kuning sebagai batas daerah. Benar-benar sebuah jembatan yang penuh air mata, penuh kerinduan dan keharuan (Khairil, 2010:9).

As an event with extraordinary effect, it is not limited to political events that have had an effect or impact on the separation of the region from Indonesia. Furthermore, the event was a sociocultural event; where as a result of the polls it socioculturally led to the cracking of the existing sociocultural system. These events, when viewed from the psychological, are even able to have a deep wound impact on those who experience these events.

The thing that is worth noting about the psychological impact is that there is confusion that cannot be revealed. The confusion is a form of psychological crisis as a result of the indignity of cultural group identity. There is a serious problem of cultural group identity. The defeat of the prointegration party in this context was followed by the problem of the identity of cultural groups within their scope as a nation and state.

The separation of Timor Leste from Indonesia was evident in the process of its beriku followed by the construction of a new nation and state discourse; namely the nation and state of East Timor. Such a phenomenon for those who are prointegration clearly gives birth to the problem of cultural group identity. There was unpreparedness, unacceptableness, and fear after the separation of Timor Leste from Indonesia. A fact of the crisis of the bonds of political collectivity as a nation (Anderson, 2002:8).

The existence of unpreparedness and disapproval for those who are prointegration is based on political reasoning which is quite reasonable because they as subjects of cultural groups have an imaginistic image of the discourse of one nation and state. Timor Leste in the imaginistic image of the nation and state is seen as an inseparable territory from the Indonesian homeland. The defeat of the prointegration actually marked the destruction of the imaginistic image as a nation and country. The destruction of the imaginistic image in the ensuing process gave birth to identity problems for the subjects of the prointegration cultural group.

On the other hand, the emergence of fear for the subject of pro-integrative cultural groups is driven by fears of political pressure in its various forms. It should be noted that post-polls there are tremendous social conflicts. As a way out of the chaos of conflict and psychological confusion, those who are prointegration prefer to evacuate to Timor Barat (NTI). The evacuation process can be interpreted as a rescue process, as well as marking separation.

Therefore, the evacuation effort is actually not the final path that can solve all the problems post-poll. Apart from that, it still leaves a problem that is no less complicated, namely the problem of sociocultural relations and relations between the two countries that were once united, which concerns territorial boundaries and the pattern of relations between two equally sovereign states. The Mountain border since August 30, 2005 has been the gateway that has been officially opened since the post-polls, between the Republic of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste. Until now, there are still around 70,000 thousand refugees out of about 300,000 refugees after the polls who still choose to live in Timor Barat (Nusa Tenggara Timur Province).

The information is taken from an additional note in the film Tanah Air Beta. Meanwhile, Bertrand (2012: 231) noted that only 200,000 Timor Timur were displaced, both to the mountains, and to Nusa Tenggara Timur. The difference in records illustrates how much the post-poll or referendum conditions left a tremendous mess; thus, it also has implications for the data. Refugee data as one example.

On the basis of this analysis, there is something that can be a critical note in this study; namely, that the matter of a nation with a concept inherent in it becomes a sensitive one. If you look closely, there are critical intersections, both in the case of hanafi and Corry mixed marriage in the novel Salah Asuhan, and in the case of the separation of Timor Timur in the novel Tanah Air Beta. Both leave serious and crucial issues for this nation.

In the case of Hanafi and Corry's mixed marriage there is a critical point of intersection when Hanafi as an indigenous subject wants to die of his personality. For the record, the Malay-Sumatran at that time was seen and positioned as a nation. On the other hand, in the case of the separation of Timor Leste from Indonesia, leaving a complex problem, not only concerning the fact of the separation of a nation's children, then becoming a new nation that has the concept of its own nation; rather, it leaves the problem of psychological confusion, as a result of the separation.

IV. Conclusion

Departing from the above analysis, it can be concluded that the concept of nation is not stable. The concept of a further nation is dynamic, following the challenges and complexity of the problems that occur. Therefore, the concept of a nation can move, undergo a shift; in fact, in some point experienced separation. The concept of nation in the novel *Salah Asuhan* and *Tanah Air Beta*, shows this. Especially in the novel *Tanah Air Beta* the concept of the nation experiencing separation. The separation of East Timor from Indonesia shows that the separation, at the same time followed by the formation of a new concept of nation and state at the same time. In both cases, one affirmation can be given that the shift and separation of the concept of a nation is a manifestation of the condition of the occurrence of a critical intersection point of a nation, which needs to be carefully observed and addressed.

References

- Anderson, Benedict. (2002). *Imagined Communities: Komunitas-komunitas Terbayang*. Diterjemahkan oleh Omi Intan Naomi. Yogyakarta: Insist-Pustaka Pelajar.
- Barker, Chris. (2005). *Cultural Studies: Teori dan Praktik*. Yogyakarta: Bentang, terjemahan oleh Tim Kunci Cultural Studies Center, dari judul asli *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. Sage Publication-London, 2000.
- Bertrand, Jacques. (2012). *Nasionalisme dan Konflik Etnis di Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak
- Hunter, Thomas M. (2008). "Indo sebagai 'Orang Lain': Identitas, Kegelisahan, dan Ambiguitas dalam *Salah Asuhan*." dalam Foulcher, Keith dan Day, Tony (ed.). 2008. *Sastra Indonesia Modern: Kritik Poskolonial*. Jakarta: KITLV dan Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- Khairil, Sefryana. (2010). *Tanah Air Beta*. Yogyakarta: Gradien Mediatama.
- Moeis, Abdoel. (2006). *Salah Asuhan*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka.
- Purba, N. (2020). The Use of Simalungun Language by Anak Boru Sanina in the Simalungun Wedding Ceremony (Sociolinguistic Studies). *Lakhomi Journal: Scientific Journal of Culture*. 1-7
- Taufiq, Akhmad. (2016). "Membincang Kembali Diskursus Bangsa dalam Novel Indonesia: dari Etnolokalitas sampai dengan Pascanasional-PascaIndonesia". dalam Anoeagrajekti, Novi. 2016. *Jejak langkah Perubahan: dari Using sampai Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak.