

The ABC of Conflict and International Scapegoating against Indonesian-Chinese

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Abstract. This article aims to analyse incidents of scapegoating against the Chinese minority, which involves international issues in Indonesia. There are two cases raised in this study: (1) the violence that occurred in the 1960s with the issue of communism, and (2) the violence in 1998 with the economic crisis issue. These cases are important to study, considering that many similar cases have occurred since 2016, starting with the case of blasphemy by the governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or Ahok. Thus, a history of bloody violence can be avoided. This study uses qualitative research methods with secondary data collection methods through literature study. The theory used to analyze scapegoating against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia is the A-B-C conflict triangle compiled by Johan Galtung. The results of this study are scapegoating as a form of behavior (B), caused by the discriminatory attitude (A) of the Indonesian people and the stigmatization of ethnic Chinese that has been going on for a long time (latent conflict). Contradiction (C) at the international level has then triggered this to become a manifest conflict.

Keywords: A-B-C Conflict Triangle, Scapegoating, International, Chinese

1 Introduction

In general, scapegoating is “*the act of blaming a person or group for something bad that has happened or that someone else has done*” [1]. The term scapegoat has traditionally been accepted as derived from Western studies: once, there were two goats received by the great Jews in Jerusalem during the Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) war in ancient Israel. One goat was used in sacrificial offerings to God, while the other goats to bear the sins of the tribe left the community [2].

This scapegoating act has been around since time immemorial. For example, the case of scapegoating people (mostly women) who are considered “witches” in Europe and North America by Christian institutions. Germany committed genocide against Jews and other minority groups who are considered influential in the collapse of the German economy. The Rwandan Tutsi are the scapegoats for the economic, social and political disparities in Rwanda, which are actually the result of years of colonial rule [2].

Even today, scapegoating occurs all over the world. Politicians blame China for the 2008 world economic recession [3], scapegoating against Islamic groups in America for all incidents of terrorism [4]. The latest case of scapegoating is violence against Asian-Americans who are considered the cause of the global pandemic in the United States [5].

The same events also occur in Indonesia. Hatred and violence against ethnic Chinese during the crisis of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in the 1960s, mass looting and

rape due to the 1998 Asian economic crisis, hatred of Chinese groups because of the governor of DKI Jakarta, Ahok as a suspect of blasphemy, until 2020, debate over images traditional clothes on the new Rp 75,000 denomination which is considered traditional Chinese clothing. These cases show that scapegoating against groups that are considered weaker continues to occur in a number of areas in Indonesia.

Therefore, this research has the formulation of the problem as follows: **How does the case of scapegoating involving international issues affect the Chinese minority group in Indonesia?** And why did this conflict occur?

2 Method

2.1 Research Design

This research is qualitative research on Peace and Conflict Studies. The qualitative approach is also referred to as a naturalistic approach because the research is carried out in natural conditions without any engineering from the researcher [6]. The qualitative approach seeks to obtain an overview and explanation of the selected social problems [7], not to examine the strength between variables such as the quantitative approach. In examining the phenomenon of international conflict and peace, this study takes a case study, violence against the Chinese minority in Indonesia. A case study is an activity in which researchers explore a single entity or phenomenon that is limited by time and certain activities using detailed information obtained from various data collection procedures [8].

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 The International Element of Scapegoating

According to Merriam Webster dictionary, the term International means “(1) relating to, or affecting two or more nations, (2) relating to, or constituting a group or association having members in two or more nations, (3) active, known, or reaching beyond national boundaries of this research are cases of violence that occur across national borders”.

2.2.2 Displaced Aggression and Scapegoating

The term displaced aggression is then understood as a robust social and psychological phenomenon resulted from frustrations faced by one person or group, and it is being justified to conduct violent actions and aggression to the target who is not the cause of initial frustration [9][10][11]. This aggression target or *scapegoats* is chosen because they are available and safe targets: “A scapegoat has to be innocent of causing the events, behavior or situations for which he or she is being *blamed*” [12]. Causes of Scapegoating according to Douglas, victims of scapegoating has four characteristics: (1) Socially powerless; (2) Dislikable party; (3) Have certain characteristics that trigger scapegoating victims; (4) Having a differ identity (pp.137-148).

The concept of a scapegoat is consistent with Sigmund Freud's idea of displacement or projection as a defines mechanism. According to Freud, people replace hostility with a stronger side, to a less powerful target. Peter Glick later noticed that this scapegoat's target had the characteristics of (1) having relatively low power; (2) the group has a very clear difference from the ingroup (the perpetrator group), so that members of the group can be easily identified and associated with undesirable situations; and (3) target scapegoats tend to pose a real threat to the ingroup, intentionally or unintentionally [13].

In the perspective of the scapegoat theory, when a person experiences an atmosphere of crisis that befalls him or his group, the usual psychological mechanism is to look for other parties as the cause of various crises that occur. This happens because a person does not have the ability to exercise self-control, and usually someone else is chosen to be the cause of various crises and disappointments. However, because he is unable to fight directly against the target who is perceived as the responsible party, the psychological mechanism of displacement of aggression is carried out, namely by choosing another target that has a real or symbolic bond or relationship to the main target [13].

2.2.3 The ABC Conflict Triangle

The conflict triangle theory was first developed by Prof. Johan Galtung to analyse various kinds of conflicts, ranging from simple conflicts to even complex ones. Triangle ABC was developed by Johan Galtung. It has three aspects: attitudes (A) of the actors involved, their behaviour (B), and contradictions (C). These three aspects are interrelated and one of them can be the starting point for the development of a conflict [14]

First, is the Attitude (A) of the conflicting parties, who tend to become more defensive or even hostile as the conflict escalates. To finally reach a conflict resolution, the parties must first become aware of their attitudes and perceptions towards each other. The second is Behaviour (B) or Behaviour. Attitudes in conflict situations not only affect their own behaviour but are strongly influenced by the behaviour of others. Insults or provocations make it harder to see the mutual benefits of ending the conflict. Therefore, it is important to find ways of dealing with negative behaviour to defuse the situation. Finally, we need to consider Contradiction (C) i.e., the mismatch between the values and goals of conflicting actors.

These three aspects are interrelated and one of them can be the starting point for the development of a conflict. What is initially a simple proposition that conflict can start at any of the three points (but must involve all three) becomes even more complex when we consider what attitudes, behaviours, and contradictions are, and how they actually relate to one another. A mismatch in goals (C), for example over territorial dominance, can lead to hostility (A) that influences violent behaviour (B). On the other hand, violent behaviour (B) can lead to hostility (A) and create a goal mismatch (C). Likewise, hostile attitudes (A) between actors can lead to behaviour (B) that creates a goal mismatch (C).

The A-B-C conflict triangle can also determine whether the conflict is manifest or latent. Manifest conflicts (visible on the surface) will show the behavioural side (B), while latent conflicts (below the surface) only show the Attitudes and Contradictions (B and C), or which can be described as follows:

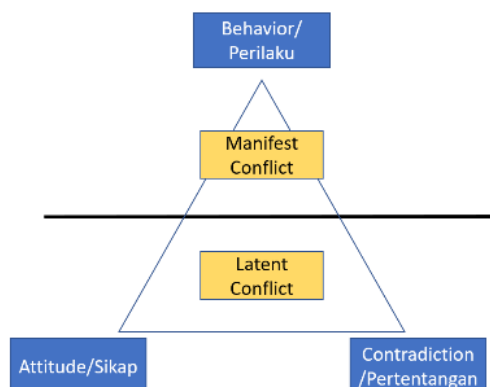


Fig. 1. The A-B-C Conflict Triangle

Luthans explains that latent conflict is a condition that has the potential to cause, or initiate an episode of conflict. This latent conflict can be invisible or not so obvious on the surface. Latent conflicts are often rooted in long-standing economic inequalities, or in groups' unequal access to political power. Governments may not be responsive to the needs of minorities or lower power groups. Strong value or status differences may exist. Any of these problems can arise as an open conflict (Manifest conflict) after the triggering event occurs [15].

3 Discussion and Finding

3.1 Behavior (B) 1: Scapegoating against Indonesian Chinese in 1960s: The Communist Allegation

In 1965 there were claims that ethnic Chinese and the PKI cooperated with the Chinese Communists, in the G30S incident. This incident re-evokes racial hatred against ethnic Chinese Indonesians in modern times. Starting from October 1, 1965, the country was rocked by the drama of kidnappings and killings carried out by a group of armed forces against seven Army Generals. Suddenly this incident made people confused and prejudiced against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Slowly the anti-communist campaign began to develop into an anti-Chinese campaign in various regions, on November 10, 1965 an anti-Chinese movement emerged in Makassar which led to the massacre of Chinese citizens in Makassar [16]. By 1966, things were getting out of hand. Soaring prices and deteriorating security stability made waves of demonstrations increasingly widespread in various places, which developed into racial riots. On December 10, 1966, in Medan there was a mass riot, in which Chinese people were chased and massacred for being accused of collaborating with the communists [17].

Then, in November 1967, in West Kalimantan, the Red Bowl Incident occurred in which tens of thousands of Chinese were massacred for being accused of being communist sympathizers who planned plots and rebellions in Kalimantan. In this incident hundreds of thousands of Chinese people fled to Pontianak and Singkawang, to avoid massacres carried out by local communities, which had been instigated by the government and military [17].

3.2 Behavior (B) 2 : Scapegoat of the Economic Crisis in 1998

Furthermore, at the end of 1997, there was a monetary crisis in Indonesia which later developed into an economic crisis, a political crisis and has even turned into a multidimensional crisis. People began to get restless and panicked about the scarcity of needed goods, besides that many workers were laid off, causing the number of unemployed to increase. The socio-economic gap in the midst of people's lives is increasingly felt, where the majority of ethnic Chinese are seen as exclusive while the indigenous people experience various economic difficulties [18].

In 1995, Executive magazine published a list of 100 conglomerates in Indonesia, of which 79 were ethnic Chinese. As a result, when the economic crisis occurred, property belonging to the ethnic Chinese was looted, damaged, and burned. According to a report by the Volunteer Team for Humanity, the riots in the capital city of Jakarta from 13 to 15 May 1998 claimed 152 victims of sexual violence and rape. While 20 of them died [19]. This incident resulted in a massive exodus of ethnic Chinese-Indonesians abroad to avoid riots. However, in the midst of the chaos of the economic crisis and the chaos that hit, New Order officials blamed the ethnic Chinese who were considered to have controlled the economy and were the cause of the economic crisis at that time. This statement made anti-Chinese sentiments flare up again in society which led to riots.

3.3 The ABC of Conflict Analysis

3.3.1 Attitude (A)/Sikap: Diskriminasi dan Rasisme

Racial hatred is also felt by Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent to this day, it can even be said to be sad. Where they are labeled as evil, stingy, and oppressing the natives. Even though they have lived in Indonesia for a long time and of course they have the same sense of nationalism as the natives, they may even be more nationalistic than the natives themselves. If we look further, this hatred actually arises because of the nature of envy and fights that have emerged since the colonial era. Where at that time the Chinese were employed as tax collectors by the sultans so that the people became hateful towards this ethnicity.

The Chinese community has existed in Indonesia since 500 years ago during the reign of Emperor Wang Ming or Wang Mang (1-6 BC). The relationship between the people of the archipelago and the Chinese at that time was very mutual [20]. However, all that began to change when the Dutch colonized Indonesia. By the Dutch colonial government, Chinese citizens were placed in the third class as Foreign East. However, in some policies, he is treated equally like the Bumiputera class. For example, in the Civil Law Regulations 1848 which was valid until 1920, they were required to carry a permit if traveling from one district to another [20]. During the Dutch colonial era, the Chinese also became tax collectors on main roads, bridges, ports, bases on rivers, and markets. This is what causes economic jealousy to the Chinese ethnic [16].

In May 1998, rumours emerged that the rupiah would rise to Rp 12,000.00 per US dollar. Hearing this issue, people started to panic and bought up basic necessities. The impact of the wholesale action has made basic food materials scarcer in the market. Then there were prejudices from the indigenous community towards the Chinese, most of whom worked as traders. The Chinese were accused of hoarding staples and causing an increase and scarcity of staple food prices. This prejudice later developed into the disliking of the indigenous groups towards the ethnic Chinese whose majority position as traders [18].

Hatred against ethnic Chinese became increasingly structured in the form of discriminatory behavior during the New Order era. First, in the field of education, since 1966 no Chinese secondary school in Indonesia has been allowed to operate. Parents can only teach Chinese to their children on a very limited basis [19][21]. In addition, in the field of culture, ethnic Chinese must experience what is known as assimilation, where all Chinese culture is prohibited from being displayed in public [19][21]. Furthermore, the repression against the Chinese was carried out by the New Order repressive regime which issued regulations for forced assimilation for the Chinese, through the Ampera Cabinet Circular No. 06/1967 on the Chinese Problem. In addition, the Indonesian government also oversees the actions of the Chinese through the Coordinating Board for Chinese Affairs (BKMC) [21].

The same thing happened after Ahok's verdict in 2017. The perception of "Aseng" attached to news about ethnic Chinese in radical online media, began to flare up again. This is a form of service behaviour that is a way to exclude certain groups from a section of society. "Aseng" in this case is a form of labelling that serves as a marker that the Chinese are foreign and not part of us (natives). In fact, the dichotomy of "Chinese" and "Indigenous" is nothing but social engineering carried out by the Dutch colonial government. The classification of the population based on race was an attempt by the colonial government during the Dutch occupation to secure its power (or often referred to as the politics of fighting sheep).

3.3.2 Contradiction (C) / Kontradiksi: Cold War

The scapegoating against Chinese minority group is also a form of contradiction, in terms of economy, politics, territory, and culture. In the 1960s, there was a capitalist-communist ideological conflict represented by the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. These international political conditions forced small countries to have a tendency to side with one of the two superpowers by joining the "Western bloc" or "Eastern bloc". Although Indonesia was the founder of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), at the end of the era of President Soekarno's administration, Indonesia was more closely related to the Eastern bloc [16]. During the Cold War, China and Indonesia were connected by two types of ties. At the country-to-country level, in the early 1960s, Beijing and Jakarta formed a strategic alignment that built on a past of shared anti-colonial struggles and an anticipated future of independence from the cold war era superpowers [16]. This contradiction was the cause of hostile behaviour and attitudes with the Chinese minority in Indonesia during the Cold War. Until now the Chinese community in Indonesia is still often associated with their support for communism.

Furthermore, the contradictions in the international sphere that led to scapegoating against Chinese Indonesians also occurred in the 1990s through the Asian economic crisis. The Asian financial crisis, which was first triggered by the devaluation of the Thai Baht in the middle of last year, has dragged down currencies and capital markets in neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, the Philippines, Korea and Indonesia [22].

Even though it happened in almost all Asian countries, but in Indonesia, different discourses were circulating. At that time there were accusations that ethnic Chinese were the cause of the monetary crisis, the provocation was spread by several generals who had no connection with the economy. The accusation was based on false information that the ethnic Chinese fled public money abroad and deliberately hoarded basic necessities so that the Indonesian people starved and suffered. This then led to hatred (A) and violent behaviour (B) against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia at that time.

4 Conclusion

The ABC Conflict developed by Galtung divides conflict into Attitude, Behaviour, and Contradiction (A, B, C). Violent behaviour against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia begins with discrimination and perceptions (Attitude/A) that some Indonesians perceive ethnic Chinese as greedy, stingy, only enriching themselves, colonizing the Indonesian economy, and even communist stooges. This then ignited the behaviour (Behaviour/B) of scapegoating the ethnic Chinese which sparked the bloody conflicts in Indonesia in the 1960s and 1998. Even today, when Indonesian politics and economics are in turmoil, the Chinese are still being used as scapegoats. According to the scapegoating theory, the ethnic Chinese were targeted because of their number of minorities, and were the closest to being used as an outlet for violence due to the economic crisis, and the political crisis during the Cold War (Contradiction/C).

Of course, any ethnic scapegoating behaviour in Indonesia must be stopped. If the main problem is economic disparity, then there needs to be a bridge of communication and cooperation in order to create an economic and social equilibrium so that the gap is getting smaller, and bloody social conflicts like 1998 do not need to be repeated.

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