

## **Civic Networks and Building Social Capital in Indonesia: An Innovative Experiment by Chinese Organisations in the Post-Suharto Era\***

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*This paper explores the role and meaning of Chinese-Indonesian civic organisations, which have emerged in Indonesia since the fall of the Suharto regime in May 1998 in preventing recurring ethnic violence. The paper analyses relationships between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians and the sufferings of Chinese Indonesians before and during the May 1998 riots. The paper then investigates reactions of the Chinese community to the riots. It highlights the activities of inter-ethnic civic organisations including the Indonesian Chinese Association (INTI), Homeland Solidarity (SNB), the Indonesian Anti-Discrimination Movement (GANDI), and the Volunteer Team for Humanity (TRuK) in mobilising various stake-holders to fight for legal justice and protect minority rights in the post-Suharto era. Their endeavours are a new and innovative experiment in Indonesian history. The paper argues that in the post-Suharto era, the security of Chinese Indonesians is being improved as the activities of these inter-ethnic civic organisations and their networks build social trust and promote cooperation between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians.*

**Keywords:** *Prevention of ethnic violence, Anti-Chinese riots in Indonesia, Chinese-Indonesian Civic Organisations, Social capital, and Inter-ethnic civic engagement*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has been torn by massive ethnic violence over the last decade. One of the prime targets of the ethnic violence was Chinese Indonesians,<sup>1</sup> who comprise around 3 per cent of the population and are regarded as the economically dominant group in Indonesia. During the economic crisis of 1998, Chinese Indonesians suffered most from mob violence in Jakarta, Solo, and other major cities. As a result, more than 1,000 people died, at least 100 Chinese women were gang-raped, and thousands of shops were burned to the ground (see Pattiradjawane 2000; Turner 2003). The sufferings of the Chinese-Indonesian community during the May 1998 riots were a watershed to reconsider their ethnic security in the post-Suharto era. They, therefore, started to devise a new avenue to protect them, taking advantage of the *Reformasi* (Reform) that has swept over the country in the past ten years. To this end, they have renewed their own identity and begun to establish political parties and civic organisations.<sup>2</sup> Some of the literature has analysed the emergence of Chinese civic

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'Chinese Indonesian(s)' in this paper when referring to ethnic Chinese in Indonesia regardless of time periods.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'civic organisation' refers in this paper to groups of non-governmental, voluntary, autonomous, and non-profit organisations or movements that can contribute to address community problems and devise alternative ideas and values. Therefore, civic organisations include non-

organisations in Indonesia since the fall of the President Suharto (see Freeman 2003; Giblin 2003; Hoon 2006; Suryadinata 2001; Turner and Allen 2007; Wibowo 2001). They generally focus on the diverse range of identity formations of Chinese Indonesians and emphasise legal and political changes in order to secure the safety of Chinese Indonesians. But little attention has been paid to the role and meaning of the new and innovative Chinese civic organisations, which create inter-ethnic civic networks, in preventing recurrent ethnic violence and protecting minority rights in Indonesia.

This paper attempts to fill this gap by exploring the new trend of Chinese civic organisations in Indonesia in the post-Suharto era. The emergence of these organisations is a new and innovative experiment for the Chinese-Indonesian community because, historically, Chinese Indonesians tended to forge their own organisations and networks. Moreover, during the New Order period (1967-1998), they built a patron-client relationship with indigenous elites throughout the Indonesian archipelago for securing their political and economic interests. After the May 1998 riots, however, the Chinese community initiated the establishment of inter-ethnic civic organisations and these organisations forged inter-ethnic civic networks with indigenous groups in order to secure their rights and safety. Why did they forge these networks, and what are the aims of these new organisations? What do these new civic organisations mean for the future security of the Chinese community in Indonesia? This paper explains these questions in the context of social capital, proposed by Robert D. Putnam, and civil society engagement, developed by Ashutosh Varshney. I argue that with inter-ethnic civic organisations and their networks, the security of Chinese Indonesians is being improved as the inter-ethnic civic organisations create social trust and facilitate cooperation between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians.

The structure of this paper is as follows. In the next section, I will discuss the relationship between social capital and civic network in facilitating ethnic peace. The history of Chinese Indonesians and anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia will be analysed in the section III. In the section IV, I will analyse the emergence of inter-ethnic civic organisations and their activities in Jakarta and Solo, where massive anti-Chinese riots took place in May 1998. In the last section, I will draw my conclusions.

## 2. SOCIAL CAPITAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In the past decade, scholars of ethnic politics have taken up the concept of social capital to explain ethnic peace. They argue that social capital functions as a catalyst for ethnic peace in divided societies. Among them, based on his research in Italy, Robert D. Putnam (1993) argues that all forms of social capital are beneficial to society because they facilitate trust and norms in society as a whole. He defines social capital as “norms of reciprocity and networks of civil engagement” which are created by participation in civil organisations (1993: 167). Putnam emphasises the democratic potential of horizontal networks as opposed to the vertical networks of patron-client arrangements. But the theory has been subjected to criticism on theoretical and empirical grounds. One of the criticisms is that the concept fails to exactly delineate which civic organisations and networks are beneficial. This is because

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governmental organisations (NGOs), labour unions, student organisations, charitable organisations, social movements, faith-based institutions, sports clubs, and other social organisations as long as they are independent from state, and aim to promote social cohesion and welfare of whole society members.

not all civic organisations and networks facilitate coordination and cooperation for common goals. Some examples of the negative side of social capital do exist. As Putzel (1997) demonstrates, ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs in some Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines have relied for their business advancement on their own exclusive networks. Some other negative examples are networks of criminal gangs (e.g. the Mafia) and Islamic fundamentalist groups (e.g. Al Qaeda).

In order to render the concept more workable, Putnam (2000) makes a distinction between bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to social norms and networks that facilitate in-group solidarity or homogeneity of the ethnic relationship. Meanwhile bridging social capital refers to those that foster inter-group solidarity or heterogeneity. Putnam maintains that an active civil society can enrich bridging social capital, which is conducive to peace or harmony between sections of society. In view of this, Martin van Bruinessen (2004) maintains that some religious organisations in Indonesia, such as Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, invest their time and energy to create bridging social capital in society through public education in religious pluralism, the provision of health care, and advocacy for minority rights.

In fact, the concept of bridging social capital has a similar function to the concept of Ashutosh Varshney's inter-ethnic civic engagement. Varshney (2001; 2002) sees that bridging social capital may have a similar positive effect on preventing ethnic violence in divided societies. He pays attention to the positive impact of social capital and applies this to Indian cities. Analysing the structures of the ethnic relationship between Hindus and Muslims in Indian cities, he finds that organised inter-ethnic civic engagements at the local level function as the prime cause of ethnic peace during times of crisis. In other words, civic organisations and their networks are beneficial to the prevention of ethnic violence when their membership crosses ethnic boundaries. He argues that inter-ethnic civic engagement facilitates ethnic peace, while intra-ethnic engagement promotes ethnic violence. Mohammad Z. Tadjoeeddin (2004) sees inter-ethnic civic engagement as a useful avenue to prevent ethnic violence in Indonesia, where societies are generally segregated along ethnic and religious lines. This concept is consistent with the earlier finding of Stolle (1998) that associations with heterogeneous memberships tend to produce more beneficial consequences for society as a whole than those with homogenous memberships.

Consequently, networks of civic engagement foster norms of reciprocity and facilitate the emergence of social trust. Such networks can function as a channel for communication and cooperation. In this sense, ethnic violence is more easily avoided in a community that has a substantial stock of bridging social capital and dense inter-ethnic civic networks.

### 3. ETHNIC SEGREGATION AND ANTI-CHINESE VIOLENCE IN INDONESIA

During the Dutch colonial period (1596-1942), Indonesian society was segregated along ethnic lines and this segregation had a profound and lasting impact on local society. For political and economic purposes, the Dutch deliberately separated the Chinese population from the indigenous population (Suryadinata 2001: 502). A three-tier 'plural society' (Furnivall 1948) was developed in Indonesia: a society that was segregated with Europeans (mainly Dutch) at the top, Chinese Indonesians in the middle, and indigenous Indonesians (*pribumi*) at the bottom. Chinese Indonesians, as a group, had a higher status than indigenous Indonesians, and they played a significant role in tax collection and the trades (Chernov

2003: 104). This colonial policy contributed to the antagonistic relationship between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians, and the ethnic segregation became one of the most enduring legacies that have affected Indonesian society until the present (Hefner 2001: 19; Mozali 1994: 59). Chinese Indonesians were the usual target of ethnic violence during political turmoil and economic crises in Indonesia. They bore a brunt of ethnic violence instigated by Islamic groups during 1920s and 1940s (Bertrand 2006; Yang 2001).

The colonial legacies impacted on the relationship between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians in the post-independence period. Since 1950, Indonesian governments have promoted an ideology of ethnic and religious pluralism through the doctrine of *Pancasila* (Five National Principles),<sup>3</sup> which refers to non-sectarian and humanistic values (Nagata 2000: 229). But Chinese Indonesians were not considered to be indigenous Indonesians; they were excluded and discriminated against by various laws and regulations (Coppel 1983: 3).

The implementation of such differentiation appeared in government regulations and policies, and impacted on every aspect of the lives of Chinese Indonesians including education, legal status and cultural life. An obvious area of discrimination was that Chinese Indonesians had to possess a Surat Bukti Kewarganegaraan Republik Indonesia (SBKRI, Certificate of Indonesian Citizenship). The SBKRI had to be produced to apply for official documents such as ID cards and passports. Without a SBKRI, therefore, many Chinese Indonesians remained stateless and their rights were limited (Freedman 2003: 446). The abolition of this discrimination has been one of main targets for inter-ethnic civic organisations in the post-Suharto era.

The discrimination was more pronounced during the New Order government. In 1967, the newly established Suharto's New Order government set a rule for Chinese Indonesians' behaviour with 'The Basic Policy for the Solution of the Chinese Problem (Pedoman Penyelesaian Masalah Cina di Indonesia).' For the purposes of social control, Chinese-Indonesian political parties, schools, and social organisations were banned (Tan 1991: 116-9). The New Order government also pushed Chinese Indonesians to change their names to Indonesian-sounding ones, expressions of Chinese culture were confined to indoor activities, and the use of Chinese characters was banned in public (Giblin 2003: 356). While the government compelled Chinese Indonesians to assimilate, they could not, however, assimilate fully into the indigenous society because they had been given special identity cards, which contained codes to differentiate them from indigenous ones. Therefore the citizenship status of Chinese Indonesians was problematic throughout the New Order period.

During the New Order period (1967-98), ethnic harmony or peaceful ethnic relationships between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians was maintained by the state, particularly by military intervention. The maintenance of political and social stability in the achievement of economic development constituted the prime agenda of the regime. To this end, the New Order government banned any discussion of SARA issues, which included *Suku* (Ethnicity), *Agama* (Religion), *Ras* (Race), and *Antar-golongan* (Class) in society. The New Order government also attempted to control all civic organisations in Indonesia including Chinese-Indonesian ones (Purdey 2006: 16).

Meanwhile, the economic prowess of Chinese Indonesians was significantly extended as they succeeded in forging symbiotic business ties with the power holders of the Suharto

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<sup>3</sup> *Pancasila* means the five principles including Belief in God; Unity of Indonesia; Humanitarianism; Democracy; and Social Justice. It was deliberately abstract in order to accommodate all ethnic and religious groups in Indonesian society.

government, including the military. A number of Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs, such as Sudomo Salim and Bob Hasan, became notorious clients of President Suharto and his family. This patron-client arrangement continued under the protection of government officials throughout the Indonesian archipelago. There were many incidents in which security forces sided with Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs in industrial disputes, often resulting in the oppression of the indigenous workers by force. As a result of this biased relationship, from the mid-1990s, Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs (particularly Chinese conglomerates) were accused of being the root cause of *Korupsi, Kolusi and Nepotisme* (KKN, Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism) and this accusation also applied to all Chinese Indonesians regardless of their social class (Schwartz 1999: 99). This negative image rendered Chinese Indonesians as a group vulnerable vis-à-vis indigenous Indonesians.

During the economic crisis of 1997/1998, the colonial legacies contributed to an outburst of anti-Chinese violence when the Suharto government lost its control over Indonesian society. When an unprecedented economic crisis hit Indonesia in late 1997, its devastating consequences fed into the already tense social, economic, and political milieu. As Collier (1999) points out, growth provides people with hope, but rapid economic decline facilitates violent conflict in society. From early 1998, rioting over staple foods began to occur in many cities and towns in Java (Purdey 2006: 219-20). The steep rises in food prices, combined with massive food shortages and increasing unemployment, placed many people in a dire situation (Hill 1999: 6). They were angry and frustrated with the inability of the government and the perceived wealth of Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs and these tensions culminated in May 1998 (Turner 2003). The poverty and people's anger fuelled the anti-Chinese riots. Ethnic violence against Chinese Indonesians in May 1998, in Jakarta, Solo, and some large cities in Indonesia, became a symbol of the national turmoil which resulted from the economic crisis of 1998 (Pattiradjawane 2000; Siegel 2001). The riots caused great turmoil in Indonesia for several days. Chinese Indonesians were badly affected and shocked by the riots. They received almost no protection from the government and security forces. In Jakarta and Solo, during the violence of 13-15 May 1998, more than 1,000 people died and numerous shops, banks, cars, and other properties were looted and burned to the ground (Pattiradjawane 2000; Purdey 2006; Turner 2003). During the riots, more than 70,000 Chinese Indonesians and a huge amount of Chinese-Indonesian capital (approximately US\$ 110 billion) fled Indonesia to safer places such as Singapore, Australia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the USA (Suryadinata 2001: 508). Large numbers of Chinese Indonesians in the violent cities migrated to safer places such as Bali (Wibowo 2001: 136). Although the victims of the 1998 May riots were people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, the riots were regarded as anti-Chinese because Chinese Indonesians and their properties was the prime target of the mob attacks. The damage caused by the riots was considerable and the sufferings of the Chinese-Indonesian community attracted the attention of the media, NGOs, and many observers (Coppel 2001: 26). Soon after the violence, the Suharto regime crumbled.

What happened after the fall of President Suharto? What lessons did Chinese Indonesians draw from the May 1998 riots? How can Chinese Indonesians avoid a recurrence of this ethnic violence? In the next section, I will analyse a process of democratisation and the new development of Chinese organisations in Indonesia in the post-Suharto era. It will explain why the Chinese community has established inter-ethnic social organisations.

#### 4. CIVIC NETWORKS AND BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN AN ERA OF DEMOCRATISATION

The fall of President Suharto ushered in an era of democratisation in Indonesia. The Chinese-Indonesian community has experienced significant change in its relationship with both national politics and its indigenous counterparts. The succeeding government, President B. J. Habibie, began to amend or abolish laws and regulations that were designated to control political parties and social organisations during the Suharto period (Freedman 2003: 439). The government repealed the regulations for the ban of Chinese language and special codes in ID card for Chinese Indonesians. The government released political detainees and labour activists, and guaranteed freedom of expression and associational autonomy. Indonesian society responded with the formation of numerous political parties and social organisations including Chinese ones. Meanwhile, as a result, the condemnation and pressure from international society, particularly from International Overseas Chinese Organisations, the government formed the Fact Finding Team for the May 1998 riots and investigated the riots. But the final report of the team was not conclusive about who main culprits of the riots were (Purdey 2009: 2). Various civic organisations criticised the Habibie government regarding the result of the report and carried out campaigns for seeking for the truth of the May 1998 riots.

After the resignation of President Habibie in September 1999, the succeeding two (President Wahid and Megawati) governments attempted to reconcile with the Chinese-Indonesian community. Two leaders condemned the culprits of the May 1998 riots and promised to guarantee ethnic and religious rights of Chinese Indonesians. The leaders enacted several new regulations for Chinese Indonesians. For example, in 2000 President Wahid released Presidential Decree No. 6 for allowing display of Chinese culture and traditions in public sphere. Two years later, President Megawati made Chinese New Year as a national holiday from 2003. All these government policies and the changing attitude of political leaders have contributed to make a social milieu conducive for ethnic harmony because most indigenous Indonesians have welcomed those changes. It seems that the status and security of Chinese Indonesians in society was considerably improved. But Chinese Indonesians did not see this new environment conducive to secure their safety and rights because they still suffered from the trauma of ethnic riots of May 1998 (Freedman 2003: 438).

Indeed, the anti-Chinese riots in May 1998 resulted in a heightened awareness amongst Chinese Indonesians of their vulnerability in Indonesian society because government and military intervention were unable to halt the violence at a time of crisis. They also have been aware that they need help from their indigenous fellows to secure their security and rights (Purdey 2009). This awareness, in turn, mobilised them to participate in the establishment of political parties and civic organisations for securing their safety and rights. Chinese Indonesians pursue a range of paths (see Giblin 2003; Turner 2003; Wibowo 2001). Some Chinese Indonesians have chosen to maintain their relationships with the government and security forces as they did in the Suharto era, but many others have established political parties and social organisations. Four political parties were established in the post-Suharto era, but they failed to gain meaningful members of votes in elections.<sup>4</sup> No Chinese-

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<sup>4</sup> In the general election in June 1999, Chinese political parties obtained only one seat in the national

**Table 1. List of Salient Civic Organizations Promoting Inter-ethnic Harmony**

Name of Organization	Year	Members	Aims and Activities
PSMTI (Association of Chinese Social Clan in Indonesia)	1998	Chinese	Promote Chinese culture and tradition; foster dialogue with indigenous counterparts
INTI (Indonesian Chinese Association)	1999	Chinese (not exclusive)	Resolve 'the Chinese Problem' in Indonesia; promote Chinese culture; facilitate inter-ethnic harmony with humanitarian aid
SIMPATIK (Solidarity of Chinese Youth for Justice)	1999	Chinese	disseminate ethnic and religious pluralism; promote ethnic harmony
GANDI (Anti-discrimination Movement in Indonesia)	1998	Inter-ethnic	Protect minority rights; fight for racial discrimination; organize civic networks
SNB (Homeland Solidarity)	1998	Inter-ethnic	Eradicate racial discrimination; conduct lobby for amending discriminatory laws; organize civic networks
TruK (Volunteer Team for Humanity)	1998	Inter-ethnic	Provide helps to victims of state violence; prevent ethnic violence
Mitra Perempuan (Women's Friend)	1998	Inter-ethnic	Protect women's rights; seek for the truth of May 1998 anti-Chinese riots
IPI (Institute of Indonesian Pluralism)	1998	Inter-ethnic	Promote inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony through dialogue meetings
PWS (Association of Solonese)	2000	Inter-ethnic	Prevent ethnic violence; facilitate solidarity between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians
FKUB (Interfaith Harmony Forum)	1998	Inter-ethnic	Promote religious harmony; conduct joint prayers' meeting

Source: Author's Summary.

parliament. Surprisingly, the majority of Chinese Indonesians voted for indigenous-dominated parties, particularly the PDI-P, instead their own political parties. See Suryadinata (2001) and Giblin (2003) for details about Chinese politics in Indonesia.

Indonesian political parties were allowed to participate in the 2004 general elections because of all of their parties failed to fulfill the government regulations for participation (*Tempo*, 50/IV/Agustus 2004: 12). Many Chinese civic organisations were formed and they were active in abolishing discriminative laws and regulations in an era of democratisation. Thus, this section will highlight the activities of inter-ethnic civic organisations in cities of Jakarta and Solo cities where massive anti-Chinese riots took place during the May 1998 riots.

Since the fall of the Suharto regime in May 1998, numerous Chinese civic organisations have been established and are active in promoting their traditional culture and political interests. But they had different ideas on how to remove discrimination and injustice against them. As seen in the list of organisations above, around 15 civic organisations began to actively participate in the campaigns of ethnic harmony (Giblin 2003). Among them, Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia (PSMTI, Association of Chinese Social Clans in Indonesia) and Perhimpunan Indonesia Tionghoa (INTI, Indonesian Chinese Association) are well-known nationwide Chinese civic organisations in Indonesia. The members of these organisations in general are older compared to those of the anti-discrimination groups, which will be discussed later. PSMTI was the first Chinese-Indonesian civic organisation after the fall of Suharto. It was established by Tedy Jusuf (a retired police Brigadier General) and his colleagues in Jakarta in 28 September 1998. Its membership is open only to Chinese Indonesians; indigenous Indonesians are not allowed to join. The founding members of PSMTI were 88 Chinese Indonesians, who represented various Chinese-Indonesian clans in Indonesia (Giblin 2003: 357-8). In 2004, it has more than 70 branches across Indonesia (Hoon 2006: 173). Since its inception, PSMTI has attempted to promote Chinese culture and traditions through publications and educational programs. For example, in 2000, the general chairperson of PSMTI, Tedy Jusuf published a book entitled as “A Glimpse of Chinese Culture in Indonesia,” which introduced Chinese culture, marriage and burial traditions, art, festive celebrations, medicine, and costume. Another example is that since 2002, PSMTI has engaged in producing a TV program in the Jakarta area that promotes Chinese art and culture (Hoon 2006: 162-3). But the leaders of PSMTI often participate in dialogue meetings and inter-ethnic cooperation programs in order to facilitate ethnic harmony between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians.

Some members of PSMTI, who disagreed with Tedy Jusuf in terms of membership conditions, established a new civic organisation, INTI (Indonesian Chinese Association) in April 1999. Eddie Lombong, a Chinese businessman, led the establishment of INTI and opened its membership to indigenous Indonesians as well. Like PSMTI, INTI also aims to promote social and cultural issues including re-introducing Chinese language and culture to the young generations. But INTI has played a more active role in inter-ethnic cooperation. The members of INTI have attempted to promote cooperation among fellow Chinese Indonesians and between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians in order to disseminate the ideas of ethnic harmony and democracy. INTI held a number of political education seminars for its members to foster ethnic pluralism and political participation (*Jakarta Post*, 25 March 2000; 07 March 2006). On 4 May 2002, INTI undertook a collaborative project with the State Islamic University in Jakarta to facilitate a better understanding of the Chinese-Indonesian community in Indonesia (Tan 2004: 38). INTI also has conducted a series of free medicine dispensing campaigns as a social service for the poor regardless of ethnicity or religion.

As large Chinese-Indonesian mass organisations, PSMTI and INTI have exerted considerable influence in the Chinese-Indonesian community in Indonesia in raising social-



cultural issues. The leaders of these organisations encouraged their members to participate in Indonesian politics, but many of them did not agree with the establishment of Chinese-Indonesian political parties (*Kompas*, 12 November 2008). They still fear an indigenous political backlash because the demise of the Suharto regime did not remove the indigenous perception that Chinese Indonesians dominated the national economy and that they used corrupt practices to expand their business interests throughout Indonesia (Purdey 2006: 182).

Some other Chinese-Indonesian civic organisations were established after the May 1998 riots by younger Chinese-Indonesian activists. Among them, Gerakan Perjuangan Anti Diskriminasi (GANDI, Indonesian Anti-discrimination Movement) and Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa (SNB, Homeland Solidarity) are well-known because these organisations apply an innovative approach to the promotion of Chinese-Indonesian security issues. As Suryadinata (2001) maintains, the formation of these organisations has been a new trend in Indonesia in the post-Suharto era. They attempt to form inter-ethnic civic organisations to abolish racial discrimination and facilitate Chinese-Indonesian security. In other words, both Chinese and indigenous Indonesian members work together to achieve common goals. They have fought with government officials regarding the SKBRI problem mentioned before; they have also provided legal aid to those who are discriminated against law. Taking advantage of the *Reformasi*, which has swept the country over the last 10 years, this new civic movement has had a significant impact on the lives of ethnic minorities in Indonesia including Chinese Indonesians because it builds 'bridging social capital' through inter-ethnic civic organisations and their networks. As Varshney (2001) argues, inter-ethnic civic engagement functions as a channel for communication and cooperation among different stakeholders so as to contain ethnic violence.

SNB is an inter-ethnic civic organisation, which was founded on 5 June 1998 by lawyers and NGO activists, such as Arnold Purba, Esther Jusuf Purba, Surya Chandra, and Ekolin Hutabarat, in order to end racial and ethnic discrimination in Indonesia. Esther Jusuf Purba has led SNB since her Dayak husband, Arnold Purba, died (Sardani 2003: 335). According to Giblin (2003), SNB lobbies the government to amend discriminatory laws and holds various seminars and workshops to promote minority rights. SNB has played a significant role in promoting the issue of the eradication of anti-Chinese discrimination (Herlijanto 2004: 74). Since its inception, SNB has participated in the formation of civic networks together with PSMTI, GANDI, INTI, and other civic organisations to conduct their struggle together (*Kompas*, 26 January 1999). SNB succeeded in forming a civic network called the Organisation of May Riot Victims to find the culprits of the violence and demand financial compensation. SNB also participates in dialogue meetings among various civic organisations including SIMPATIK (Solidarity of Chinese Youth for Justice), Suara Ibu Peduli (Voice of Concerned Mothers), Kaliyana Mitra (Kaliyana Friends), and Jaringan Kerja Budaya (Cultural Projects Network) (Herlijanto 2004: 77). SNB has focused its activities on filing a lawsuit against the Indonesian government and demanding compensation for the victims. On 20 February 2000, SNB submitted anti-discrimination laws to parliament to abolish 62 laws (and regulations) which discriminated against minorities, particularly Chinese Indonesians (*Kompas*, 21 February 2000). During the process of the lawsuit, SNB cooperated with other like-minded civic organisations such as INTI, PSMTI, GANDI, Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation) and Forum Keluarga Korban Mei 1998 (Forum of Families of the Victims of May 1998) (*Jakarta Post*, 27 February 2003; Tan 2004: 40). These Chinese and indigenous civic organisations cooperated with each other to promote ethnic peace and secure minority rights.

Meanwhile, a group of young Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs, NGO activists, professionals, and religious leaders, who were concerned about the May 1998 violence, established Gerakan Perjuangan Anti Diskriminasi (GANDI, Indonesian Anti-discrimination Movement) in 6 November 1998. GANDI was led by Nico Krisnanto, a Chinese businessman from the Lippo Bank. It is interesting to note that the establishment of GANDI was officially declared at the home of Abdurrahman Wahid and that Megawati Sukarnoputri also attended and supported its establishment (Herlijanto 2004: 75-77; Purdey 2006: 175). GANDI had close links with Abdurrahman Wahid and his party (PKB), but it did not allow its members to join political parties (Giblin 2003: 358). Like SNB, GANDI aimed to end ethnic discrimination and promote minority rights. It also carried out public campaigns to disseminate ethnic pluralism and public awareness in the media (*Jakarta Post*, 27 August 2003). Since its inception, it has focused on abolishing discriminative regulations and providing legal advocacy to ethnic minorities. In these actions, GANDI cooperated with other social organisations. In 2002, for example, it formed the Working Committee for the Study of Discriminatory Regulations together with the National Institution of Human Rights and the Communication Forum for National Unity (Effendi 2004). GANDI participated in the Coalition of Freedom of Information, together with SNB, the Independent Journalists Alliance, the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace, and the Indonesian Corruption Watch, to guarantee public access to necessary government information (*Jakarta Post*, 10 March 2003). GANDI also formed the Civil Registration Consortium, together with the Jakarta Legal Aid Foundation, the UN Children's Fund, and Plan International, to attempt to revise the Indonesian Civil Registration Act (Effendi 2004). The Consortium provided legal consultation to poor Chinese-Indonesian families to help them obtain birth certificates and persuaded the home affairs commission of the House of Representatives in Indonesia to pass a new bill (*Jakarta Post*, 10 July 2004). In September 2008, the general secretary of GANDI, Wahyu Effendi published a book that analysed the discriminative factors of the SKBRI (Indonesian Citizenship Certificate) for Chinese Indonesians (*Kompas*, 23 September 2008). Amid the plethora of reforms in Indonesian society, SNB and GANDI function as a platform of civil society organisations that pursue the abolition of discriminative laws and regulations against ethnic minorities, particularly Chinese Indonesians.

In addition, there is a network of humanitarian civic organisations that deals with the victims of the May 1998 riots. Several civic organisations, including TRuK (Volunteer Team for Humanity), Mitra Perempuan (Women's Friend) and KontraS (Commission for the Disappeared and Victims of Violence) are well known. TRuK is a core organisation amongst this group. Its members come from various ethnic, professional, and religious backgrounds and they build regional networks in Bandung, Kalimantan, Maluku and so forth (Nagata 2003: 378). They have carried out action to protect women's rights and consolidate the solidarity of the families of victims regardless of ethnicity or religion. Consequently, a new sense of solidarity has formed between the Chinese and indigenous Indonesian victims. Some Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs provided considerable financial support to these organisations, and other Chinese Indonesians joined them as volunteers after the May 1998 violence (Purdey 2006: 169). The active participation of Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs is one of the new features of the civil society movement in the post-Suharto period.

It is also important to note that some notable scholars and NGO activists established an inter-faith dialogue organisation, namely Institute Pluralisme Indonesia (IPI, Institute of Indonesian Pluralism). In October 2000, IPI was established by Thung Ju Ran, William Kwan, Abdullah Dahana, and their fellows (Fischer 2002: 9). It is an inter-ethnic

organisation and aims to promote cooperation and understanding among different ethnicities and religions. To this end, IPI has cooperated with other civic organisations in disseminating pluralism and social harmony in the Jakarta area (Fischer 2002: 9). This type of inter-faith dialogue organisation has been popular in Indonesia in the post-Suharto era.

So did the Solonese establish similar social organisations? The Solo City case is interesting because the City has long been regarded as a place where Chinese Indonesians were well assimilated into the indigenous community (Thung 2001: 165). During 14-15 May 1998, however, Chinese Indonesians in Solo City experienced severe anti-Chinese violence. The violence brought a greater fear to the Chinese-Indonesian community due to the loss of their guarantee of security (Purdey 2006: 137). As in many towns and cities across Indonesia, Chinese Indonesians in Solo relied for their security on government and military intervention. But the system was unable to halt the violence at a time of crisis. During the riots, 21 people lost their lives and hundreds of shops and houses, most of them owned by Chinese Indonesians, were looted and destroyed (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 18 May 1998).

As a response to the violence in May 1998, the people of Solo City formed new civic organisations to fight ethnic and religious discrimination and to prevent recurrent ethnic violence. Local community leaders in Solo including artists, professionals, businessmen, and academics formed Paguyuban Wong Solo (PWS, Association of Solonese). The PWS has played an important role to “develop a more intensive communication among ethnic groups, especially between Javanese and Chinese ethnic groups” (Patrikno 2002: 17). The members of PWS provided shelter for Chinese-Indonesian families who suffered from the violence, and assisted victims in order to show their solidarity with them. Another civic organisation that plays a similar role is Paguyuban Pasopati (Association of Pasopati) in Solo City, a soccer mania club, which has attempted to bridge the socio-cultural gap between various ethnicities and religions (Patrikno 2002: 17). Meanwhile, in June 1998, student organisations in Solo also made attempts to bring Chinese and indigenous Indonesians together to institute inter-ethnic forums and discuss how to avoid a recurrence of the ethnic violence in the future (Purdey 2006: 139).

The Solonese also formed two inter-religious civic organisations after the May 1998 riots. These organisations were Forum Kerukunan Umat Beriman Solo (FKUB, Interfaith Harmony Forum in Solo) and Forum Suara Hati Kebersamaan Bangsa (FSHKB, Forum of the Conscience of National Unity). The Forums were organised by community-based religious leaders such as *kyai* (Islamic clerics), priests, pastors, monks, and members of their respective religious communities. Through workshops and joint prayer meetings, they share experiences relating to inter-religious cooperation and harmony. The Forums have functioned as a platform for inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony in Solo City and the surrounding areas (Suwariyati 2002: 27). These organisations imitated a similar interfaith forum in Yogyakarta, namely Forum Persaudaraan Umat Beriman (FPUB, Interfaith Brotherhood Forum Yogyakarta), which greatly contributed to the prevention of ethnic violence in Yogyakarta during the economic and political crisis of 1998 (see Park 2008). FPUB was established in February 1997 in order to prevent the ethnic violence in the Yogyakarta area. In the post-Suharto era, the FPUB-like civic organisations were established in many cities in Indonesia for facilitating ethnic and religious peace, while restraining violent ethnic conflicts.

The inter-ethnic and inter-religious cooperation between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians in Jakarta and Solo is an important element in the dissemination of ethnic and religious tolerance in Indonesian society. As Hoon (2006: 181) argues, these inter-ethnic and

inter-religious organisations can be an effective discursive strategy for securing Chinese-Indonesian minority rights. Although it is premature to judge their roles, for a group of Chinese Indonesians, civic organisations can be a more appropriate avenue to address their vulnerability in society. As Suryadinata (2001: 512) points out, the Chinese-Indonesian community tends to prefer to work with NGOs and other civic organisations to protect their own interests such as safety and citizenship rights rather than to deal with political parties due to a phobia of politics. In this view, the activities of these inter-ethnic civic organisations to promote ethnic harmony have been more reliable than the activities of ethnic-based political parties, which performed badly in the Indonesian elections. As Nagata (2003: 373) claims, the formation of inter-ethnic civic organisations between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians is beginning to gain greater acceptance within the broader Indonesian communities in which they operate.

The emergence of new inter-ethnic civic organisations and their networks indicates that the Chinese-Indonesian community has gradually changed its perception and strategy for reducing its vulnerability in society. In fact, the Chinese-Indonesian community usually affiliated itself with the authorities or power holders for their economic interest and safety up until the New Order period. This patron-client arrangement was particularly resonant during the New Order period. During this period, as Putzel (1997) argues, Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs in general facilitated exclusive Chinese connections and networks. This meant that Chinese Indonesians have built 'bonding social capital' rather than 'bridging social capital.' Without inter-ethnic networks and cooperation, building 'bridging social capital' between themselves and indigenous Indonesians was difficult to achieve in society. The future task is how to scale up these inter-ethnic civic organizations and their networks in Indonesian society.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The Dutch colonial policies segregated Chinese Indonesians from the indigenous majority and helped Chinese traders dominate the Indonesian economy. These colonial legacies produced negative stereotypes for Chinese Indonesians in Indonesian society. During the New Order period, the cultural distinctiveness and extraordinary wealth of Chinese Indonesians had been regarded negatively and became a subject of criticism. While the government forced Chinese Indonesians to assimilate, policies of exclusion and separation prevailed. Consequently, the vulnerability of Chinese Indonesians was not reduced prior to the Asian economic crisis of 1998. When society was struck by political chaos and economic turmoil, Chinese Indonesians bore the brunt of the ensuing ethnic riots.

The May 1998 violence brought about a heightened awareness amongst Chinese Indonesians of their vulnerability in Indonesian society. This awareness, in turn, mobilised them to participate in the establishment of political parties and civic organisations in order to secure their safety and rights. This is quite a different approach from the previous one where state and military interventions were regarded as the sole avenue to protect the Chinese-Indonesian community during times of the heightened crisis. Among them, civic organisations have played a more critical role in securing their rights and facilitating ethnic cooperation than that of the political parties because of the inability of Chinese-Indonesian political parties to draw support from both Chinese and indigenous Indonesians.

More importantly, after the May 1998 riots, inter-ethnic civic organisations, such as INTI,

SNB, GANDI, PWS and TRuK, were established in conflicted cities to secure Chinese-Indonesian rights and safety. This occurred because during the May 1998 riots, the government failed to protect Chinese Indonesians from ethnic violence due to the unprecedented ethnic antagonism of indigenous grassroots people (*Massa*) towards the Chinese-Indonesian community. In fact the main culprits of the anti-Chinese riots were poor indigenous Indonesians no matter what the underlying causes may have been (Siegel 2001). Consequently, as Purdey (2009) observes, many Chinese Indonesians are aware that their political and economic security is inextricably linked to the goodwill of their indigenous counterparts.

To counter their security problem, from the outset the new Chinese-led civic organisations and their networks have endeavoured to disseminate pluralism and fight ethnic and religious discrimination together with their like-minded indigenous fellows and their organizations. A group of Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs continue to actively participate in and invest their money in these civic organisations. Although it is a long road to justice and equality, all these joint actions forge strong bonds of brotherhood regardless of ethnicity and religion. These joint actions are a new and innovative mode of protection for the Chinese-Indonesian community. If these inter-ethnic civic organisations and their networks continue to flourish, Chinese Indonesians can play a much larger role in civil society to promote their interests, and their safety will consequently be better protected than ever before. This is because the frequent contacts and dense networks among inter-ethnic civic organisations build stocks of bridging social capital in society. In other words, Chinese-Indonesian security and human rights are being improved in the post-Suharto era as the activities of inter-ethnic civic organisations promote social trust and facilitate cooperation between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians.

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