Call for Papers for Conference on
"Social Faultlines in Indonesia: Persistence and Change in an Evolving Landscape"

With around 279.1 million people in 2022, Indonesia has the fourth largest population in the world after China, India, and the US. Also known as the largest archipelagic country, the Indonesian population is spread over 17,504 islands. The wide geographical variation in Indonesia is accompanied by a high diversity of the social and cultural backgrounds of its population. This diversity has been a critical element in the political, economic and socio-cultural life of the nation since its inception.

Highly diverse populations are susceptible to increased polarisation and reduced social cohesion within Indonesian society. This has been the case since the early stirrings of nationalism in the early 20th century. During the Sukarno era, there were already calls for decentralization to address interests arising from regional diversity. This became muted during the Suharto era, where social divisions were wrapped under the governance of SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and other social divisions) issues. Subsequently, post-Reformasi implementation of regional autonomy was an attempt at addressing long-repressed interests associated with social and regional diversity, but by then, some of these divisions had evolved into deep social faultlines that led to the eruption of ethnic and religious violence. While such violence has become less common since the early days of regional autonomy, the social faultlines continue to hold sway in Indonesia through identity politics, especially since direct elections were introduced.

This conference seeks to examine these faultlines in their various iterations, and in terms of how they structure the national imaginary, as well as the political, economic and socio-cultural life of the nation. Beyond the conventional religious divides, are there new religious identities that have emerged and evolved? Where ethnic identities are concerned, have certain boundaries become more porous, or are there boundaries that have become steeper, as a result of changing demographic patterns or ecologies of resource allocation? At the same time, regional autonomy has also deepened, in some cases, the divide between migrants and those who claim autochthony.

This conference aims to provide a platform for academic dialogue on multifaceted issues related to demographic diversity in Indonesia today. It takes into account the processes that lead to the persistence of social faultlines, how they are negotiated and managed, and how new faultlines emerge. This event is co-organized by the Indonesia Studies Programme at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore, and the Research Center for Population, National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), Jakarta, Indonesia.

We welcome papers based on the following themes and scope:

Theme 1: Demographic Diversity in Modern Indonesia

This panel seeks to understand the demographic diversity of Indonesian society. It explores the population trends in the country for the past few decades by focusing on the compositional dynamics of individual attributes, such as gender, age group, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic class. In turn, this panel investigates the impact of demographic characteristics and changes on existing and potential social faultlines among population sub-groups in Indonesia.

Theme 2: Social Divisions and Post-*Reformasi* Electoral Politics

Social divisions greatly affect electoral politics. In the post-*Reformasi* era, Indonesia has experienced a huge transition in its democratic system, and this process has deepened certain social faultlines in the country. Moreover, along with the transition of the Indonesian population structure, the increase in the participation of young people in the political arena has greatly

impacted the national discourse on socio-political issues in the country. This panel seeks to explore the issues of social divisions and political activism in Indonesia, as well as how faultlines will continue to influence elections in Indonesia.

Theme 3: Migration and its Discontents

Since the heydays of transmigration during the Suharto era, the faultline between migrants and locals has had an impact on discourses of heritage and the politics of resource allocation. The increasing intensity of internal migration in Indonesia has led to more complex and diverse social systems across regions. Additionally, new recent international migrants, such as those from China and Russia, have brought new configurations of inter-ethnic relations to different parts of Indonesia. This panel seeks to engage with evolving ethnic landscapes resulting from longstanding internal migration as well as more recent international movements of people.

Theme 4: Religion and Ethnicity in the Age of Digital Disruption

In the era of digital disruption, innovations in information technology have provided new platforms for the articulation and contestation of religious, ethnic and cultural identities. The emergence of virtual spaces facilitates the growing segmentation of religious and ethnic sub-groups that cuts across geographical boundaries. This panel seeks to explore how the mainstreaming of digital technologies has impacted the formulation and transformation of religious and ethnic identities in Indonesia.

Theme 5: Social Faultlines and the Economics and Politics of Social Inclusion/Exclusion

Social faultlines do not only draw boundaries in symbolic terms, but have implications for resource allocation. Such boundaries – ethnic, religious, regional or otherwise – could lead to unequal access to educational, health, infrastructural and other resources, leading to wider socio-economic divides. This panel examines how human capital development has been defined and structured by social divisions, and the implications this may have for the longer-term development of Indonesia.

Theme 6: New Religious Identities and Order

New religious identities continue to emerge and evolve as a result of people's changing needs and desires, dissatisfaction with established religions, and the impact of broader cultural and technological trends. The emergence of new religious identities could induce tension, conflict, polarization, as well as legal and political challenges. The inclusion of people who practice "local religion or belief" in the 2020 Indonesia Population Census has reflected changes in Indonesia's religious landscape. This panel will discuss the relationship between new religious identities and social order, their interactions with established religions and the wider society, and the political and legal context in which they operate.

Theme 7: What It Means to be a Minority in Indonesia Today

Being a minority is not merely a numerical issue, but can have socio-political implications. This panel explores the position of various minorities in Indonesia, which can include but is not limited to ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities. It explores how far the veneer of social tolerance can stretch and thereby promote inclusiveness, and how deep certain faultlines can continue to be, keeping minorities on the margins and limiting access to social goods and political rights or privileges. This panel will look at the current challenges that Indonesian minorities are facing and how they articulate their own positions within Indonesian society.

Theme 8: Mapping Heritage and Cultural Identities

With the implementation of decentralization, issues of authenticity have come to the fore and cultural heritage has become valorised as a form of political capital. Each region can boast its own music, dance, other forms of artistic expression, ethnic and religious festivals, and traditional architecture, etc, and these become idioms through which cultural identities are articulated. This panel examines how diverse heritages are mapped onto Indonesia's regional and national cultural landscape, sometimes forming mosaics of shared interests, and sometimes serving as bases for contesting regional resources, even as what we understand as heritage continues to evolve under the impact of globalisation.

Conference Date and Venue

Date: Tuesday - Wednesday, 29-30 August 2023
Venue: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 30 Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Singapore

Important Dates

Deadline for abstract submission: 31 March 2023
Notification of accepted abstracts: 14 April 2023
Full paper Submission: 15 August 2023

Abstract Submissions

We invite contributors to submit an abstract of 250 words. Abstracts should indicate which theme the paper is intended for, and include proposed research questions, main argument, and methodology. Submissions should also include a title, name of the author(s), institutional affiliation(s), e-mail address(es), and personal biography of 150 words. They should be submitted to Ms Aninda Dewayanti at aninda_dewayanti@iseas.edu.sg.

Those whose abstracts are accepted will be expected to submit a full paper of between 5000-7000 words. Selected papers will later be included in an edited volume.

Conveners

Dr Hui Yew-Foong (Visiting Senior Fellow, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute)

Ms Meirina Ayumi Malamassam (Researcher, National Research and Innovation Agency, BRIN)

Mr Rudy Harisyah Alam (Researcher, National Research and Innovation Agency, BRIN)

Ms Aninda Dewayanti (Research Officer, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute)