Nation–building, Belonging and Multiculturalism in Indonesia: Contextualising Ibn Khaldun's Theories and Beyond*

Endonezya'da Ulus Kurma, Aidiyet ve Çok kültürlülük: İbn Haldun'un Kuramlarının Kavramsallaştırılması ve Ötesi

Asfa Widiyanto

State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Salatiga, Indonesia
widiyanto_asfa@daad-alumni.de

Abstract: This paper strives to reread and recontextualise the ideas of Ibn Khaldun on diversity, group feeling and political legitimacy, most specifically within the contemporary context of nation-state. Ibn Khaldun states, "A dynasty rarely establishes itself firmly in lands with many different tribes and groups". A high level of diversity (with no social cohesion), is regarded as a peril rather than a promise, most particularly to the stability of the state or dynasty. This paper address the following problems: (a) what societal cultures which contribute to the Indonesian nation-building; (b) how do the minority groups perceive their belonging to the nation and how do they respond to the nation-building.

Keywords: Nation-Building, Belonging, Asabiyya, Ibn Khaldun

Öz: Bu makale, İbn Haldun'nun çeşitlilik, grup hissiyatı ve siyasi meşruiyet üzerine fikirlerinin bilhassa çağdaş ulus-devlet bağlamı içerisinde yeniden okunması ve tekrar kavramsallaştırılmasını amaçlamaktadır. İbn Haldun, "bir hanedanın birçok kabile ve grubun olduğu topraklarda kendini kuvvetli bir biçimde tesis etmesi ender görülür" cümlesini sarf etmiştir. Yüksek seviyede bir çeşitlilik (sosyal bağlılık olmaksızın), vaatten ziyade tehlike olarak addedilir. Bu tehlike özellikle de devletin veyahut hanedanlığın istikrarına karşı bir tehlikedir. Bu makale aşağıda belirtilen sorunlara ışık tutmaya çalışacaktır: (a) Hangi toplumsal kültürler Endonezya'da ulus oluşturmaya katkıda bulunmaktadır? (b) Azınlık grupları, ulusa olan aidiyetlerini nasıl algılıyorlar ve ulus oluşumuna nasıl tepkide bulunuyorlar?

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ulus Kurma, Aidiyet, Asabiye, İbn Haldun

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1. State, Islam and Nation-Building

Up to now, the idea of the nation-state has not lost its enchantment, in the face of the courses of globalisation, supranational institution-building on a regional plane (e.g. European Union) and growing transnational cooperation. The project of nation-building is relevant for those states who obtained independence only lately as well as those who have been cautious of their independence ever since Derichs and Heberer (2006: 4).

Nation-building in the context of Asia, in general, and in Indonesia, in particular, is distinct to that in Europe. Gungwu points out:

"In Asia, we know that some of our nation-states are more artificial. This is true not only of Asia, but also in Africa and other places as well, places that have come out of recent imperial and colonial experiences during which borders were drawn by outside interests. These external factors have created conditions that have made the borders meaningless for some people and meaningful for others. Once there was the concept of borders, then you have, as scholars like Benedict Anderson have suggested, imagined national communities, or people seeking to re-imagine themselves as a nation within borders already drawn." (2004: 4).

Even though Muslims are the majority, Indonesia does not install Islam as the basis of the state. The first president of the country Soekarno (r. 1945-1967) inaugurated Pancasila as the foundation of the Republic. This was due to the strong nationalistic aspirations among the founding fathers, who were of the opinion that installing one exclusivist ideology as the basis of the state would potentially jeopardize the unity of the nation, since Indonesia was plural in terms of religions and ethnicities (Hamayotsu, 2002: 2-3).

The Pancasila as state ideology accordingly marks Indonesia as "pluralist state". The Pancasila comprises of five principles which include: (a) belief in one God, (b) a just and civilized humanitarianism, (c) national unity, (d) Indonesian democracy through consultation and consensus, and (e) social justice. It is worth remarking that the Pancasila state is not a secular state. This is because the first pillar of this ideology reads as 'the belief in a single Deity'.

The Indonesian people assign the 'Indonesian language' as their national language. This language is a romanisation of Malay language. It is worth remarking that Indonesia did not choose Javanese as the national language, although Javanese

constitute the most dominant ethnicity in Indonesia and accordingly the Javanese people have high potentials to exert their language as the national language. It was however not the case. The romanised Malay, which was then called 'Indonesian language', was chosen as the national language due to the fact that this language is simple and has been used as *lingua franca* among the people in Malay-Indonesian archipelago. Indonesian language, accordingly, contributes to the nation-building and to the shared identity of the people across the country. The case of Indonesian language shows that it is not necessarily the dominant societal culture which exerts an influence in the construction of nation-building.

In the process of nation-building, the diversity of the nations could not be accommodated completely, and for that reason this should be domesticated. Schefold (1998: 261) reveals that ethnic 'primordial attachments' embody a natural emotional need for social self-assertion, and consequently these attachments continue to be sustained by way of all processes of modernisation. In the new and scarcely consolidated states, however, these attachments constitute an impending danger, as they menace to challenge national solidarity. The only pragmatic reaction consists in arranging to 'domesticate' them.

2. The Intricate Interplays Between Religion and Nationalism

Indonesian nationalism, according to Menchik (2014: 594) represents 'godly nationalism'. This type of nationalism is construed as "an imagined community bound by a common, orthodox theism and mobilized through state in cooperation with religious organizations in society". Menchik goes on to explain "as long as citizens believe in one of the state-sanctioned pathways to God, they become full members of civil society and receive state protection and other benefits of citizenship". In this sense, godly nationalism inhabits a middle position between secular and religious nationalism (Menchik, 2014: 600). The belief in one God, or monotheism, accordingly constitutes an important foundation of nation-building in Indonesia.

For Menchik (2014: 599) "Indonesia contains a form of nationalism that is neither Islamic nor secular, but rather exclusively and assertively religious. Active state support o religion did not die in 1945 with the failure of Jakarta Charter and the state's embrace of Pancasila.... The privileging of religion is made manifest through state support for religious orthodoxy over luminal and heterodox faiths".

The notion of 'godly nationalism' is grounded on the conception that "religious practice and discourse may be a constitutive part of national identity rather than

epiphenomenal or a smokescreen for hoary political interests". Menchik goes on to say that "Indonesian nationalism continues to be rooted in religious solidarities" although "it is not an Islamic state" (Menchik, 2014: 596–598). In this regard, we may understand that the Nahdlatul Ulama from the very beginning suggested that Islam did not run in counter with nationalism, and accordingly they brought forward the adagio of "hub al-watan min al-iman" (loving the nation is a part of Islamic faith).

The endurance of a godly nation necessitates privileging a certain beliefs and persecuting "acts of deviance as blasphemy". In this regards, the persecution of the Ahmadiyya in modern-day Indonesia is a logical consequence of this tendency and politics. (Menchik, 2014: 595). Menchik argues that the cases of violence against the Ahmadiyya demonstrate that "intolerance and nation building are part of a mutually constitutive process". He goes to elucidate that "the campaign against Ahmadiyya is part of a broader effort by civil society and the state to constitute the nation through belief in God. In that respect, contemporary intolerance to Ahmadiyya is merely the most recent manifestation of a longstanding effort to promote godly nationalism while dislodging secular or Islamic alternatives". For Menchik (2014: 595), "the debates over blasphemy are an attempt (by Muslim civil society) or disrupt (by liberals) norms and laws that help constitute the nation through belief in one God".

Menchik's survey implies that the degree of tolerance among the Nahldlatul Ulama is higher than that among the Muhammadiyah. Menchik (2014: 593) explains that "75 percent of Muhammadiyah leaders and 59 percent of Nahdlatul Ulama leaders said that no Ahmadiyya member should be allowed to become the mayor in Jakarta". Menchik brings forward this survey to support his argument that intolerance has been prevalent among contemporary Indonesian civil society organisations, on the one hand; and to reject the thesis that Islam in Indonesia constitutes a "marginalised and relatively unimportant in political sense and greatly overshadowed by a form of political thinking usually called secular nationalism".

Assyaukanie highlights three models of the relation between Islam and state: (a) an Islamic state governed by Islamic law, (b) a secular liberal democratic state, and (c) a religious democratic state. For Assyaukanie, A religious democratic state does not acknowledge the adherents of heterodox faiths (Menchik, 2014: 599).

The Indonesian constitution guarantees the people's freedom in practicing their respective religions. The government, however, restricts the number of recognised religions in this country. The first principle of state's ideology, i.e. 'belief in one

God', implies the obligation of every citizen to embrace a religion; accordingly the government regards those who do not attach themselves to any one religion as subversive. The government also compels some religions to modify their respective doctrines in order to conform to the principle of monotheism (Franke 2006: 61-82). The Buddhists, for instance, advocated the principle of 'Adibuddha' as the only Buddhist God that should be assigned to conform to the Pancasila principle of 'belief in one God'. The Balinese Hindus also formulated the principle of 'Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa' (the All-One God), which is identified with the principle of 'belief in one God'. This demonstrates that Indonesia adopted 'restricted pluralism' (Franke 2006).

In principle, each of the six recognised religious communities is granted equal rights before the law. These religious communities are granted equal access to public space and consent to build houses of worship within reasonable permissible limits (Adeney-Risakota 2009:19). The adherents of "local indigenous religions" and other unrecognised religions do not enjoy the same rights as the adherents of recognised religions.

3. Minorities, Belonging and Nation-Building

Kymlicka (2001) brought forward three characteristic phases of the discourse on minority rights. The *first stage* of the dispute is put within the circumstance of competition between communitarianism and liberalism. The *second stage* of the discussion is concerned with potential scope for minority rights within the structure of liberal theory. The *third phase* of the discussion revolves around the query how some minority rights claims constitute a reaction to, or are related to, nation-building policies.

Kymlicka (2001) points out that nation building is mostly based on dominant or majority 'societal culture'. Kymlicka goes on to explain that there are at least three varied strategies which the minorities may take in terms of majority nation-building: (a) admitting the integration into the majority societal culture; (b) striving to establish their own societal culture and contesting to state nation-building; and (c) accepting the enduring marginalisation.

3.1. Ethnic Minorities and Nation-Building

There are at least three discourses pertaining to the ways in which Chinese minorities has been accommodated in Indonesia. These discourses include assimilation, multiculturalism and hybridity. Under Suharto regime (1966-1998), **assimilation** was the prevailing discourse, which compelled the Chinese to integrate themselves into

the national body (Hoon, 2006: 149). Schefold (1998: 270) points out that all inhabitants of Chinese descent are under heavy pressure to give up their ethnic traditions and assimilate. In May 1998, Indonesia witnessed anti-Chinese riots which clearly demonstrated the disappointment of the policy of assimilation (Hoon, 2006: 149).

Post-Suharto Indonesian leaders were aware of the failure of the policy of assimilation, and accordingly sanctioned the policy of **multiculturalism** in order to rebuild the nation. This policy is believed to be in conformity with the national motto 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika' (Unity in Diversity). Multiculturalism tries to challenge cultural homogenisation by recognising the coexistence and equal representation of varied peoples and cultures within a nation-state (Hoon, 2006: 149). Multiculturalism strives to allocate a space for the oppressed minorities and afford them a subjectivity, identity, and personhood by supporting individuals within that minority to 'narrate' their own experiences of repression.

There are nevertheless debates on multiculturalism in Indonesia. Some scholars criticise that in the politics of multiculturalism the frontiers of difference and the concept of plurality are still resolved by particular hegemonic and dominant group(s). They also disapprove of this policy since it assumes that each person enjoys only one distinct cultural identity. Multiculturalism accordingly does not recognise an individual who possesses more than one identity.These scholars argue further that by unconsciously setting obvious delineations and boundaries between cultures, multiculturalism has conquered its own intention the mono-cultural nation by way of an assimilation policy. People who do not fit into any of those defined cultural categories will be left with no choice but to 'assimilate' into the only officially 'prescribed' cultures that are available" (Hoon, 2006: 154, 159). This is in line with Amartya Sen's criticism (see: Ghoshal 2018) towards multiculturalism. Sen is of the opinion that what some people regard as multiculturalism is in fact 'plural mono-culturalism', in which every ethnic communities live in isolation from other communities.

The last notion, namely **hybridity**, is on the making. Hybridity is thought to substantiate the policy of multiculturalism. Hoon (2006: 163) points out that "multicultural conditions can only be lived out, regenerated and transformed with the recognition of hybridity". Hybridity in this sense is related to "the idea of cultural syncretism, which foregrounds complicated cultural entanglement rather than cultural difference by multiculturalism". It is explained that the politics of hybridity

has been inherent to the course of dislodgment and migration, and has been exercised by locals and migrants in their every day conciliation and production of their identities, deliberately or involuntarily (Hoon, 2006: 159-160).

It is worth noting that hybridity is an incessant and frequently convoluted course of cultural translation and negotiation. However it is worth remarking that hybridity does not inevitably lead to empowerment. In some instances, even where individuals take up the cultural features of their host society, they may still continue to be marginalised and othered as 'foreigners'. This can be observed for instance in the case of Chinese-Indonesians under the Suharto regime who never acknowledged as true Indonesian (Hoon, 2006: 161-162). Hybridity is accordingly in need of recognition from the state and culturally dominant groups.

The policy of hybridity would appreciate the people with multiple identities and consequently would help diminish the rigid line between 'pribumi' (natives) and 'non-pribumi' (non-natives) (Hoon, 2006: 161). In line with this, Homi Bhabha, as cited by Hoon (2006: 160) maintains that the endurance of cultural diversity will be grounded not on the multiplicity of cultures or the exoticism of multiculturalism or, but on the inscription and expression of culture's hybridity. In this regard, we may see that multiculturalism ideally should not only recognise the diversity of ethnicities and religions at macro-societal level, but also the plurality within each ethnic or religious group (Hoon 2006: 160). By acknowledging this diversity at the micro level, multiculturalism could be transformed into 'genuine multiculturalism'. . This, according to Hoon would avoid being confined to exhibiting an assortment of mono-cultural individuals.

The Jakarta governor election in 2017 demonstrates the process of substantiating democracy and multiculturalism in the modern-day Indonesia. Basuki Tjajaha Purnama (b. 1966) and Anies Baswedan (b. 1969) were shortlisted to participate in the second round of the election. Purnama is Christian-Chinese, whilst Baswedan is Muslim-Arab. The discourses of 'native versus non-native' and 'Muslim versus non-Muslim' were prevalent during the election, and were most specifically aimed at maximising the votes. Although the final result of the election shows that Purnama only got 42%, it remains a significant number if we look at the fact that Purnama assigns a double minority (Chinese and Christian). He succeeded in attracting the votes and sympathies from rational voters, most notably from culturally dominant groups. The future of multiculturalism accordingly has still good prospects in Indonesia. During the Suharto-era (1967-1998) we could not imagine that a Christian-Chinese could be elected as a

governor candidate, and could obtain a significant number of votes. Chinese-Indonesians during the Suharto-regime were dominant in terms of economics but they suffered discriminations most notably in public service.

3.2. Religious Minorities and Nation-Building

The term 'religion' in the context of Indonesia is worth remarking. In 1952 the Ministry of Religion (which was dominated by Muslims) brought out a restricted definition of religion: a religion should possess a holy book and a prophet. This sort of definition rules out the "mystical movement" and "local indigenous religion" as legitimate religious expressions of the Indonesian people (Mulder 1998: 22). There are several terms subsumed under the rubric of "mystical movement," most notably *aliran kebatinan*, *aliran kepercayaan* and *kejawen*.[1]

Some specialists believe that the state is in charge of directing the religious and mystical practices throughout the country. This can be seen in the inception of the PAKEM (*Pengawas Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat*, Inspection Body of the Mystical Sects of Society) under the Ministry of Justice in 1954. The Ministry of Religious Affairs under the "Surveillance Project of the Religious Activities and Sects" played a part in implementing this state policy as well. It was under this project that the government suggested that *kepercayaan*s should return to their original religions (Stange 1986: 82).

In 1979 the administration of the *kepercayaan* was placed under the Directorate of the Maintenance of the Adherents of the *kepercayaan*, Ministry of Education and Culture (Stange 1986: 91). The *kepercayaan* has been administrated under the Ministry of Education and Culture since the People's Consultative Assembly thought it more suitable to subsume the *kepercayaan* into the category of culture than religion (Geels 1997: 83).

The 'heretic sects' of Islam like al-Qiyadah al-Islamiyah are also often included in the rubric of *kepercayaan,* and accordingly are placed under the surveillance of the "Inspection Body of the Mystical Sects of Society". One Indonesian newspaper reported that one adherent of Ahmadiyah was forced to swear not as a Muslim but as an adherent of the *kepercayaan* when he acted as a witness in the court.[2]

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[1] *Aliran kebatinan* means a sect which is concerned with the inner self. *Aliran kepercayaan* literally means a sect of beliefs, whereas *kejawen* can be translated as Javanism (Stange 1986: 87).

[2] "Saksi Ahmadiyah disumpah di Luar Cara Islam", *Tempo*, January 10, 2013.

Religious minorities in Indonesia do not enjoy fully their civil rights, and accordingly could not contribute the process of nation-building in the country. Even, the activities of these religious minorities are often considered as threat to national cohesion, most particularly by those coming from conservative groups. This blaming and accusation increase preceding general and local election. It is political entrepreneurs who often exploit these religious minorities during the election. Such slogans are prevalent during the election: the Shiism is a threat to Indonesian Unitary State; the Ahmadiyya is a cause of the country's chaos and disunity, and the like.

Despite the strong opposition from the conservative groups, the religious minorities strive to sustain their existence in Indonesia. They undertake some legal efforts to maintain their civil rights in the country. Some progressive activists and civil society organisations take a part in supporting their struggles for attaining civil rights.

In this regard, we observe the significance of civil society in deepening nation-building and multiculturalism. Kamali (2006: 39) prefers to stick to the definition of civil society which is offered by Craig Calhoun, as "a civil sphere in which people can organize their daily lives without the intervention of the state". Kamali (2006: 39-40) rejects individualism and democratic institutions as the requirements for civil society. He would rather ground civil society on "the existence of influential civil groups and their institutions, which can, through established mechanisms, counterbalance state power".

4. Ibn Khaldun, State Formation and Nation-Building: Reflection and Contextualisation

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) maintains that, in his work *al-Muqaddima* (Prolegomena), he develops a new science, which he calls *'ilm al-'umran al-basharı* (the science of human social organisation) or *'ilm al-ijtima' al-insanı* (the science of human society) (Alatas 2006: 782).

'Asabiyya (social solidarity, social cohesion) occupies a central position in Ibn Khaldun's theory. '*Asabiyya* is conceived by Ibn Khaldun as the "feeling of solidarity among the members of a group that is derived from the knowledge that they share a common descent" (Alatas 2006: 784). Ibn Khaldun (n.d.: 128) goes on to say:

> "asabiyya results only from blood relationship or something corresponding to it.... Clients and allies belong in the same category. The affection everybody has for his clients and allies results from the feeling of shame that comes to a person when one of

his neighbours, relatives or a blood relation in any degree of kinship is humiliated. The reason for it is that a client–master relationship leads to a close contact exactly, or approximately in the same way, as does common descent. In this vein, we may see that the 'asabiyya is dealing with blood ties, clientelism and alliances." (Lawrence 2015: 318).

According to Ibn Khaldun, *'asabiyya* covers three dimensions: (a) "kinship ties", (b) "a socially cohesive religion such as Islam that provided a shared idiom legitimising the chieftain's aspirations" for royal authority, and (c) "the strength of the chieftain through trade, booty, pillage and conquest" (Alatas 1993: 31). The role of religion in strengthening social cohesion is explained by Ibn Khaldun (n.d.: 151–152) in the following words:

"When there is a prophet or saint among them, who calls upon them to fulfil the commands of God and rids them of blameworthy qualities and causes them to adopt praiseworthy ones, and who has them concentrate all their strength in order to make the truth prevail, they become fully united (as a social organisation) and obtain superiority and royal authority."

Elsewhere Ibn Khaldun (n.d.: 157–158) argues:

Dynasties of wide power and large royal authority have their origin in religion based either on prophecy or on truthful propaganda. This is because royal authority results from superiority. Superiority results from 'asabiyya. Only by God's help in establishing His religion do individual come together in agreement to press their claims, and heart become united.

Ibn Khaldun is considered one of the theorists of social cohesion, alongside with the modern sociologists such as Emile Durkheim (1858–1917). Ibn Khaldun is concerned with two main problems: (a) "What is it that keeps men together in society?" and (b) "what is it that leads them to identify with a social group, to accept and observe its norms, to subordinate their own individual interests to it, in some measure to accept the authority of its leaders, to think its thoughts and to internalise its aims?" (Gellner 1975: 203). For Alatas (1993: 39), Ibn Khaldun's notion of *'asabiyya* shares much in common with Durkheim's notion of mechanical solidarity. Both notions are concerned with "solidarity that arises out of similar states of conscience, duties and responsibilities, that is, a low level in the division of labour".

Muhammed Talbi, as cited by by Garrison (2012: 36-40), brings forward three constitutive features of *'asabiyya*. The first is "the cohesive force of the group, the bond needed to sustain and propel the group towards its goal". The second is "voluntary individual subordination to a collective interest". In this sense, Talbi conceives *'asabiyya* as the conscience that the group "has its uniqueness and its collective aspirations. Such a consciousness evokes a corporeal image of *'asabiyya* – of something more than a group *qua* group of individuals, but of a single self with its own interests, kinetic force and telos". The third character of *'asabiyya* is the "dialectic tension animating and propelling the group to seek power through conquest".

The dynasties are based upon the power of the dominant tribes (Alatas, 1993: 41). Ibn Khaldun (n.d.: 139-140) says: "The goal to which *'asabiyya* leads is royal authority. This is because… *'asabiyya* gives protection and makes mutual defense, the pressing of claims and every other kind of social activity". Elsewhere he argues that "aggressive and defensive strength is obtained only through *'asabiyya* which means mutual affection and willingness to fight and die for each other" (Ibn Khaldun, n.d.: 154). He also stresses that "aggressive and defensive enterprises can succeed only with the help of *'asabiyya* (Ibn Khaldun, n.d.: 187-188).

The *'asabiyya* holds an important position in building and sustaining the dynasty. The *'asabiyya* is accordingly needed at two domains: (a) state formation, (b) sustainability of the state. The *'asabiyya* is perceived as social capital in both state formation and state sustainability, if we employ a modern theory.

State formation designates "the processes leading to the centralisation of political power within a well-defined territory". The fundamental idea of state formation is "that societies organised as states will be more efficient externally and internally". Another impetus of state formation is common defense abroad, as "the inhabitants of a state are in the same boat, sharing threats from the outside" (Osterud, 2011: 2507).

If we look into modern theories of political science, we begin to realise that Ibn Khaldun's notion of *'asabiyya* has its parallels with the notion of nationalism. It is worth remarking that the notion of nationalism came up within the context of modern nation-state. The formation of modern nation-state was mostly grounded on nationalism.

Ibn Khaldun highlights the role of religion in strengthening the *'asabiyya*. Such a strong social cohesion is need for the formation and sustainability of the dynasty. In modern times, ideology could also play as a glue to foster the social cohesion. In the case of Indonesia, for instance, Pancasila is thought to be ideology which binds the people together.

Nation-building in the context of Europe is mostly based on one societal culture. Most modern European states are rooted in one distinct identity. Asia is plural in terms of ethnicity and religion since the outset. Nation-building in postcolonial Asia was concerned most notably with drawing and imagining the boundaries of the nation. The dominant societal culture plays a great role in the process of nation-building in Asia.

Ibn Khaldun's was concerned mostly with the state formation and state sustainability in pre-modern times. Nevertheless we could see parallels between Ibn Khaldun's notion of *'asabiyya* and the modern conception of nation-building. Ibn Khaldun paid a great attention to the *'asabiyya*, most particularly from the dominant tribe, which plays a significant role in establishing and sustaining the dynasty. Ibn Khaldun (n.d., 132-133) explains:

> *"...leadership exists only through superiority, and superiority only through 'asabiyya, as we have mentioned before. Leadership over people, therefore, must, of necessity, derive from 'asabiyya that is superior to each individual 'asabiyya. Each individual 'asabiyya that becomes aware of the superiority of the 'asabiyya of the leader is ready to obey and follow that leader."*

Elsewhere Ibn Khaldun (.n.d.: 166-167) asserts the role of dominant *'asabiyya* in uniting the people: "One of the various tribal *'asabiyya* must be superior to all (others), in order to be able to bring them together, to unite them, and to weld them into one *'asabiyya* comprising all various groups". The modern concept of nation-building is also based on majority or dominant societal culture. Nation-building is accordingly not free from power, namely from the dominant group with its societal culture.

Ibn Khaldun (n.d., 164-166) points out "a dynasty rarely establishes itself firmly in lands with many different tribes and groups". He goes on to explain:

> *"The reason for this is the differences in opinions and desires. Behind each opinion and desire, there is 'asabiyya defending it. At any time, therefore, there is much opposition to a dynasty and rebellion against it, even if the dynasty possesses 'asabiyya, because*

each 'asabiyya under the control of the ruling dynasty thinks that it has in itself enough strength and power."

In this regard, a high level of plurality without social cohesion is considered as a threat rather than an opportunity, most specifically to the solidity of dynasty. It deserves mentioning that Ibn Khaldun did not see that ethnic plurality by itself as the menace to stability of the dynasty. His statement is to be comprehended within the framework of his major concept of 'social cohesion'.

Ethnic diversities could become a capital if these diversities are united by religion, for instance, and accordingly constitute a social organisation. This is observable from Ibn Khaldun's (n.d.: 163-164) words:

"Representatives of *'asabiyya* are the militiamen who settle in the provinces and territories of the dynasty and are spread over them. The more numerous the tribes and groups of a large dynasty are, the stronger and larger are its provinces and lands. Their royal authority, therefore, is wider. An example of this was the Muslim dynasty when God united the power of the Arabs in Islam."

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