John Locke on Civil Society and Religious Tolerance

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Abstract

This study aims to elaborate the thoughts of John Locke on civil society and religious tolerance. This would be a useful way to think the conflict specifically the religious conflict. This study tended to use library research. It considers all Locke's sources which was available in online and offline library. The researcher used Skinner's contextual reading to analyse Locke's ideas. The main finding is Locke's civil society seems to be a continuation from family life to society life. According to Locke, family has an important role to set their children having democratic or tyrannical character. If parents nourish their children by consent, it is established children's minds to think that people need to appreciate others' ideas and wills. Therefore, the perfect democratic government would emergence by consent of all democratic men. The democratic condition will create a civil society and further producing the society based on religious tolerance. This article would remind that the civil society and the religious tolerance are the basic needs to pursue a peace.

Keywords: civil society, religious tolerance, John Locke, classical thinker

1. Introduction

The World faces the upheaval of society which uses the uniform of religion. One of the conflicts is the Paris riot, 11 November 2015. Paris and the World need a tolerance. The riot forces the multi-religious people to meet and to discuss how to cope the problem. There are "people" who want to separate the world into some pieces for their importance. If the society is easily provoked, it is a time for a massive disintegration of the world. The French government should response properly the riot. French wants a religious tolerance. It could be created by establishing the civil society. One of thinkers who discuss the civil society is John Locke.

John Locke is the most influential thinker in the age of enlightenment. He is a powerful, curious, original, and well-informed intellect (Thomas, 1995, p.8). Locke's works seem to describe the most radical and progressive elements of society in his day. This works are related each other and describe his experience during the life. Locke belongs to classical thinker. This means that his thought is relevant with any time and place. He would be a main reference to all people who want to go further on civil society and religious tolerance. On the whole, Locke is discussed by historians and philosophers today as an optimistic thinker (Dunn, 2003). It seems people should realize that history is not part of the problem for human beings but history would help people to solve many problems of society. To an extent, this article will discuss his thoughts on civil society and religious tolerance.

2. Methodology

This study tended to use library research. This study had used some steps mainly in reading critically and making a note. It considered all Locke's sources which was available in online and offline library. The author used Skinner's contextual reading to analyse Locke's ideas. In addition, this study analysed and compared the findings with others' findings. Finally, the author would conclude the analysis shortly.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Establishing Civil Society

Locke experienced the period of the glorious revolution which was showed the struggle between divine right of the crown and the political rights of parliament (Tully, 1993, p.13). This may influence his theory of social contract that all inhabitants should have consent to separate both institutions. However, Locke seemed to continue Hobbes' theory of a social contract that of a limited state and powerful society but he claimed that some men could design their political order because naturally they could shape their destiny as a consequence of his belief on *tabula rasa*. Therefore, civil society is formed by all independent men who have consent to act and to think under one supreme government which has a duty to protect civil life, liberty and estate (Richards, et al, 1981, p.38). Although, it seems any missing right for Locke's calling for the three rights. The right to health is fundamental for every inhabitant. They will face any difficulty without their healthy body. Locke believes that health is able to endure hardships and fatigue for people to do their activities (Locke, 1690, p.7).

Naturally, they cannot grow up maximally with respect to their constitution and mentality without keeping their health. As parent's duty to keep the children's healthy body, the government should preserve all people's health. Locke's right to health might be the reaction of the plague disaster in the mid seventeenth century London. It was caused by the abandoned dead body in their surrounding and it affected the people's health. The problem ceased when the government bought the land for burying all dead body (Gottfried, 1983,

p.1-2). Locke suggests that the government need to pay attention for people's health. In addition, man's very well-being is threatened because of industrial impact such as contaminated rivers or polluted air. Therefore, it could produce the slow death for a member of the industrial society. Hence, health is the first consideration for surviving the life. Even for Lachs (1979, p.8), right to health is the vital interest of the international community. Society is the result of a contract made by individuals (Lessnoff, 1990, p.2). Likewise, Plamenatz (1992, p.344) explained specifically that society was a moral order and men were moral in adapting themselves to society. It means they have to adjust in society to make anyone sociable by long process of education and the only natural obligation of everyone is to respect the other's rights. For example, if he wants to marry someone, he must support his wife or if he needs a child, he must protect and educate them. Moreover, if he needs to enter the civil society, he must keep his part of the consent. According to Locke, becoming a member of society is an action to making a bargain (Plamenatz, 1992, p.347). In addition, Laslett (1988, p.108) stated that the people's consent seemed to be the fundamental appointment in establishing and forming the government. Nowadays, people call this appointment by constitution.

Locke tends to consider the notion of political power before arguing how to establish the civil society. He does not give the clear definition of political power and its relationship to the civil society. Nevertheless, Locke explains that naturally all men have political power during the life, for example the power of a magistrate over a subject; a father over his children; a master over his servants; a husband over his wife; and a lord over his slave (Locke, 1691, p.216). In term of the civil society, political power is needed by government to implement several policies for society or to direct society based on the law. In addition, absolute power is allowed to regulate and preserve of property or to create public good as Locke (1691, p.217) did in "political power, then, I take to be a right of making laws with penalties of death, and consequently all less penalties for the regulating and preserving of property, and of employing the force of the community, in the execution of such laws, and in the defence of the commonwealth from foreign injury; and all this only for the public good".

Locke tries to explain the use of government and its legitimacy based on the fashionable arguments in his day, such as state of nature; state of war; or the myth of a social contract. He imagines men without government called state of nature which bounds men by law of nature. But, it has several weaknesses which leads society into state of war. The only way to overcome this problem is to quit from the state of nature and to set up the civil society under one supreme government by people's consent (Plamenatz, 1992, p.334).

Locke explains that the state of nature should be considered if we want to understand political power right. It is a state of perfect freedom under the law of nature which orders men's actions and disposes their possessions (Locke, 1691, p.218). In state of nature, the only obligation of each man is to respect others' freedom. Naturally, human beings are rational creatures and they love to be treated as equals (Plamenatz, 1992, p.338). Locke (1691, p.218) elaborated comprehensively the state of nature as the state of equality in "a state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident, than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection". It seems the state of equality becomes the foundation of that obligation to love each other which have the duties to owe the others and to derive the justice and charity. In this sense, men are bound by law which is the reason teaching them how to behave one another as Locke (1691, p.219) explained in "the state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions".

All men are grounded from taking others rights and from attacking to others by the nature of law which preserves the peace of all mankind. Everyone has a right to execute the law of nature and consequently he has the right to punish the transgressors of that law. It seems the social justice in the state of nature describes briefly in "every man hath a right to punish the offender, and be executioner of the law of nature" (Locke, 1691, p.220). In addition, Locke tries to use historical explanation to describe the origin of the state of nature. Princes and rulers of independent governments are in a state of nature without numbers of men in that state. One day, they agree to enter into one community together and make one body politic; yet, it is still in the state of nature. The promises and bargains between two men are binding them in the state of nature for truth and keeping faith belongs to men as men (Locke, 1691, p.222). The men who have consent create the law of nature which is obligatory independent of God's will and commonly it is the unwritten law (Laslett, 1988, p.99). The possessors have such a prerogative power to limit the right of men to punish anyone who trespass the law (Plamenatz, 1992, p.339).

Moreover, the prominent theory of Locke's political theory is property. In the state of nature, the other obligation of everyone is to preserve the property. Property is natural right limited by God's purposes and by obligation respects the other (Plamenatz, 1992, p.338). Therefore, there are several natural rights of men in the state of nature as Locke (1691, p.219) did in "to preserve the rest of mankind, and may not, unless it be to do justice to an offender, take away or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of life, the liberty, health,

limb, or goods of another".

However, the law of nature directs people to preserve others' properties but it has failed to protect their properties. Locke (1691, p.218-221) identified some weaknesses of the law of nature such as no equality as early purposes; no all people have power to punish; and no sense of humanity. Firstly, however the law of nature govern society to have equality between each other but there are landlord or master who have an undoubted right to dominion and sovereignty. Secondly, everyone does not have a power to punish offences against law of nature. It seems not possible to put the landlord or prince to have the dead punishment for any crime he commits in the state because they have more estates than others. People may need legislative authority or the supreme of making law to decide the equality. Thirdly, the law of nature allows everyone to kill and to punish anyone who against it as Locke (1691, p.221) said in "whoso shredded man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed". It would lead human beings into the savage community as lion, tiger, or other wild beasts and would decrease the sense of humanity.

As a result, confusion and disorder will face everyone in the state of nature. Naturally, human beings are rational who are able to think the way in avoiding the unsafe state of nature (Plamenatz, 1992, p.345). Locke (1691, p.221) recommended that "I easily grant, that civil government is the proper remedy for the inconveniencies of the state of nature" to overcome the confusion and disorder society because of the unstressed law. However, if its problem still continues therefore the state of war will come. Locke argues that state of war is a state of enmity and destruction declared by word or action of man to other because they hinder their life, liberty, and estate. The state of war is a result of no rule which directs the community how to govern themselves as Locke (1691, p.224) said in

"I should have a right to destroy that which threatens me with destruction; for, by the fundamental law of nature, man being to be preserved as much as possible, when all cannot be preserved, the safety of the innocent is to be preferred: and one may destroy a man who makes war upon him, or has discovered an enmity to his being, for the same reason that he may kill a wolf or a lion; because such men are not under the ties of the common law of reason, have no other rule, but that of force and violence, and so may be treated as beasts of prey, those dangerous and noxious creatures, that will be sure to destroy him whenever he falls into their power".

The distinction of two states can be clearly seen; the former deals with a state of peace, good-will, mutual assistance, and preservation. Meanwhile the latter is a state of enmity, malice, violence, and mutual destruction. In addition, Locke (1691, p.225) stated that "Men living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth, with authority to judge between them, is properly the state of nature. But force, or a declared design of force, upon the person of another, where there is no common superior on earth to appeal to for relief, is the state of war: and it is the want of such an appeal gives a man the right of war even against an aggressor, though he be in society and a fellow-subject".

If the state of war is continuing between men to others, the winners will have the absolute power to force the losers to be slaves and suffer from a loss of their freedom as a consequence of lawful for a man to kill a thief or other criminal who hurt him. Locke (1691, p.227) stated that "this is the perfect condition of slavery, which is nothing else, but the state of war continued, between a lawful conqueror and a captive". However, Locke suggests several solutions to overcome and avoid the state of war. Those are human beings are rational creature and they have to make an agreement for a limited power on the one side, and obedience on the other, the state of war and slavery ceases; slavery is really a threat for human liberty because they live under their master. It is needed the only security for their preservation; and quitting the state of nature is a good choice to avoid state of nature (Locke, 1691, p.226). As said before, Locke tends to set up civil society which has one supreme government to control civil behaviour and to protect the life (no death punishment), liberty (no slavery), and estate (the wealth, money, or land).

Following Schochet's accounts (2000) of "individuals, according to Locke, were bound to that state and required to obey its rules as a kind of quit pro quo, which was sometimes help to be manifested through what he called tacit consent", Locke's civil society seems to be recognized as a state and would be formed by a social contract or all independent men's consent. Locke (1691, p.227) explained that "the natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule. The liberty of man, in society, is to be under no other legislative power, but that established, by consent, in the commonwealth; nor under the dominion of any will, or restraint of any law, but what that legislative shall enact, according to the trust put in it". Freedom is a right of everyone during the life. As rational creatures, they are able to think and having some thoughts based on their experience. They can solve their problem because they know how to solve it. Its problem lies on how to preserve their property including freedom or liberty. Therefore, they set up the commonwealth under the established law by consent according to trust. In addition, Laslett (1988, p.113) stated that trust between men was an assumption of all who join to make up society. Trust is the safeguard of natural political virtue.

Locke elaborates how to trust each other and his thought lies on the character formation in family life.

He believes that childhood is the basis of human character. According to Locke, the relationship of an individual to his behaviour character is similar to an individual's relationship to his knowledge (Post, 1986). It means trust is a result of parental education and strengthened by tutor or teacher at school when they grow up to be mature. If parent try to trust their children therefore their children will learn how to trust the others. As a result, the temper of trust will be owned by the child. Hoffheimer (1986) stated that Locke seemed to elaborate the unique function of the family as an institution bridging the gap between the individual and the state. Locke developed model for social development and established different criteria for promoting equality within the state. Locke explains that the nature of society is voluntary compact between man and woman which give the beginning of parent and children; commonly, servant can be added to help household affairs and set up the relations of master and servant. They would be one family and it becomes the first political society (Locke, 1691, p.250).

Ideally, family as the first institution of society is based on equal treatment between the father and the mother in term of parental education towards their children. Moreover, they should have equal authority in the eyes of their children. They should equip each other with respect to their strength or weakness (Makarenko, 1939). However, Locke faced the different experience in his day. His father had powerful authority to force him to do as his father's wants. Therefore, he had the greater influence from his father than his mother during his life (Aaron, 1971, p.2). It might be reflected the portrait of paternalistic tradition in the seventeenth century. Slater (1984, p.7) explained that this period was patriarchal and autocratic. It was based on Verney's family history. Sir Edmund Verney (1590-1642) who was in many ways a typical upper-gentry father controlled the patrimony. His control provided him with the economic power and social prestige to maintain his authority over the other members including his wife.

Thornton (1966, p.13) realized that England experienced previously the paternalism and democracy was a new pattern. The democratization had started when the revolution and the reformation appeared. However, the paternalistic tradition kept continuing in family life. Krouse (1982, p.150) recorded that "women in liberal society which from its foundations in seventeenth century consent are in fact forced to choose between marriage on the patriarchal terms set by the dominant sex and a spinster's life of even more complete domestic dependence and servitude". It shows that equal as the major term of Locke's liberalism is seen by the egalitarian relationship between the father and the child. Therefore, it is not surprisingly that family is based on paternal authority.

Political rule has arisen from paternal power. However, political authority and paternal authority are different but men need government as children need parental care (Plamenatz, 1992, p.340). As parent who has a duty to nurture their children's health and mind, the only obligation of government is to preserve people's property. Property in two treatises has two meanings: in the state of nature refers to material possessions and in the civil society deals with life, liberty, and estate (Schochet, 2000, p.366). It is the will of men to quit from state of nature because the law of nature cannot preserve their property. The civil society was brought into being to protect property of its member by established standing law (Locke, 1691, p.272). Even, an economic system can be well ordered and regulated by the standing law based on Locke's *Lowering of Interest and Raising the Value of Money* (Locke, 1691, p.7).

It is clear that civil society is a result from everyone who is quitting from the state of nature and consent to unite in one body politic under one supreme government. It is very confusion to common people to understand Locke's view on government especially dealing with commonwealth and dominions without knowing his journey of life. In seventeenth century, British colonization of the Americas seemed to be a process of appropriation and assimilation between theories of constitutionalism and practices of colonialism. In the summer of 1669, Locke indeed participated in this practice and addressed it in theory as informal secretary to the proprietors of the Carolina colony, secretary of the council of Trade and Plantations, and member of the board of trade and plantations (Hsueh, 2002, p.427-429). His experience to handle the Carolina colony was written in *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* around 1669.

This article describes how to create a representative government in which many men could participate and orderly society controlled by the Lords Proprietor in England (Locke, 1669). The eight proprietors of Carolina established the exact laws and structures to guarantee the best settlement for everyone. They fill all of the executive position after signing the document and consent to have the executive officers. Their constitutional agreement to set up the government is not only indicates their proper position in the territory but also demonstrates the project as a political place with a present and a future in the most binding ways that can be devised (Hsueh, 2002, p.430-434). In this context, the colony would be the dominion of England or Britain or in other words dominion is an autonomous polity under British sovereignty.

Government among commonwealth and dominion have the same obligation to protect people's property and the execution of government is based on the established standing law by the national founding. Locke (1691, p.273) stated that "It may employ all that power in making laws for the community from time to time, and executing those laws by officers of their own appointing". Consent is not only used to propose the law and to choose the executive but also to take taxes from people as Locke (1691, p.227) said in "governments".

cannot be supported without great charge, and it is fit everyone who enjoys his share of the protection, should pay out of his estate his proportion for the maintenance of it. But still it must be with his consent, i.e. the consent of the majority, giving it either by themselves, or their representatives chosen by them: for if any one shall claim a power to lay and levy taxes on the people".

To achieve the wants of state of nature and try to avoid the state of war, Locke tends to divide the government into three powers: legislative power, executive power, and federative power (Tully, 1993, p.11). Legislative power is a right to direct how to preserve the community and the member of it. The legislative power should be owned by non-executive men because if they have two powers in one hand, it is easy for them to make law and execution based on their importance (Locke, 1691, p.279). The legislative is the supreme power to make laws for every member of the society prescribing rules to their actions and giving execution. The legislative is not always in being but the executive is always in being because the new laws are rarely to be made and the executive power is chosen by election (Locke, 1691, p.281-283). All of action among men in community should be based on the law as Locke (1691, p.285) said in *"salus populi suprema lex* is certainly so just and fundamental a rule" or in other words the welfare of people shall be the supreme law.

Locke (1691, p.278) suggested clearly how to set legislative power of every commonwealth or in all of government: "first, They are to govern by promulgated established laws, not to be varied in particular cases, but to have one rule for rich and poor, for the favourite at court, and the countryman at plough. Secondly, these laws also ought to be designed for no other end ultimately, but the good of the people. Thirdly, they must not raise taxes on the property of the people, without the consent of the people, given by themselves or their deputies. And this properly concerns only such governments where the legislative is always in being, or at least where the people have not reserved any part of the legislative to deputies, to be from time to time chosen by themselves. Fourthly, the legislative neither must nor can transfer the power of making laws to anybody else, or place it anywhere, but where the people have". However, the legislative power is a supreme power but the executive power has prerogative power to act according to discretion for the public good without the prescription of the law (Locke, 1691, p.286).

The last power of government is federative as Locke (1691, p.280) asserted in "there is any other power in commonwealth, it contains the power of war and peace, leagues and alliances, and all the transactions, with all persons and communities without the commonwealth; and may be called federative". However, people could set up the new government if they feel that the government cannot protect their property; the government ceases to function for people; the legislative is changed or usurped by tyrannical executive power; there is no trust between the legislatives or executives; and the executive ignores his duties and makes the law to be meaningless guidance (Locke, 1691, p.308). It is necessary to do as soon as possible before they fall under tyrannical rule (Plamenatz, 1992, p.341). As concluded by McNally (1989) that the establishment of civil society seemed to be a cycle which revised the weaknesses of the previous stages. Civil government is the proper remedy for the inconveniences of the state of nature. Indeed the preservation of their property is the great decision to unite into commonwealths (or dominions) under the rule of government.

3.2. Producing Religious Liberty

Religious tolerance seemed to be the prevalent term attracting everyone's interest in seventeenth century. It was caused by religious conflict among Christianity (Anglican, Catholic, and Protestant Sects) as a result of the reformation and it contributed into the English Civil War. At the time, religious toleration was believed as the fitted strategy for reducing religious conflict in England (Mendus, 1989, p.23-24). Klibansky (1968, p.2) stated that the issue of religious toleration had been occupying Locke's mind when he was a young man at Oxford. It was strengthened by his journey to other countries such as Holland and France. He experienced religious intolerance in Nantes and secular state in Holland. According to this experience, Locke's religious toleration lies into the principle of separation between the magistrate and the church. He believes that both institutions have their own purposes (Mendus, 1989, p.26-27). Religious toleration seems to be one of important elements to preserve the existence of a nation. It requires the consent from all member of society.

The religious society is formed by people's consent to join voluntary in which they believe they find the truly acceptable God. It means naturally no one refers to any particular Church or Sect (Locke, 1685, p.10). They are absolutely free and spontaneous to join together into the Church society. Religion seems to be a collective of human values. Therefore, everyone knows religion by his education. In this case, the parent will introduce and educate the religion to their children. They have some knowledge of religion and as rational creature they are able to think rationally then try to believe deeper time by time. Locke believes that the business of true religion is to regulate men's lives based on the rules of virtue and piety. He against some men using religion to persecute, torment, destroys, and kills other men. Religious men should express their love and desire of the soul salvation (Locke, 1685, p.6).

According to Locke's reasonableness of Christianity, it is not prudent to force people to obedience the

Christian law by afterlife sanctions because we cannot prove the existence of an afterlife. However, there is only reason which could produce obedience without any command as he explained in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. He tends to refashion Christianity to support the rational morality (Rabieh, 1991). The relationship between faith and reason is not far from scholastic tradition. Locke seems to view that the faith complements or adds reason but both operate in different spheres (Snyder, 1986). Dunn (1969, p.249) explained that his mind was essentially the product of a Calvinist natural theology which tended to set the social discipline of the religious community by reason in each religious community.

In addition, He also believes that the end of a religious society is the public worship of God (Locke, 1685, p.12). He tries to make a point that religion is a matter of internal interest and it may differ to government's business. However if anyone misuses religion for their importance or commonly in political matters, it stimulates the religious tyranny. The religious tyranny may be the major problem of religious conflict in European seventeenth century. Locke (1685, p.11) stated that he did not find any of New Testament explaining the church of Christ should persecute others and force others by fire and sword to embrace the faith and doctrine as reflected in Civil War or the Revolution of 1688. The religious conflict may people to think that religion could destroy the order of society. As a result, they will be agnosticism or atheism followers. The former refers to a thought which does not accept any religious system but they accept the existence of God (Caillavet, 1998, p.99). Atheism deals with a belief which does not accept the existence of God. For Locke, if anyone who does not save the God in his soul; it means he does not have the fear of god and is disallowed because it can strengthen people to keep their promise and contract; or it is necessary for social order (Tully, 1993, p.57).

Unlike Hobbes who believes that state and religion are closely connected, Locke tends to separate church and state based on consent (Klibansky, 1968, p.10). Locke argues that it is necessary to distinct the duties of civil government and religion. It will reduce the controversies between them; at least concern on men's souls on the one side and a care of the commonwealth on the other side (Locke, 1685, p.8). Moreover, Chen (1998, p.171) explained that the separation principle was a radical term to secularize both institutions into their natural purposes. However, the distinction has clearly seen but the magistrate still has a duty to preserve the religious liberty into every inhabitant (Kraynak, 1980). Moreover, Kessler (1985) stated that church should focus on the transfer of values and plant the peace into each believer. There are three reasons why Locke tries to separate both institutions: first, no one can confirm his faith to dictates of another; second, the care of soul is not possible to do by the magistrate; third, the laws and the force of penalties are able only to change the mind but it cannot help to the salvation of their soul (Locke, 1685, p.9).

For Locke, religious liberty is needed for everyone (Locke, 1685, p.5). The effective liberty should be liberty according to and under the protection of law within a political community (Klibansky, 1968, p.38). Nelson (2011, p.27) stated that Locke was inspired by the Hebrew republic which practiced the broad toleration, even tolerating idolatry outside its borders. However, there are a lot of different opinions and views toward religion but they have the same duty to preserve civil peace. They need to tolerate the other beliefs (Locke, 1699, p.127). Locke realizes that people try to represent God as the best they can because the idea of God is absurd, obscure, confuse, inconsistent, imperfect, and incomplete (Vivienne, 1999). Therefore, Locke believes that the mutual toleration of Christians should be implemented as soon as possible to decrease the conflict and social disorder because of religion (Locke, 1685, p.6). Klibansky (1968, p.15-18), according to Locke, explained that there are some opinions and actions of men which deserved toleration, for example purely speculative opinions (belief of the trinity and purgatory), divine worship, polygamy, or divorce. In other words, any opinion or action which do not cause inconveniences to the community is allowed and needed to tolerate by community.

4. Conclusion

Locke's civil society seems to be a continuation from family life to society life. He believes that the civil society is formed by consent of independent men. Firstly, all men agree to set a commonwealth with one supreme government based on law. The government need to separate his duty rather legislative or executive power to avoid any destruction (state of war) as a consequence of the law of nature. The legislative power deals with the law maker and executive power tries to execute what is written in the law. According to Locke, family has an important role to set their children having democratic or tyrannical character. If parents nourish their children by consent, it is established children's minds to think that people need to appreciate others' ideas and wills. Therefore, the perfect democratic government would emergence by consent of all democratic men. The democratic condition will create a civil society and further producing the society based on religious tolerance.

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