CRACKS IN MUSLIM DEMOCRACY MODEL

RADICALIZATION IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

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Indonesia as a multi-ethnic and pluralistic democracy lives along multiple faultlines – social, regional, geographic, cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic, native versus migrant, highlanders versus lowlanders, and so on. These faultlines have come to shape both Indonesia's internal as well as external expressions. Today a rising Indonesia exudes a different sense of confidence in its global projection as a moderate and the largest Muslim democracy, living somewhat in harmony with its multi-layered and multi-pronged diversities.

Three characters of the rising Indonesia have received global attention. First, Indonesia has been viewed as a model Muslim democracy and an alternative

blueprint for other Muslim societies to follow. The moderate Muslims of Indonesia have emerged as the vanguard of Indonesia's democratic resurgence. Scholars like Joshua Kurlantzik and magazines with global outreach like the Economist were prescribing Indonesian model of Muslim democracy for the Arab countries amidst the revolution initiated at the Tahrir Square in Egypt in 2011.

Second, the Indonesian leadership has projected itself as an important bridge-builder between the West and Muslim world and a facilitator of dialogue between the two world-views. The then Indonesian Ambassador to the United States, Dino Patti Djalal characterised Indonesia-US partnership as a 'constructive 21st-century partnership between the West and the Islamic world.'

Moreover, the West also seems to have acknowledged Indonesia's bridge-building capacity. While delivering his

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address at Istiqlal mosque in Jakarta in November 2000, the American President, Barrack Obama called upon Indonesia to play a greater role in facilitating dialogue between the West and Muslim world and build trust. The international Conference on Cultural Diplomacy in the European Union, Brussels in December 2011 identified Indonesia as a bridge between Islam and the West and a model of compatibility between Islam and democracy.

Finally, what has drawn the attention of the international community is Indonesia's image as a moderate Muslim society where the state has proven extremely effective against terrorism. The Post-Suharto Indonesia has projected its successful counterterrorist campaigns against the home-grown terror network with regional and global linkages. So far, the democratic Indonesia is known to have launched the most effective measures against the terrorist networks.

Notwithstanding being the largest Muslim country of the world, 'Indonesia is neither an Islamic state nor is Islam the official religion of the state. At the same time, in pursuance of this objective, Jakarta has also emphasised on its credential as a Muslim society and expressed strong opinion on issues confronting the global Muslim community. The Megawati government of Indonesia had openly criticized the US interventions in

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Afghanistan and Iraq. Indonesian leadership has shown activism in the deliberations of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC). Moreover, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), the Indonesian President had called upon the need for greater global sensitization about the Islamic values and an international anti-blasphemy Code to prevent insult to the global religions during his speech at the UN General Assembly.

I
CRACKS IN INDONESIA'S MUSLIM DEMOCRACY MODEL: TOWARDS RADICALISATION

As Indonesia is articulating its roles and priorities in the regional and global order, it faces growing radicalisation of identities in the country that challenges Indonesia's credentials as a model Muslim democracy and cuts into Jakarta's growing global popularity and its rising power status. The process of radicalisation has troubled the Indonesian leadership since the beginning of the country's democratic transition in the aftermath of the departure of Suharto, who ruled Indonesia with an iron fist and maintained the state's moderate identity.

The process of radicalisation during the last fifteen years can be seen in two different stages marked by different goals, modus operandi and focus areas. Moreover, the state and the law-enforcement agencies also seem to have exhibited different characters. While the first phase saw Christian minorities being the main target, the second phase has seen non-Sunni Muslims being the main target. Moreover, in contrast to the outer islands being the main stage of operations during the first stage, the island of Java seems to have emerged as the

focus area of radical forces during the second phase. In other words, the radicals perceived threats coming primarily from the non-Muslims and the state during the first phase.

On the other hand, they have begun to view, during the second phase, non-Sunni Muslims and nominal believers or the Abangans of Java as the main threat. While the first stage was marked by ethno-communal violence and terrorist operations, the second stage has seen frequent sectarian attacks against non-Sunni Muslims. While the first stage saw the state and government adopting zero-tolerance against the terrorist operations, the second stage has seen gradual caving in of the state to the radical pressure.

First Phase (1998-2007): Radicalisation against the State and Ethnic minorities

The first phase of radicalisation can be discerned during the formative years of Post-Suharto Indonesia's experiments with democracy. Three major elements of radicalisation were seen during this phase in the form of large-scale outbreak of ethno-communal violence in the outer islands, the rise of Islamic paramilitaries and the emergence of local and regional Al-Qaeda-linked terror networks. As post-Suharto Indonesia was celebrating the resurgence of democracy in the country, it was witnessing simultaneously the horror stories of ethno-communal violence on its different islands.

Indonesia witnessed a series of ethno-communal violence during the late 1990s, in which more than 10,000 people died and around one hundred thousand families were displaced. Many houses, religious structures and places of public utility were burnt down and economic activities in the conflict areas came to a

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standstill. Although the geography of these conflicts indicates their widespread distribution, the most extensive devastation occurred in three islands – Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Maluku.

As a part of this radicalisation process, several Islamic paramilitaries came into being in Indonesia. Some of these organisations are the Front Pembela Islam (FPI) or Islamic Defenders Front, the Yogyakarta-based Laskar Jihad, and the much smaller but still national, Laskar Mujahidin of the Council of Islamic Fighters or Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia. These militias were mobilizing nominal and devout Muslims by capitalizing on the discourse of 'victim,' and projecting non-Muslims as enemies and the state as anti-Islamic. While the Laskar Jihad claimed to protect Muslims from being victimized by the Christians in Maluku and Central Sulawesi, the FPI aimed at eliminating the impurities creeping into Indonesian social and individual space – banning bars, discotheques, nightclubs, enforcing dress codes and so on. Noorhaidi Hasan identifies three reasons for the rise of radical Islamic paramilitaries in Indonesia – (a) dispersal of state capacity across various regional and national centres (b) tendency among the political elite to reach out to 'uncivil forces' in society, and (c) the rise of factional politics within the Indonesian army.

Another important trend of radicalization process in Indonesia has been the rise of terror networks, led by Jemaah Islamiyah that represented a multi-faceted narrative, weaving together local, regional and global stories of Islamic radicalism. While the 9/11 awakened Indonesia as a Muslim country to a new set of discourse regarding the growing radicalization of Islam, the Bali bombing made Indonesia an active participant of the global discourse on radical Islam.

Democratic Indonesia had to choose between the growing domestic support for the radical Islam against the West and its role as a good international Samaritan to counter radical Islamic tendencies both within as well as outside the country. Various terrorist operations in Jakarta (April 2003, September 2004, July 2009) and Bali (October 2002, September 2005) point towards growing inter-linkages between global vectors of Islamic terrorism and local agents (Jemaah Islamiyah), operating in domestic constituencies (Poso, Ambon, Java).

Major drivers for the radicalisation during this phase came from a weak and vulnerable state, a discredited military with vested interests, an untrained and partisan police, under-developed institutional checks and balances and negative fallouts of twin virtues of governance – democratisation and decentralisation. While the process of

democratisation introduced majoritarianisation of electoral and political processes prompting the political parties and groups to mobilise majority of Muslim population, the decentralisation and regional redistricting not only brought out vested interests but also set in motion scramble for power and positions in the provinces. The mutually reinforcing relationship between the state capacity for governance and politico-economic crisis gave a fillip to the criminal elements and the manipulation of mass sentiments. Apart from structural limitations, the inefficiency of the security agencies in managing the conflict and maintaining law and order also emanated from their vested interests, a hallmark of the New Order regime.

Second Phase (2008 onwards): Towards Sunni Majoritarianism

Of late, Indonesia's social spectrum has witnessed a new trend in the process of radicalisation with more frequent attacks on non-Sunni Muslims, more intense debates on purifying Indonesian Islam with an emphasis on outward observation of Islamic outlook, and growing advocacy of the Arab-variant of Islam. Moreover, the state - with its indifference, inaction, juridico-legal support for stricter observance of Sunni Islam, partisan role of the law-enforcement agencies, majoritarian politics of many of the political parties of the country - has been seen as facilitator of the process. The new sectarian trend can best be understood as growing Sunni majoritarianism within the country's national political and social life. Following elements testify to the growing trend towards Sunni majoritarianism.

First, non-Sunni Muslims and nominal

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Muslims of Java have been major targets of the radicals. As per the reports of the Human Rights Watch, more than 200 attacks are taking place against the minorities every year since 2010. The Muslim community of Ahmadiyas has been banned from publicly professing their religion and their houses by the decree of 2008 and their religious places have been attacked on a few occasions during the last five years. A few Ahmadiyas were attacked and killed by the radical militias on two occasions in the western Java in February and August 2011. The Shia community has also come under attack during the last few years including an attack on the community in the Sampang district of Madura in August 2012. Similarly, atheists have not been spared either and many of them seem to have gone underground.

II
Legal, Judicial and Policing Issues

The process of radicalisation seems to have also acquired legal character. The HRW report identified 156 statutes, regulations, decrees and by-laws by 2010 restricting religious freedom, many of them justified under article 28J (2). Moreover, Indonesia has witnessed greater application of Sharia in social, legal and cultural affairs. There have been more than 60 cases of implementation of Sharia laws throughout the country, with roughly half of 32 provinces reporting to have implemented different sets of sharia laws. Of late, the governments both at the national as well as provincial levels have resorted to more frequent application of the Anti-Blasphemy Law of 1965 since 2005. Moreover, the decrees on houses of worship of 1969 and of 2006 have

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rendered difficult the construction of the religious places of worship for the minorities.

Two explanations for the moderate Indonesia's drift towards the majoritarian outlook stand prominent. The most important factor is the majoritarian outlook of the national politico-electoral processes emanating from the lack of political will and the compulsion of coalition politics. Bahtiar Effendy, a prominent scholar on Indonesian Islam, writes, "Had the state been strong enough and functioned the way it's supposed to function, I don't think that this so-called radicalism will escalate." The HRW report of 2013 mentions, "Despite occasional positive rhetoric, however, President Yudhoyono has responded weakly to growing intolerance and acts of violence against religious minorities, has not insisted firmly that national laws be enforced, and has often been unwilling to use his powers as president to see that the laws be enforced." The defamatory Statements from the Minister for Religious Affairs, Suryadharma Ali of the United Development Party (PPP), against Shias and Ahmediyas since 2011 seems a repetition of what Hamza Haz, his predecessor and the then Vice-President of Indonesia was praciting during the presidency of Megawati Sukarnoputri.

Second, a somewhat long-term trend

continuing in Indonesia is the growing debate within Indonesian Islam about what is sacred and what is profane, prompting people to shed those aspects of life-style that may not appear to be orthodox Muslim. There has been a growing tendency towards going to the roots, to the Arab worldview on Islam with an emphasis on outward observation. As a result, Arabic has become fashionable leading to increased circulation of veils and yellow books. It also appears that common Muslims, though not in favour of violence and radical Islam, are not averse to purer version of their Islamic credentials. This tendency also seems to have influenced the outlook of the national political parties and organisations. The experiences of ethno-religious violence have also seemed to have hardened radicalised identities and entities.

Finally, the law-enforcement agencies have exhibited both their inability as well as unwillingness to act against the radical elements engaged in the persecution of religious minorities. In other words, the law-enforcement agencies, especially the police, continue to demonstrate their partisan role that disrupted peace and harmony all over the country during the first few years of Indonesia's transition to democracy after the departure of Suharto.

III
Conclusion

A multi-religious, religiously tolerant and syncretic Indonesia faces today the rise of Sunni majoritarianism, a trend that may disrupt the Indonesian happy trajectory of a model Muslim democracy. In other words, the rising Indonesia's success story may not travel very far if it does not put its house in order. What is more worrisome is their continued existence for a long time and the lack of political will as well as consensus within the country as to how these challenges should be dealt with.

Views expressed are author's personal.

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