Religious Politics and Minority Rights

The SBY Legacy

Robin Bush
“Indonesia’s 1945 constitution explicitly guarantees freedom of religion, as does the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Indonesia is a party. However, the Indonesian government has long enacted, and in recent years strengthened, legislation and regulations that have subjected minority religions to official discrimination and made them extremely vulnerable to the members of the majority community who take the law into their own hands.”

*Human Rights Watch, 2013*

“Indonesia’s transition to democracy and economic stability has been marred by sectarian violence, terrorist attacks, the growth of extremist groups, and rising intolerance toward religious minorities and ‘heterodox’ groups.”

*US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2014*

For the past five years, Indonesia has continued to face serious challenges to its democracy. Instances of violation of religious freedom continue to increase. Also, intolerance continues to rise.

*Wahid Institute, 2013*
Overview of talk

- Religious minorities under attack
  - Ahmadiyah
  - Shi’a
  - Christians
  - Data on religious violence

- SBY - benign neglect or intentional restriction?
  - Key appointments
  - State or state-affiliated institutions
  - Legislation

- SBY – the case for godly nationalism
Ahmadiyah

- 2008 Joint Decree on Ahmadiyah
- February 2011 – Cikeusik attack
- SBY administration
  - Suryadarma Ali – Minister of Religion
  - Patrialis Akbar – Minister of Justice and Human Rights
  - Purnomo Yusgiantoro – Minister of Defense
  - Gamawan Fauzi – Minister of Home Affairs
- SBY position – middle of the road
  - “unwittingly fanning intolerance by failing to respond resolutely to the Islamists’ subversive threats and continuing intimidation of Ahmadiyah” – Fealy
Shi’a

- 2006 violence against Shi’a began to be documented
- 2010, 2011 – attacks against Shi’a school in East Java
- 2011, 2012 – Sampang
- SBY administration and allies
  - Suryadarma Ali – Shi’a are not Muslim
  - MUI – conflict with East Java branch
- SBY position – criticized police, demanded action, took no further action
Christian houses of worship

- Regulated by the state since 1969
- 2006 Joint Regulation on Houses of Worship
- GKI Yasmin and HKGB Filadelfia
- SBY modus operandi – strong pro-minority statements to the media followed by handing authority over to others
  - “President Yudhoyono’s statements are a mirage, which have no meaning if not accompanied by explicit instruction to lower levels of government to comply with the law” – Setara Institute 2012
Trends in religious violence

- Setara Institute – incidents of religious violence
  - 2007 – 90
  - 2012 – 264
  - 2013 – 220

- Wahid Institute – incidents of religious violence
  - 2009 – 121
  - 2012 – 366
  - 2013 - 245
SBY – benign neglect or intentional restriction?

- “President Yudhoyono has been inconsistent at best in defending the right to religious freedom....and has responded weakly to growing intolerance and acts of violence against religious minorities.”

  *Human Rights Watch*

- “SBY’s decade in office has been marked by only patchy progress on human rights, and even regression in some areas”

  *Amnesty International*

- “Various reports of the condition of freedom of religious/belief, plus the facts of violations of religious freedom occurring for at least 6 years tapers to the conclusion that the regime of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, after the year 2011 has chosen the way of real political discrimination in regulating the life of religion/belief...President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is a leader without initiative and leadership in promoting freedom of religious/belief.”

  *Setara Institute*
Key appointments

- Minister of Religion – Suryadarma Ali
- Minister of Home Affairs – Gamawan Fauzi
- President’s Advisory Council advisor on religious affairs – Ma’ruf Amin
- State Secretary – Sudi Silalahi
- Chief of Police (2010-2013) – Timur Pradopo
Institutions

- Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front)
- MUI (Indonesian Ulama Council)
- Bakor Pakem (Coordinating Board for Monitoring Mystical Beliefs in Society)
Legislation

- 1965 Blasphemy Law
- 2006 Decree on Houses of Worship
- 2008 Decree on Ahmadiyah
- 2011 Religious Harmony Bill
SBY – contradiction or rational godly nationalist?

- Buehler – state elite competition explains spread of shari’a legislation – provides state elites with economic, cultural, and social capital, and debunks a secular/religious binary
  - SBY – support for Islamist positions is a rational political calculation in line with perceptions of an increasingly conservative and increasingly intolerant Muslim majority

- Fealy – SBY rational responsiveness to public opinion
  - Indonesian public increasingly intolerant
  - SBY avid consumer of public opinion polls
SBY – contradiction or rational godly nationalist?

- Menchik – Godly Nationalism:
  - Indonesian nationalism is “assertively religious”
  - “Godly nationalism conceptualizes belief as a civic virtue that accrues both individual and social benefits…the archetype of a good citizen is one who believes in God and uses that belief to motivate his or her behavior”
  - “State is the conduit for religious belief, guiding its citizens toward proper faith and behavior…and intolerance toward heterodoxy constitutes the nation”

- SBY – rational, intentional conservatism (godly nationalism) influenced by closest advisors and public opinion polls
SBY – comparative perspective

- Looking back
  - Less minority-oriented than Sukarno and Wahid, but more than Suharto

- Looking forward
  - Prabowo vs Jokowi – playing the Islam card
  - Too little too late?