

Rethinking Muslim Democrats: Indonesian and Turkish Models of Democracy in the Post Arab Spring Countries

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Abstract: Turkey and Indonesia are two Muslim countries that have long experiences in managing democracy. Indonesia and Turkey hold a predicate as a predominantly Muslim country with a secular character which give them the privilege to claim the status as a model for democracy in the Muslim World. The event of the Arab Spring which change the landscape of politics in the Middle East also opens a space for both countries to share their model of democracy. This paper explains the place of Indonesian and Turkish democracy model in the middle of a democratic transition in post Arab Spring countries. The paper also shows the new transformations in Middle East countries especially Tunisia after installing fundamental pillars of democracy within its system. Tunisia succeeds in managing transition because of the support from civil society organizations and political leaders, while the rest are unstable. Decisions to transform state system from authoritarian toward democracy in most Arab Spring countries mostly initiated by non-governmental organization who have international network. This paper using qualitative approach, while during the process of research, the author elaborates number of the latest data in the form of books, research reports, and news to answers research question of the research.

1 INTRODUCTION

Indonesia and Turkey are two countries which have a long tradition in establishing a democratic system. Both countries represent a model of Muslim democrats because of the majority of its population are Muslim and adopted democracy as an integral part of their nation-building. Both countries also have similarities regarding relations between the state and religion. Indonesia on the one hand since its independence attempt to consolidate its democracy since its independence from the Dutch, while Turkey since the establishment of the republic always attempts to restore its democracy every time military coup takes place (Bruinessen, 2011).

Both countries also represent the success story of combinations between Islam and democracy. The ability of these countries in combining Islam and democracy also makes Huntington's thesis about clashes between civilizations lose its significance. Because the two countries embrace Western values and internalize the value for a transformation of the countries. Indonesia and Turkey proved that Islam and democracy are compatible (Huntington, 1993).

Indonesia and Turkey reach a positive development after consolidated its democracy, for the past fifteen years, both countries are part of the group of twenty largest economies in the world which called G-20. Their membership in the club insisting this argument.

As an addition, the ability to maintain democracy and to improve economy gave them the privilege to speak to other Muslim countries about their success in managing democracy. The Turkish leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, for example, used to speak about Turkish democracy during his visit to the Middle East then called his counterparts to learn from Turkey's experiment. While Indonesia, although not too aggressive in offering its models, the leaders of the country create an event called Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) to expose their achievement after consolidating its democracy. Both countries using promotion of democracy concept to open the door for further cooperation in many sectors.

When we look back toward the transformation in Indonesia and Turkey, we can see how the country started the process through political liberalization, the establishment of a free and fair election,

increasing awareness on the issue of human rights in every level.

Overall, the new face of Indonesia and Turkey today is a result of democratization. In the name of democracy, the country can prevent the emergence of an authoritarian regime, allowing civil society to criticize the ruling party, as well as increasing the feeling of confidence within civilian leader to control the military. The stability at the domestic level enables them to expand their influence in international politics through multilateral diplomacy (Przeworski, Mansfield, & Sisson, 2004).

2 INDONESIAN AND TURKISH'S EXPERIENCE ON MANAGING DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

Indonesia's experience on managing democratic transition started since the momentum of "Reformasi" which means reform in 1997. Between 1997 to 1998 it was hard days for Asian countries marked by the wave of the economic crisis which hit whole Asia. The "Reformasi" was a term used by Indonesian middle class to end the military dictatorship of Suharto's regime which ruled the nation for more than 30 years. The years after reformation were the hardest part of the transition for the state because the political realities within the state were very complicated and diversified regarding languages, races, cultures, political ideologies, and religions.

Pro reformation activists have a serious concern related to the situation during the transitional period because the existence of Suharto's loyalists especially "hardliners" within state structure ranging from the judiciary, military and bureaucracy institutions still can regain power from the transitional government (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2010). If these groups could create horizontal conflict at the domestic level by using ethnic issues to provoke the masses, it would bring Indonesia into a different version of Balkanization. The issue of identity is susceptible in Indonesian politics either during Suharto's period or after the fall of his regime. However, when the transitional government succeeds in organizing a general election in 1999 which involving 48 political parties, the signs of optimism re-emerge in Indonesia. Since that day Indonesian try to increase the quality of their democracy (J.A., 2006).

The period of transition often described as "an interval between one political regime to another"

(J.A., 2006). Referring to this concept, we can say that Indonesia and Turkey are on its process to reach another level of democracy either constitutional liberal democracy or electoral democracy or illiberal democracy (Munck, 1996). In the last two decades, Indonesia appears with a new image and more confident in offering its democracy model to its neighbors in the Asia Pacific and the world. The Indonesian government holds an annual event called Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) in order to discuss the development of democracy in various countries, as a place where the ideas of democracy discussed and exchanged (Bali Democratisation Forum). This event was an effort to send a message to the world that the face of new Indonesia is more democratic compared to 30 years ago and calling the states which are still facing the problem of democratic transition to learning from Indonesian model. Even though the issues of corruption which involving political actors and political oligarchy still become the main obstacles for Indonesian development on democracy issue.

Turkey also has similar story with Indonesia in terms of the influence of economic crisis to the political instability, compare to Indonesia, Turkey has faced frequent political breakdowns in time of economic crisis, including the economic crisis in November 2000 and February 2001 where Turkey faced difficult situation and demanding international financial assistance to recover their economy (Onis, 2010). Political climate during this period was still fragile because political parties were unable to form stable coalition inter-party and at the same time the shadow of military intervention always emerge in a time of crisis (Heper & Tachau, 1983).

Compared to Indonesia which still deals with the issue of restoring democratic system after the collapse of Suharto's regime who only allowed three parties to compete in every general election and placed Golkar party with special status and privilege, Turkey during this period has already established strong political infrastructure that allow every political party to compete in a free and fair manner. As shown in the 2002 general election where political parties compete to attract voters with various issues. The main issue during this moment was how to revamp the national economy after a wave of economic crisis and a possibility of Turkish membership in the European Union.

Political preferences within the voters during this period was a reflection on how political parties react to the economic situation and offer a solution to the problem regardless of their ideological background. In 2002 general election AKP (Adalet Kalkinma

Partisi or Justice and Development Party), a newly established party with Islamist background won a landslide victory. The victory of the AKP in 2002 for some scholars seen as the repetition of the era of the 1950s and 1980s denoted by the victory of Democrat Party and Motherland Party by maximizing economic issue and attempted to challenge the status quo in Turkish politic (Carkoglu & Kalaycioglu, 2007).

The victory of the AKP in general election also brought them to rule the nation with the single government after the nation witnessed last single government during Turgut Ozal's period in the 1980s (Keyman, 2005). When the party established the new government, then they started to implement policies which prepared to accelerate the process of reform to adjust with the standard of the international organizations. At the domestic level, the ruling party attempted to fulfill the precondition from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for financial assistance and the European Union (EU) for the full Turkish membership (Onis, Turkey - EU Relations: Beyond the Current Stalemate, 2008).

3 THE NARRATIVE OF DEMOCRACY IN POST-ARAB SPRING COUNTRIES

The narrative of democracy in the last decade becomes main attention of scholars and world leaders because of the increasing number of democratic countries and political turbulence in several countries after the wave of revolution which ousting authoritarian regimes in the Middle East (Fukuyama, 2015). Compare to 1974 when the "Third Wave" term of democracy introduced by Samuel Huntington after the fall of authoritarian regimes in Portugal, Spain then followed by the other countries in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America; recent trend shows many electoral democracies increased three times reached 110 countries.

The increasing number of electoral democracies and expanding of democratic value across the globe inseparable from the impact of globalization process where the interaction among nations brought them to exchange ideas directly and share various values, in this case, democratic value. The rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War also must be considered as a dominant factor behind the spreading of democracy (Huntington, The

Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century, 1991).

Guillermo O'Donnell in his book describes characteristics of consolidated democracy in two phases: First, the transition from dictator regime towards democracy by installing democratic instrument. Second, the period of consolidated democracy where every political actor considered democracy as "the only game in town" and there is no possibility of reverse (Valenzuela, 1991).

As an addition, Indonesia and Turkey show its transformation, marked by the decreasing influence of the military in politics, the involvement of military pensioner in political parties, revision of the martial law, taking over business sector from military ownership. For reform in the security sector, Indonesia also amended the concept of the dual function of military or "Dwi Fungsi ABRI" in 2004. While Turkey, since 2003 the ruling party proposed amendment of law relating to civil-military relations, one of them strengthening the role of a civilian in National Security Council (MGK), one of the most influential bodies in the state.

Ted Piccone, a senior researcher in the Brookings Institution, in his book "Five Rising Democracies," put Indonesia and Turkey together with other three countries including India, Brazil, and South Africa as a group who can maximize democratic stability at domestic level and accelerate their economic development. According to Piccone, these countries share same experiences on how these states rebuild after decades of military domination who played a principal role, how the mentality of their leaders after long period colonialism, the impact of apartheid policy and state authoritarianism. In its development, these countries could manage the democratic transition and became more open to the global market and participated in resolving world economic problems through their membership in the international financial regime such as World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Piccone, 2016). Piccone in his book explained the reasons behind the success of those countries:

"...1. They leaped from closed, authoritarian, illiberal governance to more open, representative, and accountable political and economic systems; 2. They made impressive progress in delivering better standards of living for their citizens, and their success as aspiring democratic powers could potentially impact other societies striving for change; 3. Their remarkably diverse populations, evident in multiple languages, ethnicities, and religions, distinguish them from more homogeneous

and relatively cohesive societies such as Poland, South Korea, and Chile” (Piccone, 2016).

Piccone also highlights the case of Indonesia and Turkey. He argued that the reasons behind Indonesian success in managing their democracy including the increase of the middle class, establishment of free and fair principle during the election, and law enforcement. These facts make Indonesia become an example of how development can support democracy.

While Turkey, according to Piccone, succeeds in managing its economy and democracy after the establishment of single government in 2002 and became the first single government since 1987. During this period AKP appear as a new regime that could tackle the economic problem in Turkey between 2002-13 when Turkish economy grew significantly till 253 percent, which implied to increasing number of million middle class (Piccone, 2016).

4 PORTRAIT OF GENERAL ELECTION AFTER THE REVOLUTION

For the time being, when we look back to the event of Arab Spring in 2011 and how the dynamic and changes in every country which experiencing revolution, Tunisia is the only country that has been the most successful through the transition period of post-Arab Spring democracy. Because neighbouring countries such as Libya, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria have not been able to get out from the instability zone because the democratic transition has not yet been realized.

While the neighbouring country attempting to establish political and security stability, Tunisia succeed in organizing two general elections since the fall of Ben Ali regime. Tunisia can hold legislative elections in October 2011, followed by the general election in October 2014, and not forget to mention the latest regional election in May 2018.

During the transition period, Tunisia also succeeded in amending the law initiated by a coalition of non-governmental organizations in Tunisia. The amendment of the constitution was initiative from a civil society organization in order to create a democratic atmosphere after the fall of Ben Ali's regime.

Tunisia also shows us the phenomenon of the Ennahda Party. Ennahda maintains the rhythm of national stability by sticking to the mechanisms that

apply in Tunisia. At first, many observers doubted Ennahda's ability to guard the democratic transition in Tunisia because of the leadership of Rached Ghanouchi. Ghanouchi considered as a leader who fights for Islamic struggle. In the history of Tunisia, it was noted that the conflict between Islamic groups and the ruling regime has emerged since Tunisia was established as a country. Rached Ghanouchi's background also insisting his figure as a person who led the Islamic struggle against the authoritarian Ben Ali regime. The strict approach of the Ben Ali regime made Ghanouchi, and a number of his friends choose to leave Tunisia as an asylum seeker in the UK (Anne Wolf, 2017).

When Ennahda Party won the general election after the revolution, Gannouchi send a clear message to the people of Tunisia that his party will not change the country system become ideology of Islam. He also assured that even though Ennahda has Islamist background but did not representing conservative faction in Islam. The government of Ennahda will respect lifestyle of the people of Tunisia. In a specific comment, the party's leaders mentioning the existence of secular and liberal element of society who have tradition to drink alcohol, wear bikini, attending night club and another forms of liberal life style are guaranteed by the government.

As a leader and the founder of party Ghannouchi, in his speech in front of his supporters said that "We will continue this revolution to realize its aims of a Tunisia that is free, independent, developing and prosperous, in which the rights of God, the Prophet, women, men, the religious and the non-religious are assured because Tunisia is for everyone".

In 2014, Tunisia enter new phase of transformation because Nida Tunis won general election. Nida Tunis which representing nationalist and secular faction in Tunisian politics gain majority seats in parliament while Ennahda lost the power. The defeat suffered by Ennahda was not responded in non-democratic ways. Ghannouchi as chairman of the Ennahda party congratulated his rival Beci Caid Essebsi. This situation display how Tunisian manage its democratic transition from authoritarian regime toward democracy.

In 25 June, 2015 Tunisia also witnessed terror attack by terrorist group in the city of Sousse, this district is a tourist destination. In this attack 39 people killed by gunmen and for a moment this terror destabilizes the country (bbc.com 30/06/2015). After the attack many observer worried about the situation in Tunisia because enable escalation and destroying condition that has been

built after revolution. Revamping economic situation and political situation was not easy job for the country which experienced revolution. Most observers really concern on security issue of Tunisia as a primary pre-condition for establishment of consolidated democracy.

The trend seen in the previous section shows an important transformation in Tunisian politics amid the transition period. The acceptance of all political actors towards the democratic system accelerates the process of consolidating democracy in Tunisia. Tunisia is an example of successful democratization after the revolution in the Middle East and North Africa region.

5 DEBATING CONCEPT OF MUSLIM DEMOCRATS

Before the local election took place in Tunisia, the country faced security threats from the network of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or ISIS. The group of terror attack Rabdo and museums Tunisia's coastal region sporadically to create chaos and potentially threaten Tunisian economy. However, the ruling government succeed in managing the crisis and reduce security threats. After taking control then the general election committee in Tunisia continue the process of election. During the process of election every candidate have same rights to promote their programs. Every political parties have same opportunities to involve in political campaign without restrictions. Non-governmental organizations participate in monitoring process of election and initiated an idea of national unity to prevent clash among political parties and its followers. This process help Tunisia to transform its democracy more solid.

Related to the concept of a Democratic Muslim. This concept is considered to represent a view that confirms that Islam is compatible with democracy. Muslims, wherever they are, should not have a problem with democracy because its existence is only an instrument.

In the tradition of European countries, the use of religious symbols in politics is not a new thing. In Germany, the ruling party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) is a liberal-conservative political party with a central ideology that focuses its struggle on advocating the values of liberalism and Christian values. In Germany in its history, the establishment of the Christian Democrat Party was intended to compensate for the swift flow of liberalization which

affected family life and schools, and the church was interested in stemming the swift flow of liberalization. Apart from Germany, we also can find parties which using religion as their fundamental values for their struggle. We can mention Italy and Spain in this case.

However, in its development most political parties in Europe who used religious symbol for their political purpose unable to gain majority votes, most of voters lean their votes toward liberal parties who during their campaign promise their necessities such as creating jobs, opening access for social budget, decreasing tax and programs which related to their daily need. In other words, the purpose of establishment of political parties is gaining more votes, for that reason they must be able to reach as many voters from various segments. In the end, since 60s political parties in Europe no longer using religion as their identity because of the lack of support from voters.

Referring to the democratic model in Indonesia and Turkey if it is associated with the debate about the conception of Muslim democrats, we will find a number of facts as illustrated in the following paragraphs. The religious traditions of each country have an influence on their perspective of seeing the relationship between religion and the state.

In the case of Indonesia, Muslims in Indonesia do not have a serious problem in the matter of combining religious and state affairs. Religious activities have never received strict restrictions from the state. Political parties that fight in Indonesia generally make religious groups as one of the many ballots that can be maximized to win their votes and win political contestation.

There was a narration of "Islam Yes, Islamic Party No" from the Islamic scholar Nur Cholis Majid. Through this narrative he wants to say that in political matters, religion does not need to be involved too far because it will not change many things for the life of the nation and state. Therefore, he prefers to be part of the nationalist party but still fights for Islamic aspirations.

Furthermore, there are also political factions in Indonesia that continue to maintain religious identities and traditions but in their appearance to the public they use the style of a nationalist party to gain sympathy as many voters as possible. They often refer to themselves as nationalist-religious parties. They have loyal constituencies from the largest religious organizations in Indonesia in this case Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. The party which claims nationalist-religious has a center-right political line.

While the third faction is a political party that strictly declares itself as a party fighting for the Islamic struggle. They openly use Islam as a party ideology. They seek to secure the voice of a limited group who are their loyal followers.

This group has a tendency to build a brotherhood narrative of the Islamic world as a motivation to win political battles at the domestic level. They often use religious narratives to campaign for their ideas in every contestation both at national and local elections.

But in the end they cannot ignore domestic political realities. Therefore they also choose to be pragmatic when dealing with situations where they have to win the fight. In the election at the local level this Islamic party model does not close the space for coalition with nationalist parties in order to maintain the seat of power.

Unlike Indonesia, politics in Turkey is more ideological. Political parties are built based on ideological commitment to be preserved in real life in society.

In the Turkish political tradition those who have been struggling in political contestation have often received unfair treatment from state officials. The military, attorney general and judiciary are often frightening enemies of Islamic parties. Because with the argument of martial law that seeks to save the country from the threat of Islamic fundamentalism and has the potential to threaten the principle of state secularism a party can be dissolved.

The resistance of political groups fighting for the issue of Islam also has strong arguments for resistance to the regime because of their irrational policies. The policy of the secular party regime in power since 1924 has made secularism an ideology whose interpretation is in accordance with the regime's wishes.

Especially after the founder of the Republic of Turkey died, Kemal Ataturk's death as a symbol that gave birth to Turkey's national and state principles left a bigger hole to make a broad interpretation of secularism. The fact that Turkey has changed the call to prayer from Arabic into Turkish, banning headscarves in universities and government offices, closing the meeting rooms of Sufi groups has become clear evidence of how the Kemalist regime's policies threaten the religious beliefs of Turkish society. It is from the feeling of being threatened and oppressed that they rise up with a relentless narration of resistance against secularism.

In religious-based political groups, the AKP is an example of an Islamic-based party transformation which then decides to transform into a center-right

party. The AKP chose to be a liberal party with a political orientation to the West in this case trying to be part of the European Union.

This approach was chosen by Turkey after reflecting on its predecessor parties. The experience of the Refah Party that survives with an ideology that fights for Islamic aspirations is often prohibited every time a military intervention occurs. The incidence of military coups is often the place to profit from cleaning up elements related to religious-based parties. Because for military groups, religious-based parties have a track record of resistance to state ideology.

This situation also describes how the political situation in Indonesia and Turkey. How to describe the concept of Muslim democrats can also be seen from the experience of Indonesia and Turkey. That every group involved in political battles automatically can be called democrats because they think that democracy provides an opportunity for them to gain power.

Of course there are many observers who have different definitions of the concept of Muslim democrats. But there is one fact that must not be ignored, that in Indonesia and Turkey, the majority are Muslim, democracy can live and become an instrument of regime change. The experience of democratizing the two countries took place since they became independent as a nation and from the beginning when they declared the establishment of a republic.

6 CONCLUSION

Tunisia is an example for the country that feels burdened with the label of an Islamic party that has links with the Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt. To avoid their image being degraded both at the domestic and international level, the Ennahda leaders then revised the ideology they had been embracing. They stressed that the path of their struggle in politics was closer to the AKP model in Turkey than the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

On another occasion, when a wave of demonstrations took place in Turkey in 2013 known as Gezi Park, the Ennahda Party again kept its distance from the AKP in Turkey to avoid criticism from international media. Finally, before the 2018 regional elections, Ennahda declared itself a liberal party that no longer made mosques and places of worship as a center of their political activities.

AKP in Turkey is often a model for Islamic parties in Muslim countries. They consider the AKP as a successful model for a party with Islamic mass

based but packaged more moderately. This party even close to liberals form. The AKP itself has always refused to be labeled as a Muslim Democrat from the start and prefers to be called a conservative democratic party. The AKP leader in a decade of his administration focused on strengthening development issues and accelerating reforms to achieve the standards required by the European Union. The AKP party leaders in many cases responded to international issues with an international norm approach. This method is chosen for nothing, but the aim is to build an image that their party can adapt to Western values which are now the standard of truth.

As for Indonesia, although it has never promoted itself as an ideal model for political parties in Muslim countries, countries in the Middle East such as Afghanistan and Iraq learn from Indonesian's experience managing the democratic transition. Political parties in Indonesia do not have a strong tradition in spreading their influence abroad. They are more satisfied to fight at the domestic level. Regarding ideology, political parties in Indonesia always choose middle-way politics. The nationalist-religious term is prevalent among mass Islamic-based political parties in Indonesia. The trend as above confirms that the debate on religious-based political ideology has been completed in Indonesia.

In the end, the debate about Muslim democrats is nothing more than an attempt to distinguish between those who believe that only with religious-based conservative ideas that save a nation with those who consider the system in a country only an instrument for achieving prosperity.

On the one hand, in the Islamic world there are still groups that seek to reach their political agenda by using a frontal narrative of resistance with weapons and bomb terror. Behind that they assume that the ideal system that is able to save them is the old system in this case the Khilafah system. This idea actually doesn't get many followers, but because of repeated campaigns they feel they need to be heard by the wider public.

As for those who believe that religion remains sacred and political are reality, tend to make political contestation a game that provides an opportunity to explore ideas and ideas in order to achieve victory. For groups who believe that democracy opens up greater opportunities, they do not use too much religious argument to win votes. They tend to focus on the affairs of program campaigns that directly touch the real needs of the community.

In democracy, all entities have equal opportunities to win and lose, those who are religious and non-religious are accommodated in a democratic system. Therefore, the debate about whether a Muslim democracy and non-democracy is

no longer dominant in the debate of Muslim scholars.

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