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INDONESIA AFTER THE MARRIOTT BOMBING

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The bombing of the J.W. Marriott hotel in Jakarta's central business district on 5 August, which has caused more than 100 deaths and injured, has produced a result contrary to what was probably intended by the terrorist group carrying out the attack. Instead of boosting anti-western sentiment, which could have been yielded by attack on a prominent American symbol in Indonesia, the terrorist action has created a significant backlash for the terror group. Both the state and the public have turned more hostile toward such radicalism, a sentiment that can be expected to grow in the future. However, this does not necessarily mean that Indonesians are ready to accept a return to a Suharto-era style of security legislation. This commentary will highlight some of the changes taking place post-Marriott bombing and analyze some of the factors that continue to hamper a more stringent security approach. It will conclude by suggesting some steps that can be taken to ensure Indonesia's stability.

A More Security-Minded State and A Politically-Correct Political Society

In spite of the inroads made by the security apparatus in breaking up some of the terror cells, the network remains alive and well in Indonesia. The bombing provided a rude awakening to the threat Indonesia faces from such a terrorist network. Much of the discussion in Indonesia in the aftermath of the Marriott bombing revolved around the issue of tightening security and intelligence coordination. At least among the government agencies the issue is no longer whether the network exists in Indonesia, as in the past, but rather how the network can be uncovered and eradicated.

The sense of urgency to deal with the terrorist network can be seen in a suggestion to hand over the main responsibility for internal security from the police back to the TNI. Another suggestion that was more widely reported was to introduce a security law similar to the ISA (Internal Security Act) of Singapore and Malaysia.

Initial responses heard from all corners of the political society have been supportive. In contrast with the adverse reactions from Indonesian politicians to the global war against terrorism led by the United States, and with the varied reactions shown in the aftermath of Bali bombing, this time the reactions were relatively unequivocal. All political leaders, including those who were usually hesitant to condemn terrorist acts, denounced the bombing in strong terms. The speaker of parliament, Amien Rais, for instance, was quoted as saying that the terrorist acts were "satanic" acts. No state figures chose to appear in the recent congress of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) in Solo, including vice president Hamzah Haz, a regular in past gatherings.

This point is even more salient taking into account that Indonesia will hold a general election

next year, and the politicians are already in an election mood. The issue of fighting terrorism might be seriously debated by the politicians, something that was rather rare in the past.

A Society Increasingly Hostile to Radicalism

The Marriott bombing might eventually sensitize the public that terrorist acts are really close, personal, and imminent. The fact that the blast happened in the center of Jakarta, the capital and the center of political and economic activities, made all the difference. In the past, many of the Indonesian public saw terrorism as a remote thing. Even though Jakarta has been rocked by bomb blasts in the past two years, these terrorist acts pale in comparison to the Marriott bombing. Even the Bali bombing did not really seem to change this mentality. Despite being the terrorist attack with the largest number of casualties in the country's history, the bombing was seen as targeting mainly foreigners. The fact that many Indonesians were also killed in the blast did not really change the perception that the bombing was targeted at foreign and not Indonesian interests. While the Marriott case had a similar target pattern as Bali, this time the casualties were overwhelmingly Indonesian. Only one of the 11 casualties was a foreign national. Additionally, most of the victims were blue-collar workers. This fact has been highlighted in the Indonesian media. This would sensitize the public to the indiscriminate nature of terrorist acts, and would create public resentment against groups using violence to achieve their objectives.

This trend actually could be seen since last year, when the public reacted coolly to the decision of Laskar Jihad and Front Pembela Islam to cease operating. The public reaction was also relatively mute when Abu Bakar Ba'asyir was detained and then tried. Recently, public reaction has also been lukewarm to the news that Hambali, a terrorist cell leader and an Indonesian national, was captured and taken by the Americans to an undisclosed location. These are all quite different from the reactions that we saw during the American attack on Afghanistan and the handing over of Omar Al-Farouq to the Americans. Most of the opinion polls also back the need to beef up security measures against terrorist attacks and strengthen the law to fight terrorism.

Limits to Security Approach

But this positive development has limits. It is important to note that Indonesia has just emerged from the ravages of authoritarianism, and that the state, the political elite, and the public are all too aware of the perils of an excessive security approach. While it may be true that many Indonesians felt nostalgic about the security and stability that such an order provided, many more still carry the traumatic experience of political repression and power abuses of the past. Therefore, both suggestions on security may be a bit unrealistic.

For Indonesians, the ISA reminds them of the Anti-Subversion Law, one of the first laws repealed after the fall of Suharto. The law became the mainstay of the New Order regime because it empowered the regime to arrest anyone suspected of conspiring against the state. There were numerous abuses, and the law became a deterrent for any political opposition. It should come as no surprise that the initiative to introduce an ISA-like law proposed initially by Defence Minister Matori Abdul Djalil and supported by military figures such the TNI Chief General Endriartono Sutarto, was not widely supported and appeared to be defeated even before a bill drafted.

The idea to resurrect the military's internal security role is equally controversial. The resistance toward the military's role in socio-political role like the *dwifungsi* (dual role) doctrine of the past is still high. There is also the question whether the military, whose image has taken quite a beating, is willing to take on such a difficult task. On the other hand, while still weak in many respects, Polri (Indonesian National Police) has shown a tremendous effort in investigations of various terrorist bombings during the last two to three years. Many in the Indonesian public

expressed skepticism that the police would ever uncover the perpetrators of Bali bombing. But not only have they been successful in capturing the perpetrators, they have also revealed the network behind the terrorists. It is true that had the police worked harder, another terrorist attack like the one in Marriott could have been averted. But it is fair to say that given the wide expanse of the Indonesian territory, and the huge number of its population, coupled with the open society that it now has, as well as its porous borders, no single law enforcement force could have had full control of the situation. Even during the height of the New Order's security approach, terrorist attacks still occurred when bombs exploded in Borobudur and BCA office in Jakarta in 1980s.

After the civilian bureaucracy and the army, Polri is the strongest force in numbers that Indonesia has nowadays. Realizing the challenges facing it, the 270,000-strong police force will be enlarged to 300 thousand by the end of this year. In terms of its presence, it is on par with the territorial command of the army and the civilian bureaucracy. The smallest unit of the police, known as Polsek (*kepolisian sektor*) is on the sub-district (*kecamatan*) level, equal to the civilian *Camat*, and the army Koramil (*komando rayon militer*). The heads of regional police units are members of Muspida (*musyawarah pimpinan daerah* – regional leadership council) along with the civilian head administrators and the TNI commanders. Given proper authority as well as technical skill upgrading, the police would be able to handle the job.

Impact on Indonesia-Singapore Relations

In the light of the above situation, Singapore and other friends should continue their support for Indonesia's effort in combating terrorism and maintain cooperation with Indonesian authorities. The current positive momentum should be sustained through exchanges of information, visits of officials, interaction among scholars, etc. This is important so that all sides have a better knowledge of each other's position and concerns.

On a broader front, contacts and communication with the various political groups in Indonesia should be stepped up. There should be no *a priori* determination of various groups' positions toward radicalism. As indicated by the unequivocal condemnation of terrorist acts by all major elite figures, there should be no anxiety that there would be a let-up in Indonesia's fight against terrorism should there be a regime change following next year's election. Therefore, equidistance to all major political players should be maintained.

However, Singapore or other friends should not raise too high an expectation that Indonesia would make a major leap forward in its security approach. The most that can be done nowadays is to empower the law enforcement agencies by amending some of the articles in the current anti-terrorism law, especially with regard to the power of detention.

Likewise, there should also be no expectation that the military would make a comeback in an internal security role aside from fighting insurgents and separatists. Instead, it might be more prudent to establish good contacts and cooperation with the police force. There should be exchanges of police officers. Polri officers should be given the opportunity for training and higher education abroad. There should also be material and technical aid in improving their investigative ability, as well as in intelligence gathering and analysis.

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