

Democracy and Indonesia's Foreign Policy

Case Study: Rohingya Crisis 2012-2017

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Abstract— Many liberal theorists believe democracy would become a strong force behind state's actions and policies. Therefore, this writing will discuss the extent to which democracy has influenced Indonesia's policy on Rohingya case. Some scholars argue that Rohingya case has de-legitimized Indonesia's democracy since Indonesia is consistently quite and giving reluctant response towards the issue. However, this writing argues the opposite, that although regional constraints remain, Indonesia has involved and applied consistent and comprehensive strategies to deal with the problem. Democratic values have successfully become force compelling Indonesian government to act in the name of human rights and democracy.

Keywords— Indonesia, , democracy, Rohingya, Democratic Peace

I. INTRODUCTION

For many second image theorists, a system of government – such as democracy- would affect the policy of a state both at domestic and international level [1]. Indonesia is nowadays appraised a consolidated democratic country. Indonesia begins its democratic transition in 1998 and after two decades of the Reformation, the country is acknowledged as a mature or consolidated democratic state. According to the Democratic Peace Theory, since the country has embraced democracy, Indonesia will be bound by democratic values which prevent the country from issuing rules or regulations harming civil liberties and civil rights. In addition, the democratic values will also trigger the country to voice criticism to any violation on human rights and freedom.

This writing wants to discuss the extent to which Indonesia has committed and upheld the democratic values on the Rohingya case. As generally known, the Rohingya case has become one of the central issues of human right in Southeast Asia. Apart from the real reason behind the persecution and mass killing (some say it is because of economic-related reasons, some other say it is related to ethnical and religious problem and so on), apart from those assumptions, there has been a fact that a mass violation of human right has taken place. There is also a fact that Myanmar government consistently gives slow and “reluctant” efforts to find out peaceful solution to these problems.

On the other hand, there are boundaries that any state should not cross such as state's sovereignty and ASEAN non interference. Those are obvious constraints limiting foreign countries to act on Rohingya case. However, given the constraints, Indonesia has not stepped back and kept finding every possible ways to find peaceful and constructive solutions to end the mass persecution and killing. This is a strong indicator that Indonesia has upheld the democratic values by actively involves to find solution, at least from 2012 to now (2017)

II. DEMOCRATIC CALLS AND INDONESIA

Democracy is claimed to be the best system of government in today's era. Francis Fukuyama even argues that democracy is the best and final system of government in the history of mankind [2]. Long before Fukuyama, the same argument was conveyed by Immanuel Kant. He says that republican state is the best system of government –republic is understood as democracy [3]. When a country embraces the democratic system and the system is universally applied, then perpetual peace will take place. The superiority of democracy is also promoted by contemporary scholars such as M. Doyle, Bruce Russett, and so on. They believe that democracy has values and procedures that could prevent any state's leader to issue harmful decisions [4]. This privilege surely belongs to only democratic countries

By democracy means liberal democracy which respects the principles of liberalism that emphasize on civil rights and civil liberties. A democratic state should accommodate the freedom of its citizens to exercise the rights of individuals in the fields of politics, economics, socio-cultural as well as civil rights. As quoted from Doyle that “...liberalism calls for freedom from arbitrary authority, often called negative freedom, which includes freedom of conscience, a free press and free speech, equality under the law, and the right to hold therefore to exchange, property without fear of arbitrary seizure. Liberalism also calls for those rights necessary to protect and promote the capacity and opportunity for freedom” [4]

Related to this, many literatures argue that when a country has embraced the democratic system, democratic values will be a determinant factor to influence the direction of the country's

policy at both domestic and international levels [5]. At the domestic level, democracy will become a strong structure that forces governments to secure the fundamental rights of citizens in the civil, legal, social and cultural fields. Democratic values will compel the government to respect the freedom of its citizens to speak, to form an organization, to perform religious duties and others. The values also force the government to defend its citizens who are not free to exercise their right of freedom in accordance with applicable law.

Democratic values will also become a structure that can influence state's policies at international level particularly relating to human right issue. At international level, democracy relates closely to the principles of moral cosmopolitanism. A democratic country has not only the obligation to ensure the enjoyment of freedom within the country but also has a moral obligation to voice criticism for violations committed against basic human rights and freedom that occurred outside its territory. Simply put, democratic countries should no longer restrict their moral concerns and obligations within its territory, but should extend the moral obligation into the global (global) level.

There are many cases serve as examples of the "democratic calls". United States' intervention to Afghanistan and Iraq are among those examples. Despite many speculations and debates among scholars on the reasons behind the US intervention to both countries, for democratic supporters, the liberation of the oppressed society from authoritarian regime is the ultimate goal, not as a mean to other goals. Moreover, the UN intervention in Sudan in 2003 is also important to note. The intervention is conducted to ensure the halt of ethnic extermination and mass slaughter in Darfur that has taken place for years. The government was unable or unwilling to take actions; therefore it is the responsibility of international community to take actions.

Related to the above explanation, Indonesia is currently one of the largest democratic states in the world. This certainly does not come without reason. Prior to the 1998 reforms, Indonesia was once under authoritarian rule. During the authoritarian era, procedural democracy was applied but freedom of speech, freedom to form organization and press freedoms were suppressed, so that era was more like a pseudo-democracy rather than a real democracy. The students and reformist movements of 1998 ended the authoritarian regime and opened up political freedom, freedom of expression, press freedom and so on. After two decades of the reformation, Indonesia has become a solid and consolidated democracy [6].

As mentioned above, democracy could become structure which influences the policy of a state both inward and outward. Democratic countries will involve in attempts to transfer outgoing democracy, fight for human rights and criticize the suppression of civil liberties and civil rights wherever they occur. Indonesia has committed to these values for many years. President Megawati in 2003 for example said that ASEAN in the future must be sensitive to the values that are held internationally such as democracy, and human rights [7]. Megawati's speech implies that democracy is a necessity and must be accepted by ASEAN member countries. Moreover, in 2005, foreign minister Hasan Wirajuda even said

that Indonesia had to "reflect democracy across our region. That is why we are active in promoting democracy in ASEAN[7]" These statements are strong indications that democratic values including promotion human right and freedom will be one of the core of Indonesia's interests in the region

III. ROHINGYA AND INDONESIA

This paper wants to see the extent to which Indonesia carries out the democratic calls in the case of humanitarian crisis in Myanmar. As publicly known, the conflict between Myanmar government and the Rohingya has been taken place for years - not to mention decades. The Myanmar government considers the Rohingya as illegal citizens since they are originally immigrant from Bangladesh, even though they have settled in Rakhine since the 16th century. As a result of this illegal status, Rohingya citizens denied to get basic rights such as the right to trial, the right to education and the right to marry in law and others.

Many argumentations arise around the real reason behind the conflict. Some scholars argue that it's a conflict between the government and the terrorist group, some others say it is an economic-related problem; many also believe this is a racial and religious issue. Apart from those debates, there is a fact that mass killing have been going on in Myanmar. In 2012 for instance, 280 Rohingya were killed, and hundreds of them were forced to leave their house. Human Rights Watch even described the violence to Rohingya can be categorized as "campaign of ethnic cleansing"[8]. Due to mass killing and the persecution, many Rohingya choose to leave Myanmar and find shelter in neighboring countries. According to Council of Foreign Relation which cites the International Organization for Migration (IOM), more than eighty-eight thousand migrants took to sea from the Bay of Bengal between January 2014 and May 2015[9]

Many observers argue that the Rohingya case became a critical test for Indonesian democracy. This case will expose the extent to which Indonesia uphold to the democratic values and promote the democratic values to the region as previously explained. Olivia Cable for instance says that the Rohingya case showed Indonesia's reluctant which therefore could delegitimize Indonesian democracy. This is because Indonesia is considered reluctant to fight for Rohingya rights. Indonesia gave an inconsistent message to Myanmar government, on the one hand Indonesia criticized the treatment of Myanmar government to the Rohingya, but on the other hand Indonesia expressed its trust in the government of Myanmar [7]. This gesture is considered not to reflect the values that should be fought. Moreover, the killing and the persecution to the Rohingya keep happening. The most current conflict took place in August 2017 in which hundreds of Rohingya killed and many Rohingya people abandon their home and migrate to Bangladesh. Therefore, it seems there is no meaningful and successful effort been made so far to prevent this mass atrocity.

Apart from those critics, this writing agrees that the Indonesian government surrounded by many constraints. As commonly known, Indonesia and other ASEAN members are

bound by ASEAN non interference norm, that of every ASEAN member country should respect other countries' sovereignty and no intervention is allowed to state domestic problems. Therefore there will be no action taken by ASEAN as an organization, since Rohingya case is still considered by ASEAN as Myanmar's domestic problem. However, those constraints have not prevented Indonesia to take actions.

Indonesia is aware of these constraints; therefore Indonesia tries to apply multiple ways to escape this constraint. Indonesia consistently socializes its vision on helping Rohingya, not only during Joko Widodo's era but also during previous administration. Indonesia, represented by Indonesia's foreign minister Retno Marsudi, meets important figures in 2016. This is to signal that Indonesia sees this issue as a very important case to pay attention to. Retno met Suu Kyi and kept signaling to her that Indonesia is deeply concern with this issue. This is to construct that Rohingya issue now has become Indonesia and international attention.

This "signaling" method is not unique to Jokowi administration. During previous administration, Indonesia's government also signaled its deep concern on this issue and hoping Myanmar government could find peaceful solution to the problem [10] Marty Natalegawa who assumed Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time even suggested Myanmar government to held national reconciliation and open up access to OIC to observe the conflict spot [10]

In addition, Indonesia also has approached all relevant actors to this case. Indonesia has conducted various communications and meetings, including with Myanmar Counselor Aung San SuuKyi, Chairman of the Rakhine Advisory Commission Kofi Annan, foreign minister and Bangladesh's prime minister, as well as various stakeholders in Jakarta, Yangon and Dhaka.

During Retno visit in 2016, she suggested the Myanmar government to apply a more inclusive development approach in order to prevent the conflict to escalate [11]. Indonesia reckons that inclusive development is needed as mean to provide basics for future conflict resolution. Indonesia further shows its concern on inclusive development by helping building schools in Rakhine state. From 2014 to 2017, Indonesia has developed six schools in total. Retno says the development of these schools is aimed not only to provide an experience of formal education to children in Rakhine, but also to teach them the culture of respect, pluralism and tolerance [11].

Moreover, in 2016 Retno Marsudi also met Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to discuss the Rohingya issue. Bangladesh potentially plays an important role to help solving this issue. Rohingya is historically from Bangladesh before they migrated to and settled in Myanmar. From 2012 to 2017, many waves of Rohingya immigrants came back to Bangladesh due to persecution and to avoid mass killing. For this reason Retno explains that it is very important for Bangladesh to maintain good relationship with Myanmar. [12] The good relationship is a needed foundation to earn trust from each others. Moreover, in 2016 President Jokowi and Retno also met Kofi Annan and again express Indonesia's concern on this issue.

Annan now assumes as chairman of Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

Besides emphasizing on bilateral dialogue, Indonesia also use multilateral forum to help solving this humanitarian problem. In 2017 for instance, during MIKTA (Meksiko, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, Australia) forum, Retno reminded all participants that international community should pay attention to Myanmar since if they fail to help, it is very possible the problem could disturb regional stability [13]. During SBY era, multilateral approach was more desired. President SBY and Minister Marty urged OIC to pay serious attention to this issue since it involved many Muslim people. During Jokowi administration, Retno also re-raised this issue at OIC summit 2017. Indonesia demands OIC to come up with constructive ways to help Myanmar solving this long standing problem OKI [14]

From 2012 to 2017, it can be seen that Indonesia has consistently involved itself in the problem by visiting all key actors who could put an end to this mass atrocities. Indonesia portrays itself an active actor and gives constructive suggestions to the key parties. Referring back to the Democratic Peace Theory, it is clear that democratic values have strong influence on Indonesia's policy on Rohingya issue. It is unlikely to find any other reason behind Indonesia involvement on this case. As quoted from Hasan Wirajuda, Indonesia wants to reflect democracy across our region. That is the reason behind Indonesia's active role in promoting democracy in ASEAN [7]

IV. CONCLUSION

It is important to distinguish between giving efforts and the effectiveness of the efforts. Indonesia has showed serious, consistent and total approach to help preventing further mass persecution and killing from happening. It is also true that the persecution is still happening and the limits to act more are still there. However, those facts cannot negate the fact that Indonesia has run every possible way to conduct this "democratic calls". This writing suggests that if the persecution and killing continue to happen, International Community should approach this issue from The Responsibility to protect approach. By using the R2P principle, the International Community will be forced to act to save humanity.

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