

**“Prospects for Partnership in Democracy Assistance:
The Forthcoming United States-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership”**

An Open Forum With

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September 16, 2009

Ann Marie Murphy started her discussion by addressing the basic question of whether or not democracy promotion should be apart of the comprehensive partnership. At first glance, the obvious answer is “yes”. President Yudhoyono cited in his November 2008 speech that the U.S. and Indonesia have shared democratic values. Secretary Clinton echoed these sentiments when she went to Jakarta in February, 2009. Both sides feel that these values compose a strong foundation for the partnership, so it would seem like a good idea. The fact that both the U.S. and Indonesia, within the context of ASEAN, have promoted democracy abroad is another key reason to push for democracy promotion being apart of this partnership.

There are a series of obstacles that exist that must be taken into consideration when deciding how to turn this into concrete policy on both ends. Both countries have had different experiences with democracy. In the U.S., it is more ideologically based whereas Indonesia has had to navigate a “messy transition to democracy”. Indonesians appreciate the more pragmatic benefits that democracy creates. Indonesia feels that there are many different roads to a variety of types of democracy, whereas the U.S. leans more towards the opposite viewpoint. The U.S. prefers more concrete deliverables being put on the table, something Indonesia, which prefers to take their time and focus on the process, does not emphasize. With so many other topics being discussed in the context of this partnership, it needs

to be decided early on what percentage of resources will go towards democracy promotion. If the result is marginal, then democracy promotion should be reconsidered. These obstacles need to be ironed out if democracy promotion will be entered into policy on both ends.

The point has been brought up that Indonesia can be assist in democracy promotion on a global scale. This is certainly a possibility. However, is this really in Indonesia's interest? Rizal Sukma of CSIS Jakarta pointed out that U.S. funding can be seen as a "kiss of death". Indonesia may also not have as much influence in the larger Muslim world that people might think, despite having such a large Muslim community with many Middle Eastern Muslims having a less than generous view of Indonesian Muslims.

The Bali Democracy Forum's unique method of inviting everyone to the table, including decidedly non-democratic states such as Burma, Cambodia, and Laos, offers another option for U.S. support. The Forum lacks a specific technical expertise that the U.S. could offer, theoretically strengthening its efforts. There are however, several questions that arise. Does Indonesia want this assistance, or does it believe that it would detract from its efforts? How much support would this assistance receive in the U.S. given the presence of authoritarian countries such as Burma who are not moving towards democracy?

This brings up the important notion of public opinion. Historically public opinion in both countries has inhibited the relationship. NGO's and the human rights community in the U.S. have often

put up a constraint regarding the relationship with Indonesia and perceptions in Indonesia regarding U.S. foreign policy, especially in the Middle East, has held them back from further reaching out towards the U.S.

Efforts to strengthen Indonesia's democracy have already begun such as the U.S. offering parliamentary exchange programs to Indonesian legislators. The main effort of this partnership is to move away from traditional aid donation and work towards a more equitable partnership. We should work hard to find new and innovative ways to bring the relationship to that level.

In the end, a shared normative commitment to democracy is a key aspect of the partnership, but there are a series of differences and attitudes that need to be discussed regarding democracy promotion.

Don Emmerson followed up by discussion more specifics of the program itself.

The democracy strand in the comprehensive partnership should be based on the principle of two-way learning. The relationships should enable Americans to learn about--and learn from--the nature of Indonesian democracy and how Indonesians think of democracy, and the same opportunity should be made available to Indonesians. Each partner should, for example, acquire a more thorough and nuanced understanding of how the other one approaches democratization, including the question of whether democracy should be a goal of foreign policy, and if so, how best to pursue that

goal.

Democracy is also, in different ways, a badge of identity for both countries. The partnership and its activities should, however modestly, help strengthen democracy as an aspect of how Indonesians and Americans construe their national selves.

Indonesians are numerous and diverse. But they do not wish to be enlisted in an American campaign to democratize Asia. The approach to democratization favored by President Obama differs from that of the first administration of George W. Bush in being more realistic, less direct, more multilateralist, and less inclined to favor confrontation over engagement. Notwithstanding significant differences between the styles and methods of the two governments when it comes to democratization as a foreign policy aim, Jakarta and Washington are less far apart than they were before. The popularity of SBY in the US and of Obama in Indonesia has also contributed to good relations between the countries. The partnership should take advantage of, and build upon, this moment of mutual opportunity.

Partnership activities on democracy should involve individuals and organizations on Track I, Track II, and Track III. Among participants on the Indonesian side, the official Bali Democracy Forum and the academic Institute for Peace and Democracy at Udayana University come readily, though not exclusively, to mind. On the US side, apart from various American institutions--official, semi-official, unofficial--that already cooperate with Indonesian counterparts on governance

issues, the partnership should explore the possibility of involving new venues such as university-based programs.

Balances that are appropriate to and desired by the Indonesian side should be worked out between studying and assisting already existing democracy inside Indonesia and encouraging prospective democracy outside the country. To the extent that exchanges of views and experiences on democracy issues in Southeast Asia are agreed upon, Myanmar will be an obvious and critical choice for attention. But that case should not overshadow questions regarding the quality and efficacy of democracy in other parts of the region, questions that may be less commonly raised but are nonetheless relevant to the marked unevenness of democratic institutions and practices across the ASEAN states.

To the extent that democracy inside Indonesia and inside the United States are agreed-upon topics for consideration under the partnership, it will be helpful to note Indonesia's successful (if not unblemished) record of repeatedly conducting national, regional, and local elections, compared with the weakness of Indonesian judicial institutions and the persistence of corruption (despite significant and partially successful efforts to eradicate it). In that empirical context, assuring the rule of law and the protection of human rights and freedoms deserves priority attention. The partnership should also consider encouraging young Indonesian scholars and activists to appraise and critically evaluate aspects of American democracy in relation to Indonesian conditions and preferences.

Inevitably the partnership will touch upon or encompass activities that are already planned or ongoing. In 2010 Indonesia will, for example, host a gathering of the World Movement for Democracy and a workshop on democracy co-sponsored by the Bali Democracy Forum and the Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership. The partnership should, however, also strive for creative innovation beyond existing groups, activities, and agendas. An especially high value should be placed on involving younger-generation actors from both countries.

Tom Garrett talked about the stance of organizations such as the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) as well as what they have done regarding democracy strengthening in Indonesia.

IRI and NDI focus on training and party development. They bring volunteers who are colleagues and/or peers to those in Indonesia, not academics or paid consultants. These include the current Foreign Minister of Mongolia and the only female Member of Parliament in Pakistan. Eventually, Indonesians will serve as a similar resource to other countries.

Indonesia has transformed to a democracy in a very short amount of time, and as such, has a lot to offer in the lessons learned from such a quick transformation and its current development.

Mr. Garrett asked the question on whether or not Indonesia should limit itself to technical assistance. Technical assistance is an important issue, but

Indonesia has a lot of important information and experiences to share on peaceful transition of power. This does not happen in many countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The Middle East has drawn lessons learned from Indonesia, however there is strong resistance to taking advice from a country outside the Arab world. Indonesian advice would be better received in Asia.

The fact that Indonesia's experience in democracy is so different than that of the U.S. is actually a benefit as it allows the U.S. and Indonesia to show that they are not just promoting a replication of the U.S. system.

Gustanto represented the views and ideas of the Indonesian government, discussing how Indonesia approaches these issues. In the past Indonesia has brought together a wide spectrum of countries together, including the representatives of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia, and Vietnam despite protests that they were authoritarian regimes. Indonesia follows this same format in bringing Burma, Cambodia and Laos to the Bali Democracy forum.

Another example is regarding the ongoing conflict in the South China Sea. Indonesia has engaged all parties concerned through strong Track 2 and Track 3 forums. They prefer to use all forums available, especially Track 3 because they can usually convince stakeholders to come to a solution.

When Indonesia invited countries such as China, Jordan, Iraq, Brunei and Burma to the Bali Democracy Forum, no one believed it would be successful

because these are not democracies in the traditional sense. However, the fact that all of these countries came symbolized their good intention and willingness to work towards a solution. Indonesia does not wish to change Burma overnight, as this would be impossible. But they can show them through Indonesia's experiences how to improve themselves.

It is this inclusivity that differentiates the Bali Democracy Forum from U.S. democracy promotion; however this does not mean they conflict. They compliment each other well and can easily work together. Indonesia wants to show the world and the Middle East that Islam and democracy can live hand in hand. The U.S. however has to understand that the Middle East is not automatically Muslim and their culture is not necessarily Islamic.

Questions:

Q: How can other countries such as Thailand and Malaysia come to Indonesia regarding combating corruption considering its own reputation?

A: Garret: Indonesia is one of many examples on how to deal with this. With Indonesia they would feel more comfortable. Indonesia adds what has been missing from the discussion in the past.

Q: Can the panelists comment on a top down approach versus a grassroots approach?

A: Emmerson: This is a Track 1 partnership, government to government and the bottom up approach has to keep

that in mind. There is several things a Track 3 person can do and it is possible for someone in Track 3 to have an arrangement with Indonesians interested in democracy and sharing issues. In this discussion the elites do matter. How do you organize mass movements for democracy at the village level?

Murphy: You can go to Indonesia and hear from all levels that they want more from the U.S. The whole point of the partnership is to move on and to innovate.

Q: What do you think of Indonesia's role in Burma and whether this should / can be coordinated?

A: Gustanto: The position of the GOI is that the election next year cannot be free and fair unless Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is released. Within ASEAN, Indonesia has been the most vocal, saying that Burma must fulfill its own promise to return to the roadmap to democracy.

Emmerson: The U.S. has exhausted democracy promotion of a overly rigorous sort. Realism is slowly moving towards the Bali Democracy Forum method, especially in Burma where we are on a conceivable shift from democratization to reconciliation. If reconciliation could happen between civil society it would not be democracy, but it would be better than what we have now. This is incrementalist. Looking at the relationship with Burma this way, the elections next year could be a moderately useful farce.

Q: If you want to look at democratic values in East Asian framework, how do we do that?

A: Emmerson: That debate is over, though the issues will not go away. The critical issue now is to ask whether democracy is in and of itself a good thing, or an instrument of economic growth and stability. Asians are committed to instrumentalist views of democracy.

Q: How do you think Southeast Asia and Indonesia perception will change as a result of the lower priority given to democracy promotion of the current administration compared to the last?

A: Emmerson: It will be positive. The Obama Administration is inching towards a more inclusive model, Burma is an example.

Q: Is there a correlation between democracy and trade liberalization?

A: Murphy: Singapore is the most open economic country in Southeast Asia, yet it has not lead to democracy there or vice versa. That link does not always hold.

