

The Pitfall of Counterterrorism: Interagency Turf Wars in Indonesia

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The 9/11 tragedy significantly changed the threat perceptions toward terrorism. For the past two decades, the world has been developing counterterrorism approach to combat the global terrorism threats. Each country has also followed suit in creating suitable approaches, including Indonesia. Indonesia is infamous as the hotbed of terrorist networks in Southeast Asia. Almost two decades since the Bali Bombings, Indonesia has arrested thousands of terrorist suspects, yet it is still a long way to go to fully eradicate terrorism in Indonesia. The government has established various relevant counterterrorism agencies and programmes. Experienced civil society organisations also provide substantial feedbacks and create their own programmes to fill the policy gaps (Anindya, 2019) (Sumpter, 2017). External actors have provided funding and training programmes to support Indonesia's counterterrorism efforts (Chau, 2008). Despite the significant reforms, terrorist networks in Indonesia still managed to carry out terror attacks in the past few years, such as the 2018 East Java Bombings and the 2021 Makassar Church Bombings. This research would like to address the following questions: How has Indonesia's counterterrorism regime developed? What are the characteristics of Indonesia's counterterrorism? Why do, despite significant reform since Bali Bombing 2002, loopholes still exist?

In this study, I contend that the complex nature of domestic politics hampers the effectiveness of Indonesia's counterterrorism efforts. It has engendered acute interagency turf wars among relevant counterterrorism agencies. This argument is built upon Martha Crenshaw's article on "Counterterrorism Policy and Political Process" which argues that counterterrorism policy is not a formulated based on threat assessments per se, but also a result of domestic political process (Crenshaw, 2001). Crenshaw, however, merely highlights institutional interests in the context of counterterrorism policy's decision-making process. This dissertation will attempt to dissect other key traits under the framework of domestic politics that influence the outcome of counterterrorism policies. I hypothesize three general key traits: (1) Internal predicaments of each agency; (2) Reliance on interpersonal relationships in interagency coordination, and (3) Competitions over International assistance.

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