The collapse of the Soeharto regime has undermined the three legitimacy pillars of the Indonesian state: the much acclaimed economic development of the country is thereby no longer perceived as insurmountable; the Indonesian government with economic and political equity has been recognized as the rhetorical decorum of the state; and the laudable social-political stability has finally erupted in social unrest and perturbation, gradually dissolving the ‘social glue’ provided by Indonesia’s ‘civil religion’, the pancake philosophy of nationalist imaginaries – political Islam and the disruption of centre-periphery relations – a backlash. Apart from gender, ‘religion’ became an issue in the run for presidency.

The current equation for Asian religious politics is a major recalibration of the idea of the secular/non-religious. It is as if the ‘secular’ is being threatened by religion (or something else that looks like it). The result is that the political and social discourse is one of ‘clash’ and ‘conflict’, which in turn is being translated into rhetoric that is nationalistic, anti-Western, anti-liberal and anti-global. This is the so-called ‘Islamization’ of politics. The result is that the political discourse is one of ‘clash’ and ‘conflict’, which in turn is being translated into rhetoric that is nationalistic, anti-Western, anti-liberal and anti-global. This is the so-called ‘Islamization’ of politics.

The complexity of this political discourse is that it is not just about religion versus politics, but also about different versions of religion versus different versions of politics. In this sense, the political discourse is a contest between different versions of religion and politics, and the outcomes of these contests will determine the shape of the future of Indonesia.

The main issue in Indonesian politics is the relationship between the two major religious communities: Islam and Hinduism. The current political discourse is one of ‘clash’ and ‘conflict’, which in turn is being translated into rhetoric that is nationalistic, anti-Western, anti-liberal and anti-global. This is the so-called ‘Islamization’ of politics.

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