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# INDONESIA'S FOREIGN POLICY: UNDERLINING FACTORS OF A 'RELIGIOUS' STATE

TEMJENMEREN AO

## INTRODUCTION

In the post-Suharto era, Indonesia has been taking a more proactive leadership role in the region by building bilateral as well as multilateral partnerships through Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Given its size, potential and confidence demonstrated at the regional level, Indonesia is also pursuing a foreign policy that extends beyond its traditional focus on ASEAN.<sup>1</sup> A key factor in Indonesia's foreign policy has been to help address its socio-economic challenge which is seen necessary in order to maintain its national unity and territorial integrity. Indonesia's foreign policy has been conditioned by its need to ensure that the country which has 366 different ethnic groups spread across its vast archipelago does not disintegrate. As one of the founding members of ASEAN, Indonesia played a decisive role in cementing regional reconciliation—a prerequisite for stability and growth—which was crucial for the survival of the then new Republic. Islam is the dominant religion professed by 87 per cent of Indonesians

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1. Joseph Chinyong Liow, *Dictionary of the Modern Politics of Southeast Asia* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 14-15.

along with other religious groups that include Catholics, Protestants, Hindus, Buddhists and Confucianists.<sup>2</sup> Even before Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta proclaimed Indonesia's independence in 1945, Islam was denied a prerogative place in political life through the State philosophy of *Pancasila*, which ensures that the Republic is not an Islamic state but a 'Religious' State where its citizens are free to worship any god of their choice. In studying the key factors that have helped shape Indonesia's external engagements, an important consideration would be the Islamic revival encouraged from the late 1980s for political advantage and how it is filtering into its foreign policy.<sup>3</sup>

The paper is a study on Indonesia's foreign policy and its strategic thinking which have been conditioned by its requirement to ensure the Republic's internal stability and security. The study examines the key factors of its foreign policy which have been conditioned by its historical, cultural and political experiences. With Indonesia in the midst of a cultural revival of Islam, the paper analyses the extent of its manifestation in its foreign policy.

### **FACTORS SHAPING INDONESIA'S FOREIGN POLICY**

Two basic principles that are unique to Indonesia and have helped govern its foreign policy are *anti-kolonialisme* (anti-colonialism) and *bebas-aktif* (independent and active foreign policy). And while the state's ideology, *Pancasila* (Five Principles), and the 1945 Constitution, did not provide direct guidance on how the Republic carried out its foreign relations, they laid out the values of humanitarianism and social justice, which got factored into its foreign policy. While the traditional factors that helped shape Indonesia's external relations are rooted in the two principles that ensured the security and integrity of the Republic. In the post-Cold War period the emerging security complexities creating imbalances in the region have factored into Indonesia's foreign

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2. Bahtiar Effendy and Mutiara Pertiwi, "Indonesia's Democratic Venture: Problems, Prospects, and remaining Challenges", in Sergio Bitar and Abraham F. Lowenthal (eds.), *Democratic Transitions: Conversations with World Leaders* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), p. 138.

3. Joseph Chinyong Liow, n. 1, p. 10.

policy where it seeks to build new partnerships along with the deepening of its traditional ties.<sup>4</sup> The following factors not only impacted the internal and external security of Indonesia but also were an impediment to the free flow of trade and commerce, with the potential to destabilise Indonesia's socio-economic balance.

### *Securing the Archipelago*

Given Indonesia's vast geographical stretch, Jakarta has been battling with a deep sense of insecurity stemming from its need to continuously secure its land and water bodies from internal divide as well as from external entities. Diplomacy has been one of the major tools used by Indonesia to establish cooperative regional interrelationships for creating a favourable regional environment and ensuring its security and well-being. Indonesia has always favoured the use of preventive diplomacy in the management of the regional order and avoided the use of force. Jakarta has always resorted to building friendly relations with its neighbours while remaining cautious about the spread of communism and the influence of external powers. Indonesia's deep empathy against extra-colonial power and rule stems from its own colonial experience, where the Dutch had administrative and territorial control over the archipelago. This has entered into Indonesia's foreign policy and remains a critical element of its national security.<sup>5</sup>

The concept of territorial and national unity continues to remain a key element in understanding Jakarta's approach to its national security for which it has applied major diplomatic efforts. For instance, Indonesia was not born an archipelagic state with all the waters lying between its islands being open to the ships of other countries. This heightened Indonesia's insecurity resulting in the adoption of the Djuanda Declaration in 1960. Through this Indonesia declared "... absolute sovereignty over all the waters lying within

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4. Rizal Sukma, "The Evolution of Indonesia's Foreign Policy: An Indonesian View", *Asian Survey*, vol. 35, no. 3 (March 1995), pp. 304-15.

5. Leonard C. Sebastian, "Domestic Security priorities, 'balance of interests' and Indonesia's management of regional order", in Joseph Chinyong Liow and Ralf Emmers (eds.), *Order and Security in Southeast Asia: Essays in Memory of Michael Leifer* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 176-80.

straight baselines drawn between the outermost islands of Indonesia, creating a single unified territory....”<sup>6</sup>

In the decades that followed, Indonesia organised a number of UN meetings and conferences to strengthen its claim. Eventually, in 1982, this principle was codified under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) recognising islands, waters, or any other feature of an archipelago as a single geographical, economic and political unit. The prevailing diversity within Indonesia often raises concern as it can be used by external forces to gain a strategic foothold. The sense of threat to the unity of the diverse ethnicity forms the basis of Indonesia's foreign policy orientation. This, according to some, explains Indonesia's expansionist action through its invasion of East Timor in 1975 as well as the acquisition of Irian Jaya in May 1963, which was the western half of Papua New Guinea. Although these instances represented Indonesia as an aggressor and an expansionist, some argue that its actions had much more to do with a widespread and historically based Indonesian perception. This perception is formed through its vulnerabilities, and its need to counter the rise of any dissension from within as well as helps insulate the Republic from any external interference.<sup>7</sup>

### *Multilateralism in Indonesia's Policy Approach*

Indonesia's foreign relations under Sukarno's aggressive policies did impact Indonesia's image in the region. This was necessary as it was the transitional period for the new Republic and the territorial integrity was still not completed. The Suharto government undertaking a more pragmatic approach in terms of its external policies was a departure from Sukarno's view which saw Indonesia taking on the role of being the leader amongst the underdeveloped countries. The New Order of Suharto represented a fundamental change in Jakarta's political philosophy in which a more pragmatic, cautious and moderate approach was adopted in dealing with its external engagement. The establishment of ASEAN in 1967 was a creation of Suharto which marked a new phase in Indonesia's foreign

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6. John G. Butcher and R. E. Elson, "How did Indonesia become an archipelagic state?", Australian Strategic Policy Institute, May 11, 2017, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/indonesia-became-archipelagic-state/>. Accessed on May 15, 2021.

7. Leonard C. Sebastian, n. 5, pp. 176-80.

policy. By ending the 'Crush Malaysia' campaign, Indonesia wanted to build a good relationship with the other countries in the region.<sup>8</sup> These were a prerequisite for Indonesia to attract the much-needed developmental aid and help shed its image as an aggressive and expansionist country. The setting up of ASEAN—which kept its focus on the socio-economic development of the region—ensured that no form of expansionist aggression occurs in the region in the future, and members are able to resolve their differences through dialogue.<sup>9</sup>

In order to gain greater influence in the region, Indonesia resorted to cooperation with the other countries, which was fundamental to the establishment of ASEAN. Indonesia, however, was extremely cautious not to throw its weight around by accepting the principle of equality amongst the member states. Under the Bangkok Declaration of 1967, the formal purpose of the Association was to promote cooperation in economic, social, cultural, scientific and administrative fields, and to promote regional peace and stability. Indonesia's desire to establish ASEAN was dictated by a desire for normalcy in its relations with non-communist nations in Southeast Asia. This became a necessary condition to ensure domestic stability and to lessen its reliance on external powers for regional security. Indonesia saw the establishment of ASEAN as a means towards insulating against the growth of communism while keeping potential conflicts at bay. Over the decades, through the various ASEAN-led mechanisms, it has been successful in not only diffusing intra-regional conflicts but also in preventing new ones from arising.<sup>10</sup>

Indonesia has a conception in which it sees the stability and security of Southeast Asia as its primary responsibility. Indonesia has consistently stated that ASEAN remains the cornerstone of its foreign policy.<sup>11</sup> According to Prof. Michael Leifer, "... Indonesia

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8. The 'Crush Malaysia' or *ganyang Malaysia* was announced by President Sukarno on July 27, 1963, in response to the formation of the federation of Malaysia. See <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/126b6b07-f796-4b4c-b658-938001e3213e>

9. "Indonesia", *National Intelligence Estimate (NIE 55-68)*, US Department of States, December 31, 1968, [https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB242/1968\\_NIE-55-68.pdf](https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB242/1968_NIE-55-68.pdf). Accessed on November 12, 2018.

10. Munmun Majumdar, *Indonesia: Primus Inter Pares in ASEAN* (New Delhi: Rajat Publications, 2003), pp. 8-15.

11. Paul Dibb, "Indonesia: The Key to South-East Asia's Security", *International Affairs*, vol. 77, no. 4 (October 2001), p. 835.

saw itself as first amongst equals in ASEAN, and felt that it would have a predominant role in shaping the regional order....” Leifer was sceptical about this approach since many other Southeast Asian States did not share Indonesia’s sense of entitlement on the basis of it being the largest and most populous state. Secondly, according to Leifer, it was naïve for ASEAN to assume that it was capable of having a primary role in shaping regional order as it was far behind the great powers in terms of power and influence.<sup>12</sup>

The 21st century witnessed a growing influence of China which posed a challenge to Indonesia’s prominence in the region. Indonesia, at that time, was interested in avoiding conflict in the South China Sea, since in such an event the sea lines of communication throughout East and Southeast Asia would be impacted.<sup>13</sup> Indonesia does not have any territorial or marine claims over the Spratly and the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea. However, China’s nine-dash line, through which it claims its maritime boundary, is in proximity to Indonesia’s Natuna Island. In July 2017, the waters in the Northeast of Natuna Islands was renamed ‘North Natuna Sea’, which is located at the far southern end of the South China Sea.<sup>14</sup> Given this scenario, Indonesia often emphasised upholding the unity and centrality of ASEAN, and worked towards a peaceful conclusion to the dispute on the South China Sea. This makes Indonesia constantly favour a multilateral approach, under the ambit of ASEAN.

### *The Rising Threats from the Non-State Actors*

In Indonesia, the period from 1998 to 2003 was marked by major economic and security challenges that evolved as a consequence of the Asian Financial crisis along with a parallel political transition from authoritarianism to democracy. Post-Suharto, the changes that occurred in the political and economic structure at the national level created uncertainties amongst the various provinces of Indonesia.

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12. Yuen Foong Khong, “Michael Leifer and the pre-requisites of regional order in Southeast Asia”, in Joseph Chinyong Liow and Ralf Emmers (eds.), *Order and Security in Southeast Asia: Essays in Memory of Michael Leifer* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 33.

13. Munmun Majumdar, n. 10, pp. 20-21.

14. Aaron L. Connelly, “Indonesia’s New North Natuna Sea: What’s in a name?”, July 19, 2017, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/indonesia-s-new-north-natuna-sea-what-s-name>. Accessed on August 16, 2017.

As a consequence, there was the use of force and violence by local leaders across the country to help build their control and influence over the political and economic spheres. "... The weakening of the capacity and will of state security forces to intervene in local disputes—a result in part of the separation of the police from the military—led to a security vacuum allowing for violence escalation in some places. The result was that Indonesia witnessed roughly half a decade of large-scale violence in many areas of the country..." During this period, separatist civil war and communal violence were predominant in the provinces of Aceh, North Maluku, Maluku, East Timor, West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan and Sulawesi.<sup>15</sup>

This process of radicalisation has troubled the Indonesian leadership since the beginning of the country's democratic transition in the aftermath of the departure of Suharto in 1998. Indonesia's transition to democracy was also marked by the outbreak of large-scale ethnic violence in its outer islands, the rise of Islamic paramilitaries, such as the Front Pembela Islam, Laskar Jihad and the Laskar Mujahidin. There was also the emergence of local and regional Al Qaeda-linked terror networks led by Jemaah Islamiyah (JI).<sup>16</sup> According to data from Indonesia's National Violence Monitoring System, the violence that took place from 1998 to 2003 on account of interreligious and interethnic violence has caused the deaths of close to 10,000 people.<sup>17</sup> In the post-9/11 years, Indonesia also experienced a string of major terrorist attacks such as the Bali bombing in October 2002, the 2009 Marriott and Ritz-Carlton bombings and the suicide bombers linked to Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) which attacked three churches across Surabaya, on May 13, 2018.<sup>18</sup>

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15. Patrick Barron, Sana Jaffrey and Ashutosh Varshney, "How Large Conflicts Subside: Evidence from Indonesia", *Indonesia Social Development Paper No. 8*, The World Bank, July 2014, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/127841478495882008/pdf/107871-NWP-add-series-PUBLIC.pdf>. Accessed on February 17, 2020.

16. Vibhanshu Shekhar, *Indonesia's Rise: Seeking Regional and Global Roles* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2014), pp. 156-61.

17. Patrick Barron, Sana Jaffrey and Ashutosh Varshney, "How Large Conflicts Subside: Evidence from Indonesia", *Indonesian Social Development Paper No. 8*, The World Bank, July 2014, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/127841478495882008/pdf/107871-NWP-add-series-PUBLIC.pdf>. Accessed on February 17, 2020.

18. Karina M. Tehusijarana and Moses Ompusunggu, "What is JAD? Terror group behind Mako Brimob riot, Surabaya bombings", *The Jakarta Post*, May 14, 2018, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/05/14/what-is-jad-terror-group-behind-mako-brimob-riot-surabaya-bombings.html>. Accessed on May 15, 2018.

Indonesia—which has been facing the impact of radical Islamic violence—today also faces the challenge from the growing scourge of ISIS-inspired terrorism.<sup>19</sup> Indonesia being a vast archipelago has been facing the issue of illegal immigration, some immigrants entering with the intent to carry out illicit activities. Further, “... the existence of weak law enforcement institutions, prevailing economic distress, unrestrained militia and a political climate that inhibits government repression of extremists makes it a hospitable environment for the operation of international terrorist network, collaborating with the domestic radical Islamic entities ...” As there are commonalities in ideology between the various domestic and the international terrorist groups, it becomes easy to infiltrate and influence them in becoming part of the larger radical movement.<sup>20</sup>

While the government of Indonesia has been very clear on its stand against Islamic terrorism, it has been cautious to not appear as being part of the Western forces in its fight against these very elements. Indonesian authorities have received the moral support of some of the largest religious organisations in their fight against the radical elements. These organisations have argued that the ideologies professed by the radical elements are alien to Indonesia's Islamic traditions.<sup>21</sup> While the now democratic state of Indonesia has taken effective action against Islamic terror networks as well as the radical Jihadi groups, the complete bifurcation of Islam from governance continues to remain a challenge.<sup>22</sup>

The changing nature of threat from radicalised entities in the region has today enhanced Indonesia's broader security threat perception. Indonesia is aware that relying on ASEAN alone would not help in addressing the emerging security challenges of the 21st century, and therefore seeks the participation of other nations

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19. Craig Riviere, “The Evolution of Jihadist-Salafism in Indonesia, Malaysia and The Philippines, and Its Impact on Security in Southeast Asia”, *Indo-Pacific Strategic Papers*, Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, Australian Defence College, November 2016, [http://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/Publications/IndoPac/Riviere\\_IPSP.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/Publications/IndoPac/Riviere_IPSP.pdf). Accessed on October 9, 2017.

20. Angel Rabasa and John Haseman, “The Military and Democracy in Indonesia: Challenges, Politics, and Power”, RAND, 2002, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1599.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1599.html). Accessed on September 28, 2017.

21. Craig Riviere, n. 19.

22. Vibhanshu Shekhar, *Indonesia's Rise: Seeking Regional and Global Roles* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2014), pp. 156-61.

in maintaining regional security. Indonesia has been keen on establishing a security community within ASEAN in order to help bring about conflict resolution and reduce the threat or use of force.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Indonesia sought a multilateral approach towards building partnerships in order to address the increasing security threat. The establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Defence Ministerial Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM-Plus, indicate emerging security challenges that impact the regional stability with possible domestic consequences. In recent years, defence and security cooperation—especially in the maritime space—has become a key element in Indonesia’s bilateral, trilateral and multilateral partnerships.

### *In the Era of the Great Power Rivalry*

The 21st century has witnessed the emergence of great power rivalry in the region. Indonesia’s domestic political compulsions manifested from its past experiences entrench antipathy towards any kind of extra-regional power. The new dynamics emerging today in the global order are becoming a major consideration for Indonesia’s foreign relations. The concentration of this great power rivalry is in the maritime space covering the Indian and the Pacific Oceans, which is becoming a core theatre of competition for power and influence amongst the major powers. President Jokowi’s Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) doctrine announced in 2014 at the EAS is viewed as necessary in order to safeguard Indonesia’s interest in this highly contested space. The GMF seeks “... to maintain Indonesia’s maritime sovereignty as well as control over the sea resources, while also ensuring safety of shipping lanes and maritime security....” Through the GMF Indonesia seeks to develop a strong sovereign maritime state capable of positively contributing to the peace and security of the region and the world, according to its national interest.<sup>24</sup> Towards this end, in 2017 Indonesia hosted the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Summit, which yielded the “Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action”. Further, in

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23. Donald E. Weatherbee, *Indonesia in ASEAN: Vision and Reality* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2013), pp. 62-63 and 65-67.

24. Evan Laksmana, “Indonesian Sea Policy: Accelerating Jokowi’s Global Maritime Fulcrum”, <http://amti.csis.org/indonesian-sea-policy-accelerating/>. Accessed on July 21, 2017.

October 2018, Indonesia hosted the 5th "Our Ocean Conference" that produced multi-stakeholders' commitments regarding the Ocean. Indonesia also hosted the Indonesia-Africa Maritime Dialogue, on October 29, 2018, which emphasised cooperation in sustainable fisheries and maritime security.<sup>25</sup>

President Jokowi, when delivering his speech at the plenary session of the 13th EAS, on November 15, 2018, conveyed Indonesia's vision of the "World Maritime Axis". The President explained that the Pacific and the Indian Oceans constitute a 'single geo-strategic theatre'. President Jokowi stressed the need for ensuring that this region does not become a stage for disputes and unrest. Indonesia emphasised that efforts should be made towards creating a peaceful region along the two oceans as the challenges amongst the regional players are becoming more complex, such as the increasing instances of disputes over natural resources between nations and the attempt to gain maritime supremacy for the control over the world trade routes.<sup>26</sup>

Indonesia took the lead in drafting the ASEAN vision on the Indo-Pacific which was adopted by all the ten ASEAN countries in June 2019. The "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" emphasises the centrality of the ASEAN amidst the geopolitical shifts being witnessed in the region.<sup>27</sup> Through the new ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific, Indonesia is looking towards enhancing maritime cooperation amongst Southeast Asia and its neighbourhood. In Indonesia's view, the development of the Indo-Pacific cooperation should put an emphasis on the principles of non-rivalry, inclusiveness, transparency and openness. Indonesia's use of preventive diplomacy through ASEAN seeks to build a cooperative partnership for addressing critical challenges while also helping manage increasing tensions amongst the big powers in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>28</sup>

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25. "President Jokowi Presented the Indo-Pacific Concept at the EAS Summit", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, November 16, 2018, <https://www.kemlu.go.id/en/berita/Pages/President-Jokowi-Presented-the-Indo-Pacific-Concept-at-the-EAS-Summit.aspx>. Accessed on November 26, 2018.

26. Ibid.

27. "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific", [https://asean.org/storage/2019/06/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific\\_FINAL\\_22062019.pdf](https://asean.org/storage/2019/06/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific_FINAL_22062019.pdf). Accessed on May 17, 2021.

28. Yuen Foong Khong, "Michael Leifer and the pre-requisites of regional order in Southeast Asia", in Joseph Chinyong Liow and Ralf Emmers (eds.), *Order and Security in Southeast Asia: Essays in Memory of Michael Leifer* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 32-33.

## ISLAM IN INDONESIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

In AD 600 Indonesia was introduced to Islam through commercial traders with many of the Hindu *rajas* and Chiefs also converting to Islam as this enabled them to build closer ties with Muslim India and West Asia.<sup>29</sup> Since there was a strong influence of Hinduism and ancient Javanese religions, Islam in Indonesia was relatively moderate. However, by the end of the 19th century, there were waves of 'reformist' conservative Islam which came from West Asia seeking to trace back to the religion's core teachings in Indonesia. This led to the onset of conflict between the existing and more tolerant form of Islam and the conservative form of Islam.<sup>30</sup>

Indonesia is like any other Muslim nation where religion plays a central role in the political discourse and is part of the domestic values; it is also natural to expect that Islamic values find expression in its foreign policy. "... Sukarno made the argument that if the new state was based on 'belief in God' then it would be neither an Islamic, nor a secular state but a 'religious' state. Therefore, all religions, including Islam, in Indonesia are free to practice their religious obligations...."<sup>31</sup> The emphasis on maintaining a balance between the role of the State and religion continued not only under Sukarno's Guided Democracy (1957-1965) but also throughout Suharto's New Order (1966-1998). With 'Belief in one God' outlined as one of the five principles or *Pancasila*, while there were some that wanted the implementation of Islamic *shari'ah*, the government since the time of Sukarno has been consistently emphasising secularism and non-religious nature of the State and its policies.<sup>32</sup>

During the time of Suharto there have been instances where Islamic factor has determined Indonesia's foreign policy action, in

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29. Prof. Nazeer Ahmad, "Islam in Indonesia", *History of Islam: An Encyclopaedia of Islamic History*, <https://historyofislam.com/contents/the-post-mongol-period/islam-in-indonesia/>. Accessed on May 15, 2021.

30. Craig Riviere, "The Evolution of jihadist-Salafism in Indonesia, Malaysia and The Philippines, and its impact on security in Southeast Asia", *Indo-Pacific Strategic Papers*, The Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, Australian Defence College, November 2016, [http://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/Publications/IndoPac/Riviere\\_IPSP.pdf](http://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/Publications/IndoPac/Riviere_IPSP.pdf). Accessed on October 9, 2017.

31. Douglas E. Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 14.

32. Rizal Sukma, *Islam in Indonesian Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2003), pp. 3-5.

particular with its dealing with the Muslim World. Indonesia is a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference [OIC] and has tried explaining its participation more in terms of extending its solidarity, being a Muslim majority country. Suharto faced domestic pressure from Islamic societies for Indonesia's involvement in the independence struggle of the Bosnian people. Led by Indonesia's Committee for Solidarity with the Islamic World, who argued that the conflict of Bosnia was a conflict of religion between Islam and non-Islam, and Indonesia being the biggest Muslim country in the world should take more concrete action to end the conflict. In July 1994, the government, under pressure from the domestic Muslim community, finally decided to send medical detachment as part of UN Peacekeeping Force. Further, as a sign of solidarity, President Suharto undertook a visit to Bosnia in March 1995 and raised funds for building a mosque for the Muslim community in Bosnia. The conflict between Palestine Liberation Front (PLO) and Israel is another international issue which continues to get serious attention from Indonesia's Islamic society. With regard to the Palestinian struggle against Israel and its role in the Arab-Israeli conflict, "... many Indonesian Muslims perceived these issues as related issues to the struggle of Islam against the Western (non-Muslim) power ...". The Indonesian Islamic community strongly supported the struggle of the Palestinian people, and while the Indonesian government tried to insulate itself from religion, pressure from the dominant Islamic organisations resulted in the opening of diplomatic relations with the PLO in 1974. Meanwhile, till today, Jakarta does not maintain diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv, and will not until and unless Israel withdraws its troops from Jerusalem. The condition for any future diplomatic ties with Israel may be argued as political and attached to non-religious considerations; however, this foreign policy adopted remains deeply rooted to the Islamic consideration.<sup>33</sup>

After the fall of Suharto, four amendments to the Constitution of 1945 gave human rights a strong Constitutional position which included the right to freedom of religion. In Indonesia, non-

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33. Anak Agung Banyu Perwita, "State-society relationship: Assessing Islam in Indonesia's foreign policy. Toward the Muslim world under Suharto", <http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/projects/counterpoints/PDF/A1.pdf>. Accessed on May 16, 2021.

discrimination on religious grounds has always been provided for through its Constitution of 1945, with members of minority religions having the right to occupy high positions in politics, the military and universities.<sup>34</sup> However, post-Suharto when his Vice-President, B. J. Habibie was installed as the interim President, the three-party system which existed was formally abandoned. This led to the rise of a great number of Islamic parties. The 1985 Mass Organisation Law had made it obligatory for all organisations to adopt *Pancasila* as their sole ideological basis. The abolition of this law resulted in many Muslim organisations seeking to return to Islam as a basis for their political parties as there was no legal bar in doing so. These changes led to the formal registration of 141 parties, including some 40 Islamic parties, with the Ministry of Justice in the lead-up to the June 1999 general elections. Thus, at this new phase of Indonesia's democratic transition, religion also began to play a significant role—something that Suharto tried so hard to keep out of the ambit of politics.<sup>35</sup>

It has been argued that Islam in Indonesian politics has constrained rather than influenced the government who took great care in not allowing foreign policy to be dictated by Islamic considerations.<sup>36</sup> It should be noted that in the *Konstituante* (Constitutional Assembly) debates of 1955-1957, and in the Constitutional debates at the beginning of the democratic transition in 1999-2001, the question of making Indonesia an Islamic state and imposing *shari'ah* on its citizens was always rejected. During each of these constitutional framing moments, the idea that Indonesia is a home for many religions was embedded constitutionally and broadly accepted. As democracy consolidation in Indonesia continued to expand, it was found that the vote share of parties that explicitly campaigned for state-imposed *shari'ah* declined. Further, Indonesia's largest Islamic civil society organisations continued to play a constructive role in

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34. Franz Magnis-Suseno, "Christian and Muslim Minorities in Indonesia: State Policies and Majority Islamic Organisations", in Mirjam Künkler and Alfred Stepan (eds.), *Democracy and Islam in Indonesia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 74-76.

35. Azyumardi Azra, "The Islamic Factor in Post-Soeharto Indonesia", in Chris Manning and Peter van Diermen (eds.), *Indonesia in Transition: Social Aspects of Reformasi and Crisis* (London: Zed Books, 2000), pp. 309-11.

36. Rizal Sukma, *Islam in Indonesian Foreign Policy* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2003), pp. 3-5.

fostering the pro-democratic attitudes and movements that enabled the consolidation of the Republic.<sup>37</sup> In this new phase of Indonesia's democratic transition, however, there seems to be a continuing cultural revival of Islam in Indonesia with a growing tendency towards returning to the roots, to the Arab world view of Islam with an emphasis on outward observation. While the majority of Muslims across Indonesia are against any form of violence and racialisation in the name of their religion, they are also not averse to the idea of embracing the purer version of their religion.<sup>38</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Indonesia's vulnerability along with its sense of regional entitlement based on its size and strategic location produced the conviction that it should play a leading role in the management of regional order within Southeast Asia. The sense of geographical and historical vulnerability along with the presence of its multiplicity of ethnic, cultural and linguistic traditions plays a major role in Jakarta's foreign policymaking. Insecurity played a major role in the formation of ASEAN on account of the need for regional reconciliation in order to reduce military confrontation. The insecurity for Indonesia in the post-Cold War era continued to remain, first from the impact of the Asian financial crisis to the new security challenges in the post-9/11 era and the emerging geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific. Indonesia, through its bilateral and multilateral partnership, seeks to promote regional stability crucial for its long-term stability, development and growth. Indonesia's policy towards the Muslim world, while undertaken due to strong domestic pressures, was also towards achieving political gains rather than being motivated by religious considerations. While this argument holds, given the continued support towards preserving the ideals given under the *Pancasila*, the discourse on the extent to which Islam plays a substantial role in Indonesia's foreign policy continues to remain under scrutiny.

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37. Mirjam Künkler and Alfred Stepan, *Democracy and Islam in Indonesia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 7-11.

38. Vibhanshu Shekhar, *Indonesia's Rise: Seeking Regional and Global Roles* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2014), pp. 156-61.

Indonesia continues to view the safeguarding of its territorial integrity a key component of its external security, which in turn plays a major role in determining its foreign engagements. A shift in this regard has been the enhancement of its maritime cooperation with countries in the region including India. In Indonesia's view, the development of the Indo-Pacific cooperation should put an emphasis on the principles of non-rivalry, inclusiveness, transparency and openness. The signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between India and Indonesia in May 2018 is a reflection on the emerging geopolitical shift towards the Indo-Pacific region in which the partnership would be fundamental for a stable regional order. The emerging security and economic discourse that continues to shape Jakarta's strategic narrative would impact the nature of its engagement, including its strategic partnership with India. Amongst the key factors that continue to shape Indonesia's foreign policy, strategic necessities occupy prominence and this has helped shape its relations with India with whom it shares commonalities of interest and world view.