

THE IMPACT OF SECURITY TO INDONESIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Adnan Nasution

Seniwati

Hasanuddin University, Administration Department.

South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Seniwati_2006@yahoo.co.id

ABSTRACT

Indonesian politics opened a new phase of democratization after Soeharto stepped down from his 32 years of authoritarian rule. In this paper, Indonesia's foreign policy changes after Soeharto are systematically examined through an 'international pressure—such as security. This model specifies that Indonesia's foreign policy during democratization is mainly influenced by one factor: security of the new democratic government. Four cases of foreign policy decision-making from three post-Soeharto presidencies are examined: (i) Indonesia's East Timor policy under Habibie; (ii) Indonesia's 'silence response' toward China's protest on the anti-Chinese riots under Habibie; (iii) Wahid's 'looking towards Asia' proposal; and (iv) Megawati's anti-terrorism and Aceh military operation. The results show that security shapes the nature of state behavior, i.e. balancing or compromising, whereas international pressure determines the pattern of state behavior, i.e. external/internal balancing or compromising in words/in deeds.

Keywords: foreign policy, security, international pressure

INTRODUCTION

This is a new course on the most populous Muslim-majority democracy, now the world's fourth largest nation. Indonesia has 240 million people, 250 distinct languages and ethnic groups, and more than 15,000 islands covering a 3,200 mile arc from the tip of Sumatra southeastward to Irian Jaya. At independence in 1950, it had a fractious guerrilla-based army and no authoritative bureaucratic or political institutions. The new state was wracked by mass poverty, multiple rebellions, civil war, and a major political bloodletting. Indonesia experienced seven years of parliamentary democracy, eight years of populist dictatorship, the 32-year authoritarian rule of President Suharto, and a chaotic transition period (1998-2004), before establishing itself as a functioning democracy. Today, in comparison to the recent past, the Indonesian military plays a subordinate role and the police have grown in stature. After experiencing a spate of terrorist bombings in 2000-2009, a democratic government has reestablished internal security and restored economic growth.

History of Indonesian Foreign Policy

Since independence, [Indonesian](#) foreign relations have adhered to a "free and active" foreign policy, seeking to play a role in regional affairs commensurate with its size and location but avoiding involvement in conflicts among major powers. Indonesian foreign policy under the "New Order" government of President [Suharto](#) moved away from the stridently anti-Western, anti-American posturing that characterized the latter part of the [Sukarno](#) era. Following Suharto's ouster in 1998, Indonesia's government has preserved the broad outlines of Suharto's

independent, moderate foreign policy. Preoccupation with domestic problems has not prevented successive presidents from traveling abroad and Indonesia's participation in many international forums. The independence of [East Timor](#) from Indonesia after an August 1999 East Timor referendum, and subsequent attacks on East Timor, strained Indonesia's relations with the international community.

Indonesia's foreign policy, like that of any other country, is shaped by various factors such as the nation's history, its geographic conditions, its demography and its security and national interest. These factors prompted Indonesia to adopt a foreign policy that is independent and active, as espoused in 1948 by Mohammad Hatta, then Indonesia's Vice President.

Indonesia's Independent and Active Foreign Policy is not about being "neutral" or taking "equidistant" positions on international issues, nor is it a policy of "neglecting" or "ignoring" developments in world affairs.

The word "independent" means that Indonesia alone will decide and determine its own position on world issues without external pressures or influence. The word "active" means that Indonesia is committed to participating in constructive efforts that help build and maintain a just and peaceful world. The philosophy behind this principle is the mandate enunciated in Indonesia's 1945 Constitution. Moreover, having been subjugated by a colonial power for over 300 years, Indonesia inevitably adopted a foreign policy that is anti-colonialist.

In the conduct of its foreign policy, Indonesia also adheres to the following guidelines:

- The Pancasila, the state ideology
- The Wawasan Nusantara, (archipelagic sense)
- National Resilience
- The Broad Outline of State Policy

Foreign Policy and Security

Indonesian national interest in the context of security policy accords importance to upholding the territorial integrity of states. The main threat perceptions to its security include military aggression, terrorism, border violations, separatism and communal conflict. The main problem for Indonesia comes from inside - communal tensions, the roots of which are related to social injustices prevailing in the country. ASEAN was formed to achieve the goals of peace, stability and prosperity in the region and to form an economic cultural community. Indonesia along with other ASEAN counterparts pushed Myanmar to restore democracy.

On the Six-Party Talks on the issue of nuclear weapon development by North Korea, Indonesia would like to see peaceful development of North Korea and the abandonment of its nuclear programmes. In the Middle East, on the recent attack in Gaza by Israel, Indonesia supports comprehensive peace talks and an assurance that Palestine will have genuine independence and territorial integrity.

On the problem of terrorism, the Indonesian people, government and non-governmental organizations are all committed to the fight against it. Indonesia believes that one of the aspects of terrorism is the international networking of terrorism. In the Bali bombing case, three chief

culprits were hanged, dozens of them were sent to jail for 20 years and many of them are still undergoing trial. Some of the people associate terrorism with Islamic radicalism but it should be realized that there is no connection between the two. Indonesia faces a border issue with Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, East Timor, Singapore, Philippines. With the cooperation of ASEAN counterparts and neighboring countries, concrete steps can be taken to sort this out.

There is a sea change in Indonesia's policy during Soeharto's period (1967-1998) and post the 1999 reforms. While earlier foreign and security policies were the domain of a few people, today each and every issue is discussed in parliament. The main threats for Indonesia still emanates from within. Some threats exist because of over-centralization of Indonesian government. The problem of outsider also creates problems for the central authority. The elections in the next year have a possibility of creating instability.

Indonesia views its foreign and security policies through three concentric circles: first circle is the ASEAN; second circle is constituted by ASEAN +3; and the third concentric circle includes outside superpowers like the US. During the time of Soeharto, there was a tradition of being anti-China but soon Indonesia's relations with China improved. Indonesia has now come up with a new tradition of anti-Americanism. This point needs elaboration as how Indonesia can counter such problems.

Indonesia is being critical about Myanmar and also has imposed sanctions against it. But here, Indonesia should play an important role along with ASEAN counterparts and India to persuade Western countries to lift sanctions for a time, get some response from the regime and then take further steps in order to break the deadlock in Myanmar.

While Indonesia follows a secular constitution and it is reluctant to collaborate with any Muslim countries, it is important to realize that the crisis is not between civilizations but within civilizations. Indonesia is currently passing through the same democratic problems that India has already passed through. India has been able to evolve a mechanism for centre-state relationships and believes in the concept of unity in diversity. India is a Hindu majority country with a sizeable Muslim population just as Indonesia is a Muslim majority country with many Hindus and Buddhists. So this concept is unique and Indonesia should evolve the process of blending as India has.

Lastly, the lack of a strategic dialogue between the two countries needs to be highlighted. There is a need to have a pro-active policy in order to stabilize the region. Indonesia looks more towards China and Russia in terms of supply whereas India is looked as an alternative. Better strategic relations between both the countries can help improve bilateral partnerships in a variety of areas.