

NAVIGATING A TURBULENT OCEAN: INDONESIA'S WORLDVIEW AND FOREIGN POLICY

Paige Johnson Tan

This article explores the definition, origins, and meaning of Indonesia's worldview for contemporary international relations. It finds that Indonesian perceptions of the country's world role and the realities of its capacities are in tension. Apparent sharp breaks in foreign policy from one regime to the next mask underlying continuities in the country's view of the world and Indonesia's place in it. By virtue of its size, location, history, principled behavior, and rich culture, Indonesia is entitled to a leadership role in the region and the world. For Soekarno, the father of the nation, this was political-revolutionary. For Soeharto, this was economic. For contemporary presidents, the inspiration to leadership still exists, even if the capacity to lead is not always present.

Key words: Indonesia, foreign policy in East Asia, democracy
—East Asia

Introduction: Indonesia's Worldview

Indonesia, stung by political and economic instability, separatism, as well as natural disasters, has in recent years been perhaps the easiest large nation to ignore in foreign policy. Under

former president Soeharto (1966-1998), the country was once an Asian “tiger,” but, since the dictator’s overthrow, Indonesia has seemed to lurch from one crisis, even tragedy, to the next. It is little wonder that the country does not punch to its notional weight, or to its national ambitions, in contemporary international relations.

This article explores the definition, origins, and meaning of Indonesia’s worldview for contemporary international relations. A nation’s worldview is the dominant perception of the nature of the world system and its place in that system.¹ Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (elected in 2004) called Indonesia’s foreign-policy worldview its “international identity.”² Indonesian views of the nature of the global system are consistent throughout the country’s contemporary history, despite seemingly drastic changes of leadership. International relations are seen as dominated by the large, developed nations that design institutions and act exclusively in their own self-interest. This view provides a lens through which to view world developments and is consistent from the time of the radical Soekarno (president from 1949-1966) to the cautious but ambitious Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Unlike the power-hungry large powers, Indonesia is generally imagined—from the Indonesian perspective—as a benevolent expositor of peace and the interests of the developing world. This view is held despite Indonesia’s own occasional “big stick” foreign-policy moves.

The finding here is that Indonesian perceptions of the coun-

-
1. The concept of the worldview is currently under development as a way of understanding foreign policy. The author participated in one of a pair of panels at the International Studies Association meeting (Chicago, 2007) in which a group of scholars attempted to develop and apply the concept to a selection of Asian cases. The first draft of this paper formed the Indonesian foreign-policy contribution to the panels. For the theoretical perspective, see John Garofano, “Foreign Policy Vision: Theory and Practice in Contemporary Asian States,” paper presented to the International Studies Association annual meeting, Chicago, March 2007.
 2. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, “An Independent and Active Foreign Policy for the 21st Century,” Jakarta, May 19, 2005, in Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, *Transforming Indonesia: Selected International Speeches* (Jakarta: Office of the Special Staff of the President for International Affairs in cooperation with PT Buana Ilmu Populer, 2005), p. 390.

try's world role and the realities of its capacities are in some tension. The country aspires to leadership—leaders even feel entitled to it by virtue of their perception of the nation's size, resources, strategic location, history, and other factors—yet the country's turbulent politics and economics, even the vagaries of nature, have combined to weaken its world role.

The Historical Development of Indonesia's Worldview

Independence

Indonesia's worldview primarily originates in the country's nationalism, crafted in the struggle against colonialism and for national consolidation. The view is heavily influenced by a Marxist analysis of power relations among nations—that the rich do for themselves, while garbing their actions in universal principles. This cynical view might seem inspired by realism as well; however, this would not be accurate. Indonesians appear to perceive one standard of behavior by the rich nations of the West (crass, self-serving, and hypocritical) and another more principled stand for Indonesia and many other nations of the developing world. A realist would likely see the two as more similar in motivation, differing only in capability. The worldview has been created and propagated by Indonesian leaders, the foreign policy and military establishments, and the educated public (university lecturers, civil society activists, and newspaper columnists, among others). The view is seen to have been continually validated by developments in international affairs, thus reinforcing it for new generations.

Soekarno declared Indonesia's independence from the Netherlands in August 1945. It took more than four years of talking and fighting for that independence to be recognized by the Dutch. The United States' involvement in the conflict taught the Indonesians much about the nature of the world system. Then as now, the U.S. government promoted itself as a champion of the freedom and liberty of peoples. However, the cold war had created a dynamic in which the Dutch (and other Europeans) were needed to confront the gathering threat posed by the expanding Soviet bloc. It was not until the after the 1948

communist rebellion which began at Madiun on Java that the United States appeared to realize the potential cost of its continuing support of the Dutch, a communist Indonesia. After Madiun, the United States became a more consistent advocate of Indonesia's independence, in 1949 even threatening to deny Marshall Plan aid to the Dutch to force them to come to terms. During Indonesia's darkest hour, the United States was seen to have placed interests above principles and friendship for the people of the developing world.

Dutch tactics during the revolution, too, taught the Indonesians about the world system. The Dutch were seen as trying to foist a federal structure on the new nation (as the 1946 Linggajati agreement's "United States of Indonesia" would have been, with the independent republic run by Indonesia's founding fathers as just one component of a federal nation). Partisans of the Dutch would say a federal structure was only logical given Indonesia's ethnic and religious diversity, along with the country's wide geographic spread. In the view that has crystallized as fact in the Indonesian worldview, though, a federal Indonesia was designed to weaken the new nation, so that the Dutch could continue to dominate parts of the archipelago, relying on their co-religionists and lackeys.

In addition to these episodes from Indonesia's revolution, crises of national consolidation have contributed in important ways to the evolution of the Indonesian worldview. To give one example, in 1958, a rebellion broke out in the "Outer Islands,"³ linking together rebel forces in Sumatra and Sulawesi. Many of the grievances of the military rebels were unique to the military leaders, or unique to the situation of the non-Java islands themselves. However, the Outer Islands Rebellion came to be seen as a struggle between communism and capitalism.⁴ Because Soekarno was perceived to be leading Indonesia into the communist camp

-
3. The term "Outer Islands" is considered offensive to some, as it assumes Java is the center of Indonesia and the other islands are peripheral. Despite this, the rebellion is conventionally referred to as the Outer Islands Rebellion, or as PRRI-Permesta, an Indonesian-language acronym.
 4. Cannily, recognizing that the communism-versus-capitalism spin to the battle might earn aid from the West, rebel commanders cultivated a view of the struggle as one of freedom and democracy in the Outer Islands versus creeping communism on Java.

(either by choice or because he was duped by his communist friends), the United States and others, concerned at the prospect of a communist Indonesia, gathered behind the rebels.⁵ Preventing half the nation from falling to communism (and the half with most of the resources), if not populous Java, was vital according to U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

From Soekarno's perspective, outside support of the rebels was yet another attempt by the colonialists or neocolonialists to break up Indonesia to serve their own interests. For the independence-era leaders, the behavior of the United States and the Dutch in these episodes was vital in forming views of the global order and the motives of Western nations in particular. Indonesia was perceived to be constantly under threat from colonialists seeking to break the nation apart.

"Rowing between Two Reefs": Parliamentary Democracy

With the declaration of independence in 1945, Indonesia's founders began to articulate the values that would underpin their nation's foreign policy. The country's 1945 constitution mandates opposition to colonialism.⁶ It also commands the new nation to contribute to the establishment of a world order based on independence, permanent peace, and social justice.

As the cold war began to evolve in the late 1940s, Indonesia refused to take sides. In two speeches in September 1948, Indonesia's vice president (and, at the time, prime minister) Mohammad Hatta articulated the country's "free and active" (*bebas dan aktif*) foreign policy that has continued to shape Indonesia's international relations to this day. The country would seek to find a different way in the world, neither neutralized nor aligned with one of the evolving power blocs—to "row between two reefs," in Hatta's words.⁷ Indonesia would not recoil from world affairs. It would seek to put forth the nation's views and goals to craft a bet-

5. Audrey and George McT. Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia* (New York: New Press, 1995).

6. Republic of Indonesia, *Undang Undang Dasar 1945* (1945 Constitution), available from the Asian Human Rights Commission, online at indonesia.ahrchk.net/news/mainfile.php/Constitution/22.

7. Hatta's September 2, 1948 speech was "Mengayuh di antara Dua Karang." Yudhoyono, "An Independent and Active Foreign Policy," p. 386.

ter international system, but would do so free from alliances.⁸ Each issue would be decided on its merits, in accordance with Indonesia's interests. Quoting Hatta again: "The policy of the republic must be resolved in the light of its own interests and should be executed in consonance with the facts it has to face."⁹ The free and active policy along with the focus on Indonesia's own interests in world affairs reflected a belief that Indonesia had the right to be the "subject" of its own history rather than just an "object" in someone else's.¹⁰

From the late 1940s to the mid-1960s, Indonesia experienced changes of government that impacted the country's concrete foreign-policy orientation. Under parliamentary democracy (from 1945-1958), governments alternated between the more pro-U.S. (Muslim *Masyumi*-led¹¹ governments) to the more pro-non-bloc (nationalist *Partai Nasionalis Indonesia*-led governments). Despite these swings, in the early years, the country generally tried to maintain a balance between the U.S. and Soviet blocs. Indonesia took aid from the United States for a time but also recognized the Soviet Union and took loans from it. President Soekarno was a frequent world traveler, visiting the United States and later both Russia and China as well, among many other places.

A triumph of this early period for Indonesia's foreign relations was the holding of the Asia-Africa Conference at Bandung in 1955. The prime minister at the time, Ali Sastroamidjojo, declared, it "was because of the Bandung Conference that our country very soon acquired a respected place on the map of world politics."¹² The "Bandung Principles," one of the most important products of the gathering, served as vital statements of the hoped-for post-power politics that developing countries like Indonesia wished to use as the bases for their dealings with other states. Countries agreed to mutual respect for the territori-

8. Embassy of Indonesia in Ottawa, Canada, "Indonesian Foreign Policy," undated, online at www.indonesia-ottawa.org.

9. Quoted in Philips Jusario Vermonte, "Pragmatism in Asia-Africa Strategic Partnership," *Jakarta Post*, April 23, 2005.

10. Hatta's speech is quoted in Leo Suryadinata, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy under Soeharto* (Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1996), p. 25.

11. *Masyumi* was an umbrella Muslim party.

12. Michael Leifer, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 39.

al integrity and sovereignty of other states, mutual nonaggression, noninterference in the internal affairs of other nations, respect for mutual equality and working for mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. To Soekarno, speaking at the conference, the new nations would “inject the voice of reason into world affairs.”¹³ Their numbers, over a billion strong, could “mobilize the Moral Violence of Nations in favor of peace.”¹⁴

Outwardly for peace, Soekarno warned that all was not sweetness and light in international relations. Independent just a few years, Soekarno asserted, Indonesia and other new nations still had to be on guard against colonialism,¹⁵ and he hinted at a new creation, what would come to be known as neocolonialism. Colonialism in its “modern dress, in the form of economic control, intellectual control, actual physical control by a small but alien community within a nation” is a “skillful and determined enemy.”¹⁶ The idea of neocolonialism, that the Westerners were continuing to scheme to retain control over Indonesia and its vast resources, was an influential one. It resonated because of earlier experiences during the revolution and the Outer Islands Rebellion. It also helped listeners to make sense of why Indonesia, so rich in potential, remained so poor in practice.

Determining Our Own Fate: Soekarno's Guided Democracy

Soekarno's trips to the USSR and China, the Outer Islands Rebellion egged along by the United States, the seeming failure of Western liberal democracy to offer solutions to Indonesia's governing problems, and the rise of the Indonesian Communist Party domestically all helped push President Soekarno to the left both domestically and internationally. In 1959, the president overthrew parliamentary democracy just four years after the country had held its first national elections. In place of the demo-

13. Soekarno, “Speech at the Opening of the Bandung Conference,” April 18, 1955, online at the Modern History Sourcebook, www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1955Soekarno-bandong.html.

14. Ibid.

15. Soekarno would later coin a word, *nekolim*, to describe the continued neocolonialism (NE—all acronyms from the Indonesian), colonialism (KOL), and imperialism (IM).

16. Soekarno, “Speech at the Opening of the Bandung Conference.”

cratic regime, he instituted his authoritarian “Guided Democracy.” Instead of a free and active foreign policy that balanced East and West, Soekarno hoped to build a “Jakarta-Phnom Penh-Peking-Pyongyang Axis” (one of many catch phrases of the era). Speaking to the United Nations in 1960 in a speech entitled “To Build the World Anew,” Soekarno expressed his determination that Indonesia would not be sidelined. “We are determined that the fate of the world, our world, will not be set without us.”¹⁷ He used the country’s foreign policy as a “tool for domestic control,” to help balance domestic factions like the communists and the military that were vying for political power.¹⁸

Soekarno came to view communist forces in the developing world as globally the most progressive. Speaking in 1960, he called on people to wake up:

Wake up, you people who suffer from revolution-phobia. We are now in the midst of a revolution . . . greater than the past American Revolution, or the past French Revolution, or the present Soviet revolution. One year ago I explained that this Revolution of ours is at the same time a National Revolution, a political Revolution, a social Revolution, a cultural Revolution, and a Revolution in Man One year ago I said that therefore we must move fast, we must run like the obsessed, we must be dynamically revolutionary.¹⁹

At another occasion, Soekarno called Indonesia a “Lighthouse” of the Third World.²⁰ Indonesia’s revolution would be a model for others, but the country had to be bold and stay on the path.

It is not clear if Soekarno ever really bought into the idea of the cold war as the central dividing struggle in his era. He was not at his core an ideological person and had built his political career on the desirability of a synthesis of nationalism, religion,

17. Soekarno, *Membangun Dunia Kembali* (To Build the World Anew), speech to the General Assembly of the United Nations, New York, September 30, 1960, online at www.bungkarno.net.

18. Dewi Fortuna Anwar, remarks to “Security Workshops I: Indonesia and Regional Security,” United States-Indonesia Society, Washington, D.C., May 9, 2001.

19. Quoted in J. D. Legge, *Soekarno: A Political Biography* (Singapore: Stamford Press, 2003), p. 395.

20. Suryadinata, *Indonesia’s Foreign Policy under Soeharto*, p. 8.

and Marxism in the service of Indonesian independence.²¹ As early as 1961 at the first meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade, at a time when others were preoccupied with maintaining independence from the U.S. and Soviet blocs, Soekarno suggested something else was afoot in the world. As Michael Leifer quotes Soekarno's speech:

Prevailing world opinion today would have us believe that the real source of international tension and strife is ideological conflict between the great powers. I think that is not true. There is a conflict which cuts deeper into the flesh of man, and that is the conflict between the new emergent forces for freedom and justice and the old forces of domination, the one pushing its head relentlessly through the crust of the earth which has given it its lifeblood, the other striving desperately to retain all it can, trying to hold back the course of history.²²

In keeping with this idea, Sukarno would later take Indonesia out of the United Nations, lambasting the organization as a bastion of the status quo,²³ and, with other "new emerging forces" (NEFOs) such as the revolutionary regime in China, seek to establish a Conference of New Emerging Forces (CONEFO) as an alternative.

When Tunku Abdul Rahman, prince and first prime minister of Malaya, proposed the joining together of conservative Malaya with the British colonies of Singapore, North Borneo, and Sarawak and the creation of a larger, more powerful new nation called Malaysia, radical Indonesia felt the onslaught of the OLDEFOS, the "old established forces." To Soekarno, Indonesia should have been consulted about the disposition of the colonies on its borders.²⁴ Further, for Soekarno, the creation of Malaysia seemed consciously designed to encircle and control revolutionary NEFO Indonesia by the interposition of stodgy Malaysia at its edges.

21. Soekarno would once famously say "I am NASAKOM," implying that he was in his person the amalgamation of nationalism, religion, and communism.

22. Leifer, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*, p. 58.

23. Leaving the United Nations seemed to fit Soekarno's tenor at the time. The immediate precipitate was the elevation of "neo-colonial" Malaysia to a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in January 1965.

24. Legge, *Soekarno*, pp. 404-15.

Soekarno asked:

Why do we oppose it? Because Malaysia is a manifestation of neo-colonialism We consider Malaysia an encirclement of the Indonesian Republic. Malaysia is the product of the brain and efforts of neo-colonialism. Correspondents, mark my words, Malaysia is to protect the safety of tin for the imperialists and Malaysia is to protect the rubber for the imperialists and Malaysia is to protect oil for the imperialists.²⁵

Indonesia used diplomatic bullying and low-level force in an unsuccessful attempt to “confront” Malaysia and prevent its formation.²⁶ Confrontation of Malaysia was one of Indonesia’s signature “big stick” moments in foreign policy.

*Economic Focus and Quiet Leadership:
Soeharto’s Early New Order*

A murky coup in 1965 led to the overthrow of Guided Democracy. The complex shadow play between Soekarno, the military, and the communists was in the end decisively won by the military. The president was sidelined, and the communist party was decimated. In many ways the transition from the Old Order to the New Order appeared a stark break with the past. New president Soeharto was a seemingly reluctant orator where Soekarno had been a Castro-esque tub-thumper. From alignment with the global left under Soekarno, the regime swung dramatically to the right. Most elements of the military had historically been anti-communist, so this was a natural evolution for a military-dominated regime. There was a further reason, however. The new president, Soeharto, decided to switch the regime’s focus from making revolution to developing the economy. This would serve the dual functions, if successful, of raising living standards and consolidating support behind the new regime. (Soeharto became known as Father of Development, *Bapak Pem-*

25. Soekarno, 1963; quoted in Leifer, *Indonesia’s Foreign Policy*, p. 79.

26. Opposition to Malaysia was known as Confrontation (*Konfrontasi*). The conflict was intimately tied to, perhaps even constructed for, domestic political reasons, particularly to harness the energies of communists and the military and to galvanize the populace behind a regime that was unable to deal effectively with domestic economic challenges.

bangunan; Soekarno had been known as Father of the Nation, *Bapak Bangsa*). In foreign policy, the reorientation necessitated a veer to the right as the regime hoped to turn to the West and Japan for aid and trade.

Despite the swing from left to right and from revolutionary afire to smiling general, there was an underlying continuity in the country's worldview. As will be discussed below, many of the assumptions of Indonesia's foreign policy have remained the same from independence through today.²⁷ It would be accurate to say that the swing to the right in foreign policy, in particular the swing toward the United States, was for pragmatic reasons—seeking aid and opposing communism domestically—rather than heartfelt ones. Indonesia never formally allied itself with the United States throughout the Soeharto years. It never supported the war in Vietnam or openly accepted the existence of U.S. bases (or any other country's bases) in Southeast Asia.

Still, as Leifer points out, Indonesia tolerated a U.S. role in Asia with only "mild token criticism."²⁸ The country's new, staunch anti-communism was a victory from the U.S. perspective. Behind the scenes, Indonesia assisted the United States in regional diplomacy as well, for example with the early 1990s sidelining of the Malaysian proposal of an East Asia Economic Group, a potential trade bloc that would have excluded the United States from many of its booming Asian partners. Indonesia accepted large sums of aid (including military aid, training, and equipment) from the United States and from Western-dominated international financial institutions.²⁹ So, the switch to the right in foreign policy was meaningful and indeed represented a sharp change from the Soekarno years. However, underlying attitudes about superpowers, the world system, and Indonesia's role remained similar. Where seemingly different, the heartfelt values would quickly reassert themselves.

Until the early 1980s, Soeharto was content with an understat-

27. I arrived at this conclusion independently, later finding a reference in Leifer to a continuity from independence to the Suharto years. Leifer, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*, pp. 111-12.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

29. This was later scaled back in the post-cold war era due to human rights violations in Indonesian-controlled East Timor.

ed foreign policy. After the threatening actions and rhetoric associated with the “confrontation” of Malaysia, Indonesia needed to establish itself as a good regional citizen again. The country played an active role in the founding of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. Certainly, the Indonesians’ policy change from permanent revolution to development is visible in the organization’s first declared aim, to foster economic growth.³⁰ Through the years, Indonesia has viewed itself as the quiet and benevolent leader of the region, shaping ASEAN’s limited ambitions along with its strategies such as “regional resilience.” This was the idea that the countries of Southeast Asia, building up their own strength and resilience to challenge, would build the strength and resilience of the region. To preserve ASEAN’s solidarity, in one of the central security challenges of the 1980s, Indonesia acquiesced to ASEAN’s tacit alignment with China, the United States, and the Cambodian Khmer Rouge to oppose Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia.³¹

During Soeharto’s era, Indonesia’s foreign policy was modeled as a series of concentric circles. In this conception, ASEAN was officially the central focus of Indonesia’s foreign policy. The next level out was composed of near neighbors in the Asia-Pacific. The outermost circle was composed of the United States and Europe, important partners in aid and trade. Interestingly, there was no circle for Muslim nations, not even Indonesia’s partners in OPEC, the organization of petroleum exporters. From Indonesia’s independence, *abangan*, nominal Muslims have dominated the country’s foreign policy, and so Islam has played a limited role.³²

Despite Indonesia’s new policy as a good regional neighbor, the country did still occasionally wield the big stick, as with the invasion of East Timor in late 1975. Where security and anti-com-

30. ASEAN, Bangkok Declaration, August 8, 1967, online at www.ASEANsec.org/1212.htm.

31. There were differences of opinion within the Indonesian establishment over this policy. Because of sympathy with the Vietnamese revolution, fear of a threat emanating from China, and consternation at Thailand’s driving of ASEAN policy, some, particularly in the Indonesian military, sought a negotiated outcome to the Cambodian conflict rather than the extended proxy war (using Cambodian factions to fight Vietnamese aggression) that eventuated.

32. Suryadinata, *Indonesia’s Foreign Policy under Soeharto*, p. 37.

munism were concerned, the regime was vigilant. In late 1975, as East Timor was moving toward independence from Portugal and appeared likely to be dominated by the left-wing *Fretilin* (the Portuguese-language acronym for the Revolutionary Force of an Independent East Timor), the Indonesians grew worried about having another Cuba on their doorstep. East Timor remained under occupation from 1975 to 1999. Believing in Indonesia's importance in the global struggle against communism, the United States never condemned Indonesia's invasion (new evidence has demonstrated quite conclusively that the United States in fact was told in advance about the attack³³), though the invasion was never recognized by the United Nations or Portugal.

Aspiring to Global Leadership Again

The Later New Order

Once the military regime was consolidated and confident of its position, after 1982 according to Michael Leifer, it began to cultivate a showier regional role and a wider global role as well.³⁴ Leifer cites 1985, when Indonesia hosted a follow-on Afro-Asian conference, along with 1987, when ASEAN was able to hold a third summit, as signaling Indonesia's (and the other nations') willingness to move the association to a higher level. Leifer may be correct that these are tentative first signs of a change in Indonesia's foreign policy, but I would argue that the really meaningful changes did not come until the late 1980s and early 1990s. By that time, Indonesia's development efforts had achieved such success that the country was coming to be seen as an economic "miracle."³⁵

In 1988, Foreign Minister Ali Alatas remarked that the time had come "for Indonesia to play a more active and assertive role"

33. William Burr And Michael Evans, eds., *East Timor Revisited: Ford, Kissinger and the Indonesian Invasion, 1975-76*, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book #62, December 6, 2001, online at www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB62/.

34. Suryadinata, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy under Soeharto*, p. 50.

35. World Bank, *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

in world affairs. Indonesia's right to lead flowed naturally. "As a founding member and the host of the Afro-Asian Conference and the founder of NAM; as a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference, OPEC, ASEAN, the Group of 77, the Conference of Disarmament, and other international organizations; and as a major producer of raw materials, Indonesia has a remarkable position and potential among the Third World states."³⁶

Jakarta hosted the Jakarta Informal Meetings beginning in 1988 in an attempt to find a solution to the long-running Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. After more than two decades of frozen relations, Indonesia normalized relations with China in 1990. In 1991, it brazenly disbanded the Indonesia-focused consortium of state and international financial institution lenders established by the Netherlands (IGGI, the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia) in pique over criticism of the country's human rights record, particularly the then-recent "Santa Cruz massacre" in Dili, East Timor. Knowing it was too important to be ignored, Indonesia set up a new body, almost daring the lenders not to participate. As it turned out, Indonesia was not chastened. The country received more aid in 1992 after the Dili massacre and after the disbanding of IGGI than it did before.³⁷ In 1994, Indonesia hosted the second meeting of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum leaders. In what was billed as an important summit, heads of state and government resolved to work toward a long-term goal of "free and open trade and investment." Developed countries pledged to reach the goal by 2010 and developing countries by 2020. A confident Indonesia weathered the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to two East Timorese in 1996.

One of Indonesia's most striking areas of global leadership came in 1992 when Soeharto took over the leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Of course, Indonesia had been a founder of the movement going back to the groundwork done at the Bandung Conference in 1955 and the first official NAM meeting in 1961. But, with Soekarno's overthrow, the country had seemingly moved far away from most other NAM members ideologically. In the 1990s, Soeharto sought to turn the country's growth "tiger" reputation into a means of leadership of the "global South" to

36. Quoted in Suryadinata, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy under Soeharto*, p. 177.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

change the mentality and ethos of developing countries. Indonesia hoped to encourage members to move away from the then-standard blame-the-West approach to all world problems. Soeharto challenged the NAM countries to do as Indonesia had done, to take responsibility for their development, to leave mindless politicking behind, and most importantly to get down to work.

The post-cold war world posed challenges for Indonesia. Some challenges were opportunities, such as leading NAM, which would have been more difficult had ideological lines still been so tightly drawn. However, the post-cold war world also posed a great challenge of uncertainty. Would the United States remain engaged in Asia—pushy, yes, but offering an element of regional stability? How could a rising China be contained? To secure Indonesia's position, Soeharto embarked on a unique course. In December 1995, the regime suddenly announced that it had come to a defense agreement with neighboring Australia. Given Indonesia's historic "free and active" foreign policy, which treated military pacts as anathema, along with the country's frequently strained relations with Australia, the move surprised most analysts (it was also developed in secret). The agreement was weak, however, committing the partners only to consult in the event issues of concern arose and promising security cooperation. In the end, though, perhaps tradition won out; the agreement would be relatively stillborn, with officials seemingly unsure of what to do with the alliance.

Soeharto, the longtime dictator, resigned from office as a result of nationwide protests in the wake of the Asian Financial Crisis (1997-1998). The crisis and the severe economic contraction Indonesia experienced (-13.8 percent in 1998) confirmed views by many that the world system was structured for the strongest. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) lent billions to Indonesia; the money was then sent to bail out Western banks that had lent to the country, all with Indonesian citizens left holding the bill and investment having fled. The gains of decades appeared to be wiped out overnight. The heartless big powers were seen to have contributed to throwing millions into poverty; conditions were especially harsh on Java, where people were left short of basic needs.³⁸ The United States was seen to have directed the purgative

38. The currency's collapse actually helped some off-Java areas, where export

IMF response to the crisis. (The standard view in the United States was that the affected nations had to suffer because the crisis was the fault of their crony capitalist systems.) China was seen to have responded in a sensitive manner, pledging not to devalue its currency and compete with the affected nations' ability to recover.

Digging Out: Indonesia's Post-Transition Presidents

The turmoil that preceded Soeharto's overthrow and the long years of tumult since then have forced Indonesia's post-Soeharto presidents (particularly B.J. Habibie, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Megawati Soekarnoputri) to be more circumspect in their foreign-policy ambitions. According to Rodolfo Severino, a former ASEAN Secretary-General, with the crisis and transition, Indonesia "lost the capacity" to lead ASEAN.³⁹ Unkindly acts of nature such as the Asian tsunami, earthquakes, mudslides, and floods have all challenged the nation to focus on the basics of survival, recovery, and rehabilitation. So, Indonesia's foreign policy went through seven years of fighting fires as the country used its diplomacy with decidedly narrow ambitions to help the country's economy recover, to assure that separatist movements were not recognized or supported, and to build support for democratization. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Indonesia's first directly elected president (chosen in 2004), has pressed beyond these narrow goals, increasingly asserting Indonesia's right to lead.

Indonesia's Worldview

The above narrative highlights the origin of Indonesia's foreign policy worldview. Below, I will attempt to draw out the features of the worldview and then show certain foreign-policy priorities that the worldview necessitates.

of primary commodities boomed.

39. Rodolfo Severino, "Towards an ASEAN Security Community," ISEAS: Trends in Southeast Asia Series, No. 8 (2004), p. 2.

Values

Indonesia's worldview is based on the values of its anti-colonial revolution: independence, justice, freedom, and equality. The country's constitution gives Indonesia a mandate to foster world peace, and its founding ideology, *Pancasila*,⁴⁰ inspires the nation to find unity in diversity, both domestically and internationally. This can be seen in Law 39/1999, which set out the country's foreign policy for the first time. According to the law, foreign relations were to be "conducted on the principles of equality, mutual respect, mutual advantage, and non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other nations, as implied in the *Pancasila* and the 1945 Constitution."

Indonesians value freedom, harking back to their great anti-colonial struggle. In April 2005, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono hosted the fiftieth-anniversary meeting of the Asia-Africa Conference at Bandung. The president spoke movingly on the values of the movement. "Today, the sons and daughters of Asia and Africa stand together in this Hall as equals. And we stand tall, proud, and free."⁴¹

Other values prized by Indonesians are justice, fairness, and tolerance. When Indonesia was celebrating winning its non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the period 2007-2008, Indonesia's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Makarim Wibisono, commented that the Security Council seat allowed Indonesia to "ensure global peace and security based on justice and fairness."⁴² According to Indonesia's president, the nation treats all nations fairly. "We treat big, medium, and small-sized powers with equal respect."⁴³ Indonesia's constant push for interfaith dialogue suggests the importance of fostering tolerance, in this case between those of differing faiths. In the

40. The five tenets of the Pancasila are: belief in God, international humanitarianism, the unity of Indonesia, democracy based on consultation and consensus, and social justice.

41. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, "Let Us Build a New Strategic Partnership between Asia and Africa," remarks at the opening of the Asia-Africa Summit, Jakarta, April 22, 2005; in Yudhoyono, *Transforming Indonesia*, p. 319.

42. "Indonesia Becomes UNSC Member," *Xinhua*, October 17, 2006.

43. Yudhoyono, "An Independent and Active Foreign Policy," p. 391.

Indonesian worldview, tolerance is a hallmark trait of the nation because the need for tolerance is a core survival skill learned as a result of Indonesia's own heterogeneity.⁴⁴

Traditional values such as noninterference in other countries' internal affairs, dating back to the Bandung conference, are under assault today, as Indonesia seeks to associate itself with the global club of democracies and put forth a foreign policy that encourages respect for human rights. Inside ASEAN, Indonesia has started a slow move toward opening the discussion of human rights issues. However, Indonesian diplomats recognize they must tread softly, given the political complexion of the neighborhood and ASEAN's own tradition of noninterference.⁴⁵ According to Hassan Wirajuda, Indonesia's foreign minister, it is clear that Indonesia's neighbors are not "uniformly comfortable in working with a fully empowered regional human rights mechanism—that is obvious."⁴⁶ Indonesians have begun with a focus on relatively unobjectionable areas such as the rights of women, children, and migrant workers. Hassan again: "We know that [ASEAN is] a group of ten diverse countries, some democratic, some half democratic and some military juntas, but, we must envision an ASEAN that is democratic and that respects human rights."⁴⁷

Like an individual who does not always act in keeping with the better angels of his nature, Indonesia sometimes falls short of the noble values (justice, anti-colonialism) discussed above. Bullying Malaysia in confrontation during the 1960s and invading and occupying East Timor from the 1970s to the 1990s repre-

44. Indonesia has fourteen different language groups with more than a million speakers spread across 13,000 islands. Major ethnic groups include the Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Batak, Minahasans, Makasarese, Acehese, Papuans, and Dayak.

45. Hassan Wirajuda, Keynote Address at the 2nd Roundtable Discussion on Human Rights in ASEAN: Challenges and Opportunities for Human Rights in a Caring and Sharing Community," December 18, 2006, Department of Foreign Affairs (Indonesia), online at www.deplu.go.id/?section=&news_id=1592&main_id=55&category_id=78.

46. Ibid.

47. Interview with Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda, Natalia Santi, "Indonesia Dorong ASEAN Menjadi Komunitas Yang Demokratis," *Sinar Harapan*, August 22, 2006, Department of Foreign Affairs (Indonesia), online at www.deplu.go.id/?category_id=123&news_id=1288&main_id=101.

sent occasions in which Indonesia did not live up to its values. Yet, the values live on, while the foreign-policy misadventures were eventually undone.

The World System and the Great Powers

In the Indonesian worldview, the global system is operated by and for the most powerful nations, echoing Indonesia's experience of colonialism, along with Marxist-influenced analyses of international development and world systems. In 1965, Soekarno took Indonesia out of the United Nations, an organization he saw as under the thumb of the rich, status quo powers. In a contemporary example, the country struggled to free itself from its IMF loan package put in place during the Asian Financial Crisis because IMF aid was seen as humiliating as well as dictated by the U.S. government.

At the apex of the world system, Indonesian foreign-policy makers and analysts see the United States as the "only superpower" that writes the rules of international order to suit itself.⁴⁸ An oft-cited example of the United States running roughshod over global rules is its invasion of Iraq in 2003 without United Nations Security Council authorization. Megawati Soekarnoputri, then the president, condemned the U.S. invasion as "an act of aggression, which is in contravention of international law."⁴⁹ Yet, there was no action taken against the United States. Indonesia lacks the ability to restrain the superpower. It also needs the United States for aid and trade, as it has since Soeharto's rise to power in the mid-1960s. To today, quiet statements of disagreement, while still doing business, must suffice.

Despite the unilateral power of the United States, Indonesia has common interests with the superpower. According to Indonesia's ambassador to the United States, these include "fighting international terrorism, dealing with weapons of mass destruction,

48. Quotation from Department of Defense, Indonesia, *Buku Putih: Memperhatikan Tanah Air: Memasuki Abad 21*, 2003, online at www.dephan.go.id/buku_putih, p. 30.

49. Megawati Soekarnoputri, quoted in Gary LaMoshi, "Indonesia Doth Protest War Too Little," *Asia Times*, March 29, 2003, online at www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/EC29Ae02.html.

strengthening of democratic society, and maintaining regional balance, peace and stability in East Asia and Pacific."⁵⁰ In a separate speech, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono added other factors: solving intra- and inter-state conflicts, "transnational crime, poverty, pandemics, and natural disasters."⁵¹

Indonesia perceives balance-of-power changes; its view of the world system is not fixed. The USSR was once at the top of the global rankings, yet Russia today is no longer ranked on par with the United States. As power ebbs and flows in the world system, it is also unevenly distributed among states. An Indonesian military policy document acknowledges Russia, the European Union, Japan, and China as "big countries" with the ability to influence the "international society."⁵² Indonesia was not ranked in the same rung of global power.

While the United States is still unchallengeable as a military power, rising economic powers presage military power in the future and economic opportunities for the present. Of primary importance to Indonesia is the Asian theater. Under Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Indonesia concluded strategic partnership agreements with both China and India in 2005. Trade with China was \$15 billion in 2005 and is forecast to rise to \$30 billion by 2010.⁵³ As part of the strategic partnership agreements, the Chinese promised \$300 million in credit and loans for Indonesian infrastructure projects along with \$10 billion in other investment, including in energy.⁵⁴ Defense cooperation is also planned, with the Indonesian defense minister implying that China planned to offer extensive aid (in contrast to the scraps offered by the United States) and that the aid would be offered more pleasurably, with

50. Ambassador Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat, Remarks at the National Press Club, August 15, 2006, Embassy of Indonesia to the United States, online at www.embassyofindonesia.org.

51. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, "Shared Responsibility for Common Prosperity," Statement to the Non-aligned Summit, Havana, Cuba, September 15, 2006, Embassy of Indonesia, Ottawa, Canada, online at www.indonesia-ottawa.org/information/details.php?type=speech&id=99.

52. Department of Defense, *Indonesia, Buku Putih*, p. 28.

53. "Bested by Beijing, This Time in Jakarta," *Indian Express Online*, November 22, 2005.

54. Evelyn Goh, "China and Southeast Asia," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, December 12, 2006, online at www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/3780.

“no conditionality”—a swipe at the terms the Western nations require.⁵⁵

Acquiring defense goods from China would be a departure for Indonesia, many of whose defense officials long viewed the country as Indonesia’s number-one threat. Today, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono says Indonesia does “not have a country which we consider a threat or an enemy.”⁵⁶ One observer does cite China as a “factor of uncertainty” in the security realm.⁵⁷ The military notes that China is a “regional and global” power, with “strength that has to be factored in setting the stability of the region.”⁵⁸ The military cites China’s relationship with Taiwan as a concern for the region.

Speaking as much to Japan’s quiet regional presence as to Indonesia’s perception of Japan, the country is Indonesia’s largest trade partner and one of the largest investors. Yet Japan makes barely a blip in the country’s overtly stated foreign-policy priorities.⁵⁹ The military in its 2003 *White Book* discusses Japan primarily as an economic power but notes that its interests can be counted on to make it an actor for regional security.⁶⁰

At the present time, Indonesia is hedging, moving away from its tacit Western alignment under Soeharto to establish a more balanced foreign policy.⁶¹ As Evelyn Goh recognizes, it is not in the interests of any of the Southeast Asian states that the region be dominated by any one power,⁶² benevolent or malevolent as it may be. Indonesian foreign-policy spokesmen often highlight the golden word “multilateral” as describing the desirable complexion

55. Jane Perlez, “Bush Seeks to Heal Long Indonesia Rift,” *New York Times*, February 8, 2005.

56. Yudhoyono, “An Independent and Active Foreign Policy,” p. 387.

57. Hadi Soesastro, “*Hakikat ‘Kemitraan Strategis’ Indonesia dan China*,” *Kompas*, August 1, 2005, Center for Strategic and International Studies, online at www.csis.or.id.

58. Department of Defense, Indonesia, *Buku Putih*, p. 31.

59. “Indonesia Hopes for No Major Changes in Japan’s Foreign Policy,” *Jakarta Post*, September 28, 2006.

60. Department of Defense, Indonesia, *Buku Putih*, pp. 31-32.

61. Irman Lanti, “Indonesia: Accomplishments Amid Challenges,” in Daljit Singh and Lorraine Carlos Salazar, eds., *Southeast Asian Affairs 2006* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2006), p. 103.

62. Goh, “China and Southeast Asia.”

for the world system, observing that there should be “more Europe,” “more China,” and a “more multi-polar” direction in the management of global affairs.⁶³

Indonesia, unlike its neighbors, does not assert that ASEAN is the most important element of its foreign policy. According to an Indonesian embassy website statement of the country’s foreign policy, ASEAN is “a major pillar.”⁶⁴ The concentric-circle model of the country’s foreign relations is still asserted as fact: ASEAN is the central focus, then the country’s Pacific island neighbors, Korea, Japan, and China, then finally the United States and Europe. However, this model seems increasingly out of tune with reality. Indonesia has ambitions as a global player.

Foreign-Policy Priorities Arising from the Worldview

The values and beliefs of Indonesia’s basic foreign-policy worldview impel the country toward certain relatively consistent priorities in foreign affairs. These are discussed below.

The Importance of International Institutions

One way Indonesia is able to attempt to balance or control the great powers is by reinforcing the belief in the legitimacy of international institutions in the management of world affairs. To the Indonesians, the United Nations in particular is vital. Dewi Fortuna Anwar, once President Habibie’s foreign-policy adviser, observed that Indonesia “rejects all unilateral decisions taken outside the framework of the UN. This was clearly demonstrated by Jakarta’s unequivocal opposition to the recent U.S. and British unilateral war against Iraq.”⁶⁵ President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono

63. Makarim Wibisono, Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, “UNSC Membership to Make RI’s Foreign Policies More Visible, Says Envoy,” *Antara*, September 27, 2006; Department of Foreign Affairs (Indonesia), Landasan, Visi, Misi Polugri, July 17, 2006, online at www.deplu.go.id/?category_id=12&news_id=684&main_id=1.

64. Embassy of Indonesia in Ottawa, “Indonesian Foreign Policy.”

65. Dewi Fortuna Anwar, “Key Aspects of Indonesia’s Foreign Policy,” in Dewi Fortuna Anwar and Harold Crouch, *Indonesia: Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2003), p. 4.

produced a plan for a solution to the Iraq War that would have given the United Nations a stronger role. Indonesia points with pride to its non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council (2007-2008)⁶⁶ as well as its memberships of the Economic and Social Council (2007-2009) and the newly reshaped Human Rights Council (for 2007). In September 2004,⁶⁷ Indonesia made a bid for a permanent seat on a reformed UN Security Council.⁶⁸ It is a frequent contributor to UN peacekeeping missions,⁶⁹ most recently in the expanded Lebanon force (2006). Soekarno's walking out of the United Nations in 1965 is an exception to the general rule that international institutions are viewed as important in Indonesia's foreign-policy worldview. In keeping with the general rule, Indonesia's Soekarno-induced absence from the UN was short lived.

Protecting Indonesia's Territorial Integrity

A cornerstone task of any nation's foreign policy is to protect the country's territorial integrity. Due to Indonesia's heterogeneous population and dispersed geography, fear of breakup is never far from defense planners' minds. It is widely accepted that outsiders have sought to undermine Indonesia's territorial integrity and split the nation apart. Given outside powers' role in the Outer Islands' Rebellion and Dutch proposals for federalism for the new nation, this is not an entirely unreasonable belief. Indonesians find it confirmed in more contemporary developments as well.

Criticisms of Indonesia's occupation of East Timor bothered

66. This is Indonesia's third time in a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Earlier terms were 1973-1974 and 1995-1996.

67. Indonesian Mission to the United Nations, Press Release: Indonesia Claims a Permanent Seat on the Security Council, No. 6/PHM/IX/04, September 27, 2004, online at www.indonesiamission-ny.org/press/pr097204.htm.

68. Indonesia, however, does not figure into any of the commonly circulating Security Council reform models. Germany, Japan, India, Brazil, and perhaps an African power like South Africa or Nigeria are frequently mentioned as meriting new permanent seats on the Council.

69. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, when still in the military, served with Indonesian forces in Kosovo.

Indonesian nationalists because they were convinced of how much better off the territory was under Indonesian rule. Indonesians had brought roads, schools, teachers, and clinics to the territory, one of the poorest in Asia. Indonesians were taught in school that they had “liberated” East Timor from its colonial master. So, it came as quite a bitter surprise to many Indonesians when the East Timorese voted effectively to leave Indonesia in the UN-organized referendum in 1999. Military leaders and others fanned the flames of nationalist ire by suggesting (and continuing to suggest) that the UN was not neutral in the referendum and that it had slanted the referendum toward the independence forces. When Australian forces entered East Timor two weeks after the vote to stop the horrible violence, they and the successor UN force were seen as splitting Indonesia’s territory.

Defense officials often saw foreign hands behind rebellions in Aceh and Papua/Irian Jaya as well. According to the Army chief of staff at the end of 2004, there was a “foreign conspiracy” to separate those territories from Indonesia.⁷⁰ According to the chief of staff, non-traditional means such as nongovernmental organization activism were even “more effective” than traditional means of intervention such as armed force.⁷¹

Today, the military does not see a conventional invasion as a prime threat to the nation.⁷² In the 2003 Defense *White Book*, the number-one security concern was protecting the territorial integrity of NKRI,⁷³ the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (as the Aceh rebellion was still on-going at the time, this is an obvious concern).⁷⁴ More pressing problems than fear of invasion included the threats of terrorism, separatism, transnational crime, illegal immigration, illegal fishing, drug trafficking, environmental destruction, communal conflict, and natural disasters.

70. “Foreigners Scheming to Break Up RI: TNI,” *Jakarta Post*, January 6, 2004, online at Kabar-Irian at <http://www.kabar-irian.com>.

71. Ibid.

72. The military white book suggests that UN and international reaction would be enough to prevent an invasion.

73. *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia*.

74. Department of Defense, Indonesia, *Buku Putih*.

Protecting Indonesia's Sovereignty

Foreign meddling such as the U.S. role in the Outer Islands Rebellion along with Indonesians' tetchy attitudes toward their own sovereignty has reinforced a view that Indonesia's sovereignty should be protected at all costs. Protecting sovereignty and territorial integrity came first in the 2006 program of the Indonesian department of foreign affairs.⁷⁵ It is reflected in the wake of the violence in East Timor. There were no international trials of Indonesian generals or troops over war crimes committed against the East Timorese during the occupation. There was no international justice for military officials and militia leaders over the violence leading up to and in the wake of the independence referendum. Indonesia alone would handle the trials. No country had the will or ability to force the Indonesians to accept international justice, and, on this important matter of sovereignty, even a weak Indonesia stood firm. In the human rights community in Indonesia and abroad, the Indonesian-sponsored trials were uniformly viewed as wholly inadequate.⁷⁶

Maintaining a Free and Active Foreign Policy

According to Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Hatta's idea that the country's foreign policy should be free and active and based on Indonesia's national interest has become so engrained in the country that it "has become part of Indonesia's national identity."⁷⁷ Since Soekarno's overthrow, Indonesia's leaders and diplomats have conducted a pragmatic diplomacy that sees economic growth as central to the national interest. Soeharto's foreign policy was founded on stabilizing Indonesia's foreign relations to allow the focus to switch to development; this required making the country a normal and constructive member of the Southeast

75. Department of Foreign Affairs, Program Department Luar Negeri, April 17, 2006, online at www.deplu.go.id/?category_id12&news_id=505&main_id=1.

76. Of eighteen officials indicted in Indonesia over the East Timor violence, only three were convicted and all but one had their sentences overturned. Eurico Guterres, leader of the Aitarak militia, was the only person, civilian or military, to go to jail. He is serving a sentence of ten years.

77. Dewi Fortuna Anwar, "Key Aspects of Indonesia's Foreign Policy," p. 2.

Asia region to assure stability as well as attract aid and investment from the Western nations and Japan. The economic hardships suffered at the end of Soeharto's rule and since have also compelled recent presidents to keep the focus on lifting the country economically. According to Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, "Every step in our foreign policy is undertaken by advancing—and we dedicate it to—the national interest."⁷⁸

The country maintains its free and active policy. Long seen as a tacit ally of the West in the cold-war struggle against communism, today Indonesia is working to diversify its relationships. The rising economic and political clout of India and China means greater prominence for them in Indonesia's view of its world. In 2005, Indonesia concluded strategic partnership agreements with both nations. The 1995 defense agreement with Australia fell apart in 1999 after Australian troops intervened in the post-referendum violence in East Timor; however, ties have been revived with the Framework for Security Cooperation, the Lombok Treaty, in 2006. This new agreement is not seen as a defense pact like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, however. Speaking at the fiftieth anniversary of the Bandung conference, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono vowed that the country would not make military pacts or host foreign military bases.⁷⁹

With the brief exception of Soekarno's bombastic confrontation of Malaysia (and the West in general), Indonesia has, from 1965 to today, accepted the need for cooperation in international affairs. Typical nonaligned movement rhetoric blaming the West for developing country poverty would receive a hearing in Indonesia. Indonesians would often nod in agreement at the idea that Western countries seek hegemony in international affairs, that they purposefully try to impoverish those in the developing world, and that they are engaged in a concerted campaign against Muslims. However, the country's foreign policy has not gotten absorbed in these confrontational veins. Indonesia's foreign policy is geared toward a pragmatic recognition of the country's interests. Those interests require aid and investment from the West (and now increasingly, China), along

78. "Indonesia Sticks to Free, Active Foreign Policy: President," *Xinhua*, August 16, 2006.

79. Yudhoyono, "An Independent and Active Foreign Policy," p. 387.

with trade with a wide variety of nations.⁸⁰ So, while protesters on the street may have shouted “kill him” at Bush when he visited Indonesia in November 2006 or suggested that Bush’s blood is “*halal*” (implying it would be religiously permissible to kill him), Indonesia’s foreign-policy elite recognizes and works toward the country’s longer-term interests, which require cooperation with the major powers, not confrontation.

Using Diplomacy and Being a Bridge between Worlds

Since the country’s independence struggle, when Indonesia’s founding fathers recognized that the territory could not win its independence by force of arms alone, diplomacy has been a key weapon in Indonesia’s arsenal.⁸¹ The country maintains a firm commitment to diplomacy. It sets itself as a leader of the developing world, but also a member. According to Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono: “Our heart is always with the developing world to which we belong.”⁸² Indonesians regularly express affinity for those suffering, particularly those suffering innocently, caught in the crossfire of grand global struggles.

Today, Indonesia’s leaders and diplomats tend to focus on the country’s leadership role in serving as a bridge between the developed and developing world. At the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Havana in September 2006, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono walked this fine line. He chided the developed world, saying that peace and security were not possible as long as “80 percent of humanity controls only 20 percent of the wealth. Democracy is meaningless to the eight million human beings who will die in 2006 because they are too poor to live.”⁸³ He challenged developed nations to open their markets, particularly in agriculture, to goods from the developing world. He told the rich countries to increase debt relief, transfer technology, and increase foreign

80. Increasingly, the desire for aid from China will likely play a larger role in Indonesia’s foreign policy.

81. Leifer, *Indonesia’s Foreign Policy*, p. xiv.

82. Yudhoyono, “An Independent and Active Foreign Policy,” p. 390.

83. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, “Shared Responsibility for Common Prosperity,” statement to the Nonaligned Summit, Havana, Cuba, September 15, 2006. Embassy of Indonesia, Ottawa, Canada, online at www.indonesia-ottawa.org/information/details.php?type=speech&id=99.

direct investment. However, he said there were things the developing countries needed to do, too: fight corruption, assure good governance, make the domestic environment hospitable to foreign investment, and encourage education.

Indonesia likewise hopes to serve as a bridge between Islam and the West. The country's leaders speak for much of its Muslim population when they condemn Israel's invasion of Lebanon or Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands. However, Indonesia does not stop there. In the words of Foreign Minister Hassan: "Thus today we are witnessing the error of some Western circles attributing to Islam a propensity for violence, matched by the error of terrorist groups claiming that violent means are sanctified by Islam. The only way to liberate the human mind from these errors is through intensive and extensive dialogue."⁸⁴ Dialogue, it is believed, will lead to understanding, which will in turn lead to peace. Indonesia, with its heterogeneous population of Muslims and Christians, appears to see itself as uniquely positioned to foster inter-religious understanding, even taking a leadership role in hosting global conferences on the subject.⁸⁵ For instance, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono threw his voice into the *Jyllands Posten* / Prophet Mohamad cartoon uproar of late 2005 and early 2006. An opinion piece in the *International Herald Tribune* portrayed the Indonesian president as a voice of reason, a mediator between the Western and Islamic worlds.⁸⁶

Claiming the Right to Lead

Soekarno's bid for global leadership positioned Indonesia as a spokesman for the progressive forces in the developing world.

84. Hassan Wirajuda, statement by H.E. Dr. N. Hassan Wirajuda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Republic of Indonesia at the 61st Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, September 25, 2006; Department of Foreign Affairs (Indonesia), online at www.deplu.go.id/?category_id=78&news_id=1394&main_id=55.

85. The country sponsored the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Interfaith Cooperation in December 2004 and the Asia-Europe Interfaith Dialogue in July 2005. It hosted the 1st and 2nd International Conference of Islamic Scholars in 2004 and 2006.

86. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, "Let's Try to Get Beyond Caricatures," *International Herald Tribune*, February 10, 2006.

After a period of quiet and readjustment as the nation was inwardly focused on economic matters and regime consolidation, he depicted Indonesia as a model growth “tiger” to other developing nations, able to deliver concrete gains in livelihood to the population rather than being hopelessly bogged down in the blame-the-West rhetoric of the past. Soeharto also, with a subtle hand, guided ASEAN through its early development. Indonesia hosted meetings that opened up channels of communication for solution of the Cambodian conflict in the late 1980s as well as helping to mediate between the Philippines government and Muslim rebels in the mid-1990s.

Today, after another period of relatively inward focus, as Indonesia attempted to surmount the economic crisis, political transition, and a variety of natural disasters, the country again asserts its right to lead. Indonesia hopes for a permanent seat on a reformed UN Security Council. It has so far relatively unsuccessfully attempted to play a role in the solution of the North Korean nuclear stalemate. The country hopes to position itself to play a greater role in solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. According to Susilo’s advisor Dino Pati Djalal, “Indonesia has always wanted to enhance our engagement in the process of leading to peace in the Middle East.”⁸⁷ It sees Palestine as the “mother of all conflicts.”⁸⁸ It is vital globally and as a point of attention for Indonesia’s Muslim population as well.

Indonesia is not a leader in military power, economic power, or technology, and on the whole elites acknowledge this fact with more moderate aspirations in world affairs. However, despite the convulsions Indonesia has experienced in the transitions from Soekarno to Soeharto to today, there is a consistent, underlying perception that Indonesia is entitled to a major role in world affairs for a number of reasons. First, the nation’s size and location should guarantee it a role as a major world power. Indonesia stretches across an area larger than the continental United States

87. “Indonesia Plans to Send Peacekeepers to Lebanon,” *Thai Press Reports*, September 6, 2006.

88. Interview with Hasan Kleib, Indonesia’s Ambassador/Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations, “Indonesia’s Agenda at the UN Security Council,” *Jakarta Post*, November 28, 2006 (from the Indonesian Embassy in Ottawa, Canada), online at www.indonesia-ottawa.org.

and sits astride some of the most important seaways in the world. Delivering a major foreign-policy address, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, remarked:

We are a proud nation [which cherishes] our independence and national unity. We are the fourth most populous nation in the world. We are home to the world's largest Muslim population. We are the world's third largest democracy. We are also a country where democracy, Islam and modernity go hand-in-hand.⁸⁹

His implication was that this global heft earned Indonesia an honored place.

In addition to size and strategic location, the country's history and rich culture are seen to guarantee it a place as a leader as well, particularly of the developing world, as Indonesia was one of the first nations to successfully lead a revolution against colonialism (it declared independence in 1945, and was recognized in 1949). In September 2004, as mentioned above, the country renewed a claim to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council in the event of its expansion. Indonesia's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Makarim Wibisono, believes the country would be able to represent developing countries' positions to the Council.⁹⁰ In addition to Indonesia's pioneering revolutionary struggle, at times one also finds references to the country's glorious history, such as the creation of monuments like the Buddhist Borobudur or the Hindu Prambanan on Java, or the existence of great empires such as Srivijaya and Majapahit that may have held sway over much of the region.⁹¹ Such historical references suggest that the country should be entitled to an important position in the region and the world.

Further, Indonesians tend to see the country as a principled participant in world affairs. Indonesia adheres at least in rhetoric to the idea that conflicts should be resolved peacefully. The country stands up for the interests of the little guy. Indonesians' prin-

89. Yudhoyono, "An Independent and Active Foreign Policy," p. 390.

90. "UNSC Membership to Make RI's Foreign Policies More Visible, Says Envoy," *Antara*, September 27, 2006.

91. There seems to be some dissension among scholars as to the full territorial extent of these empires. Many nationalist Indonesians take an expansive view. This is what matters for Indonesians' perception of their foreign-policy entitlement.

ciplined behavior is often implicitly contrasted with the power-hungry and hypocritical behavior of other nations. Beyond principle is the issue of moderation. Indonesians see their moderation as a model for the rest of the world. The country's moderate Islam is a blow against fundamentalists and terrorists. Size, strategic location, history, principled behavior, and moderation are the core values that indicate to Indonesians that their country should have an important position in the world.⁹²

In addition to these factors, at times, other elements have been stressed as entitling Indonesia to an important role in world affairs. Under Soekarno, the country was portrayed as being in the revolutionary vanguard, and thus entitled to a leadership role as it pioneered an ongoing revolutionary path for other newly independent nations. Under Soeharto, the country's status as a "tiger" or "mini-dragon" was seen to guarantee it an important world role, since it had seemingly solved one of the most fundamental questions of the twentieth century: how to lift millions out of poverty. Today, there is an underlying discourse from the president and the foreign minister that the country's nascent democracy and success in putting it in place ought to guarantee Indonesia a stronger role in the international realm. Indonesia again has a model to sell (democracy), a model that should guarantee it leadership.

The Meaning of Indonesia's Worldview for Contemporary International Relations

Indonesia's worldview is profoundly meaningful for the country's engagement with the region and the world. It is something that is agreed upon across wide swathes of the population.

92. In his well-regarded study of Indonesian foreign policy, Suryadinata cites size and natural resources as factors pushing the Indonesian elite to believe the country is entitled to a prominent role in world affairs. Updating Suryadinata and drawing on the foreign policies of the Soekarno and Soeharto eras, along with contemporary foreign-policy documents (presidential speeches and statements from the Department of Foreign Affairs) widens the list of factors pushing this expansive view of Indonesia's world role. See Suryadinata, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy under Soeharto*.

Socialist-leaning secular Soekarnonists and pious Muslims can all agree that the world is unipolar and dominated by the United States. Perhaps they might disagree over why the United States engages in aggressive acts (to feed its neocolonial greed or to make war on Muslims—or both), but the fact of an overly powerful United States would be completely uncontroversial.

The worldview is the lens through which developments in the world are understood. The global system is dominated by the United States, which writes the rules of the international system to benefit itself. The worldview is more than a lens, though. It also has a prescriptive element. It tells Indonesians to take certain actions in their foreign policy. If the larger, more powerful nations are constantly trying to rip your nation apart and weaken you, then you must concentrate on holding your nation together and protecting your sovereignty. If there are other nations with far more power than yourself, try to entangle them in the webs of international institutions to protect your nation and promote positive global values such as justice, fairness, and equality. If the great powers are warlike and intolerant, focus on diplomacy that is committed to peace and tolerance.

Beyond these specific foreign-policy goals, the worldview also tells Indonesians that they are entitled to a leadership role in the world. For Soekarno, the father of the nation, this was political-revolutionary. For Soeharto, this was economic. For post-Soeharto leaders, the inspiration to lead still exists. President Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-2001) traveled the world, trying to assure international support for the country's new democracy; he traveled abroad to protect himself at home. One prominent analyst has noted that President Megawati Soekarnoputri (2001-2004) retained a love of "grand gestures" from her father, Soekarno.⁹³ She attempted to interpose herself in the North Korean nuclear mess. However, the country's post-Soeharto capabilities have been limited.

Indonesia's population ranks fourth in the world with 245 million (July 2006).⁹⁴ Without economic growth, though, that

93. Hadi Soesastro, remarks to "Indonesia's Evolving Foreign Policy and ASEAN Leadership," United States-Indonesia Society, Washington, D.C., April 22, 2003, online at www.usindo.org/briefs/2003/Hadi%20Soesastro%2004-22-03.htm.

94. CIA, "Indonesia," *World Factbook*, last updated December 19, 2006,

tremendous population size is just a drain on national prosperity. Economic growth that had averaged 7.7 percent in the ten years from 1985 to 1995 fell to 2.2 percent from 1995-2005.⁹⁵ Once a "mini-dragon," Indonesia was now just a regular lower-middle-income country (in World Bank terms).⁹⁶ Once a petroleum exporter (and still a member of OPEC), since 2005, Indonesia has been a net importer of petroleum to fuel its hungry population.⁹⁷ Foreign investors have fled the country, stymied by overregulation, threats of worker unrest, corruption, fears of terrorism and threats to expatriate staff, a weak legal system, and labor that has become expensive relative to the competition in Vietnam, China, and elsewhere. The country still sits astride vital seaways, but Indonesia's capacity to defend or assert its control over those seaways has been doubtful, so preoccupied with the domestic transition and separatist turmoil has it been. Indonesia's grand history seemed to mock the troubles of the present. With the Asian tsunami and other disasters, Indonesia became a byword for "tragedy," not "global player." The country's foreign policy was forced to focus on securing the country's territorial unity and most basic economic needs.

When Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono first came to office in late 2004, in the wake of the tsunami, he was forced to focus his foreign policy (in which he has been far more personally active than his predecessor, Megawati) on solving the country's basic needs. Securing investment and aid was at the top of the list. Presidential speeches from the early period also show a focus on consolidating Indonesia's democracy and pushing further with political reform. The title of this article, "Navigating a Turbulent Ocean," comes from a Susilo speech from 2005.⁹⁸ Indonesia's ocean has been a turbulent one, both literally and figuratively. The sea metaphor also nicely echoes Hatta's earlier "Rowing

online at www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/.

95. World Bank, "Indonesia at a Glance," Development Data, undated, online at www.worldbank.org.

96. World Bank, "Glossary," 2007, online at youthink.worldbank.org/glossary.php#mmm.

97. "Indonesia Becomes Net Oil Importer: Minister," *People's Daily* (Beijing), August 9, 2005, online at english.peopledaily.com.cn/200508/09/eng20050809_201214.html.

98. Yudhoyono, "An Independent and Active Foreign Policy," p. 386.

between Two Reefs.”

But Susilo would not be daunted by Indonesia’s turbulent situation. He has greater ambitions. Speaking to a U.S. audience in 2005, he said: “We are now an outward-looking country, eager to shape regional and international order and intent on having our voice heard.”⁹⁹ The president recognized that history impelled Indonesia to lead and that it needed the capacity to lead to be taken seriously. Speaking to the foreign ministry at its sixtieth-anniversary breakfast, Susilo said: “As former president Soekarno and others showed us, we should be able to lead on certain issues in international relations. This is our ultimate goal and we can only achieve it if we are doing well at home, such as creating good governance, so we can have strength, capacity and credibility to do more in world affairs.”¹⁰⁰

Principal References

- Ang, Benedict Kheng Leong. “Indonesian Foreign Policy: Change and Continuity amidst a Changing Environment,” *Journal of the Singapore Armed Forces*, vol. 24, No. 2 (April-June, 1998).
- Anwar, Dewi Fortuna. “Key Aspects of Indonesia’s Foreign Policy,” in Dewi Fortuna Anwar and Harold Crouch, *Indonesia: Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics*. Singapore: ISEAS, 2003, pp. 1-10.
- Frederick, William H. and Robert L. Worden. *Indonesia: A Country Study*. Washington: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1992.
- Freedberg, Sydney J. “The Case for Indonesia,” *National Journal* (October 2, 2004).
- Inayati, Ratna Shofi. “Pemerintahan Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono dan Politik Luar Negeri Indonesia,” *Jurnal Penelitian Politik*, vol. 2, No. 1 (2005), pp. 35-49.
- Kahin, Audrey and George McT. *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The*

99. Roger Mitton, “Yudhoyono Urges US to Strengthen Ties,” *Straits Times* (Singapore), March 27, 2005.

100. Ivy Susanti, “Indonesia Must Play Leading Global Role,” *Jakarta Post*, August 20, 2005.

- Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia*. New York: New Press, 1995.
- Lanti, Irman. "Indonesia: Accomplishments amidst Challenges," in Daljit Singh and Lorraine Carlos Salazar, eds., *Southeast Asian Affairs*. Singapore: ISEAS, 2006.
- Legge, J. D. *Soekarno: A Political Biography*. Singapore: Archipelago Press, 2003.
- Leifer, Michael. *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1983.
- Liddle, William R. and Saiful Mujani. "Indonesia in 2005: A New Multiparty Presidential Democracy," *Asian Survey*, vol. 46, No. 1 (January-February, 2006), pp. 132-39.
- Novotny, Daniel. "Indonesia's Foreign Policy: In Quest for the Balance of Threats." Paper presented to the 15th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia, Canberra, Australia, June 29-July 2, 2004.
- Pauker, Guy J. "Political Doctrines and Practical Politics in Southeast Asia," *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring, 1962), pp. 3-10.
- Ricklefs, M. C. *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1300*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- Schwarz, Adam. *A Nation in Waiting*. St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1999.
- Severino, Rodolfo. "Towards an ASEAN Security Community," ISEAS: Trends in Southeast Asia Series, No. 8 (2004).
- Suryadinata, Leo. *Indonesia's Foreign Policy under Soeharto*. Singapore: Times Academic Press, 1996.
- Weinstein, Franklin B. "The Indonesian Elite's View of the World and the Foreign Policy of Development," *Indonesia*, No. 12 (October, 1971), pp. 97-131.
- _____. "The Uses of Foreign Policy in Indonesia: An Approach to the Analysis of Foreign Policy in the Less Developed Countries," *World Politics*, vol. 24, No. 3 (April, 1972), pp. 356-81.
- Yudhoyono, Susilo Bambang. *Transforming Indonesia: Selected International Speeches*. Jakarta: Office of the Special Staff of the President for International Affairs in cooperation with PT Buana Ilmu Populer, 2005.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.