

The Role of Islam in the Indonesian Foreign Policy in the Era of Joko Widodo's Government (2014-2024): between the Islamic Identity and the National Interests

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the role of Islam in Indonesian foreign policy during the era of Joko Widodo's government (2014-2024), examining the delicate balance between Islamic identity and national interests. This study focuses on analyzing how the Indonesian government utilizes its Islamic identity as a tool in shaping Indonesian foreign policy narratives and strategies on the international level. Drawing upon the theoretical framework of international relations and political Islam, this research employs a qualitative methodology. Data collection involves a comprehensive academic literature review, official government documents, media reports, and interviews with relevant stakeholders. The findings of this research shed light on the complex interplay between the Islamic identity and the national interests in shaping the Indonesian foreign policy during the Joko Widodo government era (2014-2024). It reveals how some Islamic principles inform the Indonesian government's diplomatic engagements and international relations strategies while highlighting the tensions and synergies between Islamic values and broader national objectives.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the past, some international relations theories analyzed relations between countries fairly ignorant of religious factors. These theories, which have developed mostly in Western countries, separate the state and religion, focusing on the factor of national interest as the reason why one state relates to another. The term that is often used is secularization, or reducing the influence of religious organizations in the political system. In contrast to today, it is important to talk about the relationship between international politics and religion. This is because the prediction that modernization will cause society to become more secular is not fully realized. As a result, the state cannot ignore religion's presence in international relations (Abdelkader, 2019).

In countries well-known as the most democratic systems in Asia, religion is a factor that is still very closely related to everyday politics. Religion serves as a means to demonstrate spirituality and influences the developing social and economic structures. Religion can also be a reason for the masses to move to fight for their aspirations. Specifically, Azyumardi Azra (2022) stated that religion has returned to public and political life in many Asian countries. This is contrary to the dominant notions that previously emerged, which stated that the decline of religion cannot be avoided due to modernization, economic development, and socio-cultural progress. This phenomenon of religious revival has occurred in many Asian countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and China, which have brought religion back into the realm of politics and socio-culture. This is also marked by the fact that Asia is the only continent where almost all the major religions of the world today originated and developed – including Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Azra, 2022).

Furthermore, Azra stated that the strengthening of the role of religion is evident in public and political life in several Asian countries. Hinduism, for example, plays an important role in India, Buddhism is an important element in private and public life in Thailand and Sri Lanka, Judaism is closely linked to national identity in Israel. At the same time, Christianity, especially Catholicism, is the single largest religion in the Philippines and Timor Leste. At the same time, Protestant Christianity is also making significant inroads in South Korea, Japan, China, Singapore, and other Asian places. Islam is the dominant religion in Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, and Malaysia; in the Middle East and Central Asia; and in South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. As well as an important religious minority in India. Lastly, although most Japanese people claim that they do not practice Shintoism, it is a fact that it is very easy to find traces of this religion in their lives (Azra, 2022).

In Indonesia, the return of Islam to power politics began when Indonesia entered the era of government under the leadership of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY). Changes are seen when the articulation of Islamic identity emerges and is even referred to as a new pattern in Indonesian foreign policy. In a meeting organized by the Indonesian Council on World Affairs (ICWA) on 19 May 2005 in Jakarta, which was also the inaugural speech of Indonesian foreign policy direction, President SBY said that Islamic identity would be an inherent projection about the Indonesian nation (Yudhoyono, 2005). The same thing was also expressed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Marty Natalegawa in the Group of 20 World Economic Forum (Group 20/G-20), who stated that as the G-20 strengthened itself as the main forum related to world economic issues, Indonesia was also faced with the challenge of positioning itself in the G-20 – namely as the third

largest democracy in the world, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, and at the same time representing the voice of moderate Islam (Songbatumis, 2021).

Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, boasts a rich Islamic heritage influencing various aspects of its societal fabric, including its approach to international relations. The Joko Widodo government era, characterized by a commitment to assertive diplomacy and economic diplomacy, has continued exploring how Islamic principles intersect with Indonesia's national interests in foreign policy (Muzakki, 2017). Understanding the dynamics of Islam's role in Indonesian foreign policy during this period is paramount for comprehending the country's diplomatic strategies and aspirations.

In the complex landscape of Indonesian foreign policy, the interplay between Islamic identity and national interests has emerged as a critical factor shaping the country's diplomatic engagements on the global stage. Since assuming office in 2014, President Joko Widodo, known as Jokowi, has overseen a period marked by significant geopolitical shifts, economic transformations, and evolving dynamics within Indonesian society. Against this backdrop, the role of Islam in guiding Indonesia's foreign policy decisions has garnered increasing attention from scholars, policymakers, and observers alike (Muzakki, 2017).

Various previous studies related to the role of Islam in Indonesian foreign policy have provided valuable insights into the relationship between Islamic identity and national interests. These various studies show how domestic factors, including Islamic identity, influence Indonesia's foreign political behavior. It also states how Indonesia's transition to democracy and the rise of political Islam has impacted international relations, providing insight into the complexity of reconciling Islamic identity with national interests (Sukma, 2004). There is also an overview of Islam's historical and contemporary role in shaping Indonesian foreign policy. This meeting discussed the evolution of Indonesia's diplomatic approach towards Muslim-majority countries and highlighted the importance of Islamic identity in Indonesia's international relations (Anwar, 2010). However, these previous studies often face limitations, including a lack of comprehensive analysis of the interaction between religious considerations and geopolitical interests and a lack of research that focuses explicitly on the Jokowi era.

This research aims to address these gaps by thoroughly examining Islam's role in Indonesian foreign policy during the Jokowi government era. The focus of this research is to analyze how Islamic factors influence Indonesian foreign policy decisions under the leadership of Joko Widodo and their impact on bilateral and multilateral relations. Through this analysis, the research endeavors to provide valuable insights into the strategies employed by Indonesia to leverage its Islamic identity on the global stage while advancing its national interests. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of Islam in Indonesian foreign politics and provides valuable insights for policymakers, diplomats, and scholars grappling with the complexities of navigating Islamic identity in international relations.

2. METHODS

This research is based on secondary data, e.g., books, research results, government publications, journal articles, newspapers, internal institutional records, and internet sites, which are then analyzed using descriptive analytical and interpretive approaches. Descriptive analysis summarizes information collected from various sources, while interpretive analysis is used to understand the context, patterns, and trends that emerge from the data and provide interpretations of the findings. Based on the perspective of analysis, this research is qualitative research, which, according to Jack S. Levy, is a qualitative method used in international relations studies. This is because the events related to the study of international relations are still closely related to historical approaches, so the research requires analysis with in-depth explanations – one of which is through case studies – so that the research results are more scientifically detailed (Levy, 2002).

In this research, historical and political approaches are used to understand how Islamic principles influence Indonesia's foreign policy decisions during the Joko Widodo era, analyze the strategies used by Indonesia in utilizing its Islamic identity to advance its national interests in the field of international relations, as well as examine the existing challenges and opportunities in reconciling Islamic identity with national interests in Indonesian foreign policy.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Indonesian Islamic Identity in Foreign Politics

Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, with approximately 87% of its over 270 million population identifying as Muslim. The presence of Islam is ubiquitous in daily life, from religious practices to cultural traditions (Brehm, 2022). Indonesia's Islamic identity also holds significant sway over the formulation of its foreign policy, reflecting the nation's rich Islamic heritage and the prevalence of Islam within its societal framework. Islamic values, deeply rooted in Indonesia's cultural and religious fabric, serve as guiding principles in the formulation of its foreign policy. Concepts such as justice, equality, and peace, derived from Islamic teachings, inform Indonesia's stance on global issues and underpin its diplomatic engagements. The promotion of moderation (*wasatiyyah*) and tolerance (*tasamuh*) within Islam resonates in Indonesia's efforts to foster dialogue and cooperation on the international stage, advocating for peaceful resolutions to conflicts and interfaith harmony (Leifer, 2005).

The inclusion of Islam as a new international identity in Indonesia's foreign policy is influenced by the dynamics of domestic political changes and shifts in the international environment after 9/11. Indonesia, which in 2004 had just entered the democratic era, marked by the election of President SBY through direct elections for the first time, made changes in its foreign policy. Indonesia's foreign policy has not experienced dramatic changes, but the changes that have occurred are in recognition of the new aspirations of Muslims in the post-Suharto era. President SBY, in his first foreign policy speech in 2005, described the desire to change the country's new international identity, which was reflected in a free and active foreign policy, with the platform "Million Friends, Zero Enemy," which means embracing as many friends as possible using soft power, thus minimizing the possibility of enemies. Hopes in Indonesian foreign policy are built using a bridge builder, consensus builder, and conflict resolution system. Indonesia is also active in international relations by prioritizing a positive image of Indonesia through activeness in various international forums (outward-looking) (Rosyidin & Andika, 2017).

President SBY also emphasized that Indonesia's international identity will reflect its position as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world and the third-largest democracy in the world. In other words, under the SBY government, Islam was considered a national diplomatic asset by the Indonesian government, where Islamic identity would become an inherent projection in references to the Indonesian nation (Yudhoyono, 2005). Regarding the national interests of the Indonesian state, one of the important motivations for the SBY government to use Islam in Indonesian foreign policy, especially Indonesian public diplomacy, is to restore Indonesia's international image after the Bali bombings as well as to restore the perception of the Muslim world among the Western world, especially after the 9/11 tragedy. The recognition of Islam as an essential asset in Indonesia's public diplomacy is also indirectly encouraged by the West, especially the United States, which hopes that Indonesia will become a model for other Muslim countries because Islam in Indonesia is seen as compatible with democracy and modernity. From here, various programs are carried out in the context of Indonesian public diplomacy under the supervision of the Directorate of Public Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, including facilitating interfaith dialogues, inter-civilization dialogues, and hosting the International Conference of Islamic Scholars (ICIS) which seeks to promote moderate aspects of Islamic civilization (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2008).

Indonesia is indeed serious in its efforts to incorporate moderate Islam as its new identity in global politics. Moderate Islam, as promoted by Indonesia, encompasses the principles of *wasatiyyah* (moderation) and *tasamuh* (tolerance). This approach emphasizes a balanced and inclusive interpretation of Islamic teachings that advocates for peace, coexistence, and mutual respect. Two things that are also often mentioned are Indonesia's efforts to become a bridge between Islam and the West and a bridge between the Islamic world. This is based on several views. First, the use of Islamic symbols in Indonesian foreign policy is a response to the international situation, which continues to corner Islam as a radical religion. At that time, the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Hassan Wirajuda, delivered his response by explaining that Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, must project the true face of Islam, namely moderate Islam (Wirajuda, 2005). Second, using Islamic symbols in Indonesian foreign policy is also aimed at mobilizing popular support and avoiding opposition. This means that this is a political mechanism at the domestic level based on two objectives, namely attracting support for policies as well as gaining legitimacy for the policies made so that opposition does not arise. This is based on the fact that Indonesian Islam is indeed moderate, and mainstream Indonesian Islamic organizations are also moderate. The history of the peaceful entry of Islam into Indonesia, the contribution of Islamic organizations in nation and state building, and their role in the dynamics of Indonesian history increasingly emphasize the peaceful character of Indonesian Islam (Purwono, 2017). Thus, the identity of moderate Islam is compatible with the character of Islam in Indonesia.

The mobilization of popular support in foreign policy that promotes moderate Islam can also be seen from efforts to include Islamic organizations in Indonesia's international diplomacy, where it is stated that strengthening moderation as a major theme of Indonesia's foreign policy is carried out by empowering moderate groups within the country as a first step. It was also stated that the success of fighting terrorism will also be determined by empowering moderates (Falahi, 2013). The Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the leadership of Foreign Minister

Marty Natalegawa, also expressed its support for various Islamic mass organizations' efforts to campaign for moderate and tolerant Islam internationally. For example, in a closed meeting between Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa and ICIS International Secretary General KH Hasyim Muzadi to discuss issues and conflicts in the Islamic world, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that it supports ICIS in campaigning for moderate and tolerant Islam to the international community (Fanani, 2012).

The urgency of engaging moderate Islam influences Indonesia's relations with the West. In Islam itself, there are concepts of *salam* (peace), *islah* (conflict resolution), and *ukhuwwah basyariyyah* (human brotherhood), which are part of the essence of Islamic messages. Meanwhile, in the context of moderate Islam, there are special values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawasut* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidāl* (justice) which can be used to solve various world problems. This shows that Indonesian Islam can coexist with Pancasila and the constitution. This is also why Indonesia is seen as having to be actively involved in resolving international conflicts, namely the high hope that Indonesian Islam will become an alternative Islam that inspires peace and democracy. It is hoped that Islam in Indonesia can become an alternative face of peaceful Islam (Akbar, 2020). The international public hopes that Indonesia can play its role as the voice of the Islamic world and act as a mediator between the West and Islam. It is even hoped that the existence of moderate Islam in Indonesia can become an alternative model that can be applied in other Muslim societies (Grzywacz, 2020).

Indonesia's self-perception as the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation indeed shapes its interactions with other Muslim-majority countries. With a commitment to upholding Islamic solidarity and fostering mutual respect among Muslim nations, Indonesia plays an active role in organizations such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). It leverages its Islamic identity to strengthen ties with fellow Muslim nations. Furthermore, Indonesia's perceptions of Muslims worldwide influence its advocacy for the rights and welfare of Muslims globally, particularly in conflict-affected regions (Falahi, 2013).

Thus, it can be stated that the Islamic factor manifests itself in Indonesian foreign policy in two main ways. First, it is reflected in the desire and effort to have closer ties with the wider Muslim world. This was driven partly by a desire to improve economic ties with the rich Gulf states and partly by gaining legitimacy among a population that uses religion in a realist way. In other words, the increased interest in enhancing relations with Islamic countries is primarily driven by anticipated economic advantages rather than by considerations of Islam as a faith and the shared challenges encountered in today's globalized world (Williams, 2017). Second, Islamic factors are reflected in Indonesia's foreign policy regarding conflicts in which Muslims are victims. This is because Islam formulates solidarity among Muslims, especially when some Muslims become victims of conflict. Traditionally, this has largely manifested itself in Indonesia's foreign policy towards the Middle East, particularly in support of Palestinian independence, opposition to the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, opposition to the 2003 Iraq War, as well as condemnation of Israel's use of force against Lebanon and also in the Gaza Strip. The consistency of Indonesia's foreign policy direction also influences and is reflected when Indonesia responds to the atrocities committed against the Rohingya Muslim population in Myanmar and the Uighurs in China (Murphy, 2020).

In summary, Indonesia's Islamic identity is pivotal in shaping its foreign policy narrative and attitudes. By drawing upon Islamic values, perceptions of Muslims, and the demands of its Muslim population, Indonesia navigates the complexities of global politics while upholding its commitment to Islamic principles and advancing its national interests on the world stage. Understanding these intricacies of Indonesia's Islamic identity in foreign politics is essential for comprehending the nation's diplomatic strategies and engagements within the international community.

3.2. Islam in the Context of the Indonesian Foreign Policy in the Joko Widodo Era (2014-2024)

Under President Joko Widodo's leadership, the Indonesian government is trying to reinterpret Indonesia's free and active foreign policy, where Indonesia displays a more assertive attitude in defending its sovereignty and national interests. If, under the SBY government, the policy was interpreted as “a thousand friends, zero enemies,” then the policy was reinterpreted as “all nations are friends until Indonesia's sovereignty is degraded and national interests are jeopardized.” This reinterpretation is not to say that President SBY is wrong but is necessary to make Indonesia's role at the international level visible (Juwana, 2015). Specifically, President Joko Widodo stated that his government would strengthen Indonesia's role as a democratic country with a moderate Muslim majority by encouraging global and regional cooperation to build democracy and tolerance between groups. Despite this, Indonesia does not attempt to project democracy and moderate Islam as its main identity in its foreign policy. In this case, Indonesia will prioritize its identity as an archipelagic state by implementing diplomacy and building international cooperation (Marsudi, 2020).

Regarding Islam, Joko Widodo's government uses references to a free and active foreign policy by emphasizing the need to support the struggle of the Palestinian people, as well as positioning Indonesia as a country that promotes a “middle way” form of Islam that is, neither liberal nor radical (Laksamana, 2018). It also stated the importance of inter-religious dialogue as a platform for promoting Indonesia's soft power, even though this has not yet become the main instrument in Indonesia's foreign policy. Overall, the utilization of Islam in Indonesia's foreign policy during the Joko Widodo era was marked by several key themes and strategies, comprehensively can be stated as follows (Marsudi, 2020) :

1. Support for the Palestinian cause: Joko Widodo's government expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people, aligning with broader sentiments within the Indonesian population. By advocating for Palestinian rights and criticizing Israeli policies, Indonesia sought to position itself as a champion of justice and solidarity within the Muslim world and beyond.
2. Promotion of moderate Islam: Indonesia under Joko Widodo emphasized a "middle way" form of Islam, distancing itself from both liberal interpretations and radical extremism. This positioning aimed to showcase Indonesia as a model of tolerance, moderation, and pluralism within the Islamic world, reinforcing its soft power and international reputation.
3. Inter-religious dialogue: While inter-religious dialogue was acknowledged as important for promoting Indonesia's soft power, it did not necessarily become the main instrument of foreign policy during this period. Despite rhetoric highlighting the significance of interfaith harmony, the practical implementation of such initiatives may have faced constraints due

to various factors, including diplomatic priorities, resource limitations, and domestic political dynamics.

4. Soft power diplomacy: Promoting a moderate Islamic identity, coupled with expressions of solidarity with causes such as the Palestinian struggle, contributed to Indonesia's soft power diplomacy efforts. By projecting an image of tolerance, diversity, and compassion, Indonesia sought to enhance its influence and credibility on the global stage, particularly within Muslim-majority countries and international forums.
5. Regional cooperation: Within Southeast Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region, Islam influenced Indonesia's approach to regional cooperation. The country played an active role in organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and engaged in initiatives promoting peace, stability, and economic integration, leveraging its Islamic identity to foster closer ties with neighboring Muslim-majority nations.

However, it's important to note that while these themes and strategies were evident in Indonesia's foreign policy discourse under Joko Widodo's government, their actual implementation and impact have varied. Challenges such as domestic political considerations, resource constraints, and shifting geopolitical dynamics could have influenced how these objectives were pursued and achieved in practice.

The multifaceted relationship between Islam and Indonesian foreign policy during Joko Widodo's leadership was also based on efforts to explore various factors that influenced the formulation of Indonesia's diplomatic strategy. Indonesia experienced notable political dynamics within the domestic sphere that intersected with Islamic identity and influenced its foreign policy outlook. The rise of political Islam, characterized by the emergence of Islamic political parties and the increasing influence of Islamic organizations, exerted pressure on the Joko Widodo government to consider Islamic perspectives in its foreign policy decisions. Additionally, domestic debates and discourse surrounding religious tolerance, human rights, and Islamic extremism shaped Indonesia's diplomatic engagements and international positioning.

Overall, it can be stated that under the leadership of President Joko Widodo, Indonesia pursued an assertive and pragmatic foreign policy agenda guided by the principles of sovereignty, economic diplomacy, and regional leadership. While Indonesia's foreign policy remained anchored in its commitment to pluralism and non-alignment, the Joko Widodo government sought to leverage its Islamic identity as a source of soft power and cultural diplomacy on the global stage. Initiatives such as promoting moderate Islam, interfaith dialogue, and humanitarian assistance in Muslim-majority regions reflected Indonesia's efforts to position itself as a global Muslim leader while advancing its national interests (Jubba et al., 2021).

Another characteristic that shows that during the Joko Widodo government era, Islam played an important role in shaping Indonesia's foreign policy landscape was the role of public opinion regarding issues connected to Islam and Muslims. These various public opinions are seen as influencing Indonesia's implementation of foreign policy. For example, when the United States (US) moved its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, the Indonesian people responded by holding a massive protest at the US embassy in Jakarta. Likewise, Indonesia protested when Australia announced in December 2018 its plans to follow in the US's footsteps. Indonesia then also postponed signing a free trade agreement with Australia until Australia announced its support for a two-state solution with the Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem (Grzywacz, 2020).

Specifically for the Palestine-Israel conflict, Indonesia has always stated its position in favor of Palestinian independence. However, in the era of the Soekarno and Suharto governments, this support position was expressed based on anti-colonialist values and not because of religious factors. In the era of Joko Widodo's government, the Indonesian public's pressure for a two-state solution has strengthened. Indonesia itself firmly states that Indonesia is a strong supporter of the Palestinian struggle at the United Nations (UN), and Indonesia has never recognized Israel. Indonesia has even repeatedly offered its services to help mediate the split between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and *Ḥarakah al-Muqawwamah al-Islāmiyyah* (Ḥamas). This is based on Indonesia's own experience and struggle for independence, where national unity is a prerequisite for achieving independence (Marsudi, 2021).

Thus, Islam in the context of Indonesian foreign policy during the Joko Widodo era was shaped by a confluence of domestic political dynamics, the government's foreign policy agenda, and the array of issues and challenges faced by Indonesia in international relations. It can also be stated that Joko Widodo's presidency marked a period of dynamic foreign policy characterized by a balance between traditional diplomatic norms and innovative approaches to global engagement. Indonesia's identity as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation provided a unique backdrop for integrating Islamic narratives into its diplomatic endeavors (Varagur, 2017).

Indonesian foreign policy under Joko Widodo also recognized the potential of Islamic soft power, emphasizing the dissemination of Islamic values such as tolerance, moderation, and inclusivity. Meanwhile, Indonesia actively participated in international forums and Islamic summits to propagate its vision of a peaceful and progressive Islam, fostering dialogue and cooperation among Muslim-majority and non-Muslim nations (Jubba et al., 2021).

As Indonesia continues to navigate its role in global affairs, the strategic utilization of Islamic narratives will likely remain a cornerstone of its foreign policy under successive administrations. Balancing the promotion of Islamic values with broader diplomatic objectives will be crucial in enhancing Indonesia's influence and relevance in an evolving international landscape. In conclusion, the Joko Widodo era witnessed a deliberate effort to harness Islamic narratives as a soft power tool in Indonesia's foreign policy arsenal. By projecting a vision of moderate Islam rooted in tolerance and diversity, Indonesia aimed to assert its leadership on the global stage while contributing to efforts for international peace and cooperation.

3.3. Indonesian Foreign Policy and the Use of Islamic Narratives in the Joko Widodo Era: Challenges and Critiques

Indonesia faced many issues and challenges in international relations during the Joko Widodo era, many of which intersected with Islamic identity and necessitated careful navigation. From addressing transnational threats such as terrorism and extremism to managing diplomatic relations with Muslim-majority countries and organizations, Indonesia grappled with balancing its Islamic identity with broader national interests. Additionally, regional dynamics, including territorial disputes, maritime security concerns, and economic partnerships, underscored the complexities of Indonesia's foreign policy agenda and its engagement with the Muslim world (Menchik, 2019).

During the Joko Widodo era, Indonesian foreign policy also witnessed a nuanced approach toward leveraging Islamic narratives to enhance the nation's international standing. While Indonesia sought to project a moderate Islamic image, challenges persisted in maintaining a balance between Islamic authenticity and global perceptions, particularly amid rising extremism and Islamophobia. Domestically, debates arose regarding the government's prioritization of Islamic narratives over other facets of national identity, prompting discussions on inclusivity and diversity in Indonesia's diplomatic agenda (Varagur, 2022).

There are four main challenges and criticisms regarding Indonesian foreign policy and the utilization of Islamic narratives during Jokowi's presidency: domestic polarization, human rights concerns, risk of radicalization, and diplomatic balancing act. Domestic polarization refers to concerns that the use of Islamic narratives in foreign policy could exacerbate domestic polarization, especially between secular and Islamist factions within Indonesian society. The use of Islamic narratives in foreign policy can indeed be a double-edged sword, especially in countries like Indonesia, where there is a diverse range of religious and ideological perspectives. While incorporating Islamic narratives into foreign policy may resonate with specific segments of the population, it could also deepen divisions and exacerbate domestic polarization, particularly between secular and Islamist factions within Indonesian society (Ummah, 2012).

In this context, Indonesia, with the world's largest Muslim population, has a complex socio-political landscape where different interpretations of Islam coexist alongside secular ideologies. Introducing Islamic narratives into foreign policy decisions risks alienating non-Muslim minorities and secular groups who may perceive such actions as favoring one religious group over others. This can lead to heightened tensions and polarization within society. To mitigate domestic polarization, policymakers in Indonesia must balance the inclusion of Islamic narratives in foreign policy with a commitment to secular principles and the protection of religious pluralism. They should strive to foster inclusive policies that respect the diversity of beliefs within society and promote dialogue and understanding among different religious and ideological groups. Additionally, transparency and accountability in foreign policy decision-making are essential to ensure religious considerations do not overshadow broader national interests and values (Aswar, 2018). Ultimately, navigating the intersection of religion and foreign policy requires a nuanced approach that considers the complexities of domestic dynamics while promoting unity and social cohesion.

Critics also raised concerns about the government's crackdown on dissent, particularly targeting religious minorities and activists critical of the administration's policies. Muslims' diverse demands and aspirations within Indonesia's domestic landscape influence its foreign policy priorities. As a pluralistic society with a spectrum of Islamic interpretations and practices, Indonesia must navigate the complexities of addressing the needs and concerns of its Muslim population while upholding its national interests on the international stage. Issues such as human rights, social justice, and religious freedom resonate deeply within Indonesia's Muslim community. They are reflected in its foreign policy agenda, particularly in advocating for the rights of Muslims abroad (Sauki, 2018).

The next challenge and criticism are related to concerns that instrumentalizing Islamic narratives in foreign policy could inadvertently fuel radicalization and undermine Indonesia's reputation as a moderate Muslim-majority country. The instrumentalization of religion in foreign policy can further politicize religious identity and create divisions along religious lines. It may

also empower extremist elements within the Islamist factions, leading to radicalization and potentially destabilizing consequences.

In this context, in contrast to the application of democracy as a value in foreign policy, which produces little domestic dispute, the use of Islam in Indonesian foreign policy is seen as more controversial. The rise of political Islam is a characteristic feature of Indonesia's reform era. Just as policymakers believe that promoting democracy will strengthen political reform at home, some policymakers believe that projecting an image of moderate Islam abroad will trigger domestic “feedback” and help strengthen Indonesia's moderate traditions. But after the 2002 Bali Bombings confirmed the existence of a homegrown terrorist threat, several Indonesian leaders – both secular and Islamic – believed that using religion in foreign policy would empower radicals and not moderates, namely by providing the tools others use in the name of Islam to fight the government. Muslim scholar Azyumardi Azra describes the role of Islam in foreign policy as a “policy of ambiguity.” Ambiguity refers to the fact that, on the one hand, the Indonesian government pays attention to issues that are strongly connected to Islam but, on the other hand, downplays the Islamic factors that connect it to these problems. The Muslim community in Indonesia is not monolithic, so the Indonesian government must be careful not to take a stance that creates opposition within the country (Azra, 2006).

During Joko Widodo's presidency, Indonesia also confronted security challenges posed by extremist groups, prompting collaboration with international partners to address terrorism. This involved intelligence sharing, capacity building, and joint operations aimed at disrupting terrorist networks and preventing attacks. The government also strategically employed Islamic rhetoric to mobilize public backing for counterterrorism initiatives. References to Islamic principles of peace, justice, and security were used to garner support and legitimacy for government actions to counter extremism and safeguard national security interests. In this context, the government utilized Islam to rally support for counterterrorism measures. There were valid concerns regarding the securitization of religion and the risk of human rights violations in the pursuit of combating terrorism. In addition, the securitization of religion, where Islam became framed primarily as a security issue, also raised apprehensions about potential adverse consequences. This approach risked stigmatizing entire Muslim communities, fostering discrimination, and eroding trust between the state and its citizens, particularly those from minority groups (Juwana, 2015).

At last, the diplomatic balancing act between economic interests and religious considerations presents significant challenges, particularly for countries like Indonesia, when engaging with nations with poor human rights records or involvement in conflicts with Muslim communities. On one hand, economic interests drive countries to engage in trade and investment with various partners, including those with questionable human rights records. Economic cooperation can bring benefits such as job creation, technological advancement, and economic growth. However, engaging with such partners can also raise ethical dilemmas, especially when there are concerns about human rights abuses or conflicts with Muslim communities. On the other hand, religious considerations, particularly in a predominantly Muslim country like Indonesia, play a crucial role in shaping foreign policy decisions. Indonesia, as a member of the global Muslim community, may feel compelled to advocate for the rights and interests of Muslims worldwide (Azra, 2015). This includes addressing conflicts where Muslims are affected or oppressed.

Balancing these competing interests requires a nuanced approach that considers economic pragmatism and ethical principles. One approach is to leverage economic engagement to influence positive change. By maintaining diplomatic channels and engaging in dialogue with partner countries, Indonesia can advocate for human rights principles and encourage religious freedom and conflict resolution improvements. Additionally, Indonesia can work multilaterally through regional and international organizations to address human rights concerns and promote peaceful resolutions to conflicts. By collaborating with like-minded partners, Indonesia can amplify its voice and leverage collective diplomatic pressure to effect change (Rosyidin, 2019).

At the same time, Indonesia can pursue diversification strategies to reduce dependence on partners with poor human rights records. By expanding trade and investment relations with a broader range of countries, Indonesia can mitigate the risks associated with overreliance on problematic partners while still pursuing economic growth and development. Ultimately, navigating the intersection of economic interests and religious considerations requires careful deliberation and principled leadership. Indonesia can strive to uphold its values while pursuing its economic goals, promoting a foreign policy that balances pragmatism with a commitment to human rights and religious freedom (Rosyidin, 2019).

Overall, while the Joko Widodo era witnessed the use of Islamic narratives in Indonesian foreign policy, it was accompanied by various challenges and critiques related to domestic politics, human rights, and regional security dynamics. Balancing economic interests with religious considerations, navigating domestic political dynamics, addressing human rights concerns, and managing regional security challenges remained a complex task for the Indonesian government during this period.

CONCLUSION

The question of this paper is how the role of Islam influenced Indonesian foreign policy during the era of Joko Widodo's government and how the administration balanced Islamic identity with national interests. This paper answers this question by examining the nuanced interplay between Indonesia's Islamic identity and its national interests under President Joko Widodo's administration. It finds that throughout his presidency, Jokowi's administration navigated a delicate balance between projecting Indonesia as a moderate Muslim-majority nation – which refers to a balanced, inclusive, and progressive interpretation of Islam that emphasizes tolerance, peace, and coexistence – as well as advancing its economic and strategic objectives on the global stage. Islamic narratives – which refer to the strategic use of Islamic principles, values, and cultural references in Indonesia's foreign policy discourse and diplomatic initiatives – were strategically utilized to bolster Indonesia's diplomatic engagements, particularly with Muslim-majority countries, and to reinforce the country's cultural diplomacy efforts. However, these narratives often intersected with broader national interests, such as economic development and regional security cooperation, underscoring the multifaceted nature of Indonesia's foreign policy agenda.

Nevertheless, incorporating Islamic narratives in foreign policy under Jokowi's leadership faced several challenges and critiques. Domestic polarization, human rights concerns, and the risk of inadvertently fueling radicalization were among the key issues that underscored the complexities of intertwining religious identity with diplomatic initiatives. In short, the era of Joko Widodo's government highlights the evolving dynamics of Indonesia's foreign policy landscape, where the role of Islam remains significant but must be carefully balanced with broader national interests. As Indonesia continues to navigate its position in the global arena, future administrations will likely grapple with similar challenges, emphasizing the ongoing importance of striking a delicate equilibrium between Islamic identity and pragmatic diplomatic objectives.

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