Articulation of Islam: President Joko Widodo’s Foreign Policy 2014-2019

Achmad Ubaedillah
Department of Political Science, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
aubaedillah@uinjkt.ac.id; aubaedillah@gmail.com

Muhamad Ali
Religious Studies Department, University of California, Riverside, USA
Muhamad.ali@ucr.edu

Bimo Arfino
Indonesian Center for Civic Education (ICCE), UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia
arfinobimo@gmail.com

Submitted: 16 November 2021; Revised: 18 May 2022; Accepted: 27 July 2022

Abstract
This paper discusses how President Joko Widodo articulated Islamic identity in his foreign policy during his first period of presidency, 2014-2019. Through the constructivism approach and the concept of identity operated eclectically, the study discovered that the Islamic identity factor contributed to the formation and implementation of foreign policy during the period. An analytical descriptive explanation could approve the Islamic identity. This study revealed that Jokowi was anti-Islam, as accused by many during the period. Theoretically, constructivism offers a new perspective on understanding the relationship between Islam and the state in contemporary Indonesia.

Keywords: Islam, politics, Indonesia, Islamic identity, constructivism, middle power.

INTRODUCTION
Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world and the third largest democratic country after the USA and India. Demographically, 88.1 percent of 205 million of Indonesia’s total population are Muslims, and 12.7 percent of the whole Muslim population in the globe are Indonesians (Indrawan, 2019). In doing so, Islam has been an essential element in the history of Indonesia. Many Islamic expressions in Indonesia, among others, are its political articulation based on an understanding of Muslim groups, or it can be looked at in governmental perspective and policy on Islam or, on the contrary, how Islam is understood and placed by policymakers in the context of a nation-state of Indonesia. For this notion, academicians approaches and perspectives have changed since the late 1990s, where Indonesian Islam has its character and expression in different forms, Islam in the land of its origin, the Middle East. Though Islam was rocked by a terrorist attack on 11 September 2001, in the
USA, the Muslim responses around the globe varied (Fealy and White, 2008).

This study, however, addresses Islam and state relation in contemporary Indonesia. It deals with factors of Islamic identity in foreign policy in the first five-year term of the presidency of Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla, 2014-2019. During this period, however, many had accused President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) of anti-Islam leader (Batu, 2017; Suherdjoko, 2018; Fabian, 2018). However, during this period, President Jokowi has dealt with Islam in more substantive articulation, as demonstrated in his continued support for the Palestinian struggle, Afghanistan’s peaceful resolution, and the Rohingya of Myanmar. Jokowi’s Islamic articulation continues in his second term of presidency. Making Indonesia’s presidency of G20 in 2022, the promoting session of the Islamic economy and finance forum can be seen as Jokowi’s substantive way of boosting Indonesian Islam to the world. Emanating from Jokowi’s foreign policy platform, this study deals with findings unveiling his Islamic articulation on predominantly Muslim issues abroad—from the Saudi Arabia-Iran conflict, Rohingya, Afghanistan, to Palestine—and Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretically speaking, through combined perspectives of constructivism and the concept of identity, the authors will discuss how factors of Islamic identity have influenced Indonesian foreign policy during the first era of the Jokowi presidency, 2014-2019. Accordingly, as a social realm, the international relationship is socially constructed. Moreover, the constructivism approach emphasizes that international relations are dynamic and fluid. Therefore, there is no universal realm within international relations; yet they are diverse and particular. Though this approach assures that the state is the most critical matter in international relations, it remains to consider the importance of non-state actors such as individuals, civil society, and non-government organizations (NGOs).

Studies on religions as a determinant variable within contemporary international relations have been conducted either by specialists or social scientists such as Kubalkova; Fox and Sandler; Sandal and Fox; Katzenstein and Brynes; Snyder; Kratochvil; Shah, Stepan and Toft; Dawson (Kobalkova, 2009; Fox &Sandler, 2004; Sandal & Fox, 2013; Katzenstein & Brynes, 2006; Snyder, 2011; Kratochvil, 2009; Shah, Stepan & Toft, 2012; Dawson, 2015). Nevertheless, specific studies on the critical role of religion within international relations where religions determine much on foreign policies have been accomplished by Froese and Mecken; Xu Yihua; Toft, Philpott and Shah; Hayness; Walner and Walker; Ress; Johnston (Froese & Mecken, 2015; Xu Yihua, 2012; Toft, Philpott & Shah, 2011; Hayness, 2001; Walner & Walker, 2011; Herrington, Mckay & Haynes, 2015; Johnston, 2008).

Concerning how Islam has been deployed as a political consideration in the contemporary Muslim world, however, two works on Islam and foreign policy in contemporary Turkey and Malaysia by Naveed Sheikh (2003) and Shanti Nair (2003) can be referenceable. According to Sheikh (Bacik, 2007; Sheikh, 2014), compared to the transnationalism organization of European countries, symbolically European United (EU), with the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), Turkey, as the OIC leader, remains traumatic with the post-Caliphate world order but still adjusting to liberal norms. Unlike the Western EU, which emerges as an international society, the OIC is unable to build up political and economic cooperation; instead of Islamic values-based organization. In other words, Islamism by the OIC has failed to unite the Muslim community (umma) due to its lack of firm mission and prominent thinkers and weak position toward the West (Nurtina, 2019). On the other hand, according to Nair (2003), the articulation of Islam in Malaysia’s foreign policy has elevated the political legitimacy of the ruling government of the Mahathir administration. It is likely similar to Jokowi’s consideration of Islam within his middle power diplomacy, which has increased his political legitimacy.

Unfortunately, studies on Islam and Indonesian foreign policy have only been carried out by a few Indonesian scholars like Rizal Sukma, Azymardi Azra, and Dewi Fortuna Anwar (Sukma, 2003; Azra, 2000; Anwar, 2010). Historically, the involvement of Islam and Indonesia has been so obvious that Islam has been an
inseparable matter in the history of Indonesia (Piscator, 1983; Benda, 1958; Noer, 1978; Suminto, 1982; Boland, 1971; Samson, 1972; Maarif, 1983). Subsequently, such a long run of integrated history of Islam and Indonesia has led the nation to be noted as the largest Muslim country in the world.

RESEARCH METHOD

Under the auspice of the constructivism approach, this study employed qualitative research, by which social and human problems are explored. Qualitative research is applied to constitute complexity, holistic picture, word analysis, and detailed information reports (Creswell, 2010). The data were collected through interwoven techniques, literature assessment and depth-interviews. First, a literature study was conducted through an assessment of primary and secondary sources related to the topic of the study. The primary sources were reports issued by the government and international organizations both digital and non-digital, while secondary sources were scattered academic publications such as books and journals, newspapers, and digital sources like websites or the internet (Ikbar, 2015). Second, in-depth interviews were performed with prominent Indonesian Islam scholars, policymakers, and authoritative government sources. The authors deductively analyzed the data regarding structured questions given to the respondents during interviews before concluding. This study focuses on the first period of Jokowi’s presidency (2014-2019), between 2018 and 2019.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

PLATFORM AND FOREIGN POLICY OF PRESIDENT JOKO WIDODO

The direct presidential election in 2014 won Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla as Indonesia’s president and vice president (Pramono, 2017). The elected Jokowi-Jusuf Kalla (JK) came up as a national alliance of political parties and politicians from different political masses, representing major political power in Indonesia: nationalists and Islam. Jokowi as the cadre of Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP) led by Megawati Sukarno Putri represented the nationalist group and JK, Golkar’s politician close to Muslims, represented Islam. Both acted as committed figures for strengthening Indonesia (Effendy, 2005; Interview, Kalla¹, November 2019; Interview, Azra², July 2019).

Concerning changing national leadership, every elected president may have different perspectives and priorities during his/her presidency, among others is Indonesia’s foreign policy. However, there are static and dynamic matters within Indonesian foreign policy. The static ones that have been evident in the history of Indonesia’s foreign policy over decades are (1) the state ideology of Pancasila, (2) the UUD 1945 (constitution of 1945), and (3) non-align policy. These three elements have been the back bound of Indonesian foreign policy. On the other hand, the dynamic ones are operational guidelines and mechanisms for the implementation of national programs on foreign policy.

The latter may have been foreign policy programs different from one president to another (BAPPENAS, 2015; Ubaedillah & Rozak, 2014). For instance, President Jokowi’s foreign policy emphasizes three interlinked missions, Tri Sakti, indicating Indonesia’s independence in politics, economy and character. The acronym of Tri Sakti refers to President Sukarno’s national vision (Pramono, 2017). Through this vision, Jokowi stresses his foreign policy on his commitment to implementing his foreign politics on the notion of Indonesian independent and active policy (Pramono, 2017). In addition to the Tri Sakti, he also considers seven missions on foreign policy, called Nawa Cita. It consists of implementing Indonesian independence and active policy, elevating Indonesia on regional and international floors, and accommodating public interests in national foreign policy (Pramono, 2017). At the beginning of 2015, President Jokowi considered four strategies of national foreign policy: protecting national integration, protecting Indonesian citizens abroad, strengthening economic diplomacy, and increasing the contribution of Indonesia to the world (KEMLU, 2015).

Apart from four strategies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also emphasizes its eight priorities; upgrading Indonesia as a middle power or a problem solver in
international relations. Due to this mission, the ministry has considered specific strategies in responding to problems faced by the Muslim world, such as Indonesia’s support of the Palestinian struggle, the humanitarian crisis in Rohingya, and the peace process in Afghanistan (Interview, Fachir, July 2019).

Following the discourse, Jokowi’s foreign policy platform intends to be nationalistic. It accentuates more issues related to Islam due to the state ideology of Pancasila, a religiously friendly ideology that has contributed to the formation of a Godly nationalism in Indonesia, constituting a space where every religion can articulate in public life (Azra, 2016; Menchik, 2014). In other words, rather than using an Islamic identity that potentially would cause a political problem, as a nationalist, Jokowi avoids a double identity caused by the uniqueness and complexity of the entanglement of Islam and the nation-state of Indonesia (Sukma, 2003).

Theoretically evident, based on the constructivism approach that personal interest is not the only matter determining the deed and behavior of any actor, here is the Indonesian president, but also other factors such as identity, ideology and ideational (Steans, Pettiford, & Diez, 2005; Wendt, 1992; Wendt, 1999).

**INDONESIA AND MUSLIM WORLD: SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN CONFLICT, ROHINGYA AND AFGHANISTAN**

In 2015, Jokowi stated that his foreign policy remained concerned with regional and global challenges and strategic issues (Kemlu, 2015; Kemlu, 2016). Jokowi assures that Indonesia has a high commitment to be part of the solution for the political crisis in the Muslim world, like current conflicts in the Middle East, while emphasizing his middle power of diplomacy (Interview, Kalla, November 2019; Interview, Fachir, July 2019).

As the fourth largest population globally, around 250 million, and the biggest Muslim population, Indonesia has leverage in Asia and the globe, coupled with the third democratic country that has contributed significantly to ASEAN and G203 (Azra, 2015; Kemlu, 2015). Its middle power diplomacy has been implemented through Indonesia’s engagement in seeking a solution for the Saudi-Iran conflict, Rohingya, and Afghanistan, as we discuss later.

The Middle East is a region where conflicts among Arab countries emerge. The conflicts frequently escalate into wars in the region. Among others is the Arab-Saudi-Iran conflict (Mushoffa, 2015; Iryani, 2015). Saudi Arabia and Iran are the major players in the region. Their conflict has spilled over to their neighboring Arab states (Ali, 2018). The long rivalry between the two states may have been based on religio-sectarianism between Sunni and Shiism (Fawcett, 2013). In 2016, the conflict between Saudi and Iran reemerged when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was willing to execute Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a learned Shia ulama living in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. He and 47 prisoners received the death penalty because his activities threatened the kingdom’s national security (Fauzi, 2017; Purkon, 2015). Teheran quickly responded to Saudi’s decision over street demonstration and burning down Saudi Embassy in Teheran. Finally, Saudi ended its diplomatic relations with Iran (Rosyidin, 2019).

As the conflict between Teheran and Riyadh escalated, President Jokowi sent the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi, to meet the leaders of the two countries and gave a letter from President Jokowi telling them about the readiness of Indonesia to be a mediator for both and asked them to cool down to maintain regional stability (Interview, Shihab, July 2019). Both leaders accepted Indonesia’s proposal for a peaceful solution (Interview, Fachir, July 2019). Saudi and Iran welcomed and respected Indonesia as a Muslim brother highly committed to maintaining tolerance and world peace (Interview, Shihab, July 2019).

In this case, Indonesia’s language of political Islam has been properly articulated and well accepted by two conflicting countries, Saudi and Iran. If Indonesia agrees with the constructivism approach, mediating the conflict between Saudi and Iran is influenced much by ideational factors of Islam as a shared identity. Islam has been mentally constructed for Indonesia Islam as the compilation of the beliefs and distinct principles
influencing much of Indonesia to its construction policy (Zehfuss, 2004; Jackson & Sorensen, 2013; Tannenwald, 2005). However, Islam as an identity has been considered by Indonesia to convince both countries as Indonesian Muslim friends. They share a similar identity of Islam (Neuwmann & Weaver, 2005; Interview, Fachir, July 2019).

Similarly, Islam has been employed by Jokowi in dealing with the Rohingya conflict in Myanmar. Rohingya is a minority ethnic Muslim population engaged in a dispute with Rakhine Buddhis fellows in Myanmar. It has been known that as a Muslim minority, the Rohingya people are treated badly by the military government of Myanmar through its discrimination policy (Yusuf, 2018). One discrimination policy of the junta is its citizenship regulation that excludes the Rohingya people of the country (Brooten & Verbruggegen, 2017).

The ethnic conflict between Rohingya and Rakhine has been escalating to the level of humanitarian crisis. It peaked from 2012 to 2017 when the conflict worsened due to political movements run by the Buddhis-nationalist wing (ARSA) in addition to perpetuating violence in the junta military government (Alfajri, 2018; Yusuf, 2018). In the mid of the political and humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, particularly in 2014, Jokowi demonstrated his concern for the Rohingya’s suffering by building four hospitals in the Rakhine District as a commitment of himself and the people of Indonesia to the Rohingya (Interview, Fachir, July 2019).

Also, in 2015 when Rohingya refugees landed in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, Jokowi mandated Retno Marsudi to hold a regional meeting with her counterpart from Malaysia and Thailand in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to solve the Rohingya crisis. The meeting resulted in an agreement that Indonesia agrees to place Rohingya refugees in Aceh for one year under the supervision of the UNHCR (Jati, 2017). One year after, Jusuf Kalla, representing President Jokowi, handed over ten containers of humanitarian aid for the Rohingya in the Sitwee and Rakhine Districts. President Jokowi also delivered additional aid, 34 tons of rice, brought by four helicopters embarking from the Indonesian airborne base in Jakarta (IPAC, 2018). Of course, what Jokowi has performed for the Rohingya cannot be disassociated from many exclamations and opinions by Muslim activists in Indonesia asking for Jokowi’s attention to the Rohingya crisis (Budhi, 2019; IPAC, 2018). To maximize Indonesia’s concern for ending the Rohingya crisis, the Indonesian government initiated an interfaith dialogue forum to learn how to respect and live together peacefully. The first Indonesia-Myanmar Interfaith Dialogue (IMID) with the theme of “The Role of Leaders in Promoting Tolerance, Mutual Understanding and Harmony in Social Development” was hosted by the Institute for Peace and Democracy in collaboration with the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Indonesia in Yogyakarta in 2017 (Yulianto, 2016; Dwinanda, 2017).

The conflict remained escalated, however. Then, Jokowi asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs to further negotiate with the state counselor of Myanmar, Aun San Suu Kyi. In this regard, Indonesia proposed the 4+1 formula to solve the Rohingya crisis. The proposed formula consists of security and stability restitution, with the holding of each faction of any usage of violence, protecting everyone regardless of his/her belief and ethnicity, open access to humanitarian aid, and the implementation of the mandate of the advisory board for Rakhine state led by Koffi Aanan (Interview, Fachir, July 2019). Eventually, following the meeting between Retno Marsudi and Aun San Suu Kyi, the government of Indonesia facilitated the foundation of International Humanitarian Assistance (IHA) or Aliansi Kemanusiaan Indonesia Untuk Myanmar (AKIM), where 11 Muslim organizations and Islamic philanthropy institutions are its members (IPAC, 2018; Interview, Azra, July 2019).

During his visit to South Asia in 2018, Jokowi stopped at Rohingya refugee camps in Cox Bazar, Bangladesh, to deliver humanitarian aid. To the refugees, indeed, Jokowi called them “Muslim brothers,” and Indonesia would continue to help them (Rosyidin, 2019). Jokowi’s concern with the Rohingya case is illustrated when, in 2015, he employed Indonesia’s influence upon OIC members, from which the financial aid for Rohingya, USD 50 million, was collected (Bainus,
2016). Then, in 2017, during the OIC’s ministerial meeting, Indonesia appealed to the members to pay close attention to the Rohingya crisis and to support Indonesia’s proposal of constructive engagement (Alfajri, 2017).

In 2018, Jokowi brought the Rohingya issue to the OIC’s 45th Presidential Summit in Jeddah and resulted in a resolution number 59/4-POL on the Establishment of An OIC ad Hoc Ministerial Committee on Accountability for Human Rights Violations against the Rohingya. Through this resolution, all OIC member states hope to work together to single out human rights violations evidence against the Rohingya minority ethnic group in Myanmar (Interview, Fachir, July 2019).

Middle power diplomacy was employed by Indonesia when it appeared as the facilitator for a peaceful solution in Afghanistan. Afghanistan, a Muslim country with high diversity, has been trapped in long-lasting primordial conflicts for two decades. The conflict is not only internal but has become an international engagement that hampers creating national cohesiveness and peace in the region (Mustafa & Khan, 2015). Since 2016, Jokowi has paid attention to the Afghan conflict. His attention to Afghanistan can be seen in his initiation to build a mosque, later named the as-Salaam (Eng. peace) Mosque, in the Indonesian Islamic Center (IIC) complex, coupled with a library, a health center, and a shelter for refugees. Through this integrated mosque and social services, Jokowi hoped peace in Afghanistan would come true (Interview, Kalla, November 2019).

In the mid of 2017, President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan visited Jakarta. His bilateral visit aimed to follow up on Afghanistan’s peacebuilding and capacity-building programs (Interview, Anwar, July 2019). During his visit, Ashraf Ghani showed respect to Jokowi as the leader of Indonesia, the largest Muslim country, with his remarkably successful in maintaining national unity despite its diversity. Also, President Ashraf Ghani expressed his willingness to invite Indonesia to directly engage in Afghanistan’s reconciliation efforts and peacebuilding initiatives (Interview, Anwar, July 2019).

In 2018, President Jokowi visited five states in the South Asian region, such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. It was a historical visit of President Jokowi to Kabul, Afghanistan, amid security issues after the bombing blast. Again, during his talk to President Ashraf Ghani, President Jokowi stated that as the largest Muslim state, Indonesia, under his leadership, is highly eager to help its Muslim brothers in Afghanistan to materialize peace and prosperity (Interview, Dzuhayatin, July 2019).

President Jokowi also hosted the Trilateral Conference on 11 May 2018 in Bogor Palace to support peaceful solutions in Afghanistan. The conference was attended by prominent Muslim Ulama, such as Professor Muhammad Quraish Shihab and many from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah and Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI). The declaration of the conference was to build inclusive peace in Afghanistan. It is crucial to spread values of moderate Islam, tolerance, and non-violence and to endorse the Ulama to participate in creating a peaceful society and state (Interview, Azra, July 2019).

In addition, in 2019, the Indonesian government took part in a capacity-building program under the notion “Indonesia and the Building Peace Through the Promotion of Tolerance, Pluralism and Democracy: Experiences and Lessons Learned” for Afghanistan diplomats (Interview, Azra, July 2019). No less important; however, President Jokowi’s concern for Afghanistan is depicted by his support to his Vice President Jusuf Kalla to have an informal meeting with a Taliban delegation led by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar in his house in Jakarta (Interview, Kalla, November 2019).

In Amide’s first diplomacy track by President Jokowi, the government endorsed non-state actors like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the most respected Islamic organization among Taliban Ulama, to have its take on the peacebuilding in Afghanistan (Interview, Fachir, July 2019). Since 2014, Afghanistan Ulama has established Nahdlatul Ulama of Afghanistan (NUA). Supported by 6,000 ulama, the NUA’s representatives have scattered across 22 provinces in Afghanistan (Interview, Azra, July 2019).
Internationally, the middle power diplomacy for Afghanistan was marked by Indonesia’s success in bringing the Afghanistan crisis to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Then, the UNSC launched resolution number 2,489 and mandated United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to run its mission to support the Afghanistan government in implementing women empowerment, protecting children’s rights, gender equity, human rights and carrying on the general election in 2019 (PTRI, 2020). In brief, in the case of Afghanistan, President Jokowi, based on the constructivism approach, maximized Islamic identity, constructing much of the mentality of Indonesians, to determine his foreign policy (Zehfuss, 2004; Jackson & Sorensen, 2013; Tannenwald, 2005). Islam as identity has been the basis for Indonesia, like in previous cases of Saudi-Iran and Rohingya, and its prominent decision-makers to formulate solutions for Afghanistan (Hopf, 2002: 17).

PALESTINA: INDONESIAN’S ENDLESS SUPPORT

The long-run conflict between Palestine and Israel has emerged as the epicenter of political turmoil in the Middle East that deserves the attention of the international community (Fawcett, 2013). In the past, Palestine was under the British protectorate government. The British handed the mandate to the UN in 1947, from where the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis appeared. A day before the British formally left Palestine, Jewish society holding Zionism declared the foundation of Israel state on 14 May 1948 (Fawcett, 2013). The unilateral declaration of Israel constituted resistance from the Arab states opposing its existence. Arab resistance against Israel has ignited so-called Arab-Israel wars, notably in 1948, 1956, 1973, and 1982 (Fawcett, 2013). Wars against Arab Israel, militarily and politically, were backed up by Western countries, particularly the USA (Fawcett, 2013).

Indonesia’s commitment to the struggle of Palestinians has been declared since the Sukarno era, from the first President of Indonesia to President Jokowi. Jokowi and Jusuf Kalla restated Indonesians’ commitment to Palestine in their presidential campaign in 2014 (Mudore, 2019; Interview, Kalla, November 2019).

Issues on Palestine have been endless discourse within the Indonesian public. Over decades, most Muslims have perceived the Palestinian struggle as religious and, to some extent, political history (Muttaqien, 2013; Interview, Azra, July 2019). President Jokowi has considered Palestine the most foreign policy priority (Interview, Fachir, July 2019). His support for the Palestinian struggle was implemented through technical aids and non-technical ones, in addition to diplomatic efforts at the international level, such as the OIC and the UNSC. Non-diplomatic support was also provided through fellowships programs for Palestinian students on 50 campuses in Indonesia, trade facility for Palestinian products, capacity training for Palestinian pilots, Indonesian hospitals in Hebron organized by the MUI, water desalination for Gaza, and financial aid of 20 billion rupiahs for As-Shifa health center hospital in Gaza (Interview, Fachir, July 2019). Financial aid from the Indonesian government, USD 200,000, is allocated for Palestine annually through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Jokowi also endorsed the National Zakat Council or Badan Zakat Nasional (BAZNAS) to cooperate with the Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization (JHCO) and UNRWA for distributing aid for 5.3 million Palestinian refugees (Interview, Fachir, July 2019). Through the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD), Indonesia considered USD 2 million for Palestine to enhance tourism, agriculture, information technology (IT), infrastructure, and women empowerment capacity. This amount was part of a three-year Work Plan from 2019-2021, which resulted in CEAPAD III in Bangkok, Thailand (Interview, Fachir, July 2019).

In the mid of 2015, when Indonesia hosted the 60 years of Asia Africa Conference (AAC) commemoration in Bandung, President Jokowi persuaded Asian African member states that had been freed from imperialism and colonialism to support a free Palestine. One of the AAC summits was the Declaration on Palestine, pointing out
the support of AAC member state leaders for Palestine (Interview, Kalla, November 2019). Amid the commemoration agenda, Indonesia also held an “Informal Gathering on Strengthening Solidarity and Cooperation in the Islamic World”. The informal gathering agreed that the Palestinian crisis is a challenge for the Muslim world and that all members of the OIC have to respond immediately (Interview, Anwar, July 2019).

In December 2015, Indonesia convened an international conference on the question of Jerusalem, collaborating with the OIC and Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP). The conference aimed to seek academic solutions for the complexity of Jerusalem for conflict resolution and to make Palestinian issues catch up among the international community (Interview, Azra, July 2019). Indonesia again employed its middle power diplomacy by hosting the OIC’s fifth extraordinary Summit in Jakarta from 6 to 7 March 2016. Chaired by President Jokowi, Indonesia, with all member states, launched the “Jakarta Declaration,” consisting of recommendations for the solutions for Palestine and al-Qud al-Syarif (Interview, Anwar, July 2019). Through the theme “United for A Just Solution”, Jokowi argued that the solidity and solidarity among OIC’s member states are pre-requirement to support the Palestinian struggle while emphasizing that one of the reasons for the foundation of the OIC was to become a political fight for the freedom of Palestine (Interview, Anwar, July 2019). Then, in his third year of presidency, Jokowi appointed Maha Abou Susheh as an Honorary Consul of Indonesia in Ramallah. His inauguration was held in Indonesian Embassy in Amman, Jordan, on 13 March 2016. The presence of the Honorary Consul was an unavoidable proof of the endless support of President Jokowi for Palestine (Interview, Fachir, July 2019).

On the other hand, between 2017 and 2019, the US, as the most powerful state in the world, engaged in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Indeed, on 6 December 2017, President Donald Trump announced a controversial statement that the USA acknowledged Jerusalem as the Capital City of Israel, followed by his intention to move American Embassy there. Subsequently, on 14 May Jakarta reacted to the US’s unilateral consideration of Israel. Jokowi sent the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi, to a few countries in the Middle East, such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Europe, before the OIC’s Sixth Extraordinary Session in Istanbul, Turkey. Mr. Marsudi’s diplomatic journey aimed to gain international support against the US unilateral policy upon Israel, which would potentially threaten ongoing peaceful solutions for Palestine-Israel (Interview, Fachir, July 2019).

Indonesia seriously opposed President Trump’s unilateral policy. For this concern, President Jokowi attended the OIC’s Sixth Extraordinary Session in Istanbul on 13 December 2017 to respond to America’s provocative decision to Israel (Interview, Shihab, July 2019). Furthermore, right after the movement of the American Embassy to Jerusalem, Indonesia, led by Jusuf Kalla, came to the OIC’s Seventh Extraordinary Session in Istanbul on 18 May 2018 (Interview, Kalla, November 2019).

In addition to the OIC forums, Jokowi brought his support of Palestine to UN forums. As Indonesia was elected as a UN Security Council’s undesignated member in June 2018, Jokowi made it viable to strengthen support for Palestine (Interview, Fachir, July 2019). Accordingly, with its middle power diplomacy and position as an undesignated member of the UNSC, Indonesia consistently holds Palestine as its priority issue with special attention. For this notion, Indonesia has been mandated to be responsible for creating documents, namely penholder ships, for issues related to the Islamic world, like Palestine and Afghanistan (Interview, Fachir, July 2019). Such responsibility seemed relevant for Indonesia once it was appointed as the chair of the UNSC in May 2019. Though this position lasted one month, through its theme of “Investing in Peace”, Indonesia has depicted its capacity and high commitment to international leadership for world peace (Djani, 2019).

As the chair of the UNSC, on 9 May 2019, Indonesia’s UNSC team held a forum, “Arria Forum Meeting on Palestine”. In this informal forum, Indonesia strongly considered that the formation of Jews’ illegal settlement in Palestine may have broken the two states’
solution, international law, and Palestinian rights as well, calling the international community up to pressure Israel to end its policy (Interview, Fachir, July 2019).

Also, on 22 May 2019, Indonesia chaired the UNSC assembly in a briefing format to discuss the ongoing situation in Palestine. In this forum, Minister Marsudi emphasized the necessary means to help Palestine, among others, enhancing the protection of civilians and endorsing the international community to give humanitarian aid to Palestinians immediately (Interview, Fachir, July 2019). In sum, as the chair of the UNSC, Indonesia has accomplished 45 diplomatic activities that ended with 11 recommendations (Djani, 2019).

**PRESIDENT SPECIAL ENVOYS FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE OIC AND CULTURAL COOPERATION AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUES**

The presence of two special envoys for the president, for the Middle East and the OIC (Utusan Khusus Presiden untuk Timur Tengah dan Organisasi Konferensi Islam/UKP TTOKI) and for Cultural Cooperation and Interfaith Dialogues (Utusan Khusus Presiden untuk Dialog dan Kerjasama Antar Agama dan Peradaban/UKP DKAAP), has been a distinct consideration to value how Islam is critical for Jokowi’s foreign policy, in his first presidential period. Two president envoys, Dr. Alwi Shihab, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Professor Din Syamsuddin, former chairman of Muhammadiyah, had direct responsibility to President Jokowi (Interview, Dzuhayatin, July 2019).

According to Shihab, since the beginning, UKP TTOKI has performed its programs as it was mandated. Among its program is his meeting with King Salman of Saudi Arabia visiting Egypt to talk to Grand Syaikh al-Azhar for their cooperation in strengthening Islamic moderation (Interview, Shihab, July 2019).

Meanwhile, Syafiq Mughni, who replaced Din Syamsuddin in the UKP DKAAP, received a task to enhance Indonesia’s diplomacy by increasing cultural cooperation and interfaith dialogues nationally and internationally (Interview, Dzuhayatin & Mughni, July 2019). UKP DKAAP’s successful program was its initiation for the High-Level Consultation of World Muslim Scholars on Wasatiyyat Islam (HLC-WMS) in 2018 in Bogor. Moreover, 100 Muslim scholars worldwide participated in the forum, which President Jokowi formally opened. The HLC-WMS considered the practice of moderate Islam as the alternate solution of the Muslim World for the crisis of global civilization marked by disorderly uncertainties and accumulative catastrophe of the world due to the disconnection of human beings from morality, ethic and religion (Syamsuddin, 2018). The UKP DKAAP has initiated many events regarding cultural cooperation and interfaith dialogues, such as an interreligious forum under “Rakun dan Bersatu, Kita Maju” (In Harmony and Unity, We Progress) participated by 500 figures representing different religions. Then, in 2018, the forum was taken part in the World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW), bringing Indonesia the second winner and internationally recognized as the country with its cultural diversity that succeeded in developing a peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive nation (Interview, Dzuhayatin, July 2019).

Many forums and conferences have been run by the UKP DKAAP, in association with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Foreign Embassies in Jakarta, and international organizations, and they participated in bilateral and multilateral agendas. For bilateral forum: The First Indonesia-Australia Interfaith Dialogue (Bandung, 13-14 Maret 2019), The Third Indonesia-Denmark Interfaith Dialogue (Denmark, September 2019), The Fourth Indonesia-Serbia Interfaith Dialogue (Semarang, September 2019), The Indonesia-Germany Interfaith Dialogue (Purwokerto, Oktober 2019) (Interview, Dzuhayatin, July 2019).

**INTERNATIONAL INDONESIAN ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY (IIU)**

The foundation of Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII) can be accounted as the distinct policy of President Jokowi. IIII has planned to become an Indonesian international university focusing on Indonesian Islamic studies (Interview, Hidayat, June 2019). The government responded to the idea, and in 2016, President Jokowi issued Presidential regulation on the foundation of IIII in June 2016 and considered it
one of the national strategic projects (Interview, Hidayat, June 2019).

Different from the rest of the Islamic universities in Indonesia, the management of UIII is under four government institutions, among others is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This policy means President Jokowi is deeply concerned about making UIII an internationally reputable campus (Interview, Hidayat, June 2019). For this goal, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) issued a ministerial decree in 2016 appointing the Minister and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and the Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy as the advisors and the implementers of the UIII project (TIM UIII, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Islam has been a critical consideration for President Jokowi’s foreign policy during his first period of presidency, 2014-2019. Theoretically evident, what has been carried out by President Jokowi by making Islam his object of concern can be seen through a constructivist perspective where Islamic identity, which resonances with the majority of the Indonesian population, was obvious in his foreign policy platform and its political orientation. Islam has been wrapped in the notion of national vision foreign policy, Tri Sakti and Nawa Cita, as the anchor of his diplomatic practice.

Following this integrated paradigm, President Jokowi firmly performed with his notion of Indonesia as a middle power in varied international stages, through which he succeeded in speaking up about Islamic issues in international forums, whether in Islamic world forums like the OIC or the UN. Contemporary issues in the Saudi Arabia-Iran conflict, the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Myanmar, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and Afghanistan were the point of articulating the Islam of President Jokowi abroad and domestically. While the “first track” diplomacy was consistently run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and president special envoys (UKP TTOKI and UKP DKAAP. UKP TTOKI), the “second track” diplomacy was conducted by non-state actors, such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah and MUI.

Compared to his predecessors, what was conducted by President Jokowi with Islam in his first turn of the presidency was quite congruent with President Megawati and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY). However, rather than repeating his predecessors, Jokowi articulated Islam abroad more elegantly.

ENDNOTE

1 Muhammad Jusuf Kalla, Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia (2014-2019)
2 Azymardzi Azra, a prominent Muslim scholar and professor History at UI Jakarta
3 G20 or Group of twenty is an intergovernmental economic forum comprising 19 countries and the European Union.
4 IHA or AKIM’s memberships are LBI NU, MDMC, Dompet Dhuafa, PKPU, Rumah Zakat, LAZIS Wahdah, Daarut Tauhid, LAZIS DDII, LAZNAS Lembaga Manajemen Infaq and STF UIIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta
5 Dewi Fortuna Anwar Foreign Policy Expert
6 Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, Presidential Special staff
7 Komaruddin Hidayat, IIIU Rector (2019-2024)

REFERENCE


Shihab, A. (2019, July 10). Peningkatan Kiprah Diplomasi Indonesia terhadap Dunia Muslim [Personal Interview].


