Islam and Sukarno’s Foreign Policy, with reference to Indonesia-Pakistan Relations 1960-1965

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to investigate whether it is Islamic solidarity or the elite’s material interests that shaped Indonesia-Pakistan relations during the final years of Sukarno, 1960-1965. The argument is that the primary cause of Sukarno’s foreign policy was his political interest which extended into the state’s international posture. However, the changing geopolitical landscape opened up the space for Islam to entrench policy agenda, especially when Jakarta favoured Islamabad during the 1965 Kashmir war. The discussion is divided into two sections. First, it demonstrates the context in which Sukarno redirected Indonesia’s relations with India and Pakistan to serve his ideological foreign policy objectives. Second, it examines how Jakarta used the language of Islamic identity to pursue strategic interests in the event of war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. This discussion is followed by concluding remarks.

Keywords: Indonesia, Pakistan, Sukarno’s Foreign Policy, Islamism, Secularism.

Introduction

Similarities existed between Indonesia and Pakistan in terms of the formation of their respective states and foreign issues faced by them. Indonesia and Pakistan were born out of post-colonial countries with their anti-colonialism vision. Both countries were struggling to maintain their territorial integrity from external aggression. Hence, Indonesia should have a sense of tenacity to build strong relations with Pakistan. However, after the transfer of power in 1949, Jakarta pursued policies ignoring the historical importance of Pakistan. Formally, Indonesian and Pakistani ties were consolidated by the signing of the Treaty of Friendship on 3 March 1951 in Jakarta, laying the foundation of mutually beneficial relations between the two nations. Despite the fact of Islam being the religion of the majority in Indonesia and Pakistan, it was not mentioned as the basis of the two countries’ relationship in the text of the treaty, but it
did contain universal values such as social justice, respect for sovereignty, mutual cooperation and peace (Sutardjo, 1951, 3-10).

While playing down the relevance of Islam in Indonesian foreign policy towards Pakistan, the Sukarno Government was eager to foster stronger relations with India with its pronouncement of Asian African solidarity. The high noon of the relationship was the holding of the 1955 Asian African conference in Bandung (Agung, 1973, 222-4). Another Afro-Asian conference was scheduled in June 1956 in Cairo but had to be postponed due to the unstable situation of the Middle East caused by the Suez crisis. By 1960, Indonesia intended to revive the proposal, but met with little success. This was mainly because of the strong opposition from India which had felt that Indonesia would rival its leadership role in Third World affairs. Pakistan, on the other hand, supported the Indonesian proposal (Burke & Ziring, 1990, 310-11).

This article proceeds to focus on the development of Indonesia’s foreign policy towards Pakistan between 1960 and 1965. Sukarno was the centre of the politics of foreign policy in the country. The argument is that the primary cause of Indonesian foreign policy at this time was Sukarno’s political interest, which extended into the state’s international posture. However, the changing geopolitical landscape of Jakarta’s South Asian outlook opened up the space for Islam to become entrenched in policy agenda, especially when Jakarta favoured Islamabad during the 1965 Kashmir war.

The Changing Context

During the 1960s, Indonesian foreign policy was centralised in the figure of President Sukarno whose ideas and interests dictated the state’s external relations. Ever since the installation of ‘Guided Democracy’ in 1959, Sukarno had assumed complete direction of Indonesia’s foreign policy; gradually giving it an ideological ground as the struggle of the New Emerging Forces (NEFOS) against the Old Established Forces (OLDEFOS), which mostly referred to the West. Modelski (1963) and Legge (1972) explain that Sukarno considered an international conflict theory between the new and the old powers as the determining feature of world society. This conflict would, in his view, lead to the ultimate and inevitable destruction of the old. In Sukarno’s view, the root cause of international tensions lay in imperialism and colonialism and not the Cold War ideological enmity. This worldview was the radicalised form of the discourse of
anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism in Indonesian foreign policy with the confrontational character of Sukarno dominating the state’s international relations in the 1960s.

The changing dynamics of regional and global settings also influenced Indonesia’s foreign policy towards Pakistan. Jakarta had viewed with alarm the emergence of Malaysia with the help of Britain and India and considered it to be a potential threat to Indonesia. It was also suspicious of India’s improved relations with Washington after the Sino-Indian border war in 1962. Meanwhile, Jakarta had improved military ties with the Soviet Union, particularly during the dispute over West Irian against the Dutch, and had remained aloof from Washington. After the 1962 Sino-Indian border war, tensions escalated between Indonesia and India. Jakarta allied with China against the perceived expansion of the British Empire and Indian power in Southeast Asia. This contributed to the improvement of qualified relations between Jakarta and Islamabad.

The strengthening of Indonesia-Pakistan ties can be divided into three phases. Firstly, between 1960 and 1962 Indonesia and Pakistan tried to identify common views and policies. Secondly, during 1963-1964 the two sides were keen to show reciprocal support and develop mutual cooperation based on common interests. And, finally, Jakarta and Islamabad actively collaborated in the creation of a strategic front against India when the Indo-Pakistan war over Kashmir broke out in September 1965.

The first phase of the improvement of ties between Jakarta and Islamabad took shape during Pakistani President Ayub Khan’s visit to Jakarta in early December 1960. The meeting of the two countries’ leaders was not planned to discuss serious matters related to bilateral relations. It was like a friendly exchange of views between Sukarno and Ayub Khan. Nonetheless, they agreed to forge a more cordial relationship; as indicated in the joint communiqué issued at the end of the talks, the two sides committed to review economic and cultural ties, which over the last decade had not shown much progress, aiming to discover ways and means to progress them to a more satisfactory degree (Text of Joint Communiqué, 1960).

The sign of improvement in the relationship was further evident when Sukarno and Ayub Khan expressed in front of cheering crowds at Bandung their full support for the rights of self-determination of all peoples. Sukarno was happy with Ayub Khan’s
statement that Pakistan would continue to endorse Indonesia’s position on the West Irian issue. The Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs released an official announcement saying that Pakistan was a true supporter of Asian peoples struggling under foreign domination (BintangTimur, 6 December 1960).

Despite this growing amity, the two states differed on certain foreign policy issues. Though they agreed upon the rights of self-determination for all peoples, Indonesia did not mention specifically the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India - a silence that slightly disappointed Ayub Khan (Times of Indonesia, 8 December 1960). Pakistan’s membership of the US military alliance also remained a point of disagreement: Ayub Khan tried to explain Pakistan’s position by arguing that his country required an umbrella against communist expansionism. Indonesia disagreed with Pakistan’s position. Sukarno, in reply to Ayub Khan’s clarification, maintained Indonesian policies of non-commitment to either bloc of the Cold War, saying that Asian African powers would become the victims of the bloc opposition if they submitted to them (Times of Indonesia, 8 December 1960). The two leaders also differed on the plan to convene the second Asian African conference. President Ayub Khan had not yet supported Indonesia’s plans to hold this conference by stating that “…the gathering of Asian and African nations might not be needed urgently…” (Times of Indonesia, 12 December 1960). Pakistan’s position was perhaps a reaction to Indonesia’s unwillingness to support Islamabad’s Kashmir policy.

The nature of Indonesia’s relations with Pakistan changed as Jakarta’s friendship with New Delhi deteriorated. The setback in Indonesia-India relations was primarily caused by Nehru’s open refusal to Sukarno’s proposal for convening a second Asian-African gathering. Ever since the Bandung conference, Indonesia was keen to host such a meeting by which Jakarta had attained tremendous international prestige. Nehru argued that a second Asian-African conference would do more harm than good to Afro-Asian states by reiterating publicly that Asia’s and Africa’s problems would sharpen dissimilarities amongst them. Nehru’s actual reason was an unwillingness to see Indonesia earn more credit from the forum. On the other hand, China ardently endorsed the Indonesian proposal. India, with its old allies Yugoslavia and Egypt, both of whom resented Indonesia, hindered the proposal of a second Bandung-type meeting, and
instead planned a conference of nonalignment countries that eventually took place in Belgrade in September 1961 (Singh, 1967, 658).

On his journey to Belgrade, Sukarno declined Nehru’s invitation to visit New Delhi. Instead, he chose to have a short stop-over at Karachi Airport. At the airport, the Indonesian leader expressed his fondness for the people of Pakistan by admitting that he liked Pakistan and its people (BintangTimur, 1 September 1961). In spite of the remaining different views and policies between Indonesia and Pakistan, this episode demonstrated that parallel to a certain degree of coolness between Jakarta and New Delhi, due to Sukarno’s disappointment with Nehru, Indonesia had asserted its preference for Pakistan. It was to provide an important path towards the improvement of relations between the two states.

At the Belgrade conference, Indonesia strongly challenged India’s preeminent position. Sukarno insisted and was allowed to deliver his major address after Tito’s welcoming speech. The Indonesian daily BintangTimur (2 September 1961) reported that in the group photo of the participants Sukarno was at the centre, accompanied by Tito, Nasser, and Nehru. It could be interpreted as suggesting that Sukarno wanted to eliminate the prevailing notion that Nehru was the originator of nonalignment stand in the Cold War. However, India had succeeded in ensuring that the declaration of the non-alignment position subordinated all issues to its ideological commitment of being neither pro-Western nor Eastern Bloc for averting threats to world peace. The outcome of the Belgrade conference upset Sukarno since no mention had been made for the cause of the West Irian issue, while the twenty-seven-point Belgrade Declaration mentioned nationalists’ issues in Algeria, the Congo, Angola, Palestine, and Iberia (Indonesian Observer, 10 September 1961). Hence, the Belgrade conference had furthered tensions between India and Indonesia, opening up a wider space for Indonesia and Pakistan to promote each other’s interests.

Pakistan overtly supported Indonesia’s challenge to the nonaligned group. The editorial on 1 September published in a prominent Pakistani English daily - Dawn - expressed doubt if the non-aligned forum could play a crucial role in the resolution of the world’s problems. The editorial was critical of Nehru’s idea of neutrality as not being based on sincerity and honesty. Specifically, it criticised India’s response to Indonesian preference for a second meeting. It reported that previously most Afro-Asian states had
approved Indonesia’s demand for a second gathering, but India endeavoured to impede it due to a fear of China’s and Pakistan’s attendance. *Dawn* alleged India never had a sensitivity towards the plight of Asian and African peoples (Arora, 1975, 231-2). Such coverage was in line with the harsh criticism of the Belgrade conference in the Indonesian press. The editorial entitled ‘The Betrayal of Anti-colonialism’ in a pro-government daily *AngkatanBersenjata* (4 September 1961) pointed out that ignorance of the preponderant anti-imperialism struggle in West Irian by the Belgrade conference was the bias of nonalignment policy. It suggested the Indonesian Government review the friendship with India. Another daily *Siasat* (3 September 1961) even more asked the government to freeze ties with India. Importantly, the *Indonesian Observer* (2 September 1961) identified similarities between the Pakistani policy in Kashmir and Indonesian struggle for integrating West Irian. It identified the two cases as evidence of anti-colonial powers’ policies against foreign aggressors.

During the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1962, India expected Indonesia to condemn China. But, Indonesia remained impartial. Public opinion in India reflected considerable annoyance at Indonesia not taking a firm stand against China that was portrayed as the aggressor. India reminded Indonesia of the solidarity founded earlier in Colombo, Bogor, and Bandung. However, Indonesia confirmed its neutral position when in the six-nation-Colombo conference in December 1962 the Indian proposal for joint action against China was refused by Indonesia, Burma, and Cambodia (Singh, 1966, 172).

The Sino-Indian war of 1962 also had a profound impact on Pakistan’s foreign policy, which made it possible for Islamabad and Jakarta to stand side by side against New Delhi. The war had created an interest between India and the United States in their common desire to contain China. India, which had long rejected Washington’s offer of military aid and refused to adopt a friendly attitude towards the West, was compelled by its military debacle in 1962 to seek military assistance from the Anglo-American alliance. New Delhi’s request for military aid was favourably received in London and Washington which in addition promised long-term military aid. This formed an informal alignment of India and the Western military powers. The improvement in Indian-US relations affected Pakistan’s relations with the US; realising that Islamabad’s strategic importance for the US had declined, Pakistan reacted to the altered environment by forging closer relations with China. Beijing and Islamabad shared an interest in retaining the balance
of power in the region vis-à-vis India, and containing the possibility of Indian aggression (Hyder, 1966, 20).

Still in 1962, Jakarta rejected the Indian role in the transfer of power from the Dutch to Indonesia in West Irian. The New York Agreement concluded on 15 August 1962 had provided for the Netherlands’ administrative power to be reassigned to Indonesia within seven months beginning on 1 October 1962 to conclude on 1 May 1963. In the meantime, West Irian was to remain under the authority of the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA). To assist with the task, UNTEA invited India to provide the services of six military officers who would be led by Brigadier General Inderjeet Rikhey. Indonesia preferred Pakistan’s participation to that of India. Hence, at Indonesia’s request, Pakistan was appointed as an alternative to India to form the United Nations Security Force (UNSF) for West Irian, with a 1500 strong contingent commanded by Major General Said Uddin Khan (Indonesian Observer, 2 October 1962). This was a clear sign of Indonesian preference for, and recognition of, the importance of Pakistan, paving the way to improve their qualified relationships.

Between 1963 and 1964 the relations between Jakarta and Islamabad improved within the context of a triangular relationship involving Pakistan, Indonesia and China. The triangular relationship was directed against the emerging alliance between India, the US and the Soviet Union. Jakarta was interested in countering the Indian efforts to block its plans for the Afro-Asian world. But, it also sought support for its ‘crush Malaysia’ policy which included elements of confrontation without going to war with Malaysia. As elaborated by Indonesia’s Foreign Minister, Subandrio, in his speech before the Resimen Mahakarta in Yogyakarta on 20 January 1963, the policy towards Malaysia was guided by the Indonesian commitment to “pursuing confrontation against colonialism and imperialism in all its manifestations”. But since Malaysia had unfortunately ‘let itself become the proxy of colonialism and imperialism…[Indonesia was] compelled to adopt a policy of confrontation….’ (Djiwandono, 2001, 2). Malaysia was depicted by Jakarta as the extension of Western colonialism, especially of the British in Southeast Asia.

Pakistan, on its part, sought a new patron after reduced US support in the wake of the Sino-Indian border war. It also looked for endorsement by Asian and African states of
its Kashmir policy that was always couched in terms of the rights of the Muslim population to become part of the Islamic state of Pakistan. China needed Afro-Asian countries to stand by its efforts in countering the perceived American domination as well as Soviet communist revisionism expressed in its fear of encirclement. These interests brought the three states together (Singh, 1980, 44-5), and Indonesia and Pakistan discovered common interests. This was a step in the direction of closer relations than had been the case so far.

The emergence of the triangular relations of Indonesia-Pakistan-China marked a more radicalised worldview proposed by Sukarno. On many occasions, Sukarno had been more outspoken of the necessity for the Third World countries to ally with NEFOS. At the Cairo meeting of nonaligned states in September 1964, Sukarno challenged India’s peaceful coexistence policy by arguing how NEFOS and OLDEFOS could coexist peacefully in situations such as the conflict in Cambodia, Malaysia, and Vietnam (Bintang Timur, 7 October 1964). Still in the same month, Sukarno took Indonesia out of the UN, severely criticising the world organisation as being a stronghold of the OLDEFOS. In its place, Sukarno wanted to establish the conference of New Emerging Forces (CONEFOS). When Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Prime Minister of Malaya, proposed the joining together of conservative Malaya, with the British colony of Singapore, North Borneo, and Sarawak, and build a new more powerful nation called Malaysia, Sukarno felt it was an onslaught of the OLDEFOS. For Sukarno, Indonesia should have been consulted about the disposition of colonies around its borders. Further for Sukarno, the creation of Malaysia was designed to encircle and control the revolutionary NEFOS, Indonesia (Tan, 2007, 155).

Pakistan’s position on Indonesia’s NEFOS discourse was unique: Pakistan was a member of CENTO and had been beholden largely to American economic and military aid for nearly 15 years. But, it had also come to realise the significance of an alliance with Jakarta and Beijing under the guidance of the then Foreign Minister, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. However, during the height of the Indonesia-Malaysia confrontation in 1964-1965, Pakistan remained neutral with its proposal for mediation to resolve the dispute. Indonesia did not respond to this peace initiative, but Malaysia did (Times, 25 February 1965). However, Pakistan’s failure to side with Indonesia did not affect its strengthening of ties with Jakarta.
President Sukarno paid a visit to Pakistan in June 1963 where he was warmly welcomed. On his arrival, the Indonesian leader urged Pakistan and all NEFOS sympathisers to rally against the OLDEFOS order which retained domination, exploitation, and suppression of peoples around the world. President Ayub Khan praised Sukarno for his tough diplomacy and determination to advocate for the liberation of West Irian, and hoped that Indonesia would lend its remarkable support for the similar struggle of freedom being undertaken by the peoples of Kashmir. Sukarno did not pronounce Indonesian support for Pakistan’s position on Kashmir (*Indonesian Observer*, 24 June 1963). Nevertheless, in a speech in Murree on 25 June, Sukarno emphasised the need for more solid cooperation and real friendship between Indonesia and Pakistan. Furthermore, Sukarno declared that the tumultuous welcome he was receiving reflected spontaneous brotherly feelings the Pakistanis had for Indonesians (*BintangTimur*, 26 June 1963).

At this event too, there had emerged a mixed context within which Indonesia viewed its ties with Pakistan. Secular and Islamic discourses emerged as common ground on which it became possible to promote the relationship amidst the strategic shift in Indonesia-India relations. This was an important modification in Indonesia and Pakistan relations, by which the former had indicated greater willingness to recognise the role of its Islamic identity, albeit the dominant theme remained the struggle of NEFOS and Bandung spirit. It can be discerned in the way Sukarno approached relations with Pakistan as stated in the joint communiqué that, on the one hand, reaffirmed that the Asian African solidarity was the main basis for the two countries relations, and, on the other hand, mentioned Islam as the bond of societal friendship between Indonesians and Pakistanis (Text of Joint Communiqué, 1963).

Pakistan committed to favour the Indonesian plan for the holding of the second Afro-Asian meeting and was prepared to take part in the NEFOS Games to be held in Jakarta in 1964 instead of the Asian Games (*Indonesian Observer*, 1 July 1963). By confirming its support of a second Bandung-like forum, Pakistan was able to place its relations with Indonesia on a better footing than the deteriorating Indian-Indonesian ties. Foreign Minister Subandrio - when accompanying President Sukarno on his visit to Karachi – was assured that Indonesia had formed a promising friendship as was clearly
shown by the sincerity of the people and Government of Pakistan, and that this was very meaningful for the struggle of NEFOS (BintangTimur, 28 June 1963). Indonesia felt more confident with its closer relationship with Pakistan, which was sending a signal to India that the Jakarta-Islamabad collaboration was entering a new phase.

The conflict between India and Indonesia was meanwhile widening. Sukarno, eager to convene the second Asian African conference, hoped to seek recruits to his proposed NEFOS grouping. Nevertheless, India was determined to stall the holding of such a Bandung type meeting. The Shastri Government of India, on the diplomatic front, made a concerted attempt with Yugoslavia, Egypt, and Ceylon, to host a rival conference, the second nonalignment meeting. It was quite likely that a meeting between nonaligned states might render unnecessary a second Bandung-like conference because most Afro-Asian countries were taking part as well. At any rate, India considered a conference of Asia and Africa would have been delayed had the nonalignment group held their gathering in 1964 earlier than the planned Bandung gathering (Singh 1980, 45).

At the meeting held in Jakarta, the two blocs vainly opposed each other’s position. Controversies centred on the Indian proposal to invite Malaysia and the Soviet Union. For Indonesia, Malaysia did not exist. China could not accept the attendance of the Soviet Union at the conference which Peking had been long expecting to dominate and able to gain a good image. Indonesia at the time was close to the Soviet Union in the military field since its dispute over West Irian with the Netherlands. However, Jakarta was inclined to favour China, and Sukarno saw this as more helpful to his ‘crush Malaysia’ campaign. The trio Jakarta-Beijing-Islamabad put up a strong fight against the proposed Malaysian and Soviet participation. This issue further strained relations between Indonesia and India. The national media, controlled by the Indonesian Government, accused India of insulting Indonesian sensibility through the controversial initiative of trying to bar the Afro-Asian conference (Singh, 1967, 663).

Again, Indonesia felt hindered by India and likeminded parties. Indonesia, with the support of China and Pakistan, wanted to convene the second Asian-African conference in an Indonesian city, which was to be held prior to the nonalignment meeting at the end of 1964. Once more India struck at the very root of the Indonesian bid. To the great disappointment of Indonesia, Pakistan and China, India succeeded in
confirming support of African delegations, in that not only the second Afro-Asian gathering would be held in 1965 after the nonalignment conference, but also the venue would be in an African country, to be decided by the Organization of African Union (OAU). Algiers was identified on 10 March 1965 as a likely venue for the conference. To give more time to Algiers to make preparations, the schedule of the meeting was changed to 29 June 1965 (Millar & Miller, 1965, 311). By this time, Indonesia and India were engaged in a contest in respect to the ideas, venue, and participants in the convening of the Bandung-like meeting.

Amidst growing tensions with India, in September 1964 Sukarno visited Pakistan to seek a more solid commitment in support of Indonesia. The joint statement issued at the visit established the framework for a stronger relationship between Indonesia and Pakistan. It was on this visit that, for the first time, Sukarno asserted his political support for Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. Sukarno openly acknowledged that the Kashmir issue was of the Indonesian Government’s concern from now on, so that the people of Indonesia were called to support the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination. Any actions by an external ruler – the reference to India – to thwart the efforts of the majority of Kashmiri peoples was opposed in line with Indonesia’s continuing fight against imperialism of the OLDEFOS (ANTARA, 22 September 1964). Indonesia had made it clear that it was leaning towards Pakistan.

While Indonesia and Pakistan were fostering ties, further tension arose with India. Observers were convinced that the split between Indonesia and India within the Asian-African powers was a considerable factor in the failure of that second Bandung-type gathering (Weinstein, 1965, 335). Beside this, unsettled situations in Algiers following the overthrow of President Ben Bella on 19 June 1965 had paved the way for India to work actively with Ghana, Nigeria, Egypt, and Japan to reschedule the conference to 5 November 1965. In fact, the conference never took place (Singh, 1967, 664). The year 1965 witnessed the height of Indonesian hostility towards India.

This development served as a fresh opportunity for Indonesia and Pakistan to further consolidate their political relations. Foreign Minister Subandrio of Indonesia made a three-day visit to Pakistan beginning on 19 February 1965. In Pakistan, Subandrio assured the people of Pakistan that his government would carry on working with Pakistan for the strengthening of their relationship. An Indonesian press correspondent
in Karachi wrote that the Pakistani media gave wide coverage of Subandrio’s visit. Indonesia – especially President Sukarno – was symbolised as the champion of freedom in Asia, and the greatest leader of the Indonesian nation and Muslims. Moreover, under the leadership of the revolutionary Indonesia, the NEFOS movement was identified as the denominator of changes in the neo-colonised world. India, in contrast, was illustrated as the perpetrator of “brown imperialism” in the region (BintangTimur, 20 February 1965).

Since Indonesia was improving relations with Pakistan, Islam began to be relatively more present than was the case before in Sukarno’s rhetoric. Sukarno used the language of Islamic identity in an inaugural address at the Asian-African Islamic conference held at Bandung in the first half of March 1965. He exhorted “…to seek freedom from colonialism in all its forms [as] it had oppressed and suppressed the Muslim world…colonialism has put Islam in the chains against which Muslims are obliged to oppose…” (Indonesian Observer 15 March 1965). Sukarno attempted to construct an image that the struggle against colonialism featured in his worldview and policies were congruent with the Islamic duties.

Islam was used to gain favour for Indonesian political interest in humiliating India. In a reception for the participants of the Asian African Islamic conference, the Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio, said “…Islam should be the basis of worldwide human revolution…”. Despite complaints from the Indian delegates, the Indonesian foreign minister called upon the worldwide Muslims “…to present a united front against non-Muslim aggressors, and provide all assistances for Muslims being attacked by non-Muslims such as what happened in Kashmir…” (BintangTimur, 17 March 1965). This statement indicated that Indonesia had been willing to adopt Islamic language in the foreign policy more openly, although the change was not simply due to a heightened awareness of Islam as the bond with Pakistan and others in the Muslim world.

In any case, Pakistan benefited from this change. During the mid 1960s, the Islamic identity was more obviously and strongly applied in Indonesia’s approach to describe its relations with Pakistan. For instance, Indonesian Ambassador to Pakistan Brigadier General RoekmitoHendraniggrat wrote in Pakistan Horizon (1965, 142) “…the people of Pakistan had shown to us (Indonesians) an amount of goodwill and affectionate feelings to their brothers in Islam, a kind of relationship that would be hard to find in any other
bilateral ties...”. The ambassador added “...it is true that Islam makes indestructible bonds for the two nations...”. As the Pakistan Horizon published by the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs was a significant space where foreign policy issues were discussed in the country, the publication of the opinion of the Indonesian ambassador in the space indicated that he wanted to engage Pakistani opinion and policy makers with Indonesian Muslim identity.

The 1965 Indo-Pakistan War and the Indonesian Response

In September 1965, India and Pakistan fought their second war on Kashmir. Prior to the war, the two armies had clashed over the Rann of Kutch, a piece of marshy land along the border of India and adjoining Sindh. The issue was settled through an accord signed between the two states on 30 June 1965 (Choudhury, 1972, 242). One of the points in the agreement mentioned that the Kashmir dispute, if unresolved, would be submitted for arbitration by an international tribunal. Pakistan expected that this principle could be applied to the Kashmir issue in the future (Sayeed, 1966, 8). The Rann of Kutch fighting was perceived by Pakistan’s leadership as a solid demonstration of its strength. This encouraged Pakistan that an uprising could be spurred on in Indian-governed Kashmir. The Pakistani Government’s assessment was that India, having lost the Sino-Indian border war of 1962, would not be confident enough to risk an all out war, especially after its experience in the dispute over the Rann of Kutch. Additionally, Pakistan was confident that the well equipped military personnel as a result of the American aid it received over the last ten years would be able to thwart Indian moves. Only four months after the clash in Rann of Kutch, Pakistan commenced an underground operation – called ‘Operation Gibraltar’ – to send Mujahideen infiltrators across into the Indian-held Kashmir area to incite insurgence (Burke & Ziring, 1990, 333).

Pakistan’s provocative actions worried India, and New Delhi retaliated by mobilising troops to seize Kargil. It was followed by Indian advances along the ceasefire line between Pakistani and Indian-occupied Kashmir. Events started moving at rapid speed. Pakistani tanked troops moved up to occupy the Chamb sector of South-western corner of Indian-occupied Kashmir on 1 September 1965. India was concerned that if the
Pakistani troops took over Aknur and Jammu, New Delhi’s communications with Srinagar would be cut off and Indian troops would be bottled up between the ceasefire line and the valley. Thus, on 6 September 1965, India positioned troops to cross over the international borders between India and Pakistan. A full scale armed conflict was fought between India and Pakistan on the outer edges of Lahore and Sialkot in West Pakistan during the next two weeks. The war ended on 23 September 1965 without any side achieving a decisive breakthrough (Sayeed, 1966, 9).

Indonesia supported Pakistan during the 1965 War thus marking the third phase of the improvement in their relations. Indonesia declared readiness to militarily support Pakistan. According to the former Chief of Pakistan’s Air Force, Air Marshall Asghar Khan (1979, 44), he went to Jakarta and carried a personal letter from Ayub Khan for Sukarno, explaining the situation Pakistan was facing. Responding to the Pakistani plea for military aid, Sukarno said that Pakistan’s terrible need was Indonesia’s as well. Sukarno considered Indian attacks on Pakistan as though it was an aggression to Indonesia, and pledged, upon the ground of Islamic solidarity, to provide all assistances necessary for Pakistan. The Pakistani emissary was told to regard Indonesia as his own country and take from it whatever might be helpful to Pakistan in the emergency circumstances. This commitment materialized into Indonesia’s military support for Pakistan.

Indonesia went so far as to ask Ceylon permission to use its airports for transferring military aircrafts for Pakistan, which were manned by personnel of the Indonesian Staff College. In fact, it was reported that Ceylon rejected this request on account of its neutral policy towards India and Pakistan. In mid September, Sukarno sent the Indonesian Chief of Staff, Vice Marshall Omar Dhani to China for a secret mission to obtain spare parts for military airplanes as Indonesia was arranging to dispatch them for military assistance to Pakistan. Then, Indonesia gave eight MiG-19 jet fighters to Pakistan without asking for permits from the Soviet authority (Khan, 1979, 47).

In addition to air force aid, the Indonesian Government agreed to give naval aid. Indonesia, at Pakistan’s request for aid, was ready to take over the Andaman group of islands. The Chief Commander of Indonesian navy believed that India did not deserve
to be there in Andaman and Nicobar islands since they are an extension of the Indonesian territory of Sumatra, and are located between Indonesia and East Pakistan. Therefore, the Indonesian navy commenced patrols and undertook inspection of these areas to see what India had done there (BintangTimur, 10 September 1965). An observer even said that India had postponed launching its sea strikes on Pakistan after realizing that the Indonesian navy was already in Pakistan’s seas⁴ (WahyudiPurnomo, interview Feburary 2012). The Indonesian military aid to Pakistan illustrates that Indonesian support was not confined to sheer rhetoric.

The Indonesian elite gave statements suggesting that they viewed India as an aggressor in Kashmir and the perpetrator of conflict in the state. Assertive language backing Pakistan was heard in Jakarta during the war. Sukarno gave a press conference expressing the fellow feeling and prayers of Indonesians for Pakistanis who were fighting sternly against aggression to the sovereignty of their country and people (Pakistan Horizon,1965, 364). The Chairman of the Indonesian Parliament, ArudjiKartawinata, and Chairman of PartaiKomunis Indonesia (the Indonesian Communist Party, PKI) D. N. Aidit, shared similar views and depicted Indians as the representation of neo-imperialists in Asia. They also advised the Sukarno Government to devote more humanitarian assistance to Pakistanis in need (BintangTimur, 8 September 1965).

It may be argued that the Indonesian support for Pakistan was extended within the context of the China-Pakistan-Indonesia triangular alliance that had evolved since the turn of the 1960s. Jakarta was willing to cooperate with China in supporting Pakistan during the war both diplomatically and militarily. But, the explanations of Indonesian policy on Pakistan located the support within the context of Indonesia’s struggle against imperialism, and its Islamic identity. In explaining the Indonesian government’s policy on supporting Pakistan, the Minister of Communication RuslanAbdulgani spoke to journalists in Jakarta, saying that India was in doubt about anti-colonialism, endorsing the birth of the colonial puppet Malaysia, as well as betraying the Bandung Spirit. On the other hand, Pakistan had developed friendship and solidarity with Indonesia in the struggle against colonialism, faithful in respect to the rights of self-determination, and compliant with the Bandung Spirit. Therefore, Indonesia decided to support Pakistan’s

⁴WahyudiPurnomo is an expert of Indonesian foreign policy in South Asia under Sukarno.
struggle for the Kashmiri people’s rights of self-determination (ANTARA, 7 September 1965).

Generally, media in Indonesia was in favour of the government’s policy towards Pakistan. For instance, an editorial of the nationalist daily Kompas (10 September 1965) wrote an appraisal of Indonesia’s tangible support for Pakistan which was of help in fortifying the struggle of the Kashmiri people. The daily expressed that every nation has an inalienable right to self-rule. In the case of Kashmir, its people’s rights were denied by India due to the latter’s selfish national interest. The policy adopted by Indonesia was correct because it was aimed at defending the rights of self-determination for peoples in Kashmir. Based on the Bandung Spirit of Asian and African solidarity, the Government of Indonesia was urged to help heighten Pakistan’s bargaining position in international diplomatic arenas.

Ambassador Hendraninggrat – when inaugurating the Indonesian consulate in Dhaka on 19 September 1965 – stated that the Indonesian Government and Muslims gave Pakistan their full political and moral support without reservations. Emphasising solidarity in the name of Islam, Hendraninggrat mentioned “…no power on earth that could disturb Islamic bonds binding Indonesia and Pakistan…” (ANTARA, 20 September 1965). With this statement, it is clear that the Indonesian Government had offered its support for Pakistan by both acknowledging the need for the pursuance of Muslim solidarity and the struggle against imperialism manifested in Kashmir; a dual-approach that admitted - even if to a limited extent - the importance of Islam in Indonesia and Pakistan relations.

Societal groups in Indonesia also supported Pakistan with reference to their common Islamic identity. As the war started on 6 September, an angry, 2,000 strong mass organised by the youth wing of NahdlatulUlama Party demonstrated in front of the Indian embassy in Jakarta, mouthing anti-India and pro-Pakistan slogans. Two days later, another bigger mass rally took place, and on 9 September massive gatherings turned violence. The Indian embassy was stoned and ransacked, three cars belonging to the embassy were burnt out, and the Indian information service office was occupied through force by angry Indonesian mobs (Sayeed, 1968, 236). It was reported that in
West Java the property of Indians was placed in custody. In Medan North Sumatra, the Indian consulate and Khalsa English School were seized by rowdy elements. The Gandhi Memorial School and office of Air-India in Jakarta were also attacked. In this troubled atmosphere, the Indian Embassy in Jakarta decided to evacuate the wives and children of its staff (Singh, 1966, 174).

Nahdlatul Ulama pledged a readiness to send volunteers to Kashmir to fight against Indian forces there. The former leader and founder of Laskar Hezbollah and Laskar Sabiillah, affiliated mostly with Nahdlatul Ulama, Kiai Masykur expressed his great sympathy to Pakistan. He said that he was called upon to do that by the history of his and other Muslim fighters who had struggled hand-in-hand with Pakistani Muslim soldiers to defend the freedom of Indonesia during the 1940s. Therefore, it was his duty to pay back those services given by Pakistani Muslim brothers by supporting them against the attacks of foreigners - the reference was to Indians (Kompas, 11 September 1965).

Despite its professed secularist identity, the Sukarno Government, represented by Foreign Minister Subandrio, appreciated the commitment and actions by the Islamist activists of Nahdlatul Ulama. He claimed “…the show of solidarity by the Indonesian masses is highly appreciable…it reflects the genuine feeling of support of Indonesian peoples for Pakistanis who are fighting powerfully to safeguard their independence and territorial integrity…” (Indonesian Observer, 10 September 1965). Although there was no report suggesting that the Indonesian Government facilitated volunteers to go to Kashmir, the events taking place in Jakarta and other cities where mass protests against Indians continued violently, with no effort made by the security authorities to control or stop them, indicated that the government favoured the violent actions.

**Conclusion**

What can be learnt from the case study is that foreign policy conducted by Sukarno over the 1960s was not always a set of rational official actions toward external environments. There were both material and ideational factors influencing the making and implementation of Jakarta’s foreign relations. As a country with the world’s largest Muslim population, Indonesia’s politics and international affairs had something to do with Islam. Although Islam is not the primary cause of foreign policy, it played the roles
in strengthening Jakarta’s strategic interest, exemplified by its responses to the Kashmir war of September 1965.

With regard to the ongoing debate on the role and position of Islam in Indonesia’s foreign policy, the case study has demonstrated, firstly, that investigation through case study of bilateral ties between Indonesia and Pakistan (1960-1965) can provide an understanding about the presence of Islamic ideas in foreign policy, including the dynamics of Jakarta’s attitude toward Islamic-related issues, and its implication to the Muslim community. Secondly, Islamic features have not been entirely absent in Jakarta’s participation in international affairs of the Muslim world. Islam has proven to be an important consideration of the governmental policy when there has been a congruent interest between the ruling elite and Islamic groups in response to a specific issue.

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