Chapter IX. Conclusion

IX. 1. What Do The Case Studies Tell Us?

This chapter draws together the main themes that have been addressed throughout this thesis and relates them to the research questions outlined in Chapter I. These questioned the position and importance of Islam in Indonesia’s foreign policy toward the Muslim world, the reactions of the Muslim community to the international issues pertinent to Islamic feelings, the influence of the Muslim community to foreign policy making, the state’s efforts to justify its foreign policy on non-Islamic grounds, and the extent of Indonesia’s involvement with the Muslim world during the Soeharto era. The above main issues shaped the central theme that has guided the entire thesis, which focused on the explanation of ‘State-Society’ relationship concerning Indonesia’s foreign policy toward the Muslim world during the Soeharto era.

This study started from the premise that foreign policy begins at home in which the domestic political process, including personal rule, political institutions, political affiliations and the strength of civil society, are significant factors in foreign policy making. Furthermore, the importance of domestic politics in foreign policy analysis is also based on the idea that there might be a clash of particularistic interests within the environment of national institutions and between the government institutions and the domestic community. As this study demonstrated, the State and Indonesia’s Muslim community had different views on some international
issues pertinent to Islamic sentiments. Consequently, there were competing interests between the State and Indonesia's Muslim community in attempting to shape foreign policy toward the Muslim World.

In the history of Indonesian politics (since 1920s), the interactions between the State and the Muslim community have been colored by tensions. As discussed in Chapter II, antagonism and mutual suspicion were the main characteristics of the interaction between the State and Muslim community which basically came from different political interpretations of Islam as well as different political interests of Indonesia's Muslim organizations from the state. Some Muslim groups perceived that Islam served as both a religious and a political force which can influence the policy making process.

The struggle between the dominant political subcultures of secular-nationalists (mostly Abangan Muslims and non-Muslims) and religious-nationalists (mostly Santri Muslims) was also reflected in Indonesia's foreign policy, especially toward the Muslim world. In principle, the basic components of Indonesia's foreign policy: anti-colonialism and nationalism, discussed in Chapter IV, were the result of the victory of the secular-nationalist over the religious-nationalists in managing Indonesia's foreign relations. The latter wanted to include religious sentiments in managing both Indonesia's domestic politics and international relations, or at least to influence foreign policy making. In other words, Islam's disputed place as a basis for all policy has been a source of conflict between the State and Society (Muslim community) in Indonesia's foreign policy toward the Muslim world.
It is also noteworthy that the growing demands of the Indonesian Muslims for greater participation in foreign policy making was also triggered by developments in the Muslim world in which political Islam re-emerged as a global political force in the 1980s and particularly in the post-Cold War era. As discussed in Chapter III, the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the double-standard policy of the Western world, particularly the US, towards the Muslim world were the major reasons for the revival of global political Islam.

This thesis explored the position and the influence of Islam in Indonesia’s foreign policy toward the Muslim world by utilizing four different case studies:

Indonesia’s relationship with the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC);
Indonesia’s position on the regional order in the Middle East;
Indonesia’s role in the peaceful settlement of the Moro problem; and
Indonesia’s position on the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

These case studies have provided insights into the interactions between the State and Indonesia’s Islamic community in the conduct of Indonesia’s foreign policy. The above case studies have also demonstrated the continuity and changes of perceptions, and attitudes of the New Order regime, particularly President Soeharto, to Islam and its position in Indonesia’s foreign policy.

**Case Study I: Indonesia’s Participation In the OIC**

Even though Indonesia actively participated in most OIC programs, Indonesia never claimed its participation was based on religious considerations but based on its desire for political cooperation among developing countries. Internationally, this political stance served as a
diplomatic tool to maintain a balanced relationship with both the Muslim world and Western countries. It means that Indonesia has a 'wide' involvement in the OIC but without a 'deep' level of commitment. Moreover, the influence of the Muslim community in influencing Indonesia's policies to this religious-based international organization was insignificant. As discussed in Chapter V, Indonesia's Muslim community has a minimum of interest in increasing the welfare of the global Ummah. In fact, it paid attention only to international issues in which Islam is threatened by or in conflict with other non-Islamic values or forces.

On the other hand, Indonesia needed to maintain its participation in OIC in order to get political support from Muslim countries on foreign policy issues, which involve the interests of the Western world (i.e East Timor issue). In other words, Indonesia's participation in OIC was driven by pragmatic reasons dictated by Soeharto's domestic and international agendas.

**Case Study II: Indonesia's Relations With the Middle East (PLO, Israel and the Gulf War)**

Unlike Indonesia's involvement in OIC, the interaction between the State and the Muslim community toward the Middle East was quite intense and obvious. The voices of some of Indonesia's Muslim communities were also strongly articulated through many different channels in expressing Islamic sentiments. Yet, Indonesia's government has always avoided the inclusion of religious factors in its foreign policy toward the Middle East which then triggered huge emotional responses from the Muslim community, particularly from the 'scripturalist' and the 'hardliner' groups.
The first issue which invited significant responses from Indonesia's Muslim community was Palestine. Even though the Indonesian government always maintained that support for the struggle of the Palestinians was based on universal values as stated in the 1945 Constitution, Islamic sentiments could not be totally denied on this issue.

Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that there were different interpretations within Indonesia's Muslim community itself on the Palestine issue. This chapter shows that some 'hard-liner' Muslim groups, which are a minority in Indonesia, linked the issue of Palestine with Islamic solidarity. The Palestine issue, according to them, was part of the conflict between Islam and non-Islam. As a result, some Muslim groups conducted massive demonstrations and demanded the State give stronger support to the struggle of the Palestinians. They argued that as the country with the biggest Muslim population in the world, Indonesia had a moral obligation to provide sustained support for the Palestinians.

The attitudes of the Indonesian government toward the Palestine issue changed significantly in the late 1980s. One of the significant indicators of the shift was the decision to permit the PLO to open an embassy in Jakarta. However, the alteration of Indonesia's attitude toward the Palestinians was not triggered by the continuous demands of some Islamic groups (such as Muhammadiyah and KISDI), rather, it was due to other reasons: namely, the changing domestic political map in which the Muslim community grew to be a more significant societal group in domestic politics, the new agendas of Soeharto's political need to chair the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) and the need to obtain political support for the issue of East Timor from Middle
East countries. The other significant reason was the US approval for Soeharto to permit PLO to open its official diplomatic representative in Jakarta. In this context, the changes of Indonesia's policy toward the PLO were pushed by the simultaneous development of its international and domestic environments. With this policy shift, Soeharto not only obtained more political support from Indonesia's Muslim community but he has also changed the perception of Indonesia in the Muslim world.

An even more significant political concern of Indonesia's Muslim community was the issue of opening diplomatic ties between Indonesia and Israel. On this issue, Indonesia's Muslim community was outspoken in rejecting the idea of establishing diplomatic ties with Israel. However, on this issue Soeharto was not responsive to the demands of the Muslim community but rather more anticipative to the possible negative impacts of rejecting opening diplomatic ties with Israel, which could have reduced his legitimacy. In other words, the government's policy of refusing to establish diplomatic ties with Israel was not due to the changing sensitivity of Soeharto toward the Muslim community but to the need to gain political support from the Muslim community for the sake of his own domestic political agenda. More importantly, Soeharto's rejection of diplomatic ties with Israel was used not only as a crucial effort to dampen opposition from the Muslim community, but also to build political coalitions with elements of the Muslim community which would be useful to further foster his domestic political power.

The tension between the State and the Muslim community was also evident over the issue of the Gulf War. The State always argued that the Gulf War
was not a religious war between Islam and non-Islam. Some Muslim groups, on the other hand, perceived it as part of neo-colonialism of the US toward the Muslim world. Others, though, saw it as a religious war. Despite different perceptions within the Muslim community on the Gulf war, one thing that can be underlined here is that some Muslim groups demanded that the State take more initiatives to help find diplomatic efforts to end the war. Yet Indonesia maintained a ‘wait and see’ policy toward the Gulf War due to the deep involvement of the major powers’ political and economic interests. In other words, Indonesia’s reluctance to become further involved in the Gulf war was due to its perception of the need to maintain good relationships with the Western world.

**Case Study III: Indonesia and the Moro Problem.**

On the Moro issue, the Indonesian government showed its deep concern to find a comprehensive peaceful solution of the conflict. As other cases have shown, Indonesia’s initiative to find such a solution was not based on religious solidarity (Islamic solidarity) but on the crucial need to have regional unity and cohesiveness in Southeast Asia. It was more important for Indonesia to have regional stability in the region than to build religious solidarity with the Moro people. This is because a strong regional orientation was the most crucial priority of Indonesia’s foreign policy. Indeed, a peaceful and stable Southeast Asia is the major concern of the ‘concentric circles’ of Indonesia’s foreign policy.

Domestically, Indonesia was also in the position that it never tolerated separatism or allowed a separatist movement to grow in Indonesia. It is also crucial to note that even though the Moro problem invited widespread
reactions from the Muslim world, the influence of Indonesia’s Muslim community to this regional issue was virtually non-existent. This was mainly due to two factors: the success of the Indonesian government in convincing the Muslim community that the Moro problem was a domestic problem of the Philippines; and the continuous efforts of the government to limit and even to hamper any negative impacts of the Moro conflict on Indonesia’s national unity.

**Case Study IV: Indonesia and the War in Bosnia**

On the issue of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Indonesia’s Muslim community showed its deep concern for the survival of the Muslim Bosnians. Indonesia’s Muslim community not only released strong statements in support of the struggle of the Muslim Bosnians but also conducted a number of demonstrations against the atrocities of the Serbs, the community also provided financial aid and even offered to send volunteer missions to help the struggle of the Bosnians. On the other hand, the State always argued that the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina had nothing to do with religious sentiments. This attitude aroused the anger of the Indonesia’s Muslim community to the State.

Interestingly, there were also sharply different perceptions and frictions within the State regarding policies on Bosnia between the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Military, particularly over the need to send Indonesian military troops. More specifically, this friction which occurred between the ‘secular-nationalist’ and the Islamist groups in the Military (ABRI, now TNI), demonstrated the power struggles and competition among them in Indonesia’s politics in the 1990s. The Department of Foreign Affairs
as a whole represented the nationalist-secular point of view. The Department of Foreign Affairs did not want to accept Islamic feelings in any Indonesian decision toward the Bosnian issue, while the Islamic faction in the military argued that domestic Islamic feelings could not be ignored.

The frictions between the political elites on Indonesia’s policy on Bosnia led to a polarization between the ‘secular-nationalist’ and the ‘Islamist’ groups. The secular-nationalist faction of ABRI and the Department of Foreign Affairs perceived that the revival of political Islam had pushed the reemergence of Islam as a political force, which in turn invited greater demands of the Muslim community in foreign policy issues based on Islamic sentiments.

This case study and the issue of Indonesia’s refusal of opening diplomatic ties with Israel are the only two case studies where the power and interest competition within the state, particularly within the military and between Deplu and the military, are clearly noticeable in foreign policy making. Yet Soeharto was strategically able to handle the power struggle between the competing groups. By signalling Indonesia’s readiness to send military observers to Bosnia-Herzegovina, to mobilize financial aid from Indonesia’s Muslim community, to build a mosque as a symbol of Islamic brotherhood between Indonesia’s Muslim community and the Muslim Bosnians and more importantly to visit Bosnia in the middle of war, Soeharto successfully manipulated the power struggle between the two competing groups.
IX.2. The Position of Islam In Indonesia's Foreign Policy Toward the Muslim World.

Overall, during most of the Soeharto era the state positioned Islam at the periphery of Indonesia's political stage. The role of the Muslim community in foreign policy issues depended greatly on the condition of domestic politics. Yet, Indonesia's Muslim community could still sometimes play a substantial role in influencing Indonesia's politics. The growing militancy of some elements of the Muslim community encouraged the government to 'accommodate' their wishes in the policy making process. This situation is obviously shown in Chapter VI which delineates the outspoken voices of Indonesia's Muslim community on Middle East issues, particularly on the idea of having diplomatic ties with Israel.

Even though the government denied the significant role of Islam in Indonesia's foreign policy, this study has demonstrated that the major hypothesis in this study, that "foreign policies are also influenced by the religious views and beliefs of policymakers and their constituents", is applicable in the issues of Middle East and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Thus, these findings clearly show that the government was aware of the need to take account of the Muslims' aspirations in the conduct of Indonesia's foreign policy.

More importantly, Chapters VI and VIII not only demonstrate a series of large scale mobilisation of Indonesia's Muslim community over the Middle East and Bosnia, but those chapters also disclosed sharply different perceptions within the State itself toward the above issues. In other words, these two chapters are the only case studies where the state was not a 'unitary-actor'.
However, as the discussion so far indicates, Islam has been utilized by the government to confirm considerations of realpolitik. Further, Islam, in some case studies, was only important in the implementation of foreign policy not in its formulation. This is because Islam was used to justify and legitimate foreign policy behavior. More importantly, the State manipulated the Muslim voices on foreign policy issues pertinent to Islamic sentiments to bolster Soeharto’s position in domestic politics.

**IX.3. The (In)Significance of Islam in Indonesia’s Foreign Policy Toward the Muslim World**

As it is quite clear from the arguments outlined above, the Soeharto regime disregarded Islam as a crucial factor in Indonesia’s foreign policy toward the Muslim world. Further, the New Order regime successfully hampered Islam from becoming a major focus of most controversial issues in Indonesia’s foreign policy. It is a fact of major importance of this study that Indonesia’s foreign policy has been conducted without involving Islam formally and explicitly. Unlike the foreign policy of many Muslim states in which Islam played a dominant role, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, the Soeharto regime has carefully avoided the use of Islamic terms and symbols in Indonesia’s foreign policy. In this context, Indonesia’s policy toward the Muslim world was governed by rationality and pragmatism rather than by emotion or religious sentiment.

Yet the input of Indonesia’s Islam community was one of the contributing factors in the implementation of Indonesia’s foreign policy. As has been discussed in the case studies, the foreign policy of Indonesia under Soeharto toward the Muslim world was the result of a mostly one-sided domestic political struggle between domestic actors, particularly the Muslim
community, and the State, each with conflicting interests in the international issues pertinent to Islamic feelings, and thus different foreign policy preferences.

Specifically, massive mobilization by Indonesia’s Muslim community at the domestic level has, in some cases (Israel and Bosnia-Herzegovina), motivated the State to consider their demands in conducting foreign relations toward the Muslim world. In this context, Indonesia’s Muslim community has provided the domestic political context for the role and position of Islam in Indonesia’s foreign policy toward the Muslim world. Empirically, the major findings of this study fit with Hagan’s proposition that ‘the state’s conduct of foreign policy is a function of its current internal political dynamics’. In other words, there was a strong link between the condition of domestic politics and Indonesia’s foreign policy toward the Muslim world. However, the New Order regime could almost always successfully avoid Islamic identification and mobilization in the realm of domestic politics and foreign policy which could have potential negative impacts on national security, stability and unity.

**IX.4. The Links Between the Theoretical Framework and the Empirical Findings.**

This study shows that despite a significant growth of political consciousness and awareness of Indonesia’s Muslim community in foreign affairs pertinent to Islamic sentiment in the late 1980s and 1990s, the State still plays a very decisive role in Indonesia’s foreign policy making. This was particularly evident during the Soeharto era in which the voices of the Muslim community were effectively tamed. This was due to two main strategies applied by the Soeharto regime: *inclusionary*, aimed to co-opt
Islam into conditional participation in the domestic political process which is principally controlled by the State; and exclusionary, seeking to deny Islam influence in the wider political community through repression. In this context, the Soeharto regime was largely successful in containing and neutralizing political Islam in domestic politics. However, Islamic sentiment continued to be a factor which the government had to take into account in certain issues (the issues related to Israel and Bosnia-Herzegovina) of Indonesia’s foreign policy toward the Muslim world.

This study has shown that in the case of Indonesia’s foreign policy toward the Muslim world, there was a significant interplay between the Statist, the Societal and transnational approaches in which the state is the most significant actor in foreign policy making and implementation (the Statist approach). However, the societal groups (the Muslim community) with all their transnational networks also play a continuing role in articulating their demands and interests in foreign policy issues pertinent to Islamic sentiments.

Hence, the interaction between the State and Indonesia’s Muslim community concerning the foreign policy issues in this present study produced several domestic political consequences: the state has utilized Indonesia’s Muslim community’s aspirations in order to mitigate opposition, and to build political coalitions and at the same time, this would be useful to retain its domestic political power. In this context, the strong domination of the state in the present study leads to ‘the state leading society’ which is a strong state guiding its society toward adaptive foreign policy behavior for the purpose of maintaining the power of the state. Even though this study
demonstrated that the state has a 'domestic agential power' or the ability to shape domestic realm and construct foreign policy (relatively) free of domestic social structural constraints, the link between current domestic political dynamics and the international environment was very obvious.

The major empirical consequence of the above pattern of interaction between the state and the Muslim community is that on most issues pertinent to the Muslim world, Indonesia adopted a 'policy of ambiguity'. The policy of ambiguity itself, on the other hand, was basically the result of both domestic politics and international conditions (Indonesia’s close relation with the Western world, particularly the US). As this study has shown the Muslim community in Indonesia was not monolithic. It was divided along different aliran, political interests and affiliations. On the other hand, internationally, Indonesia did not want to be perceived by the Western world of having close relations with the Muslim world, particularly with the radical Muslim states.

Theoretically, the regime’s motivation in the conduct of its foreign policy will be determined by the state’s fundamental needs to control the value allocation process within a society and domestic legitimacy needs (the ability to govern by retaining political power). Following this theoretical logic, Indonesia’s foreign policy toward the Muslim world was paralleled with Soeharto’s motivation to control the role of Islam in domestic politics and retain his political power by manipulating the demands of the Muslim community. From this point of view, this study has demonstrated that the overall case studies, to a large extent, support the theoretical approaches used in this study.
As the analysis model used in this study (in Chapter I) and the major findings show, the phenomenon of growing militancy and political demands were very obvious when we take a look at Indonesia’s (the state) responses to the demand of the Muslim community on the issue of Israel (Chapter VI) and Bosnia (Chapter VIII). In other words, Indonesia’s foreign policy behavior toward the Muslim world heavily relied on the Soeharto regime’s responses to the activities of the Muslim community. The other major finding of this study is that the policy choices taken by the state to the Muslim world were determined by the state’s agenda of needs and the capabilities of the Muslim community to influence the policies.

As a result, the level of Indonesia’s foreign policy commitments and activities toward the Muslim world are always reactive in nature. In other words, Indonesia tended to conduct a minimalist approach in its foreign policy toward the Muslim world. As a result, this approach has limited Indonesia’s foreign policy commitment toward the Muslim world.

The above findings then leads to both theoretical and empirical questions for further research. Theoretically, to what extent can a significant increase of political awareness in a society lead to the making of ‘society leading the state’, lead to society’s ability to influence foreign policy making? While the empirical question for further research is: if Indonesia’s Muslim community is more coherent and able to permanently provide direction by political lobbying on the conduct of Indonesia’s foreign policy toward the Muslim world, to what extent will Indonesia’s foreign policy be more significantly determined by the Islamic factor? In other words, will the secular nature of Indonesia’s foreign policy be altered to an Islamic foreign policy, or at least
will Indonesia have a more Islamic orientation in its foreign policy toward the Muslim world?

The above questions are quite crucial in the post Soeharto Indonesian foreign policy, especially in the current situation of the post-Cold War international system and the rapid development in the domestic political map when the political awareness of the Muslim community, the number of Islamic political parties and groups have significantly increased in the late 1990s.

As the theoretical framework drew in the introductory chapter, the need to engage a higher level of participation of the societal factor, particularly the Muslim community, in Indonesia's foreign policy implies a significant response of the state to the rapid development in the domestic arena as well as the challenges of the politics of globalization in the post Soeharto era. This means that the Islamic factor in Indonesia's foreign policy will become a more significant factor in the future due to the greater convergence of the domestic (societal) and the Muslim world (transnational) dimensions. In this context, the degree of "secularization of policy" and "religionization of policy" concerning the relationship between the state and religious community at the national level will remain debatable and will continue to be a controversial topic in Indonesia's foreign policy in the post Soeharto era.
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