

Domestic Politics and Indonesia's Foreign Policy on the Arab-Israeli Conflict

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Indonesian foreign policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict. This conflict has been concerned by the Government of Indonesia since Indonesia existed as a nation-state because of two reasons: firstly, a domestic sentiment especially Indonesian Muslim and secondly, the involvement of the major powers in the world in this conflict. The government response to the conflict is based on the views that Israel has occupied Palestinian territory illegally and the Government of Indonesia has supported Palestinian independence state. However, how the regimes have realized this policy in the history of Indonesian foreign policy on this conflict is not similar. The differences are shaped by domestic politics and international considerations.

Keywords: *the Arab-Israeli conflict, Indonesian foreign policy, Islam.*

Tulisan ini membahas dinamika politik luar negeri Indonesia berkaitan dengan konflik Arab-Israel. Konflik ini menjadi perhatian pemerintah Indonesia sejak berdirinya negara ini. Hal ini didasari oleh dua hal. Pertama, konflik Arab-Israel menyangkut sentimen domestik, khususnya Muslim Indonesia. Kedua, perhatian masyarakat internasional khususnya negara-negara besar terhadap permasalahan ini sangat tinggi. Dasar berpijak pemerintah Indonesia menanggapi konflik ini antara satu rezim dengan rezim lain relatif sama, yaitu bahwa pendudukan Israel atas Palestina adalah ilegal dan pemerintah Indonesia mendukung kemerdekaan Palestina. Namun, implementasi dari tiap rezim atas garis kebijakan ini berbeda-beda, dipengaruhi oleh dinamika politik domestik dan internasional.

Kata-Kata Kunci: *konflik Arab-Israel, politik luar negeri Indonesia, Islam.*

The Indonesian government maintains that the Arab-Israeli Conflict, which has continued since the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948, is one of the most sensitive and long standing issues in the United Nations (Deplu 2009). This conflict has involved major powers in the world and all Indonesian governments have had to deal with the issue in their foreign policy. Moreover, this conflict has also involved Muslim sentiment domestically and internationally. This paper argues that although Indonesian governments' response to the Arab-Israeli Conflict has differed from one regime to another depending on the domestic and international political situation, however, each regime has maintained a similar standing position regarding this issue; that Israel has occupied Arab territory illegally. This paper will elaborate the history of Indonesia's government response to the Arab-Israeli Conflict and how domestic politics shaped international Indonesia's position on this conflict.

Culture and Indonesia's Foreign Policy

The dominant social value orientation in a society usually shapes the foundation of both its external goals and the means to achieve them. The conversion of a society's dominant cultural values into foreign policy plans and actions involves the impact of public opinion on foreign policy making (Rosenau 1976, 22). Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilization describing the global context of conflict emphasizes the role of culture in the international affairs (Huntington 1993). With regard to this issue, Hudson (2007, 104) argues that what we do or should do on foreign policy depends on how we define 'Who are we?' and 'Who are they?' Who we are refers to deep cultural beliefs actively shared among a large majority of the populace and who they are involves concerns over groups of people who are being dealt with based on their own identity (Hudson 2007, 104-106).

Based on cultural approach, the relationship between Arabs and Israelis, for instance, is determined by how Arabs and Israelis define themselves and how Arabs view Israelis, and vice versa. What each country has done to make its foreign policy strategies constructs the nation's cultural background. The claims by Arabs and by Israelis for Jerusalem or Al-Quds to be an aspiring capital city, of the state of Palestine and of the state of Israel are based on their respective cultural backgrounds. Jerusalem is a special place for Muslims (Arab and non-Arab) due to this city including the Noble Sanctuary or the *Haram al-Sharif* where the Prophet Muhammad SAW is believed by Muslims to have visited in the Miracle Night Journey *Isra* and *Mi'raj*. This spot is known to the Israelis as the Temple Mount where the Jews believe that the platform of Solomon's Temple was located. The competing important symbols of this place make an agreement between Arab and Israel to resolve the conflict difficult to

achieve (Bickerton and Clausner 2007, 7-8). This example indicates that national identities based on historical memories and cultures are used to shape foreign policy action. This approach, however, ignores economics and competition for natural resources that cultural history creates. The Israeli settlements and occupation on the West Bank, for instance, also had an economic motive, namely Israel wanted to control the Dead Sea which produces minerals such as potash, bromine, caustic soda, magnesium, and sodium chloride, and to control water resources, especially those coming from the Jordan River which crosses the West Bank, and with surface and ground waters which also spread over the West Bank territory (EWASH, n.d.).

Culturally, Indonesian society is diverse in terms of religion, ethno-linguistics and race, and the regional and local bases of communalism (Brown 1995, 118-119). Although approximately 85 per cent of Indonesians are Muslims, they divide between more devout Muslims, the *santri*, and the more nominal Muslims, the *abangan*, whose actual religious beliefs and practices owe more to Hinduism as it existed before the Islamic impact than they do to Islam (Geertz 1960, 121-130). *Santri* can be further divided into two categories: Muslim traditionalists who usually affiliate to the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) and Muslim modernists who commonly affiliate to *Muhammadiyah*. It is estimated that the majority of the Javanese people are *abangan*. This can be seen from the results of every general election since 1955, with Islamic parties never winning in Java (Feith 1971).¹ Over forty years ago Feith argued that the *abangan* usually preferred being affiliated to secular parties (nationalist or communist parties in the Old Order) rather than Islamic parties (Feith 1970, 8-9). In other words, when defining 'who we are' that refers to deep cultural beliefs shared among people (Hudson 2007, 104-106), a large majority of Indonesians is considered to ignore overt Islamic values or identification in politics. This dominant value orientation has shaped a foundation of foreign policy making in the history of Indonesia, including the response to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Illegal Occupation of Israel

It is called illegal because based on the UN Security Council Resolution 242 on 22 November 1967; Israel has to withdraw its IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) from territories occupied after the War of 1967 (Parker

¹ In the general election in 1955 the percentage of voters for the main non-religious parties in East Java, Central Java, West Java, and Jakarta was 46.6%, 59.53%, 42.3%, and 38% respectively, while the those for the main religious parties was 45.75%, 30.27%, 42.1% and 44.71% respectively (Feith, 1971, 78-81).

1992, 177-178; Rodinson 1970, 187).² These territories are Sinai, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank. Only Sinai was returned to Egypt after the Camp David Accords in 1978. Several talks have been conducted by the Governments of Israel and Syria over the returning of the Golan Heights to Syria with compensation of a permanent peace between Israel and Syria, such as between Israel and Egypt, however these efforts have failed (Bickerton & Klausner 2007, 318-321). Meanwhile, when it comes to the rights of Palestinian people, Israel only gave autonomy to the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank under the strict security control of Israel. The creation of Palestine as an independent state is far away from being achieved because of sensitive issues of security, the status of Jerusalem, the future of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank, the rights of Palestinian refugees, and the distribution of water resources (Bickerton and Klausner 2007, 387-390).³ The illegal occupations by Israel, as they are defined in Indonesia as colonialist, are not acceptable to Indonesia under the terms of Indonesia's 1945 Constitution which stated: "Whereas independence is the inalienable right of all nations, therefore all colonialism must be abolished in this world as it is not in conformity with humanity and justice."

² In the spring of 1967 along the Syrian-Israeli border the tension between Syrian and Israeli armed forces arose. Israel shot down six Syrian aircraft and the regime of Syria conducted sabotage and intelligence operations in Israeli territory. Because of the tension, the IDF were sent to the Syrian frontiers. At the same time, President Gamal Abd al-Nasser mobilized Egyptian troops to Sinai. Jordan as the weakest country in the front line of Israel signed a joint Egyptian-Jordanian defence pact on 30 May 1967 to protect Jordan from Israeli attacks. Surrounded by Arab countries which did not recognize her independence, Israel launched pre-emptive attacks in the June 1967 and conquered within six days the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the West Bank including East Jerusalem (Parker 1992, 177-178; Rodinson 1970, 187). The legal Israeli territory is based on UN Resolution 181, known as the Partition Plan of 1947.

³ Israeli security is a crucial issue because of the threat of violence coming from Palestinian fighters of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Moreover, Israel has expanded the Jewish settlements in the West Bank as well as around Jerusalem. Deals on how to protect them have been difficult to achieve. On the rights of Palestinian refugees, the debates are about which Palestinian refugees have the right to return to Palestine. The Palestinian Authority argues that all of the Palestinian people whose families were expelled from Palestine since the War of 1948, estimated at 3-4 million, have the right of return, while Israel has proposed 100,000 can return. Regarding Jerusalem's status, Palestinians proposed that this city, especially East Jerusalem including the Old City where the late-7th Century Al-Aqsa Mosque is located, becomes the capital city of Palestine, while Israel has committed to not divide this city and claims it as the eternal capital city of Israel (Bickerton and Klausner 2007, 387-390).

Before the Camp David Accords in 1978, all Arab states had refused to recognize Israel as an independent state. After the end of the Turkish Ottoman Empire which had included Palestine, from 1922 to 1948 the whole area of Palestine had been administered by Britain under a legal Mandate of the League of Nations, the predecessor of the United Nations which was established in 1945. The UN Special Committee on Palestine in 1947 had proposed a partition of British-administered Palestine into seven sections. Three sections were to be under Palestinian Arabs' control, three sections would be controlled by Jews, and one (Jerusalem and Bethlehem) would be administered by the UN. The partition plan was opposed by all six Arab state members of the UN: Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq and Yemen (Goldschmidt & Davidson 2006, 287-290). They argued that all Palestinian territories belonged to Arabs and a historical claim of the Jews on Palestinian land as a place where the state of Israel would be established was not acceptable (Fisk 2005, 402-406). Meanwhile, Israel accepted the partition plan of the UN. Besides using historical claims, Israel based her claim to establish the state of Israel in Palestine on the 1917 Balfour Declaration. When the British Mandate over Palestine ended in 1948, Israel proclaimed her independence. This triggered the War of 1948, or as Arab people called it *An-Nakhba* (The Disaster), because more than 700,000 Arabs were expelled or fled from their lands and sought refuge in the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon (Goldschmidt & Davidson 2006, 291).

Soekarno's Era: Between Arab and Israel

Since the recognition of Indonesian independence by the Dutch in December 1949, Israel had made efforts to build its relationship with Indonesia. President Chaim Weizmann and Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion congratulated President Sukarno and Foreign Minister Muhammad Hatta on the transfer of power from the Dutch to the Government of Indonesia at the end of 1949 by sending telegrams and, in January 1950, Indonesia was fully recognized by Israel as a new state. Hatta responded to Israeli's messages with thanks without offering reciprocal recognition to Israel. Then Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett wrote to Hatta informing him that a goodwill mission from Israel was going to be sent to Jakarta, however Hatta suggested postponing this without giving due time (Barton & Rubenstein 2005).

Indonesia's support for the Arab position was based on the Arab countries having recognized Indonesia as a new state before the 1949 transfer of power. Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Saudi Arabia recognized Indonesia in 1947 and Yemen in 1948 (Panitya Penulisan Sedjarah Deplu 1971, 74-75). Moreover, the majority of Indonesians were Muslim as in Arab states. Indonesia also needed Arab states' support on its Western New

Guinea/Irian cause which had not been transferred by the Dutch to Indonesia. At the Asian and African Conference in Bandung (1955), Indonesia together with Pakistan refused to involve Israel in the conference. Afterwards, when the War of 1956 broke out in the Suez Canal Crisis between Egypt on the one side and Britain, France and Israel on the other side in response to the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by Nasser, Indonesia under Soekarno supported Nasser's decision (Panitya Penulisan Sedjarah Deplu 1971, 251). There was a close relationship between Indonesian national leader Soekarno and Pan-Arabism leader Gamal Abdul Nasser, two of the five founding fathers of the Non-Aligned Movement.⁴ After the War of 1956, Dag Hammarskjöld, the Secretary General of the UN, asked Indonesia to participate in the UN Peace Keeping Forces to observe the ceasefire in Sinai Peninsula and the government for the first time sent a contingent (Panitya Penulisan Sedjarah Deplu 1971, 254).

The solidarity of Indonesia with Arabs in the conflict with Israel also appeared when Indonesia became the host of the Asian Games in Jakarta in September 1962. Jakarta refused to grant visas to Israeli athletes as well as to the sport teams of Nationalist China (Taiwan). The Indian Vice-President of the Asian Games Committee Sondhi responded by urging withdrawal of official recognition from the games. As a result, the Indonesian public protested in front of the Indian Embassy in Jakarta. The consequence of these cases was that Indonesia was suspended by the IOC (International Olympic Committee) from being allowed to participate in the Olympic Games until Indonesia apologised to those refused and gave an assurance to not commit political discrimination in the future. However, Sukarno refused to do this and Indonesia even sponsored a rival international sports festival known as the GANEFO/Games of the New Emerging Forces (Leifer 1983, 138; Modelski 1963, 87).

Arab-Israeli Conflict in the Frame of Nefos-Oldefos

Even though Islam is followed by a majority of Indonesians, Indonesia's foreign policy position on the Arab-Israeli Conflict during Sukarno's regime was not based on Islamic values but was influenced by Sukarno's dialectical idea of the world order. Soekarno classified the powers in the world into two categories (Modelski 1963, 80); the New Emerging Forces (Nefos) and the Old Established Forces (Oldefos). Indonesia, Sukarno argues, was part of the Nefos together with socialist countries (East Bloc). Based on Soekarno's ideas, the Arab world which had struggled to gain

⁴ The other founding fathers were President Broz Tito from Yugoslavia, Prime Minister Muhammad Ali Jinnah from Pakistan, and Jawaharlal Nehru from India.

independence from the West was also part of the Nefos. In accordance, Arabic countries which had direct borders with Israel such as Egypt and Syria at that time were also close to the East Bloc. On the contrary, Israel had been clearly supported by the countries in the West such as the US, the UK and France, countries categorized by Soekarno as the Oldefos. Given that definition of the situation, Indonesia under Sukarno was in favour to the struggle of Arab countries when they involved conflict with Israel. With regard to the Palestinian cause, it was their right to set up an independent state in their territory and what Israel had done against Palestinian people by occupying their territories was a pattern of colonialism and imperialism. In other words, Sukarno's support for the Arabs was much more because of anti-imperialism or for reasons of post-colonialism rather than pan-Islamic solidarity. Barton and Rubenstein (2005) argue that Sukarno's concept of the official state ideology did not give preference to an Islamic state or Islamist conception but referred to Pancasila (Five Pillars) which emphasized national unity and a theistic but non-sectarian secularism. This had implications for Sukarno's views on world affairs. Indonesia supported Arabs when they were involved conflict with the new state of Israel because of the support of Israel by the West, the old established forces, in order to realise a new-imperialism in the emerging Afro-Asian world.

Pragmatism in the New Order

When it came to the New Order under Soeharto, the basic principle of Indonesia's foreign policy on the Arab-Israeli Conflict was similar: Indonesia rejected Israeli occupation of Arab territories and supported the right for Palestinians to establish an independent Palestinian state. However, in terms of how the foreign policy was implemented, compared to the Old Order, the New Order tended to be more moderate. For instance, after the War of 1967 Indonesia proposed direct talks between Israel and its Arab neighbours, while amongst Arab countries direct talks between Arabs and Israel were a sensitive issue due to Arabs were not recognizing Israel at that time. Indonesia also did not show real solidarity after the Arab-Israeli Conflict in 1973, because when Arab countries embargoed oil exports to countries which supported Israel such as the US, the Netherlands, Canada, Portugal, Rhodesia, and South Africa (Bickerton & Klausner 2007, 172), Indonesia did not participate in this action, because the New Order regime was clearly pro the West, especially the US which supported Israel. Moreover, after 1968 the largest oil company from Texas, Mobil Oil (later ExxonMobil) which had operated in Indonesia for decades, had been cooperating with the Indonesian National Oil Company (Pertamina) as a Production Sharing Contractor for Pertamina (Exxon 2010). When the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) agreed to raise the oil export price by up to 10% in October 1975,

Indonesia only raised its price by 1.6%, although it followed the subsequent OPEC agreement to raise the price by up to 10% after the OPEC Conference in Doha in December 1976. Not just in regards to the Arab-Israeli Conflict, in general the Middle East was not a main concern of the regime under Soeharto. Another example of Indonesia not paying attention to this region can be seen when King Faisal from Saudi Arabia visited Indonesia in 1972, but it was not until five years later that the exchange visit was conducted by President Soeharto in 1977 - after the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the energy crisis in 1973-1974, the global economic crisis in 1975-1976, and King Faisal having passed away and been replaced by King Khalid (Roesnadi 1979, 248-264).

Indonesia was also late to allow the opening of a Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) representative office in Jakarta. After the war of 1967, the PLO became a popular movement representing the Palestinian people (Sayigh 1992, 258-261).⁵ The Rabat Arab League Summit in October 1974 recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the United Nations recognized the leadership of Yasser Arafat. Moreover, especially since 1982 the PLO had acted as a state in dealing with Arab governments (Andoni 1991, 64). Indonesia's Foreign Minister Adam Malik recognized the PLO in 1974 and agreed to open an office in Jakarta. This policy, however, was postponed because the Indonesian military worried about the 'terror' activities conducted by the PLO, the impact of the PLO on Indonesian Muslim radicalism, and the existence of communist elements within the PLO. Fifteen years later in order to gain support from Arab countries when Indonesia desired to be chair of the conference of the Non-Aligned Movement and to gain support for

⁵ The PLO consisted of ten organisations with different background ideologies, from left wing nationalism, communism to ba'athism ('Arab socialism'). Amongst those organisations, Fatah established by Yasser Arafat was the most dominant faction. This organisation became popular because of its guerrilla strategy with random attacks on Israel in the period of 1967-1982. Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Jordan supported this organisation by giving intelligence information, logistics, and weapons. They also offered their territories, especially Jordan, as the basis for guerrilla activities (Sayigh 1992, 258-261). Another movement which was concerned with the Palestinian struggle was the Moslem Brotherhood (*Al-Ikhwaniyyah Muslimun*). This organisation after the War of 1967 had taken a non-violent strategy by building a social base through social activities in the occupied Palestinian territories. When the first Intifada erupted at the end of 1987, this organisation set up Hamas (*Harakah Muqawwama Islamiyya*) led by Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, and the strategy of this organisation changed to be an armed, political as well as social, organisation. For more details on the development of Hamas see Z. Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1994. Also see M. Lewitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*, Yale University Press, New Heaven, 2006.

Indonesia's position on East Timor in the UN, Jakarta decided to open a Palestinian Embassy in Jakarta in 1989. Three years later, the Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement was conducted in Jakarta between 1 and 6 September 1992, attended by state leaders including Yasser Arafat (Suryadinata 1997, 160-161).

Because the right of Palestinian people to establish a Palestinian independent state had not been given by Israel, Indonesia had not opened diplomatic ties with Israel yet.⁶ This did not mean that there was no contact between Indonesia and Israel. Secret contacts between Indonesia under Suharto and Israel were started after Israel defeated the Arab states in the 1967 War. High ranks of the Indonesian Army were impressed by the Israel military capability. Indonesian Foreign Minister Adam Malik in private channels asked Israel to accept that Indonesia's official policy which was pro-Arab was to fulfil domestic consumption. The contacts had to be conducted secretly, because any publicity this could affect Indonesian public opinion about the government (Barton and Rubenstein 2005, 2).⁷ The proof that there were military contacts between Indonesia and Israel could be seen in 1980 when the Indonesian military, through an intelligence operation known as "Operation Alpha", bought 32 A-4 Skyhawk aircraft from Israel (*Metro TV* 2008; Peorwoko 2007; Leifer 1983). Even though there were no diplomatic ties, "business" like this could occur by using other countries which had diplomatic ties with Indonesia as well as Israel (Sutiono 2011, interview).⁸

⁶ AFP reported that at least 112 countries in the world from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America formally recognized Palestine as a state. In October 2011, Palestine officially became one of members of UNESCO (United Nations of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), even though the US and Israel resisted it. Because of this membership, for the first time the flag of Palestine was raised at UNESCO's Headquarters. See 'More than 100 countries recognize Palestine as a state', *Al-Arabiya*, 15 December 2011, <<http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/15/182782.html>> accessed 28 February 2012.

⁷ Barton and Rubenstein, p. 2.

⁸ An Indonesian diplomat stated that Indonesia bought war planes from Israel simply because of business. "*Lo nawarin gue beli*", (You offer I buy), he stated. Interview by the author with Pribadi Sutiono, an Indonesian diplomat, in Jakarta 21 October 2011. In the case of the Skyhawks' procurement, Djoko Poerwoko, former Chief of National Air Defence Command of the Indonesian Air Force recounted that ten Indonesian pilots, including him, who were involved in this operation departed to Singapore from Halim Perdana Kusuma (military) Airport Jakarta. They knew only that they would be sent to the US to be trained as Skyhawk pilots in Arizona. However, when they arrived in Singapore, Chief of BIA (*Badan Intelijen ABRI/Indonesian Military Intelligent Body*) Major General Benny Moerdhani delivered a briefing to them that they would be sent secretly to Israel with a mission to be trained as Skyhawk pilots and to delivery 32 Skyhawk aircrafts to Indonesia. If the mission failed, they

Afterwards, the relationship between Indonesia and Israel become more open. This can be seen, firstly, by Indonesian citizens as long as they hold an ordinary passport (with a green cover) were permitted to enter Israel from 1983, while the holders of Indonesian passports for government employees (with blue covers, known as *paspor dinas*) who had duties abroad were still prohibited from entering Israel as well as Taiwan (Majid 2012, interview).⁹ In 1994 four Muslim leaders, including Abdurrahman Wahid, were invited to attend a Seminar in Israel organized by the Harry S. Truman Institute and witnessed the signing of the Israel-Jordan agreement.¹⁰ After the signing of the Declaration of Principle (DOP) between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin in Washington DC on 13 September 1993, Arafat visited Jakarta to gain support for the implementation of the DOP and then, surprisingly, Suharto also accepted a visit by Rabin to Jakarta a year later on 15 October 1994. In 1995 Suharto met Rabin again in Washington (Perwita 2002, 137; Suryadinata 1997, 161). Contacts between Indonesia and Israel sponsored by state and non-state actors gradually moved from being only secret to be more open, indicating that there was a will from Indonesia's government as well as private individuals and groups to build relations with Israel. These efforts were conducted by measuring domestic public responses, especially from Muslim communities, about the more serious relationship at the level of opening official diplomatic ties with Israel.

were not returned to be Indonesian citizens. Their Indonesian passports were taken and changed with fake identities (Singaporean passports). From Singapore, they departed to Frankfurt, and then from Frankfurt Airport to Tel Aviv. At Ben Gurion Airport, they were arrested by Israeli officers and they were jailed underground. Without knowing what happened after that, in this place they met several Indonesian military intelligence officers. Then the ten Indonesian air force pilots were sent to an Air Force Base in Eliat City and trained there for four months. After finishing their training they got brevets as fighter pilots. However, these certificates were burned by other Indonesian intelligence officers to hide proof that there was military cooperation between Indonesia and Israel. Before returning home to Indonesia, they travelled to the US, visited main cities in this country, and took pictures as proof that they had been to the US for their military training. This story could be seen in "Operation Alpha", Secret Operation, *Metro TV*, Jakarta, 26 July 2008, or see the autobiography of F. Djoko Poerwoko (Poerwoko, F. Djoko 2007. *Menari di Angkasa*, Jakarta: Kata).

⁹ If a government employee wants to study in Israel or Taiwan, for instance, he or she cannot use a blue passport which is issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enter either country. He or she has to use a green passport which is issued by the Indonesian Immigration Office under the Ministry of Law and Human Rights. Interview by the author with Agus Abdul Majid an Immigration Officer on 12 May 2012.

¹⁰ Other leaders invited were Habib Chirzin (Muhammadiyah), Djohan Effendy (Department of Religion), and Bondan Gunawan (Democracy Forum)

Calculating Domestic Voices

During the Habibie Administration, there was no specific response about the Arab-Israeli Conflict. Habibie was much more concerned about self-determination for East Timor and overcoming Indonesia's immediate domestic political problems. Moreover, negative sentiment amongst Muslims, especially in Indonesia and Malaysia, against Jews and Israel was raised because of a statement by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir who accused a Jewish investor George Soros of being an actor behind the Asian financial crisis (Winters 2000, 38). After Habibie, the Wahid and Megawati Administration continued the policy of supporting Palestine and trying to force Israel to recognise a Palestinian independent state. Even though Abdurrahman Wahid, as a former leader of NU, delivered a speech advocating the opening of diplomatic ties with Israel¹¹, however, during his administration, he did not realize this policy. His Foreign Minister Alwi Shihab stated that diplomatic ties with Israel were suspended. The agenda of President Wahid visiting Tel Aviv was also postponed due to domestic pressure rejecting the proposed links between Indonesia and Israel. Shihab also emphasized that Indonesia would not open diplomatic ties with Israel until Israel recognized a Palestinian independent state (*Tempo*, 13/07/2001).

As had Soeharto, Wahid calculated the domestic resistance if he made efforts on opening diplomatic ties with Israel. Even though the NU did not involve itself in the protests or demonstrations as did the PKS and the pan-Islamic, anti-Zionist Hizbut Tahrir, officially this organisation also supported Palestine. However, Shalahuddin Wahid, one of the NU leaders, also acknowledged that there were elements in the NU which supported Wahid's idea to open diplomatic ties with Israel (Wahid 2010, interview).¹² After Wahid's removal from the office of President and replacement by his former Vice-President Megawati, a daughter of Soekarno, at the Summit Meeting of the 56-nation Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Kuala Lumpur in 2002 she committed to support a Palestinian independent state and criticized developed countries which were being unfair in threatening Palestinian people. When Israel attacked Ramallah and Bethlehem in March 2002, Megawati also condemned these Israeli

¹¹ As stated by him when he was asked by an *ABC* reporter, Jennifer Byrne, during his April 2002 visit to Australia about his efforts to forge links with Israel, Wahid answered, "Israel believes in God. While we have a diplomatic relationship and recognise diplomatically China and Russia, which are atheist states, then it's strange that we don't acknowledge Israel. This is the thing that we have to correct within Islam" (*ABC* 2002).

¹² Interview by the author with KH Shalahuddin Wahid the leader of NU in Pondok Pesantren Tebu Ireng Jombang East Java on 10 February 2010. When the author asked how many elements in the NU which supported the idea of Gus Dur, he replied that it was difficult to quantify.

attacks and the Indonesian government gave financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority under Yasser Arafat (Setiawati 2006, 59-61).

Religious Sentiment

Even though the secular view of decision makers in Indonesia on Arab-Israeli conflict becomes a main factor in the foreign policy making¹³, the religious sentiment amongst many Indonesian Muslims on the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot be ignored. Generally speaking, the educational curriculum in Indonesia introduced Islamic religion for Muslims as a compulsory subject. As a result, they are familiar with several places which are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or in the history of the prophets. Ancient cities such as Mecca where Masjid Al-Haram is located, Medina, Baghdad, Yemen, Damascus, and more specifically Jerusalem (Al-Quds) where the Masjid Al-Aqsa is located are not strange for most Indonesians. This mosque is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, the first *Qibla* (direction when Muslims are praying) before being changed to Ka'ba in Mecca and most Indonesian Muslims know the story of Isra' and Mi'raj (the Holy Quran Surah Bani Israel/Children of Israel verse 1). This story told of the night journey of the Prophet Muhammad SAW from Al-Haram Mosque in Mecca to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem called Isra', then the Prophet went up to the sky to meet Allah the God of the Universe and He revealed the order for 5 times a day prayer. The journey to the sky is called Mi'raj. This event is celebrated by Muslims and became one of the national holy days in the official Indonesian calendar. The contents of the celebration of Isra' and Mi'raj were not only on the divine order of the five praying times, but also are used to remind Indonesian Muslims about what happened in

¹³ A 'Secular view' on this conflict means that the Arab-Israeli conflict is not as a religious conflict, but as a conflict triggered by fighting for land between Palestinian Arabs and Israelis. The solution which was offered to solve this conflict was by giving land to both parties (known as 'land for peace'). The idea of land for peace was based on UN Resolution 242 when the War of 1967 broke out, especially point 1 (ii) which stated that, 'Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force'. See Document 6-3: UN Security Council Resolution 242, November 22, 1967 (Bickerton and Klausner 2007, 153). The (Islamic) 'Religious view' on this conflict is based on the fact that all of Palestine's land before the migration of Jews into the British Mandate era belonged to Arabs, then after the British Mandate ended in 1948 Israel took by force the land of Palestine in the War of 1948 and 1967. The Islamist solution offered to end Israeli's occupation of Palestinian land is by *Jihad*. Article 12 of the Charter of Hamas reveals, "There is not a higher peak in nationalism or depth in devotion than *Jihad* when an enemy lands on the Muslim territories. Fighting the enemy becomes the individual obligation of every Muslim man and woman" (Maqdsi 1993, 126).

Bumi Mi'raj (the earth of Mi'raj, meaning Palestine). In other words, Islamic education influences the way Indonesian Muslims think about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This religious sentiment amongst Muslims, a major part of the domestic public, had to be considered by political decision makers when democracy was chosen as a political system in Indonesia. During Yudhoyono Administration, for instance, when Hamas gained success in the 2006 election, then this movement has been boycotted by the West, Indonesia's Foreign Minister Nur Hassan Wirajuda stated that Indonesia respected the Palestinian people's democratic choice. Indonesia also called on the international community not to give any prejudice against Hamas. He added, "I believe that other democratic states should respect the Palestinian democratic decision. I hope anyone who wins the election will continue the peace process to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict." (*Suara Pembaharuan*, 28 January 2006). The Indonesian government's support to Hamas was to fulfil domestic public demand as the domestic public in Indonesia gave a positive image to Hamas and sympathy to this movement (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006).¹⁴

Then, when the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) attacked South Lebanon in July 2006 an attempt to release two Israeli soldiers who had been captured by Hezbollah fighters, Indonesia condemned Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Wirajuda asked the UN Security Council to stop the war (*Kompas*, 15 July 2006). Indonesian public especially Muslim groups demanded to go to Lebanon for *jihad*. When the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) deployed the military to realize a full cessation between Hezbollah and Israel, Indonesia has participated in the UNIFIL representing Muslim countries. When the first (December 2008-January 2009) as well as the second (November 2012) Gaza Wars erupted, the Government of Indonesia condemned un-proportionate and excessive Israeli attack against Gaza, called on the international community to take action stopping the war (*SCTV*, 29 Desember 2008)

Conclusion

The Arab-Israeli conflict was categorized as a high profile issue in Indonesia's foreign policy, because the public, more specifically the attentive public represented by religious interests groups in a largely Islamic society which was a newly democratic society with media and

¹⁴ A survey conducted by Pew Global Attitudes Project shows that in Indonesia 61% of the respondents felt that Hamas was good for Palestinians, 23% of the respondents maintained it was bad, and 33% said they did not know if it would be good or bad (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006, 2)

scholars of international relations and others as consequences of the transition towards democracy, paid attention to this issue. The tension between Arabs and Israel is a type of event in international affairs which attracted public concern, because this conflict involved public sentiments such as ideological background, cultural or religious beliefs. Moreover, the continued portrayal of events supported by a massive exposure by the mass media made ordinary people aware of what was happening in Palestine. Consequently, public opinion on this issue had to be considered in making foreign policy decision from one regime to another. Since the Arab-Israel conflict had attracted the public, especially Muslims, in Indonesia, this issue can be categorized as a constituency arena, meaning that political powers saw that the issue could be manipulated to gain public sympathy.

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