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## Islamic Identity and Foreign Policy Discourse: Indonesia's Responses to the US War in Afghanistan (2001-2002)

**Abstract:** *Observers of Indonesia's foreign policy commonly argue that while the state needs to include domestic Muslim interests in its foreign policy formulation, foreign policy officials have rarely considered Islam in their policy choices, with a dual-identity predicament constraining such a move. This article challenges this argument by demonstrating that foreign policy leaders have begun referring to Islamic identity and norms when justifying Indonesia's foreign policy choices. By discussing Indonesia's foreign policy responses to the United States' war in Afghanistan in 2001, this paper elucidates the way in which Indonesia's foreign policy leaders have constructed Islam as an "inclusive civilizational" identity in their foreign policy discourse, legitimizing their alliance with the global war on terrorism amid staunch domestic Muslim opposition to the war. They managed to turn identity constraint into opportunity by framing their policies within the context of "inclusive" and "integrative" Islamic values and norms.*

**Keywords:** Islamic Identity, Norms, Framing, Foreign Policy Discourse, War on Terror.

**Abstrak:** Para pemerhati kajian kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia umumnya berargumen bahwa walaupun pemerintah perlu memperhatikan kepentingan-kepentingan masyarakat Muslim dalam memformulasikan kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia, mereka hampir tidak pernah menggunakan simbol Islam untuk menjustifikasi pilihan kebijakan mereka disebabkan adanya “dilema identitas.” Artikel ini berargumen bahwa hal tersebut sudah berubah sejak 2001. Para pemegang kebijakan luar negeri mulai melirik norma dan nilai Islam sebagai pijakan justifikasi bagi pilihan kebijakan tersebut. Sebagai ilustrasi empiris, artikel ini membahas proses konstruksi Islam sebagai “identitas nasional” dan “peradaban” sebagai respons kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia terhadap kebijakan Amerika Serikat dalam perang terhadap terorisme di Afganistan pada 2001 yang ditentang oleh masyarakat Muslim. Melalui upaya tersebut, pemerintah dapat mengatasi dilema identitas dengan cara membingkai kebijakan untuk beraliansi dalam perang melawan teror dalam nilai-nilai Islam yang inklusif dan integratif.

**Kata kunci:** Identitas Keislaman, Norma, Pembingkai, Wacana Kebijakan Luar Negeri, Perang Melawan Teror.

**ملخص:** يرى مراقبو السياسة الخارجية الإندونيسية، بشكل عام، أنه على الرغم من أن الحكومة بحاجة إلى إيلاء الاهتمام بمصالح المجتمع المسلم في صياغة سياستها الخارجية، إلا أنها لا تستخدم الرموز الإسلامية في تبرير خياراتها السياسية بسبب وجود «معضلة الهوية». ويرى هذا المقال أن الأمر قد تغير منذ عام ٢٠٠١، حيث بدأ أصحاب القرار في شؤون السياسة الخارجية ينظرون إلى الأعراف والقيم الإسلامية كأساس لتبرير هذه الخيارات السياسية. وكمثال لذلك يبحث المقال في عملية بناء الإسلام باعتباره «الهوية الوطنية» و «الحضارة»، وذلك في إطار رد الحكومة الإندونيسية على السياسة الأمريكية في الحرب على الإرهاب في أفغانستان عام ٢٠٠١ والتي عارضها المجتمع المسلم، مما مكّن الحكومة من التغلب على معضلة الهوية من خلال تأطير سياساتها للتحالفات في مكافحة الإرهاب في سياق القيم الإسلامية الشاملة والتكاملية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الهوية الإسلامية، الأعراف، التأطير، خطاب السياسة الخارجية، الحرب على الإرهاب.

Most existing policy studies argue that Indonesia tends to carefully avoid using Islamic symbols when articulating its foreign policies (Gindarsah 2012; Laksmana 2011, 164–65; Leifer 1986, xvii; Perwita 2007; Sukma 2003b, 3–4; Wicaksana 2012). This is in contrast to most Muslim countries, which commonly utilize Islamic language to explain and justify to their own population what they do abroad (A. I. Dawisha 1983, 4–5; 180; See also Nair 1997; Telhami and Barnett 2002). The conventional wisdom has been that the absence of this Islamic symbolism has much to do with an identity predicament, inherent in pluralistic nations such as Indonesia (Gindarsah 2012; Laksmana 2011, 164–65; Leifer 1986, xvii; Perwita 2007; Sukma 2003b, 3–4; Wicaksana 2012). This dilemma is reflected in two aspects. Although Muslims constitute the majority of the population, and Indonesia is the home to the world’s largest Muslim population, Islam is not the official identity of the state. Foreign policy officials prefer to promote the country as a religiously neutral state, where all faiths have their place and are protected by the government. Thus, the country’s exceptional pluralism limits the exercise of Islamic identity in the rhetoric of foreign policy officials. Yet Islam serves as an important societal source of political legitimacy. The domestic social environment limits what the government can or cannot do in its foreign relations (This is one of the main arguments of Leifer 1986; Perwita 2007; Sukma 2003b). Although Islamic symbolism is relatively absent in Indonesia’s foreign relations, the faith serves as an influential constraint on some foreign policy issues. To tackle this identity predicament and the domestic constraint, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs usually takes the middle ground. While the Ministry carefully considers and accommodates domestic Muslim aspirations in its foreign policy formulation, it tends to avoid referring to Islam as an official framework for its foreign policies or the international identity of Indonesia (Azra 2000; Leifer 1986).

This article proposes that the dominant view maintaining that the government avoids using Islamic language should be corrected. Rather than avoiding it, the government has begun to embrace Islamic identity<sup>1</sup> in its foreign policy discourse, especially after *reformasi*. Through a close study of Indonesia’s responses to the United States’ “War on Terror” in Afghanistan in 2001, this paper demonstrates that the government constructed an Islamic identity in its foreign policy statements to

explain and justify its policy to domestic Muslim constituents opposing the war. This case suggests that the government, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Kementerian Luar Negeri, Kemlu*), has solved its identity dilemma, as it is now possible for *Kemlu* to use Islamic symbols to explain what it does abroad, as long as these symbols are expressed in terms of universal and inclusive civic identities and norms. This has broader implications for understanding the role of Islam in Indonesia's foreign policy after *reformasi*. Islam could serve as more than just a constraint, it could also function as a justification or legitimization for these policies.

This paper is part of the emerging literature observing a more positive and proactive take on Islam by *Kemlu* (Alles 2015; Fogg 2015; Hoesterey 2013; Sukma 2011; Umar 2016). One notable example is references in the current literature to *Kemlu's* projection of a moderate Islamic identity, empowerment of moderate Muslim groups in Indonesia's diplomacy after *reformasi*, and its promotion of Indonesia as an exemplar of a democratic Muslim country in the wake of the Arab Spring (Alles 2015; Anwar 2010; Hoesterey 2013; Murphy 2012; Nugraha 2012; Sukma 2011; Umar 2016). Delphine Alles (2015, 131) underscores that the increasing reference to Islamic language in foreign policy rhetoric suggests the need to reconsider Islam as a factor of constraint.<sup>2</sup> She proposes that Islam could become an instrument for achieving foreign policy goals: "The succeeding administrators (after Suharto) have striven to address this constraint ... in order to manage it as a controlled factor serving the interests of international policies compatible with their vision of Indonesia's national identity narrative" (Alles 2015, 50). In reference to Indonesia's diplomacy before independence, Kevin W. Fogg (2015, 329) likewise argues that Islam served "an instrument to enact policy."

This case study extends this finding by arguing that, apart from serving as a foreign policy instrument, Islam could also be employed by the government to justify foreign policy to a domestic audience. It also challenges it by demonstrating that reference to Islam as an instrument for foreign policy is significantly different from employing Islamic rhetoric to justify policy. Indonesia's foreign policy leaders have the choice to delegate reference to Islamic identity or issues to Islamic non-state actors in order to solve their identity dilemma. As Alles (2015, 117, 131) claims, the government only incorporates Islam by

“externalising religious issues to loyal, Islamic non-state actors, as a way of maintaining the national authorities’ neutrality on these issues.” Fogg (2015, 329) likewise contends: “[the promotion of Islamic identity] did not come from ... [the] government nor from the government-appointed representatives. Instead, Islam was deployed by societal groups at some distance (ideologically and geographically) from the state.” In the latter, by contrast, foreign policy officials themselves begin to use Islamic language to explain and justify their policy choices, a move that they usually avoid doing for the sake of religious neutrality. This difference has to be explained in terms of how it was possible for the government to construct Islamic symbols in its foreign policy rhetoric within the constraints of Indonesia’s religiously plural identity. This paper highlights this by demonstrating that it was possible for the government to project Islamic identity so long as it was expressed in terms of “inclusive,” “integrative,” and “multi-confessional” civic identities and norms. This case study also showcases that there is more to Islamic symbols in Indonesia’s foreign policy rhetoric than just reference to moderate Islam and democracy. It discusses the construction of Islam as a “civilizational identity” during the early years of Megawati’s term (2001-2002), a crucial period that become the breeding ground for much of the contemporary *Kemlu’s* practice of using Islamic language in its discourse.

### Foreign Policy Backgrounds

The following section explores the interplay between domestic and international contexts, which set out the grounds for the government to construct an Islamic identity in its foreign policy discourse in order to justify its foreign policy response to the United States’ War on Terror.

The September 11 attacks in the United States, and that country’s subsequent War on Terror policy, changed the international and domestic strategic environment of Indonesia’s foreign policy-making. First, while the Megawati government perceived its relations with the United States as extremely important for the country’s economic recovery and security, the September 11 tragedy altered the United States perception of Indonesia’s strategic importance. Second, the September 11 attacks gave a new burst of energy to domestic political Islam, whose political clout had increased during Megawati’s term. Each will be discussed in turn.

The fact that the United States was made the first official diplomatic destination of the newly formed Megawati government outside Southeast Asia indicated the importance of the United States to Megawati's foreign policy (Sastrohandoyo 2001). To her government, the United States remained one of the country's most important trading partners, more so after Indonesia was hit by the 1997 financial crisis. The presence of many economic ministers and officials in her entourage underlined the main foreign policy agenda of the visit, namely, Indonesia's economic recovery would not be possible without the support of the United States and international financial institutions in which the United States has an influential role (Sukma 2004, 86–87). Thus, an arrangement was made for Indonesia to visit the United States for further bilateral talks in economic and military relations. A visit to the United States was scheduled soon after President Megawati announced her cabinet, with a date set for 17 September 2001.

Nevertheless, the September 11 attacks changed the way the United States perceived the strategic importance of Indonesia in two ways. First, if it had not been for the September 11 tragedy, Indonesia's visit would have been treated just like a normal diplomatic visit. As expected, Indonesia's visit was instead seen in the light of the United States' new strategic interests in waging a global War on Terror (Anwar 2004, 84–85). After America declared its intention to retaliate for the attacks by attacking Afghanistan, there was resistance against this plan in the Muslim world, most of which was based on a perception that this was war against Islam or Muslim nations. In order to pacify this concern over United States interference in Muslim nations, the United States needed symbolic support from allied Muslim states, so as not to be seen to be waging a war against Islam (Adeney-Risakotta 2005, 337–38). Indonesia, being home to the largest Muslim population in the world, was considered the most representative state to take up this role.<sup>3</sup> Second, as a result of the global War on Terror campaign, the United States government changed its parameters for judging foes and friends, and its conditions for granting foreign aid to them (Sukma 2004, 86–87). Consequently, the Megawati government's economic diplomacy turned out to be directly entangled with its policy response to the War on Terror (Sastrohandoyo 2001). Accordingly, Megawati's government had to adjust the agenda of the visit. In addition to its economic diplomacy, the government was under pressure to pledge

its support to the United States campaign against terrorism, and particularly the plan to attack Afghanistan (Presiden Megawati Tetap ke AS 2001).

Indonesia's response to the war, however, occurred in the context of increasing clout and militancy of political Islam in the domestic environment (Effendy 2003, 222; Malley 2003, 136; Sukma 2003b, 96). First, Megawati's rise to the presidency was possible because of support from Islamic political parties. It all began in the 1999 general election. Initially, formally Islamic political parties did not attract significant voter support.<sup>4</sup> Out of twelve self-declared Islamic parties, only the PPP (the Islamic United Development Party) gained a substantial vote (10.7%), thus becoming the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest party among the big five.<sup>5</sup> Despite their small number, however, parliamentary politics gave PPP and other Islamic parties more political clout than was warranted by their electoral tally. This can be seen, for example, from the political maneuver of forming a loose coalition of Islamic political parties under the political caucus of *Poros Tengah* ("Central Axis"),<sup>6</sup> with the intention of making Abdurrahman Wahid the fourth President. The Central Axis was able to deflect Megawati's bid for presidency in 1999 despite the fact that her nationalist-secular party (PDI-P) was the winner of the general election (Sukma 2003b, 96). In 2001, after the departure of President Wahid from office, Megawati realized that she still could not rule without the support of Islamic political parties. In effect, she built a coalition with the Central Axis, the same loose coalition of smaller Islamic political parties that sank her bid for the presidency in 1999. The key political concession was that Megawati needed to accept Hamzah Haz, the leader of the PPP party, as her Vice President (Malley 2003, 136). By accepting Hamzah Haz, Sukma (2003b, 125) argues that Megawati "recognized the importance of Islamic credentials to strengthen the legitimacy of her government." Second, this political coalition was fragile, as the sheer necessity to form a coalition did not halt the competition between the different party elites. In terms of policy-making, the general support of other political parties within the coalition does not necessarily mean that policy contestation can be discounted.

The Megawati government's concerns to safeguard United States support for its economic recovery and military aid initially shaped her preference to support the War on Terror (Budi S. P. 2001; Jemadu 2005,

44). However, the increased clout of political Islam placed constraints on government policy decisions in support of the war (Capie 2004, 223; Desker 2002; Hafidz 2003; Hefner 2001; Sukma 2003a, 58–60). As will be discussed further in the following section, domestic Muslim groups and Megawati’s coalition members from Islamic political parties perceived the War on Terror as an assault against Islam. They constituted domestic constraints on foreign policy making. As Rizal Sukma (2003a, 65) points out, because of Megawati’s interest in maintaining the support of Islamic political parties for the stability of her government coalition, she “realized that a showdown with her coalition partners over the war on terrorism was not worthwhile.”

### **Domestic Opposition to the War**

Most Muslim groups in Indonesia framed the United States war in Afghanistan as an attack against Islam. This frame can be seen in two narratives. First, they interpreted the War on Terror as a stigmatisation of Islam. Second, they framed the United States attack as a continuation of its interventionist policies in the Middle East, the cradle of Islam.

When the United States declared its plan to wage war on Bin Laden and the Taliban regime who protected him in Afghanistan, most domestic Muslim groups in Indonesia perceived that the war was not supported by convincing evidence of Bin Laden’s complicity in the September 11 attacks. They came to an understanding that if the war proceeded without evidence, it confirmed their belief that the United States tended to treat all Muslims as terrorists. The risk was that the entire military operations would stigmatize “Islam.” In a national meeting of Islamic clerics under the auspices of the National Board of Indonesia’s Ulama (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) of Java, on 17 September 2001, the Muslim clerics maintained that, without evidence, the attacks might unjustly “discredit the Muslim community” (MUI Se-Jawa: *Jangan Pojokkan Umat Islam* 2001). They stated that even if later it would be proven that the perpetrators were Muslim groups, then “[the perpetrators] and their actions should not be seen as representative of the entire Muslim community” (MUI Se-Jawa: *Jangan Pojokkan Umat Islam* 2001). Hamzah Haz and the Speaker of Parliament, Amien Rais, argued that America’s common method of attributing terrorism to particular religious groups was not always accurate. Both recalled that the United States was mistaken when it accused Middle



Eastern hard-line Islamic groups of bombing an Oklahoma office block in 1995 (United States warned against blaming Islamic groups for attacks 2001). It turned out that the perpetrator was an American ex-serviceman who was disillusioned with the government's capitalist economic policy. Therefore, according to Din Syamsuddin, "The United States officials should not make careless accusations," arguing that "if the United States launches an attack on an Islamic country, such as Afghanistan [before providing evidence] ... I can imagine a start of a scenario of a global clash." (Fears Grow in Asia as War Against Terrorism Nears 2001) Din implied that the war could be interpreted as a clash between the United States (the West) and Islam, if the attack proceeded without evidence. Even when the United States government offered intelligence-based evidence to support its argument, and after Bin Laden confessed to his complicity in the attacks through veiled media statements, some Muslim groups were still not convinced and instead demanded evidence admissible in a courtroom (Smith 2003). This demand implied that their concern went beyond Bin Laden's case. They were anxious with how Islam was being stigmatised in the media, particularly in the West.<sup>7</sup>

Such anxiety had its roots in their reading of both recent events in the United States following the September 11 attacks and in historical narratives about the place of Islam in the West. For instance, when President Bush used the words "civilized world" as opposed to "axis of evil" in his rhetoric on the War on Terror campaign, the domestic public interpreted "evil" as a term attached to "Islam." This interpretation has historical roots: President Bush's discourse of "evil" rekindled previous post-Cold War discourses in the West, only with Islam as a "green menace," replacing the "red menace" of Communism as the new, post-Cold War geopolitical enemy profile (See Gerges 1999; John 1992). Amien Rais, the House Speaker, aptly described this profile when he said: "after the Cold War against communism, there is now a Cold War against Islam" (quoted in Sirozi 2006, 394).

In addition to their apprehensions about a stigma against Islam, most Muslim political elites and organisations framed the United States plan to retaliate against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan as an extension of American interventionist policies in the Middle East, the cradle of Islam. For example, then-Indonesian Vice-President Hamzah Haz said that before the United States government took any retaliatory

measures, it should have reflected on why the terrorist attacks happened in the first place. He suggested that it was because of “America’s sins,” or its “unjust foreign policy” in the Middle East (quoted in Sukma 2003a, 57–58). MUI’s Java branch expressed the same sentiment in an even stronger statement asserting that the attacks should cause “the United States government to have self-criticism against its arrogant attitudes,” particularly with regard to its policies in the Middle East (MUI Se-Jawa: *Jangan Pojokkan Umat Islam* 2001). The use of such framing was widespread among analysts in Indonesia and beyond. For example, according to CSIS senior analyst, Jusuf Wanandi (2001), the September 11 attacks could be framed by some as “a retaliation by people who ... are feeling injustice from United States policies that are considered to be double standard, one-sided.” Therefore he argued that for a war against terrorism to be effective, the United States government should first address one of the root causes of the problem: “a sense of injustice” about American policies in the Middle East (Wanandi 2001). Dewi Fortuna Anwar, a close observer of Indonesia’s foreign policy, also commented that “the attack should give the United States a reason to reflect on why such attacks have been perpetrated, which may lead to recognition that maybe some United States policies have resulted in a lot of enemies for the United States” (quoted in *No Strings Attached to United States aid: Analysts* 2001).

By framing the United States attack in Afghanistan in the context of “unjust policies” in the Middle East, domestic Muslim groups interpreted the war as an assault against Islam. Historically, American involvement in Middle East conflicts (such as the Israel-Palestine conflict and the first Gulf War) has long aggravated domestic Muslim groups. Mobilizing solidarity with co-religious communities in the Middle East, particularly in Palestine, had long preoccupied various domestic Muslim groups in Indonesia.<sup>8</sup> Within such Pan-Islamic solidarity, they imagined the Islamic *ummah* as one people residing in an imagined unbounded territory (“the abode of Islam”), separate from the imagined modern nation-states created by Western colonialism. For them, Israeli subjugation of Palestinians lies at the heart of the Middle East conflict, since Jerusalem was considered the third most holy place after Mecca and Medina. Since the Israel-Arab war in the 1960s, the United States pledged to be Israel’s ally in the conflict; the historical moment that was kept in the collective memory of various domestic

Muslim groups. The story about a Zionist-cum-Western conspiracy was generated from such historical narratives. They interpreted the current attacks on American soil as the outcome of such injustice. Thus, the frame that the plan to attack Afghanistan was a continuation of past American ‘interventionist’ policies in the Middle East “fuelled ... the idea that the war on terrorism is a war on Islam” (quoted in McBeth 2002, 17; see also Mujani and Burhanuddin 2005, 119–20). Unfortunately, President Bush made inflammatory statements, which described the war in Afghanistan as a “crusade,” further vindicating the validity of such framing. Several leaders of radical Islamic groups, for example, argued that Bush’s “crusade” rhetoric made a clash between Islam and the West inevitable (Islam Moderat dan Fundamentalis Hanya Stigma Palsu 2002). In the view of a Laskar Jihad activist, Bush’s rhetoric indicated America’s “true nature” – its enmity with Islam (Tabloid Laskar Jihad, No. 11, 2001, p. 8, quoted in Mujani and Burhanuddin 2005, 122).

Within this domestic political climate, wild conspiracy theories about “orchestrated attacks” against Islam were circulating, particularly among radical Islamic groups. For example, Irfan S. Awwas from Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia expressed his doubt as to whether the attacks were indeed perpetrated by al Qaeda (quoted by Mujani and Burhanuddin 2005, 128). He argued that the United States’ advanced security system made it difficult for such small terrorist groups to infiltrate the country and launch a strike of such magnitude. Donald K. Emmerson (2002, 118) and Smith (2003, 455) also noted there were rumours circulating in the fringe media that the CIA and Mossad were involved in orchestrating the September 11 attacks; alleging that Al Qaeda was a fiction created by United States government officials to scapegoat Islam. What is interesting about this claim is that it mobilized conspiracy theories which, together with the United States’ one-sided support for Israel in the Israel-Palestinian conflict, vindicated their belief that the American government and the Jews had conspired to attack Islam (see Hasan 2005, 311 for further details).

In brief, the early protests against the War on Terror made a discursive representation of the operation as an attack against Islam, or at least construed it as a stigmatization of Islam. Within such an interpretive frame, expressing support for the War on Terror would imply abetting the enemy and, therefore, such support was seen as illegitimate (see, for example, RI Committed to Global War on Terrorism 2001).

Subsequently, this paper discusses in some detail how the government defended its responses to the war amid such staunch domestic opposition by embracing an “inclusive” Islamic identity. It can be seen in three discursive formations along three phases of Indonesia’s responses to the war. First, the government constructed Islamic identity as a “civilizational identity,” to counter the “clash-of-civilization” thesis underlying domestic oppositional discourse. Second, it utilized Islamic identity as a frame for creating “shared interests” to generate broad-based consensus on the foreign policy response to the war. Third, it constructed “norms of the Muslim world” to back up its argument to support the international coalition for war on terrorism.

### **Islam as a Civilizational Identity**

This section discusses how, in the face of domestic Muslim oppositional discourse against the United States war, the government constructed an inclusive Islamic civilizational identity to show that its support for the war could not be interpreted as a war against Islam. Rather, it was presented as a war against terrorism; barbarians that threatened civilization, including Islam.

This identity construction can be implicitly seen in the government’s statements during President Megawati’s visit to the United States on 19 September 2001:

*As leader of the world’s largest Muslim population and the third largest democracy, President Megawati joined President Bush in underlining the importance of differentiating between the religion of Islam and the acts of violent extremists. Emphasizing that Islam is a religion of peace that neither teaches hatred nor condones violence, President Megawati encouraged President Bush in his stated purpose of building a broad coalition across religious lines and cultures to deal with these new and dangerous threats. She further emphasized the importance of taking into account the views of the Muslim world as the United States leads an appropriate response to the events of September 11 [emphasis added].” (United States and Indonesia on Terror and Tolerance: Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Indonesia on Terrorism and Religious Tolerance 2001)*

It is clear that, in her statements responding to the War on Terror, President Megawati is referring to Islamic symbols such as the “world’s largest Muslim population” and “views of the Muslim world.” Claiming to be the representative of the world’s largest Muslim country, she emphasized the crucial distinction between Islam and terrorism and the

importance of considering the feeling of the Muslim world in deciding appropriate responses to terrorism.

The government issued these statements, replete with Islamic symbols, in the context of condemning terrorism on the grounds of universal norms and values (including Islam) such as peace, security, and common humanity, with a view to expressing its sympathy with the United States and its support for the Global War on Terror.<sup>9</sup> In this instance, the government constructed an “inclusive” civilizational identity that framed terrorism as barbaric and the common enemy of and threat to humanity. For instance, a few hours after the September 11 attacks, Indonesia’s then-Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda stated: “the government of Indonesia condemns those barbaric and indiscriminate attacks” (RI deplores plane attacks on U.S. 2001). In her visit to the United States on September 19, while responding to American calls for an international War on Terror, President Megawati reiterated the government’s official stance saying that she “condemned the barbaric and indiscriminate acts carried out against innocent civilians” (U.S. and Indonesia Pledge Cooperation, Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Indonesia 2001) She also condemned the attacks as “very inhumane” (Remarks with Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri 2001) and “the worst atrocity ever inflicted in the history of civilization” (Solomon 2001). She further stated “these indiscriminate attacks have no place in a civilized world” (U.S. and Indonesia on Terror and Tolerance: Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Indonesia on Terrorism and Religious Tolerance 2001). Megawati then stressed the need for international cooperation between the United States and other “civilized countries” in combatting terrorism (Sukarnoputri 2001).

The Megawati government’s identity discourse generally conforms to the dominant “civilizational identity” discourse employed by most world leaders in response to the September 11 attacks and their aftermath (Acharya 2002). This identity discourse ascribes the “civilized self” to the community of humanity and, therefore, it is “premised upon the aspiration toward a range of universal values and norms, not upon a particular religious, ethnic, or linguistic identity” (O’Hagan 2004, 35). In this identity discourse, humanity as the community of mankind is assumed to generally share common “standards of civilizations,” such as justice, freedom, and other “universal values” of humanity (O’Hagan

2004, 36). Therefore, the “other” in this discourse of “civilized self” is not other “civilized selves,” with their plural identities (religious, linguistic or ethnic). Instead, the “civilized self” is often juxtaposed with a “barbarian other.” To use Bush’s term, the “evil” does not subscribe to these “common standards” of humanity. Barbaric are those people and actions that go “beyond the pale of international society” and “its underlying norms.” Accepting the premise that indiscriminate killing is “inhuman,” terrorism is, therefore, construed as an enemy of humanity (O’Hagan 2004, 34).

It is within this inclusive civilizational identity that the government constructed Islamic identity in its foreign policy discourse. In other words, the government’s discursive practice of juxtaposing Islam against terrorism occurs within the context of juxtaposing civilization against barbarism. As such, Islam was constructed as a part of the world’s “civilization” because it is a faith that promotes peace, rejects indiscriminate killing, and thus protects humanity, while terrorism was constructed as the “enemy” of and “threat” to this faith and civilized humanity because terrorism is a threat to this common humanity. The statement above by President Megawati reflects this:

Emphasizing that *Islam is a religion of peace that neither teaches hatred nor condones violence*, President Megawati encouraged President Bush in his stated purpose of building a *broad coalition across religious lines and cultures* to deal with these new and dangerous [terrorist] threats [emphasis added] (U.S. and Indonesia on Terror and Tolerance: Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Indonesia on Terrorism and Religious Tolerance 2001).

Megawati appealed that the War on Terror should be conducted in the framework of a broad civilizational coalition, involving all faiths and cultures. This suggests the government-sanctioned interpretive frame of conflict: that the War on Terror is not an assault against one particular faith, but an attack by a “coalition of civilization” against threatening “barbaric terrorism.” Consider also the statement made by former Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, who, in his capacity as senior adviser to the President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asserted that:

Terrorism is a threat not only to one country, to one people, but it is against humanity; whether we be Muslims, Christians or from other religions ... It has to be explained, that it [the Global War on Terror] is not against Islam and it should not be seen as against Islam and even not against the

Afghan people. But (the campaign) is against terrorism, against Osama bin Laden, who the United States and most countries agree has been behind this terror. Of course there are people who ... will continue to link this with a fight against Islam (Ali Alatas 2001).

Alatas frames terrorism as a “threat” (i.e. barbarism) that poses risks to “civilization” (i.e. humanity and all faith communities); the juxtaposition upon which he built his case that the War on Terror is not war against Islam. Many further statements also reflect such a discursive pattern. For example, Hassan Wirajuda stated: “terrorist threats had become a *global threat*, and Indonesia is no exception” (Time for U.S., Indonesia to unite on terrorism 2001). Rizal Sukma (Murad 2001), in his suggestion to the government, also stressed that terrorism is “a threat to the world community; global threat to humanity.” In concert with the government’s official statement, then *NU* leader, Hasyim Muzadi, concurs that the September 11 attacks were a “tragedy of *humanity* and not a tragedy of *religion*,” and “therefore, no society in the world must transform the terrorist attacks into a conflict of religions” (Muhammadiyah and NU Against Plan Calls for Jihad 2001). Prominent Indonesian muslim scholar Nurcholish Madjid (2001) also concurs that “Muslims, deemed by Allah as just according to the Koran, should be fair. We must realize that not only non-Muslims have become the victims of terrorist attacks. Muslim leaders, such as former Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, have also become victims of such attacks.” To put it succinctly, the objective of these statements is to demonstrate that terrorism is a threat to civilization and humanity irrespective of faith affiliations.

It is not yet clear, however, why this Islamic civilizational identity matters in the context of the government’s response to the war. Several analysts maintained that, from the United States’ perspective, statements of support for the War on Terror by the “world’s largest Muslim populous country” were crucial to help “the United States show that it is battling terrorism, not Islam” (Richardson 2001). Donald K. Emmerson (2001), a long-time observer of Indonesian politics also concurs: “the American side decided it wanted to proceed [with Megawati’s visit to United States] knowing the public relations value of early and visible support by the ruler of the world’s largest Muslim population, and the Indonesians agreed.” Bush’s assertions during his meeting with Megawati tend to confirm this view. He

stated that Indonesia's "support for the American people, and ... strong statement against terrorist activities ... meant a lot to us." This is because Indonesia "represent[s] the nation with the most Muslim people in the world" (U.S. and Indonesia Pledge Cooperation, Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Indonesia 2001).

Since the above observation relies mostly on United States officials' and the media's perspective on Indonesia's statement of support (i.e. they are external evaluations), we need to investigate how Indonesia's foreign policy officials themselves perceived this statement.

This research indicates that the construction of these Islamic symbols was motivated by the need to respond to domestic oppositional discourse, which framed the international War on Terror as an assault against Islam.

The Megawati government's visit to the United States from 19 to 27 September 2001 occurred against the backdrop of the above dominant oppositional discourse. Thus, the construction of Islam as a civilizational identity in Megawati's visit to the United States should be seen as an attempt to legitimize its foreign policy responses to the War on Terror in the face of such domestic Muslim opposition. There are two pieces of evidence to support this argument.

First, since most domestic groups framed the United States attack in Afghanistan as an assault against Islam, responding to the United States call for international cooperation to combat terrorism "did place policy makers in a difficult situation," in the words of PLE Priatna (2001), a senior Indonesian diplomat. This was due to, as former Foreign Minister Alwi Shihab put it, "the possible interpretation by many Indonesians that the war against terrorism would mean a battle against Muslims" (quoted in RI Committed to Global War on Terrorism 2001). Therefore, the government needed to craft its support for the war in a way that was not offensive to Islam. The construction of Islamic civilizational identity above clearly served as an antithesis to Huntington's clash of civilizations premise, which underpinned domestic oppositional discourse. As such, this discourse likely served as a counter frame against dominant domestic oppositional frames that interpreted the international War on Terror as an exemplary case of the war of the West against Islam. In an interview, then-Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda's (2014) comments confirmed this:



We made policies in response to the situation. Before we decided our position, we had to study how this situation was perceived by both international and domestic actors ... the general perception had been that the September 11 attacks vindicated the correctness of Huntington's theory of a clash of civilizations. The attacks reinforced the view that Islam is, indeed, clashing with the West. We have to correct this misperception (that Islam and West are in a clash). As a civilization, Islam as practiced by communities around the world, including in Indonesia, is plural. There is a process of cross-fertilization and civilizational convergence even between Islam and the West ... So, (we) cannot accept that there is an inherent clash between the two civilizations.

Second, in general, Indonesia's responses were first and foremost formulated to cater to domestic Muslim aspirations and concerns. In a closed meeting<sup>10</sup> in the office of the Coordinating Minister for Politics and Security (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono/SBY) on 15 September 2001 (three days before President Megawati's departure to the United States), a team of international relations experts, including Rizal Sukma, Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Senior Advisor and former Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, and Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda discussed President Megawati's response to the War on Terror during her visit to the United States on 19 September 2001. They specifically asked Megawati to consider domestic responses and sentiments, particularly Muslim groups, in devising her policy responses by not giving an explicit or affirmative/negative answer in case the United States asked Megawati about its plan to attack Afghanistan (Murad 2001, 17, 21, 24). The need to accommodate domestic aspirations was considered by the team as "a matter of national interests" (Murad 2001, 21, 24).

### **In the Interests of All**

Irrespective of the government's statements in the United States, most domestic Muslim groups regarded President Megawati's visit as a signal of "giving blessing" to the war in Afghanistan. For them, supporting such a war meant succumbing to United States' interests and sacrificing the interests of fellow Muslims. For instance, on 25 September, MUI quickly spotted official government policy statements during the visit and urged Megawati's government and other Muslim countries to "avoid being trapped into supporting the *subjective interests of the United States*" and, therefore, "not to be persuaded by the United States to support the planned aggression in any form, political or

moral” (MUI slams attacks on U.S. planned Afghanistan strike 2001). According to Nadir Muhammad, from the Vice-President’s United Development Party (PPP), “it seems that Megawati has not protected the Muslims’ interests” (Hari 2001). According to a Laskar Jihad leader, Megawati’s move to support the war on terrorism “ignored the feeling of the umma (Muslim community).” Different from most radical Muslim groups, moderate NU leader Hasyim Muzadi acknowledged that the country has legitimate *national* interest to secure United States support for its economic development. However, like most other Muslim leaders, he argued that the government “should also heed the interests of domestic ... Muslims” (Nurbianto and I 2001). A shift can be observed in the tone of domestic oppositional discourse that puts more emphasis on the dichotomy between the United States (“enemy”) interests and Muslim interests.<sup>11</sup>

In most domestic Muslim discourse, United States interests are defined as either ideological in nature, i.e., to attack Islam or Islamic countries, or economic, such as the United States’ desire to control oil resources (Nasir 2001). They mostly interpreted the desire to capture Bin Laden as a pretext. By acceding to these interests, most domestic Muslim groups argued that *their* interests would, in effect, be sacrificed. Their interests comprised of expression of faith-based solidarity to protect their co-religious allies from the attack of the enemy (for a survey on this opinion, see Mujani and Burhanuddin 2005). But for some analysts, this reason is also a pretext: their “real” interests were to challenge Megawati’s leadership in order to capture the power of the state (e.g. Hafidz 2003; Hefner 2001). Whatever the motivation may have been, the opposition groups framed their interests in terms of Islamic identity.

To further support their claims that the War on Terror served American interests, most domestic Muslim groups claimed that the United States was using a carrot-and-stick policy to persuade other countries to support its cause and interests. Media reports that covered public attitudes toward Megawati’s government in the United States indicated widespread domestic interpretations that the government’s visit was a strategic move to trade off its backing of the war in Afghanistan for the “carrot” of economic and military deals. For example, Jafar Umar Thalib the leader of radical Islamic group, Laskar Jihad, said that Megawati’s visit “can be seen as a form of support by

Megawati for America's plan to attack Afghanistan" (quoted in Sukma 2003a, 58) and such support reflected the government's submission to a "stick and carrot" policy (Mujani and Burhanuddin 2005, 122–23). Likewise, moderate NU and Muhammadiyah leaders noted that Indonesia "had to maintain good relations with the United States and its allies to help resuscitate [Indonesia's] economy" (Religious Leaders Urge Govt. to Cut Ties with U.S. 2001).

In light of this domestic discourse, Islamic political parties and members of the People's Consultative Assembly (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, DPR) asked the government to clarify its policy stance, and whose interests it served by advocating such a stance (Penjelasan Menlu RI Kepada Pemerintah AS: Tak Ada Warga AS yang Dapat Ancaman Fisik 2001). For example, the Chairman of Parliamentary Commission One on foreign affairs, Ibrahim Ambong, said that the DPR would "summon Minister of Foreign Affairs Hassan Wirayuda ... to explain the background of the promised aid" (No Strings Attached to U.S. aid: Analysts 2001). The demand for information came especially from leaders of Islamic political parties. A legislator from the informally Islamic political party PKB, Yusuf Muhammad, said that President Megawati had to explain what she "had promised President George W. Bush in return for the multimillion dollar aid package offered" (DPR Wants Mega's Trip Report 2001). Nadir Muhammad of the Vice-President's United Development Party (PPP) likewise commented that the visit "needs explanation" (Hari 2001). They were particularly interested in how Muslim interests were considered in their official stance. Samuel Koto, a legislator from the Reform faction, urged the President to invite Muslim leaders to discuss the official government stance and diplomatic talks in the United States in order to assess whether the government "takes the wishes of Islamic groups into account" (Hari 2001).

An information session was finally held in the DPR on 3 October 2001. The meeting was chaired by Ibrahim Ambong, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Commission One of the DPR from the Golkar party (Sikap Resmi RI atas Terorisme dibahas sidang Kabinet Hari Ini 2001). Two main agenda items were proposed (Hari 2001; Nurbiyanto 2001; Penjelasan Menlu RI Kepada Pemerintah AS: Tak Ada Warga AS yang Dapat Ancaman Fisik 2001; Sikap Resmi RI atas Terorisme dibahas sidang Kabinet Hari Ini 2001). First, the

government had to explain its stance with regard to the American plan to attack Afghanistan and the economic deals that it received. Second, they were particularly interested in investigating whether such deals had scarified domestic Muslim sentiments.

During the meeting with the DPR, the government made an effort to legitimise its foreign policy response by convincing domestic Muslim groups that the interests of Muslims were seriously taken into account in formulating the response *and* that Muslim also have interests in supporting the international War on Terror. As such, the government referred to Islamic identity to support its discourse.

First, the government reassured members of parliament that its response to the war had taken Muslim interests into account. For instance, in response to a question from a member of parliament as to whether the government support for the war sacrificed Muslim interests, Wirajuda reiterated the joint statement made by President Megawati and Bush, saying that “President Bush has assured President Megawati that the United States respects Islam as one of the world’s largest religions. President Megawati also asks the United States to take into account the Muslim world’s sensitivities in their response to the terrorist attacks” (Sikap Resmi RI atas Terorisme dibahas sidang Kabinet Hari Ini 2001). If the United States did not take this into account, he warned that the planned attack against Afghanistan “might be interpreted as a punishment against an Islamic nation or Islam” (Sikap Resmi RI atas Terorisme dibahas sidang Kabinet Hari Ini 2001). In an interview with *Tempo*, he also said “there was clearly no ... blessing [from Indonesia for the war] as such. We only requested that the United States, in taking action against terrorists, take note of Muslim voices around the world ... and President Bush agreed” (N. H. Wirajuda 2001). Thus, the fact that the government employed Islamic symbols such as “Islamic nation” and “the Muslim world’s sensitivities” to inform the domestic public of its policy stance of accommodating Muslim interests reinforces the argument that Islamic identity was constructed as a frame for domestic foreign policy legitimacy.

Second, the government did not only reassure that Muslim interests were taken into account, but also affirmed that support for war on terrorism was actually in the interests of the world, including Islam. This can be seen from his statement in reassuring the DPR that “in the language of international law, all states [including Indonesia] agree that

terrorism is a threat to international security and peace” (Sikap Resmi RI atas Terorisme dibahas sidang Kabinet Hari Ini 2001). Through this statement, Wirajuda would like to emphasize that the war on terrorism is not only in the interest of the United States but also in the interest of all states, including Indonesia, which according to him were not immune from such attacks (H. Wirajuda 2014; compare his statement with interview transcript that Tempo made: N. H. Wirajuda 2001). In turn, the government framed this international law in the language of Islam in order to defend the acceptability of its support for the war. For instance, Wirajuda (2014) underscored that “Indonesia strongly condemns terrorism, because of our beliefs ... we believe that Islam is a religion of peace, tolerance, and against violence.” On another occasion he also reiterated, “Indonesia, being the largest Muslim country, is against terrorism because this is against Islamic teachings, which preach peace” (End strikes before Ramadhan, says RI 2001; H. Wirajuda 2014). In other words, Wirajuda asserted that the fight against terrorism was in the interests of Muslims as well, because terrorism is against the fundamental principle of Islam as religion of peace. Thus, by enacting Islam as a (moderate) religion of peace that “neither teaches hatred nor condones violence” and that terrorism is a threat to all civilized identity (including Islam), Megawati’s government built up warranting conditions that justified its interests in participating in an international coalition against terrorism. In brief, in the government’s official policy discourse, normative commitment to the idea of Islam as a religion of peace was imperative as the basis for making a compelling case for its policy to participate in waging the War on Terror.

### **The Norms of the Muslim World**

The launch of the United States attack in Afghanistan occurred on 7 October 2001. A day later, large-scale domestic demonstrations protesting the attacks occurred in many major cities in Indonesia. In Jakarta, there were at least four thousand protestors present in front of the United States Embassy, the British Embassy, and the United Nations buildings (Harsanto and Abu 2001). *Tempo* released a report that this mobilization was “the biggest demonstration in Jakarta since the Black September 11” (Sudarsono, Hidayat, and Nugroho 2001). Expressions of enmity toward the United States increased in ferocity. This animosity was manifested in the form of what many analysts and media reports

describe as “anti-Americanism.” For example, the protesters held banners with slogans such as “America is the Great Terrorist,” burnt United States flags and billboards for McDonald’s and KFC, and threatened to vent anger against American citizens and other expatriates identified as citizens of the “allied nations” in Indonesia by conducting “sweepings” (Crouch 2001, 1–2). Although this turned out to be only rhetoric, the threats were taken seriously and caused some anxiety among Western expatriates. The United States ambassador, in turn, urged the government to protect their embassies and staff (Unidjaja 2001a).

Most protesters were united in denouncing the American military operation in Afghanistan and called on the government to accommodate different policy options in order to pursue their wish to stop the war, such as freezing diplomatic ties with the United States, boycotting its companies and products, and participating in waging *jihād* against the United States to defend Afghanistan (Sudarsono, Hidayat, and Nugroho 2001).

Note how they referred to *jihād* to describe their policy preference. Domestic Muslim protests against the war in Afghanistan at this stage were replete with references to “*jihād*.” Two radical Islamic groups came to centerstage in this effort: the Islamic Defenders Front (*Front Pembela Islam*, FPI) and the Indonesian Board of Islamic Fighters (*Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia*). Both called for *jihād* against the United States and its associated interests and opened venues for registration of those who would like to volunteer to wage *jihād* in Afghanistan (Hasan 2005, 303).<sup>12</sup> Ja’far Umar Thalib, the leader of the domestic armed Islamic mobilization body Laskar Jihad, claimed that his organization had organized 10,000 holy warriors to participate in *jihād* in Afghanistan (Hasan 2005, 303).

The MUI also joined the radical groups’ *jihād* bandwagon. MUI renewed its declaration of *jihād* against the United States and stated that it would “not bar the Muslims [in Indonesia] from taking up arms to wage a *jihād*. That is part of their human rights” (MUI slams attacks on U.S. planned Afghanistan strike 2001). The organization also publicly opposed the United States military operation and called it a “manifestation of arrogance and oppression” (MUI slams attacks on U.S. planned Afghanistan strike 2001) and asked for the suspension of diplomatic relations with America in the event the attack did not stop (Religious Leaders Urge Govt to Cut Ties With U.S. 2001).

During this mounting opposition, even Vice-President Hamzah Haz endorsed radical groups' calls for *jihād* to defend their Afghan brothers and sisters (Don't pit me against Mega 2001), and encouraged peaceful large demonstrations by Islamic groups to voice their oppositions to American military operations in Afghanistan (Unidjaja and Siboro 2001). A member of parliament from the Islamic-based Crescent Star Party (PBB) also called on the government to sever diplomatic ties with the United States and boycott its products (quoted in Sukma 2003a, 60). The parliament's Commission on Foreign Affairs and Defense also opposed the attacks, calling them "brutal" and "in contravention with international law" (quoted in Crouch 2001). The rhetoric of MUI, Hamzah Haz and some elites from Islamic political parties appeared to reinforce the legitimacy of the Islamic radical groups' cause. As such, some have noted that Hamzah Haz and some elites from formally Islamic political parties were inclined to play "right-wing diplomacy" (Abshar-Abdallah 2002).

The use of the term *jihād* in their rhetoric suggests that most radical Muslim groups had taken their own interpretive frame (U.S. attack as a war against Islam) for granted. They felt the United States attack vindicated their interpretive frame as valid, and that the its military operation (initially described by Bush as a crusade) was indeed an attack on Islam or Islamic nations and territories. For Bin Laden, this confirmed his vision of a civilizational clash between Islam and the West, stating that *jihād* was not only "a battle" between "al Qaida and the United States. This is a battle of Muslims against global crusaders" (quoted in O'Hagan 2004, 31). Therefore, the most appropriate response would be *jihād*. For most radical Muslim groups, *jihād* represents an important identity representation. In the vocabulary of radical Muslim groups in both Indonesia and abroad, *jihād* is an "armed struggle" to defend Muslim nations or territories. In such representations, they imagined Afghanistan, as well as Indonesia, as a part of a universal Muslim nation.

Although they rejected the call for *jihād*, the leaders of the two mainstream moderate organizations, NU and Muhammadiyah, also joined the chorus to condemn the attacks (Religious Leaders urge govt to cut ties with U.S. 2001). Hasyim Muzadi, then NU Chairman, stressed that he "condemned the United States attacks in Afghanistan on the pretext of hunting Osama bin Laden" because

“Washington had yet to convincingly prove that bin Laden was guilty of masterminding the ... attacks” (Religious Leaders urge govt to cut ties with U.S. 2001).

Turning now to government official responses to such domestic opposition, on 8 October 2001, the government issued a six-point statement. Among the most important points were: the government expressed deep concern that a military act was carried out. The government also urged that the military operation should minimize civilian targets or casualties. Thus, Indonesia maintained its “ambiguous” position *vis-à-vis* the war: it did not express explicit support nor condemnation (Emmerson 2002, 123).

Given that the domestic oppositional discourse still framed the war as an attack against Islam, the government specifically highlighted in the statement that “the [United States military] operation is only launched against terrorist training camps and military installations, and that the operation is not meant as an act of hostility against Islam” (Statement of the Government of Indonesian on the Military Actions in Afghanistan 8 October 2001). The military demonstrated its support for the government’s official position when the Army Chief, General Endriartono Sutarto officially reiterated, “the U.S.-led military operation in Afghanistan was not a war against Islam, but against terrorism” (quoted in Sukma 2003a, 60). In relation to these statements, the Senior Advisor of *Kemlu* and former Foreign Minister Ali Alatas (2001) stressed that:

I don’t think that it is correct now to assume that suddenly the United States is against Islam. Why should they be? ... For some it is a war against Islam ... But (the campaign) is against terrorism, against Osama bin Laden, who the United States and most countries agree has been behind this terror.”

...we should point out the fact that the United States has supported Islam. In Kosovo it was America who fought for the Islamic people against Yugoslavia. In Bosnia Herzegovina the slaughter of the Muslims of Bosnia was finally overcome, thanks to very drastic American intervention in Bosnia.

All the quoted statements above implicitly refer to a constructed civilizational identity. The statements assert that the military operation was not an attack against Islam (civilization), but against terrorism (barbaric other). These comments also imply that the civilized “self” (Islam) is not to be contrasted with another civilized “self” (the West),



because both these selves (Islam and the West) have a common enemy “other”: barbaric terrorism.

Domestic Muslim groups and leaders of the DPR were, nevertheless, not satisfied by such responses. They demanded that the government issue an explicit statement opposing the war. For instance, on 10 October 2001, Muhammadiyah stated that the government’s official stand on American military operations in Afghanistan was unclear (Muhammadiyah Urges Government to Have Clear Stand on U.S.-Afghan Conflict 2001). On the same day, former President and then Chairman of NU Abdurrahman Wahid also criticized the government’s official position, which, according to him, did not express explicit criticism of the strikes (RI ties with U.S. in Nation’s Interests - Ministers 2001). On 11 October 2001, around 50 protestors from the Alliance for Justice and Peace (*Aliansi Keadilan dan Perdamaian*) staged a demonstration in front of the office of the Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, expressing disappointment with the government which, they claimed, “made no definite stand in responding to United States aggression” (Alliance for Peace Opposes Indon-U.S. Military Cooperation 2001).

The formal request demanding the government to issue a firmer statement against the strikes came from the leaders of the DPR. On 12 October 2001, all leaders of the DPR held a meeting with President Megawati at the State Palace. During the 2.5-hour meeting, Akbar Tandjung, DPR speaker and Golkar Party chairman, was joined by four deputies, representatives of all DPR factions and leaders of six DPR commissions. In the meeting, Akbar said that “the government’s position seems unclear,” and urged the government “to take a more resolute stance against the [United States] attacks,” and that the President “should ask the United States to stop its attacks” (Unidjaja and Purba 2001).

We can observe that the government maintained its official (ambiguous) policy stance regardless. On 10 October 2001, for example, then Defense Minister Matori Abdul Djalil publicly stated that Indonesia’s official stance, as reflected in six-point statement issued on 8 October 2001, “is clear and we are not going to review it” (Govt rejects calls to change stance over U.S. attacks 2001; Indon Govt’s Stance on U.S. attacks on Afghanistan is Firm 2001). At its meeting with members of the parliament on 12 October 2001, Megawati’s

administration further advanced arguments to defend the legitimacy of its official response. President Megawati, for example, conveyed to the DPR speaker and his deputies that the government had “strongly criticized the United States’ attacks in her [private] meeting with American leaders,” (Unidjaja and Purba 2001) suggesting that no further resolute public statements were required. However, according to A.M. Fatwa, one of the leaders of the Islamic political parties, “we [leaders of the DPR] want the government to criticize the attacks openly, not just behind closed doors” (Bersama OKI, Indonesia Lakukan Langkah Pro-Aktif 2001). In defence of Megawati’s position, Hassan Wirajuda stated that the official statement issued on 8 October 2001 had been firm enough, and had generated resentment among American government officials. He further argued, “The United States was not happy with our statement [that expresses] deep concern that a military act was finally carried out. By this statement, we actually meant that the military action by the United States was regretted. Will our relations with the United States be disrupted because of this statement? I hope not” (Bersama OKI, Indonesia Lakukan Langkah Pro-Aktif 2001).

Then Wirajuda defended the government’s “ambiguous” position in Islamic identity terms. He stressed that the government’s position had been consistent with the policy responses of other Muslim countries in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) (Bersama OKI, Indonesia Lakukan Langkah Pro-Aktif 2001). During the meeting with leaders of the parliament in the state palace, he briefed the legislators about “the cautiously worded communiqué” issued by the OIC meeting in Doha earlier, on 10 October 2001 (Unidjaja and Purba 2001). He stated:

In official statements produced by all members of the OIC, we did not find any word that expresses condemnation on United States [attacks in Afghanistan]. The official position that the government expressed on Monday [October 8] was in line with the positions of all members of the OIC. We can understand those who still perceive that this position did not live up into their expectations. But, we expect them not to enforce their views and position. It would be better for them to read these OIC joint communiqués, because this organisation represents the Muslim world. So [if we read these communiqués carefully], we did not see any calls for jihad, nor calls for severing diplomatic ties with the United States. Our position is how to help the Afghan people (Bersama OKI, Indonesia Lakukan Langkah Pro-Aktif 2001).

This statement shows that, in defending the government's official stance on the United States' military operation, Hassan invoked Indonesia's identity as a part of the Muslim world and a member of the OIC. As a part of this membership, he underlined that there are norms that should be observed and these norms are formulated by the OIC, as the most prominent organisation representing the Muslim world. With respect to military strikes in Afghanistan, the OIC had declared in joint communiqués that there was no condemnation of the attacks, no calls for *jihād*, or proposals for cutting diplomatic ties with the United States. The *New York Times* highlighted this decision, stating that 56 Islamic countries had avoided condemning the attacks, and only warned about civilian casualties (56 Islamic Nations Avoid Condemning U.S. Attacks 2001; Kifner 2001). Hassan displayed compliance with these norms as the basis for legitimising Indonesia's own policy stance when he urged the protestors to "read the OIC joint communiqués, because this organisation represents the Muslim world" (quoted in Bersama OKI, Indonesia Lakukan Langkah Pro-Aktif 2001). A journalist also commented that Indonesia could "orchestrate the voices of OIC" to demonstrate that "any decision on Afghanistan [by OIC] would be accepted by Muslims in Indonesia" (Free and Active? 2001).

Not much documentation is available to tell us what really happened during the meeting, but it appears that a consensus was finally achieved between the government and opposing groups within the government's own ranks and the parliament. On the one hand, Megawati agreed to review its "soft stance on the attacks" (Unidjaja and Purba 2001). In a joint press conference after the meeting, President Megawati asserted that she promised to consider the demands of the House leaders that the government should take a "more resolute stance" against the American operation in Afghanistan, saying that the government at the right moment "will issue a new statement" (Unidjaja and Purba 2001). On the other, the parliament agreed to endorse the government's support for the global campaign against terrorism. The President stated: "The DPR totally supports our stance that terrorism must be eradicated. The actions of the government have received the full support of the DPR. We must encourage international cooperation in facing this (terrorism)" (Unidjaja and Purba 2001).

The right moment that President Megawati referred to during the negotiation with the DPR turned out to be the day that Muslims in

Indonesia commemorated the Prophet Muhammad's Ascension (*Isrā' Mi'rāj*). On 14 October 2001, in her televised speech at the country's largest *Istiqlal* mosque in Jakarta, President Megawati released an indirect sharp criticism against the United States' operation by declaring that "it is unacceptable that someone, a group or even a government – arguing that they are hunting down perpetrators of terror - attack people or another country for whatever reason" (quoted in Kurniawan, DEN, and Zakaria 2001). This is basically a re-statement of the government's earlier official stance that called for a multilateral response by the United Nations to the threat of terrorism, except for the fact that this time the government explicitly opposed unilateral attacks. Foreign policy officials later reiterated this official statement during the APEC meeting in 21 October. In the press conference during the meeting, Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda explicitly opposed any unilateral response to terrorism, urging the United Nations to take the initiative to lead the multilateral fight against it (End strikes before Ramadhan, says RI 2001). He also called on the United States to stop its military campaign before the beginning of the fasting month (*Ramaḍān*), which started on 16 November 2001. The government did eventually change its policy response from "ambiguous" to "firm" opposition to the war. As explained above, this was clearly a response to domestic demands.

The firmer stance against the War on Terror was followed by the government's firm position to support the international (not the United States') fight against the War on Terror. Once again, the government harnessed Islamic symbols to secure domestic Muslim support for such a war. In her statements in *Istiqlal*, Megawati called upon fellow Muslim citizens to "uphold the peaceful ideals of Islam and resist thoughts that justify terrorism or any acts of violence" (Nakashima 2002). This statement reflected the government's worry about the use of Islamic rhetoric by radical Islamic groups to justify terrorism. With respect to this, Hassan Wirajuda (2014) comments:

Looking at the news coverage and the media [during the war in Afghanistan], it appeared that the support for our campaign to fight terrorism was undermined by the voice of radical Muslim groups. Certainly, their voice was louder ... they glorified violence and terrorism as an ultimate sacrifice to defend Islam.

One clear example of such rhetoric is the depiction of Osama bin Laden as a hero. Within some segments of radical Muslim groups, Osama

bin Laden was elevated into a symbol of resistance: as a David who fought against the 'unjust' Goliath of America. Osama's justification of his attacks on the basis of the perceived unjust American interventionist policies in the Middle East, and the Taliban's call for *jihād* to defend itself from the attacks, reverberated among radical Muslim groups in Indonesia (for further discussion on this see Hasan 2005). This oppositional frame triggered a normative debate on defining terrorism, such as the oft-quoted argument that one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter. For most domestic radical Muslim groups, terrorism is defined by the motives and injustice of the perpetrators. As such, the "real" terrorists are the "great nations" whose motives are economic exploitation (greed) and whose means are the colonisation of weaker nations (see, for example, Mujani and Burhanuddin 2005). By implication, such thinking was mirrored by the radical and terrorist groups who justified it with their use of violent means, acceptable so long as their cause was just and legitimate.

It is within such a context that Megawati's statement, which called to uphold the peaceful ideals of Islam and resist thoughts that justify terrorism or any acts of violence, should be understood. Her statement, therefore, epitomizes the harnessing of Islamic symbols to legitimize its stance to support the international War on Terror in two respects.

First, the government promoted peace as a fundamental teaching of Islam, by which terrorism should be rejected. Hassan Wirajuda, restating Megawati's speech in his press conference during the APEC meeting, said, "Indonesia, being the largest Muslim country, is against terrorism because this is against Islamic teachings, which preach peace" (End strikes before Ramadhan, says RI 2001). In an interview Wirajuda (2014) also stressed that killing "a large number of innocent people indiscriminately as a means for ... political ends" is unacceptable within any moral standard, including Islam. In respect to this, the influential Muslim intellectual Nurcholish Madjid (2001), who also served as senior advisor to foreign policy officials, commented:

We should give ... moral support in fighting terrorism. Terrorism is contradictory to Islam. According to Islam, even when Muslim troops are engaged in war, they are not allowed to kill women, children, old people or animals. They are not allowed to cut trees or destroy buildings.

Thus, Madjid argues that the use of violent and indiscriminate killings (terrorism) as a means for achieving political objectives is illegitimate within Islamic norms.

Second, Megawati's administration persuaded domestic Muslim constituents to resist ideologies that support terrorism. The government's statements about *jihād* could give a further example how did the government did this. During her meeting in the State Palace with MUI leaders, led by Din Syamsuddin, President Megawati indirectly criticised Din Syamsuddin over the MUI's recent *fatwá* endorsing *jihād* in Afghanistan. Megawati stressed that "the *jihād* should not be narrowed down to the interpretation of physical war, but rather *jihād* in its fundamental meaning, striving against evil and ignorance for the common good" (quoted in Unidjaja 2001b). In response to Indonesian radical Muslim groups who endorsed the Taliban's call for *jihād* against the United States, Indonesia's Defence Minister Matori Abdul Djalil "called on the nation to distinguish between Islam and Talibanism because they have different meanings" (Indon Govt's Stance on U.S. attacks on Afghanistan is Firm. 2001). Djalil's comment suggests that the Taliban regime's call for *jihād* does not represent Islam because the Taliban's conception of *jihād* contradicted the moderate and peaceful ideal of Islam. In other words, in its efforts to call for resisting thoughts to justify terrorism, Megawati's government constructed Islamic norms about appropriate interpretation of *jihad* to correct radical Muslim groups' understanding of *jihad*.

### Concluding Remarks

Learning from Indonesia's responses to the United States' war in Afghanistan, it is clear that the Indonesian government incorporated Islamic identity into its foreign policy discourse in order to legitimize its foreign policy choice. This finding revises the argument that, due to the principles of religious neutrality, the government tends to avoid referring to Islamic symbols in its foreign policy rhetoric. It also challenges the current literature that sees the government's delegation of Islamic symbols to societal actors as a way to maintain religious neutrality in a case when it deploys Islam as a foreign policy instrument.

This case study reveals how was it possible for the government to employ Islamic identity in its foreign policy rhetoric within the constraints of the country's exceptional pluralism. The government constructed Islam by qualifying it as a part of an "inclusive" civilizational identity and international/universal norms of peace and security. In other words, it constructed Islam in the state symbols in a way that fostered the multi-confessional nature of Indonesia's identity.

This has broader implications for understanding the role of Islam in Indonesia's foreign policy, especially after *reformasi*, in that Islam could serve as more than just a constraint; it could also function as a justification or legitimization for these policies. This confirms the existing literatures on the place of Islam in foreign policy beyond Indonesia. For instance, in the context of Islam in Malaysia's foreign policy, Shanti Nair argues that Islam "has largely served as a means for mobilizing support" (Nair 1997, 271). Albert Hourani, in the concluding remarks on a book on a comparative study of Islam in foreign policies of Muslim countries, said:

To what extent do government or ruling elites use Islamic terms and symbols to explain and justify to their own people what they are trying to do in the outside world? This is the question which perhaps has yielded the most fruitful answer, because it is clear that governments do use Islamic language more than before (Hourani 1983, 180).

However, this study adds nuance: in a case where a Muslim country is religiously plural, its government was not entirely free to employ Islam as a primary foreign policy instrument. Its discursive action is contingent upon the ability of its foreign policy leaders to build the bridge between the faith of its majority population and the faith of other citizens. This led them to construct Islamic identity in terms of universal civic norms and values in order to maintain social cohesion.

## Endnotes

- This article is a part of my dissertation submitted to the University of Melbourne in 2018. I have revised the article substantially from, and included new data that are not available in, the original manuscript. I would like to thank Prof. Thomas Reuter, Dr. Avery Poole, Dr. Sow Keat Tok, Dr. Minako Sakai and Dr. Julian Millie for their insightful feedbacks and comments on the earlier draft of this article. I also thank an anonymous reviewer, editor and English Advisor of *Studia Islamika* for their constructive feedback. All errors, if any, are my own.
1. In this paper identity is defined as the conceptualization of self-other relations, as informed by the values and norms of group membership. A group's identity or membership (self) is defined by its adherence to certain values, and its relationship with others is defined by questions of value compliance. This is consistent with Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori's assertion that "socially defined values play an important role in formulating identities" (see Eickelman and Piscatori 1996, 9). This paper uses the term "Islamic identity" as synonymous with Islamic symbols, norms, and values.
  2. The same argument was also proposed by Rizky M Umar, who referred to the construction of moderate Islamic identity, challenging the claim that Islam was totally absent from foreign policy due to the state's identity dilemma. Accepting that Islam is now present in Indonesia's foreign policy discourse, Umar, however, did not explain what role Islam plays, apart from its constraining role in Indonesia's foreign policy (see Umar 2016, 426).
  3. Both domestic and foreign news reports represent Indonesia's visit in this strategic context. For domestic news reports see Budi S.P. (2001).
  4. "Formally Islamic political parties" refers to parties that explicitly declared Islam as their political identity, such as the United Development Party (PPP), the Crescent and Star Party (PBB), Justice Party (PK) and nine other smaller Islamic political parties. Meanwhile the informally Islamic political parties (such as PKB and PAN) are those that declare their identity as pluralist and open parties, but their main constituents remain from specific Islamic communities. See Alfian (1999, 116-20).
  5. PDI-P gained 33.7 percent; Golkar 22.4 percent; PKB 12.6 percent; and PAN 7.1 percent. Indeed, this outcome was generally referred to by most analysts as the "failure of political Islam." Reference to these analysts are found in Effendy (2003, 211-13) and Sukma (2003b, 96).
  6. This was the caucus of ten Islamic political parties (PPP, PKB, PAN, PBB, PK, PNU, PP, PSII, PPII Masyumi, PKU), which gained one or more seats (together 172 seats) in the parliament.
  7. For example, in a national seminar held by NU on October 25, 2001, Muslim scholars suggested that after 9/11, Islam came into the spotlight as a religion of violence. They contended that this over-generalization led to the stigmatization of Islam (Media Barat Beri Stigma Islam Sebagai Teroris 2001).
  8. For a more detailed analysis of this issue see Suryadinata (1996), Sukma (2003b), and Perwita (2007).
  9. President Megawati agreed with the international community to wage war on terrorism, because terrorism is a threat to international peace and security (U.S. and Indonesia Pledge Cooperation, Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Indonesia 2001). However, when asked whether its agreement to wage war on terrorism included support for the United States war in Afghanistan, the government neither expressed its support nor firm opposition (see Remarks with Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri 2001). This was a strategic choice in order not to



- frustrate domestic Muslim groups and offend the United States at the same time. For further details on this, see Smith (2003) and Sukma (2003a).
10. There is not solid evidence to suggest that the government adopted the policy recommendation made during the meeting. However, the consistency between the policy recommendation and government foreign policy statements, and the presence of the Foreign Minister and Senior Advisor to the President and high officials in the meeting, are grounds to assume that this recommendation was indeed adopted by the government.
  11. This also indicates that no matter how systematic the government discourse is in distinguishing between Islam and terrorism, most domestic Muslim groups still see the war as an attack against Islam. This was particularly visible during the second wave of protests against the war in major cities in Indonesia soon after the United States formally declared military operations in Afghanistan.
  12. However, his claim could not be confirmed by the Indonesian security forces.

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