

Indonesia and the Muslim World: Islam and Secularism in the Foreign Policy of Soeharto and Beyond. By Anak Agung Banyu Perwita. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2007, pp. 222+ xvi. ISBN 10-87-91114-92-6, ISBN 13-978-87-91114-92-2.

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Since the collapse of Communism in the late 1990s, Islam has received a good deal of attention at local and international levels as a potential political force to reckon with. Indonesia as the largest Muslim country in the world, therefore, has attracted the attention of scholars with a focus on Islam in Indonesian foreign policy. Anak Agung Banyu Perwita, the Deputy Rector of Relations and Cooperation at Parahyangan Catholic University, Bandung, has produced the latest work on this subject. This book is largely based upon his PhD dissertation submitted to the Flinders University, Australia. It explores the relationship between Islam, as a societal factor, and the state in terms of foreign policy formulation and implementation (p. 3). It is divided into eight chapters including an introduction and the concluding chapter that summarises the findings of the study.

Banyu Perwita attempts to explore the position of Islam in Indonesia's foreign policy toward the Muslim world focusing on four issues, the OIC, the Middle East conflict, peaceful resolution of the Moro problem and the war in Bosnia Herzegovina. These case studies are meant to explain the interactions between the state and its Islamic communities in formulating its foreign policy. The author argues that Indonesia never claimed that its participation in the OIC is based on Islam or religious considerations. In fact, according to him, the participation in the OIC was utilised as a means to get political support from the Muslim World for Indonesia's stand on various foreign policy issues especially on East Timor. Likewise, the author argues that Indonesia's response to the Middle East conflicts, such as the first Gulf war and Palestinian issues was not based on religious sentiments. Indonesia's consistent support for the struggle for the independence of Palestine was due to factors such as the nature of Israel's colonialism in the Arab Palestinian

lands and further to pursue new agendas of Suharto's political need to chair the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and to get political support of the Middle Eastern countries on the issue of East Timor in the United Nations General Assembly.

Banyu Perwita also analyses the role of Indonesia in the peaceful resolution of the Moro problem. Once again, Islamic sentiments did not compel Indonesia to contribute to the peace process in the Southern Philippines. Indonesia domestically had never tolerated separatism and hence could not be sympathetic to the cause of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). However, Indonesia was committed to the maintenance of peace in the region. It, therefore, played a major role in the peace process between the Government of Republic of Philippines and the MNLF. In the case studies dealing with Indonesia's relations with Israel and Indonesia's response to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the author recognises the influence of Islam and the Islamic forces and factors prevalent in the country.

On the basis of the four case studies, the author concludes that Islam did not exert a significant influence on Indonesia's foreign policy. Its involvement in the peace process between the MNLF and the Philippines and its stand on the Gulf war were based purely upon national interest. The remaining two cases show some relevance of Islam but again it was dictated more by domestic consideration. He argues that Suharto's response to the activities of the Muslim community was reactive in nature. Suharto aimed at marginalising the Islamic forces in the country and thus to retain political power by manipulating the demands of Muslim community.

One may admire the attempts Banyu Perwita made in understanding the foreign policy of Indonesia. However, the factors he analysed are very selective. One may understand the importance of regionalism and domestic forces influencing the foreign policy of a country, however, one should also look at the actors involved in and their motivation behind a particular foreign policy posture. For instance, it was the Chairman of Muhammadiyah, Lukman Harun, who played a major role in paving the way for the meeting between the leader of the MNLF, Nur Misuari, and the government of the Philippines. Likewise, Banyu Perwita did not include the attempts made by ICMI (Association of the Indonesian Muslims' Association) who brought the issue as an urgent matter before the

Human Rights Commission chaired by B.J. Habibie, the former vice-President of Indonesia.

Banyu Perwita's argument that Indonesia's foreign policy has been based on secularism is somewhat confusing. He makes no distinction between Islam as a political ideology and Islam as social and political factors influencing foreign policy. As a political ideology, Islam is hardly found in any foreign policy decision of Indonesia. For the basic principles of Indonesia have been Pancasila and not Islam. However, Islam is paramount as social and political factors in the form of Muslim political and social movements and is, therefore, embedded in Indonesia's foreign policy. Indonesia's military and bureaucratic elites may try to turn the country from a religious to a secular, nationalist state. This is bound to fail as the elites must respond to, what Perwita calls, "domestic political variable" which is the Muslim community and the Muslim political movements. Many scholars of Indonesia, therefore, have cautioned that Indonesian politics should be studied not by referring to Islam but by looking at Muslims who form the majority of the population and who have played an active role in political activities. The same argument applies in the analysis of the foreign policy of Indonesia since its independence. Surely, Islam can not be ignored in Indonesian politics. Given the fact that Muslims form the majority of the population of Indonesia, the Indonesian government must adopt an Islamic posture in reacting to issues related to the Muslim community all over the world. A serious attempt at forging a secular Indonesian identity will provoke religious opposition.

The above remarks notwithstanding, Banyu Perwita's work demands scholarly attention as it contains enough background and a wealth of information to understand Indonesia's foreign policy. Perwita's analysis of Indonesia's foreign policy by referring to a domestic political variable in Indonesia's foreign policy since independence is revealing. Some editing and improvement and reference to other works on Islam in Indonesia's foreign policy would greatly enhance the quality of Perwita's *Indonesia and the Muslim World: Islam and Secularism in the Foreign Policy of Soeharto and Beyond*.