

# INDONESIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

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The foreign policy of a country is inevitably shaped by the confluent force of a number of factors, both objective and subjective: its national interests as conceived at a given time and space; its geo-political configuration, its national history and, immediately relevant to newly independent nations, its particular process of growth into sovereign statehood.

Thus, in the case of Indonesia, such factors as its strategic location; bridging two continents and two oceans, its vast and still largely untapped natural resources, its demographic and socio-political make-up, cannot but have an important bearing on its outlook on the world. Indonesia's foreign policy, moreover, as that of many other New Nations in Asia and Africa, has been greatly influenced by the struggle for national independence and the subsequent struggle to defend and give substance to that independence.

It is therefore, obvious that one of the main forces welding Indonesia together and guiding it in its external relationships is nationalism. It is the expression of the desire to freedom, to independent nationhood with an identity of one's own, and to national prosperity in social justice for all.

As this sense of nationalism, however, inspired and generated the struggle for freedom from colonialism, it thus became infused with a strong sense of solidarity with all struggles for freedom from colonial rule and against oppression and injustice everywhere. Indonesia's nationalism, therefore, never degenerated into narrow chauvinism or xenophobia, and in fact, tolerance towards other ways of life or systems of government has always been one of its marked features.

This strong urge for freedom from any form of domination or oppression almost naturally led Indonesia to adopt another basic principle, which has been a constant characteristic of our foreign policy since the inception of our independence. I refer to the policy of non-alignment, or in our own phrase, the independent and active foreign policy.

When in 1950, at the end of the revolutionary war for independence, the young Republic joined the international community of free nations, the cold war between West and East was already a fact of life. Indonesia entered itself in a world divided into two polarized ideological blocs, both seemingly bent on each other's destruction. It was not a world situation conducive to the goal of peaceful reconstruction and development for which the nation longed after five years of armed struggle.

Neither was Indonesia presented with much of a choice: to join one or the other of the two blocs would clearly run against its basic sense of freedom from any oppressive entanglements, whether of an ex-colonial or communist flavour. Even for pragmatic considerations, such a choice would not serve the national interest, which then as now prescribes the necessity for Indonesia to seek all available international assistance and cooperation in its efforts at rapid economic development.

It was at this point in our history that the basic principles of our foreign policy found their first definition. In his speech before the Working Body of Parliament in 1948, then Prime Minister Mohammad Hatta outlined the main elements of an independent and active foreign policy. Independent, in the sense of refraining from joining any of the ideological blocs in the world, and free from any of its attendant military alliances; active, in the sense of seeking to actively and positively contribute towards the attainment of lasting peace and stability in the world.

It should be stressed that this is not a "neutral" or "neutralist" policy, for the sake of being friends to everybody. Neither does it imply a policy of "sitting on the fence" as if the wishing to remove ourselves, in isolation or indifference, from world events and developments. On the contrary it is a policy, that does insist on reserving the right freely to determine our own stand with regard to international issues and events and to support or initiate those measures which we believe would serve the cause of world peace best.

It was only some time afterwards that the term "non-alignment" was coined to describe this particular type of foreign policy outlook, as it was subsequently adopted by a growing number of newly independent nations in Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America.

The principal tenets of the foreign policy such I have described above have endured the test of time and circumstance, because they are felt to express the fundamental ideological outlook of our people and to conform with the basic philosophy of our State, the *Pancasila*. Indeed, ever since the proclamation of our independence, these principles have been embodied in the Preamble of our 1945 Constitution.

The many deviations from these basic principles into which the previous regime has led the nation during its last years in power is, therefore, seen to be among the gravest sins it has committed, requiring immediate and drastic redress. These deviations, as may be recalled, were manifested by a foreign policy excessively geared to the pursuit of empty prestige abroad in almost total disregard of the realities of economic conditions at home; a policy of extreme radicalism which virtually abandoned the principles of non-alignment; a policy which in the end led to Indonesia's growing isolation from its friends in both East and West as well as from its friends in the

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non-aligned world, culminating in Indonesia's walk-out from the United Nations.

No wonder, therefore, that when the new Government under President Soeharto took over, it made it its first order of business to call a halt to all past deviations and to proclaim a return to a foreign policy in strict compliance with Indonesia's traditional principles based on the Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.

It is on this basis that the present Government has conducted its foreign policy up to this moment. It is not a new policy as far as the principles are concerned on which it is based, except for the fact that consistency has been restored in the implementation of those principles.

What is, of course, new and thoroughly changed is the mental outlook with which our present policy is imbued. For Indonesia's foreign policy today is guided by a new and pragmatic realism in approach and vision, more closely attuned to the real needs and interests of the people at large. The results it has yielded so far sustain our determination to continue these policies of commitment to constitutional government, realism in out-look on the world and rationality in policies.

The objectives of this foreign policy have also been clearly defined. In the short term, primary attention is to be devoted to safeguard what has been decided as the nation's first priority today: the successful accomplishment of overall national development, specially economic development. This means an external diplomacy geared towards the maximisation of all available foreign aid, technical assistance, private investment and trade, in support of our national development goals.

In this effort, Indonesia will steadfastly abide by its non-aligned policy: it is willing to accept foreign assistance from whatever source, whether from the West or the East, provided no political strings are attached. It is also being realised that foreign aid, while vitally important to accelerate the development process, can only supplement, never supplant, the national determination and effort to develop. The success, or failure, of Indonesia's development, therefore, will ultimately depend on the Indonesian people themselves.

It is clear that to attain this priority objective, peace and stability are absolutely essential, not only domestically but also in the international context. Thus, Indonesian diplomacy has the task simultaneously to secure an international environment of relative peace and stability, an area of goodwill and mutual cooperation within which meaningful development becomes possible. It is logical, that in the first instance our focus of attention is directed towards the countries in our immediate surrounding: Southeast Asia, and the countries of East Asia and the Western Pacific. But also in the global context, Indonesia's foreign policy consciously and actively

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strives towards the establishment of a new international order in which lasting peace and equitable prosperity can prevail.

The principles and order of priorities described above can be discerned in the pattern and style of diplomacy that is being conducted by Indonesia at present. They are perhaps best illustrated in our policies towards our own region, Southeast Asia.

From the very first days since its inception, the present Government has given first priority to the promotion of close and harmonious relations with Indonesia's immediate neighbours, the area where Indonesia's vital interests are.

Indonesia is aware that any development in Southeast Asia, whether positively or negatively, will have a direct bearing on its own national development. Prospects of political stability and economic progress within each individual country cannot be separated from the prospects of peace and stability in the surrounding region.

Indonesia, therefore, aspires to see Southeast Asia develop as rapidly as possible into an area of indigenous stability and security, capable of withstanding any negative influences from outside. This is only possible if the nations of Southeast Asia can, jointly and separately, develop the ideological, socio-economic, political and military strengths, which *together* constitute a nation's real capacity or endurance to resist, or as President Soeharto has termed it, the *ketahanan nasional* of a country or a region.

To this end, mutually beneficial cooperation among the nations of the region themselves, on the basis of equality, mutual respect and non-interference, becomes imperative, in order to first of all develop the economic and industrial strength that is to form the necessary basis on which to develop strength in other fields. Only in this way can the nations of Southeast Asia, individually as well as collectively, start on the road of development towards progress and stability.

It is these aspirations of Indonesia and of its like-minded neighbours in the region which have found their structural realisation in ASEAN, an association for regional cooperation established in 1967 and comprising the roughly 200 million people of Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia.

The historic significance of ASEAN lies, of course, in the fact that it heralds an encouraging trend towards regional cohesion rather than chronic divisiveness, towards cooperation instead of confrontation. It reflects the growing determination of the nations of this region to take charge of their own future; to work out problems of their development, stability and security together. It signifies the rejection by these countries of the assumption that the fate of Southeast Asia is going to continue to be determined by outside powers.

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Although after five years of existence ASEAN's real progress can still be said to be mostly in the intangible and spiritual aspects of regional cooperation, it has undeniably grown into a constructive force in Southeast Asian politics.

To the extent that it has exerted a more or less restraining influence on potentially explosive issues in Southeast Asia (e.g. the Sabah territorial dispute), ASEAN has been instrumental in preventing such issues from growing into dangerous proportions so as to pose a serious threat to peace and stability in a wider context.

On the positive side, inter alia through the forum of regular consultations on the Foreign Ministers level, ASEAN can be said to have succeeded in moulding an increasing degree of political cohesion among its members and a more integrated approach towards common problems, despite still existing differences in political systems and attitudes. Within the ASEAN spirit, the nations of Southeast Asia can be seen to be assuming an increasing, and most appropriate, role towards the solution of regional problems vitally affecting their direct interests and responsibilities, such as manifested in the recent Jakarta Conference on Cambodia, in efforts towards finding a peaceful solution to the Indo-China war and towards securing a more durable stability and peace in their own region, inter alia through the concept of Southeast Asia as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality.

Thus, it is through the development of policies and the accumulation of experiences in meaningful regional cooperation such as being initiated within ASEAN, that Indonesia believes it can best fulfill its wider task as a responsible member of the international community of nations: that of contributing towards the building of a better, more secure and peaceful world, with greater prosperity and justice for all.

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