

## NEW TRENDS IN INDONESIAN'S FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATION AND PRACTICES: FROM REGIONAL TO GLOBAL ORIENTED

### **Indonesian Foreign Policy under Authoritarian Period**

From Soekarno era till the end of Soeharto regime, Indonesia's world view mainly dominated by main stream perspective, namely realism. It was built on the suspicious, distrustful attitude, defensive and reactive as well as "inward looking" in nature. Indonesia perceived international politics as an anarchic and unfriendly world which was not only potentially could threaten its national interest but also even dangerous for its existence.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, Indonesia's foreign policy orientation and practices were fundamentally built on the traditional or narrow nationalism; anti-colonialism, defending Indonesia independent and protect sovereignty (territorial, economic, politics and ideology) from any kind of threat from outside world. The slogans such as "independent or die" (merdeka atau mati), "we love peace but love more independent" (kami cinta perdamaian tapi lebih cinta kemerdekaan), "Republic of Indonesia is the ultimate and unnegotiable price" (NKRI adalah harga mati) can be seen as the expressions of that kind of nationalism. So Indonesia foreign policy was

Such Indonesia's foreign policy orientation and practices was shaped by historical legacy: especially by the bitter experiences under colonialism, Dutch and then Japan. It was also

influenced by the world political and security constellation in the Cold War era: tension between two Super Powers (US and Soviet Union), wars in Korea Peninsula, Vietnam, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Middle East etc.

Regional political and security architecture during the Cold War era has also strengthened such Indonesia's world view. The fact that some neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines and Australia all joint the defense pact with America, Australia and British (in FPDA and ANZUS), while Vietnam and North Korea were backed by China or/and Soviet Union, made Indonesia felt inconvenience: alone, unprotected, insecure and threatened. Experienced conflict with Malaysia and also communism rebellions 1960s has strengthened that kind of feeling. Meanwhile, domestically Indonesia also faced serious security problems such as separatist movements in Aceh, West Papua (Irian Jaya), Ambon and East Timor.

So that way, Indonesia strongly rejected (at least rhetorically) to join one of the blocks (West and East) and decided to take a position so called freedom and active foreign policy (politik luar negeri bebas aktif). Indonesia felt more convenience to join the organizations which historically, culturally and emotionally closed to Indonesia such as Non-Alignment Movement, Islamic Conference Organization (ICO), and ASEAN. Joining such organizations not only has made Indonesia felt safer but also, given its leverage and advantages in military and economic strength, has provide more space for it to play more important role in international arena.

It was not surprising if the conduct of Indonesia's foreign policy till 1998 was so much based on what so called hard power elements: economic and military strength, size of state and population, natural resources etc. For Indonesian governments at that time, the elements of hard powers, particularly economic and military powers, are extremely important to support the conduct of foreign policy, and therefore it is as a must to be developed. Consistent with the realist point of view, international norms and values such as human rights and environment were not counted as priorities in Indonesia's policy consideration.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, like other realist states, Indonesia tended to ignore to consider the such international norms and values, as they were perceived not in parallel with national interest objectives. It was based on these reasons and arguments that made Indonesia for so long also reluctant, and even rejected, to join or engaging itself with international community by adopting international norms and ethics such as human rights, environmental, human interventions etc. Human rights was refused because it was perceived as western made norms and values. Any norms or values come from outside would be viewed not only in contrary with but also as a threat to the Indonesian original values and norms (cultural and religion) as already packed in Indonesia National Philosophy, Pancasila, and therefore, must be rejected. So, it can be understood if during Soekarno and Soeharto era, the focus of Indonesia policy was on how to develop its economic and military powers.

## Global Financial Crisis

But in 1997/1998, as the impact of Global Financial Crisis (GFC), Indonesia faced severe multi dimensional crisis. Indonesian economic fallen to the lowest level since 1960s; Gross Domestic Products (GDP) decreased dramatically, inflation mounted and millions of people lost their job.

### Indonesia Economic Main Indicators 1996 -1998 (%)

Year	Ind	Mal	Phil	Sing	Thai	Viet
GDP Growth						
1996	8.0	8.6	5.5	6.9	5.5	9.4
1997	4.7	8.0	5.1	7.8	-0.4	9.0
1998	-15.0	-5.8	-0.2	-0.2	-8.0	7.0
Inflation						
1996	6.5	3.5	8.4	1.4	5.8	4.5
1997	11.6	2.6	5.1	2.0	5.6	4.5
1998	75.0	5.0	8.0	2.0	8.0	5.0

Sources: Asia Pacific Economic Group, *Asia Pacific Profiles 1998* (Canberra 1990), *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 15 October 1998.

That situation has destabilised domestic politics and sparked social tension and hatred as marked by protests, demonstrations, killing and burning, which in turn, resulted in

human rights violations. This critical situation culminated in the fall of Soeharto regime and the rise of new governments which were more democratic and more open.

Meanwhile, since 1997 – 2009, Indonesian military/defense capability has also decreased significantly. According to the IISS Military Balance record, as cited by Center for Strategic and International Studies, Indonesia's military capability at that time far behind Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Vietnam. Quantitatively and qualitatively, Indonesia's main military equipments such as aircraft, tank and warship are not only out of number compared with those owned by neighbouring countries, but also most of them are out of date.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Military Forces of Major Powers in Southeast Asia 1999 - 2006**

<b>Military Expend and Equipments</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Mal</b>	<b>Sing</b>	<b>Thai</b>	<b>Phil</b>	<b>Viet</b>
Expenditures (US\$ billions)	1.502	3.158	4.696	2.638	1.627	0.89
Manpower (in thousands)	301	110	72.5	306.6	137	484
Armored Fighting Vehicles (MBTs, Lt. Tanks, RECCE, and APC)	864 (some data NA)	1,464 (some data NA)	2,024 (some data NA)	1,830 (some data NA)	520 (some data NA)	3,715
Airforces (Fixed and Rotary Wing Combat Aircraft)	279	131 (some data NA)	221 (some data NA)	558	115 (some data NA)	296 (some data NA)
Naval Combat Ships (Amphibious, Mine, Patrol, Missile patrol, corvettes, frigates,	156	52 (some data NA)	67 (some data NA)	148 (some data NA)	105 (some data NA)	101 (some data NA)

destroyers, Carrier, Submarine)						
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Sources: IISS, *Military Balance 1999-2006*, London 2005-2006, and CSIS, *The Asian Conventional Military Balance in 2006*, Washington 2006

Any effort to modernise the equipment were hampered due to lack of political and financial supports as a result of economic crisis and arms embargo by western countries, particularly by US. Indonesia military also faced political pressure domestically, as democratic forces in society demanded TNI return to their barrack.

In short, the Global Financial Crisis has made Indonesia run out of what so called the basic element of hard power, particularly economic and military powers, which were for so long as the main sources to support its foreign policy.

### **International, Regional and Domestic Pressures**

At the same time, international political pressures on Indonesia also increased and harderned, particularly in relation to human rights issues. Unlike in Cold War era, in the post cold war era international community paid more attention to the human rights issues, along with evironmental, pendemic, terrorism and other percieved as human security issues. Donor countries and international organizations such as World Bank, IMF, ADB

began to put human rights issues as important condition for aid and for military cooperation.

This new trend in international politics was certainly caused difficulties for Indonesia as it was accused as a serious human rights violator in many places around the country, such as in East Timor and Aceh. Whereas, Indonesia at that time in the situation urgently needed international support, particularly political, financial aid, investments and military equipments. As a result, Indonesia not only failed in trying to play major role in international arena but also failed to maintain the position it has achieved before, and even to some extent was alienated from international community. For instance, Indonesia failed in controlling or managing the East Timor Issues in the UN and failed to restrain US arms embargo in 1999.

In regional level, Indonesia also felt unhappy and even got frustration due to the ineffectiveness of regional organizations ASEAN to solve political, economic and security problems faced by its members. For instance, ASEAN has never been able to solve comprehensively the persistent conflict between Malaysia – Indonesia, Singapore – Malaysia, Malaysia – Phillipine, Thailand – Cambodia, and Myanmar case. What ASEAN could do, based on “Asian way” and non-intervention principle, just put the problem under the surface. For Indonesia, it was so disappointed situation since it has experienced negatif impact of unsolidity and the weakness of soladarity among ASEAN

countries as can be seen from it failed to get strong and explicit support from the ASEAN members on the issue of East Timor.

Some other important factors which have made Indonesia frustration and forced it to pursue other alternative foreign policy orientation and practices were the failure of signing the Security Cooperation Agreement and extradition treaty over Indonesian corruptors issue with Singapore, conflict with Malaysia over Indonesian migrant workers, the difficulties that Indonesia faced to realise the establishment of Human Rights Body in ASEAN and the lost of Sipadan and Ligitan (took over by Malaysia), and conflict with Malaysia on Ambalat area. Whereas, Indonesia for so long has put ASEAN as its foreign policy mile stone, positioned itself (or claimed itself) as driving force for ASEAN and percieved itself as a “leader” of ASEAN.

Meanwhile, as a country carrying new identity over its shoulder - the democratic State - Indonesia was also demanded to respect, protect and fulfill human rights of its citizens. This because democracy and human rights are two thing in the same coin, they are interrelated each other closely. Even, it is widely accepted that democracy itself is a part of the ways to fulfil human rights.<sup>4</sup> As a result, Indonesia began to believe that to be seen as democratic country which respect human rights of its citizens is extremely important for economic, political and security development. Furthermore, respecting, protecting, fulfilling the rights of citizens was believed would resulted positive impacts on economic, social, political and security development as many expert believe,<sup>5</sup> which would be, in



return, also beneficial politically for the existing government as it would get political support from majority of people in domestic.<sup>6</sup>

### **Shifting Orientation and Practices**

Facing the critical situation of economic and political pressures, domestically and internationally, forced Indonesia to look at broader world by binding itself to the international norms or values, particularly human rights, a policy which very much in line with what so called English School and Constructivists conceptions.<sup>7</sup> It began to shift its foreign policy orientation and practices by joining international community, tried to show its willingness to respect, protect, promote and to fulfill the rights of its citizens. Indonesian decided to adopt all main international human rights standards. Completed the adoption of International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1958 and International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRoC) in 1990, Indonesia ratified International Convention Against Torture (CAT) in 1998 and International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 1999.

Later on, the end of 2005 again Indonesia demonstrated its commitment to engage with international norms and values by ratifying two other important (as umbrella) international human rights standards: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

(ICESCR). So, only in 7 years Indonesia successfully ratified 4 main international human rights standards, an extraordinary achievement compare with other countries in the region could do at that time.

Recently, Indonesia is planning to ratify Rome Statute and International Convention on Migrant Workers Covention (MWC). Since the declaration of ASEAN Charter in 2005, Indonesia has been also enthusiastically and progressively trying to realize the establishment of Human Rights Body in ASEAN, far more enthusiastic and progressive than other ASEAN countries such as Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Brunei Darussalam and Myanmar were.

In the mean time, internally, Indonesia government also passed some laws related to human rights, such as Law No. 39/1999 (UU No 39 tahun 1999 tentang HAM), Law No. 26/2000 (UU No 26/2000 tentang pengadilan HAM). It set up Ministry of Human Rights, then became Directorate General of Human Rights, National Ombudsman Body, Human Rights Court (Ad Hoc), Woman's National Commission and Commission for Child Protection etc. As an effort to implement the human rights standards already ratified, since 1999 Indonesia set up a program so called Five Years Term National Human Rights Action Plan. For same reasons and also to show international public that Indonesia seriously willing to solve human rights problems, Indonesia also conducted trials for those who accused committed to human rights violation in East Timor, Aceh, Ambon, May 1998 Tragedy and the death of Humna rIghts activist Munir cases.

## **The Results**

One of the most important positive impact of Indonesian engagement with international community through the adoption of international norms and values, international human rights standards, is that International community pressures on Indonesia softened. Since the end of 1990s, US, Canada, European Countries, Japan, Australia started to loose their pressure on Indonesia, especially in relation to human rights violation issues. They began to flow aid to Indonesia either directly or through donor institutions such World Bank, IMF, ADB etc. Goerge W. Bush government, for instance, has indicated US willingness to lift its arms embargo to Indonesia.

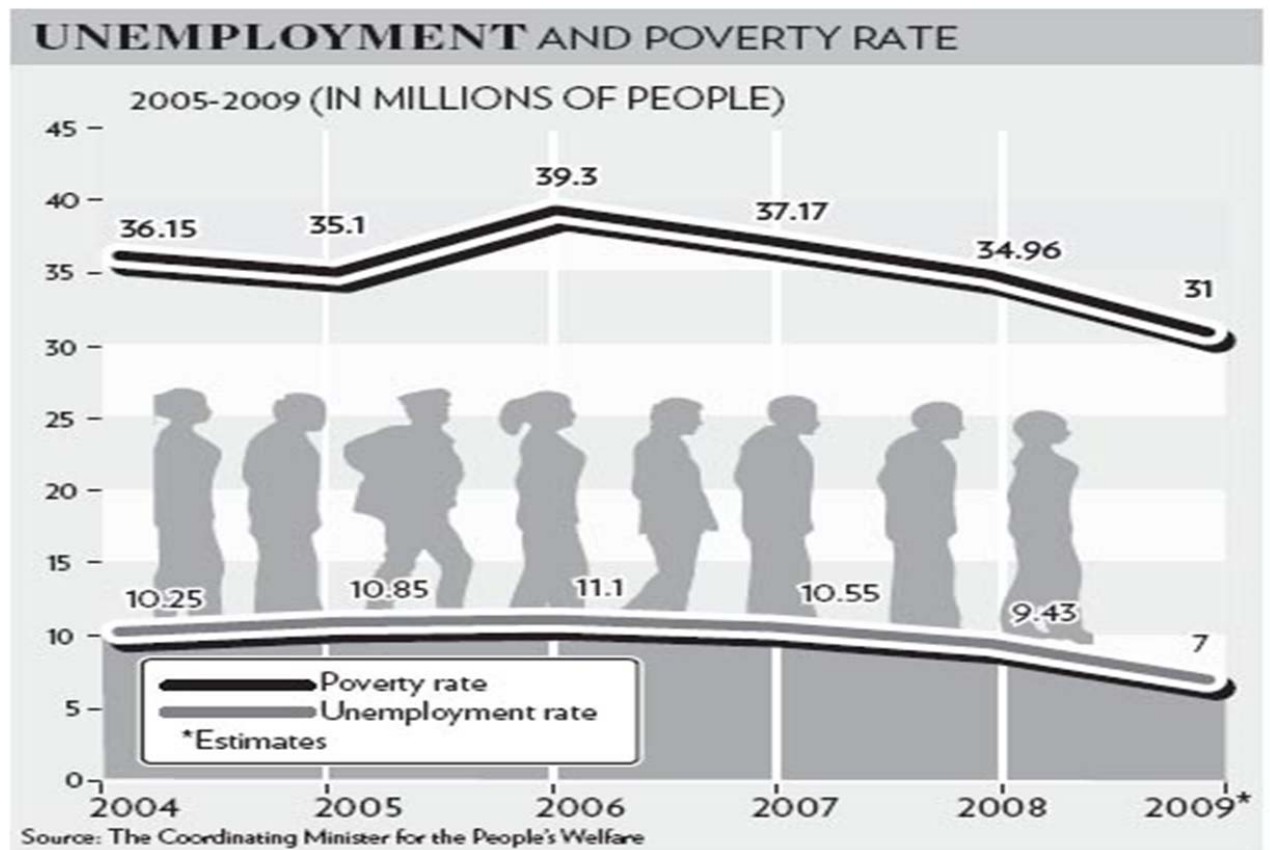
Indonesian diplomacy also strengthened as can be seen from increasing role Indonesia can play in International forum. For instance in 2005 Indonesia for the first time successfully was elected as head of UN Human Rights Commission. In 2006 again, Indonesia was elected as a nonpermanent member of UN Security Council. One year later, in 2007 Indonesia successfully held Climate Change Conference in Bali. And at the top of the achievements in Indonesia foreign policy after political reform 1998 was that Indonesia appointment as an active member of G20 in 2009. The rised of Barack Obama as President of the US, has also increased Indonesia hope higher for US support for assuming stronger position and to play more important role in the world.

In the economic aspect, the Indonesia new approach to foreign policy has successfully full out Indonesia from Global Financial Crisis started 1997/1998. Even, as recognised by many economic analysts, in that period Indonesia has succeeded in develop its economic better than other regional counties could achieved. Following main economic indicators might support that arguments.

**Indonesian Economic Main Indicators 2000 – 20007 (%)**

Year	Ind	Mal	Phil	Sing	Thai	Viet
GDP Growth						
2000	5.4	8.7	6.0	10.1	4.8	6.7
2001	3.6	0.5	1.8	-2.4	2.2	6.9
2002	4.5	5.4	4.4	4.2	5.3	7.1
2003	4.8	5.8	4.9	3.5	7.1	7.3
2004	5.0	6.8	6.4	9.0	6.3	7.8
2005	5.7	5.0	4.9	7.3	4.5	8.4
2006	5.5	5.9	5.4	8.2	5.1	8.2
2007	6.3	6.3	7-3	7.7	4.8	8.5
Inflation						
2000	3.8	1.6	4.0	1.3	1.6	-1.6
2001	11.5	1.4	6.8	1.0	1.7	-0.4
2002	11.8	1.8	3.0	-0.4	0.6	4.0
2003	6.8	1.1	3.5	0.5	1.8	3.2
2004	6.1	1.4	6.0	1.7	2.8	7.7
2005	10.5	3.0	7.7	0.5	4.5	8.3
2006	13.1	3.6	6.2	1.0	4.6	7.5
2007	6.4	2.1	2.8	2.1	2.2	8.3

Sources: IMF, *World Economic Outlook*, April 2008



Indonesia domestic politics has also been improving significantly. It has been getting more democratic as can be seen from the existence of freedom of press, freedom of expression, more political parties and other political institutions, and the successful of conducting direct elections every five years regularly.

As human rights has been more respected than most political and social problems, particularly local and ethnic conflicts were eased. For instance, conflict in East Timor, Aceh, Ambon, West Kalimantan and in the other areas were resolved.

### **Phenomenal?**

The shift in Indonesia's foreign policy orientation and practices above can be recorded as phenomenal for some reasons. *First*, time gap between ratification of one international human rights standard and the others was so significant. One covenant or convention needed longer time to be ratified, while the others needed much shorter time. For instance: CEDAW (adopted by UN in 1958), took 21 years before Indonesia ratified it in 1979. But since 1998, only in 7 years, Indonesia successfully ratified 4 international human rights standards: CAT (1998), CERD (1999), ICCPR and ICESCR (2005).

*Second*, the process of ratification of all covenants and conventions were not in "correct" order according to the time the international human standards adopted by UN and also according to the law logic. Normally, a country would ratify covenant first (ICCPR and ICESCR) before ratifying a convention as they were adopted earlier by UN than conventions, and as the fact that covenants are umbrella of conventions. But, interestingly Indonesia did it in the other way around, ratified conventions first and then covenants.

*Third*, at the time Indonesia enthusiastically ratified the entire above international human rights standards, a lot of resistance or opposition from some elements of society, domestically and regionally. The resistance, for instance, come from religion and nationalist groups in Indonesia, accused the adoption of such international human standards was in contrary with Indonesian national norms and values. In regional level, resistance come from some neighbouring countries leaders by rising the issues of cultural relativism. Mahatir Muhammad, The Prime Minister of Malaysia, for instance, argued that Asia has its own norms and values what he called “Asian Values” which are even better than western norms and values. So, actually Indonesia took risky steps politically, domestically and regionally, when it decided to engage with international community by adopting international human rights standards in its legal, social, economic and political system.

*Fourth*, at the time, actually Indonesia has not ready yet to implement the human rights standards it already ratified due to lack of infra and supra structures as well as political and cultural will of the people and government. During the Soeharto era (more than 30 years) Indonesia has adopted two international human rights standards: CEDAW and CRoC, but no indication that the government seriously tried to implement them in social, economic, political and legal system. Even Soeharto regime was proved committed in human rights violations in many areas and places, to name some of them were human rights violation in East Timor, Aceh, and other political killing, kidnapping and illegal political sentences.

*Fifth*, the shift has significant positive impacts to the Indonesia foreign policy performance as well as domestic economic, social and political development. Indonesia not only survive and successfully recovery from economic and political crisis, but also able to improve its economic and political development till now. There might be many factors has contributed to the success of Indonesia in facing fragile world in between 1997 – 2010. However, it is difficult to deny that the success Indonesia has achieved was correlated positively with shifts Indonesia has made in its foreign policy and practices since 1998.

### **Criticism**

Succeeded in confronting multi-dimensional crisis by shifting its foreign policy orientation and practices, nevertheless, does not mean Indonesia spared from strong criticisms and resistance from domestic elements and traditional alliance countries. Some critics, for instance, view that new Indonesia foreign policy approach is too pragmatic, ignore the very basic of Indonesian foreign policy idealism. They viewed Indonesian foreign policy has lost its orientation as demanded by Indonesian constitution. Some critics even accused that Indonesia has been tailing western countries and values, especially US and European countries. Indonesia was accused as has been trying to leaved behind the traditional alliances such as Muslim countries such as Iraq, Iran and



neighbouring countries in ASEAN. It can be seen when Indonesia indicated it support (although just by abstain) for US sponsored UN resolution no 1803 against Iran.

Finally, some critics also questioning the advantage of new foreign policy orientation and practices for the future (long term) Indonesia development, particularly military capability development. In their opinion, though Indonesia has shifted its foreign policy orientation and practices, still it is not able to increase its hard power element, especially military capability. The fact, according to them, up to now Indonesia military capability still behind Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Philippines.<sup>8</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Facing economic and political problems affected by GFC made Indonesian governments more creative and innovative in making and conducting foreign policy. Since 1998 Indonesia refrained from main stream Indonesian foreign policy orientation and practices, based on hard powers resources, suspicious, distrustful attitude, defensive and reactive in nature, to a more soft-power based diplomacy: image building, more constructive attitude, adaptive to the global issues such as human rights, environment, and terrorism, multilateral in approach and global in scope. By binding itself to the international norms and values Indonesia has been indicating its willingness to engage with international community, look at the broader world than tied up in regional orientation.

The shift was timely and correct choice given the situation faced by Indonesia at the time such as economic, political, security problems, and the changing international trends and pressures, as well the need to make up the new identity of democracy. That the adoption and implementation of global norms and values such as human rights proved is not contrary with Indonesian values, culture, law and ideology, in fact they parallel and support the effort to improve the realization of national interests. The new approach has resulted positive impacts to the Indonesian national interests. It not only contributed to strengthen Indonesian foreign policy (maintaining and strengthen Indonesia position and role in international forum), but also important for and contributed significantly to domestic economic, social and political development, especially those related to the issues of human rights. So, it can be understood why President Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, has declared that the nation had "a million friends and zero enemies".<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For further discussion on Realism see for instance, Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: the Struggle for Power and Peace*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1947 and Richard N. Lebow, "Realism", in Tim Dune, Milja Kurki, Steve Smith, *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, Oxford University Press, New York 2003.

<sup>2</sup> See Jack Connelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2003, hal 46

<sup>3</sup> See Center for Strategic and International Studies, *The Asian Conventional Military Balance in 2006*, Washington, DC, 2006 and IISS, *Military Balance 1999-2006*, London 2005-2006

<sup>4</sup> See, Clarence Dias, "Transitional Justice: Hak atas Keadilan Sosial", Komisi nasional Hak Asasi Manusia, *Keadilan dalam Masa Transisi*, Komnas HAM, Jakarta 2001, hal. 155

<sup>5</sup> For further discussion on the relation between human rights and development, see for instance, Philip Alston and Mary Robinson (eds), *Human Rights and Development*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005

<sup>6</sup> Lynn Miller, *Global Order: Values and Power in International Politics*, Westview Press, Boulder, USA, 1990, hal 183

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<sup>7</sup> See Tim Dune, “The English School”, and K.M, Fierke, “Constructivism” in Tim Dune, Milja Kurki, Steve Smith, *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, Oxford University Press, New York 2003

<sup>8</sup> See Center for Strategic and International Studies, *The Asian Conventional Military Balance in 2006*, Washington, DC, 2006 and IISS, *Military Balance 1999-2006*, London 2005-2006

<sup>9</sup> Cited from President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono inauguration speech, October, 20, 2010