



**BUILDING UP STRONGER AND MORE LONG-LASTING FOUNDATIONS
FOR INDONESIA-AUSTRALIA RELATION**

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The terrorist's bomb attack in Bali killing about 200 people and injuring hundreds of others, the majority of victims being Australian citizens, has given rise to a new awareness that Indonesia and Australia need to enhance relation and cooperation to ensure stability, eternal peace and common welfare.

As a matter of fact, relation and cooperation between Indonesia and Australia have been improving since President Abdurahman Wahid's visit to Australia and Prime Minister John Howard's visit to Indonesia. This is evident from the increased number of agreements made by the two countries, among others in the areas of security, anti-terrorism, across-border crimes, smuggling of human beings, money laundering, statistics, legal reformation, regional autonomy, education, culture, agriculture, fishery, oceanography, and cooperation of law-enforcers/police.

The constantly improving relation and cooperation need to be maintained and enhanced because of the enormous positive impact on the communities of both countries in particular and South-east Asia and the Pacific regions in general. For example, in dealing with the victims of the terrorists' bomb attack in Bali and in dealing with further terrorist issues. Without relation and cooperation, how can problems of terrorism be promptly resolved? Therefore, there is no other option but for Indonesia and Australia to strengthen relation and cooperation.

Considering that relation and cooperation between the two countries have been fluctuating, sometimes closer and sometimes further apart, frequently there has been suspicion of each other, and there has even been threat of severance altogether, it is imperative to seek foundations for stronger and more long-lasting relation and cooperation so that suspicion, tension and conflict between the two countries may be avoided or at least minimized.

It is absolutely necessary for Indonesia and Australia to seek, understand, and build foundations for strong and long-lasting relation and cooperation considering the greater threats, challenges and obstacles that the two countries will be confronted with in the future, for example threats of global terrorism, smuggling of human beings and across-border crimes. The two countries certainly will not be able to face these great problems alone but need to work hand in hand to overcome them. The question now is: what foundations must be built by Indonesia and Australia in order to ensure a strong and long-lasting relation?

A New Phase

Indonesia and Australia are two great countries that live as neighbours in the same region. Indonesia is very important for Australia. Geographically, Indonesia is the nearest Asian country to Australia and therefore forms a bridge for Australia to reach Asia.

From the geostrategic point of view, Indonesia constitutes a shield and at the same time a threat for Australia. For example, people from Afghanistan and Pakistan seeking

asylum in Australia can first be detained in Indonesia. However, if Indonesia is unstable, she may become a threat to Australia as many Indonesians will be flocking to Australia to seek asylum.

From the psychohistorical point of view, Indonesia showed an aggressive expansion political standpoint in the 1960's and the 1970's when recovering West Irian from the Dutch, when engaging in confrontation against Malaysia and when occupying East Timor. Such a political standpoint caused Australia to feel constantly threatened by Indonesia.

And from the point of view of political demography, the population of Indonesia is more than tenfold of that of Australia. However, Australians are much more prosperous than the majority of Indonesians. In the mind of Australians, it is not an impossibility that at some time or other waves of boat people from Indonesia would be heading towards Australia as was the case with the boat people from Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1970's and the 1980's.

Based on the above considerations, Australia has so far continued to increase relation and cooperation with Indonesia not only G to G (Government to Government) but also G to P (Government to People). The aid offered by the Australian Government to Indonesia in the year 2002 to the amount of \$121 million is an indication that Indonesia is really important for Australia.

Historically, the relation between Indonesia and Australia has been going up and down. There was a time when Australia gave support to the struggle of the Indonesian people between 1945 and 1949. Thanks to that support Indonesia was recognized for her independence and integrity.

There was a time when Australia was against Indonesia in the recovery of West Irian from the year 1950 to the year 1962. There was a time when Australia was close to Indonesia when she claimed East Timor as an Indonesian territory. When Australia under the leadership of Prime Minister John Howard supported the freedom of East Timor, relation with Indonesia once again became remote and tense.

At present the relation between Indonesia and Australia has become closer again. The two countries are in agreement to bury the past and to look more to the future. The Australian Government has reiterated that Australia supports Indonesia to be strong in democracy, economy as well as stability. Australia also supports the unity of the Indonesian territories and has never supported separatism in Indonesia (Richard Smith, A report card: Dispelling numerous myths. *The Jakarta Post*, 11-12 October 2002, page 7).

What happened in the past is a lesson for the future. When Indonesia and Australia have determined to bury the past and to look more to the future, it means that the relation between the two countries has embarked on a new phase, that is a phase when they make a new contract to ensure better relation and cooperation. Even more so when Indonesia and Australia have to face common problems that require togetherness in handling and overcoming them. As such, this new phase constitutes an initial step towards better relation and cooperation in the future.

Common Substantial Interests

The new phase in the relation and cooperation between Indonesia and Australia that has been opened up and is now in progress will be strengthened when based on

substantial interests of both Indonesia and Australia, that is the creation of stability, peace and common welfare. It is on those common interests that all forms of relation and cooperation should be based. Therefore, relation and cooperation for the sake of benefit to one's own country should be avoided as it will only trigger tension and conflict.

Common stability, peace and welfare should be made our point of departure because when one is faced with instability, conflict and poverty, then the other will be disturbed. It should not be too hard to imagine that if the turmoil and the economic crisis in Indonesia remain rampant for long, Australian stability and economy will also be affected. Why? Because, besides Australia being a close neighbour, many Australian interests in Indonesia will not be able to run effectively. That is why it is very important to evaluate the foundations of the relation and cooperation that have been made so far for, who knows, they have been based on narrow and short-term interests.

It should also be understood that Indonesia has a non-hegemony policy in building bilateral as well as international relations. Indonesia upholds the principles of equality (equal footing), mutual respect and mutual benefit relation with any country. Adhering to these principles, Indonesia constantly endeavours to maintain progress in the country by continuing to appreciate and respect other nations to make progress in their own way. Therefore, Indonesia has no liking for arrogant nations who feel that they have no need for other nations.

Within the framework of maintaining common interests between Indonesia and Australia, the leaders of both countries should be able to control the conservative instinct of their respective public. The conservative instinct of the Australian public is that they constantly feel threatened by Indonesia and migrants. That instinct is often used by certain parties in Australia to corner Indonesia simply for the sake of power, whereas the conservative instinct of the Indonesian public is that they lack self-confidence due to backwardness and ignorance. In any case, when public pressure arises as a consequence of the conservative instinct of our respective communities, the leaders of both countries should be able to give a wise response. In other words, the leaders of both countries should be able to form a public opinion, and not the other way round.

Within the framework of maintaining common interests, Indonesia and Australia should continue to increase dialogue and cooperation in order to create mutual understanding on common grounds as well as on our respective differences. Mutual understanding in turn will result in mutual trust and will make for greater responsibility in carrying out activities to reach a common goal.

Orientation is also needed to further integrate common interests and to eliminate existing deviations. For example, Indonesia is suffering from continuing economic and political crises and Australia should join in thinking for solutions. If integration of interests and elimination of deviations between the two countries do not occur, then common stability, peace and welfare will suffer.

Indonesia-Australia relation should also take into consideration the idea of a new world culture, a world that is becoming more and more global in which countries are inter-related. For example, the economic crisis taking place in Mexico and in the Argentine has become a threat to many countries. The economic crisis in Thailand in 1997 had a catastrophic effect on all the countries in East Asia. The attack on the United States of America on September 11, 2001 rang loud and clear in Indonesia. Especially after the terrorists' bomb attack in Bali, the world culture has been felt even more.

The onset of this new world culture has forced all countries to be universally bound and to enhance relation and cooperation one with another. And when two countries are located in the one and same region, then relation and cooperation between the two will become most essential.

The Future of Indonesia

The potential of Indonesia to create stability, peace and welfare in South-east Asia and the Pacific is very great indeed. Indonesia fulfils all the requirements geographically, geostrategically, geopolitically as well as economically to play a significant role in those regions. Indonesia cannot be undermined by any country in the world.

Admittedly, Indonesia is at present in a bad way due to economic, political, legal, educational and security crises which cannot as yet be completely overcome. Furthermore, Indonesia is facing a threat of disintegration and inter-ethnic, racial, religious and communal conflicts.

Conditions being as they are, the Indonesian Government has had to turn greater attention to internal affairs. Presidential visits to various countries made by Abdurahman Wahid and Megawati Soekarnoputri had the objective of carrying out a diplomacy for the sake of Indonesian unity by soliciting support from other countries in order that the Indonesian territories remain intact.

It should be noted that internal consolidation has now begun to show results. In the political sphere, for example, Indonesia is to become the greatest Moslem democratic country in the world when the direct presidential election has been carried out by the year 2004. Through direct election, political legitimization and certainty in Indonesia will be more guaranteed. This will surely have significant implications for Indonesia both internally and externally.

Indonesia is experiencing democracy and is in need of amiable support in developing, nurturing and cultivating the process of democracy by means of planned, regulated, well-directed and measured endeavours. Otherwise, the democracy that is beginning to grow will wither and die before it has the chance to take roots. Should democracy in Indonesia die, then political instability in this region will continue to flourish. Seen from the point of view of common interests, this will become a thorn in the flesh in our effort to build a stable, peaceful and prosperous region. As a close neighbour, Australia is in a position to assist Indonesia to ensure a smooth process of democracy, for example in the areas of research, training and education in democracy.

Indonesia will awake from her long slumber to become a country that will be able to develop a more stable, peaceful and prosperous world order. This will be marked by the awakening of moderate Moslems who will be able to maintain their religious conviction and at the same time absorb the benefits of advanced modern science and technology.

The Indonesian moderate Moslems will be able to join the empirically rational western culture and the Islamic culture which puts in equilibrium (tawajun) the empirically rational and the spiritual (transcendental). Moderate Moslems are also tolerant of differences, upholding human rights, peace-loving, democratic, open-hearted, rejecting all forms of violence, extremism and terrorism.

Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah will work hand in hand to pioneer awakening of the moderate Moslems. The two biggest Islamic organizations are at present pioneering

a common national moral movement together with non-Moslem religious organizations and other intellectual figures. Australia will certainly be able to give support to the moderate Moslems by continuing to carry out dialogue and cooperation within the framework of making the moderate Moslem movement a success.

It should also be noted that as a rule the Indonesian community really wishes for a life that is based on solidarity, tolerance of differences, plurality, moderation, respect and enforcement of human rights, and religious recognition and freedom.

The vision of the Indonesian community is reflected in Pancasila, which through consensus has been accepted as the basis for the life of the nation and the state. Pancasila contains the principles of belief in God Almighty, humanity, social solidarity, democracy and justice. The vision actually comes from the understanding that life is in fact the result of a mixture of various kinds of spirit and culture. Consequently, the Indonesian community is of the conviction that the progress of a nation can only be achieved through an attitude that is inclusive and moderate, willing to accept the truth from a different party. Based on the vision mentioned above, Indonesia is not a nation to be feared. Indonesia is a good friend to any nation any time.

The radical Moslems in Indonesia are very small in number, but because the mass media tend to blow it up, it appears as if they were great in number and powerful. An indication that they are small in number is that the number of votes they obtain in the general election from time to time remains small. The moderate Moslems continue to dominate the votes in the general election through national as well as national Moslem parties, such as Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (National Awakening Party). In other words, radical Moslems have no roots in the religious tradition in Indonesia. Moreover, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah will not allow radical Moslems to grow and take political control. This is evident from the fact that the two organizations reject the overall application of Islamic laws or Islamic state in Indonesia.

Economically, Indonesia will become a powerful force considering that Indonesia is rich in natural resources in the sea as well as on land. On top of that, Indonesia is a country with the fourth largest number of population, namely 220 million people, so as to constitute a great market potential and is made the object for export by various countries. Australia can of course boost the Indonesian economy by means of economic cooperation and transfer of technology. Through commitment to common stability, peace and welfare, there is no occasion for fear that Indonesia will be hazardous for the Australian economy.

Once again, the great Indonesian potential to create common stability, peace and welfare in South-east Asia and the Pacific regions will be possible only if Indonesia survives in the process of democratic and political transition, and economic and socio-cultural restoration. Therefore, Australia has to be very patient in making great efforts to help Indonesia undergo all the changes for they are very complex and require a rather long period of time.

Conclusion

Indonesia-Australia relation and cooperation should be built on the basis of common awareness that the future of the two countries is full of challenges, obstacles and hindrances. Based on that awareness, the two countries should put to the fore substantial interests, namely common stability, peace and welfare. Narrow and short-term interests should be replaced by greater and more future-oriented interests.

In realizing those common interests, the two countries should adhere to the principles of equality (equal footing), mutual respect and mutual benefit. Relation and cooperation between Indonesia and Australia will become strong and long-lasting if the common interests continue to be discussed in order to have the same perception concerning existing differences. For that purpose, an attitude of openness, honesty and mutual respect are greatly required to maintain relation and cooperation in the future.

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**Original submission written in Bahasa Indonesia
(attached)**