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Book Review

**Amitav Acharya. Indonesia Matters:
Asia's Emerging Democratic Power.**

Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd. 2014. 148 pp.

AGUS, Trihartono*

Currently, Indonesia is recognized as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, the third-largest democracy, and the fourth-most populated state in the world after China, India, and the United States. Some analysts also identified Indonesia as part of the "third world" or "global South," a leading member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and a voice of moderation in the Islamic world.

Those entities raise some questions such as how to define the contemporary Indonesia in the international community? How does Indonesia matter to the world? What lesson can we learn from Indonesia's path to its power status?

Conventional wisdom offers the lessons that states should obtain significant economic and military clout before their diplomatic and political roles came to be acknowledged. Accordingly, wealth accumulation and military power are the dimensions that are frequently used to include to what extent the country possess a global standing. Hence, the collapse of Suharto in 1998, which was prompted by a devastating economic crisis, turned into political turbulence, and led the regime change to end the longest dictatorship in Southeast Asia had devastated Indonesia in many aspects domestically and internationally. In the sense of traditional measurement, Indonesia lost its prominent position on the global stage at the time and afterward.

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Amitav Acharya, a leading scholar in International Relations in this seminal book sees that the post Suharto Indonesia has recovered and currently come to newfound prominence in global affairs. In line with that argument, this book systematically demonstrates his insightful account to trace the evolution of Indonesia's diplomacy. Indonesia has created an unconventional track to an emerging power status than other nations. Unlike the other states' road to power which necessarily rely on military strength and economic resources, those two elements are not solely as the prerequisite key for the current Indonesia's status and recognition. Rather, the recognition comes from a positive virtuous cycle of democracy, development and stability, persevering a foreign policy of restraint toward neighbors, maximizing the ability to fulfill regional trust, and creating intense engagement with the world at large. In a similar vein, the growing international stature of Indonesia lies at home and projected in constructive relations regionally and globally. In that sense, Indonesia's evolution to be an emerging power suggests a different pathway.

The book offers a snapshot of Indonesia's role as an emerging power in Southeast Asia, Asia-Pacific region, and a recognized voice in world affairs that have wider regional and global relevance. This book draws on the extensive interviews and keen observations with people inside the country. The sources are broad ranging from the president, the former foreign ministers, the academics, the think tanks, the ambassadors, the diplomats, the military generals, the members of the parliament, the journalists, the leader of NGOs, and even the head of the Islamic boarding school in a remote area which is far from the center of power. Although the book is not the all-inclusive account of Indonesia's foreign policy, to anyone who is familiar with Indonesia's international relations, this new general knowledge is an important contribution to what we have already known.

This book primarily, but not exclusively, focuses on Indonesia in the Presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–14). Acharya sees that the period of Yudhoyono was notable as he successfully recovered the country from its domestic economic and political turbulence and moved to consolidated democracy. Further, Yudhoyono not only had remarkably active foreign policy, worked vigorously to advance Indonesia's image and influence in the region and the world, but also made a significant movement to combine three important pillars, namely: democracy, development, and stability to enhance national prestige and influence on the global stage. In Yud-

hoyono era, Indonesia conducted the elections that were widely acknowledged as fair and free and as a milestone of Indonesia's political reform. These achievements were important for Indonesia to obtain a so-called democratic credential.

The book consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 ("Why Indonesia Matters?") addresses an account of the Indonesia's road to an emerging power and answers why this concept of 'emerging power' fits in Indonesia's contemporary status. The core idea of the chapter is the story that Indonesia has reached its growing international standing in an unconventional track. Compared to other emerging powers' states including the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and the non-BRICS emerging powers like South Korea and Saudi Arabia, the Indonesia's road to power is unique. While the rise of BRICS countries, non-BRICS countries, and other middle power ones, for instance, were mainly linked to economic growth and military strength, Indonesia, in contrast, paved the way through democratization and regional engagement. In line with that argument, compared to some of its neighbors, even in its immediate region of Southeast Asia, Indonesia is still militarily and economically weak. Nevertheless, Indonesia enjoyed more comparable regional leadership legitimacy and clout than most of the other emerging powers in the developing world. Also, Indonesia did more regional role-playing to mediate and facilitate intra-regional conflicts than the region's major powers. Hence, although military and economy measurements are frail, for the current Indonesia those two elements are not the foremost sources for its pathway to an emerging power. In addition, this chapter also explains how four other aspects namely independent and active foreign policy, normative power, dynamic equilibrium, and democracy have been the basis for Indonesia's foreign policy and have mutually reinforced the vigor to guide Indonesia's role internationally.

Chapter 2 ("Democracy, Development, and Stability: Creating a Virtuous Cycle") underlines that domestic progress relies on three main domestic grounds namely: democracy, development, and stability. These three layers are the basis of Indonesia's ability to foster a greater role internationally. In other words, the cornerstone of the modern Indonesia's foreign policy and the key to its international standing merely begin at home.

Regarding the domestic story, this chapter mainly spotlights how Indonesia has struggled to consolidate its democracy, stabilize its economy, and

achieved its internal stability after the fall of Suharto in 1998. The story of Indonesia's struggle for democracy has brought about a so-called democratic credential for the country. Later on, Indonesia is acknowledged as a regional "example" in managing the journey from authoritarian to a consolidated democracy.

More importantly, Indonesia's story figures out that its road to democracy has challenged several skepticism and suspicion about the relationship between democracy, development and stability. Regarding the suspicion that democracy is somehow antagonistic to development, Indonesia has proved that the country does not have to choose between democracy and development. Indeed, within the last decade, both democracy and development have been marching together in one package. Further, Indonesia also has answered popular skepticism regarding democracy and stability. It is verified that it is wrong to generalize a newbie state in a democracy is more likely to be unstable and suffers from internal violence and foreign adventurism. Last but not least, Indonesia also replies popular distrust that Islam is incompatible with democracy. In fact, Islam and democracy can go hand-in-hand in the country. Under President Yudhoyono, Indonesia's accomplishment started to embrace its role as a "promising model" as well as rediscovered the possibility of serving a voice for developing countries. In addition, the image of "a democratic country" together with "the largest Moslem population" has produced new capital for Indonesia's public relations to uphold its standing and Indonesia's new entity. Furthermore, since the ASEAN member committed to develop democracy and human rights, Indonesia has been seen as a "success story" of regional democratic country which deals with those issues.

Chapter 3 ("Indonesia and the Regional Architecture") elaborates how Indonesia manages regional legitimacy as the basis for its global standing. Acharya underscores that Indonesia is not essentially a regional power regarding its power possessing in traditional point of view. However, Indonesia has successfully formulated its foreign policy to facilitate a regional order as the basis of its global role, known as "regionalist approach to globalism." To make this approach works, Indonesia views foreign policy and external role based on a series of so-called "concentric circles." In that context, Indonesia considers ASEAN as the Indonesia's first circle and the principal pillar in carrying out its foreign policies. ASEAN + 3 (Japan, China, South Korea), the USA and the European Union are in the next circle

followed by like-minded developing countries in the third one.

The chapter also spotlights that Indonesia has expanded its foreign policy to ASEAN and the wider Asia-Pacific region. In capitalizing Indonesia's role, ASEAN remains the cornerstone of Indonesia's foreign policy and has upheld Indonesia's fundamental idea of an "independent and active" in the wider context. Hence, to expand its foreign policy Indonesia has designed a building-block of regional cooperation and strengthened the role of ASEAN globally. Indonesia, in particular, supports ASEAN as a key player in ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asia Summit (EAS).

In addition, this chapter underlines how Jakarta maintains the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) to promote free trade in the region as well as to ensure a central place for ASEAN countries in managing Asia-Pacific relations and preserving the interests and voice of ASEAN in APEC. Finally, the chapter also highlights to what extent Indonesia engages in the South China Sea issue to limit the regional ramifications of the South China Sea conflict, and considers the peaceful management as the highest importance for regional security.

Chapter 4 ("Indonesia and the Major Powers") argues that the primary basis of Indonesia's role as an emerging power is Jakarta's strong relations with the major powers in the Asia-Pacific. Asia-Pacific is essential for Indonesia as the region is the arena where the most economically and militarily powerful actors in the globe are placed. The region is also considered to be the strategic hub of the most current world order. Accordingly, Indonesia has seized the opportunity of developing closer ties with those vital actors and by implication allows its role to shape, to a certain degree, the regional architecture and shares values in the evolving world order in general. Although Indonesia does not identify itself as a major power in the traditional sense of the term, Jakarta has the distinction of enjoying good relations with all the major powers in the Asia-Pacific primarily with the US, China, Japan, Australia, India, and Russia.

Regarding the relations with the major powers, despite fluctuating, Jakarta has developed "comprehensive" and "strategic" partnerships with the Washington and Canberra. Jakarta has also include Moscow in its strategic design as a major arms supplier to the country. In the meantime, Jakarta has reconstructed a solid connection with Beijing, maintained a long interdependent relationship with Tokyo, and welcomed New Delhi in the ARF and the EAS. By developing close ties with those major powers, Ja-

karta gains benefits to bolster its role in the regional architecture and to develop a greater part in the world order.

Interestingly, Acharya also highlights important factor which enables Indonesia to enjoy the degree of acceptance by the major powers. The factor is the fact that Indonesia's military modernization and capacity have not yet caused anxieties in the region. Indonesia's military capacity and strategy are also shaped by its perceived security challenges that have been traditionally focused on internal threats and non-traditional security issues so that it would not have any significant implication for regional security and stability.

Chapter 5 ("Indonesia as a Global Actor") identifies references and idealism that guide Indonesia to the global role and explores activities proving that Indonesia engages itself in global diplomacy. For the first, this chapter refers to the document called The Strategic Plan (2005–25) of Indonesia's Foreign Ministry (*Rencana Strategis Kementerian Luar Negeri*) as the foundation that describes the goals and rationales of Indonesian foreign policy to pursue the global role.

For the later, the chapter displays Indonesia's engagement in various areas and issues that provide an opportunity to craft a new image and role in the international arena. Indonesia's global engagement is varied and multifaceted in some institutions such as G-20, Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), UN Peacekeeping, Climate Change, Reform of Global Institutions, Bali Democracy Forum, and Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Indonesia is also and remains part of the Group of 77 (G-77) of developing countries. Regarding the priorities, the UN remains a main focus of Indonesia's multilateral diplomacy, especially in the issue of the UN reform and peacekeeping. On the other hand, the most current particular importance is Indonesia's engagement in the G-20, supporting the most current norm called the R2P, and keeping the global campaign in the issue of Climate Change.

Admittedly, Indonesia's engagement in global diplomacy is not new. To recall, soon after Indonesia proclaimed its independence of Sukarno to the era of Suharto, Jakarta played an active role in forums of the developing countries such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and North-South negotiations. Yet, there has been a change in Indonesia's recognition in global diplomacy since the country has, to some extent, a democratic credential, regards its human rights, and pays attention to environmental and

other non-traditional security issues. Regarding the change, under Yudhoyono presidency, the degree of acceptance and acknowledgement by the international community was higher than that of Suharto era. The post Suharto Indonesia is politically more acceptable internationally than that the previous authoritarian regime of Suharto was.

Finally, chapter 6 ("A Nation on the Move: Indonesian Voices") exposes voices from within Indonesia and identifies some challenges and lessons remain in the country recent achievement. The voice from within acknowledges that although Indonesia's journey to democracy has moved from skepticism to optimism, Indonesia may face several challenges that potentially hinder the recent achievements in democratic life, economic accomplishment, and domestic stability as well as international role. Domestically, among the greatest obstacles, corruption remains a major problem. Other major issues are internal conflict places in West Papua and the likely revival of terrorism. Above all, Indonesia's poor bureaucratic capacity to manage all issues in the country is the most immediate challenge. Internationally, the rise of China, the growing rivalry among the major Asia-Pacific powers (China, Japan, US, and India) and the evolving conflict of South China Sea are issues that Indonesia need to face in the future. In short, to maintain its journey as Asia's emerging power, Indonesia needs to safeguard against those challenges.

What can we learn from this seminal work? This book opens up and enriches the perspective on how Indonesia mattered as an emerging power. There are two advantages to highlight: First, this book is among the most updated work to investigate the Indonesia's role regionally and internationally. There were several books previously discussing Indonesia's foreign policy and role in international affairs. However, most of them saw Indonesia in a specific period, at a specific region, on a specific issue in the past. To mention some, for instance, Weinstein (1976), Leifer (1983), Sukma (1999), Smith (2000), and Anwar (2000 and 2005) are among those earlier works. Unlikely, this book covers a wide-ranging issue of the most current Indonesia's international relations.

Second, this book provides a unique and illuminating argument to see Indonesia road to an emerging power. As written, being a regional power is always associated with the military and economic capacity. The achievement of Indonesia, on the contrary, comes from domestic achievement together with international's confidence and cooperation. Thus, Indonesia is

certainly an auspicious case for an alternative model of its path to power status.

The book also emphasizes the lessons as follows: the first and foremost, democratization is helpful not only to development but also to national stability and regional order. On the other hand, a definite capacity such as the country's size, population, strategic location, economic potential, including military, by itself is not the only way to attain international status as the country could rise by exercising its influence and normative power. As acknowledged by the author, this book covers only the former era of Yudhoyono. The analysis does not include the era of the current administration under President Joko Widodo. Although foreign policy may not be going to change drastically following the national leadership exchange, there is uncertainty over whether the current president adopts an internationalist foreign policy outlook.

Regarding the current administration under President Joko Widodo, domestically, there has recently been growing attentiveness and prosecution against corruption, proposing a new approach to handle the internal conflict, and addressing the potency of terrorism. Internationally, the way of President Joko Widodo prioritizes ASEAN and preserves major powers, such as maintaining the balance between Jakarta relations with Beijing and Tokyo, may come to a slight difference insight compared to the remained conclusion of the book. As a national leader also is an actor of diplomacy, the design of how President Widodo uses his personal touch upon the issues is quite different from that the former President Yudhoyono. In that sense, it likely affects how Indonesia exercises its role regionally and internationally in the near future.

All in all, this book is a timely and outstanding study of this important issue. Therefore, this book is not only important for students of International Relations and diplomats, but also for those who follow the dynamics of Indonesia's significant ascent.

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