

RETHINKING SOUTHEAST ASIA

Transnational Islamic Actors and Indonesia's Foreign Policy

Transcending the state

Delphine Alles



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Transnational Islamic Actors and Indonesia's Foreign Policy

The last fifteen years have seen Indonesia move away from authoritarianism to a thriving yet imperfect democracy. During this time, the archipelago attracted international attention as the most populated Muslim-majority country in the world. As religious issues and actors have been increasingly taken into account in the analysis and conduct of international relations, particularly since the 9/11 events, Indonesia's leaders have adapted to this new context.

Taking a socio-historical perspective, this book examines the growing role of transnational Islamic non-state actors in post-authoritarian Indonesia and how it has affected the making of Indonesia's foreign policy since the country embarked on the democratization process in 1998. It returns to the origins of the relationship between Islamic organizations and the Indonesian institutions in order to explain the current interactions between transnational Islamic actors and the country's official foreign policies. The book considers for the first time the interactions between the parallel or second-track diplomacy undertaken by Indonesia's Islamic NSAs and the country's official foreign policy narrative and actions. It explains the adaptation of the state's responses and investigates the outcomes of those responses on the country's international identity. Combining field-collected data and theoretical reflection, it offers a distanced analysis which deepens theoretical approaches on transnational religious actors.

Providing original research in Asian studies, while filling an empirical gap in international relations theory, this book will be of interest to scholars of Indonesian studies, Islamic studies, international relations and Asian politics.

Delphine Alles is Professor of Political Science at Université Paris-Est, France and teaches international relations and Asian politics at Sciences Po Paris, France. She is a senior research fellow at LIPHA (Hannah Arendt Interdisciplinary Institute for the Study of Politics, Université Paris-Est) and IRSEM (The Institute for Strategic Research, Paris).

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For Louise

Acknowledgements

This book owes its existence to Dr. Rizal Sukma, Executive Director of Jakarta's Centre for Security and International Studies, who welcomed me in his Tanah Abang office where I had candidly stepped on my first field research in Indonesia in 2008. Within a few weeks, Rizal's humour and critical perspectives contributed to enrich of my vision of Indonesia's socio-political sphere, more than the dozen books I had read before arriving on the archipelago's territory. While I kept on promoting a sociological and transnational approach for the study of international relations, Rizal defended the English School perspective. The idea emerged of pursuing together the path he had opened with his own book, *Islam in Indonesia's Foreign Policy* (Routledge, 2003), by focusing on the interactions between non-state actors and official foreign policy narratives and practices. As Rizal's academic, administrative and political responsibilities progressively piled up, they did not leave him with enough time to pursue this initially common endeavour. It is nevertheless thanks to his impulse that the project was concretized and through our long exchanges that the first version of its structure was shaped – for which I remain tremendously grateful. As this project progressed, Duncan McCargo knew how and when to inquire and encourage to ensure that the final point would finally be typed. With Gwenael Njoto-Feillard, they provided constructive feedback which was critical in helping me shape the final version of the manuscript. The benevolent attention and example of Professor Bertrand Badie, who supervised the PhD thesis from which this book is partially extracted, have been major impulses for my work. I am also indebted to the many actors from the Indonesian civil society and various national administrations who kindly agreed to share their time and experience during interviews and left many “black boxes” partially ajar by allowing me to attend some of their meetings. I also wish to thank Routledge's editors for their patience as I was struggling with the arcanae of the writing process. The concretization of this research would not have been possible without the support of the institutions which have hosted or funded my research, both in France and Indonesia: Sciences Po Paris, IRSEM and Université Paris Est in France, CSIS and EFEO in Jakarta. Marian's tolerance and support patience also proved essential at every step of the way. Although the result is considerably greater than it would have been without these impulses and supports, I fully assume responsibility for its remaining weaknesses.

Lélex – May 2015

Spelling and transliterations

In the following pages, Arabic terms are spelled according to their most common Indonesian transliteration. Indonesian names are written according to the 1947 and 1972 orthographic reforms, which most importantly transformed “oe” into “u” (Soekarno into Sukarno) and “j” into “y” (Jogjakarta into Yogyakarta), except when the names of deceased personalities or ancient locations remain commonly spelled with the old orthograph.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ABRI	Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia, Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia
AIG	Afghan Interim Government
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Justice and Development Party (Turkey)
AMINEF	American Indonesian Exchange Foundation
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CDCC	Centre for Dialogue and Cooperation among Civilisations
CIDES	Centre for Information and Development Studies
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSCAP	Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific
CSIS	Centre for Strategic and International Studies
D-8	Development-8
DDII	Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia, Predication Council of Indonesian Islam
DEPLU	Departemen Luar Negeri, Department of Foreign Affairs
DPR	Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, People's Representative Council
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigations
FPI	Front Pembela Islam, Islamic Defenders' Front
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, Free Aceh Movement
Golkar	Partai Golongan Karya, Party of the Functional Groups
GONGO	government non-governmental organization
GRP	Government of the Republic of the Philippines
HCR	High Commissioner for Refugees
HMI	Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, Organization of Muslim Students
HT	Hizbut Tahrir, Liberation Party
HTI	Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, Indonesian Liberation Party
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICFM	Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICIS	International Conference of Islamic Scholars

ICMI	Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia, Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals
IDFR	Institute for Diplomacy and Foreign Relations
IGGI	Inter-governmental Group on Indonesia
IIFSO	International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations
IIROSA	International Islamic Relief Organization of Saudi Arabia
IMT	International Monitoring Team
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
JCLEC	Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation
JIL	Jaringan Islam Liberal, Liberal Islam Network
JT	Jemaah Tarbiyah, Society for Education/Development
KAMI	Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Indonesia, Indonesian Students' Action Front
KAMMI	Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia, United Front of Indonesian Muslim Students
KEMLU	Kementerian Luar Negeri, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
KISDI	Komite Indonesia untuk Solidaritas dengan Dunia Islam, Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with the Muslim World
KOMPAK	Komite Aksi Penanggulangan Akibat Krisis, Action Committee for Crisis Prevention
Kopassus	Komando Pasukan Khusus, Special Forces Commando
LIPIA	Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Arab, Institute of Islamic and Arab Sciences
Masyumi	Partai Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia, Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MMI	Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia, Indonesian Mujahidin Council
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MPR	Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat, People's Consultative Assembly
MUI	Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Indonesian Ulema Council
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NU	Nahdlatul Ulama, Awakening of the Ulamas
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference / Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (after 2011)
OIC-PCSP	Organization of the Islamic Conference – Peace Committee for Southern Philippines
PAN	Partai Amanat Nasional, National Mandate Party
Parmusi	Partai Muslimin Indonesia, Indonesian Muslim Party
PBB	Partai Bulan Bintang, Crescent and Star Party
PD	Partai Demokrat, Democratic Party
PDI	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, Indonesian Democratic Party
PDI-P	Partai Demokrasi Indonesia – Perjuangan, Indonesian Democratic Party – Struggle
Persis	Persatuan Islam, Islamic Union

Perti	Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah, Union for an Islamic Education
PKB	Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, National Awakening Party
PKI	Partai Komunis Indonesia, Indonesian Communist Party
PKS	Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, Justice and Prosperity Party
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNI	Partai Nasional Indonesia, Indonesian National Party
PPKI	Panitia Persiapan Kemerdekaan Indonesia, Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence
PPP	Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, United Development Party
PTIQ	Institute Perguruan Tinggi Ilmu Al-Quran, Institute for Higher Quranic Education
PULO	Patani United Liberation Organization
SBPAC	Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center
SBY	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono
SPCPD	Southern Philippines Council for Peace and Development
THHK	Tiong Hwa Hwee Koan, Gathering House of the Chinese
TNI	Tentara Nasional Indonesia, National Army of Indonesia
UMNO	United Malays Nationalist Organization
UN ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
UN	United Nations
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTEA	United Nations Temporary Executive Authority
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
VOC	Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, United Company of the Oriental Indies
WPF	World Peace Forum

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Introduction

The two largest Islamic organizations in the world, Indonesia-based Nahdlatul Ulama (Awakening of the Ulama) and Muhammadiyah (Muhammad's path), founded in the early twentieth century, were organizing in 2015 their respective thirty-third and forty-seventh *Muktamar* (quinquennial congresses). Both have set internationalization at the centre of their projects, as they emphasized the urgency to promote their model beyond Indonesia's borders rather than defensively striving to contain external influences. The two organizations had previously been rather inward looking (although at different degrees), by comparison with more recently emerged groups inspired by Middle Eastern models. This move thus confirmed and substantiated a reorientation toward more extraversion, which they had begun to engage in during the 2000s. Their internationalization ambition also echoes the government's updated foreign policy agenda to uphold Indonesia's image as the home of a moderate brand of Islam and a model of peaceful coexistence among various faiths.

This convergence, between the country's official foreign policy narrative and the objectives of its largest Islamic organizations, is all but an accident. Foreign policy has been at the forefront of the adaptation of the Indonesian authorities to the growing role of transnational Islamic actors on the global and domestic scenes. This evolution has taken place in the double context set by Indonesia's domestic transition and a global tendency to focus on religious interpretations for political issues involving Muslims. Pressured to adapt by an increasingly diverse, vocal and influential Islamic civil society, foreign policy has been the place of emergence of a renewed national identity narrative which highlights the specificity of Indonesian Islam as an example of tolerance and compatibility with democratic political institutions.

In this context, the reform of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which began in the mid-2000s, has given way to innovative public diplomacy practices. The formulation and implementation of the country's international projection have been increasingly co-constituted by public and private actors. Along with the traditional actors of foreign policy, they now involve selected civil society organizations characterized by their acknowledgement of the existing relationship between religion and the nation-state. The international promotion of Indonesia's renewed national identity narrative thus partly lies on the transnational activities

2 Introduction

of these actors, whose domestic and global outlooks and agendas converge with the government's priorities. This evolution has taken the form of a co-optation of stato-loyal Islamic actors' transnational activities, while remaining within the limits of the religious neutrality imposed by the Indonesian Constitution.

These observations open many questions, which will be framed in the context of the emergence of a dense body of literature on the interactions between religious concerns and international relations.¹ Many works have questioned the secular foundations of the discipline and demonstrated that religion and government foreign policies may interact.² Drawing on this literature, the key aspiration of this work is to understand how different categories of actors who identify themselves by their adherence to Islam, an external source of legitimacy and the basis of transnational solidarities, relate with a policy area that is conventionally addressed as the state's prerogative. It questions the rationale and the forms of their integration in foreign policy making and implementation processes, asking whether this evolution undermines the traditional definition of foreign policy as a regalian monopoly.

Once treated as a vanishing anomaly or as a marginal phenomenon, religion is difficult to fit within classical international relations paradigms.³ Yet, new perspectives have been introduced in the wake of the increasingly obvious difficulty in making sense of contemporary international disorders in the post-Cold War and especially the post-9/11 world. Attempting to draw a typology, Jeffrey Haynes has defined three ways of approaching religion for the purpose of social investigation: "from the perspective of a body of ideas and outlooks (. . .); as a type of formal organization (. . .); or as a social group – that is, religious groups and movements."⁴ Having largely emerged from the quest for renewed explanations of conflictuality and the need for on-the-spot analyses of terrorism legitimated by a religious rhetoric, the concern for religion's role in world affairs has often been analyzed through essentialist or primordialist lenses. The first, addressing religion as an independent variable, focuses on the identification of the fundamentals of different faiths and the behaviours which they are expected to impose on their believers, leaving aside the specificities of different social configurations, as well as the role of individualities. The second sees religion as a natural fact of human life and a primordial source of identity, thus systematically analyzing human behaviours through this variable. Both leave aside the fact that religious identities – and the narratives they contribute to found – are based on constantly changing boundaries. They may be socially and politically constructed by actors who often reinterpret or renegotiate their own identities and practices at the individual and collective levels within their own communities, as well as the institutional, social and political contexts within which they interact. The self-definition and identity of the *Umma* (Islamic nation) has thus been redefined in the context of the emergence of a "transnational public sphere."⁵ By contrast, functionalist and instrumentalist approaches deny any agency to the religious variable in international relations. The former consider its mobilizations a product of more determining social, economic or political factors or conditions. The latter see identity variables as mere objects, manipulated by identity entrepreneurs seeking political or material gains through the mobilization of the masses.

Rather than reifying “Islam,” and rather than addressing “religion” as an independent variable or as a fully manipulable object, the following developments purposely draw on a sociological approach to focus on the interactions and agendas of religiously motivated non-state actors. Max Weber, from the first lines of his *Sociology of Religion*, has underlined that it is vain to search for an a priori “essence” of religion. He proposed to analyze the “conditions and effects of a certain type of communal action whose understanding may only be reached (. . .) by starting from individuals’ subjective experience, representations and finalities.”⁶ Religion may thus be approached as what actors themselves define as such in order to grasp how their subjective understanding of their own religion affects their worldviews and actions. This vision, which presents the advantage of circumventing a theological discussion, is usefully complemented by Emile Durkheim’s approach to religious affiliations as a factor of social integration. In his words, religion should be addressed as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.”⁷ The interest of the Durkheimian approach is to analyze religion as an “eminently collective thing,”⁸ which creates communal solidarities and may thus integrate, mobilize or divide. Having increasingly emerged as an alternative and overarching object of allegiance for actors who contest the state’s role as the main source of legitimacy, it may cement groups of non-state actors across national borders, with the effect of disturbing the course of inter-state relations.

Social anthropologist Clifford Geertz has cleared a path that goes beyond the debate on religion’s role as a social and political factor. He demonstrated that religious identities’ constructed nature does not prevent individuals from reifying them as primordial in their daily practices.⁹ Religious identities may thus contribute to shape the worldviews of actors who claim their actions to be based on religious references. They hence draw the frameworks within which foreign policy decisions are made, either as one of the fundamental elements of a foreign policy maker’s *Weltanschauung* (worldview) or through the constraint exercised by religiously motivated actors on policy options. Religion also constitutes a potential source of legitimacy, independent from political processes, which may enhance or undermine the authority of a political leader or identity entrepreneur pursuing a religious, social or political agenda. These observations call for a middle way, through the combination of a constructivist framework and a sociological approach to international relations and religion. The former focuses on religion’s role in shaping political and social leaders’ identities, worldviews and perceptions of legitimacy. It is thus seen as influencing their understanding of their own interests, as well as their approach toward others, weighting on behaviours and policy orientations.¹⁰ The sociological agenda, rather, seeks to analyze the role of religion in shaping individual or aggregated actors’ interactions and their interdependences within the global system.¹¹ Going beyond the conventional domestic/foreign divide, this approach opens a toolbox to analyze the relationships between decision makers and non-state actors, which are addressed as units of analysis per se, as they may act independently or in spite of the limitations set by states.