REVITALIZING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN INDONESIA AND SAUDI ARABIA: MODERATE MOSLEM'S PERSPECTIVE IN PROMOTING PEACE AND COOPERATION FOR MUTUAL BENEFITS

[1]MANSUR JUNED, [2]MOHAMD HERY SARIPUDIN

[1]Engineering Department of International Relations, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional 'Veteran' Jakarta,
Doctorate Candidate at the International Relations, University of Padjadjaran
[2]Consul General, Consulate General of the Republic Indonesia, Jeddah Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Doctorate Candidate at the International Relations, University of Padjadjaran
E-mail: [1]mansurjuned@ymail.com, [2]hsaripudin@gmail.com

Abstract- Indonesia-Saudi ties were initiated formally in 1948 with the establishment of the Indonesian Embassy in Jeddah and, two years later, with a Saudi representative office in Jakarta that was eventually turned into a formal embassy in 1955. It is important to note the Kingdom was among the first countries to have recognized Indonesia's independence in 1945. The bilateral relations between the two countries which are based on a number of common factors and recalled that the Kingdom was among the first countries to have recognized Indonesia's independence in 1945, confirming the Kingdom's hope to see more development and enhancement of the strong relations between the two sisterly countries. Naturally, bilateral trade has reflected the predominance of energy in trade between the two countries. However, in recent years, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia has agreed to double their bilateral trade value by 2020, as the two countries believe they have a lot of potential for expansion. This qualitative study shows that beside economic relations and cooperation, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia maintain considerably strong religious and cultural links with each other. The Saudi government-backed Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies (LIPIA) in Jakarta was founded in 1987 with close affiliations to the University of Imam Mohammed Bin Saud. It is estimated that over 8,500 students have graduated from the institute. The historical link between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia was Islam. Numerous Muslim traders and *Ulama* arrived in the Indonesian archipelago from the Arab World during the coming of Islam around the 13th century. It is necessary to revitalize relationship between both countries due to the changing nature of international politics and threat.

Keywords- Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Revitalization, Religion

I. INTRODUCTION

Islam today is in conflict, between western secular culture and traditional Islamic culture. The growth of Islamic Fundamentalism is an attempt to reach back to the glories of Islamic history. Many Fundamentalist (Muslim) ask themselves the question, If Islam is the religion of Allah, why are we being defeated by the West (United States) and Israel. The fundamentalist sees the problem with the failure of Islamic nations to live as the Quran commands. Not living the life and traditions required by Allah, as specified in the Quran, is the cause of Islam's weakness and defeat by the West, this is the spark of fundamentalism. Today in Islam, there is a struggle between moderate and fundamentalist ideology, moderates strive to be more western and while the fundamentalists look to the days of the prophet. Religion, particularly in Indonesia, has become the most important element in the matters of social and political identity. Nevertheless, religion and state are not in different part of Indonesia as nation. State or government puts religion and its symbols as a power relation to deal with domination practice; therefore government has control tightly towards religion.

1.1 Positioning Religion in Nation-State (Indonesia)

Indonesia claims to be neither an Islamic nor a secular state. It is a "religious state" or "*Pancasila-based state*" which does not favor any particular faith. The religiosity of the state is translated into the institutionalization of religion in social life and state formal structure. As the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, Indonesia has been praised for its success in maintaining harmony between religious life and democracy. The existence of vibrant moderate Muslims throughout the country is regarded as the containing force of religious extremism as well as the basis for the establishment of democratic polity.

The definition of religion in Indonesia is multi-meaning because the administration law has classified two religious groups meaning that there is official religion recognized by government such as: Hindu, Buddhist, Islam, Catholics, Christianity, and Kong Fuchu. Religion as identity; which embeds into the concept of national building since the fall of Sukarno's regime becomes important tool to unity political ideology as well as power relation. This happened because Indonesian government escapes the communism related to the 'myth' of atheist ideology. Religion in Indonesia has enhanced the battle of political supremacy, class social, and gender in the colonial period. In addition, it seems that religion has become a power contestation of which the role of government is absolutely important element to distinguish 'religion' as individual matter and 'religion' as political function. Such political

suspicion is the most reasonable fact to set column of religion in the Indonesian identity card after the fall of Sukarno regime.

There are generally two ways how people exercise religions. The first way, common to western secular idea, is by positioning religion within the concept of individual rights, the implication of which is the positioning of religion in private sphere. This way, the right to believe in the Supreme Being, including the right to practice religion is reserved for individual. Different interpretations among believers are accepted as common phenomena. The second way of exercising religion is through certain set of hierarchical order. Religions are interpreted by small groups of religious leaders, such as *Ulama* in Islam and the Pope in Catholic. The interpretations by these religious leaders are imposed to the followers as the true teaching and any differences are considered heresy. While the first way of exercising religion employ bottom-up approach, the second way uses top-down approach to form religious community.

The top-down approach to form religious community undoubtedly requires institutionalization of religion, by making a structure of religious community ranging from supreme leaders to grass-root followers. Religious leaders in many places already hold traditional power within the society. In Indonesia, for example, traditional leaders stand side by side with formal leaders, often even outweighing them in terms of social influence. These traditional and informal figures are normally judged by their level of religiosity. But institutionalization of religion does not stop at social level. Social power embedded in religious leaders makes it possible to bring religions into political stage, and along with it comes institutionalization of religion in the state level.

1.2 Reconciliation of Faith with Modernity in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is one of the most important countries not just in the Arab-Islamic world but for the entire globe. It's geostrategic and geo economic significance emanates from many factors but most importantly due to petroleum reserves and production, its centrality to Islam and geographical location. Domestically, it has been one of the most stable states in the Arab world in modern times. It has been ruled by a family since 1902 when the campaign for reinstating the Saudi state started and culminated in the formation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. Following which the founder King Ibn Saud started the process of consolidating power and stabilizing the newly formed state. [1]

However, with changing economic needs and some internal demands for reforms, things started to change. Economic compulsions forced the monarchy to invest in human resource development and expansion of educational facilities for women. More importantly, with a rising population and declining oil-wealth the need to provide economic welfare and better job opportunities began to reverberate. Therefore, the monarchy started to take measures to improve the quality and accessibility of education, to improve the condition of science and technological education, a limited opening of the job market for educated women, and a promised political opening. It also took measures to respond to the disgruntled sections of *Ulama* and conservative populace which were unhappy with marginalization of traditional Islamic ideals.

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia has experienced numerous changes in the social, political, and economic aspects of life since its establishment. Like many Muslim societies it has witnessed major reformulations in the day-to-day life of the people as well as the behavior of the state. More importantly, Islam and modernization have been the two important variables that have driven this process of transition. This is reflected in a variety of ways in numerous areas including education, the condition of women, the judiciary, the functioning of civil society and media, as well as the economy and administration of the state. Many other factors too have influenced this complex process including linkages with the outside world, globalization, the information and communication revolution, and so on. [2]

One single idea or ideology cannot be regarded as being the driving force behind or being responsible for setting in motion this complex process. A number of competing ideas have influenced and combined to catalyze the reformation in Saudi Arabia but Wahhabi Islam remains the dominant ideology both in social as well as state affairs. In the course, Saudi Arabia has evolved into a state where Islam and modernization have started to have an existence based in complementation, though tension between them remains visible. This is a situation which can be interpreted as resembling with, albeit partially, Islamic modernist ideas and ideals of state and society. Although Islamic modernist thought envisages a more comprehensive and complex process of reformation for Muslim societies, it also agrees on local specifications and distinctions. One might argue that Islamic modernist ideals and contemporary Saudi Arabia remain a case of conflict but it becomes impossible to ignore the convergences between them. In this light, it can be concluded that Islamic modernism provides an important strand of thought to understand the transition process in Saudi Arabia.

II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

2.1 Indonesia-Saudi Relations

Official diplomatic relations between Indonesia and

Saudi Arabia were opened in 1950. Saudi Arabia is a major employer for thousands of Indonesian workers, mostly in the domestic sector as house maids. As of 2009, there are around 1 million Indonesian workers working in Saudi Arabia.However, there are reports of abuses of Indonesian migrant workers by their Saudi Arabian employers. There are reports of physical abuses, and some led to the death of Indonesian maids.Most of the time, justice was not enforced in Saudi Arabia as the abusers have rarely faced punishment greater than a fine. Some of these cases have attracted worldwide attention.Another problem is the number of Indonesian workers facing death row in Saudi Arabia. These Indonesian maids have been arrested on alleged charges of murder, witchcraft and sexual offenses. In June 2012, around 32 Indonesian housemaids were arrested and held under death sentences. A few maids were sentenced to death earlier. [3]

The total trade between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia amounted to $8.6 billion in 2015, with the Saudi investment value in Indonesia reaching $29.3 million in the first half of 2015. Indonesian exports to Saudi Arabia amounted to $3.35 billion in 2015, while imports were worth $5.14 billion. The figures are yet to reflect the potential of both countries, as Saudi Arabia is one of the biggest potential markets for Indonesia in the Middle East. The non-oil and gas trade balance between the two countries experienced a 29.84% surplus in 2015. Meanwhile, Indonesia's main exports to Saudi Arabia in 2015 were motor vehicles, palm oil, tuna, rubber and rubber products, plywood, paper and paper products, pulp, wood charcoal, and textile and textile products. [4]

In Jakarta, LIPIA represents a Saudi microcosm where Salafi norms and traditions prevail. LIPIA not only helps Saudi Arabia to influence Indonesian society, it also provides a gateway to all of Southeast Asia. As long as Muslim societies fail to create attractive government-run educational institutions for their citizens, there will be ample room for Saudi influence.

2.2 Strengthening Partnership & Revitalizing Relations

In 1980, in reaction to Iran's Islamic revolution, the Saudi government founded LIPIA, a branch of the Imam Muhammad bin Saud University in Riyadh, to be an ideological bulwark in Jakarta. LIPIA offers a bachelor's degree in Islamic Law, a diploma program for Arabic-language teachers, and preparatory courses for both programs. LIPIA comes under the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education and is entirely financed by Saudi Arabia. The curricula and teaching materials reflect the Saudi worldview. Although LIPIA does not subscribe to Indonesia's concept of a religiously pluralistic democratic society, the Indonesian government allows it to operate freely. LIPIA is seen as helping Indonesia to solidify its bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia; its presence helps to upgrade Indonesia's ailing educational infrastructure. Indonesian government educational institutions suffer from a lack of financing, poor facilities, and insufficiently trained lecturers. [5]

Saudi Arabia has signed an agreement with Indonesia aimed at protecting the rights of Indonesian maids in the country following allegations of abuse. The domestic workers will no longer be deprived of their passports nor prevented from communicating with the outside world.They will also be guaranteed the payment of a monthly wage and time off.Indonesia's government will wait to see how the agreement is implemented before allowing recruitment to continue.It has been pushing for the guarantees for four years following of allegations of overwork, forced confinement, non-payment of wages, food deprivation, and psychological and sexual abuse.Workers who attempted to report employer abuses have sometimes faced prosecution based on counter-claims of theft or "sorcery".Earlier this month, King Abdullah pardoned an Indonesian maid who was sentenced to death in 2003 after being convicted of witchcraft.

Bilateral relation between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia is more than just about the deployment of Indonesian workers to Saudi Arabia. In the trade sector, Saudi Arabia benefits from Indonesia, with about US$4 billion, thanks to its oil export. In the tourism sector, about 15 percent of Saudis revenue from Hajj activities come from Indonesian Hajj. Indonesia and Saudi Arabia to strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two countries for the benefit of the two sides. In the trade sector, Indonesia exports motorcycle, spare parts, tires, textiles and palm oil to Saudi Arabia, while Saudi Arabia exports oil, petrochemical products and plastic to Indonesia. Meanwhile there are 1.3 million Indonesian workers working in Saudi Arabia currently. The number excludes the number of illegal immigrants in Saudi Arabia without proper documents. [6]

As victims of terrorism, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia both cooperate with global counterterrorism efforts, particularly in the areas of intelligence sharing and terrorist financing. Both have longstanding defense relationships with the West, but geographical distance and diverging security threats have historically limited more-traditional defense cooperation between the two. An archipelagic state of 17,000 islands, Indonesia is relatively immune from external security threats while Saudi Arabia's location in the volatile Middle East makes external defense a much higher priority. Nevertheless, the two countries have recently decided to work together in the defense sector, agreeing to defense-related educational exchange, training and the development of defense industries in

both countries. A joint military committee tasked with identifying areas of cooperation will meet in June with the aim of having a memorandum of understanding ready for signing by December.

Radical Islamic movements in Indonesia are not a new phenomenon but have been present since the colonial era. The underlying reasons for a Muslim to radicalize can be (a mixture of) political exclusion, feelings that great injustice has been done towards the Muslim community or feelings of western domination (which results in resentment of the West). It is also important to note that Indonesian radical movements have their origin in reform movements in the Middle East. Wahhabism, a very strict interpretation that aims for a return to the true nature of the Islam as it was practiced during the days of Prophet Muhammad, was founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Saudi Arabia in the mid-18th century. The purification of Islam would strengthen the position of Islam vis-a-vis the growing western powers. Around 1800, Indonesian hajji's arriving back in the archipelago after the pilgrimage to Mecca, brought with them this Wahhabi ideology and aimed for reviving Indonesian Islam. Not coincidentally Wahhabism was spread through the archipelago when the Dutch began to expand their political role. Another radical movement that would gain much influence in Indonesia was the Salafi-movement that stems from Egypt at the end of the 19th century. Its ideology is essentially very similar to Wahhabism. [7.

CONCLUSION

Contact with the Middle East was key in spreading stricter forms of Islam to Indonesia. When the Suez Canal opened in 1869, which significantly quickened journeys to the Middle East, contacts with religious centers in the Middle East were intensified. Not only an increase in numbers of Indonesian hajji's emerged, but also more Indonesians went to study in Egypt or Saudi Arabia. Vice versa migrants from Arabia founded Salafi-influenced organizations in the archipelago, for example Al-Irsyad (Union for Reformation and Guidance) and Persatuan Islam (Islamic Union) in West Java, both promoting the purification of Islam. Today, these links to the Middle East are still very important for present radical Indonesian movements (see below), both for ideological support and for financial funding. The cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Indonesia is underscored by both nations' common Islamic identities. In fact, both Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, in agreeing to cooperate on counterterrorism, noted that terrorism should not be linked to any ideology or religion, in particular Islam. On several occasions Indonesia has made global headlines due to vicious terrorist attacks and the presence of terrorist networks (and training camps) that may be connected to the militant Al-Qaeda group. Indonesia is also considered one of the world's largest suppliers of Islamic State (IS) fighters, with more than 500 Indonesians having joined the war in Syria and Iraq, based on data from the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT). It illustrates the existence of a radical Muslim community that not only believes Islam should be the sole guidance in life but is also willing to use extreme measures to reform and uproot established conditions.

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