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## **Role Conflict and the Limits of State Identity: the Case of Indonesia in Democracy Promotion**

**Moch Faisal Karim**

### **Abstract**

This paper aims to analyse why Indonesia projects democracy as a state identity by taking on the role of democracy promoter? This paper argues that Indonesia's aspiring role as a democracy promoter is not a manifestation of a firm and coherent democratic political culture, which is more likely to be a permanent feature of states. Thus, rather than seeing it as firmly established state identity, instead, Indonesia's democratic identity should be seen as role conception articulated by foreign policy elites in its quest for international prestige. Its role as a democracy promoter has enabled Indonesia to enhance its other roles conceptions such as an intellectual leader in ASEAN as well as a bridge-builder at the global level. However, this paper further argues that Indonesia's role as a democracy promoter has also been hindered due to the inter-role conflicts arising from its enactment of multiple roles. As a result, Indonesia's enactment of the role as democracy promoter have relatively less impactful towards democratisation in the region. To substantiate this argument, the paper examines Indonesia's strategies in promoting democracy and human rights in three case studies, namely Indonesia's role in mainstreaming human rights in ASEAN, Indonesia's democracy promotion through the Bali Democracy Forum, and Indonesia's engagement toward democratization in Myanmar.

### **Introduction**

Since the election of Former General Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) as the first democratically elected president in 2004, Indonesia has started to pursue a greater role at the global level. One of the areas where Indonesia aims to assert its greater role is democracy promotion. Under Yudhoyono's leadership, Indonesia has made democracy promotion one of the main objectives of its foreign policy agenda. Ironically, in the 1990s, resisting international pressure for democratization was one of the dominant features of Indonesian foreign policy. Now, Indonesia emerges as a state that strongly advocates the values and principles of democracy in the Asia Pacific (Sukma 2011).

This paper analyses why Indonesia projects democracy as a state identity by taking on the role of democracy promoter. Furthermore, it examines the extent to which its role as a democracy promoter has been successful. Drawing heavily from the concept of state identity and role theory, this paper argues that Indonesia's aspiring role as a democracy promoter is not a manifestation of a firm and coherent democratic political culture, which is more likely to be a permanent feature of states. Rather than seeing it as firmly established state identity, Indonesia's democratic identity should be seen as role conception articulated by foreign policy elites in its quest for international prestige. Its role as a democracy promoter has enabled Indonesia to enhance its other role conceptions such as an intellectual leader in ASEAN as well as a bridge-builder at the global level. However, this paper further argues that Indonesia's role as a democracy promoter has also been hindered due to the inter-role conflicts arising from its enactment of multiple roles. As a result, Indonesia's enactment of the role as democracy promoter is relatively less impactful towards democratisation in the region.

To substantiate this argument, this paper examines Indonesia's role as a democracy promoter in three case studies, namely Indonesia's role in mainstreaming democratic norms in ASEAN's principles and mechanisms, Indonesia's democracy promotion through the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF), and Indonesia's engagement toward democratization in Myanmar. The three case studies presented can also shed light on how Indonesia employs different strategies for different audiences as an aspiring democracy promoter. The first case shows Indonesia's efforts to promote democratic norms in ASEAN core values. The second case elucidates Indonesia's aspiration to promote democracy through providing a platform for democratic socialization among democratizing and aspiring countries. The last case demonstrates Indonesia's attempts to promote democracy by gaining trust from Myanmar's military junta.

This paper aims to contribute to the literature on Indonesia's foreign policy in the post-authoritarian regime especially during the SBY era. Given its size, strategic location and economic potential as well as its success in navigating democratization culminating in the country's designation as an emerging democratic power, there has been increased interest among scholars in understanding the nature of Indonesian foreign policy. The extent to which Indonesia can seek a leadership role at the global level remains inconclusive where some see Indonesia indeed has played a greater role (Acharya 2014; Laksmana 2011) while others are not convinced (Fealy and White 2016; McRae 2014). Furthermore, in light of the democratization process, most recent studies on Indonesian foreign policy focus on how the democratization process shapes Indonesian foreign policy outcomes (Dosch 2008; Ruland 2010). Few studies thoroughly analyse the extent to which the enactment of a role as democracy promoter in Indonesian foreign policy aligns with Indonesia's pursuit of greater leadership role at the regional and global level as emerging democratic power. This paper tries to build on this literature by analysing Indonesia's democracy promotion through the application of role theory.

Role theory can provide a better understanding of Indonesian foreign policy on democracy promotion. Recent scholarship on democracy and Indonesian foreign policy mainly utilises a constructivist approach which situate democracy as Indonesia's state identity. This is due to the fact that many scholars and Indonesian foreign policy makers alike take for granted that democracy has indeed become Indonesia's newly state identity (Anwar 2011; Poole 2015; Wirajuda 2014). Thus, it is widely assumed that Indonesia's democracy promotion agenda is a function of Indonesia's democratic identity (Sukma 2011).

This paper challenges this conviction by demonstrating that identity-based explanation is rather incomplete in understanding Indonesia's policy on promoting democracy. While it can be argued

that democracy has become Indonesia's state identity, it does not necessarily drive Indonesia's democracy promotion agenda. Role theory can unpack how Indonesia's role as a democracy promoter is a result of both ideational structures and material constraints from inside and outside of its border in the form of international expectations and domestic contestations. Through the case of Indonesia's role as democracy promoter, this study also seeks to make a contribution to the growing literature on the importance of role theory for the study of state identity by expanding the empirical scope of this literature (McCourt 2011; Thies and Breuning 2012). Indeed there are very few studies that have been conducted to analyse Indonesian foreign policy through the application of role theory (Borchers 2013; Rüländ 2015). However, those studies largely neglect the discussion on how the enactment of multiple roles has hindered Indonesia's role as a democracy promoter.

This paper is organized as follows. The second section discusses the theoretical relations between state identity and policy makers' national role conceptions. The next section examines the emergence of the role of democracy promoter as one of Indonesia's national role conceptions under Yudhoyono's presidency. The fourth section analyses the enactment of Indonesia's role as a democracy promoter on the regional level. The last section provides the theoretical implications of the argument as well as future research agenda.

### **Understanding State Identity through Role Theory**

This research utilizes the concept of state identity to explain the role of democratic identity in the foreign policy of new democracies. According to social constructivists, states' interests are mainly shaped by their identities, while states' identities themselves are subject to change (Johnston 1998; Katzenstein 1996). In their discussion on the changes in state identity, Katzenstein (1996) and

Johnston (1998) developed strategic culture as a concept that is interchangeable with state identity. They argue that state identity is usually a semi-permanent feature of states because it is rooted in the social, political and historical beliefs existing in society. Social constructivists assume that identity is created out of cultural, political, historical and social contexts. Hence state identity is seen as an outcome of domestic political culture rather than a systemic interaction (Katzenstein 1996). For social constructivists, state identity is likely to change when the old domestic political cultures and norms are abandoned and new ones are embraced (Hopf 2002). It is assumed that certain values must exist as the foundation of such a choice. According to this argument, in the process of democratization, the democratic identity will be embraced if the domestic political culture favours democracy rather than other identities as a way for the state to present its identity in the international arena. If this argument is true, there must be a significant change in the domestic political culture that eventually pushes the foreign policy elites to project a democratic identity as the state identity. However, social constructivism does not prove helpful in understanding the precise mechanism of how a state changes its old identity to a new one despite the lack of a strong belief in that new identity within the society that the state represents.

In order to fully understand how state identity changes, role theory can be incorporated into the constructivist theory of state identity. Role theory offers greater explanatory power in explaining why state identity changes by capturing the dynamics of structural and societal aspects of state identity (Grossman 2005). The notion of identity implies a very rigid set of ideas and behaviours (Hansel and Möller 2015). Roles, however, imply more diverse and multifaceted relations. They are heavily driven by a specific combination of policy makers' interpretations of their supposed behaviour, society's expectations as well as the particular context in which the role is enacted. Thus, roles are more a function of the social identity of states, which include both actors'

perceptions of themselves as well as the perspectives of others, rather than an intrinsic identity (Aggestam 2006). By applying role theory, the operationalization of state identity in foreign policy can be seen in roles being taken and performed by foreign policy elites. In other words, roles become an in-between mediator between identity and foreign policy actions (McCourt 2011).

Through the lens of role theory, the state identity is mainly the embodiment of a national role conception constructed by policy makers rather than a function of the interaction between states and the international system or domestic political culture. As defined by Hymans (2006), a national role conception is “an individual’s understanding of the state’s identity – his or her sense of what the nation naturally stands for and how high it naturally stands in comparison to other in the international arena”. Originally, Holsti (1970) defined national role conceptions as “policy makers’ own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system.” Both definitions of national role conception assign a greater role to state policy makers in crafting a national role conception that becomes the backbone of the state identity.

However, role conception is not solely determined by state policy makers’ perceptions, but is also driven by the expectations of other international actors, who allocate the state its role in the international or regional system. As argued by Hollis and Smith (1990), roles are a ‘two-way process between structure and actor’; role theory takes into account the dynamic interaction between external actors within the international system that shape the role of the nation in the international system. The fulfilment of role expectation may be driven by the pursuit of legitimacy.

Role theory can also capture the potential conflicts between the different roles enacted by a state in materializing its state identity. There are two types of role conflict that may emerge from the enactment of multiple roles namely inter-role (conflict between roles) and intra-role conflict

(conflict within role) (Thies 2009). Inter-role conflict may occur when states find themselves in two or more positions requiring the enactment of contradictory roles. This contradictory role enactment has caused the condition in which enactment of one particular role reduces the other role's salience (Harnisch 2011). Another reason why role conflict may appear is due to the existence of different roles generated from different institutional contexts, both domestic and international (Aggestam 2006).

Intra-role conflict can occur when a particular enactment of a role is contested by domestic and international actors (Cantir and Kaarbo 2012). While international actors such as great powers and international institutions may have the ability to alter particular roles that states enact, the domestic actors have more influence in affecting what roles the states are more likely to enact (Breuning 2013; Thies 2014). Through the concept of role contestation, role theory provides an analytical tool to understand the reluctance of foreign policy elites to enact a particular national role conception in response to the extent to which there is disagreement among domestic actors in regard to specific roles. By analysing inter-role and intra-role conflict, role theory provides a better understanding of how the projection of a certain identity through enacting a specific role might be hindered by conflicts arising from the enactment of other roles.

In the following empirical section, the paper details and assesses the emergence of roles closely associated with Indonesia's post-authoritarian regime. Furthermore, this paper discusses why foreign policy makers especially under SBY's administration selected particular roles: namely 'democracy promoter', 'regional leader', and 'bridge-builder'.

### **Indonesia's Search for International Roles in the Post-Authoritarian Era**



The year 1998 was an important moment that became the cornerstone for the change in Indonesia's state identity. Suharto's authoritarian regime, which had been in power for more than 32 years, collapsed due to the 1997 monetary crisis, which turned into a political crisis that reached its climax in May 1998. The collapse of the Suharto regime marked the start of a new era for democratic Indonesia, which is widely known as the *reformasi* era. However, at the beginning of the *reformasi* era, from 1999-2004, Indonesia suffered from large scale ethnic and religious conflict, which occurred throughout the country and claimed around 10,000 lives (Bertrand 2004). In the same period, Indonesia also experienced political turmoil characterized by unstable national leadership successions. During this five-year period, Indonesia went through three national leadership changes. Coinciding with the rise of the War on Terror initiated by the United States, Indonesia had also become fertile ground for the development of Islamic radicalism (Sidel 2006). The conditions were further exacerbated by the country's slow economic recovery although the economy did finally return to pre-crisis levels in 2004.

Although Indonesia was still undergoing fragile democratic consolidation from 1999-2004, in October 2001 at the Jakarta Foreign Correspondents' Club, Hassan Wirajuda, the country's foreign minister from 2001 to 2009 asserted that:

“For a long time, the Indonesian public did not see human rights in the same way that the international public did. This discrepancy in perception became a constraint in the development of our foreign relations. We will do our best to remove that perception gap” (The Independent 2001).

Wirajuda's speech was an initial indicator that Indonesia would change its national role conception to be in line with the expectation of the international community towards a new democratic country. A month later, in front of the delegations of the United Nations General Assembly, he

declared: “Indonesia today stands proud as the third largest democracy in the world” and “we Indonesians have a natural affinity to democracy” (Wirajuda 2001). His claims indicated the shift in Indonesia’s foreign policy elites’ interpretation of the country’s aspiring new national role conception. Since then, Indonesia has continued to use the identity of being the third largest democracy in the world. However, the change in Indonesia’s national role conception did not reflect the conditions at the domestic level, since, at the same time, Indonesia was struggling with the impact of democratization, which caused various ethnic conflicts and increasing support for separatism in various provinces. It was merely driven by Indonesian foreign policy makers’ willingness to fulfil the perception of the international community of a newly democratic Indonesia.

Although the idea of using a democratic identity as a national role conception has been there since 2001, the proposed national role conception to project democratic identity through the Indonesian foreign policy had not fully gained its momentum. There was a lack of real foreign policy action to put the identity into practice. Given her lack of foreign relations experience as well as the domestic political situation, at the time, Indonesian president Megawati Soekarno Putri did not make foreign policy one of her top priorities and preferred to focus on domestic issues. Thus, under Megawati Soekarnoputri, Indonesia did not set a clear objective for its new national role conception (Azra 2006). As a consequence, during her leadership, Indonesia had a low profile in terms of its foreign policy in the international system (Sukma 2004).

In contrast to his predecessors in the early *reformasi* era, who focused heavily on domestic issues, the Yudhoyono administration officially asserted democracy as a new identity to be projected abroad. Although the consolidation of democracy was still at an early stage when Yudhoyono took office from Megawati in 2004 and there were still many domestic issues that challenged

Indonesia's democratization, it was under the Yudhoyono presidency that projecting a democratic identity to the international community was incorporated into an official mid-term objective for Indonesia. The Mid-Term Development Plan 2004-2009 stated that the country's main target in the area of foreign policy was: "strengthening and expanding the national identity as a democratic country in the international society". In operationalizing this target, Indonesia focused on ASEAN as a venue to project its democratic identity (RPJMN 2005).

Projecting a democratic identity was expanded during the second period of the Yudhoyono administration (2009-2014). During his second term, projecting a democratic identity was further operationalized through Indonesia's greater involvement in advancing the agenda of democracy and human rights in multilateral fora and international organizations. The official Mid-Term Development Plan 2009-2014 established "the recovery of an important position - Indonesia as a democratic state that is characterized by the great success of diplomacy in the international fora" as a general goal, and it stated that one of the main targets of Indonesia's foreign policy was to "promote a positive image of Indonesia through the advancement of democracy and human rights" (RPJMN 2010). In other words, the focus of Indonesia's foreign policy in the second five-year term of the SBY administration showed an increased assertiveness with regard to playing a role in the promotion of democracy and human rights both at the regional and global levels.

During Yudhoyono administration, Indonesia not only aspired to take a role as a democracy promoter, it also aspired to take a role as a bridge-builder as well as a regional leader. The idea of Indonesia as a bridge-builder became deeply entrenched during the SBY administration. As the largest Muslim democratic country and an emerging economy, Indonesia has a unique position from which to play the role of bridge-builder to bridge the interests of developed countries and developing ones, north and south, democracies and non-democracies, as well as western and

Muslim-majority countries. Through this role, Yudhoyono sought to utilize the realities of Indonesian democratic change to revitalize Indonesia's position at the regional and global levels. In his first foreign policy speech in May 2005, Yudhoyono reinterpreted Indonesia's Cold War Doctrine, known as Independent and Active Foreign Policy, into a foreign policy that emphasized Indonesia's activism as a bridge-builder. Indonesia's aspiring role as a bridge-builder can be seen in Yudhoyono's foreign policy motto, 'A million Friend, Zero Enemy' (Yudhoyono 2005). As a bridge-builder, Indonesia seeks to represent the voice of developing countries to promote dialogue between the North and the South as well as between the West and the Muslim world (Yudhoyono 2012).

Other than its national role conception as a democracy promoter and bridge-builder, democratic Indonesia under Yudhoyono aimed to play the role of regional leader in Southeast Asia. While the role of bridge-builder was a consequence of Indonesia's unique position in 21<sup>st</sup> century global politics, given its territorial size and population, Indonesia is seen as a natural regional leader in Southeast Asia (Emmers 2014). From the beginning of its independence, Indonesia saw itself as a leader in the region. But Soekarno's vision for Indonesia as a newly emerging force, which became the bastion against neo-colonialism, was too grandiose to fit into the framework of Southeast Asia (Acharya 2013). It was under Suharto's leadership that the role of regional leader was again pursued and Indonesia tried to play a leading role in contributing to regional security and stability in the region by pushing the idea of the establishment of ASEAN, which was agreed by Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines in 1967. However, in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which hit the Indonesian economy, Indonesia's leadership position has declined.

After more than six years of consolidating democracy, under Yudhoyono, Indonesia aimed to reassume the role of regional leader in ASEAN. Indonesia's regional leadership vision is more

directed toward intellectual and entrepreneurial leadership which focuses on providing vision and objectives as well as shaping procedures and institutional frames. In the case of ASEAN, Indonesia's leadership role is conducted through actively reforming ASEAN by providing it with new objectives, goals, and norms as well as establishing procedures and institutional frames (Rattanasevee 2014). In exercising its regional leadership, Indonesia maintains its consensus-based approach in which it tries to accommodate the interests of all countries in Southeast Asia. By doing so, Indonesia can minimize challenges from other ASEAN countries to Indonesian leadership in the region (Reid 2012).

In translating its democratic identity into foreign policy action, there are three major cases that elucidate Indonesia's aspiring role as democracy promoter in the region, namely the establishment of the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the initiation of the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF), and Indonesia's greater involvement in enhancing Myanmar's democratic consolidation. As well as enacting the role of democracy promoter, Indonesia also tries to perform its role conception as a bridge-builder and regional leader through these major Indonesian foreign policy objectives. The next section provides detailed analysis of role conflict arising from the enactment of multiple roles conceptions which arguably hinder Indonesia's role as democracy promoter.

### **Mainstreaming Democratic Norms in ASEAN**

In 2003, Indonesia for the first time held the ASEAN chairmanship as a newly democratized country. During its chairmanship, Indonesia aimed to exercise its regional leadership by reviving ASEAN as a regional institution. At the time, ASEAN was perceived to have lost its relevance due to its inability to make Southeast Asian countries cooperate with each other to solve the 1997 Asian

financial crisis that hit the region. In June 2003, during an ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, under Wirajuda's leadership, the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted a bold proposal for the establishment of the ASEAN Security Community (ASC), later renamed the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC). This proposal was expected to give a new direction for ASEAN to maintain its relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Sukma 2009b).

Many would argue that Indonesia's choice to play the role of democracy promoter by pushing the agenda of democracy and human rights in ASEAN stems from Indonesia's changing democratic environment at home (Murphy 2012; Poole 2015; Wirajuda 2014). However, there is hardly any evidence that Indonesia's aspiration to project its democratic identity in ASEAN, which started in 2003, was the result of civil society pressure or other domestic political actors. At the time, projecting a democratic identity was not a top priority in Indonesia, which was still undergoing democratic consolidation and had many domestic political problems that needed to be addressed. The Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), an Indonesian think tank, had advocated Indonesia's greater role in putting the agenda of democracy at the heart of ASEAN. In fact, it was a policy paper written by Rizal Sukma, the then Executive Director of CSIS, that was adopted by Indonesian foreign policy elites to be used as a background for Indonesia to establish the ASC (Katsumata 2003). However, the think tank is widely known to have close relations with the Indonesian government. Thus CSIS can be seen as the intellectual source behind Indonesia's strategy to pursue a more democratic ASEAN.

Indeed, the impetus to promote democracy motivated by foreign policy makers' pursuit to restore Indonesia's role as a regional leader in Southeast Asia might not be directly attributed to the greater civil society involvement in foreign policy making. However, the role of civil society in by no means unimportant in the project to create a more democratic ASEAN. As a result of the Asian

Financial Crisis, regional NGO networks began to discover the relevance of regional governance (Gerard 2014). This change of attention – before the focus was mainly directed at the global level – also had repercussions on Indonesian NGOs. After all, Indonesian NGOs also participated in the ASEAN People’s Forum (APA), convened in 2000 by ASEAN-ISIS think tanks on the Indonesian island of Batam (Rueland 2014). Thus, it can be interpreted that foreign policy makers’ choice to enact the role as a democracy promoter through putting the agenda of democracy at the heart of ASEAN has been positively received by civil society.

Although finally endorsed during the ASEAN Summit in October 2003, the proposal to create the APSC stirred a lot of opposition from other ASEAN countries (Phan 2012). The reason for this was the agenda of democratization and the promotion of human rights as the core of the proposal brought to the table by Indonesia. Indonesia, which devised almost major components of the ASC, aimed to transform the ASEAN approach to solving problems, which is highly informal, into a more formal mechanism.<sup>1</sup> In doing so, Indonesia introduced an institutional change that would transform ASEAN into a rules-based organization that adheres to a specific set of values. The specific set of values was unilaterally defined by Indonesia as the values of democracy and human rights.

The consequence of Indonesia’s proposal to create a more rules-based organization for ASEAN was the need for the association to have a charter as a constituent instrument that established new ASEAN goals and objectives as well as the institutional framework for achieving them. At the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in 2005, for the first time, proposals on the ASEAN Charter were announced (Caballero-Anthony 2008). The emergence of this idea cannot be separated from Indonesian

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with senior researcher in the Habibie Centre, August 2015

diplomatic efforts to exercise its regional leadership by giving ASEAN a new legal entity as well as new dynamism to cope with new challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although Indonesia was still struggling to consolidate its own democracy and internalize democratic norms, Indonesian foreign policy elites had already envisioned the value of democracy and human rights in the Southeast Asia regional order (Sukma 2011).

The formulation of the ASEAN Charter was a battleground for Indonesia in its efforts to include democracy and human rights in ASEAN's professed values. During the formulation of the Charter, Indonesia played a very active role in pushing for the incorporation of the principles of democracy and respect for human rights in the Charter's preamble. Indonesia maintained its insistence on making democratic values, respect for human rights, and fundamental freedom as basic principles of ASEAN (Ciorciari 2012). The principles were incorporated into the recommendation made by the Eminent Person Group (EPG), which initially drafted the Charter. The EPG's recommendation was finalized by a High Level Task Force – a group of ASEAN's state representatives – and the final draft of the ASEAN Charter was produced (Koh et al. 2009). However, Indonesia failed to convince other ASEAN members, especially the new ones (Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam), to agree to creating a more concrete mechanism for ASEAN to be able to uphold the principles. The idea to establish a powerful ASEAN Human Rights Body promoted by Indonesia was rejected by the new member countries of ASEAN (Weatherbee 2013).

As shown above, through its role in mainstreaming the democratic values in the region, Indonesia was able to gain a role as a regional leader in Southeast Asia by transforming ASEAN to embrace democratic values. However, it was also due to its effort to play a role as a leader in maintaining ASEAN's cohesiveness that Indonesia became less well-positioned in promoting democracy and human rights in the region (Sukma 2009a). Indonesia's democratic projection in ASEAN's



mechanism has been hindered by its aspiration to become a regional leader. As a regional builder that emphasizes a consensus building approach, Indonesia could not deny the position of new member countries of ASEAN (CMLV) that were still reluctant to embrace the new values introduced by Indonesia even though several founding members agreed to embrace values that fit with the 21<sup>st</sup> century reality. Indonesia's efforts to foster new values for ASEAN by introducing democratic values was not easily accepted by these countries. As a result, Indonesia had to be satisfied with a condition where these values, on paper, are part of the ASEAN principles and goals but there is no formal mechanism to ensure that ASEAN member states follow these values.

In exercising its leadership role in the region, Indonesia's choice to play the role of democracy promoter by pushing the agenda of democracy and human rights in ASEAN was an appropriate strategy given that the role taken would not attract contestation from the domestic audience. This was the reason why Indonesia hesitated to take an active role in the efforts to revitalize ASEAN through regional economic integration. In fact, the revitalization of ASEAN through the ASEAN Economic Community was initiated and supported by countries such as Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. Such an active role would not have been supported by Indonesia's domestic audience and would most likely have created a significant domestic contestation. Given its huge domestic market and low competitiveness of Indonesia's domestic economic actors, many feared that Indonesia would only be the market for products from other ASEAN countries. It is no wonder that many Indonesian domestic stakeholders are sceptical about the benefit in implementing the ASEAN Economic Community for the Indonesian economy (Rüland 2016). Under SBY administration, though rhetorically it supported market integration within ASEAN, Indonesia has significantly increased non-tariff measures (NTMs) to limit imports and exports to protect its domestic industry especially after the global financial crisis (Chandra 2016). Some Indonesian

high ranking officials even talk about pushing back against the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) reforms (Nazeer 2015). By contrast, taking a leadership role in making ASEAN embrace democratic values would not have triggered a negative response from Indonesia's domestic audience due to the absence of significant actors that actively reject the role enactment. Having no domestic contestation in doing so, Indonesia's foreign policy elites could easily mobilize all available resources to push this idea in an attempt to restore the leadership role of Indonesia in the region.

This is in line with Emmers' finding which shows that Indonesia's leadership has been limited to the political and security realms while other realms such as the economy has been taken by the others (Emmers 2014). While Indonesia's incomplete and sectoral leadership might stem from its unwillingness to provide public goods in realms other than politics and security, this explanation is rather partial. Indonesia's tendency to play an intellectual and entrepreneurial leadership role in political and security issues is also driven by the effort to reduce domestic contestation. However, Indonesia's attempt to exercise leadership by promoting democratic values in ASEAN cannot be considered fully successful given that despite being stated as a normative value of ASEAN, it has had little impact on the domestic governance of ASEAN members. Recent events in Thailand where the military again took control of the government in 2014 as well as in Malaysia under Prime Minister Najib Razak that shows an increased democratic deficit might suggest that democracy is a receding force in the region.

### **Sharing Democracy through Bali Democracy Forum**

Besides its efforts to instil democratic norms in ASEAN's mechanisms and objectives albeit with many constraints, Indonesia also demonstrated its aspiration to become a leader in the promotion of democracy in the Asia Pacific by initiating the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) in 2008. The BDF is the first intergovernmental forum in the Asia Pacific that focuses on regional cooperation in the field of democracy and political development. The forum is a response to the absence of a regional mechanism to promote democracy in the Asia Pacific region (Anwar 2010). Compared with other region such as Latin America and Africa, surprisingly, Asia still lags behind in its efforts to promote political development and democracy through regional partnership. As stated by Yudhoyono, cooperation and integration of the region at various levels – especially in East Asia and the Asia Pacific – are more focused on economic aspects, namely the efforts to overcome the development gap (Ginting et al. 2010). However, in reality, there is an urgent need to overcome the “political development gap”. While Asia is also home to another democratic emerging power, India, it tries to avoid framing its foreign policy in terms of supporting democracy due to geopolitical considerations (Mazumdar and Statz 2015). Indonesian foreign policy elites have observed that Indonesia's initiative for regional partnership can fill this gap.

Indonesia was not the only country that had such an initiative for the Asia Pacific region. In mid-2007, during the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit, George W. Bush proposed a new regional partnership in the Asia Pacific to foster cooperation in enhancing the agenda of democracy (Brazinsky 2008). The idea of regional democracy partnership was to encounter the growing impact of the Beijing Consensus as an alternative model of political and economic development, promoted by China (Twining 2010). This new regional democracy partnership crystallized in the form of the Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership (APDP), which was fully backed by the United States.

From the beginning, Indonesia was invited to join the US-led regional democracy partnership in the Asia Pacific. Indonesia was one of twelve initial members of the APDP and even attended the first APDP Senior Official Meeting in October 2008 in Seoul, South Korea. Although normatively Indonesia supported the initiative of the US, it appears that it did not respond enthusiastically to the formation of the APDP (Currie 2010). Indonesia's lack of enthusiasm might have been due to the heavy US involvement in initiating the forum and setting up the agenda of the new regional partnership. For Indonesian foreign policy makers, the agenda was seen of being too western in its bias; treating democracy narrowly as electoral and procedural democracy. Furthermore, Indonesia's reluctance to play an active role in the APDP was also caused by the exclusivity of the grouping, reflected in the fact that the majority of its members were US allies in the region (Weatherbee 2013). Indonesia feared that this exclusive grouping would simply become an instrument to isolate China from the architecture of regional cooperation. In this case, we see a clear manifestation of Indonesia's national role conception as a bridge-builder which drives its foreign policy to include China and the US in various initiatives for regional mechanisms. Given the waning of America's image during the Bush administration, Indonesia's initiative gained a more positive response from countries in the Asia Pacific.

Indonesia's initiative in creating the regional mechanism for promoting democracy through the BDF can be seen as its willingness to scale up its efforts to promote democracy from Southeast Asia to a broader Asia Pacific.<sup>2</sup> Given the limitations it faced in the promotion of democratic values in ASEAN as well as its rising status in the international arena, Indonesia has enabled the BDF to play a bigger role outside of the confines of ASEAN. Although intended as a cooperation among

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with senior Indonesian diplomat, August 2015

countries in the Asia Pacific region, BDF meetings are attended by countries not only from the Asia Pacific, but also from the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America.

Unlike the ASEAN Political-Security Community, President Yudhoyono and Foreign Minister Wirajuda did not envision the BDF as a formal and highly institutionalized mechanism for democracy partnership in the Asia Pacific. Rather, it was designed to be a very loose mechanism in which countries in the Asia Pacific could share their experiences and thoughts about democracy comfortably without having to follow a certain unilateral standard of democracy. The reason for making the BDF a loose mechanism was due to Indonesia's circumspection not to be perceived as a country that pushes the agenda for a specific democratic model.

In practice, the BDF is a place for member countries to share experiences and best practices in an effort to find the best way to strengthen the democratization process in each country. The BDF stresses the importance of equal, constructive dialogue, mutual respect and understanding in order to enhance cooperation and promote democracy in the region (Sutiono et al. 2008). In the inaugural Bali Democracy Forum in 2008, which had the theme "*Building and Consolidating Democracy: A Strategic Agenda for Asia*", President Yudhoyono stated that the idea of the BDF was not to impose a particular model of democracy, nor to discuss a common definition of democracy. The idea behind the forum was to share experiences, thoughts and ideas to improve the co-operation of democracy, no matter what political system developed. The President also stressed that there is no perfect democracy; democracy is never ending and still growing (Sutiono et al. 2008).

Thus, from the beginning Indonesia did not articulate its own approach and definition of the ideal democracy that it supposes to promote through the BDF. Rather, Indonesia conceptualizes it as an inclusive forum for countries that have become democratic as well as countries having an aspiration to become democratic to share their best practices in promoting democracy within their

national political systems. While designing the BDF, Indonesian foreign policy makers did not see democracy promotion as the imposition of Indonesia's own state interests and historical experiences on others (Halans and Nassy 2013). On the contrary, democracy promotion is understood as an opportunity to provide a condition for democratic learning and socialization among countries that have an aspiration to be democratic or that are undergoing the process of democratization.

The inclusivity of the BDF, which also embraces authoritarian regimes, is one of the characteristics that distinguish it from the democracy promotion initiatives set up by Western countries. It is no wonder, given its inclusivity, that the BDF has been criticized for inviting non-democratic countries. As argued by Carothers and Youngs (2011), the BDF is seen by many critics as a forum that gives "autocrats a platform to extol the virtues of their political models without facing any serious pressure to meet universal democratic standards."

While many critics see the inclusivity of the BDF as its weakness, Indonesian officials see it as one of the strengths of the BDF. As stated by President Yudhoyono, the BDF is not a forum for debating "a commonly agreed definition" but one that aims to outline a "set of issues relevant to democratic development" (Sutiono et al. 2008). Through the inclusivity of BDF, Indonesia can play a greater role in bridging the differences in perceiving democracy between established democracies, new democracies and authoritarian regimes.

**\*\*Table 1\*\***

**\*\*Table 2\*\***

The above tables show an increase in the number of participants in the BDF and also an increase in the number of high-ranking officials and heads of state who are present at the BDF. For the Indonesian government, this demonstrates the growing support of the international community from various regions of the world for the BDF. Many high ranking officials in Indonesia believe that the Forum has successfully brought a change in several countries undergoing a democratization process in which Indonesia has built long-term cooperation to improve their democracies such as in Myanmar and Fiji.<sup>3</sup> For Indonesia, through the BDF, countries that had been reluctant to talk about democracy have begun to open up. This can be seen in the statements delivered by several governments, including Myanmar and Qatar, in which they emphasized the problems they faced in an attempt to make the government more open and responsive to political democracy (Sutiono et al. 2009).

Indeed, the fact that the number of relevant participants has been on the rise is not *per se* a persuasive argument that Indonesia is successfully promoting democracy. On the contrary, the BDF tends to confirm the view of those who argue that the forum with its vague conceptualization of democracy gives authoritarian countries or hybrid regimes an excellent forum for legitimizing their non-democratic practices. However, the increased number of participants shows that indeed Indonesia can play a bridge-builder role and there is an acceptance by the international community of Indonesia's aspiring role to be a new player in promoting democracy in the Asia Pacific.

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Indonesian diplomat in the Directorate of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, August 2015

Despite the criticisms regarding the lack of a direct impact of the forum on democratization in Asia Pacific countries, Indonesia's initiative through the BDF can be regarded as the implementation of an alternative way of promoting democracy by a so-called emerging democratic power. As argued by several scholars (Carothers and Youngs 2011; Stuenkel 2013), the emergence of new democratic powers has created an expectation from the international community, especially Western countries, for them to fill the gap in democracy promotion, which cannot be filled by Western countries due to the difference in the nature of their democracy and that of many non-Western countries. Through the BDF, Indonesia has shown that democracy promotion is not exclusively the agenda of Western countries. The BDF is able to provide an alternative platform for discussing the importance of building a home-grown democracy rooted in tradition and the values of non-Western society.

The BDF has become an important platform for Indonesia to perform its role as a bridge-builder between democratic countries and countries that are in the process of democratization and even countries that do not adhere to a democratic system. However, due to its nature as a bridge-building forum, the BDF only serves as a talking shop for democracy rather than a place to implement the practical agenda of democracy promotion. Even though Indonesia is able to demonstrate an alternative model in promoting democracy through emphasizing democratic socialization and learning as its main methods, the BDF is hardly likely to have a direct impact on countries undergoing democratization.

### **Indonesia's Engagement in Myanmar's Democratization**



Given the need for Indonesia to exercise its role as democracy promoter, efforts to assist the democratization process in Myanmar have become one of the most important agendas in Indonesia's foreign policy. Moreover, Indonesia's success in managing its own democratic consolidation and its similar historical path with Myanmar has given Indonesia credibility for playing a role in the transition of Myanmar (Budianto 2010). And Indonesia has been expected by the international community to play a greater role in the democratization process in Myanmar. In 2008, the United Nations (UN) officially asked Indonesia to play a greater role in maintaining communication with the leadership of Myanmar, as well as in following up the democratization process in the country. UN Secretary-General General Ban Ki Moon called President Yudhoyono and asked Indonesia to contribute to realizing democracy in Myanmar (Antaraneews 2008).

This expectation has, to some extent, driven Indonesia's active involvement in Myanmar's democratization. Indonesia's role is also becoming more important due to two factors. Firstly, compared with other regions such as Africa and Latin America, Southeast Asia is one of the regions that had a democratic deficit in its regional mechanisms that require a more bilateral approach to dealing with a country undergoing democratization. Although Indonesia has initiated the ASEAN Political-Security Community and the BDF as a platform for promoting democracy, in the case of Myanmar, those two platforms are not sufficient for the democratization process due to the lack of a specific mechanism to enforce the values of democracy and human rights. Secondly, the United States and international non-governmental organizations that have campaigned for democratization in Myanmar have realized that their approach to pushing Myanmar through sanctions and international isolation have not resulted in progress in terms of democratization in Myanmar (Haacke 2008). In fact, this only made the military junta regime in Myanmar lose confidence in the international community. This has resulted in the junta's

increasing antipathy and suspicion towards the international community's efforts to help the process of democratization in Myanmar.

Indonesia's strategy in dealing with Myanmar's military junta is rather different from that commonly employed by Western countries, which usually use a naming and shaming approach. Indonesia has tended to enact its role as a bridge-builder between the isolated Myanmar and the international community. Since taking office in 2004, rhetorically, the SBY administration has always defended Myanmar's authoritarian regime from the pressures of the international community. Every time Western countries have put pressure on Myanmar with regard to primarily human rights issues, the Indonesian government has always asked the international community to be patient about the democratization process in Myanmar although it also continues to keep asking the government of Myanmar to prove its achievements in the democratization process.<sup>4</sup>

In approaching Myanmar's military junta, Indonesia stresses the merits of a quiet diplomatic approach rather than megaphone diplomacy, which serves as a diplomatic instrument to persuade Myanmar to move towards democracy. As argued by See Seng Tan (2013), it was persuasion rather than coercion that worked best to engage Myanmar constructively. In order to persuade the military regime, periodically President Yudhoyono conducted personal correspondence with top military junta leaders in Myanmar. In that correspondence, the Indonesian president always asks about the progress that has been made by the military government in the promotion of democracy in Myanmar. Furthermore, Indonesia has, several times, sent a former reformist general, Agus Widjojo, as a special envoy to Myanmar. The assignment of a former general as a special envoy is intended to make the military junta feel comfortable to communicate with Indonesia.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with senior Indonesian diplomat within Directorate of Human Rights and Humanitarian issues, July 2015

<sup>5</sup> Interview with senior Indonesian diplomat, July 2015

As a former military leader himself, President Yudhoyono understands that while democratization should be conducted, it must not harm territorial integrity or internal stability within Myanmar. Indonesia's experience of democratization, which almost led to its disintegration, has shaped Indonesia's approach to Myanmar democratization, which emphasizes Myanmar's territorial integrity and stability. Due to Indonesia's approach, Myanmar saw Indonesia under Yudhoyono's leadership as a close friend that contributed constructively to the process of democratization in the country (Lang 2012).

When ethnic unrest in Myanmar that led to the killing of ethnic minority Rohingya Muslims erupted, unlike the international community, which immediately strongly condemned the incident, the Indonesian government asked the government of Myanmar to allow Indonesia to participate in solving Myanmar's internal conflict. The initial step taken by Indonesia was to provide assistance in the form of basic commodities valued at US\$1 million to the Myanmar government. This assistance was used to reinforce the goodwill of Indonesia in assisting Myanmar to solve the problem of communal conflict and human rights violations of Rohingya Muslims. Given the high level of confidence that Myanmar has in Indonesia, Indonesia became the only country allowed to send a delegation to enter the conflict area and see first-hand the conditions of the conflict on the ground.<sup>6</sup>

Indonesia also plays an important role in bridging the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) with Myanmar's military junta. Indonesia criticized the OIC over its handling of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar, which often makes a strong statement without acting significantly to resolve the problems faced by the Rohingyas. This approach has made the OIC lose confidence

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Indonesian diplomat within Directorate of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, August 2015

in the eyes of Myanmar's military regime. In bridging this distrust, Indonesia tried to communicate directly with the Myanmar government regarding the importance of the international community in monitoring the situation relating to the Rohingyas. The junta finally considered Indonesia's proposal to allow representatives of the UN and the OIC to come and witness the existing conditions in Myanmar as well as allowing a dialogue with the Myanmar government (Adam 2014). Due to Indonesia's bridging role, the OIC appreciates the role of the Indonesian Government on this issue and hopes that Indonesia can give direction to the OIC in order to contribute constructively to the settlement of the Rohingya issue. In this context, Indonesia plays an important role in bridging the gap between the isolated Myanmar and the international community.

While it did not happen quickly, as in Indonesia, the changes towards more democratic measures in Myanmar are indeed being gradually and carefully implemented. One of the crucial changes in Myanmar politics, among others, is the issuance of the Law on Freedom of the Press. With the enactment of the Law, Myanmar entered a new phase of the democratic transition, especially in the context of freedom of the press, which is one of the most important pillars of democracy. Freedom of the press in Indonesia has become a reference for the Myanmar government and Indonesia helped Myanmar in its efforts to design its own law regarding this issue through several capacity building programs. The Myanmar Law on the Press heavily adopted some of the law on the press and broadcasting in Indonesia, namely Law No. 40/1999 on Press and Law No. 32/2002 on Broadcasting.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with researcher from Human Rights Working Group, 2015

Indonesia's role as a promoter of democracy has been well received not only by the junta but also by the international community. United States Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, expressed her appreciation to President Yudhoyono for his role in ensuring the progress of the reform and democratization process in Myanmar. In addition, the US also appreciates Indonesia's bridge-building role in responding to and addressing the internal conflict between the ethnic Rohingyas and Rhakines in Myanmar (Antaraneews 2012).

Given the discussion above, the paper does not make a claim that democratization happening in Myanmar is solely a result of Indonesia's role in promoting democracy. A huge domestic political shift as well as other factors are contributing to the improved condition in Myanmar. Instead, this paper highlights how Indonesia's role as a democracy promoter in Myanmar is enacted in light of Indonesia's pursuit of a role as a bridge-builder and to some extent it arguably constraints Indonesia's role as a democracy promoter in Myanmar. Some civil society organizations argued that Indonesia's policy toward Myanmar has made Indonesia tend to shield Myanmar's abusive regime from international scrutiny rather than contributing towards democratization in Myanmar (Kontras 2011). Despite this criticism, Indonesian foreign policy makers continue to persist with Indonesia's role as a bridge-builder for Myanmar. Due to its bridge-builder role enactment with Myanmar, Indonesia seems to have limitations with regard to using more concrete efforts to put pressure on Myanmar to demonstrate progress in democratization and the protection of human rights.

### **Conclusion: Role Conflict in Indonesia's Democracy Promotion Agenda**

As shown by the three case studies above, Indonesia's role conception as a promoter of democracy was not merely the result of the institutionalization of democratic norms at the domestic level. This is because when Indonesia started to make democracy its identity to be projected towards the international community, Indonesia was still undergoing a process of consolidation of its democracy in which democratic norms were not fully internalized at the domestic level. Instead, other than to enhance Indonesia 'international prestige, the role as democracy promoter is enacted to enhance other roles conceptualised by Indonesian foreign policy makers in the post-authoritarian era.

Firstly, the role of democracy promoter has been utilized by Indonesia to play a greater role in the region by introducing the democratic values into ASEAN's objectives and mechanisms. Secondly, its role as a democracy promoter enabled Indonesia to take the role as a bridge-builder in the international community. Indonesia's role as bridge-builder through initiating the BDF as well as its active involvement in Myanmar have also been driven by role expectation from the international community, which Indonesia aims to fulfil in order to legitimise itself as an emerging democratic power in the global arena.

Though Indonesia's role as democracy promoter serves its aspiring roles as a bridge-builder and regional leader, there is also clear indication that its role as a democracy promoter, in some cases conflicts with its role as a bridge-builder and regional leader. As a consequence of this inter-role conflict, Indonesia's role in promoting democracy has been hindered by the other two roles that Indonesia's policy makers chose to enact.

Through the application of role theory to the case of Indonesia's democracy promotion, this paper also yields some implications for both literature on state identity and Indonesian foreign policy. It demonstrates role theory's potential account to unpack the idea of state identity. By treating

democracy promotion agenda as a role enacted by Indonesia, rather than a by-product of democracy as its new state identity, we can capture the nuance of Indonesia's ambivalent attitude toward its role as democracy promoter in juxtaposition with other roles Indonesia wanted to enact. Furthermore, role theory can actually help the scholars to better analyze Indonesian foreign policy by looking at the domestic contestation process. Although this paper touches on this issue, it only narrowly focuses on Indonesia's role as a democracy promoter. Thus, further studies are needed to understand the extent to which the potential domestic role contestation restraint Indonesian foreign policy makers to enact such a leadership role in some other areas that are important in the region.

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## List of Tables

**Table 1. Number of state representation in Bali Democracy Forum by region and international organizations**

<b>Regional Representation</b>	<b>BDF 1</b>	<b>BDF 2</b>	<b>BDF 3</b>	<b>BDF 4</b>	<b>BDF 5</b>	<b>BDF 6</b>
East Asia and the Pacific	17	16	20	16	13	20
Middle East	7	6	12	14	11	14
South and Central Asia	8	13	12	8	14	11
Central and Eastern Europe		1	5	12	18	12
Western Europe		10	14	14	13	15
South America and the Caribbean			2	4	3	4
Africa			2	6	3	8
North and Central America		2	2	3	2	3
International Organization			2	4	7	8
Total	32	48	71	81	84	95

Source: <http://www.ipd.or.id/>**Table 2. Number of High Ranking Officials Attending BDF**

<b>Type of Officials</b>	<b>BDF 1</b>	<b>BDF 2</b>	<b>BDF 3</b>	<b>BDF 4</b>	<b>BDF 5</b>	<b>BDF 6</b>
Head of States	4	5	5	9	15	3
Ministerial Level Official and Head of IO	13	25	25	14	24	22

Source: <http://www.ipd.or.id/>