

11. REVISITING PRESIDENT MEGA 'GO-EAST' TRIP

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The recent state visit to Russia, Poland, and Romania led by President Megawati in April 2003 has been entertained—from various points of view—with a wide array of responses. Mostly, if not enthusiastic, they articulated optimistic tones. Dewi Fortuna Anwar of the Habibie Center and Indria Samego of CIDES shared this view. To diversify sources of military suppliers and seeking for alternative partners in the changing international environment have become the central concern of the observers. Many of the eventual analyses have very quickly coined the procurement plan with the need to modernise Indonesian military posture and a smart diplomacy manoeuvre that all of which were formulated by Buntarto Bundoro of CSIS as the 'go-east' approach (*The Jakarta Post*, 2/5/2003).

Beyond the above two objectives, the economic advantages—as stressed by our Foreign Minister (*The Jakarta Post*, 28/4/2003) and opportunity for technology transfer the trip might yield noticeably received less attention. Considering the magnitude of the investment value agreed in numerous fields of cooperation plans, it was true that the delegation was not returning with empty-bag. However, the time would prove that how many per cent of the amount agreed in the memorandum of understandings would actually realised into mutual projects. Another reason why the economic, business, technological, and socio-cultural benefits of the visit were not proportionally taken into account perhaps that they fell within the domains of 'low politics' not 'high politics'.

This article might be slightly dissent from the previous deliberations and rather a contemplation on the implications of the visit to Indonesia's domestic aspirations and the country's juxtaposition in the international politics.

The first concern is related to the arm procurement. The intention to adjoin the existing air fleets and modernise Indonesia's Air Force with the

Russian Sukhoi fighter jets and helicopters in 4-year term, to acquire a large consignment of Kalashnikovs' assault rifles as well as other military equipment from the countries visited by the president cannot only be considered important but also timely. The U.S. arm supply to Indonesia that was suspended following the carnage in Santa Cruz of 1991 has severely degraded our military capabilities. Appeared as the principal major military benefactor to Indonesia since the second-half of the 1960s, the American embargo due to human rights records of our military has almost totally halted the modernisation of Indonesia's defence equipment. The Air Force suffered the most as the planes and choppers have been mainly American made. In 2000, half of our F-16s were not operational and many C-130s were grounded. Only eight of the Air Force's helicopter fleets of thirty were operational. Even the Hawk fighter jets handed over by the British required the American origin avionics in order to be running (P. Finnegan, *Defense News*, 1/5/2000).

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However, in term of urgency, is to empower our Air Force with fighter jets at this time necessary? To fly with proud patrolling our airspace with modern fighter jets seems too expensive considering our huge foreign debts. The likely threats to our territory are no longer external ones, and Indonesia—as Pak Harto said ironically about 14 months before the annexation of East Timor—would never have any territorial ambitions. Beside terrorism and pseudo-terrorism, the probably immediate threat to our national security and integration is separatism. To militarily overcome separatist movements that have been engaged in the farthest boundaries of our western, northeastern, and eastern territories—after all peaceful means exhausted—our military need rapid deployment. In this current context, what we need more is doubtlessly military transport aircrafts, helicopters, or ships than fighter jets.

Recuperating defence system and gears is crucial to increase the confidence and posture of our military. Yet, respected arm forces are the professional ones and all characters attributed to that word. Professionalism requires a paradigm shift of the current military triple-functions in defence and security, socio-politics, and business by repositioning it to the first function: defence. The consequence of professionalism would be the

need to increase budgetary allocations to improve the living standard and adequate training of the military personnels.

It is true that strong army must be supported with the state-of-the-art equipment. The history, nonetheless, often notes that strong standing army could still experience defeat from an army of high moral supported by the people. In term of number of personnels and operational equipment, the capacity of our arm forces to defend the sovereignty of our stretch archipelago, without sharing the responsibility with other popular elements, is limited. Only with the full, universal and patriotic support from the people, the predecessors of the TNI, which were poorly equipped and trained, successfully resisted the well equipped and trained Allied and Dutch forces during the independence war. The North Vietnamese soldiers and Vietcong guerrillas could humiliate the French and Americans alike to pull out of the Indo-China and Vietnam soils. An army would be worthless and in its weakest performance when it was abused, often symbiotically, by the state to oppress its own people so that it obtains no sympathy let alone popular support.

To diversify the sources of our military suppliers is a good step. Nevertheless, in the end, it would not good enough to solve the problem of dependency. The international politics always experiences realignment. Poland, for example, was a bulwark of the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War, now has become an active part of the 'Coalition of the Willings' together with the U.S., UK, and Australia. Next year this country will be member of the European Union, which very keenly concerns with the human rights situation in Indonesia—a formal reason for arm embargo or development aids restrictions. Romania, which is desperately aspiring into the European *acquis communautaire*, after the fall of the Communists, has become American strongest ally in the south-eastern Europe as well as part of the present 'Coalition of the Willings'. Diversifying of arm suppliers to these geographically Eastern European countries may raise problem in the future when they really join the EU.

To break up with the over due dependency strongly demands the improvement of the capabilities of the domestic strategic industries we ever have like Dirgantara Indonesia, Pindad, Dahana, PAL, Lapan, Batan, IN-

KA, etc. South Africa has come up as a middle-class supplier of military equipment, an industry that interestingly bloomed as an impact of the international anti-apartheid embargo. Many patients from the Netherlands decided to have medical treatment in Cuba as this tiny U.S. embargoed country has successfully developed its medical abilities to the excellent level. A moderate form of Bung Karno's concept of *zelfstandig* or *berdikari* is thus worthy to be mindfully reinvented.

Another implication of this arm procurement plan is that it might ignite backlash in the relation with the U.S. itself. Even though the intention to buy Sukhoi fighter jets has been started years ago, I am sceptic the 'go-east' trip would soften the staunch American public support on the arm sales prohibition on Indonesia. Even though the U.S. Administration has been reluctant to spin out the arm embargo and tended to lessen following the 11 September 2001, it remained effective. The diversification of source may harden the attitude to prolong or even extend it to coercive measures for instance in bilateral and multilateral trade.

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The second concern of this contemplation is as a tactical diplomacy manoeuvre. Tendency of bandwagon leaning toward stronger alliance preferred by vulnerable countries is common in this multipolar, but actually threatening unipolar world. For strategic and bilateral interests and cooperation to solve global problems, diplomacy road show to Russia, Poland, and Romania should reasonably earn applause. It might upgrade our international image and bargaining position.

A special concern, however, should be given to the nature of the more anarchic international politics: 'Creating friends will be inviting foes.' To prevent a backlash, the substantial weight of our international role should be played within internationally respected multilateral cooperation or organisations such the ASEAN, UN, WTO, AFTA, APEC, IOC, Non-Aligned Movement, and so forth. Through this multilateral setting, the formulation of 'active and independent' notion—a distinguish term in the nomenclature of foreign policy—of our external strategy in pursuing national interests would be more contextual. Although this foreign policy strategy has been in place since the early years of our independence, only in very short period did we consistently commit with it. Despite the in-

ternational environment has changed considerably, the analogy used by Bung Hatta to describe our foreign policy that 'we sailed between two reefs', is still relevant to be reconstructed as that 'we are sailing between a single huge reef and several smaller reefs amidst a sea storm'.

Some of our designated diplomats I ever talked with often blamed that our weaker international diplomacy posture has been mainly caused by our fragile internal socio-political stability and the economic downturn. This means our international leverage does not merely depend on our active roles to solve global problems, but also upon how solid and democratic our national leadership is and its clear visions of where to bring forward this nation. Compare ours with the international image of Malaysia or Thailand that have experienced similar fate with us of the economic malaise, but they have successfully recovered. In other words, our national competence to set up clean government and good governance, commitment to implement the agendas of reform, just and humane solution to separatisms and horizontal conflicts, improvement of human rights situation, quelling the threats of terrorism by eliminating the roots of their economic and socio-cultural flint stones as well as prevent any forms of state-terrorism, etc., would merit respect and consequently increase our external influence. International diplomacy therefore should be carried out simultaneously with committed and sincere efforts to improve our internal situations. This step would be an effective way to create an image that future state or official visits would result in concrete achievements, not just modest signals of 'political will' or simply pomp and atmospherics.