

## **Expanding the Potency of the Indonesia-U.S. Strategic Partnership**

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The visit of the U.S. President, George W. Bush, on November 20, has produced controversies among Indonesian people. It is therefore interesting to find how these controversies are perceived by particularly the decision makers and Indonesian foreign policies' executors, and other stakeholders including business communities in the context of Indonesia-U.S. bilateral relations today.

It is very important to understand the present relations between Indonesia and U.S., so that the decision makers, executors, and other stakeholders of Indonesian foreign policies can play their optimal roles.

In the context of current bilateral relation between Indonesia and the U.S., there are at least five strategic factors – in which optimal potencies are hopefully obtainable, if elaborated further. The five strategic factors are: first, economic and political power configuration in Asia; second, energy needs and supply, market potential in trade and investment between Indonesia and U.S.; third, the pluralistic values in Indonesian and U.S. societies; fourth, democratic values and the large number of Muslims in Indonesia; and fifth, the Indonesian national leadership.

The following is the explanation of the factors:

### **1. Economic and political power configuration in Asia**

At the moment, China and India have emerged as new economic powers in Asia, which have fundamentally changed the economic and political power configuration in Asia. Their economic growths are 7% (India) and 9% (China) with GDP U.S.\$ 3.61 trillion and U.S.\$ 8.83 trillion, respectively. These facts have forced U.S. to adjust its economic and trade policy adjustments towards India and China and other Asian countries.

The ramification of China and India development as economic power and the dynamic of international politics in the region have provided opportunities for Indonesia and U.S. to cooperate in order to create regional architecture that will give the opportunities for their citizens in obtaining peace, stability, and prosperity. As a global power with broad foreign and military policy outreach since the World War II until now, the U.S. is still continuing its role and influence in Asia.

Moreover, with the robust development of China and India, the U.S. definitely needs to adjust its economic, political, and military policies in the region. In the process of that adjustment, of this process, Indonesia –with its potentials, which also include the four following strategic factors, is the U.S. partner with strategic role, apart from other ASEAN member countries, Japan, and South Korea.

## **2. Energy needs and supply, market potential in trade and investment between Indonesia and United States**

Indonesia is a prominent partner for U.S. in the field of oil and gas, as well as an important investment destination place in mining industry. This has been shown by the long existed operations by the eminent MNCs, such as ExxonMobil, Chevron, Conoco Phillips, Freeport, McMoran, and Newmont.

The U.S.’ investment value in Indonesia by 2006 has reached more than U.S.\$ 10 Billion. In 2008, Indonesia is becoming the direct energy supplier for the U.S. West Coast region, taken from Tangguh in Papua. Regarding this issue, the U.S., a country “addicted to oil”, has been consuming oil approximately 19 million barrel per day. Other countries’ increase of oil needs from Indonesia will be perceived as competitors by US.

The existing Indonesia-U.S. cooperation in the energy field has to be elaborated to achieve optimal outcome in addressing the “traditional” energy problem. Not to mention if Indonesia has the ability to perform a partnership in the biofuel field, that would give Indonesia a bigger chance to increase its partnership with US.

In trading, the total value of both countries which has reached approximately US\$ 13.4 Billion is still able to be increased.

## **3. The pluralism values in Indonesia and US society**

Indonesia is a nation consists of many ethnicities and heritages and makes it a pluralistic entity. When the pluralistic society starts adopting the value of democracy, Indonesia’s consolidation process to be a whole nation of unity has become a phenomenon for the American society. There has been an increase of interests for Indonesia as a subject of study, or for other needs such as creating stability in the Asia region and in fighting terrorism.

The peace, stable, harmonious, yet pluralistic region has also served as a strong aspiration for other states in the Asia region. For US, the Region with Indonesia the pluralistic yet stable and peace as a part of it, indeed serves as a proponent for its foreign policy.

Also, as a fellow pluralist society, there are many opportunities for cooperation in the field of research, education, and also society empowerment. The civil society concept

has rooted in American society, which intended to be expanded and strengthened together with other civil societies.

#### **4. Democratic values and the large number of Muslims in Indonesia.**

Since its independence through the “Declaration of Independence” on July 4th, 1776, the United States has self-built itself by introducing and strengthening democratic values and pluralism. The process involved sacrifices and human casualties, and took hundreds of years to implement.

The old democratic society (the United States of America) at this modern time has the strong belief that democracy is the only nation-state base or ideology, and no other alternatives in the implementation of nation-state practice. The belief has motivated the birth of younger democratic society, the Republic of Indonesia, a country which has evolved into a new entity, viewed as equal by its partners, and also by the elite community in the United States.

This common nation-state ideology between Indonesia and the United States has naturally opened the opportunities and possibilities for further and deeper cooperation.

The fact that Indonesia is the third largest democratic country after India and the United States – demonstrated and proven by the peaceful and successful presidential election in October 2004 by 126 millions of Indonesian voters- has provided and broaden the areas of better and further cooperation between Indonesia and the United States, which will lead to optimal benefits particularly for Indonesia.

In additional, this younger democratic society is a country of the largest Muslim community. The fact that democracy can go alongside with Islam has been a concern for some elite in the United States, and this has also provided a great potential for cooperation between the two countries.

#### **5. The Indonesian national leadership**

One obvious fact is that there are a large number of political elites and private sectors who have the confidence, --as well as expectation- in the commitment of Indonesian national leadership in the achievement of democracy, pluralism, human rights implementation, good governance, and friendly-international cooperation in Indonesia.

This expectation that Indonesia implements democracy, pluralism, good governance, and friendly international cooperation, is not of some American elite community only, but more importantly, is from the Indonesian people. This hope will only prevail if the Indonesian people give their continuous support to their national leadership.

These five strategic factors in the context of Indonesia and the United States relations are to be viewed as opportunities and to be used wisely, sensibly and in critical way of thinking. The compositioning of the choices of policies in order to obtain the opportunities must be accompanied by deep understanding of economic, political, and strategic interests of the Indonesian people. These choices are the full rights of the Indonesian people and cannot be dictated by other countries.