

Jokowi's Indonesia and the World**By Ahmad Ibrahim Almuttaqi. Singapore: World Scientific, 2020. xxviii + 159 pp.**

The rise of Joko Widodo, or better known by his affectionate nickname 'Jokowi', in 2014 as Indonesia's new president was initially viewed by many observers as a challenge to oligarchic interests as well as a triumph of the *reformasi* forces in the country. This was due to not only his outstanding performance as the mayor of the central Javanese city of Solo in 2005-2012 and the governor of the country's capital Jakarta in 2012-2014, but also the fact that he had no connections to the traditional political, big business or military oligarchies. Nevertheless, it was also because of such a background, Jokowi faced a hostile parliament upon his accession as the seventh president of the country since the majority of the members of parliament were in the opposition coalition that backed ex-General Prabowo Subianto, his long-time rival. From time to time, Jokowi has to figure out various strategies to deal with such political challenges and this has brought significant impact on Indonesia's foreign policy. During his first term in 2014-2019, Indonesia's foreign policy was generally reactionary instead of active and assertive in nature because Jokowi needed to focus on dealing with the challenging domestic situation. This is the central theme of Ahmad Ibrahim Almuttaqi's *Jokowi's Indonesia and the World*.

This book consists of a prologue followed by four chapters on Jokowi's achievements and failures in each of his year in office, and an epilogue that summarises the main arguments of Almuttaqi. In the prologue, Almuttaqi reviews the foreign policy during the years of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, i.e. Jokowi's predecessor. Almuttaqi points out that in general, Yudhoyono was an internationalist president who actively led Indonesia into playing a larger role in international affairs. Hence, Indonesia's foreign policy is regarded as "assertive and active" during Yudhoyono's years (p. xxvii).

However, such an image immediately changed after Jokowi came to power and this is the central theme of the first chapter. Apart from a hostile parliament as mentioned earlier, Jokowi also encountered the influence and antagonism of former president Megawati Sukarnoputri who was also the chairwoman of his party, i.e. the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P). This was mainly because Jokowi did not give the party enough positions when he formed his cabinet. Jokowi emphasised that cabinet positions would be based on merit instead of transactional politics but this upset Sukarnoputri. Such a challenging domestic situation had significantly affected Jokowi's performance in foreign policy during his first year in office. In more than one occasion, the Jokowi government reversed earlier decisions. One very good example was the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway project. Although the government earlier announced its decision to scrap the project and requested China and Japan to submit proposals for a medium-speed railway, it later revived the high-speed railway project and awarded it to China. Such conflicting messages and inconsistent policy had upset Japan.

The second chapter focuses on Indonesia's domestic situation and foreign policy during Jokowi's second year in office. In order to secure a majority in parliament, Jokowi resorted to coercive interventions in the Party of Functional Groups (Golkar) and the United Development Party (PPP), two major opposition parties, by supporting pro-government factions within them. This resulted in the switch of both parties to the pro-government camp. With a new found majority in parliament, Jokowi managed to break free from his previously subordinate position with

Sukarnoputri. But Indonesia's foreign policy remained reactionary in nature and Jokowi only reacted assertively when Indonesia's sovereignty was at stake "such as in response to China's increasing assertiveness to waters surrounding Indonesia's Natuna Islands, or when Indonesian citizens were being kidnapped by militants from the Philippines' restive south" (p. 49).

The third and fourth chapters highlight the disadvantageous situations that Jokowi faced both domestically and internationally during his third and fourth years in office. Domestically, Jokowi's ally Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, the incumbent governor of Jakarta who was also an ethnic Chinese Christian, controversially quoted a verse from the Qur'an in a campaign speech and this sparked anger among conservative Muslims. They launched a large rally in Jakarta on 4 November 2016, calling for Purnama to be charged for blasphemy against Islam. But the rally turned violent as the police clashed with demonstrators. Jokowi was forced to postpone his planned visit to Australia to deal with the aftermath of the violence. Indonesia was also struck with earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions as well as suicide bombing against churches during Jokowi's fourth year in charge. Moreover, he failed to secure trade deals worth USD 25 billion with Saudi Arabia as Indonesian officials had claimed earlier. The only significant foreign policy achievements of Jokowi were the securing of a non-permanent seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council and the successful hosting of the Asian Games in 2018.

In the epilogue, Almuttaqi points out that although Jokowi was re-elected as Indonesia's president in 2019, the percentage of his popular votes did not increase significantly. Hence, he needs to "reassess what went right and what went wrong during his first term" (p. 158).

The greatest strength of this book lies in its contemporaneous approach in examining Jokowi's foreign policy in his first term. Almuttaqi wrote each chapter critically soon after Jokowi completed each of his year in office. Readers will be able to capture the genuine concerns that were present during the actual time of his first term.

This book has also done a good job in reminding readers that as long as Jokowi is occupied with various domestic challenges during his term in office, it will be extremely difficult for Indonesia to play a more active and assertive role in foreign policy.

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