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## Indonesia-India Bilateral Relations Under Jokowi & Modi Leaderships: An Indonesian Perspective

Mohd. Agoes Aufiya

Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

**Corresponding Author:** Mohd. Agoes Aufiya; Email: [agoesaufiya@gmail.com](mailto:agoesaufiya@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

This article analyses and assess Indonesia-India relations under the administration of President Joko Widodo and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the first term as well as at the beginning of the second term from 2014-2021. The analysis is divided into the key aspects, the leadership background including political carrier, political party and their respective vision or foreign policy; assessment the “journey” of the relations from year to year; the challenges of the relations. Threefold keys of progress cooperation under the Jokowi and Modi relations are maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, multilateral engagement, and economic cooperation, while the shortcoming of the relations potentially derives from domestic politics policy, China factor, a reciprocal gap in the export tariffs. This article evaluates that despite the relations between the two countries successfully maintain closer ties through exploring a new area of collaboration namely maritime cooperation. This article recommends that the bilateral ties still require more implementation, exploring a new area of the partnership while at the same time managing potential threats within the bilateral ties for achieving maximum cooperation.

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia and India bilateral ties narrative have a rich historical foundation which positively contributed to cultivating the bilateral relations from the past to the future. The bilateral relations between Indonesia and India have existed even before their independence which refers to the kingdom era. One of the significant connections is Bali Yatra where a trip from the port of Paradeep in Orissa to Bali, with economic and cultural ties, said to have existed for over 2000 years as the Indian traders were the first to come in the 1st Century, followed by religious preaching for Hinduism and Buddhism (Ray, 2020). The kingdoms era not only has a critical role in connecting the historical past of the two countries in the form of deep trade, cultural and religious ties but has laid down the foundation of Indonesia and India relations in the modern time.

In modern Indonesia and India relations, especially in the colonial era is another significant stage in their bilateral ties. Indonesia and India also shared their bitter experience under the colonial

rules of the Dutch and the British in very long period for least three centuries which again positively impact their solidarity in achieving independence from the colonial power under the spirit of Asia-Africa and Third World Countries which eventually positioned them as a pioneer of post-colonial state (David Brewster, 2011).

The role of President Sukarno and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was substantial in achieving a cordial relationship between the two countries which support each other in the struggle of an independent state which reflected on the first celebration of India’s Republic Day ceremony who President Sukarno was the first chief guest on 26 January 1950. Moreover, Indonesia and India had formalized their relationship with the signing of a Treaty of Friendship based on “perpetual peace and unalterable friendship”, in March 1951, which significantly improved many aspects of their relationship, including diplomatic, cultural, trade, and military cooperation.

In the modern era especially after Indonesia's reformation era, Indonesia and India have achieved their aged relations for at least seventy years of bilateral ties especially within the leadership of President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi since 2014. The two leaders also have been elected by their respective people even for the second term of leadership up to 2024. Despite the mature age of bilateral ties and maintaining its cordial relations, Indonesia and India need to introspect their relations within the new globalized world especially in the Indo-Pacific region which faces not only a potential source of cooperation but also a threat.

This article intends to analyze the progress of bilateral ties between Indonesia and India under the new leadership including the assessment for the relations, challenges, projection, and recommendation for better engagement in the future. This article argues that:

1. Indonesia and India continue to maintain their good relations under the new leadership;
2. The maritime issue is the new area of cooperation and significantly grows between Indonesia and India;
3. Despite major cordial relations is maintained and expanded successfully, several challenges potentially may disrupt the ties;
4. Indonesia and India should avoid and manage carefully the source of threat into their bilateral relations and improve the substantial bilateral sector for a better partnership.

Within the context of literature review, despite limited scholars in the field, there is recent and relevant analysis from several scholars on the Indonesia and India bilateral ties under the leadership of Jokowi and Modi. First, Mustafa Izzudin and Ankush Ajay Wagle (2019) argued that the bilateral relationship between India and Indonesia is centered on building a maritime partnership. In terms of history, political systems and ideologies, economic power, and marine perspectives, such as on the Indo-Pacific, India, and Indonesia have a lot in common. However, without resources and capabilities, plans and synergies in the marine space are impossible. Positive momentum has been gathered by the warm relationship between President Jokowi and Prime Minister Modi. Both countries should leverage such positivity through practical collaboration in areas

like tourism and the digital economy, in areas such as Andaman and Nicobar. Improving India-Indonesia maritime cooperation needs increased political confidence, thus it is necessary to put the Indo-bilateral Pacific's maritime vision into practice by making small efforts in the two key sectors of economy and security cooperation.

Second, Pallavi Aiyar (2014) described several different elements between Jokowi and Modi political background and leadership. He argued Modi is assertive and belligerent, whereas Jokowi is cooperative and accommodative. As he pursued an aggressive, pro-business agenda, Modi earned a reputation for ruling with a hard hand. Jokowi, on the other hand, is physically little and his demeanor is unpretentious. Modi and Jokowi have opposing policy objectives as well. Modi belongs to a capitalist with economic reformist impulses while Jokowi prioritized communal welfare and small business entrepreneurs including during his governorship of Jakarta such as were a free healthcare card and education grants for the poor.

Jokowi has also guaranteed that he has good credentials with the country's minority populations, which is significant for a vast and pluralistic country like Indonesia. Modi's record with India's minority populations, on the other hand, is dismal. He is accused of doing nothing to prevent the 2002 religious' riots in Gujarat, which resulted in the deaths of over 1000 persons, predominantly Muslims. Even though he has constantly disputed the claims and been exonerated by the courts, many civil society organizations continue to hold him responsible. Modi is also intimately associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a right-wing Hindu organization whose goal is to establish India as a Hindu nation while Jokowi is more into nationalistic and inclusive manner (Aiyar, 2014). The religious ideology difference also coincides with Marcus Mietzner's argument (2015) that in comparison to Modi, Jokowi's ideology is more religious inclusiveness compared to Modi which is strongly on the Hindu ideology (Mietzner, 2015).

Third, Raja Mohan and Ajay Wagle (2018) argued that the comprehensive strategic partnership between India and Indonesia which was announced at the end of May 2018 by Prime Minister Modi and President Jokowi has several signs of progress such as annual summit meetings between the two

countries' leaders, ongoing high-level bureaucratic exchanges, deeper economic integration, closer people-to-people relations as well as defense cooperation, including on arms production and stronger counter-terror cooperation. They highlighted that the maritime dimension stands out in this expansive agenda. The two leaders' unified marine strategy for the Indo-Pacific is based on the long-overdue acknowledgment that the two countries share a wide oceanic neighborhood. The ascent of China, its deteriorating ties with the United States, and the sharpening of Beijing's territorial conflicts with its neighbors have given this a new urgency as well for the two countries' closer engagement (Mohand & Wagle, 2018).

Fourth, Danielle Rajendram (2014) argued with the argument that India and Indonesia's defense relations are still weak despite signing a Defense Cooperation Agreement in 2001 and launching a Strategic Partnership in 2005. Given that the two Indian Ocean neighbors are separated by only 80 nautical miles, there is a lot of untapped potential for increased maritime security cooperation (Supriyanto, 2013). However, he argued that given President Jokowi's proclaimed ambition of Indonesia as a global maritime fulcrum, the significant relations between Indonesia and India are obvious as their interests are closely matched with a focus on regional stability and freedom of navigation rather than support for others' particular claims. Further, he argued that Modi's closer relations with the world's largest Islamic country, Indonesia might be beneficial to the Modi government. Promoting ties with would assist to strengthen Modi's secular credentials and alleviate fears about his anti-Muslim tendencies (Rajendram, 2014).

As the result of the literature review, this article concludes the problematic reality as well as the research gap which produces several novelties. Despite several scholars well in explaining and answering the improvement of cooperation between Indonesia and India under the two leadership especially on the maritime and strategic dimension, this article attempts to analyses comprehensively the bilateral relations which not only highlights the progress which has been made but also to explore more scope of potential cooperation. In addition, to fill the research gap in this topic namely on how to maximize the bilateral ties as well as managing the

several potential challenges within Indonesia and India under the two leaders. Therefore, the purpose of writing this article contribute the study of Indonesia and India bilateral ties for better relationship and progress by describing the pattern and progress that has been made at the recent age bilateral ties between Indonesia and India especially under the leadership of Jokowi and Modi which concludes the assessment for as well as challenges within the bilateral ties. This article also and projection followed by a recommendation for better engagement in the future.

## **METHODS**

This study used a qualitative method by analyzed on how Indonesia and India bilateral relations particularly under the leadership of President Jokowi and Prime Minister Modi can be flourished in several aspects as well as several potential challenges in the ties. Within the research variable, Indonesia and India as nations are the dependent variables that depend on the independent variable, namely the leadership of President Jokowi and Prime Minister Modi. In the data collection process, the data were obtained through credible sources from primary resources by the two official governments as well as the secondary resources which include journals, news articles, and online media publications.

In the theoretical aspect, within the context of bilateral cooperation, the theory of liberalism applies within the relation of Indonesia and India under the principle of balance or harmony operates in all forms of relationship with key assumptions which reflects by a growing prospect of international cooperation and peace, trade and economic interdependence, promotion of international law as well as democratic states tend to reduce the possibility of war and inherently peaceful (Heywood, 2011). The bilateralism concept also applies which argues that as a joint action between two parties concern especially on the aspect of political, security and economic with costs and benefits within the context of Indonesia-India bilateral relations.

On the data analysis process, the method is based on the date-to-date moments of the two-leadership engagement especially on their bilateral meeting to obtain the pattern and highlight a critical aspect of cooperation which have been made as well

as challenges to capture the comprehensive understanding and analysis of the bilateral ties. The three-level of analysis has significance in explaining the two countries' relation from the individual level, national level as well as regional or international level in the context of Indonesia and India bilateral relations which equal to leadership profile, national interest or foreign policy, and the cooperation between the two countries.

Hence, to analyses and assess the Indonesia and India bilateral relations under President Jokowi and Prime Minister Modi leaderships, this article organizes into three parts, namely (1) the leadership background of Jokowi and Modi, (2) the journey of Indonesia-India bilateral ties under Jokowi-Modi leaderships, (3) potential cooperation as well as challenges toward the bilateral relations. The article also covered the time of this research up to October 2021 as the most recent analysis up to date.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Leadership Background of Jokowi and Modi**

Despite Indonesia and India bilateral relationship majorly maintaining in very cordial relation since the past and even in the previous leadership of President Yudhoyono and Prime Minister Singh, the successor of the leadership under the new administration needs to be analyzed. The analysis on the leadership background is crucial to describe their convergence as well as divergence which may become the source of strength as well as a weakness within the bilateral engagement in the context of Indonesia and India. In the individual-level analysis, the leadership factor between the two leaders namely political carrier background, political parties, and their respective policies becomes the precondition on the individual level of analysis.

In the scope of political carrier background, the year 2014 is the new stage of Indonesia and India government bilateral relations with their new respective leaders. India as the largest democracy with 1.3 billion population with the majority and largest Hindu believers in the world while Indonesia is the third-largest democratic country with 270 million population and largest Muslim population in the world elected their new respective leader, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) for the next five year till 2019.

A quite similar background of the two leaders, who Jokowi known in his early life as furniture entrepreneur while Modi is known as a tea seller (chai wala) became one aspect many thinkers in this field are thinking as their basic personal similarities without any political dynasty or military background. Further, the two leaders also in the same political career before won the election to lead the countries, Jokowi as the mayor of Surakarta (2005-2012) then the Governor of Jakarta, Indonesia's capital (2012-2014) which significantly improved his political carrier into Indonesia presidency position while Modi as the Chief Minister of Gujarat (2001-2014).

Within the scope of a political party, the political party background is also important in reflecting within their policy which the two leaders came out from the opposition party from the previous incumbent government. Jokowi comes from "Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan" (PDI-P) which means Indonesia Democratic Party of Struggle. Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, established the PDI-P, which she presently leads. The party's ideology is based on Pancasila, Indonesia's official national philosophy, economic nationalism, Indonesian nationalism, popularism, and Sukarnoism which is described as a left political ideology (Aspinal, 2018; [www.pdiperjuangan.id](http://www.pdiperjuangan.id), 2021).

While Modi comes from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) means the Indian People's Party as the strong opposition party of the Indian National Congress. The BJP is a right-wing party whose policies have historically mirrored Hindu nationalist views ideologically and structurally linked to the much older Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) which means the National Volunteer Organization (Vaishnav, 2019). The RSS is a Hindu nationalist, right-wing, paramilitary volunteer organization in India and politically has a strong presence in India's society. RSS was established on 27 September 1925 with the primary motivation was to instill character via Hindu discipline and to bring the Hindu community together to establish a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation) as well as to "strengthen" the Hindu community, the organization supports the principles of maintaining Indian culture and civil society norms, as well as spreading Hindutva philosophy (Savarkar, 1969).

In this position, Jokowi and Modi respective political parties are quite contrasted within their political party's ideology which directly or indirectly potentially may become the source of challenges within the bilateral ties of Indonesia and India if some policies reflect from their political party's ideology which Jokowi belong to the leftist ideological party whereas Modi toward the right-wing ideology. This position even becomes more problematic when the communal issue closely engages with the BJP political activities especially toward Indian Muslims which several times has brought attention from Indonesian Muslims. The solidarity of Indonesian Muslims was reflected in their demonstration in front of the Indian Embassy in Jakarta as a reaction to the conflict between Muslims and Hindus in eastern New Delhi which killed 42 people and injured dozens more.

Front Pembela Islam (FPI), GNPF Ulama, dan Persaudaraan Alumni (PA) 212 condemn various acts of violence and persecution by Hindu groups and Indian authorities against Indian Muslims. They urged the Indian government to immediately stop the various acts of persecution and immediately arrest the perpetrators of the persecution. In addition, they also urged the Indonesian government to take political steps against human rights violations committed by Hindu groups in India and even demanded cut off diplomatic relations with India (CNN Indonesia, 2020). Vice President of Indonesia, Ma'ruf Amin asked India to take an example the conditions of religious life in Indonesia, which prioritizes moderation and tolerance among religious adherents as a pluralistic country. He said this in response to the recent conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India after the Indian government issued a controversial Citizenship Law (CNN Indonesia, 2020). This phenomenon potentially may disrupt the bilateral relations between India and Indonesia under borderless information in the globalized world. Furthermore, the worst possibility may bring Indonesia and other Muslim majority countries into solidarity with Pakistan on the issue of Indian Muslims.

#### **National Interests and Policies of Jokowi and Modi Government**

At the national level, after Jokowi and Modi won respectively the election in 2014, the two leadership have launched their foreign policy which

reflects their national interest as well. Within the leadership of President Jokowi, a manifesto, vision, and agenda for the nation have been launched during his campaign on presidency which called as Jokowi-Jusuf Kalla 2014 Vision, Mission and Action Program titled "*Jalan perubahan untuk Indonesia yang berdaulat, mandiri dan berkepribadian*" (alteration/revolution way for Indonesian sovereign, independent and personality). According to Jokowi's vision on Indonesia, he stated that to establish Indonesian as sovereign, independent and identity based on *gotong-royong* (cooperation)."

Jokowi then suggested "Nawacita", or nine key agenda initiatives, to attain political sovereignty, economic self-sufficiency, and a national culture-based personality for Indonesia. The "Nawacita", is defined in a total of 31 strategic agendas, including 12 strategic agendas for achieving Indonesian political sovereignty, 16 strategic agendas for leading Indonesia to economic self-sufficiency, and three strategic agendas for Indonesian cultural personality.

At the foreign policy level, Jokowi launched its grand strategy called "Global Maritime Fulcrum" which was initially mentioned during the presidential candidate debate in June 2014, he stated that "to transform Indonesia into a global maritime fulcrum". After his victory in the presidential election in July 2014, he used the term again to encourage all citizens to "work together to transform Indonesia into a global maritime fulcrum, a global civilization center" (Jokowi, 2014). The vision or policy's backdrop is Indonesia's projection to turn into a maritime nation by promoting the motto "*Jalesveva Jayamahe*" (we prevail in the ocean) and, more crucially, to become a maritime power in the Indo-Pacific region by developing military capabilities.

Another definition of the Global Maritime Fulcrum can be found in Jokowi's speech to the East Asia Summit (EAS) in November 2014, where he introduced the concept to EAS member leaders for the first time by listing the five pillars of the maritime fulcrum for supporting the maritime-fulcrum doctrine:

1. The maritime culture of Indonesia must be recreated. With 18,000 islands, Indonesia is the world's biggest archipelagic republic. It must recognize that the oceans are a vital part of its



national identity and economy, and that good ocean management will determine Indonesia's destiny;

2. Establishing a sustainable fishing enterprise and controlling the marine food industry to manage and safeguard marine resources.
3. Prioritizing marine connectivity and infrastructure development. The plan asks for the formation of a maritime tourist sector, the building of sea highways along Java's coast, and the shipping industry, as well as the development of logistical networks and deep seaports.
4. Increasing the value of maritime diplomacy. This is performed by collaboration with partner nations on maritime and marine issues to reduce and resolve territorial disputes, illicit fishing, smuggling, piracy, sovereignty violations, and marine pollution disputes and conflicts.
5. Improving Indonesia's maritime defense capabilities. The objective is to protect not only Indonesia's maritime sovereignty and natural riches but also the safety and tranquility of the region's maritime security.

Jokowi's grand vision can be described as having a strong maritime component, which ambitiously projects Indonesia as the global hub of maritime activities, primarily for economic and image development, and importantly, the vision also necessitates cooperation with other nations to be realized.

In India's context, Modi, who became India's Prime Minister on May 26, 2014, announced his adopted his one of grand strategy on a foreign policy level as "Act East policy" in November 2014 during the 12th ASEAN-India Summit and EAS in Myanmar, stating that his government has moved with a high sense of urgency and speed to transform our 'Look East' policy into an 'Act East' policy (Modi, 2014; MEA, 2015). The Act East Policy, also known as the third "phase" of India's Look East Policy (Bajpae, 2017) outlines India's internal economy reformation with a new age of economic development, industrialization, and commerce, as well as a reflection of the importance that we [India] place on this area (Hindustan Times, 2014). The Act East Policy aims to improve connectivity between India's Northeastern states, such as Arunachal Pradesh, and their neighbors, particularly

ASEAN, by promoting closer ties with Asia-Pacific countries through cultural, economic, and strategic cooperation on a bilateral, regional, and multilateral level (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2015).

More specifically, under the Act East Policy, India would devote special attention to ASEAN nations, dubbed CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam), as an extension of the Northeastern state's territory, to contribute to regional stability and balance any foreign force impact. Because India's Act East Policy focuses on Southeast Asia, it emphasizes a variety of physical and digital aspects of cooperation with ASEAN, such as enhanced maritime and military cooperation, deeper economic integration, intensive people-to-people linkages, and improved cultural links (Kesavan, 2020).

Besides the Act East Policy, other foreign policies launched by Prime Minister Modi with strong maritime aspects are SAGAR and Sagarmala. The first is a name borrowed from the Hindi language that means "sea", but it also stands for "Security and Growth for All in the Region", which was established in 2015. The purpose of this strategy is to maintain the Indian Ocean Region stable, secure, and safe by defending the islands and mainland, as well as India's interests. As a result, SAGAR has played a vital role in India's foreign policy, particularly in the maritime domain (Padmaja. 2018). In addition, SAGAR will address regional challenges such as humanitarian aid to maritime neighbors and combatting non-state players in the Indian Ocean, such as pirates. The tsunami of 2004, regular earthquakes, the threat of rising sea levels, the Maldives' water problem, and the Indian help that followed all highlight the importance of this effort. India's main ambition is to become the Indian Ocean's single regional power, capable of supplying humanitarian relief and security to the whole region. The Sagar Initiative includes the Act East Policy, Project Sagarmala, and Project Mausam (Singh, 2020).

Another important policy is the Sagarmala project, which according to the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways of Government of India is a large-scale national project aimed at modernizing India's logistics business by using the country's coastline and waterways to their full potential. Sagarmala's goal is to reduce logistical costs for

both domestic and EXIM commodities by investing wisely in infrastructure. The concept of “port-led growth” is central to the Sagarmala concept. Port-led growth is focusing on logistics-intensive industries (where transportation either represents a high proportion of costs, or timely logistics are a critical success factor). These enterprises can be inherently competitive if they are built near the coast or rivers. A modern and efficient port infrastructure, as well as seamless multimodal links, would help them. The local population would be sufficiently skilled to take advantage of the given economic opportunities. The unlocking of economic value occurs when the aforesaid four components, namely logistics-intensive industries, efficient ports, seamless connectivity, and the requisite skill-base, are developed in a synergistic and coordinated manner. The four pillars of the Sagarmala Project are (i) port modernization; (ii) port connectivity; (iii) port-led industrialization; and (iv) coastal community development (Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways).

While the Project Mausam policy, which was launched in 2014, focuses on monsoon patterns, cultural pathways, and maritime landscapes, it examines important processes and phenomena that link different regions of the Indian Ocean littoral as well as those that connect coastal centers to their hinterlands. In summary, Project 'Mausam' aims to investigate how knowledge of monsoon winds and their management has affected interactions throughout the Indian Ocean, resulting in the spread of shared knowledge systems, traditions, technologies, and ideas via maritime routes. Different coastal centers and their surrounding environments allowed for these encounters in their own time and space, and they influenced them. Project 'Mausam' seeks to establish itself on two levels: at the macro level, it seeks to reconnect and re-establish communications between countries in the Indian Ocean world, resulting in a better understanding of cultural values and concerns; and at the micro-level, it seeks to comprehend national cultures in the context of their regional marine environment (Ministry of Culture).

In light of India's unique position to contribute considerably to the security and trade of the Indian Ocean, Modi's administration is establishing Project Mausam. The physical position and might of India can aid in the organization of the Indian Ocean

littoral republics. In the struggle against China's Maritime Silk Road, the initiative is viewed as the Modi government's most crucial foreign policy endeavor (Pillalamarri, 2014). It is based on India's historical prominence as a commercial crossroads in the Indian Ocean, during which pre-modern mariners used seasonal monsoons (*mausam*, which signifies whether or season in many South Asian languages) to easily cross the Indian Ocean. Project Mausam would allow India to reconnect with ancient commercial partners and construct an “Indian Ocean world” along the Indian Ocean's coast, spanning east Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, southern Iran, the major South Asian countries, and lastly Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

Within policy preferences, Jokowi and Modi have a significant focus on the maritime policy domestically and internationally with high commonalities of national interest which equally high potential convergence and collaboration between the two nations. the maritime cooperation has become one of the key improvements of the bilateral ties which significantly growing under the two leadership.

Table 1 Jokowi & Modi's Maritime Policy

Maritime Foreign Policy		
No	Prime Minister Modi	President Jokowi
1	<i>Act East Policy</i>	<i>Global Maritime Fulcrum</i>
2	<i>SAGAR</i>	
3	<i>Sagarmala Project</i>	
4	<i>Project Mausam</i>	

### **The Journey of Indonesia-India Bilateral Ties Under Jokowi and Modi**

As the two leaders have been elected in the same year of 2014, Modi has been swearing in 26 May prior than President Jokowi on 20 October. Thus, at very first time, Prime Minister Modi delivers his written greeting by congratulating President Jokowi on being sworn in as the President of Indonesia on his Twitter account at the same date which states "Congratulations and best wishes to Mr. Joko Widodo on being sworn in as the President of Indonesia." This positive gesture has laid an important foundation for the relations not only for the two leaders but also in the level of bilateral ties. This section will be analyzed Indonesia and India bilateral ties especially within the two head governments meeting from the first

time up to the recent meeting to assess the realm of cooperation.

The first meeting of President Jokowi's first appearance after taking office as President of the Republic of Indonesia took place during the 25th ASEAN Summit in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, in November 2014. On the margins of the event, President Joko Widodo met with Prime Minister Modi in a bilateral meeting. Indonesia offered India investment prospects in coal, defense equipment, infrastructure, and manufacturing industries at the first meeting, with Jokowi emphasizing that Indonesia and India have a lot of trade and investment that he wants to increase. On the one hand, Modi said that he and Jokowi have many characteristics, including a tight relationship with the media. However, there was no independent marine sector collaboration at the time, so it had to be kept together (Wibowo, 2014). Both leaders emphasized the importance of carrying out the five-point initiative to strengthen India-Indonesia Strategic Cooperation, convening the Joint Working Groups on Energy and Coal as soon as possible, and tasked the Foreign Ministers with ensuring the early formation of the India-Indonesia Eminent Persons Group (EPG) and convening of its meeting as soon as possible (Embassy of India Jakarta, 2021).

The second critical meeting has been placed on the invitation of Modi, Jokowi paid a state visit to India from December 12 to 13, 2016. Jokowi and Modi met and discussed their bilateral relations in depth. During the visit, three agreements were signed: a Memorandum of Understanding on Youth Affairs and Sports Cooperation, a Memorandum of Understanding on Standardization Cooperation, and a Joint Communique on Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and To Promote Sustainable Fisheries Governance (Ministry of External Affairs of Government of India, 2019). The two sides also published a Joint Statement, as well as a Statement on Maritime Cooperation, which requires both parties to draught a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in this field. They also agreed to hold yearly leaders' meetings.

Both sides agreed to start Strategic and Security Dialogues and draught a new Comprehensive Defense Cooperation Agreement. In the first half of 2017, India and Indonesia have also committed to host meetings of the following mechanisms: A Joint Ministerial Commission, a

Defence Ministers Dialogue, and a Joint Defence Cooperation Committee, as well as a Biennial Trade Ministers Forum and an Energy Forum, exist at the ministerial level. The Bilateral CEO's Forum met for the first time at the event, with over 40 CEOs of major firms from both sides convening and offering recommendations to the two presidents. Retno Marsudi, Indonesian Foreign Minister, and Shri M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs, received the report of the India-Indonesia Eminent Persons Group on December 12, 2016. On December 12, 2016, Garuda Indonesia launched a flight from Jakarta to Mumbai to mark the occasion (Ministry of External Affairs of Government of India, 2017).

The third meeting was the visit of Indonesian President Joko Widodo to India for the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit. On the 25th and 26th of January 2018, Indonesian President Joko Widodo visited New Delhi as the Chief Guest at India's 69th Republic Day festivities and to attend the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit. Jokowi underlined the importance of a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region which can be achieved through an ASEAN-led mechanism and through the ASEAN-India partnership. In addition, the Indo-Pacific concept can naturally be developed based on the ASEAN Cooperation and Friendship Treaty in which all important countries in the region have become parties to the agreement. Thus, the development of the Indo-Pacific concept must also be carried out in an open, transparent, inclusive manner based on the habit of dialogue; based on the desire to cooperate and uphold international law according to Jokowi during the summit (Santi, 2018).

Besides maritime and the Indo-Pacific focuses, Jokowi also emphasized that economic issues while stressing the need for an immediate settlement of the Regional Comprehensive Economy Partnership (RCEP) negotiations which have been running since 2013 represents almost half of the world population with 31,5% of global GDP and covers 28,5% of world trade. The President added that the main key to facing the challenges of the RCEP negotiations was a pragmatic and realistic attitude from all Parties, including India (Dit. KS. Eksternal ASEAN, 2018).

On the sidelines of the ASEAN-India Summit on January 25, 2018, President Jokowi held a



bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Given the enormous potential for bilateral trade between the two countries, the two presidents discussed issues of mutual interest, including efforts to strengthen economic cooperation. President Jokowi emphasized the significance of measures to strengthen economic cooperation, including the removal of trade obstacles, particularly the increase in import tariff rates on vegetable oil to India, which were fairly high. Because the rise in palm oil tariffs would have an impact on Indonesia's palm oil exports as well as the growing demands of the Indian market, Jokowi hopes that the Indian government will reconsider its vegetable oil tariff policy. President Jokowi decided that bilateral ties between Indonesia and India were improving, particularly following President Jokowi's meeting with Prime Minister Modi in India in December 2016, and he issued an invitation to Prime Minister Modi to visit Indonesia in 2018 (Humas, 2018).

The fourth meeting of the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May 2018 is the fourth: Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Jakarta on the 29th and 30th of May 2018 at the request of the Indonesian President Joko Widodo. Both leaders resolved to develop a New Comprehensive Strategic Partnership to expand cooperation in all areas and usher in a new era in Indonesia-India relations during this visit. The two countries inked 15 agreements/MoUs during the visit, including nine G2G MoUs in the sectors of defense cooperation, space exploration, and peaceful uses of space. Among the themes covered are scientific and technological cooperation, technical cooperation in the railway sector, health cooperation, pharmaceutical, biological, and cosmetics regulatory functions, government-to-government policy dialogue, and think tank interaction. Importantly, both parties agreed on a Joint Vision for Indo-Pacific Maritime Cooperation (Ministry of External Affairs of Government of India, 2018).

In addition, Jokowi valued partnership with India in the maritime sector for actively working in IORA cooperation, and intensive communication continues to be carried out in advancing cooperation in the Indo Pacific. another significant development that the two leaders agreed to advance infrastructure and connectivity cooperation, including development on Sabang Island and Andaman Island. The air connection between the two

countries with Garuda Indonesia's direct flights from Bali to Mumbai has been started in April 2018 (Widodo, 2018).

Within the cultural aspect, the Kite Exhibition, themed after the Ramayana and Mahabharata, was also jointly launched by the Prime Minister and the President which described their past and common cultural linkages. In the economic aspect, the members of the India-Indonesia CEOs' Forum presented Recommendations and an Outcome Document for both leaders as the focus of business cooperation agreed upon namely, manufacturing, mining, pharmaceuticals, and infrastructure. The Leaders also directed that the forum be held regularly, with the extension of business sectors as a positive move to tap more prospects and potentials in expanding bilateral trade and investment relations.

However, Jokowi expects that the negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership can be completed this year, 2018. Jokowi also urges his attention regarding tariffs on palm oil products in Indonesia and he had agreed to take a look at the problems that we mentioned earlier. Jokowi also invites India's investment in infrastructure, such as ports and airports, as well as the pharmaceutical industry, especially drugs that cannot be produced in Indonesia (Humas Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2018).

As the second election has been held in Indonesia and Jokowi re-elected for the second time after beating Prabowo Subianto, a former General, on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019, Modi congratulated his re-election as president of Indonesia and said "Heartiest congratulations @jokowi on your re-election! As two large democracies, we take collective pride in the successful celebration of democracy.

The fifth bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Modi and President Joko Widodo was in June 2019 at the G20 Summit in Osaka to strengthen bilateral cooperation in a variety of crucial sectors, including the economy, defense, and marine security between the two nations. At the beginning of the meeting, President Jokowi expressed his appreciation for India's support for the "ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific" which was recently adopted by ASEAN leaders at the 34th ASEAN Summit in Thailand on June 22, 2019. The Indo-Pacific is a concept of cooperation between

countries along with the Indian and Pacific Oceans in terms of increasing cooperation by prioritizing the principles of openness and respect for international law which Jokowi believes that believe that ASEAN and India can enhance Indo-Pacific cooperation (Kantor Staf Presiden, 2019).

According to Raveesh Kumar, a spokeswoman for India's Ministry of External Affairs, besides exchanging views on the Indo-Pacific strategy, Jokowi and Modi also discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in commerce and investment, defense, marine, and space (Press Trust of India, 2019a). In addition, the two leaders also discussed ways to boost bilateral ties and enhance cooperation in trade and investment in depth by setting an ambitious USD 50 billion targets for bilateral trade over the next six years or by 2025 (Press Trust of India, 2019b). The two heads of the state emphasized the necessity of both nations removing tariffs and non-tariff obstacles. In this regard, Jokowi specifically requested that Modi pay attention to the imposition of new import tariffs on Indonesian palm oil exports in early January 2019, encouraging the two Trade Ministers to continue discussing a win-win solution, including the palm oil trade-off proposal with other commodities. President Jokowi also stated his optimism that the RCEP discussions will be finished by the end of the year.

Jokowi emphasizes the need of developing both nations' marine economic cooperation in maritime matters. Increased engagement between Aceh and Andaman-Nicobar enterprises might be the first step in the approach. As a result, President Jokowi wants India to take part in the construction of Sabang's linking infrastructure. In response, Modi is enthusiastic about the prospect of developing commercial and business ties between Andaman & Nicobar and Aceh. Modi claimed that the relationship is a win-win situation for both parties (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). According to Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency, in 2016, trade between the two nations was USD 12.9 billion which increased by 28.7% to USD 18.13 billion in 2017, with exports to India reaching USD 14.08 billion and imports from India totaling USD 4.05 billion.

The sixth bilateral meeting took place in November 2019, on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in Bangkok. Prime Minister Modi

congratulated President Joko Widodo on the start of his second term as President of Indonesia and stated that as the world's two largest democratic and pluralistic societies, India and Indonesia are committed to strengthening ties in the areas of defense, security, connectivity, trade and investment, and human resource exchange (Musyaffa, 2019).

Further, PM Modi stated that India and Indonesia are close maritime neighbors, and he and President Joko Widodo reiterated their commitment to work together for peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region, to realize their shared vision of maritime cooperation. The two presidents agreed to collaborate closely to combat terrorism and extremism. Prime Minister Modi held a forward-thinking conversation on strengthening bilateral trade, emphasizing the importance of broader market access for Indian exports (Press Trust of India, 2019).

The seventh bilateral meeting was held through the telephonic channel in the situation of a COVID-19 pandemic. Prime Minister Modi and President Jokowi discuss on 28th April 2020 discuss the health and economic issues faced by the pandemic, including maintaining the ongoing supply of medical and pharmaceutical items. The leaders discussed difficulties with their citizens in each other's countries and agreed that their teams would stay in touch to guarantee the best possible assistance. Modi emphasized that Indonesia is a key maritime partner in India's extended neighborhood and that the bilateral relationship's strength will aid both nations in combating the pandemic's consequences. He also sent his best wishes for the Holy Month of Ramadan to Jokowi and the Indonesian people (Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, 2018).

President Jokowi expressed his appreciation for the facilitation provided by the Government of India for the supply of pharmaceutical products to Indonesia (Antara, 2020). In Addition, Jokowi also discussed hundreds of Indonesian citizens who are members of the Tablighi Jamaat with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The two heads of state were agreed to assign their foreign ministers to discuss the fate of the 700 Indonesian citizens who have been trapped in India due to the implementation of the lockdown or regional security since March 23, 2020. The Indonesian

citizens are quarantined by the Indian authorities which they also admitted to having difficulties because they had difficulty getting food and often experienced unpleasant treatment from the officers (Permana, 2020).

The eighth meeting between the two leaders was held on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in La Nuvola, Rome, Italy, on 31 October 2021. At the beginning of the meeting, Jokowi appreciated the number of Covid-19 cases in the two countries which continued to progress significantly into a low case that cannot be separated from the cooperation between the two countries in handling Covid-19. Modi also expressed his full support for the chairmanship of Indonesia in 2022 and conveyed his contribution to the success of Indonesia's chairmanship as India will be the Chair of the G20 in 2023.

The economic aspect becomes one of the main points to be discussed was related to the recovery of the economic recovery. As the Covid-19 situation continues to be under control, President Jokowi invites PM Modi to encourage safe economic activities. For this reason, President Jokowi proposed two things, namely the creation of a safe route for community mobility through the vaccinated travel route (VTL) and mutual recognition of vaccine certificates between Indonesia and India. Still, in the economic field, the President also invited PM Modi to re-encourage increased trade and investment cooperation between the two countries post-pandemic. Therefore, President Jokowi hopes that the two countries can start negotiations on the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA).

The health sector was another sector the two leaders discussed was cooperation in. The President hopes that the pharmaceutical industry cooperation of the two countries can carry out joint production of medicinal raw materials (BBO), including capacity building between pharmaceutical companies of the two countries as the leader to immediately start at the technical level (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2021).

#### **Assessment on Indonesia-India Bilateral Ties Progress: Opportunities and Challenges**

In assessing the bilateral ties progress between Indonesia and India, it is important to assess the progress which has been achieved under Jokowi and Modi. in continuation of the leadership of President

Yudhoyono and Prime Minister Singh with well-maintained bilateral ties, Indonesia and India bilateral ties under the leadership of President Jokowi and Prime Minister Modi has bright potential to grow into closer and more expanded aspects of cooperation within globalization era. According to the bilateral meeting analysis between the two leaders during their respective period from 2014 to 2021, Indonesia and India have achieved several progress in the bilateral ties under the two leaderships. In this section will be suggested as well the potential cooperation which can be explored between the two countries.

The top point of cooperation progress between the two countries is on the maritime cooperation which immensely explored by two leaderships. The commitment is reflected on the separate Statement on Maritime Cooperation which was initiated during the first state visit by Jokowi to India from 12-13 December 2016 (Media Center Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, 2016). Within the statement, the two states affirmed their geographical proximity as a maritime neighbor, aged historical relations, and shared maritime perception in the international sphere. In this initial stage, the two countries can be described to solidify their convergence in several maritime principles such as the rule of law especially on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), human rights, pluralistic society, recognizing transnational organized fisheries crime, freedom of navigation and overflight on the high seas and also Promoting peace, stability, and development in the Indo-Pacific region.

These shared principles are a crucial foundation to improve the maritime cooperation into the next stage as the two countries are targeted to establish an MoU with a specific for maritime collaboration as one of the major foundations towards developing the bilateral relationship, to further deepen and accelerate maritime cooperation, including in marine safety and security as well as maritime industry promotion.

On 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018, during the first state visit by Modi in Indonesia, the two countries elevated the statement into "Shared Vision of India-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific." the shared vision which in addition to their common understanding of several principles, the two governments also looked deeper for exploring

some potential cooperation in a maritime sphere such as ASEAN-India Maritime Transport Agreement, India's Act East Policy and Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR), and Indonesian Ocean Policy and Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum Vision, the Blue Economy (Media Center Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, 2019). In more detail, the vision is created to pursue (i) improving trade and investment cooperation; (ii) encouraging sustainable development of marine resources; (iii) increasing collaboration in disaster risk management; (iv) developing cultural and tourism exchange; (v) establishing maritime security and safety and (vi) increasing cooperation in technology, science, and academic sphere.

Under the six commitments in the vision, several practical cooperation has been realized in the security aspect especially the coordinated patrols between the Navies of the two countries which were established since 2002 as regular bilateral naval exercises. Second, in the economic aspect, the initiation on connectivity between the nearest point of India and Indonesia maritime border with 150 kilometers away namely Andaman and Nicobar Islands of India and Provinces in Sumatera Island of Indonesia compared to the nearest mainland states of India with 1,600 kilometers apart (Fransisca, 2021). Hence, the two governments are committed to promoting people-to-people contacts, trade, tourism as well as in assisting business-to-business relations between the Chamber of Commerce of the Provinces in Sumatera, including Aceh of Indonesia and Andaman Island of India.

Aceh Provincial Government has re-opened trade relations by the sea with the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India through the Malahayati port in Kreung Raya, Aceh Besar on 29 December 2018 by transporting various food products and commodities from Aceh to Port Blair, Andaman Islands in Nicobar, several challenges still required to be solved for improving the potential cooperation (Umar, 2018). However, according to the Head of the Sabang Area Concession Agency conveyed that the key to the success of strengthening connectivity at Connectivity in Free Trade Areas and Free Ports of Sabang was to focus on resolving various regulations that have been obstacles to economic activity in Sabang as a free trade zone, including

various regulations such as the trade, transportation, marine and fisheries sectors (Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Perekonomian Republik Indonesia, 2021). In addition, despite the huge potential for the economy of the Acehnese people on the border of the surrounding islands, better cooperation between the two governments is needed to resolve the problem of Acehnese fishermen who are arrested if they violate the border with India.

Several other potential maritime cooperation needs to be realized such as (i) fisheries and ship-building, (ii) sea tourism connectivity between Andaman Island and Sabang Island such as marine adventure sports, sail tourism, diving, and cruise ships; (iii) establishment of institutional linkages between Al-Muslim University of Bireuen, University of Malikussaleh of Lhokseumawe (Aceh), Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi on Centre of India-Indonesia studies. Despite a strong commitment between the two countries, the realization of the cooperation is still importantly needed to implement the maritime vision.

The second most progress between the two countries is the establishment of the New Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2018 between the two countries as an upgraded status from the previous leadership with the status of New Strategic Partnership in 2011 from the very beginning of the Strategic Partnership in 2005. The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership becomes the basic foundation in expanding the bilateral relations between the two countries into a broader sense as well as a deeper one which encompasses from the political, strategic, defense, security, and economic fields. The two countries translated the relations mainly into Annual Summit meetings between the two leaders in a multilateral forum, Shared Vision on Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, the ASEAN – India Commemorative Summit, the signing of Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA), the commitment on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and others (Media Center Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, 2018).

However, one of the main agendas namely the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was failed to achieve as India withdraw from the agreement with the reason that the agreement would have reduced import levies on 80 percent to 90 percent of items, as well as made

service and investment rules easier. Some in India's industry anticipated that lower customs duties would result in an influx of imports, particularly from China, with whom the country has a significant trade imbalance as well as with other members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) will also increase (The Economic Times, 2020). The withdraw of India from RCEP become one of the disadvantages for Indonesia as the biggest trade partner in the ASEAN and long-awaited finalized successful negotiation.

To improve the bilateral ties under Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the two governments delegated their respective the Ministry of External Affairs on the program of the sixth round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between Indonesia and India on 25 June 2021 through virtual meeting for reviewing the bilateral relations (ANI, 2021). Several cooperation to be reviewed including Shared Vision of Maritime Co-operation in the Indo-Pacific, security and strategic, defense, political, economic and cultural, people-to-people contact, and strengthen theirs. In addition, the two parties also strengthening cooperation between ASEAN and India, multilateral cooperation, International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) which both parties committed to conduct next negotiation (ANI, 2021).

The two countries have immense potential progress within the foundation of comprehensive strategic partnership as well as the Shared Vision of Maritime Co-operation in the Indo-Pacific which encompasses all aspects of cooperation. However, several challenges also potentially may hinder the relations (i) China factor; (ii) Communal sentiment; (iii) unequal economic treatment. First, China factors in between the relations between India and Indonesia need to be managed carefully especially within Indonesia foreign policy. As India has quite an acute problem with China especially in the border issues as well as with its neighboring state, the Pakistan is its strong ally in South Asia. Within this context, India does not expect Indonesia falls into closer relations with China especially in the political and security points, despite in terms of economic relations has a better position than India. If the relations between Indonesia and China enter into deeper engagement into political and security

aspects, India will pose more complexity in the ASEAN and Indo-Pacific itself.

Hence the good and strong relations with Indonesia within the perspective of India is important to avoid Indonesia ally with China and to some extent to Pakistan which also has a common religious background and well-maintained relations. Thanks to Indonesia free and active (Bebas-Aktif) foreign policy which maintained a good balance the relations with China as well as India. China claims on nine-dash line in the South China Sea which overlap with Indonesia maritime territorial in Natuna Sea become the strong factor for Indonesia to maintained good relations with India, however, as Jokowi quite strong economic relations with China compared to India should be carefully maintained to avoid the chance of debt trap by China. the Chinese debt trap even hiddenly occurred within Belt and Road linked Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail project which the Government forced to tap the state budget to pay extra costs (Mcbenth, 2021). The higher economic dependence of Indonesia toward China in terms of trade, investment as well as debt may influence the quality of the relations with India either politically and strategically which potentially becomes a challenge for the two countries to improve their relations.

Second, the religious sentiment. As Indonesia and India respectively a major state for Muslims and Hindus as well as also own its minority especially Hindus and Muslims, the issue of communal conflict in each country will easily spread in the level of people to people which may come into national political issues. With the recent communal issues between Hindu and Muslim which happened under Modi government from the Northeast Delhi communal riots, Ayodhya dispute, revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir as well as Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 potentially reaches into Indonesian Muslim solidarity sense. This as an effect of borderless news and contact between people-to-people within hi-tech and globalized communication which attract solidarity from other Muslim majority countries including Indonesia. The people-to-people solidarity may also develop into national issues and foreign policy of the country which will strengthen solidary such as between Indonesia and Pakistan. Moreover, as India has a strong relationship with Israel which is contrary with Indonesia foreign

policy principle, may improve more complexity of the relations between the two countries which need to be maintained well.

Third, unequal economic treatment which becomes one of the direct challenges on practical action between the two countries in managing their relations. In this situation, President Jokowi took a lead in conveying to Prime Minister Modi for removing trade barriers especially the increase in import duty rates on Indonesia's CPO to India in several bilateral meetings. This effort is understandable as This issue came especially in the trade sector as India become the major state in importing Crude Palm Oil (CPO) from Indonesia. For Indonesia, as one of the world's biggest producers CPO, India is one of the important trade partners which is expected to have unhindered CPO export to Indian market. By the increase of tariffs on Indonesia's palm oil would significantly hit on Indonesia's palm oil exports as well as the Indian market. Fortunately, Indonesia's request to the Indian government consistently has lowered the import duty rate for Crude Palm Oil (CPO) products up to 10% which the tariff is effectively from 30 June 2021 until September 30, 2021. This move effectively strengthens the economic relations between the two countries which welcome positively by Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

The relations between Indonesia and India within the leadership of Jokowi and Modi have moved into deeper and closer relations which expanded into a more comprehensive field under the foundation of the 2018 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership within their seventy years of bilateral ties. Another progress with potential collaboration is the Maritime issue in terms of political and strategic cooperation. However, despite practical economic cooperation that has been initiated between Andaman Island of India and Aceh Province of Indonesia, more progress needs to be made especially regarding the economic regulations between the two authorities to improve economic cooperation. To improve a strong bilateral engagement, the two countries need to tackle potential challenges mainly from religious sentiment, non-reciprocal economic cooperation policy, and the China factor.

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