

Role Legitimation in Foreign Policy: The Case of Indonesia as an Emerging Power under Yudhoyono's Presidency (2004–2014)

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This article analyzes how foreign policymakers legitimize their enactment of role conceptions to play a more active role at the global level toward a potentially reluctant domestic audience. In order to reduce the likelihood of domestic role contestation while at the same time subscribe toward ego and alter expectations, it is necessary for policymakers to legitimize role conceptions and their enactments toward domestic audiences. This article develops the notion of role legitimation to capture this process and puts forward two mechanisms through which role legitimation is performed. The first mechanism is the revival of roles from a specific period in time that is deeply entrenched as an inalienable historical feature of the state. The second one is the reproduction of the international expectations into the domestic political discourse. To illustrate the argument, this article utilizes the case of Indonesia's foreign policy during Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's Presidency (2004–2014), particularly its engagement at G20, its objective to make the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) a global player, and its agenda to promote democracy and moderate Islam at the global level.

Introduction

Indonesia's assertiveness to play a greater role at the global level is puzzling. Under Suharto's authoritarian regime (1967–1998), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was institutionalized as the cornerstone of Indonesian foreign policy (Anwar 2010). Even in the post-authoritarian era (1998 onward), the regional level has always been the dominant level at which Indonesian foreign policymakers invest most resources. This condition has raised questions on how foreign policymakers legitimize Indonesia's aspiration to play a more active role at the global level, specifically under the leadership of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014).

To answer the question, this article analyzes Indonesia's assertive foreign policy through the application of role theory. To do so, I examine Indonesia's role in the post-authoritarian era, particularly during the Yudhoyono presidency. This article argues that Yudhoyono's government mobilized the *role legitimation* process to legitimize its aspirations of a global role in the minds of the domestic Indonesian

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audience. This legitimation process consisted of two mechanisms: reviving Indonesia's historical roles at the global level and reproducing international ("alter") expectations into the domestic political discourse.

Through documentary analysis supplemented with expert interviews with forty Indonesian policymakers and other domestic actors, this article identifies four main national role conceptions that were conceptualized and enacted by Yudhoyono's administration in order to play a greater role at the global level. These roles were (1) a voice for developing countries, (2) a regional leader, (3) an advocate of democracy, and (4) a bridge-builder. While the initial two roles were enacted as a part of historical self-identification, the latter two were constructed in response to international expectation emerging due to changes in Indonesia's domestic political landscape.

This study makes both conceptual and empirical contributions to role theory literature in international relations and Indonesian foreign policy as an emerging power. Conceptually, with the increasing call within role theory literature to unpack the state (Wehner and Thies 2014; Brummer and Thies 2015; Cantir and Kaarbo 2016), discussion regarding how policymakers legitimize their choices of role conceptions remains relatively unexplored. This article aims to fill the gap by developing the notion of role legitimation. Empirically, it analyzes Indonesia's greater engagement at the global level during the Yudhoyono presidency. Because of Indonesia's material capability, diplomatic posture, and how its foreign policymakers see their systemic position, much of the literature treats Indonesia under the Yudhoyono presidency as an emerging power in terms of the global order (Acharya 2014; Santikajaya 2016). However, less attention has been paid to explore how Yudhoyono's administration legitimized its expansive foreign policy to become an emerging power. To understand this, the article examines how Indonesia's aspirations of becoming a global player were translated into the enactment of multiple national role conceptions rooted in Indonesia's historical experience, as well as changing domestic political environment and international expectations.

This article, therefore, explores the different role conceptions espoused by Yudhoyono's administration and how it sought to enact and legitimize its national role conceptions. However, this article does not claim that the state-domestic audience interaction shaped foreign policy decisions, but rather aims to demonstrate that the domestic audience was greatly considered when developing legitimization strategies. Thus, this article opens the door to a broader consideration of the relationship between role theory and domestic audiences in international relations scholarship.

The article is structured as follows. The second section provides context on Indonesian foreign policy and domestic constraints on Yudhoyono's aspiring engagement at the global level. The third section develops the notion of role legitimation through which foreign policymakers legitimize role enactment toward potentially reluctant domestic audiences. The fourth section presents an empirical analysis of how these national role conceptions were mobilized in Indonesia's pursuit of greater role at the global level as well as how the foreign policymakers legitimized the enactment of such roles to the domestic audience.

Constraints on Yudhoyono's Global Aspirations

Before proceeding to theory, this section further elaborates how domestic issues restrained President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's ambitions for Indonesia to play a greater role at the global level. There is no doubt that under Yudhoyono's leadership, Indonesia sought and indeed obtained a growing international reputation as a rising or emerging power (Laksmiana 2011; Santikajaya 2016; Fitriani 2017). Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country in addition to being the largest country in Southeast Asia in terms of both economy and population. Since 2004, the Indonesian economy has shown significant and constant development, growing by around 5 percent each year. Besides its economic rise, under the Yudhoyono

presidency, Indonesia became a model of functioning democracy in the Islamic world and among developing countries (Piccone 2016). These achievements have successfully set up the conditions for Indonesia to enhance its international status.

However, at least two significant issues constrained Yudhoyono's pursuit of such an expansive foreign policy agenda at the global level, namely the domestic audience and institutional constraints. Many Indonesian civil society and academics argue that some of President Yudhoyono's commitments at the global level did not reflect the reality at home (Interviews 6, 11, 19, 39). For instance, through initiatives such as the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF), held since 2008, Yudhoyono's government appeared to have a strong commitment to act as an advocate for democracy on the global stage. This agenda, however, did not reflect the reality in Indonesia—Indonesian democracy is in fact quite vulnerable, and freedom of association is restricted. This can be seen in political dynasties, ever-strengthening oligarchies, and inadequate efforts to uphold human rights in Indonesia (Setiawan 2016).

Despite projecting itself as a democratic country, there are nevertheless significant restrictions within certain Indonesian provinces, such as Papua and West Papua, with regard to freedom of expression and freedom of the press (Karim 2020a). According to a SETARA Institute report (2017), Indonesia's two Papuan provinces were the country's worst in terms of human rights violations: 29 people were criminalized, 2,397 people were arrested during protests, 13 were killed, and 68 were shot. Hence, even after two decades, Indonesia's democracy is still a procedural rather than a liberal one.

Yudhoyono often stressed that the inclusion of Indonesia as a G-20 country was a form of global recognition of Indonesia's economic development. Many domestic actors, however, did not see it that way. The former head of the Indonesian Financial Services Authority (OJK), Muliawan D. Hadad, for example, revealed that G-20 meetings related to the global financial system did not provide many benefits to Indonesia's own financial industry. In his words, "There is not much progress made there; the meeting was only a debate that never ended between developed countries like the US and European countries; it only made me ache" (Sukmana 2015).

Despite being a member of the G20 and classified as a newly industrialized country with the seventh-largest economy in terms of GDP (PPP), Indonesia still faces many domestic issues that restrain its power projection. This has led to many Indonesian critics urging the government to focus on solving domestic problems rather than focusing on widening and deepening Indonesia's global role (Sukma 2012).

The second primary constraint of Yudhoyono's ambition for such expansive foreign policy stemmed from the institutionalization of ASEA as a cornerstone of Indonesian foreign policy (Anwar 1994). For almost thirty-two years under the authoritarian Suharto regime, Indonesia institutionalized foreign policy that prioritized the regional level. This was because as part of the first concentric circle of Indonesian foreign policy, the Indonesian government has always placed ASEAN as the central pillar of Indonesia's foreign policy by continuing to actively participate in ASEAN cooperation in the fields of politics, security, economy, social culture, and development (Anwar 1994). As a cornerstone of Indonesian foreign policy, ASEAN continues to be a top priority regardless of the administration in charge. Within this framework, Indonesia first and foremost claimed to be and was accepted as a regional power within Southeast Asia long before it self-identified as an aspiring global power. In fact, Indonesian foreign policy circles frame Indonesia's global position as "a regional power with global interests and concerns" (Natalegawa 2014).

Given the discrepancy between Indonesia's foreign policy agenda and its domestic reality, as well as the institutional fixation on ASEAN, President Yudhoyono was constrained to pursuing active engagement at the global level in a way that did not further invoke contestation over such aspirations. Moreover, policymakers needed

to continue Indonesia's institutionalized foreign policy emphasizing ASEAN as its priority within the ambition to be a global player.

To do so, Yudhoyono's government tried to legitimize its active engagement at the global level by considering the domestic audience and its institutionalized region-focused foreign policy. I propose a new analytical concept to analyze how governments resolve these constraints by developing the notion of role legitimation.

Role Legitimation and Foreign Policy

Within role theory scholarship in international relations, roles are often translated into role conceptions, defined as "an actor's perception of his or her position vis-a-vis others ... and the perception of the role expectations of others as signalled through language and action" (Breuning 2011, 8). Originally, Holsti (1970, 14) defined role conceptions as "policymakers' 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 assign a greater role to policymakers in crafting role conceptions.

Role theory literature has established two general processes through which roles are constructed, namely, ego understandings of the self (ego expectation) and other expectations of the self (alter expectation). In this work, the former captures the domestic factors as a source of role conceptions while the latter considers the international dimension as a source of role conceptions. Ego expectation could be seen as an articulation of state identity that needs to be translated into specific role conceptions. Although roles are not merely a function of state identity (McCourt 2011), they usually reflect the norms, values, ideologies, and beliefs that are currently dominant features of domestic political culture. Hence, changes in the domestic political environment within states may lead to the recalibration of the role conceptions to be enacted through the foreign policy agenda.

The expectation of others (alter) is essential in the process of role construction. Alter can be referred to tangible actors such as states or international organizations that are significant (significant other) as the primary socializing agent toward the self. It could also be more abstract terms (generalized other) such as democracy or human rights to which the self relates (Beneš and Harnisch 2015). Through this reading, the impetus for states to play a greater role at the global level could be the result of domestic political changes as well as the changing structure of the international system.

As observed by Cantir and Kaarbo (2016), since the incorporation of the sociological role theory approach in understanding states' behavior, the literature tends to black box the state as a unified actor because the assumption of the unitary of ego indeed creates a parsimonious understanding in applying role theory in international relations. However, in practice, this assumption cannot hold true, especially in democratized states where the making of role conceptions requires a process that involves not only policymakers but also other domestic actors. As a result, role conceptions articulated by policymakers are often contested domestically.

Arguably, policymakers benefit when the domestic audience accepts the role conception rather than contesting it. This makes the domestic audience agree on foreign policy that fits with the enactment of said role conception.¹ To do so, policymakers need to legitimize role conceptions and how they are to be enacted to the domestic audience. Surprisingly, the discussion on how policymakers legitimize their role conceptions and enactments to pursue expansive foreign policy remains relatively unexplored within role theory literature. This article suggests the notion of role legitimation to capture this process.

¹ I am thankful to one of the reviewers who gave this suggestion.

As suggested by [Goddard and Krebs \(2015, 7\)](#), the legitimation process is integral to how states define their national interests and identify crucial threats. The legitimation process rests upon four assumptions. First, the actors are both strategic and social actors where they are confined within a particular socio-environmental context. Second, legitimation works through providing meaning to political actions. Third, the legitimation process is continuously being contested. Fourth, the power of language emerges through contentious dialogue ([Goddard and Krebs 2015, 15](#)).

Building upon their works, I argue that the legitimation process is also integral to how states choose and enact their role conceptions. Role legitimation can be defined as a social process in which policymakers aim to strategically legitimize their enactment of role conceptions toward the domestic audience with the purpose of avoiding domestic contestation. The legitimation process is usually identified with actors' rhetoric ([Goddard 2006, 40](#)). In our discussion, the legitimation process is a way of giving meaning to a particular foreign policy agenda.

This article puts forward two mechanisms through which role legitimation is performed. The first mechanism is reviving the historical role from a specific period of time; the second is reproducing the alter expectation into domestic political discourse.

The first mechanism focuses on how historical experience affects the salience of roles. Policymakers might invoke certain specific historical experiences to legitimize their choices to enact certain role conceptions while at the same time warranting societal acceptance of those choices. The process to invoke this historical experience is called historical self-identification. [Harnisch \(2016\)](#) argues that the process of historical self-identification might be related to role salience. In other words, states have multiple roles, and each role may have different salience. As suggested by many social psychologists ([Stryker and Burke 2000](#)), roles are hierarchically organized based on the possibility of action being taken from each role. Arguably, roles that have been enacted for a long period of time are more likely to be at the top of the hierarchy. Consequently, they are more likely to be reenacted due to strong self-identification with past experience. Thus, invoking a historical role can legitimize foreign policymakers' efforts to pursue a specific objective since historical reference is a powerful tool widely used in political discourse ([Beneš and Harnisch 2015](#)).

Historical roles from a specific period of time may be attributed to the most common well-accepted understanding of states' role that is widely championed within the domestic audience. For example, the historical period could be the state's early formative years, which are often deeply entrenched as an inalienable part of the state's historical narrative, developed and maintained as a part of the nation-building process. Historical roles can reflect a collective sense of identity through which new generations are taught the parameters of conceivable visions for a desired national future ([Breuning 1997, 103](#)).

Enacting historical roles as part of foreign policy objectives is likely to reduce the chance of domestic contestation. This is because there is a preexisting collective understanding among the domestic audience that such historical roles should be revived. This strategy is arguably an effective legitimation strategy, especially given that historical roles can transcend the trivialities of everyday politics and also bring into being the coherent collective ([Goddard and Krebs 2015, 7](#)).

Furthermore, given that states' national role conceptions can be traced back to the early formative experiences of the state, which may shape the role conceptions in the following years to come ([Aras and Gorener 2010](#)), the state can make a more coherent sense of itself over time and thus create a sense of continuity of roles. This is in line with scholarship on ontological security, in which enacting historical roles can be regarded as a way to provide a state with a coherence self that fits with a broader biographical narrative of the state ([Subotic and Zarakol 2013](#)). In this regard, the sense of continuity surrounding role conceptions is necessary for reducing domestic contestation. This is because changes in role conception would provide an

opportunity for domestic actors to scrutinize a new role conception further, alleging it is not historically appropriate for the country. Thus, for emerging powers from the global south, framing a desire for a greater role at the global level—a role which may require significant mobilization of resources—as a part of continued enactment of historical roles may reduce the possibility of domestic contestation.

One should note that not all historical roles are able to serve contemporary objectives. Different periods of time have different ego and alter expectations, leading to distinct sets of objectives in relation to certain roles. In other words, the meaning of historical roles may need to be redefined to pursue new objectives that suit the current situation. The second mechanism through which role legitimation is performed captures the dynamics of how policymakers justify particular foreign policy agendas to accommodate international expectations by reproducing such expectations into domestic political discourse. Reproducing alter expectations can also be seen in what [Thies \(2012\)](#) calls the role location process, whereby states learn their appropriate roles in response to demands from other member states in the international order.

Foreign policymakers take alter expectations into account by reproducing those expectations as inherent social qualities within the state that need to be projected abroad. Moreover, foreign policymakers make a case for the importance of the projection of these qualities for the sake of enhancing their domestic political objectives. By doing so, the incorporation of alter expectations into role conception is less likely to be viewed as a state's response to foreign pressure, as this may create domestic contestation. Rather, foreign policymakers have a domestic imperative to incorporate alter expectations into national role conceptions.

By incorporating insight from norm diffusion literature, localization or domestic reproduction of alter expectations is another mechanism for foreign policymakers to develop norms that may otherwise be rejected by the domestic audience. As defined by [Acharya \(2004\)](#), localization is a process in which foreign ideas are translated into indigenous traditions and practices through strategic selection. In this case, reproducing alter expectations is a process in which policymakers localize the expectations as if they are inherently part of the domestic norm; they do so by making expectations more congruent with the domestic audience's prior beliefs and practices.

However, reproducing alter expectations is somewhat different to norm internalization. In norm internalization, a state may adapt to others' expectations, but they are not internalizing the norms expected by others ([Beasley and Kaarbo 2018](#)). In addition, unlike localization—which is considered as a voluntary process resulting in a more enduring change ([Acharya 2004](#))—reproducing alter expectations is a strategy for foreign policymakers to utilize international expectation for domestic political purposes.

Borrowing from [Moravcsik's \(2000\)](#) lock-in argument, foreign policymakers try to legitimize certain alter expectations by locking in the expectation as instrumental in keeping certain societal values that could be contested domestically. Thus, through enacting a specific role conception, a government aims to both fulfill alter expectation while at the same time utilizing the role conception as a strategic instrument in keeping contested values as inherent qualities within the domestic political environment.

The process of role legitimation is a response by policymakers in regard to changes in the foreign policy agenda. As suggested by [Hermann \(1990, 6\)](#), major foreign policy changes can be viewed in three forms: namely, change in means (program), ends (goal/problem), or overall orientation. In terms of source, [Gustavsson \(1999\)](#) suggests that foreign policy changes can be attributed to two structural changes, namely international and domestic factors. In our case, the role legitimation focuses on the foreign policy changes at the overall orientation level. Arguably, Indonesian foreign policy changes under Yudhoyono's administration involve

dramatic changes in the actor's international roles in multiple issue areas. Moreover, role legitimation focuses on how policymakers frame foreign policy changes that are driven by international expectations as if they actually are driven by domestic factors.

Role legitimation then concerns the mobilization of historical roles and reproduction of newly acquired roles into domestic political discourse as a mechanism to legitimize the choice of particular role conceptions by a specific administration. By doing so, through role legitimation foreign policy changes can be seen as (1) a continuation of previous role conceptions with different foreign policy objectives and (2) a projection of inherent social qualities within the state rather than a state response to international expectations.

These mechanisms can arguably explain why Yudhoyono's government preferred to enact four role conceptions for Indonesia: a voice for developing countries, a regional leader, an advocate of democracy, and an emerging power bridge-builder.

These four role conceptions are not unique to Indonesia. Literature has established that for emerging powers, enacting a regional leadership role is key to increasing a state's leverage at the global level (Laksmiana 2011; Santikajaya 2016). As argued by Nolte (2010, 890), "while traditional middle powers are first and foremost defined by their role in international politics, the new [emerging] middle powers are, first of all, regional powers and in addition to middle powers on a global scale." Emerging powers such as Indonesia tend to exercise their growing global ambition through taking on the role of a regional leader.

The role of a bridge-builder has also been established as one of the key roles in emerging power diplomacy (Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal 1993; Santikajaya 2016). The emergence of multipolarity with the relative decline of the United States, as well as the War on Terror and the resulting increased tension between Islam and the West, made the role of bridge-builder increasingly relevant for emerging powers. In enacting its role as a bridge-builder, Indonesia focused on its moderate views on global issues. Indonesia's role as a bridge-builder is mainly contextualized as a role to build a bridge between the Western world and Islamic civilization.

The role as a voice for developing countries reflects Indonesia's interest as a part of the developing world (Rüland 2017). This role fits with Indonesia's formative identity as a postcolonial state that distrusts the western powers (Wicaksana 2016, 751). It also reflects Indonesia's priority of domestic economic development.

The role as an advocate of democratic and human rights norms can be seen as an articulation of Indonesia's aspiration to become a norm entrepreneur in the international system. The process of democratization also attracted growing expectations from the international community, particularly from the Western countries, for Indonesia to be a role model for successful democratized developing countries. This provided an opportunity for Indonesia to craft new role conceptions that could be utilized to take a more active role at the global level.

Case Selections, Methods, and Data

This research draws extensively from document analysis and elite interviews. The article makes use of official documents of selected major speeches by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono at international fora; Indonesian Foreign Minister annual press statements for the years 2004 to 2014; and official Indonesian National Medium-Term Development Plans (RPJMN) from 2005 and 2010. Particularly this article analyzes fifty-nine foreign policy speeches made by Yudhoyono from May 20, 2005 to May 7, 2013.² These documents are analyzed through content analysis to unpack Indonesia's role conceptions during the Yudhoyono presidency. The documents are coded for common themes, ideas, and discourses that can represent a particular role

² For a complete list of foreign policy speeches, please see table A1 in the online appendix.

conception. For instance, words such as dialogue, moderate, interfaith, religious harmony, and consensus builder are categorized into the role of bridge-builder, while notions such as development agenda, solidarity, and social equity are coded into the voice for developing countries.

Moreover, interviews with forty Indonesian policymakers and other foreign policy actors, as well as domestic actors such as members of parliament and nongovernmental organizations, were conducted to supplement the document analysis.³ The interviews enable us to examine the internal contestation of the roles within the state and thus unpack the rhetoric-performance gap regarding the enactment of Indonesia's role conceptions.

Through analyzing speeches and official documents supplemented with expert interviews, this article suggests four main national role conceptions for Indonesia under Yudhoyono's administration. These four main national role conceptions are a voice for developing countries, a regional leader, an advocate of democracy, and a bridge-builder. While the previous two roles are enacted as a part of historical self-identification, the latter two are constructed in response to the international expectation due to the changes in Indonesia's domestic political landscape.

To illustrate how foreign policymakers legitimize their expansive foreign policy agenda, this article examines four cases of Indonesia's greater engagement at the global levels. These are Indonesia's engagement at G20, its objective to make ASEAN a global player, its agenda to promote democracy, and its aim to promote moderate Islam. These four case studies represent Yudhoyono's signature foreign policy elements in supporting Indonesia's becoming a global player. The first two case studies elucidate how foreign policy initiatives and agenda are framed as a way to enact historical roles (mechanism one). The latter two cases illuminate how policymakers justify specific foreign policy agendas by reproducing international expectations into domestic political discourse (mechanism two).

Mechanism One: Invoking Historical Roles

A Regional Leader and Voice for Developing Countries as Indonesia's Historical Roles

The underlying ideals and visions of President Yudhoyono's foreign policy agenda to play a greater role in the global order can be traced back to the legacies of the early independence era (post-1945). It is not surprising that Yudhoyono's foreign policymakers always frame Indonesia's greater global role by invoking the historical idea of resuming Indonesia's rightful position, as the country did in the early days of independence.

From the beginning of its early formative experience under the Sukarno presidency (1945–1967), Indonesia's role as a global player was conducted through the enactment of its role as a voice for developing countries against colonialism. This motivation stems from the pursuit of an independent and active foreign policy and to be free of foreign power influences and domination, as laid down by Indonesia's first Vice President, Mohammad Hatta. Sukarno and Hatta embarked upon Indonesia's first effort to take on this role by hosting and organizing the Asian-African Conference, also known as the Bandung Conference, held in Bandung in 1955. Organizing the conference was not without significant hurdles and barriers, given that the world was divided between United States and Soviet spheres of influence (Wicaksana 2016, 751). Although the conference was seen as an anti-Western gathering, the conference was the hallmark for the articulation of the norm of human rights and universal organization, as well as the advancement of a straightforward idea throughout Asia and Africa: the idea of national independence.

³For a complete list of interviews, please see table A2 in the online appendix.

Sukarno's role enactment of Indonesia as a voice for developing countries in the then-bipolar world gradually shifted to become more revisionist and revolutionary. While the revisionist tendency in articulating its role as a voice for developing countries could be attributed to Sukarno's own revolutionary ideas, it was also influenced by the increased influence of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) as well as the escalation of domestic grievances against Sukarno's leadership. These two factors enabled foreign policymakers under Sukarno to adopt a more revisionist approach in order to legitimize and ensure societal acceptance of the regime (Mortimer 2006). However, the enactment of this role conception did not receive positive responses by either international audiences or domestic political actors. Not only did Sukarno attack Western powers, but he also attacked the United Nations (UN), which he increasingly came to view as merely a tool for Western imperialism (Bunnell 1966). His radical revisionist view ended up with Indonesia being shunned by most countries at the time. It comes as no surprise that Sukarno's interpretation of Indonesia's role conception was highly contested by domestic political actors, especially from the military and Islamic groups, and further complicated by Sukarno's failed economic policies. Inflation reached 650 percent by 1965, and Indonesia's budget deficit was greater than the country's entire revenue (Palmier 1970).

Eventually, Sukarno's regime collapsed with a push from the Indonesian military. The regime change from Sukarno to Suharto was marked by the extermination of communist-leaning political actors and hundreds of thousands of civilians across the country during the years of 1965–1967. Indonesia's national role conception changed radically in the aftermath of these bloody regime changes. Despite the failure of this role enactment at the time, Sukarno's articulation of a greater role as a voice for developing countries has remained a part of the Indonesian historical narrative. This is because it was the first main role enacted during the crucial part of Indonesia's nation-building process in the early postindependence era.

While Sukarno's regime incepted the role of a voice for developing countries as an integral part of Indonesia's historical self-identification, it was under Suharto's authoritarian regime (1967–1998) that the role of the regional leader became viewed as Indonesia's historical role. The key characteristic of Suharto's leadership was his inward-looking approach, focusing more on domestic political stability and economic development. To achieve these two domestic goals, Suharto's authoritarian regime pursued a national role conception of Indonesia as a regional leader, which had not been fully enacted by his predecessor.

Enacting a role as a regional leader was an important part of Indonesia's strategy to create a stable regional environment and to win back the trust of its neighbors. To do so, in the early years of Suharto's regime, Indonesia played a significant role in the creation of ASEAN before further developing ASEAN as a regional security architecture, as well as deepening its regional integration ambition in the years to come (Thompson 2017).

Indonesia's aspiring role as a regional leader was also highly influenced by the changing of the regional strategic environment, specifically US intention to disengage from Vietnam in the late 1960s and Sino-US rapprochement in the early 1970s (Thompson 2017). The regional strategic uncertainty became a threat to Suharto's idea of national resilience. National resilience can be defined as an inward-looking security concept that focuses on establishing orderly, peaceful, and stable conditions from any subversive elements and infiltration from either within and without (Koga 2014).

In Suharto's view, ASEAN was an extension of Indonesia's pursuit of national resilience. It is no wonder that during Suharto's leadership, Indonesia's role conception as a regional leader was enacted by taking a greater role in the institutional building of ASEAN, such as setting the agenda for its code of conduct and consultation mechanisms, as well as the regional scope for the member states through the first Bali Concord in 1976. The Bali Concord strengthened ASEAN's political

solidarity by “promoting harmonization of views, coordinating positions and, where possible or desirable, taking common action” (ASEAN 1976). The summit made Indonesia a key player in Southeast Asia. Until today, Indonesia appears to feel more comfortable playing a greater role at the regional level than at the international level. It was only after the Asian economic crisis in 1997, which led to the collapse of Suharto’s authoritarian regime, that for a short of a period of time, Indonesia lost its regional leadership status in ASEAN.

Suharto’s regime conceptualized and enacted the role of Indonesia as a regional leader as a response to the need for regional resilience. For Suharto, national resilience would in turn provide internal security for his own regime. This role conception was articulated through Indonesia’s leadership in making Southeast Asia a communist-free region, which was in line with US interest in the region. At the same time, Indonesia also led the endeavor to solidify noninterference in Southeast Asia to keep external powers out of the region. The role of a regional leader in Southeast Asia demonstrated Indonesia’s desire for a stable regional environment to support its internal security objective: maintaining its fragile territorial integrity, threatened by separatist movements across the archipelago. Hence, the role as a regional leader also provided Indonesia under Suharto with an arena to articulate its active foreign policy while at the same time serving its domestic security concerns.

Ultimately, Indonesia’s role as a voice for developing countries became deeply entrenched in Indonesia’s historical narrative because it was the first main role enacted during the crucial part of Indonesia’s nation-building process in the early postindependence era. Besides its role as a voice for developing countries, its role as a regional leader was also institutionalized for three decades under Suharto’s regime.

In his first foreign policy speech in 2005, President Yudhoyono reiterated the importance of these two national role conceptions in foreign policy by stating that:

“We will stay our course with ASEAN as the cornerstone of our foreign policy. And our heart is always with the developing world, to which we belong. These are things that define who we are, and what we do in the community of nations.” (Yudhoyono 2005)

Under Yudhoyono’s presidency, these two national role conceptions were recalibrated to establish Indonesia as an emerging power. The next sections elaborate on how these historical roles were mobilized to legitimize Indonesia’s global aspiration under Yudhoyono.

The Case of Indonesia in the G-20

One specific Yudhoyono foreign policy agenda in which the role as a voice for developing countries was deployed as a legitimation strategy was through Indonesia’s active involvement in the G-20. The inclusion of Indonesia as a member of the G20 since 2008 has been framed as an opportunity for Indonesia to further energize its role enactment as a voice for developing countries. This can be seen from all G20 summits since 2008, with Indonesian officials constantly positioning Indonesia as a voice for developing countries (Maulia 2009).

To substantiate the commitment, Yudhoyono’s government proposed consultative meetings in Jakarta with nonmembers of the G20, mainly from developing countries, so that both members and nonmembers of the G20 could have the opportunity to discuss various issues (Hermawan and Habir 2015). In each subsequent G20 head of state summits, Indonesia has continued to voice the need for developing countries to gain access to finance in difficult economic conditions, including through liquidity facilities and support programs from international institutions such as the World Bank. To support this, Yudhoyono’s government initiated several initiatives in the G20 that focus on developing countries. For instance, Indonesia

was the initiator of the General Expenditure Support Fund (GSF), which helps to provide liquidity funds from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank for developing countries, particularly least developed countries (Hermawan et al. 2011).

A year after its inclusion as a member of the G20, in 2009, Yudhoyono also initiated the establishment of the ASEAN G20 contact group, aimed at coordinating the ASEAN interest in G20 summits. The contact group consists of the ASEAN chair, the ASEAN secretary-general, and Indonesia. Indonesia finally convinced other G20 members to allow the ASEAN chair to be invited to G20 summits. These initiatives can be interpreted as a way to link Indonesia's global ambition as part of the G20 with its role as a voice for other developing countries, particularly those outside the G20.

Through enacting the role as a voice for developing countries, Yudhoyono's government legitimized its global foreign policy for the domestic audience. While Indonesian foreign policymakers perceive Indonesia's membership of the G20 as an achievement that has boosted Indonesia's global position, many domestic actors—particularly Yudhoyono's political opponents—believed that the inclusion of Indonesia in the forum of the world's twenty largest economies will not directly benefit the economy of Indonesia, due to the G20's nature as a policy coordination forum (Interviews 6, 11, 12). For instance, current President Joko Widodo, who was elected in 2014 replacing ten years of Yudhoyono's presidency, was initially reportedly not sure whether he would attend his first G20 summit in Brisbane (Kuwado 2014). This shows that the new president, known for having little interest in foreign affairs and focusing more on domestic issues, viewed the forum as having little real benefit for Indonesia. Even one top cabinet minister from Widodo's administration has called for Indonesia to opt out of G20 membership because of the perceived high financial cost (Saragih 2014). However, populist Widodo was eventually convinced that G20 is an essential forum for continuing to enact Indonesia's role as a voice for developing countries (Interviews 8, 9, 24). In this regard, invoking Indonesia's role as the voice for developing countries has legitimized Indonesia's greater role at the global level and neutralized potential role contestation from the domestic audience. Furthermore, it can also lock in Indonesia's greater engagement as emerging power from foreign policy changes that could potentially be made by future administrations.

The Case of Indonesia in ASEAN

Throughout Yudhoyono's presidency, the aspiration to become a regional leader was central to many statements made by critical actors within the Indonesian foreign policy establishment. As mentioned, the role of a regional leader can be seen as a continuation of the role institutionalized by Suharto's authoritarian regime. Institutional fixation toward ASEAN has placed ASEAN as a priority within the Indonesian foreign policy agenda. The 1997–1998 Asian financial crisis, which led to the collapse of the Suharto regime, decreased the strategic and leadership role of Indonesia in Southeast Asia (Rattanasevee 2014). Hence, the main objective of Indonesian foreign policy in the post-Suharto era has been to tackle one problem, namely the waning of Indonesia's regional leadership role. However, under Yudhoyono, Indonesia did not aim to reenact its role as a regional leader in the region per se but rather further used its leadership role in the region to pursue a greater role at the international level.

During the Suharto era, Indonesia's aspiring regional leadership role was primarily driven by the motivation to provide internal security by creating regional resilience through regional cooperation. Under Yudhoyono, the same role aspiration was primarily driven by his ambition to play a greater role at the global level. In fact, there has been a paradigm shift in how policymakers see ASEAN as a regional organization (Interviews 1, 7, 10). Moreover, during Suharto's regime,

Indonesia tried to keep external powers out of ASEAN affairs. During Yudhoyono's tenure, Indonesia tended to perceive ASEAN as a platform for it to exercise its mediator role in the broader East Asia region by taking an active role in shaping regional architecture as well as ensuring the centrality of ASEAN in responding to various initiatives to include external powers within said architecture (Interviews 7, 9). Rather than keeping external powers out of ASEAN regional architecture, Indonesia pushed the agenda of intensifying institutional engagement with external major powers through strategic cooperation such as the East Asia Summit (EAS).

In Yudhoyono's second term, Indonesia further used its regional leadership role to pursue emerging middle power status at the global level. Indonesia has increased its leverage in several important forums. Under Indonesia's chairmanship in 2011, ASEAN adopted the Bali Concord III, which transformed the organization into an international actor. As stated by Natalegawa (2011), the change in the direction of ASEAN to become a global actor is in fact a reflection of Indonesia's own aspiration to be a regional power with global interests. To do so, Indonesia took ASEAN cooperation to a higher level through the Bali Concord III adopted in 2011. The Bali Concord III enhances ASEAN's engagement as an international actor in the UN framework and substantiates its representation in the G20 as well as other international bodies and processes, including Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), IMF, World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO).

Given its historical identification as a regional leader, Indonesian foreign policy-makers can legitimize its aspiration to play a greater global role through enhancing ASEAN as a regional organization that actively tackles global issues. As stated in the theoretical section, even though historical roles might be revived and continued, the enactment of such roles will not necessarily have the same objective. In this case, Yudhoyono's administration was able to mobilize a historical role to fit with its current foreign policy agenda. It enacts the role conception in a way that does not follow how it was originally conceived. Indonesia's role as a regional leader was defined differently due to expectations both from ego and alter, particularly with regard to the need for Indonesia to enhance its global role.

By doing this, the Indonesian Foreign Ministry does not need to entirely reject the notion of ASEAN as the cornerstone of Indonesian foreign policy institutionalized for almost three decades by the Suharto regime. Instead, its success in strengthening ASEAN's role in East Asia's regional architecture as well as its capability as a mediator in the context of great power rivalry shows how Indonesia's aspiration for a more active role at the global level can be achieved through the enactment of the role as a regional leader.

Mechanism Two: Reproducing Expectations as Inherent Social Qualities

The International Expectation as a Democratic Advocate and Bridge-BUILDER

While Indonesia's roles as a voice for developing countries and a regional leader were incepted during Sukarno's and Suharto's leaderships, its roles as an advocate of democracy and a bridge-builder have been driven by changes in the domestic political environment, namely democratization. The process of democratization started soon after the collapse of Suharto's authoritarian regime in 1998 and provided an opportunity for post-authoritarian governments to craft role conceptions to play a greater role at the global level in line with Indonesia's domestic political environment and international expectations.

Indeed, during the first six years of democratization, Indonesia faced several challenges stemming from problems of political legitimacy at the domestic level and pressure from international community (He 2008). However, with the election of Yudhoyono in 2004, Indonesian policymakers started to design a more coherent

national role conception that utilized its successful democratization process while also fulfilling the expectations of the international community (Interviews 1, 4).

Changes in Indonesia's domestic political environment have also led to increased expectations on Indonesia's global role. In the post-authoritarian period, Indonesia's foreign policy has been heavily influenced by the incentive to fulfill the expectations of the international community. This can be explained by the need for Indonesia to restore its position at the international level after its economic and political crisis (Karim 2020b). When Yudhoyono took office in 2004, Indonesia was praised by the international community for its success in managing democratic consolidation and avoiding further social and political tension.

This expectation has been integrated into Indonesia's foreign policy priority agenda. Indonesia's National Mid-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) for 2004–2009 stated “strengthening and expanding the national identity as a democratic country in the international society” as the main target in the area of foreign policy (RPJMN 2005). In operationalizing the target, in his first term, President Yudhoyono focused on Indonesia's role as a democracy promoter at the regional level by advocating the democratic norm in the regional architecture as well as building an institutional mechanism to protect human rights (Karim 2017). In his second term, Yudhoyono wanted to see Indonesia as an advocate of democracy at the global level. The RPJMN for 2009–2014 establishes “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 to “promote a positive image of Indonesia through the advancement of democracy and human rights” as a key foreign policy target (RPJMN 2010).

Given that Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim country, its democratic consolidation is regarded as a living model of how Islam can be compatible with democracy. Moreover, the increased tension between the Islamic and the Western worlds, characterized by the rise of Islamic radicalism and epitomized by the War on Terror, has led to international demands on Indonesia to take a greater role in bridging what is perceived to be a civilizational gap. In response, the role of bridge-builder has been pursued since Yudhoyono's first term. Yudhoyono's first term Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda publicly confirmed Indonesia's commitment to be a bridge-builder at the global level in his speech before the UN General Assembly (Wirajuda 2005). Marty Natalegawa, Indonesian foreign minister during the second term of Yudhoyono's presidency, further committed that Indonesia would enhance its role as a bridge-builder beyond the UN to include other multilateral fora in which Indonesia is actively involved by bridging different visions through Indonesia's moderate stance (Natalegawa 2014). Given the above discussion, it is evident that Indonesian foreign policymakers have utilized its unique secular democratic Muslim identity as an asset to play roles as both an advocate of democracy and a bridge-builder in order to meet both ego and alter expectations. The next sections elaborate on how reproducing expectations as inherent social qualities have provided Indonesian foreign policymakers with opportunities to articulate role conceptions that fit with foreign policy objectives.

The Case of Indonesia's Democracy Promotion Agenda

Another distinguished landmark of Yudhoyono's foreign policy agenda was its efforts to scale up its democracy promotion project to the Asia Pacific by initiating the BDF and establishing the Institute for Peace and Democracy (IPD) (Sukma 2011). The forum has become a platform for the exchange of ideas among intellectuals and practitioners from various countries on democratic issues (Rosyidin 2020). Meanwhile, the institute aims to provide training for practitioners in managing the implementation of democracy (elections, political parties, etc.) and carry out activities together with other countries to strengthen the democratic implementation.

These efforts to disseminate the Indonesian experience of democratic consolidation are expected to encourage other Asian countries to uphold democratic values within their own national settings and local values.

Indonesia's role as an advocate of democracy can also be seen as a way for it to play a greater role at the global level by advocating alternative normative values and providing alternative ideational sources to generate an influence on the global stage (Karim 2017). Although Indonesia's role as an advocate of democracy cannot yet be seen as successful, since many ASEAN countries are currently experiencing backslides into authoritarianism, promoting democracy has indeed shown Indonesia's aspiration to play a major role through providing ideational resources given its constraints in projecting its material capabilities at the global level.

In addition to the criticism of the lack of impact toward democratization within the region, many critics find Indonesia's democratic projection worthless since it has had no impact on the condition of democracy nor the human rights agenda back home (Interviews 5, 11, 17). Unlike its roles as a voice for developing countries and regional leader, which have more salience due to its strong self-identification with past experience, its role as an advocate of democracy is rather a recent role conception enacted due to international expectations toward Indonesia. Consequently, it is prone to domestic contestation. As argued by one Indonesian parliamentarian:

“The Bali Democracy Forum is only a project to boost the image of the government in the international community. It fails to improve life nationwide because the government seems to only focus on international affairs in such an event instead of promoting our national interests” (Eva Kusuma Sundari in [The Jakarta Post 2012](#)).

Despite these criticisms, foreign policymakers can work to legitimize Indonesia's democracy promotion agenda by reproducing international expectations into domestic political discourse. The role of advocate of democracy has been reproduced in the domestic political discourse by foreign policymakers as a strategy to lock in Indonesia's democratic trajectory. This is to make sure that the process of democratization in Indonesia does not stop and the country does not go back to its authoritarian past (Interviews 2, 13, 22). Moreover, in the early days of Yudhoyono's presidency, Indonesia's democracy indeed was quite vulnerable. Even now, after one decade of democratic governance, Indonesia's democracy is still a procedural democracy rather than a liberal one (Aspinall and Mietzner 2010). State policy discrimination against religious minorities remains prevalent, violence by the majority toward minority groups has increased, and significant crackdowns have been implemented against civil society.

Given that democratic values have not been fully internalized in Indonesia's political culture, there remains the possibility that Indonesia could return to authoritarianism. Indonesia's enactment of the role as an advocate of democracy and human rights can also be seen as a way to enhance the government's domestic political objectives, namely to improve Indonesia's fragile democracy. By doing so, the incorporation of international expectations into role conception is less likely to be seen as a process in which the state responds to the pressure from other foreign actors, which might create domestic contestation. Instead, foreign policymakers have a domestic imperative to incorporate such expectations into role conception.

For this reason, much of civil society and many parliamentarians have supported the enactment of this role conception (Interviews 11, 12). Furthermore, many democracy activists and civil society representatives see that Indonesia's role as an advocate of democracy in the international community has created moral consequences for policymakers in the country in terms of safeguarding Indonesia's own democracy (Interviews 17, 18, 19). The legitimizing strategy has thus been relatively successful in avoiding domestic contestation, particularly from civil society.

The Case of Indonesia's Promotion of Moderate Islam

Besides promoting democracy, the role of bridge-builder was enacted as one of Yudhoyono's aspiring global roles (Santikajaya 2016). In terms of its foreign policy agenda, the enactment of this role is manifested in Indonesia's growing significant role in mediating conflict in the Muslim world. For instance, it hosted the Sunni–Shiite Conference in the city of Bogor to help foster dialogue and peace between the two factions of Islam in Iraq (Greenlees 2007). Since 2004, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with several national Islamic organizations, has actively promoted Indonesia's moderate Islamic identity by organizing interfaith dialogue in bilateral and multilateral settings (Grzywacz 2020).

Yudhoyono's role enactment has deviated from conventional Indonesian foreign policy agenda. Since its independence in 1945, Indonesia has never located Islam as its state identity. During Sukarno's presidency (1945–1967), Islam played only a minor role in the shaping of Indonesian foreign policy, as preferred to exercise third world solidarity and gave no room for Islamic identity to be projected abroad. The Suharto regime continued this tradition for more than thirty-two years, presenting Indonesia as a secular country with limited interest in issues surrounding the Islamic world.

However, under Yudhoyono's presidency, Indonesia's Islamic identity is heavily used to present the country in many international fora. During this period, the President introduced the concept of "Moderate Islam" as a representation of Indonesian Islam at the international level (Umar 2016). Since 2004, this proposed state identity has been translated into a foreign policy agenda in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has chosen the theme "Empowering the moderates" as one of the top priority agendas in Indonesian public diplomacy.

To establish itself as a country that can take on the role of bridge-builder between Western and Islamic civilizations, Yudhoyono justified the enactment of the role by invoking Indonesia's status as the world's largest Muslim country, which makes Indonesia a natural bridge-builder. In a 2009 speech, Yudhoyono said:

"[T]hroughout our history, the cultures of three Oriental, Islamic and Western civilizations have found a home in Indonesia, we have been given a new role. We have come to be regarded as the natural bridge between the Western world on the one hand and the Islamic and Oriental worlds on the other" (Yudhoyono 2009).

Although Indonesia became the country with the largest Muslim population in the world long before Yudhoyono became president, it was under his leadership that this became an attribute used by Indonesia in its foreign policy agenda. Indonesia has exploited this attribute and repositioned itself as a Muslim-majority country while at the same time adhering to secular democratic principles as the core of western civilization. By doing so, Indonesian foreign policymakers are able to legitimize their choice to enact a role as bridge-builder by invoking this inherent quality to capture the change in the international order given the increasing tension between the Islamic and Western worlds.

Many conservative Muslim elites argue that Indonesia's role as a moderate Muslim bridge-builder is a cover-up for Yudhoyono's support for the US-led Global War on Terror to combat "terrorism" in Southeast Asia (Hidayatullah 2015). To counter such narrative, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs involved moderate Muslim organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah to participate in promoting the moderation of Indonesia through various diplomatic activities.

Furthermore, the enactment of the role as a bridge-builder also serves as a political objective. During the War on Terror, there was also increasing radicalism within Indonesia's Muslim community that undermined Indonesia's secular and moderate Islamic values. Thus there was a need for policymakers to deal with a radicalism that challenges Indonesia's moderate status at the domestic level (Sukma 2004). As

revealed in interviews with high ranking Indonesian foreign policymakers, Indonesia's enactment of the role as an advocate of democracy and bridge-builder through the articulation of democratic and moderate Muslim values was to empower moderate Islamic groups by providing them with the chance to engage in public diplomacy (Interviews 1, 4). By enacting the role as bridge-builder, foreign policymakers aimed to make Indonesia's moderate Muslim identity as a mainstream discourse within Indonesia's domestic political environment and prevent mainstream domestic political actors from succumbing into radical Islamic discourse. By doing this, many domestic political elites, particularly from secular and moderate conservative backgrounds, ended up supporting such an agenda.

Conclusion

This article has shown that role theory can provide a more nuanced understanding of the role preferences of states to play a greater role at the global level. The articulation of states' behaviors to pursue a greater role at the global level as emerging powers may vary, given that they are manifested through the enactment of multiple role conceptions. By looking at the construction of role conceptions, we can analyze different trajectories of state in their pursuit of greater role at the global level.

In the case of Indonesia, its aspiration for a greater role at the global level is manifested through the enactment of four main role conceptions: namely a voice for developing countries, a regional leader, an advocate of democracy, and a bridge-builder. Although Indonesia is not the only emerging power to enact these roles, these roles are more likely to be enacted in Indonesia than other roles because of the country's historical experience and the changes in expectations from international actors toward Indonesia's role in the global order (alter expectations).

This article has also demonstrated how roles as a regional leader and a voice for developing countries have been an integral part of Indonesia's historical self-identification, while its roles as an advocate of democracy and a bridge-builder have been influenced by recent changes in the domestic context of Indonesian foreign policy as well as the growing international expectations toward Indonesia in the post-authoritarian era. Through the analysis of four of Yudhoyono's signature foreign policy agendas, this article has shown how the two mechanisms of role legitimation have been mobilized by Indonesian foreign policymakers to legitimize Indonesia's role preferences to play a more active role as an emerging power. These mechanisms were reviving historical roles and reproducing alter expectations into domestic political discourse.

Moreover, our case studies illustrate that the domestic audience will always remain key audiences for the state in enacting role conceptions, particularly in democracies. This article contributes to this research agenda by developing the notion of role legitimation to understand how policymakers legitimize role conceptions to their domestic audience in light of potential domestic contestations. Beyond the case of Indonesia, we expect that our argument, especially regarding legitimizing strategies carried out by policymakers, would help to explain other cases.

Supplementary Information

Supplementary information is available at the *Foreign Policy Analysis* data archive.

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