

Role conflict in International Relations: the case of Indonesia's regional and global engagements

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Abstract

In recent years, scholars have devoted increased attention to the notion of roles in foreign policy analysis and international relations. However, role theory literature has so far less frequently explored re-conceptualising role conflict. To further understand the concept of role conflict, this article aims to unpacks the notion of international audiences. To do so, this article advances the application of role conflict by arguing the importance of notion of vertical role conflict that considers the different levels of international audiences, specifically regionally and globally. Building upon the symbolic interactionist conceptualisation of social interaction as a stage, regional and global levels can be seen as arenas for role-playing but with different expectations to fulfil. The article proposes two types of vertical role conflict, stemming from the difference between the regional and global levels. These theoretical claims will be elucidated through the study of Indonesia's regional and global engagement in two areas: human rights and trade.

Keywords

human rights, Indonesian foreign policy, role conflict, role theory, trade policy

Introduction

Role theory has a long tradition in the field of sociology. It concerns on how individuals behave based on their respective social identities and situation.¹ In the literature of international relations (IR), role theory, which was introduced by KJ Holsti in the 1970s, has been widely used by students of foreign policy analysis to analyse the

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foreign policy behaviour of states in the international system.² Role theory provides rich conceptual tools to describe specific foreign policy phenomena while also engaging and incorporating different levels of analysis and supplementing other theoretical approaches.³

As one of the earliest key concepts of role theory literature developed in sociology,⁴ the notion of role conflict has been mobilised to understand how states behave in international politics. The concept provides a nuanced understanding of how role conception can be hindered by the enactment of other roles. Much IR literature focuses on role conflict within the nexus between ego-driven and alter-driven role conceptions, as well as inter-role conflict, in which ego-driven states pursue two or more roles entailing contradictory behaviours.⁵ Recent studies have tried to unpack how domestic audiences understand the notion of role conflict.⁶ For instance, Kaarbo and Cantir show how role conflict between two expectations can be traced back within a domestic political process.⁷ They further make a distinction between conflict occurring as a result of two roles pursued by one state, and conflict between the role preferences of domestic actors and role expectations of international actors.⁸

Despite the growing literature in understanding role conflict, most studies seem to overlook international audiences. This article advances the conceptualisation of role conflict by arguing the importance of considering the different levels of international audiences, specifically regionally and globally. This allows us to see the regional and global levels as role-playing stages with different audience expectations to fulfil. This article proposes two types of role conflict, stemming from differences between the regional and global levels. The first type appears when a role manifests differently at regional and global levels, with foreign policy elites assigning different meanings to the same role being enacted at different levels. We can refer to this as 'reconciled role conflict'. The second type of role conflict appears where one particular role is highly performed and treated as a part of state identity in some situations, yet is disregarded in others. We can call this type of conflict 'unreconciled role conflict',⁹ because of the lack of effort by government elites to reduce the tension. I elucidate these theoretical claims through the study of Indonesia's growing interest in playing a more significant regional and global role in the post-authoritarian era, specifically during the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014). Building upon interviews with forty Indonesian policymakers and supported with analysis of official documents, this article discusses Indonesia's regional and global engagement in human rights as well as trade issues. With regard to human rights, this article focuses on Indonesia's aspiration for greater engagement in democracy and human rights promotion, despite the lack of full acceptance of democratic norms. On trade issues, the article aims to analyse the puzzling case of Indonesia's greater support for trade liberalisation despite its domestic audience's preference for a protectionist approach.

This article presents three sections. In the next section, I develop and refine the notion of international audiences to further unpack the concept of role conflict. The third section elucidates these theoretical claims through the study of Indonesia's regional and global engagement in human rights and trade issues. The last section provides the contribution of our analysis towards a broader understanding of role conflict.

Role conflict and regional-global nexus

Much sociological literature, especially within the tradition of organisational role theory, concerns the study of role conflict.¹⁰ In this field, role conflict occurs in conditions where others do not hold a consensus over expectations for a certain person's behaviour.¹¹ In a straightforward definition, role conflict can be defined as 'the concurrent appearance of two or more incompatible expectations for the behaviour of a person'.¹² One of the fundamental factors that may cause role conflict is ambiguity, in which there is a lack of necessary information regarding expectations and methods for fulfilling the role.¹³

Thus in applying role theory in IR scholarship, it is assumed that states may have multiple roles to play in the international system. The value of the role depends on how well-suited the social setting is to the actor.¹⁴ Since distinct roles can coexist, there is a possibility that they might contradict each other. A contradiction among the roles that a state holds will lead to role conflict.

Previous literature has tried to conceptualise role conflict. Harnisch suggests four different causes of role conflict. Role conflict is likely to appear if: (1) role expectations from others are vague or inconsistent; (2) there is a lack of resources to fulfil the role; (3) states face diverging norms and expectations; and (4) there is an incompatibility between the interests of the state and its external expectations in international relations.¹⁵ Building on this, conventional literature has established that two types of conflict may emerge from the enactment of multiple roles: inter-role (conflict between roles) and intra-role conflict (conflict within roles). Inter-role conflict may occur when states find themselves in two or more competing positions, as the contradictory role enactment means that one role reduces the other's salience.¹⁶ On the other hand, intra-role conflict can occur when domestic and international audiences contest a particular enactment of a role.¹⁷ While international audiences such as great powers and institutions may have the ability to influence the particular roles that states enact, in fact domestic audiences have more influence.¹⁸

Through the concept of role contestation, role theory provides an analytical tool to understand the reluctance of foreign policy elites to enact a particular national role conception in response to disagreement among domestic actors. By analysing inter-role and intra-role conflict, role theory provides a better understanding of how the projection of a particular identity through enacting a specific role is hindered by conflicts with other roles. Thus, role conflict can also be seen as contestation on how a state's identity should be presented.¹⁹

To substantiate this claim, we need to conceptually distinguish between roles and identities in IR. Drawing several insights from identity theory,²⁰ identity can be conceptualised as 'a set of meaning that is tied to and sustains the self as an individual'.²¹ A role, however, can be the basis for identity, because the role is a morphological component of the social structure that allows identity to emerge.²² Furthermore, roles are an important part of identity formation because the core of identity is rooted in 'the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance'.²³ Given this condition, as a part of maintaining identities, agents also need to maintain roles. This means that in order to have a particular identity, one will act to fulfil the expectations of the role, coordinating and

negotiating interaction with role partners and manipulating the resources for which the role has responsibility.²⁴ Through this understanding, Indonesia's role conceptions reflect the dominant identity that the state currently embraces and wants to maintain.

However, one should note that in enacting roles, a state's experience is shaped by their relationships with other actors, groups with which they identify, networks with which they engage, and institutions to which they belong. Thus, while actors learn to play their roles during interactions, the structure of an international system acts as 'facilitators of and constraints on entrance into and departures from networks of interpersonal relationships'.²⁵ Hence, understanding the roles of a state should also take into account the importance of the context in which the roles are enacted.

Through this understanding, then, roles are expectations attached to positions in networks of relationships, while identities are essentially internalised role expectations.²⁶ In this conceptualisation, actors have a general understanding of their existing social position but try to make the performance of the role unique to themselves. Given that social positions and roles only loosely prescribe appropriate behaviour, actors have more flexibility to individualise the performance of their role in order to express their own identity.

The conceptual distinction between role and identity is helpful in analysing the seeming incoherence between roles taken by the state and its deep-rooted identity. For instance, roles being enacted in the realm of trade may not have the same function as roles enacted in security or human rights. Likewise, roles enacted at regional levels might be different from roles enacted globally.

In the case of Indonesia, the notion of role conflict provides a nuanced understanding on how the enactment of role conceptions might be hindered by the enactment of other roles, particularly between recently-enacted role conceptions and historical ones.²⁷ For instance, Indonesia's post-authoritarian role conception as an advocate of democracy and human rights may be in conflict with its role as a bridge-builder. This is because the latter role might be operationalised through solidarity with other developing countries that may not adhere to the norms of democracy and human rights.²⁸ However, this role conflict does not necessarily change Indonesia's identity as a developing country. Instead, it shows negotiation and contestation within domestic Indonesian discourse on how the government positions itself internationally. Thus, the seemingly ambivalent Indonesian foreign policy agenda of democracy promotion can be understood through the notion of role conflict.

However, examining role conflict by looking solely at how states find themselves in two or more competing positions (inter-role conflict), or when domestic and international audiences contest a particular enactment of a role (intra-role conflict), might only tell half the story. To better understand role conflict, we need to focus our attention on the sources of expectation. Here, role conflict can be contextualised in terms of the audience. Thies argues that the audience is a crucial yet often neglected aspect of role theory.²⁹ The audience is important in establishing the consensual reality for the role, providing cues to guide role enactment, engaging in social reinforcement of role enactment, and contributing to the maintenance of the role over time. Moreover, according to Thies, the international audience is important in determining suitable roles through interactions.³⁰

To further understand this contextualisation, we need to unpack the notion of international audiences. Thus far, within IR role theory scholarship, examinations of international

audiences and role conflict are situated within the literature on international institutions, which can be broadly defined as a 'general pattern or categorisation of activity' and 'a particular human-constructed arrangement, formally or informally organised'.³¹

Given that roles are primarily generated by a state's membership in particular institutions, role conflict may appear where 'the actor exists in two different institutions that simultaneously demand that it express contradictory behaviour'.³² Harnisch further clarifies such institutions by distinguishing them as tangible actors. States or international organisations are seen as the leading socialising agents to the self (significant others) while more abstract terms such as democracy or human rights are seen as generalised others.³³

I advance the conceptualisation of role conflict within IR scholarship by arguing that it should also consider the different levels of international audiences; in this case, regional and global. This is because conflict not only occurs due to different expectations between domestic and international institutions, but also due to incongruent role enactment at the regional and global levels. The former type is horizontal role conflict, while the latter is vertical role conflict. Previous studies mainly focus on conceptualisation of horizontal role conflict. The need to substantiate vertical role conflict is essential given that the state behaves differently at these different levels. Additionally, for emerging middle powers, the difference between regional and global are significant, in comparison with superpowers which have wide-ranging interests and massive capabilities, making the distinction between regional and global less compelling.³⁴

The source of vertical role conflict due to regional and global difference can be attributed to three conditions. First, there are different material constraints between the levels, preventing the state from incorporating alter expectations into their role conceptualisation. Second, there is the structural difference between regional order and global order, which structurally affects the expectations and patterns of behaviour of states. Third, there is a difference in the degree of norm diffusion, which affects the degree of performance of roles.

Literature on regional order has established that the end of the Cold War created space for states to actively participate and become willing to play more significant roles in the international system.³⁵ As suggested by Hurrell, due to proximity and limitations of power projection, either through normative or material capabilities, states are more likely to maintain influence in their respective regional orders.³⁶ As a result, states are more likely to engage in interactions that shape their roles preferences regionally than globally. This incentivises states to treat the region as an arena for a more significant interaction, in which international expectations are more likely to be incorporated into role conceptions.

Secondly, structural differences between regional and global orders may also lead to disparities in how the state responds to the expectations of the audience. This may be due to different actors that dominate the regional and global orders.³⁷ For instance, the proliferation and strengthening of regional institutions after the Cold War has provided a new arena for small- and medium-sized states to play greater roles at the regional level. While globalisation has created a more interdependent world, the difference in the arrangement of regional institutions may create a different set of social settings for states to enact roles. This could also be attributed to the different levels of institutionalisation

that occur regionally and globally. Thus, the behaviour of states may be also vary at different levels due to the different expectations.

The third condition is the difference in norm diffusion between regional and global levels. It has been widely studied that the degree of norm diffusion and the way states respond at the global level may differ with the response at the regional level.³⁸ The norms being adhered to may also differ. This is because a region is not only defined in terms of geographic contiguity but also in terms of collective identities or the normative underpinnings internalised within the region. For instance, within regional orders in the Global South, the notion of sovereignty, and especially its norm of non-interference, has become the most critical aspect of the interaction of states. On the contrary, at the global level, there is softening of the traditional understanding of sovereignty that has led to the normalisation of international intervention.³⁹ These differences can lead to different expectations being placed upon a state.

The regional level can also be a dynamic arena for contesting, resisting, localising and accepting norms that are widely held at the global level.⁴⁰ This is particularly true for regional orders outside of the Global North, where liberal norms are often contested before being accepted and diffused. If a region has a strong presence of regional institutions that also serve in mediating roles between global norm entrepreneurs, these institutions can also provide a different set of social interactions for the states in the region.⁴¹ In addition, regional advocacy networks are emerging that might more successful in emulating particular norms than at the global level. This is due to an institutional density of regional advocacy that has an impact on the effectiveness of networks in diffusing norms.⁴² This, in turn, affects the degree to which states react and incorporate international expectations.

Drawing upon the discussion above, there are two types of vertical role conflicts stemming from differences between the regional and global levels. The first type of conflict – reconciled role conflict – appears when a particular role manifests differently at different levels. In this case, foreign policymakers face different audiences who give distinct meanings to the roles. As a result, the discourse underpinning such roles might be the same, but the performance and foreign policy implemented to enact them differ.

The second type of role conflict – unreconciled role conflict – appears where a particular role is highly-performed at one level by foreign policy actors but is disregarded at the other level. Thus, the role seems to be treated as an inherent part of the state identity at one level while also a potential threat to the country's core interest at the other. Here, the discourse underpinning such roles does not change and foreign policy actors do not try to give different meanings to the roles based on different audiences; the role is simply abandoned where it is not relevant or helpful.

This article does not assert that the regional-global nexus can solely be interpreted through the notion of role conflict. To be sure, the notion of norm contestation, which focuses on degrees of norm cohesion and contestatory challenges directed towards particular norms, could explain the seemingly different policies taken by Indonesia at the regional and global levels.⁴³ Likewise, insights on domestic versus international pressures in affecting different policy outcomes by the state could also explain what occurs. However, this article argues that the notion of role conflict differs significantly from both norm contestation and domestic versus international pressures.⁴⁴

First, role conflict focuses more on the role a state plays rather than normative beliefs. Hence, a state may very well accept a particular norm yet performs ambivalent roles at the regional and global levels. The conflicting roles a state play are not merely driven by resistance to norms but rather due to different audiences. This provides a more nuanced understanding of why states may appear ambivalent, because it situates the regional and global levels as stages for role performance.

Second, different degrees of domestic and international pressures may offer a convincing answer for a state's ambivalent regional and global roles. However, the notion of role conflict enables us to further discuss why, despite the domestic and international pressures, a state still enacts such roles. The notion of role conflict incorporates both domestic and international pressures by situating them as factors in driving how a state gives different meanings to particular roles.

Role conflict and Indonesia's regional and global engagements

To substantiate the theoretical discussion above, this article examines Indonesia's growing interest to play a more significant both regionally and globally in the post-authoritarian era, specifically during the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014). To achieve such an objective, Yudhoyono enacted four overarching role conceptions: regional leader, a voice for developing countries, an advocate of democracy and liberalism, and bridge-builder.⁴⁵ While the former two roles were enacted as a part of historical self-identification, the latter two were constructed in response to international expectations. For this study, we specifically focus on the role conflict in the enactment of the latter two roles. These are driven more by international expectations rather than historical self-identification. Arguably, these roles are not highly internalised as a part of Indonesia's state identity, so analysing them would enable us to examine how Yudhoyono's government enacted conflicting roles due to different international audiences it aimed to engage.

This article focuses on two areas of engagements: (1) democracy and human rights, and (2) trade issues. In terms of democracy and human rights, this article focuses on Yudhoyono's aspiration to have greater engagement in democracy and human rights promotion, despite a lack of full acceptance of the democratic norm. In terms of trade, the article aims to analyse the puzzling case of Indonesia's greater support for trade liberalisation despite its domestic audience's preference for protectionism.

The cases highlight areas in which Indonesia has been seen to, and continues to be expected to, play a more significant role outside of its previous foreign policy agenda, which focused on maintaining regional stability for domestic economic development. However, despite Indonesia's greater involvement in these issues, the role enactments as well as the factors driving them might vary across cases. Therefore, the cases chosen provide an interesting comparison of the differences and similarities in Indonesia's engagement in several areas of global governance.

To operationalise the regional audience, this article focuses on Asia-Pacific, with a particular focus on ASEAN as a key arena in which Indonesia enact its international roles. At the global level, this article focuses on the United Nations Human Rights

Council (UN HRC) as well as the DDA negotiations at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as cases of the global audience. As the primary international collaborative mechanism responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights, UN HRC serves as a venue in which non-Western powers accept or contest the liberal view of promoting and protecting human rights, while DDA represents a platform where the roles of emerging countries have more impact on negotiation outcomes.

Indonesia's engagement in human rights governance

With its success in dealing with an uneasy democratisation process between 1998 and 2004, after the collapse of the authoritarian Suharto regime, Indonesia has been celebrated by the international community as a role model for newly democratised countries. The process of democratisation has encouraged Indonesia to engage deeply with various international human rights regimes.⁴⁶ Domestically, Indonesia undertook several measures in the late 1990s and early 2000s to strengthen its human rights institutions and develop national capacity for the promotion and protection of human rights, as outlined in the National Human Rights Action Plan 1998–2003 and 2004–2009. During that time, Indonesia also ratified several international treaties on human rights, including six out of seven major human rights covenants. Currently, Indonesia is a party to eight core international human rights instruments, two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and all of the core rights conventions of the International Labour Organization.⁴⁷

To reflect its growing interest in active engagement in human rights issues, Yudhoyono's government decided to restructure the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by creating a new directorate specialising in human rights and humanitarian issues.⁴⁸ Furthermore, Indonesia's greater involvement in human rights issues can also be seen in its efforts to create a regional mechanism within ASEAN to promote and protect human rights.

The analysis of Indonesia's role in human rights governance illustrates how the regional-global nexus affects the extent to which the state enacts its role as an advocate of democracy and human rights. At the regional level, this role has been mobilised to reflect international expectations of Indonesia as a new democratic state.⁴⁹ However, the challenges in enacting this at the regional level primarily come from the inter-role conflict between being an advocate of democracy but also a bridge-builder. Indonesia's leadership in ASEAN requires it not be seen as a country that pushes its agenda on other ASEAN member states. Hence, Indonesia cannot strongly push its agenda in promoting democracy and human rights norms within ASEAN's institutional mechanisms.⁵⁰

Indonesia's enactment of the role of democracy advocate at the regional level raises several interesting points. First, the regional enactment of this role as an advocate of human rights can be seen as the most successful substantiation of Indonesia's pursuit of regional leadership.⁵¹ Second, Indonesia's enactment of this role is in fact operationalised through its other role as bridge-builder. This arguably may stem from Indonesia's lack of a definitive model of democracy to promote in the region.⁵² For Indonesian policymakers, advocating for democracy and human rights provides the conditions for democratic learning and socialisation among countries that have democratic aspirations or are undergoing the process. Hence, this fits with the state's role of bridge-builder.

At the global level, Indonesia's role of advocate of democracy has not yet been fully enacted, particularly in regard to Indonesia's involvement in the UN Human Rights Council.⁵³ The role is indeed feasible in terms of Indonesia's normative acceptance of human rights as well as its willingness to ratify human rights instruments. However, in the case of strengthening global human rights governance to protect human rights, Indonesia is constrained from undertaking further advocacy. This challenge comes from the internationalisation of a domestic issue that threatens Indonesia's territorial integrity: the independence movement in West Papua.

Despite projecting itself as a democratic country, Indonesia places significant restrictions on Papua and West Papua Provinces, especially with regard to freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Alleged human rights violations in Papua have been held up internationally by both Indonesian and foreign actors who want to widen international support for West Papuan independence.⁵⁴ The movement has particularly gained the attention of Melanesian states, such as Fiji, Vanuatu, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau and Solomon Islands. Through several Pacific Island countries, the issue of Papuan independence has been brought to several international platforms, leading to Indonesia viewing that global human rights governance could be used as a platform for the internationalisation of the Papuan issue.

Indonesia's seemingly inconsistent actions in advocating for democratic values has less to do with the degree of contestation toward human rights and democratic norm, and more to do with the different audiences which the Indonesian government faces. At the regional level, ASEAN members states generally do not bring up the issue of human rights abuses, while at the global level, some Pacific island nations as well as international civil society utilise UN mechanisms as a way of raising human rights abuses in Papua. This means that strengthening global mechanisms on human rights protection could result in harm to Indonesia's territorial integrity, creating role conflict in Indonesia's role as a regional and global advocate of democracy.

This dissonance can also be seen in Indonesia's enactment of its bridge-builder role. The role is heavily asserted both regionally and globally, such as how Indonesia has framed this role as the country's 'natural role' in official speeches and foreign policy documents. For instance, in a 2019 speech, then-President Yudhoyono said:

[T]hroughout our history, the cultures of the 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.⁵⁵

However, the tone and rhetoric that the state conveys varies from the regional level to the global level. Regionally, Indonesia's role as bridge-builder can be seen in its success in establishing and maintaining the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF), which stresses the importance of equal constructive dialogue, mutual respect, and understanding to enhance cooperation and promote democracy in the region. The BDF also provides Indonesia with a platform to further enact its leadership and its role as an advocate of democracy in the region. The inclusivity of the BDF arguably reflects Indonesia's aspirations as a bridge-builder. Rather than treating democracy promotion as a tool for domestic political

change, Indonesia sees promoting democracy as providing a platform for countries with different domestic political environments to better understand their progress and development as well as challenges faced.⁵⁶

Globally, Indonesia's enactment of the bridge-builder role also forms part of its endeavour to fulfil alter-expectations from the international community. As suggested in an interview with the Director of the Directorate for Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues:

Indonesia's democratisation has provided an opportunity for Indonesia to bridge a growing divide among developing and developed countries regarding the condition of global human rights issues. Many Western powers such as the US and EU expect Indonesia to convey their message to developing countries on the need for them to address their human rights issues. While at the same time, many diplomats from developing countries with a substantial human rights issue expect Indonesia to lobby Western powers to stop naming and shaming strategy and focus on helping in enhancing state capacity in developing world.⁵⁷

Given this position, Indonesia's aspiring role as a bridge-builder can be understood as a factor that drives the country's inclination towards shielding abusive foreign regimes at the global level, especially those who are members of ASEAN. Indonesia's bridge-builder role has mainly been translated into effort to build strategic partnerships with all major countries and the majority of the world's emerging powers. In the case of its relations with developing countries, the need to become a bridge-builder means that Indonesia must be seen as friend rather than foe. This sometimes leads Indonesia's diplomatic engagement to be directed to supporting developing countries' positions, no matter what those positions are. Hence Indonesia tends to reject the naming and shaming approach, preferring to use dialogue and capacity building in dealing with alleged state-performed gross human rights violations. Indonesian policymakers believe that naming and shaming would only shift the targeted countries away from the process to engage them to change their policy. As a result, the enactment of the role of bridge-builder has been expressed through defending abusive foreign regimes from international criticism. Overall, the enactment of the role stems from both Indonesia's willingness to capitalise on international expectations while not triggering domestic contestation.

Indonesia has long been a defender of Myanmar at the global level. This can be explained by Indonesia's aspirations to be a bridge-builder between non-democracies and the international community.⁵⁸ Instead of criticising Myanmar through the mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council or other UN-related institutions, Indonesia has historically preferred to work within regional frameworks to influence Naypyidaw to actively protect the human rights of its citizens and gradually make the transition towards democracy.

Thus Indonesia's role as a bridge-builder at the global level seems to challenge Western criticism towards developing countries' human rights conditions. This might be attributed to the need for Indonesia to convince Myanmar as a fellow ASEAN member state that it genuinely wants to help the process of democratisation. For Indonesian policymakers, the global level may not be the most suitable place to support Myanmar's transition, primarily because the Western approach places Myanmar as the guilty party,

Table 1. Indonesia’s roles in democracy and human rights issues.

Overarching role conception	Human rights issues	
	Regional	Global
An advocate of democracy and human rights	Framed as a reflection of Indonesia’s democratic identity	Constrained due to domestic concern related to the Papuan issue
Bridge-builder	Heavily enacted by stressing the importance of constructive dialogue, mutual respect and understanding to promote democracy.	Heavily enacted through the defence of abusive regimes.

Source: Author.

alienating the Myanmar government. Indonesia prefers to actively promote democracy and human rights towards Myanmar through regional and bilateral relations.⁵⁹

This ambivalence in how Indonesia projects its bridge-builder role can be attributed to the different audiences to which it performs. Regional audiences – consisting of both democracies and non-democracies – are stasified with Indonesia’s bridge-builder role, as it focuses on constructing platforms for mutual understanding on democracy.⁶⁰ At the global level, however, audiences have different expectations towards Indonesia’s role as a bridge-builder. Western countries have high expectations that Indonesia should push the human rights agenda within other developing countries. However, developing countries expect Indonesia to moderate the West’s tendency to name and shame when dealing with human rights allegations. Given its self-identification as a developing country, Indonesia is naturally more inclined toward meeting the expectations of other developing countries. As a result, to the West it appears that Indonesia is defending abusive regimes from international scrutiny. We can summarise Indonesia’s role enactments concerning democracy and human rights issues as follows (see Table 1).

From the discussion above, we can see the reconciled and unreconciled role conflicts at play in Indonesia. The enactment of role of democracy and human rights advocate at the regional and global levels reflects the unreconciled type of role conflict. However, in the case of the country’s role as bridge-builder, Indonesian elites can reinterpret the role to fit with the audience it aims to engage. Reconciliation thus occurs by creating different meanings for roles at different levels.

Indonesia’s engagement in trade governance

The dynamics of how Indonesia enacts its role conceptions can also be seen in trade issues. Arguably, Indonesia’s role as an advocate of democracy and human rights can be linked to Indonesia’s auxiliary role as an advocate of economic liberalisation. This is because the neoliberal reform agenda formed part of Indonesia’s state transformation in the post-authoritarian period, leading to a greater urge to internationalise Indonesia’s markets.⁶¹ Indonesia’s reform created two opposite forces within the country’s trade

discourse concerning further regional economic integration projects: the liberalisers, mainly economic technocrats, who championed greater regional integration and openness, versus the nationalists, including politicians, small and medium enterprises, and farmers and labourers unions, who preferred a protectionist approach and were sceptical towards the notion of regional integration and economic openness.⁶²

For many Indonesian economic technocrats, the neoliberal reform agenda aimed to break up Suharto's crony capitalists and interest groups that were holding the country back from being competitive in the global market.⁶³ Many of Yudhoyono's cabinet ministers were part of a technocratic group that pushed for more liberalisation within the Indonesian economy.

In the economic realm, Yudhoyono's inclination towards a neo-liberal agenda within Indonesia's overarching role as an advocate of democracy has been incorporated into the country's aspiration for leadership in ASEAN. This can be seen through Indonesia's advocacy to reduce protectionist policies that hinder free trade, as well as through strengthening economic integration among ASEAN member states. Hence, Yudhoyono's administration used regional economic integration projects as a platform to advance its foreign policy agenda. In speeches detailing his foreign trade policy, Yudhoyono frequently reiterated Indonesia's willingness to remove protectionist policies in order to increase liberalisation. In his speech before the opening ceremony of the APEC CEO Summit in 2013, Yudhoyono stated that:

We all need to do our part to prevent protectionist policies and continue on our path of trade liberalisation, in ways that uplift the well-being of all our citizens. We must also ensure that our trade relations are not only strong but balanced.⁶⁴

Indonesia's democratic transition has been mobilised in policies to create a new conceptualisation of Indonesia's position that is more supportive of trade liberalisation. However, Yudhoyono's attempts to enact the role of democratic advocate through being an auxiliary advocate of economic liberalisation failed to gain support from domestic audiences, other than from a small number of technocrats in the inner circle of his administration.⁶⁵ In fact, while the role of advocate of democracy is the direct result of Indonesia's transition from authoritarianism to democracy, the role of advocate of liberalisation has been hindered precisely because of the democratisation process. This is because Indonesia's domestic audience has become increasingly suspicious of liberalisation, which was widely blamed for the 1998–99 collapse of the Indonesian economy and plunged millions of Indonesians into poverty.⁶⁶

Thus, at the regional level, Indonesia is reluctant to lead the regional economic integration project as a part of the liberalisation agenda. Instead of enacting the role of advocate of liberalisation, Indonesia took on the role of bridge-builder. The objective of both roles is to place ASEAN as an institutional hub for evolving regional economic architecture through the mega-trade project of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). As stated in an interview with a senior Indonesian trade negotiator in the RCEP:

Actually, we were not ready to build a bigger regional architecture yet. At that time, we prefer to consolidate internally with ASEAN members who still have many problems with the efforts of economic integration. However, external pressure with the intensity of China and Japan to

be the front guard in regionalisation in the region could make Southeast Asia just a sphere of influence. For that, we can convince other ASEAN Ministers to agree to initiate the RCEP initiative by inviting all ASEAN FTA [Free Trade Agreement] partners to join in the formation of a regional mega block where ASEAN became its hub.⁶⁷

In practice, the objective of realising the RCEP is problematic due to the difficult positions faced by Indonesian trade negotiations within the RCEP negotiation process. As stated by a senior Indonesian negotiator, the difficulty in situating Indonesia's negotiating position lies in the three different interests and positions that negotiators should enhance: first, Indonesia's domestic interests; second, Indonesia's position as a leader within ASEAN; and third, Indonesia's position as part of the ASEAN group. Given these three positions, rather than pushing the agenda of its domestic market, which leans towards protectionism, Indonesia's role in the negotiations tended to be as a bridging force to make sure that the RCEP negotiation process could be concluded. The role of bridge-builder was thus manifested within two positions: Indonesia as a part of ASEAN, and Indonesia as the representative of ASEAN towards other ASEAN partners within RCEP negotiations. The former was enacted to provide cohesiveness and coherence within ASEAN, while the latter was enacted to ensure that ASEAN can deliver the mega-trade project and become its hub.

In order to enact its role of bridge-builder, Indonesia needed to offer concessions that were likely to be resisted by domestic interests. Given that existing ASEAN FTAs with partner countries have already resulted in the elimination of over 80% of tariffs, in order to make the RCEP attractive to other ASEAN partners, Indonesia needed to offer more concessions than had already been offered by the ASEAN plus one FTA. As a minimum, the RCEP aimed to eliminate 95% of tariffs.⁶⁸ The main challenge, however, was the different tariff classifications for tariff concessions by the ASEAN+6 countries, which needed to be harmonised. This is due to the fact that ASEAN is not a customs union and does not have a common external tariff. In order to bridge the parties' many different interests, Indonesia needed to show that it was willing to open its market to be on a par with other ASEAN members, achieving common concessions that would require all ASEAN member countries to have the same schedules. As Indonesia's liberalisation status is still low compared with other ASEAN countries, and among the ASEAN countries, Singapore would face no issues in achieving a high-level region-wide FTA, in order to make a common concession, some ASEAN countries need to reduce the tariffs across many lines. As revealed by one senior Indonesian negotiator on the RCEP:

If Indonesia's position is below the average position of liberalisation of other ASEAN members, it is a hassle. How can Indonesia bridge if that is the case? Sometimes we are in a tricky situation to do a positioning that represents Indonesia's domestic interests because on average they ask Indonesia to be in a very low position in terms of market liberalisation compare with the positions of ASEAN countries. Therefore, sometimes we like to be scolded by ministers if we cannot make our position clear which reflects the interests of domestic economic actors.⁶⁹

Although the RCEP was the key platform for Yudhoyono's government to enact the role of bridge-builder, Indonesia's domestic political discourse was still heavily dominated by a protectionist approach. Many people remained quite suspicious of the ongoing

RCEP negotiations. As a result, Indonesian policymakers needed to face the challenges on two fronts. First, Indonesia needed to perform its role as a bridge-builder to find a common goal that bridged the diverging interests within ASEAN. Second, Indonesia also needed to deal with the growing domestic contestation towards its regional leadership role within the RCEP negotiations.

In terms of global trade governance, Indonesia is relatively more confident in enacting the dual roles of bridge-builder and advocate of liberalisation. This enactment was arguably a result of the internalisation of alter expectations for the Yudhoyono government to play a greater role at the global level. This could be seen in Indonesia's increasing role as a bridge-builder between developing countries and developed countries during the Doha Round. Moreover, under Yudhoyono's presidency, Indonesia continuously voiced its support toward trade liberalisation agenda, including in completing the Doha Round.⁷⁰

However, the enactment of these two roles may not actually relate to Indonesia's need to advance its domestic economic interests. This is because many of Indonesia's international trade policies under Yudhoyono were mobilised to fulfil foreign policy agendas. Orders to become more involved in trade diplomacy appear to have come primarily from the highest ranks, including Yudhotong himself, such as after formal state visits. Hence, instructions from the President were often the basis of the start of trade diplomacy during the Yudhoyono era. Given Yudhoyono's bridge-builder aspirations, foreign trade policies were often mobilised to fulfil this role conception. Indonesia's position and posture both in terms of politics, the size of the country, as well as the large population, economic capacity, meant that Indonesia's role was taken into account and trusted by the negotiating partners.

At the Doha Round, Indonesia was seen as an honest broker, particularly when Indonesia became the Chairman of the 9th World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference in 2013. In this forum, Indonesia did not strive for its own domestic economic interests. For example, palm oil products are very strategic and significant to Indonesia's economy, with Indonesia acting as a global supplier. Yet at the forum, Yudhoyono's government decided not to fight to include palm oil as an environmentally friendly product.⁷¹ Instead, they supported the finalisation of Bali Package as the outcome of the conference, even though the Package limited agriculture subsidies, which are an important mechanism for Indonesia in maintaining the welfare of its farmers. Such limitations did not reflect the interest of majority of Indonesian farmers and peasants. Despite this, through Yudhoyono's personal diplomacy along with diplomatic efforts by his then-trade minister, Gita Wirjawan, Indonesia convinced other developing countries to accept the Bali Package deal. With all the WTO member states finally agreed on the Bali Package and signing it on 7th December 2013, the Yudhoyono Government claimed to be the driving force to overcome the Doha Round deadlock, restoring public confidence in the multilateral trading system.

The enactment of Indonesia's bridge-builder and trade liberalisation roles at the global level are relatively uncontested, aided by the fact that commitments from being a bridge-builder are not necessarily translated into domestic trade policies. During Yudhoyono's presidency, while rhetorically calling for liberalisation and the completion of Doha Round at the global level, at home Indonesia's domestic trade policies

Table 2. Indonesia’s roles in the trade issues.

Overarching role conception	Trade issues	
	Regional	Global
An advocate of liberalisation	Contested by domestic audience	The role is highly enacted and linked to the role as a bridge-builder
Bridge-builder	Part of the geostrategic interest in putting ASEAN central in the evolving East Asia regional order	An honest broker to push the liberalisation agenda

Source: Author.

were increasingly demonstrating protectionism. This can be seen in multiple laws and regulations passed during Yudhoyono’s administration that were actually in violation of WTO agreements. Examples include Law no. 4/2009 on Mineral and Coal Mining, which forbids the export of unprocessed minerals and coal, and Law no. 3/2014 on Industry, which allows the government to increase the use of domestic products or components to empower domestic industries.

Conventional domestic and international pressures cannot fully explain Indonesia’s engagement in trade governance during the Yudhoyono era. Indonesia’s role as a bridge-builder required Indonesia to change its domestic trade policy, resulting in domestic contestation. These pressures should have led to resistance towards Indonesia from taking such roles, yet this was not the case. Indonesia took on the roles but altered the meanings depending on which audience was more relevant. This shows how important the audience is in regard to Indonesia’s enactment of the role of bridge-builder. For Indonesia, the regional audience matters to maintain the centrality of ASEAN in the evolving East Asian regional architecture. The bridge-builder role was framed as a geopolitical necessity despite abundant domestic contestation. The very same role was also framed as a way for Indonesia to act as global moderator between divided camps during the Doha Round.

The discussion above shows that the contested role of liberalisation advocate was severely hindered because of the high level of domestic contestation over Indonesia’s enactment of such a role. Yet at the same time, Indonesia’s rhetoric on advocating liberalisation at the global level was relatively uncontested by domestic audience. This is a clear example of unreconciled vertical role conflict, in which Indonesia abandoned the role of liberalisation advocate at the regional level while still successfully performing the very same role at the global level.

Meanwhile, Indonesia’s bridge-builder role enactment illustrates the ability of Indonesia’s policymakers in reconciling the meaning of the role. At the regional level, the role of bridge-building was framed as part of the geostrategic interest in putting ASEAN at the centre of the evolving East Asia regional order. Globally, meanwhile, the role was translated into Indonesia’s aspiration to push for liberalisation as a way to maintain the relevance and increase the success of the Doha Round.

Given the above analysis, we can sum up the pattern of Indonesia’s role enactments concerning trade issues as follows (see Table 2).

Conclusion

In this article, I have discussed Indonesia's role enactments at the regional and global levels. I have shown that the regional-global nexus has an important influence on the enactment of Indonesia's role conceptions. There is a clear pattern to Indonesia's enactment of its role conceptions across human rights and trade issues. In these two areas of investigation, we can see that there is a process of role conflict in the enactment of the country's two primary role conceptions.

As shown in the empirical analysis above, Indonesia's role enactments are contested, creating a seemingly ambivalent foreign policy agenda. The conceptualisation of role conflict developed in this article allows the further scrutiny of Indonesia's enactment of its role conceptions. As suggested above, role conflict can also occur due to the regional-global nexus. This condition arises from the different expectations of the international audience. In relation to the regional-global nexus, there are two types of role conflict: the first appears when one particular role manifests differently at the regional and global levels, while the second occurs when one particular role is highly performed and seemingly treated as a part of state identity at one level but is contested and disregarded at another.

Reconciled vertical role conflict leads to a rhetoric-performance gap, in which the role being enacted might be the same, but the performance differs from one level to another. This type of conflict can be seen in Indonesia's bridge-builder role at regional and global levels. At the regional level, Indonesia's enactment is directed towards its shared democratic experiences with both democratic and non-democratic countries. The role of bridge builder is connected to Indonesia's role as a democratic advocate. However, at the global level, the role of bridge-builder is enacted in a way that shields abusive foreign regimes from international scrutiny.

Meanwhile, unreconciled vertical role conflict can be seen in Indonesia's enactment of the role of advocate for democracy and human rights. At the regional level, this is seen as a manifestation of Indonesia's new identity as a democratic state. However, at the global level, enactment is relatively absent. The same goes for Indonesia's role enactment as an advocate of liberalisation in trade governance. At the regional level, the role has not been enacted consistently due to domestic contestation. Although so far Indonesia has, to some extent, supported the regional integration project through the AEC and RCEP, many technical ministries and agencies continue to resist such projects. Hence, the enactment of the liberalisation advocate role under the Yudhoyono government was not present within domestic trade governance. Yet at the global level, Yudhoyono's administration enacted the role through supporting the success of the Doha Round. This shows that the Indonesia's role enactment of advocate of liberalisation is highly performed at a global level but remains regionally contested.

Indonesia's role conflicts reflect the tension between foreign policy elites' beliefs regarding what Indonesia should promote, and the domestic reality that Indonesia faces implementing related policies. However, this situation can in fact led to role conflict being both a constraint and a leverage for Indonesia's foreign policy efficacy. To some external actors, primarily in the west, such role conflict makes Indonesia's claims to be a promoter of democracy and liberalisation appear fatuous at best. However, the situation

may actually enable Indonesia to pay increased attention to specific highly-important contexts in how it conducts its foreign policy. Additionally, this role conflict is inevitable due to Indonesia's increasing desire to play a greater global role. The country's positioning within regional realms might ultimately need to be recast when it encounters different audiences at the global level.

This article has made substantive contributions to literature on role theory and Indonesian foreign policy. The rest of this conclusion seeks to highlight several routes forward by identifying limitations and suggesting future research in several fields of international relations, particularly foreign policy analysis.

The most obvious limitation of this article is empirical. Due to its single case study, this article cannot establish the generalisability of the framework. I hope that further research can be conducted so that we can see the extent to which the theoretical framework fits with other case studies, especially other non-Western emerging middle powers. Further comparative research on the behaviour of non-Western middle powers through the lens of role theory might provide us with insights on varieties of roles enacted by them at regional and global levels.

Further research on the dynamic interactions of states in international organisations and during negotiations could also benefit from the application of role theory. As suggested by the analysis of Indonesia's role in the UN Human Rights Council and WTO, international organisations can be seen as highly relevant arenas for role enactment. However, this article does not scrutinise this notion due to its focus on Indonesia. This is a lacuna to which the role theory could contribute. Thus, further conceptualisation of international organisations as arenas for role-playing could provide us with a more nuanced understanding of how international organisations shape the behaviour of states and *vice versa*. For instance, with non-Western powers establishing more international organisations, the incorporation of organisational role theory would arguably unpack the institution building process of new international organisations.

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