

# The Future of Relations between Indonesia and the Middle East Region in Terms of Geopolitics as Indonesia's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan

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## Abstract:

### Purpose:

This research examines the future relations between Indonesia and the middle east region regarding geopolitics as Indonesia's 2020-2024 strategic plan.

### Methodology:

This study is qualitative. This research is a live case study that is used on a legal issue that has not ended or is currently happening, as well as conducting an extensive review of existing literature, scholarly articles, books, reports, and policy documents related to Indonesia's strategic plan, geopolitics, and the Middle East region. Analyze and synthesize the information to identify trends, perspectives, and potential future scenarios.

### Findings:

The Middle East Region has various problems that occur in various aspects. However, the problems that occur are still said to be unable to be resolved by both parties alone but require one of the parties to participate in paving the way for peace between the Arab countries. Indonesia is considered capable of being a mediator because of the principles they carry out, namely a Free and Active Foreign Policy, close and harmonious relations between Indonesia and the Middle East Region in all aspects, and a continuous feeling of sympathy for one another.

### Implication:

Foreign relations in the Middle East Region are included in the Strategic Plan by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia as the primary goal in enhancing world peace based on the fourth paragraph of the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Indonesia's geopolitical concept indeed has led and can be carried out specifically concerning the interaction of relations with countries in the Middle East Region.

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has had diplomatic relations with several countries in the Middle East Region for a long time. The relationship between Indonesia and the Middle East must have been very close before Indonesia's independence, with a long history. This history began to emerge when an incident occurred during the seconds of the Indonesian proclamation, which was witnessed and recognized by several countries starting from countries in the Middle East Region. It was proven when Indonesia declared independence in 1945, one of the countries that first recognized the existence of Indonesian independence, namely Egypt. Egypt is also one of the countries still included in the Middle East Region. It began when one of the countries from the Middle East Region, Egypt, first legally recognized Indonesia's independence and sovereignty on March 22, 1946, or seven months after the Independence of the Republic of Indonesia. This recognition of independence and sovereignty was officially conveyed by one of the Consulate Generals of Egypt, Muhammad Abdul Mu'im, while on a visit to Yogyakarta, which at that time was the capital of Indonesia. His arrival was also previously encouraged by most of the public and mass media in Egypt to provide independent support for Indonesia at that time (Reditya, 2021). For the decision taken by Egypt, several countries in the Middle East Region, such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Qatar, and Syria, felt a sense of sympathy.

It means that the relationship between Indonesia and the Middle East has undoubtedly provided enormous potential in various sectors, especially with the similarities in religious factors, economic interests, domestic affairs, to foreign affairs. Such is the case that the Middle East Region became occupied by countries center of Islamic religious civilization or the birth of Islam centuries ago. In addition, the Middle East has very abundant oil reserves. It is owned by the world's largest oil-producing countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Iran, and many more (Wuryandari, 2008).

The relationship between countries and regions that are so attached continues today. It is evidenced by Indonesia's involvement through the diplomatic missions it carried out with countries in the Middle East Region, one of which was involved in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which was founded in 1969, cooperative efforts in the export and import of petroleum, to play an essential role in handling cases of conflict between Palestine - Israel, in which Indonesia has been on the pro-Palestinian side for a long time. It has enabled Indonesia to create a variety of cooperation plans that are increasingly close and strategic, in which the relationship can cover all sectors by compiling a Strategic Plan for Indonesia and the Middle East, which was initiated in 1984-1988 through the arrangement of official documents on the Strategic Plan. The Implementation of the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Indonesia in the Suharto Era (Dahlan, 2008). The existence of a strategic plan is, of course, supported by geopolitical relations between countries, both within each other and countries and regions, including Indonesia and countries in the Middle East. The geopolitics that were used then brought the Diplomatic Relations between Indonesia and the Middle East to have a strategic political direction to date, there are even plans that will continue to be implemented for the next few years as a future Diplomacy Strategic Plan for the 2020-2024 period.

Geopolitics of Indonesia and the Middle East Region. The approach that can be taken by the Relations between the State of Indonesia and the Middle East Region is through a geopolitical approach. Even though these two regions are relatively far apart, the relationship between Indonesia and the Middle East has been very close since ancient times. Several countries within the Middle East Region also have an essential role in geopolitical affairs through historical relations that Indonesia owned in the early era of independence in 1945. Their essential role certainly greatly influenced Indonesia concerning strengthening diplomatic relations with countries in the Middle East Region.

This example, of course, has become an initial illustration for the discussion on relations between Indonesia and the Middle East Region. Geopolitics is the preferred approach as the relationship between the two regions is categorized as a relationship with a comprehensive scope regarding politics, security, economy, social, religion, society, and energy resources. In addition, the Strategic Plan presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia for strengthening relations with the Middle East Region has undoubtedly been included in the official draft Strategic Plan for the 2020 - 2024 period. Based on the explanation above, this research aims to examine the future of relations between Indonesia and the middle east region regarding geopolitics as Indonesia's 2020-2024 strategic plan.

## **METHODS**

This study is qualitative. This research is a live case study that is used on a legal issue that has not ended or is currently happening, as well as conducting an extensive review of existing literature, scholarly articles, books, reports, and policy documents related to Indonesia's strategic plan, geopolitics, and the Middle East region. Analyze and synthesize the information to identify trends, perspectives, and potential future scenarios.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Phenomena of Contemporary Issues in the Middle East Region. The Middle East region is one of the areas that is very strategic with everything that has happened so far. Some conflict issues in the region between the three continents are, of course, still frequent and have yet to show actual peace results. Seeing these problems, Indonesia is undoubtedly involved in dealing with various issues in the Middle East, given the robust political and emotional approach through cultural history that binds one another. Indonesia's steps in highlighting the problems that occur in the Middle East Region are as follows:

1. Conflicts between countries that occur in one region, for example, the conflict between Israel-Palestine, the Saudi Arabia-Yemen conflict, the Syria-Turkey conflict, to the Saudi Arabia-Iran conflict. Inter-state resistance was caused by several factors, from inter-state territorial disputes, inter-ethnic issues, and political interests to ideological resistance.
2. The Arab Spring phenomenon has been happening for a long time, from the end of 2010 until now. This phenomenon was motivated by a wave of protests by the public against the government in Tunisia in December 2010 and spread widely to several other Arab countries (Indriana, 2017).
3. Problems in ideological competition or religious teachings with conflicting thoughts between Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims exist.
4. The civil war is still ongoing, such as the civil war in Libya and Syria and the political crisis that Lebanon experienced.
5. Most Indonesian Migrant Workers and several Indonesian citizens in countries in the Middle East Region still need protection, which Indonesia can increase again. It is because of the ongoing conflict incidents, coupled with the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus, which is increasingly spreading in several countries in the region.
6. Transnational crime, such as Terrorism, began to develop from the presence of Terrorist Organizations such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq Syria (ISIS), which continue to influence Indonesia significantly. It is evidenced by their recruitment to provide doctrine to several communities worldwide, including Indonesia. Influences that can harm society are practices that are carried out, such as human trafficking to illegal smuggling (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020).

The various issues presented are certainly very influential on the role of Indonesia's foreign policy. It will also be a challenge for Indonesia to resolve these problems and prevent the implications of problems from the Middle East Region to Indonesia. Also, the urgency faced will certainly be sustainable with political developments in Indonesia itself.

Indonesia plays an essential role in the Middle East in terms of geopolitics. Based on the problem data and the reasons for using the approach to this case, an issue like this has many aspects that need to be clarified in detail. Indeed, the three approaches presented, such as the geopolitical approach, political economy, and the concept of violence, indirectly enter a geopolitical approach. However, this approach will be more specific to deepen the analysis of geopolitics between Indonesia and the Middle East Region on the relationship that needs strengthening.

After that, the geopolitical approach to this issue refers to three levels of geopolitical support according to the dynamics of reality presented by Cohen (2009): global reality (geopolitical realm), regional reality, and national reality. However, the geopolitical level is more directed at global realities. The reason is that many things certainly make geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East impact Indonesia. One of the global realities is the impact of understanding Radicalism, which is increasingly spreading worldwide, including in Indonesia. Radicalism thoughts are also mainly carried by various groups of Transnational Crime (Terrorism) in the Middle East Region. In addition, national reality is also part of the analysis of this issue. It is seen from a perspective that is too narrow and that Indonesian people experience mistakes in the interaction between Indonesia and the Middle East Region (Wardoyo, 2017). Errors in this perspective lead to exaggerated worship of state and non-state actors, such as considering one of the Transnational Groups, ISIS, to be a group with a view as a representative of Islam that feels the most righteous. Their role is to take very harsh actions and sometimes contrary to the existing teachings of peace.

In addition to discussing this, there are steps that Indonesia can take to strengthen relations between countries and the region. Increasing diplomatic efforts in various aspects, especially in increasing security and political stability, can be a breakthrough in achieving targets in Indonesia's Strategic Plan concerning Foreign Relations. Increased security by providing alternative solutions to various conflicts in the Middle East. It can make Indonesia a country that can mediate conflict resolution between Arab countries by opening negotiations between countries in the Middle East to negotiate peacefully and avoid violence. An example of this has been done from a geopolitical point of view, namely when Indonesia sent UN troops known as the Garuda Contingent as part of a UN Peacekeeping Mission in various regions and continents worldwide. The Garuda Contingent, which was sent for the first time since 1957 or the Garuda I Contingent to Egypt, the Garuda VI Contingent to the Middle East in 1973, the Garuda VIII Contingent in the post-Yom Kippur War period between Arabs and Israel, the Garuda XI Contingent to Iraq and Kuwait in 1992, Garuda XXII Contingent on a UN peace mission in Sudan, to Lebanon (Nailufar, 2020). It certainly indicates that the diplomatic path taken by Indonesia has had an impact on good

relations between Indonesia and the Middle East Region. Also, remember Indonesia's support and commitment to international policy agreements for the Middle East Region. That way, the Strategic Plan carried out by Indonesia can provide significant improvement results in the specified period.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the previous presentation, the Middle East Region has various problems and issues that occur in various aspects. However, the problems that occur are still said to be unable to be resolved by both parties alone but require one of the parties to participate in paving the way for peace between the Arab countries. Indonesia is considered capable of being a mediator because of the principles they carry out, namely a Free and Active Foreign Policy, close and harmonious relations between Indonesia and the Middle East Region in all aspects, and a continuous feeling of sympathy for one another. It is what makes foreign relations in the Middle East Region included in the Strategic Plan by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia as the primary goal in enhancing world peace based on the fourth paragraph of the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Also, Indonesia's geopolitical concept indeed has led and can be carried out specifically concerning the interaction of relations with countries in the Middle East Region.

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