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Humanitarian Diplomacy: Strategy, Policy, Implementation

Professor Stefan Ziegler

The Efforts of the Government of Indonesia in Negotiating Peace on the Rohingya Crisis Through Humanitarian and Political Support: A Multi-stakeholders Humanitarian Diplomacy Practice

Arzita Devi Shafira

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Geneva School of Diplomacy and International Relations

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I. Introduction

Rohingya ethnics who are Muslim, and which are an ethnic minority in Myanmar are known, from some media sources, to get racial discrimination by the majority of Buddhist ethnic in the State of Rakhine, Myanmar. This racial discrimination it has drawn much criticism. Myanmar, which has historically been held by the military junta and is currently in the process of developing democratization, has become the spotlight of the world media with this case.

Basically, the conflict in Myanmar is more likely to be known as ethnic conflict, not religious conflict. Because, unintentionally, Rohingya ethnic group are Muslims and Rakhine people are Buddhist. Rohingya people has been discriminated for years by their own country and also by the major ethnic group in Myanmar because they are seen as minority by language, religion and physical characteristics. They are not considered as ‘native’, not a part of Burma and considered have a closer relation to Bangladesh. Too many forms of discrimination experienced by the Rohingyas, such as no citizenship given, limitation of employment opportunity, human rights violations, property confiscation, forced labour, extrajudicial killings, rape, and village combustions¹.

Many of the Rohingya people flee the country from this devastating situation seeking refuge in the neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia and just recently, to Indonesia. In Bangladesh, with help from international organizations such as UNHCR, WFP, etc., the refugee camp is built in Cox’s Bazaar. In Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, they are arrived by boat and the Governments of those three countries had initial response as ‘refusing’ the Rohingya people to enter the country. However, as a commitment of humanity, the Government of Indonesia (GoI), through the Army Force Commander, executed orders to assist these refugees by delivering food and clean water to their boats that has been floating for quite some time over Malacca Straits. Because the GoI is still unable to grant permission to these boats to dock to Indonesian shores. But in the higher level of diplomacy, Indonesia is one of the countries who, oftentimes, highlights and supports solidarity for peace making process in Myanmar at Governmental level.

¹ From Information and Advocacy Centre of Rohingya Arakan in Indonesia (PIARA). *“Rohingya 101 facts and data”*

Therefore, it is interesting to see the role of Indonesia which has the *Pancasila*, as the Country's philosophical foundation, and the first paragraph of the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia "*Whereas freedom is the inalienable right of all nations, colonialism must be abolished in this world as it is not in conformity with humanity and justice*" and the fourth paragraph "...and to participate toward the establishment of a world order based on freedom, perpetual peace and social justice..." in seeing cases of violence that occur in Myanmar. Contributions given by Indonesia, especially in the form of humanitarian and the thought of resolving or initiating peace process in Rohingya, which later the author will discuss in this paper. Not forget to mention also that the author will explore the reasons why Indonesia is quite eager to take this stance.

II. Efforts by the Government of Indonesia in Resolving Rohingya Crisis through Multi-Stakeholder Diplomacy Practice

As explained by Roger Fisher and William Ury in their book "Getting to Yes", integrative bargaining is a strategy by which parties collaborate to find "win-win" solutions. The focus is on developing mutually beneficial agreements based on the interest of the negotiators, with the understanding that interests are the underlying reasons that people become involved in a conflict. In general, integrative bargaining could be used when negotiating parties are willing to agree and adopt a forward-looking and problem-solving approaches that will benefit both sides². Indonesia has carried out a delicate balancing act with respect to Myanmar and the Rohingya crisis. Indonesia's commitment to ASEAN means that it has generally subscribed to the principle of non-interference in the domestic issue of other fellow Member States. Indonesia attempts to demonstrate concern for the Rohingyas without alienating Myanmar as ASEAN Member States. Indonesia has also tried to always engage Myanmar on other issues, namely counter-terrorism, to ensure that courses to the government were stayed open even when relations with Aung San Suu Kyi sunk in 2017.

² (Roger Fisher, 1981)

Under the leadership of President Joko Widodo (Jokowi), the GoI's response to the violence against Rohingya and resulting in refugee influx began with highly visible diplomacy on the part of the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Indonesia, Retno Marsudi. In December 2016 when Rohingya militants attacked police posts and killed a number of policemen, the Myanmar army responded by a wave of violence against the Rohingya and by closing off access for humanitarian aid. President Jokowi sent Foreign Minister Retno to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi. Minister Retno expressed Indonesia's concern over violence against the Rohingya and its readiness to provide humanitarian relief for the victims of violence. Furthermore, on 19 December, Minister Retno had a bilateral discussion with Aung San Suu Kyi on the sidelines of ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat at Yangon, Myanmar³. Reportedly she convinced Myanmar to host the event to strengthen ASEAN unity and solidarity and, in particular, to reduce tensions between Malaysian Prime Minister, Najib Razak and Suu Kyi⁴. The Myanmar's State Counsellor agreed to convene the meeting as an informal platform for Member States to express their concern about the violence, with little expected results aside from Myanmar's assurances that it would accept ASEAN humanitarian aid in Rakhine⁵.

Indonesia then decided to make humanitarian relief through civil society cornerstone of its diplomacy in Myanmar. Early in 2017, Retno invited representatives of several humanitarian communities to have talk on the joint effort between the GoI and civil society for providing aid to Rakhine State⁶. The meeting resulted in the establishment of an organisation who accommodates several humanitarian groups with the same objective, Indonesia Humanitarian Alliance (IHA) whereas it had developed a USD 2 million program called "Humanitarian Assistance for Sustainable Community" focusing on development of schools, traditional markets, and medical aid in Rakhine state. The Foreign Ministry further funded the visa application of IHA staffs and made visit plans to the programs, emphasizing that the alliance's work was essential for the humanitarian diplomacy of the GoI.

³ From the Indonesian Foreign Ministry Website www.kemlu.go.id, Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs Report on Rohingya Issue Development.

⁴ In early December 2016, PM Najib Razak accused Aung San Suu Kyi's Government of presiding over "genocide" in Rakhine state and calling for international action. See also: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Indonesia, *Indonesia is Ready to 'Play Bridging Role' with OIC in Taking Constructive Steps in Helping Improve Rakhine State Situation*. 19 January 2017

⁵ (Chongkittavir, 2017)

⁶ Most of these group were part of an existing coalition called Humanitarian Forum Indonesia.

On 19 January 2017, Minister Retno submitted a proposal to the OIC during the extraordinary Ministerial Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. She urged the conference to respond to the latest phase of Rohingya conflict. She believed that only by taking constructive and inclusive steps can the OIC contribute to improving the situation in Rakhine State⁷.

In August 2017, another attack happened. Rohingya militants against 30 police post and an army base. This deterioration has produced the fastest and largest refugee exodus in modern times. More than 700,000 Rohingyas were driven out of northern Rakhine into Bangladesh in a matter of weeks⁸. This violence then led to domestic pressure on the Indonesian Government to respond, generated in part by outrage but also in part by an Islamist coalition intent on bringing down the Jokowi leadership in 2019. Jokowi government settled on a policy of humanitarian assistance, mostly in the refugee camps in Bangladesh, without direct criticism of the Myanmar government and without any commitment to taking in more refugees itself. It was enough, however, to keep the Islamist opposition quiet.

Myanmar's scorched earth tactics — that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at that time, Zeid bin Ra'ad referred to as a 'textbook case of ethnic cleansing' — abruptly stopped almost all Indonesian government and non-government humanitarian work in Rakhine state⁹. The Jokowi government immediately went into action. Foreign Minister's highly visible shuttle diplomacy to Myanmar in 2016 has put the GoI in a good position to move quickly in response to the 2017 attack. The existence of IHA ensured support from mainstream Muslim entities and meant there was a body to receive donations as many wanted to help.

On 3 September, President Jokowi held a press conference at the presidential palace, announcing that he had instructed the Foreign Minister to go to Myanmar and urge it to stop violence, protect its Muslims and ensure access for humanitarian aids. He also said he had instructed the Foreign Minister to open intensive discussions with UN Secretary General,

⁷ From the Indonesian Foreign Ministry Website www.kemlu.go.id, Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs Report on Rohingya Issue Development.

⁸ (Institute for Policy Analysis for Conflict, 2018)

⁹ Luckily, the construction of Indonesian hospital was uninterrupted despite the conflict in northern Rakhine state. See (Republika, 2017)

Antonio Guterres as well as with the late Kofi Annan. So on the following day, Indonesian Foreign Minister, Retno Marsudi, went to Myanmar to meet Aung San Suu Kyi and army chief, U min Aung Hlaing. She proposed a *4+1 Formula* for resolving the issue. The four main points are: restoration of stability and security, maximum self-restraint and commitment not to use violence, protection of all persons in Rakhine State, regardless race and religion, and immediate access for humanitarian assistance. The plus was the advice to implement the recommendations of Kofi Annan's Advisory Commission on Rakhine State¹⁰. She also wanted to inspect progress in the construction of the Indonesian hospital.

The following day, Retno met with Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheik Hasina to discuss the condition of Rohingya refugee camps and Indonesia's readiness to provide humanitarian assistance to Bangladesh. A week later, President Jokowi went personally to Halim Perdana Kusuma airport in Jakarta to see off the departure of four Hercules cargo planes, carrying 34 tonnes of humanitarian aid.

Some observers contrasted the approaches of Indonesia and Malaysia, who seemed to be using political stance on Myanmar as a way of diverting attention from corruption scandals at their domestic affairs. The Government of Indonesia refused to be goaded by its neighbour and exclusively focusing on humanitarian needs to avoid any break with Myanmar. This reflects the integrative approach of negotiation that has been elaborated earlier in this paper.

¹⁰ (Vinanda, 2017)

III. Conclusion

Clashes between Rohingya and Rakhine ethnic groups became the center of attention ranging from human rights activists to leaders of a number of countries. The Indonesian government was asked to influence the Myanmar government to deal with the case more fairly. This is because many parties see Myanmar in resolving its case side by side. Indonesia itself is not only concerned about this issue but also makes various efforts both diplomatic efforts and other efforts related to humanity. There are a number of things done by Indonesia¹¹

1. The Indonesian government has actively discussed both multilateral and regional issues in assessing issues related to Rohingya ethnicity. The path taken through the United Nations, ASEAN and other forums. Besides that, it also carries out bilateral ways, namely by actively establishing diplomacy and cooperation. There are 124 Rohingya asylum seekers in Indonesia. Even the president sent a letter to the President of Myanmar in the hope that the Rohingya's problems could be completed as well as possible.
2. Indonesia proposes to the Myanmar government to invite UN agencies or foreign diplomats as well as countries that are members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to see the real conditions, so that opinions are balanced with the actual situation.
3. Protection of minorities should be given, Indonesia also provides appropriate assistance because the Myanmar government itself in receiving assistance is quite selective. The role of the Indonesian government itself is neutral and is on the path of humanity. Neutral organizations such as the Indonesian Red Cross, or its Indonesian name "Palang Merah Indonesia" (PMI) led by Jusuf Kalla were used as aid vehicles. Neutral organizations are reinforced by several parties such as the United Nations, the OIC, and ASEAN access to entry is more fluent than religious organizations that are feared could actually exacerbate the problem.

¹¹ (Antara News, 2012)

4. The issue of this case has violated human rights, therefore there needs to be political pressure. Cooperation of various parties so that assistance in the form of boards, clothing, food can be received by Rohingya ethnic groups is also very necessary.

Besides that all must also be understood that the resolution of the Rohingya ethnic problem in Myanmar must also be accompanied by a background understanding of the problems that occur. The steps taken by Indonesia have hopes that the Myanmar problem can be resolved immediately.

The GoI played a major role in resolving the conflict in Rakhine. That can be seen from the seriousness of Indonesia in mediating conflict in Rakhine. In handling conflicts as such, Indonesia is arguably very inclusive. It can be seen from the use of integrative diplomacy compared to condemning Myanmar regarding Rohingya. Indonesia understands very well if Indonesia pressured Myanmar so that Myanmar could be closed to Indonesia it actually makes it difficult to help the Rohingya. Not only communicating with Myanmar, Indonesia also communicates with Bangladesh. This is because Bangladesh is also affected by violence in Rakhine. Bangladesh receives a large number of refugees. Help humanity also continues to be given to Rohingya through AKIM which has 4 priorities, namely economics, health, education, and basic needs

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