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Promoting a home-grown democracy: Indonesia's approach of democracy promotion in the Bali democracy Forum (BDF)

Mohamad Rosyidin

Department of International Relations, Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

After the demise of Suharto's New Order dictatorship in 1998, Indonesia has been committed to democratization process. Since then, democracy has become an integral part of Indonesia's foreign policy. As the world's third-largest democracy, Indonesia initiated the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) in 2008 as an instrument of democracy promotion in the region and beyond. However, the nature of the forum is not to promote democracy by force as exemplified by the West. Although Indonesia perceives itself as a role model for democratic transition, it does not equate democracy with the Western-style liberal-democracy but rather with allowing every country to choose a home-grown democracy. This paper argues that the BDF represents an Indonesian approach in democracy promotion that differs from that of Western countries. Promoting a home-grown democracy represents a culture of tolerance and harmony which are inherent features of Asian interstate relations, constrained as they are by regional norms of non-interference that respect the domestic affairs of other countries.

KEYWORDS

Indonesia; Democracy promotion; Bali Democracy Forum; Home-grown democracy; Culture of tolerance; non-interference

Introduction

> Democracy must be firmly rooted in our society. [Hassan Wirajuda]

Democracy promotion is one of the most notable characteristics of Western civilization. This is perhaps predictable: democracy was born in the West, after all, in Ancient Greece around the fifth century BC. The agenda for the expansion of democracy was probably first implemented by Athens during the Peloponnesian War. Promoting democracy was a political strategy to ensure the loyalty of controlled areas. This is because by adopting democracy, the occupied territories become more transparent and thus more easily controlled (Huber, 2015, p. 8). The Western agenda of democracy promotion continued into the colonial era in which Britain played a critical role. Most political scientists agree that there is a strong connection between colonialism and the development of democracy in former Western colonies (Bernhard et al., 2004).

In the modern era, promoting democracy is a political spearhead of United States (US) foreign policy. Henry Kissinger wrote in his *opus magnum* that US foreign policy orientation has always been influenced by two paradoxical national roles: as a 'beacon' that

CONTACT Mohamad Rosyidin mohamadrosyidin@lecturer.undip.ac.id

sets an example for other countries and as a 'crusader' fighting for moral values. While the former requires the US to focus on domestic politics or isolationism policy, the latter is more oriented towards internationalism (Kissinger, 1994, p. 18). It includes promoting democracy abroad as a fundamental American value. US founding father, Abraham Lincoln, stated in the Declaration of Independence that

> It was not the mere matter of the separation of the colonies from the mother land; but something in that Declaration giving liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world for all future time. (Rose, 2001, p. 186)

Lincoln's perspective on democracy became the basic tenet of liberal internationalists who believe that democracy is a necessary foundation of world peace. Francis Fukuyama, a well-known liberal internationalist, suggested in his 'the end of history' thesis that in order to create peace, the US has a long-term interest in spreading its ideology around the world (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 180).

Like the US, Europe also has a common interest in promoting democracy. The formation of the Common European and Security Policy (CFSP) after the Cold War prompted the European Union (EU) to be involved in many international issues, including democracy and human rights. The 1992 Treaty of Maastricht stated that one of the EU's goals is 'to develop and consolidate democracy, the rule of law and the respect of human rights' (Olsen, 2000, p. 143). The EU's commitment to promoting democracy intensified in the 2000s. In EU Parliament Resolution October 22, 2009, it was stated that the EU will 'support for democracy-building, and, above all, the promotion of democratic values and respect for human rights throughout the world, more effective' (European Parliament, 2009). In accordance with the agreement of Helsinki Summit, 10–11 December 1999, which discussed the agenda of expanding EU membership, democracy promotion became the main task of the organization. To do so, the EU implements an array of strategies, including political and economic instruments and even threats (Kubicek, 2003, p. 197). Like the US, the EU considers democracy promotion as a moral responsibility to make long-lasting peace. This vision implies that countries outside Europe should adopt the democratic system because it brings a better future for mankind.

From a non-Western perspective, the agenda of democracy promotion creates a hierarchical and biased global order. Hierarchical because the West acts as a 'teacher' who dictates to the rest of the world what political values they must adopt. Spreading democracy is inherently political, and despite inspired by moralism, promoting democracy is undoubtedly a strategy to achieve a country's own national interests, especially with regards to security and maintaining US hegemony (see for example, Smith, 1994; Ikenberry in Ikenberry, 2000; Markakis, 2016; and Pee, 2017). In addition, the Western-led democracy promotion contains cultural bias because it ignores the uniqueness of other countries. The agenda tends to impose liberal values such as individual freedom of speech, economic openness, law enforcement, respect of human rights, and so on. The problem is every country has its own cultural traits and historical experiences that are different from the West and may be incompatible with their identity. Some scholars criticize democracy promotion by the West as a form of imperialism (see for example, Bridoux & Kurki, 2014; Robinson, 1996).

This paper is a critical analysis of Western-led democracy promotion from a non-Western perspective. This paper does not reject democracy as a political system. On the contrary, democracy is by far the most ideal system in ensuring good governance, regardless of its weaknesses. Instead, this article criticizes the way in which democracy is promoted by the West. Although the European approach is somewhat different from that of America—as we shall see later—both adopt similar ways of thinking about the nature of democratic values. To these countries, promoting democracy means that other countries should imitate Western values. Using the case study of Indonesia's approach through the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF), this article argues that the BDF represents a non-Western approach to promoting democracy. BDF is Indonesia's contribution to encouraging political openness in countries that are still constrained by democratization problems. The BDF emphasizes dialogues and tolerance rather than the 'stick and carrot' strategy favoured by the West. Despite having the same goal, the adoption of different strategies is important to highlight the contrasting views between Asia and the West in terms of the democratization process. Instead of promoting a universalist character of democracy, BDF is Indonesia's contribution to promoting homegrown democracy.

This paper will proceed as follows. The first section discusses the differences between US and European approaches in promoting democracy. While the US often adopts 'hard' approaches, the EU puts more emphasis on 'soft' approaches. Nevertheless, difference in strategy does not necessarily mean difference in objective; both the EU and the US strongly believe that democracy is a universal value that must be accepted by other countries regardless of their cultural constraints. The second section discusses identity and its relationship with the BDF. This section analyzes the BDF from a constructivist perspective that stress on the impact of Indonesia's identity as the 'third largest democracy' on foreign policy, particularly in promoting democracy since the end of the New Order. The third section discusses Indonesia's 'soft' approach in the BDF. This section highlights Indonesia's foreign policy characteristics in promoting democracy. This section does not discuss the importance of the BDF for Indonesia's national interests but rather on how the BDF differs from Western strategies in promoting democracy. The final section will draw conclusions and summarize their implications for the literature on democracy promotion in the twenty-first century.

The Western style of democracy promotion

Democracy is one of the most important ideas in political science. However, there is no agreement among scholars and practitioners on the concept of democracy. As an analytical tool, democracy can be defined as 'a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives' (Schmitter & Karl, 1991, p. 4). Dahl (1971, p. 2) proposed the term 'polyarchy', that is, 'a political system one of the characteristics of which is the quality of being completely or almost completely responsive to all its citizens'. Samuel Huntington (1997, pp. 5–6) argued that a system of governance is considered 'democratic' as long as elite decision makers are elected through a justice, fair, and periodic election in which they compete to each other to win the most votes. From these conceptual definitions, we can conclude that there are two pillars of

democracy: competition and participation. In addition, democracy requires 'three freedoms': freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of association (Huntington, 1997, p. 6). It is also important to note that contrast to what many people believe, democracy is not a sort of political *ideology* but rather a political *system*. Heywood (2017, p. 3) suggested that political ideologies shape the nature of political systems. In other words, a form of government is strongly influenced by certain principles and values. It is common sense in political science that democracy stems from liberal thinking that put a strong emphasis on individual freedom. This brings us back to John Locke's ideas in the seventeenth century on the natural rights of the individual: life, liberty, and property. According to Locke, the primary goal of the government is to protect the 'state of nature', that is, the condition in which each individual enjoys their natural rights (Schmandt, 2015, pp. 339–341). This is consistent with Dahl's definition of democracy that the government should be 'responsive to all its citizens' (Dahl, 1971, p. 2).

In practice, the idea of democracy has various forms of implementation or models. Despite the claim that democracy is a universal value (see for example, Sen in Diamond & Plattner, 2001), there is no single formula of democratic governance across the globe. Held (2006) distinguished four models of democracy: classical (Ancient Greek), republicanism, liberal, and direct democracy. In 2012, an ambitious project called 'Varieties of Democracy Project' or 'V-Dem' was initiated by the Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg and the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame. They conceptualized and measured democracy using seven principles: electoral, liberal, majoritarian, consensual, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian (Coppedge et al., 2012). In 1990s, there was a growing literature on the 'non-Western model of democracy'. A volume edited by Larry Diamond and Diamond and Plattner (2001) discussed varieties of democracy in non-Western societies that are strongly influenced by cultural as well as religious values such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Islam. These studies demonstrated that democracy has nothing to do with liberalism. According to Plattner (1998, p. 172), 'democracy and liberalism are not inseparably linked'. This argument is supported by Bell (2006) that in the East Asian region there is an alternative legitimate democratic governance that goes beyond the Western-style liberal democracy. The research conducted by Chu et al. (2008, p. 238) concluded that 'Asian cultures are open to democracy, but not committed to it'. As conceived by Zakaria (1997, p. 24), 'Western liberal democracy might prove to be not the final destination on the democratic road, but just one of many possible exits'.

With regard to foreign policy, democracy has long been an instrument as well as an objective of the West. Although 'the West' connotes European and North American cultural heritage, European cultural identity is significantly different from American identity, even though both are variants of the same modern Western civilization (Martinelli, 2007, p. 8). In terms of foreign policy approach, they show significant differences. Robert Kagan used the phrase 'Europe from Venus, America from Mars' to illustrate the contrasting worldview between the EU and the US in international politics. According to Kagan, Europe tends to be less ambitious towards power and places more emphasis on international law, negotiation and cooperation. Moreover, Europe is heading to a 'historical paradise' of peace and prosperity. On the contrary, the US views the world as an anarchic environment in which international rules and norms are meaningless. As a result, US

foreign policy is more inclined to military power than international law (Kagan, 2004, p. 3).

Nevertheless, the US and EU are strongly committed to democracy promotion. Both are the leading promoters of democracy in the modern era. They believe that democracy is the only instrument of peace and will lead countries to freedom and prosperity. For the US, promoting democracy is a Wilsonian 'holy mission' that seeks to 'make the world safer'. As for the EU, promoting democracy refers to ends and means. Democracy will ensure the fulfilment of individual rights, the upholding of the rule of law, improvements in the welfare of society, and ultimately the creation of world peace (Smith, 2003, p. 130). This assumption is the basic tenet of 'democratic peace theory', proposing that fellow democracies will not fight each other, a widely accepted view in both the US and the EU.

The US and the EU have different strategies in promoting democracy abroad. Jeffrey Kopstein, for example, classified two contrasting approaches of what he called American 'bottom-up' versus the European 'top-down' approach. The former emphasizes efforts to encourage the development of independent civil society in order to control government policy, supports liberal-style political organizations, limits overly governed state policies, and creates conditions for public opinion to flourish. In contrast, the top-down approach tends to focus on affecting the top level of government in order to support the adoption of democratic values. This involves supporting pro-Western government elites and providing financial assistance so that they are better inclined towards the West (Kopstein, 2006, pp. 88–90).

However, some scholars reject the dichotomy of 'top-down'/'bottom-up' approach. Instead of using different strategies, they argue that both America and Europe implement similar instruments, ranging from 'soft' strategies such as diffusion, socialization, diplomacy, assistance, and positive conditionality (dictating other countries to adopt democratic values) to 'hard' strategies such as negative conditionality (typically economic sanctions) and the use of force (war). Yet diplomacy, assistance, sanctions, and war are common strategies employed by the West for decades (Baracani in Bindi and Angelescu, 2010, p. 308). The similarity of strategy in promoting democracy was evident in US and EU engagement in Serbia in the late 1990s when they worked together to encourage pro-democracy groups and oversee the democratization process in the country (Carothers, 2008, p. 127).

The similar typology has been proposed by Magen and McFaul (in Magen & McFaul, 2009, pp. 12–15) who distinguish four Western instruments of democracy promotion: control, material incentives, normative suasion, and capacity building. First, the instrument of control refers to the use of force to encourage a state to adopt a democratic system. This strategy uses military power to install democracy in a non-democratic country. This 'regime change' approach has always been associated with the US foreign policy in many parts of the world. The US invaded Iraq in 2003 to topple Saddam Hussein from power by convincing Iraqi people that it would liberate them from tyranny. When giving a victory speech at the USS Abraham Lincoln, then-US President George W. Bush said, '[T]he transition from dictatorship to democracy will take time, but it is worth every effort. Our coalition will stay until our work is done. Then we will leave, and we will leave behind a free Iraq' (CBS News, 2003). Similarly, NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011 to overthrow President Moammar Gaddafi following the 'Arab Spring' is a typical example of Western-led democracy promotion. The West initially

expected that the revolution would go smoothly as in Tunisia President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was successfully overthrown. Yet, as the Gaddafi regime became increasingly brutal against civilians, NATO took military action. It seemed that the rationale behind this operation was saving civilians from the massacre. However, it is evidently clear that the real motive was transforming Libya into a democratic country (Rosyidin, 2012).

Second, material incentives often employ a 'stick and carrot' strategy in the form of economic sanctions and financial assistance. Both the US and the EU are key players behind sanctions policies. Compared to other countries, history shows them to be the toughest actors in imposing sanctions. In a quantitative study by Gary Clyde Hufbauer et.al, from 204 cases of economic sanctions under study, 80 cases are imposed in attempts to change the regime to democracy (Hufbauer et al., 2007, p. 67). This implies that economic sanctions are the most widely implemented instrument of coercive diplomacy to export democracy. Despite that, there have been enduring debates regarding the efficacy of coercive approach in transforming authoritarian states. Peksen and Drury (2010) argued that economic sanctions actually worsen the level of democracy because the negative impact of sanctions can be used by an authoritarian government to consolidate its power over its citizens. Marinov and Nili (2015) meanwhile argued that economic sanctions are still effective in promoting democratization and reducing repressive policies.

Aside from the use of force and sanctions, the West also employs financial assistance to persuade other countries to adopt a democratic system. According to Thomas Carothers, there are two approaches to promote democracy using aid instruments. First, a political approach that focuses on assisting democratic institutional actors and institutions, including the electoral system. Second, a development approach that focuses on improving the socioeconomic level of society as a prerequisite of democratization (Carothers, 2009). The US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) are the best examples of the development approach. These institutions have a vision of creating a civil society to act as a force to promote democracy and human rights in targeted countries. From the Western point of view, the presence of a strong civil society is an indicator of a healthy democratic system. The focus of providing assistance to civil society is to cultivate a democratic culture or 'linkage models' (see for example, Freyburg et al., 2015; Levitsky & Way, 2005). According to this perspective, the development of civil society has great significance to democratic consolidation.

Third, persuasion emphasizes communicative actions. These can range from positive instruments such as discussions, seminars, conferences, workshops, research, and cultural exchanges to negative instruments such as debate and sharp criticism. One favoured practice of the West is the strategy of 'naming and shaming': saying publicly that a government has committed norm violations or has misbehaved; it is commonly associated with authoritarian government policy (Magen and McFaul in Magen & McFaul, 2009, p. 14). If the material incentive strategy uses economic sanctions, naming and shaming takes advantage of social sanctions for a state's bad policies. This strategy is closely related to the 'politics of leverage' in disseminating international norms (Friman, 2015). The US and the EU often criticize governments that violate human rights. They regularly monitor and release reports containing data on human rights abuses and the development of democracy in various parts of the world. For example, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor under the US Department of State is obliged to report issues concerning democracy

and human rights to Congress. The European Union has the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET), with two sub-committees called the Sub-Committee on Human Rights (DROI) and the Sub-Committee on Security and Defense (SEDE). DROI is responsible for reporting to the European Parliament on human rights and democracy issues in third countries, including the issue of protection of minorities.

Fourth, another strategy often used by the West to promote democracy is capacity building. It is conducted through financial and technical assistance to train potential promoters of democracy in targeted countries. Similar to the financial strategy discussed earlier, the capacity building strategy aims to prepare democratic infrastructure with a special focus on human resource development. For example, the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Indonesia Program is a programme organized by Harvard University and funded by the Rajawali Foundation, a philanthropic organization founded by an Indonesian investor, Peter Sondakh. The objective of this programme is to provide scholarships for studies and research related to public policy; its participants are primarily leaders and policymakers (Harvard University, n.d). In Europe, there also are many non-profit organizations that are oriented towards capacity building programmes. For example, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung was founded in Germany in 1925 and claims to be the oldest democracy foundation in Germany. It was founded to commemorate Friedrich Ebert, Germany's first democratically-elected president. One of its aims is to encourage social and political education in the spirit of democracy and pluralism (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, n.d). The existence of both private and government-owned foundations shows that the West believes education and training can successfully foster democratic values.

The various Western approaches to promote democracy do not diminish its universalist nature. As a champion of democracy and the centre of liberalism, the West will do everything necessary to make other countries become like them, especially in terms of political systems and governance. Fareed Zakaria (1997, p. 42) suggested that there is no alternative system that can replace democracy because it is already an integral part of modernity. This idea has a serious flaw when it comes to taking into account different historical and cultural backgrounds of other countries. That is why Francis Fukuyama argued that culture is the barrier of democracy. Fukuyama (1992, p. 215) wrote, '[C]ulture—in the form of resistance to the transformation of certain traditional values to those of democracy—thus can constitute an obstacle to democratization'. Likewise, Samuel Huntington explicitly mentioned Confucian and Islamic cultures as barriers to democracy. He stated, '[S]trong cultural obstacles to democratization thus appear to exist in Confucian and lslamic societies' (Huntington, 1991, p. 20). Western-style democracy promotion tends to override the cultural aspects of other countries, and this can precipitate resistance even when using non-coercion strategies. As we will see in the next section, Asian countries have varied cultural values and sometimes find it difficult to accept external, especially Western, values. From an Asian perspective, adopting Western democracy would have negative impacts on their society. This poses a major challenge to the democracy promotion in Southeast Asia and beyond.

State identity and the Bali democracy Forum

States' foreign policies are often explained from realist point of view since it offers a simple account of why states behave like they do in an anarchic international system. Legro and

Moravscik (1999) have outlined three basic tenets of realism. First, state-centric paradigm which posits that state is a unitary political actor that rationally pursues their own interests in a conflictual interaction. Second, state preferences are fixed, that is, power and security. At a minimum, states seek to maintain their own security, while at the maximum they seek to dominate others. Third, a realist approach emphasizes on material capabilities as the underlying factor of states behaviour, especially military and economic elements that define states power in international politics. With regard to democracy promotion, realist accounts have long been associated with US foreign policy. The best explanation of US democracy promotion from a realist perspective was proposed by Strobe Talbott in his 1996 article published by *Foreign Affairs*. According to Talbott, promoting democracy abroad serves US national security interests. He went further by saying,

> The larger and more close-knit the community of nations that choose democratic forms of government, the safer and more prosperous Americans will be, since democracies are demonstrably more likely to maintain their international commitments, less likely to engage in terrorism or wreak environmental damage, and less likely to make war on each other. (Talbott, 1998, pp. 48–49)

Similarly, Lynn-Jones (1998) argued that spreading democracy around the world brings benefits for the US. One of the most strategic interests of US democracy promotion is ensuring national security from external threats. This would mean the prevention of terrorist or foreign attacks on American soil, the prevention of refugees seeking asylum in the US, and the encouragement of political alliances between democracies.

However, the security-based argument proposed by the realist view lacks empirical evidence when it comes to Indonesia's foreign policy in the BDF. From the Indonesian point of view, democracy has no relation with ensuring national security from external threats. Rather, it has been widely acknowledged that democracy has become national identity of Indonesia in the post-Suharto era. The demise of Suharto's authoritarian rule in 1998 promoted the adoption of a democratic identity in Indonesia's foreign policy (Poole in Roberts, Habir and Sebastian, 2015: pp. 157–158). During the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014), democracy became one of the most important pillars of Indonesia's foreign policy other than Islam. Yudhoyono asserted that, 'We must know who we are and what we believe in, and project them in our foreign policy' (Anwar, 2005, p. 39). Since then, Indonesia has been projecting its national identity as a democratic country at the global stage. Thus, unlike the American style of democracy promotion that strongly influenced by security calculations, Indonesian democracy promotion in the BDF is best described by the concept of identity.

There is abundant literature concerning the role of identity in foreign policy. Constructivism has become the dominant approach in the discipline of International Relations that considers identity as an underlying factor of states' behaviour. Alexander Wendt, a prominent constructivist, defined identity as 'a property of intentional actors that generates motivational and behavioral dispositions' (Wendt, 1999, p. 224). Identity is a psychological conception that distinguish between one actor and the other. Identity plays a crucial role in social interactions because it is 'cognitive schemas that enable an actor to determine "who I am/we are"' in a situation and positions in a social role structure of shared understandings and expectations' (Wendt, 1994, p. 385). Thus, actors act not solely based on the logic of interest but also the conception of who they are.

Constructivism argues that identity is the basis for interests. While identity refers to who the actor is, interest refers to what the actor wants (Wendt, 1999, p. 231). This implies that interest is not a given entity but rather socially constructed through interactions. Consequently, national interest is the product of interactions between states or how a state defines its identity vis a vis others in certain situations. This relationship between identity, interest, and foreign policy forms a cycle where identity shapes interest, interest shapes foreign policy, and foreign policy redefines the identity. If a state's foreign policy is consistent with its identity, then the identity of the country will endure. Otherwise, its identity could change or even disappear. For example, a democratic country would be 'democratic' only if a country behaves in accordance with democratic values.

Identity can take many forms: corporate, type, role, and collective identity (Wendt, 1999, pp. 224–229). Corporate identity refers to the intrinsic qualities that constitute individuality. Like human beings, it defines personalities of state actors. For example, Indonesia often proclaims itself as a 'maritime country' because geographically two-third of its territory is ocean. In contrast, type identity refers to the internal characteristics of a country related to ideology or value systems, traditions, patterns of behaviour, culture, etc. that distinguishes them from other countries. Just like corporate identity, type identity is a byproduct of a country's internal elements. However, if corporate identity does not require the presence of other actors to define it, the type of identity requires a significant other because without it, the identity will not be meaningful. For example, Indonesia is a 'democratic country' because it adopts democracy as political system in contrast to an 'authoritarian state' such as North Korea, China, and Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, role identity is a position that determines states responsibility in international system. K.J. Holsti (1970, p. 245) proposed the term 'national role conception', that is, 'policymakers' conceptions of their nation's orientations and tasks in the international system or in subordinate regional systems'. A country is labelled as a 'peacemaker' because it is consistent in supporting peaceful means in international conflicts, for instance, sending peacekeeping forces, being a mediator, and actively participating in humanitarian activities. Finally, collective identity refers to the similarity of thoughts and feelings between countries. It generates the logic of collective action on the basis of a sense of solidarity that creates a 'weness' among its members. The best example is trans-Atlantic relations between the US and the United Kingdom (UK).

Of four typologies of identity described above, type identity is arguably the most appropriate concept in understanding Indonesia's foreign policy in the BDF. After the collapse of the New Order in 1998, Indonesia entered a new phase where democratization took place from the top level of government down to the grassroots. As noted earlier, type identity is an intrinsic characteristic of a state, but its existence requires a significant other. During the Reform era (*Reformasi*), Indonesia's foreign policy focused on image building in order to seek international recognition. Indonesia was keen to convince the world that it had succeeded in overthrowing an authoritarian regime and replacing it with a democratic one. This pro-democracy campaign reflects Indonesia's aspiration to be treated as 'a successful democracy and as an example to the vast majority of non-democratic countries in the Global South, especially in the Muslim world' (Shekhar, 2014, p. 102). This is evident in the foreign policy of post-Suharto Presidents BJ Habibie and Abdurrahman Wahid. According to Dewi Fortuna Anwar (2005, p. 79), although Habibie stayed in power for less than two years after taking over from Suharto, he had plenty of time to focus on

three aspects: laying the foundation for Indonesia's democratization, resolving the East Timor issue, and securing international assistance for Indonesian economic recovery. His successor, Abdurrahman Wahid (commonly known as Gus Dur), was labelled 'a foreign policy president' for visiting 26 countries in four months after coming to power. His reason for doing so was to improve Indonesia's image in the eyes of the international community. As a pluralist leader, Gus Dur wanted to show the world that Indonesia was able to create harmony between the values of western liberal democracy, Asian identity, and Islam (Smith, 2000, p. 505). This indicates that during the Reform era Indonesia's identity as a 'democratic country' came into existence and began to achieve international recognition.

After Megawati Sukarnoputri became president in 2001, she put ASEAN back at the centre of Indonesia's foreign policy. The blueprint of BDF was initially developed within the framework of ASEAN during her presidency. Restoring ASEAN's role as Indonesia's concentric circle strengthen state's status as a regional power; a status that had been ignored by Gus Dur with his Pacific Forum idea. Megawati visited nine ASEAN countries in August-September 2001 to unite ASEAN as a solid organization. She also promised to restore Indonesia's leadership in ASEAN after resolving domestic issues (Batabyal, 2002, p. 41). The promise appeared to had taken place in 2003 when the signing of the Bali Concord II that became the institutional basis for the establishment of the ASEAN Community which stands on three pillars; ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), ASEAN Security Community (ASC), and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

Bali Concord II contains the idea of how democracy and human rights are accepted by all ASEAN members. The document clearly states that the ASC will 'ensure that countries in the region live at peace with one another and with the world at large in a just, democratic and harmonious environment' (ASEAN, 2003). In her address at the 9th ASEAN Summit, Megawati underlined that the success of Bali Concord II reflects the strong commitment, role, and leadership of Indonesia in ASEAN. According to Donald Weatherbee, Bali Concord II 'cemented Indonesia's position as the key local player in Southeast Asia's international relations' (Weatherbee, 2013, p. 151). At that time Indonesia also began to lobby ASEAN to adopt democracy and human rights as regional values. According to Hassan Wirajuda, Minister of Foreign Affairs during Megawati's presidency, Indonesia is a democratic country in the region so it needs to be active in promoting democracy to ASEAN (Sukma, 2011, pp. 110–111). Based on constructivist logic, identity as a democratic country thus shapes Indonesia's foreign policy to promote democracy in ASEAN.

Identity as a democratic country strengthened during the leadership of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Although he was a retired military general, Yudhoyono was deeply committed to democracy, becoming something of an anomaly compared to the vast majority of Indonesian military elite. In contrast to his considerable failures in consolidating democracy at the domestic level (Aspinall et al., 2015, p. 16), Yudhoyono's foreign policy was widely praised due to his strong commitment to incorporating democracy and diplomacy. The idea of BDF during the post-authoritarian period was institutionalized in 2007 and held its first meeting in 2008. The BDF may be one of Yudhoyono's most important foreign policy legacies. His successor, President Joko Widodo, does not seem interested in advancing the BDF. Widodo's foreign policy is not inclined to liberal internationalism by promoting democracy abroad as its core business (Poole, 2019, p. 31).

Indonesia's identity as the world's third largest democracy goes hand in hand with its identity as the world's largest Muslim country. However, unlike the latter, a democratic identity demands Indonesia to be a democracy promoter, a role that has become a dominant feature of Western foreign policy. Indonesia should encourage and promote democracy at the regional and global stage because it reflects the national experience in overthrowing authoritarianism as well as diverse socio-cultural backgrounds (Elizabeth, 2016, p. 23). During his visit to the Netherlands in 2009, Wirajuda stated that Indonesia's foreign policy upholds democracy promotion since it has become integral part of Indonesian values. At the regional level, Indonesia urged ASEAN to adopt democratic values, respect for human rights, and good governance (The Global Review, 2009). For example, Indonesia pushed ASEAN to establish the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) that, according to Wirajuda, was an 'Indonesian initiative' (Acharya, 2015, p. 58). However, due to ASEAN's core principle of non-interference, Indonesia employs a diplomatic approach in promoting democracy, especially in the case of Myanmar., where Indonesia proposed a 'regional solution for a regional problem' on the issue of democratization and human rights (Wirajuda, 2014, p. 155). The structural constraint of regional norms affects Indonesia's approach in promoting democracy in the region. The next section discusses the impact of both domestic and structural variables on the nature of Indonesia's democracy promotion in the BDF.

Leading by (tolerant) example: an Indonesian style of democracy promotion

Before going any further, we must understand the very nature of a home-grown democracy. The notion of home-grown democracy has often been associated with a non-Western style of democracy. As discussed earlier, the Western democracy concept is derived from liberal philosophy and thus puts a strong emphasis on individual freedom and equality. De Sousa Santos and Avritzer (2007, p. xxxvii) argue that Western liberal democracy connotes the hegemonic form of democracy that 'ignoring the experiments and discussions coming from the countries of the southern hemisphere in the debate on democracy'. For non-Western societies, culture plays a significant role in forming a government. Despite the fact that democracy—at least in principle—has become a universal ideology, any society beyond the West has an autonomy to determine their own their definition and/or implementation of democracy. Bell (2006, p. 8) suggests that in the East Asian region, alternatives to Western-style liberal democracy are morally legitimate. For Asians, political practices should draw upon their own political realities and cultural traditions rather than simply implementing Western-style democracy that might not fit.

Within the Asian context, home-grown democracy implies the cultural foundation of democracy based on Asian values and norms. Despite the debate over the definition of 'Asian values', there is a common ground among pundits and policymakers that Asian values are set of beliefs and norms adopted by Asian societies that differ from values of the West. Robison (1996, pp. 310–311) outlines five main elements of Asian values. First, family—not the state—is the focal point of social organization and loyalty as well as the basis for the organization of authority and responsibility. Second, the interests of the community or the group are much more important than those of the individual. Third, the primacy of consensus-based decision-making process instead of confrontation

or debate. Fourth, the strong emphasis on social cohesion and harmony supported by strong government. Fifth, the government prioritizes economic development and guarantees its citizen's welfare over others. Thus, the key feature of Asian values is the requirement of strong government to maintain stability and economic welfare of its citizen. Consequently, the government 'may justifiably intervene in most if not all aspects of social life in order to promote an officially predetermined conception of the good' (Bell et al., 1995, p. 164).

The impact of Asian values on the implementation of democracy in East and Southeast Asia is the adoption of democratic institutions but rejection of liberal values such as individualism, equality, freedom, and limited government. Pundits and policymakers have often been associated Asian-style democracy with the term of 'illiberal democracy' (see for example, Bell et al., 1995; Zakaria, 1997) or 'communitarian democracy' (see for example, Chua, 1995). As Youngs (2015, p. 7) puts it, non-Western variations of democracy 'are about values, not institutional forms'. Similarly, Lawson (1995, p. 3) argues that non-Western democracy does not reject democracy as an institutional form, but may differ with regard to 'value assigned to the various elements of democracy'. As a political system, Asian democracy emphasizes the values of patron-client communitarianism, personalism, deference to authority, dominant political parties, and strong interventionist states (Neher, 1994). While Gilley (2014, p. 103) and Reilly (2015, p. 173) mention four distinctive common characteristics state-preserving, developmental, majoritarian, and consensus-based.

For Indonesia, all forms of democracy adopted by Asian countries should be respected. Thus, Indonesia has no intention to impose its own model on others. Instead, Indonesia employs the BDF as an instrument to promote democracy without force. As mentioned earlier, Western-led democracy promotion also adopts soft approaches such as socialization and assistance. However, such approaches are ineffective in encouraging non-Western countries to adopt democratic values. The use of material incentives, for example, is incapable of altering the views of other governments to accept democratic principles because the interpretation of such incentives differs from country to country. In other words, the West regards the principle of cultural universalism as the basis for democracy promotion; that is, all states, regardless of their cultural diversity, would be willing to adopt democracy if given material incentives (Striebinger, 2016). In short, Western-led democracy promotion overlooks cultural variations of targeted countries, when in fact, as we will see later, cultural dimensions have a great impact on how a society interprets external values prior to their adoption.

Indonesia is fully aware of the importance of democracy for the political development of Southeast Asia and beyond. According to Hassan Wirajuda, the development of democracy and human rights in the Asia-Pacific region is in stagnation compared to other regions. This is because the notion of development is always associated with economic development, not political development (Republika, 2016). For Indonesia, democracy is not only a political value, but also a source of soft power that is essential for the pursuit of national interests. In his speech at the opening of BDF in 2008, Yudhoyono stated that the twenty-first century is a soft power era, in contrast to the twentieth century of hard power. Much of this source of soft power comes from democracy. He also mentioned that the rise of Asia in the twenty-first century 'will also be increasingly determined by the challenge of democracy' (in Faizasyah, 2012, p. 142). This statement indicates that

Indonesia, along with Western countries, believes that democracy is a necessary condition to create peace, stability, and prosperity.

Nonetheless, Indonesia has no tendency to impose democracy abroad as Western powers do. The most prominent characteristic of Indonesia's democracy promotion is the relinquishing of the universalism characteristic of Western-led democracy promotion. Indonesia views democracy not as a single concept but understands that each country has its own conception of how democracy is applied. Yudhoyono asserted that:

> We have all come here as equals. We are not trying to impose a particular model on any of us. We are not here to debate on a commonly agreed definition of democracy–for which I believe there is none. We have come here not to preach, not to point fingers. Indeed, we have come here to share our respective experience, our thoughts and our ideas for cooperation to advance democracy (Sutiono et al., 2008, pp. 5–6).

BDF does not dictate other countries what kind of democracy that should be implanted. In addition, the BDF is not a forum to criticize, blame, or condemn non-democratic regimes. Instead, BDF provides an important platform where discussion on the democratization takes place in a non-confrontational setting. States considered 'undemocratic' would thus not feel threatened by the forum. This is the opposite of the more robust and direct Western style of democracy promotion (Chinyong, 2014). BDF is not designed to argue the best version of democracy or seek a single definition of democracy, because democracy is not a perfect system, has many forms, and is not a product of one process (Sutiono et al., 2009, p. 11). BDF is fundamentally different from typical Western multilateralism because it resembles a consultation forum where all participating countries have equal rights and positions. Although Indonesia is the founder and chair of BDF, Indonesia does not position itself as the most powerful party nor does it persuade others to follow its policy.

Indonesia's role in the BDF demonstrates the 'leading by example' approach, guided by the principles of tolerance and harmony. These principles cannot be separated from Indonesia's own historical background as a nation-state. The principle of tolerance is manifested in the state ideology *Pancasila* (Five Basic Principles): belief in God, humanity, national unity, democracy, and social justice. *Pancasila* provides a philosophical foundation for the 'ideology of tolerance' to become the most important value, capable of uniting all elements of a diverse nation (Ramage, 1995). This value was not adopted from outside but is extracted from the long history of Indonesia, reaching back to the Majapahit Kingdom (thirteenth–sixteenth century). *Sutasoma*, a book authored by Mpu Tantular in the 14th century, contains a phrase which later became the motto of the Indonesian state: '*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*' (Unity in Diversity). Tolerance also became an integral part of Indonesia's diplomatic conduct. In his speech at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Yudhoyono (2009) stated:

> Our reputation for tolerance and harmony is not something that happened just now. We have been working hard at it since time immemorial, in the process developing and nurturing a tradition of consultation toward consensus, '*Musyawarah untuk Mufakat*'. The majority does not impose its will on the minority. There is a thorough process of consultation before consensus is reached, a process in which all views are expressed and all interests are taken into account—including those of minorities. That is how we achieve harmony in an immensely pluralistic society.

In contrast to the Western approach, BDF does not use 'reward and punishment' strategies. Under this method, countries that are willing to adopt democracy will be given incentives, either material or political, such as diplomatic support in international politics, while those who refuse will be given punishment such as condemnations, economic sanctions, scapegoating, or even war. History tells us that most non-democratic countries tend to be the enemy of the West. Iran, Libya (Moammar Gaddafi), Iraq (Saddam Hussein), Syria, North Korea, Cuba (Fidel Castro), and Venezuela (Hugo Chavez) were countries categorized as 'enemy' by the West due to their authoritarian systems. Yet history also tells us that some authoritarian regimes have gained strong support from the West such as Indonesia (Suharto), Chile (Augusto Pinochet), and Saudi Arabia until now. In Asia, China and Myanmar have become the target of Western criticism, especially with regard to the prospect of democracy and human rights. BDF participants refrain from criticizing other political systems because it is regarded as an extremely sensitive issue. There is a sort of 'taboo' in the BDF talking about the bad reputation of other countries. There are no written rules to codify this taboo but most Asian countries understand that the goal of relationships is to achieve harmony and supportive social relationships within a family or society. Asian people are concerned with the feelings of others; they tend to anticipate the negative reactions of others with whom they interact (Nisbett, 2003, p. 59). This is the reason why Indonesia avoids the politics of confrontation in promoting democratic values towards the region.

This is not to say that Indonesia tolerates authoritarianism. Through BDF, Asian countries are expected to admit and adopt democratic values at the most fundamental level even though their implementation varies from country to country. The Asia-Pacific region is considerably the world's most diverse area, so variation in democracy is inevitable. Yudhoyono asserted in 2010 that '[D]emocracy continues to evolve and progress with its dynamics, which are unique to each country. Hence, we can never say that democracy has been achieved one and for all' (in Ginting et al., 2010, p. 17). This is quite different from the West where the idea of democracy is relatively more acceptable to all parties because of underpinning cultural similarities. As Bhikhu Parekh (in Held, 1993) put it, the root of democracy is individualism that places the individual as an integral part of society. Society is seen as a collection of individuals because individuals exist before society. In the West, equality is highly respected based on liberal philosophy. On the contrary, in Asia social relations are hierarchical depending on one's status in society. This cultural difference provides serious political consequences. In Asia, criticism can create disorder. Asian political culture is characterized by a patrimonial system in which the relationship between government and the people forms a patron-client; the people must obey the leader and the leader must protect the people as father protects his children (see for example, Anderson in Holt, 1972; Pye, 1985; Moertono, 2017).

Even though Asia has unique cultural characteristics that differ from the West, Asia has its own version of democratic ideas. Bhikhu Parekh (in Held, 1993, pp. 171–172) conveyed that Asian people ' … have to determine the value of themselves in the light of their cultural resources, needs, and circumstances, and that they cannot mechanically transplant them'. In other words, from an Asian perspective, democracy should not be understood as a monolithic ideological system, but rather interpreted based on cultural dimensions. Although the very idea of democracy emerges as a product of Western civilization, its basic values can be found in non-Western civilizations. For example, in Thailand,

democracy lives in harmony with the monarchy. Although the people are obliged to express their loyalty to the King unconditionally, but the King plays role as a guardian of democracy, not an absolute ruler. This is because Thai politics is deeply influenced by Buddhism in which a leader must possess '*metta*' or kindness and compassion. A leader must also have '*karuna*' or helpfulness and guidance toward goodness (Pye, 1985, p. 109). In Indonesia, too, democracy existed long before independence. In West Sumatra, the Minangkabau people are have long familiarized with the culture of democracy called '*demokrasi adat*' (indigenous democracy). There are two underlying principles of the Minangkabau democracy model. First, the principle of consensus in the decision-making process or *sakato* (*musyawarah mufakat* in Indonesian). Second, the principle of hierarchy of authority in resolving conflicts. Disputes should be settled starting from the lowest level. If consensus fails then go up to the higher level; or 'you go up the stairs and go down the ladder' (*bajanjang naiak, batanggo turun*) (Beckmann & Beckmann, 2013, p. 51).

Democracy promotion in a pluralistic region requires both cultural and political sensitivity. Indonesia has repeatedly convinced other countries that democracy does not necessarily means replacing national identity with a new one. Indonesian democracy is compatible with Islam as the majority religion, challenging most Western scholars' assumption that Islam is a barrier to democracy. Yudhoyono at the first BDF meeting asserted that Indonesia is a home for major civilizations: Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, even the West. Instead of contradicting each other, they can live in a harmonious atmosphere amid differences (Sutiono et al., 2008, p. 8). Indonesia does not dictate other countries to follow its path. Instead of saying 'my democracy is the best, you should follow us', it says, 'let's make democracy enrich our cultural diversity'. Consequently, each state is urged to seek a democratic model that best suits its historical and cultural background. Therefore, any form of foreign intervention is not allowed except when requested voluntarily.

> … democracy is not something that comes out on its own. Neither is it something that can be imposed from abroad. Democracy must be grown from its own society, through the creat [i]on of wider opportunities and greater room for the people's empowerment. Democracy that is imposed from abroad may lead to political complications and run out of steam (Ginting et al., 2010, p. 18).

The pluralist character of Indonesia's democracy promotion is also recognized by Joko Widodo (Jokowi), Yudhoyono's successor. Jokowi expressed optimism regarding democracy and pluralism during the 9th BDF opening speech of 2016, stating that all governments should encourage synergy between religion, democracy and pluralism. He stated that religion is important because it teaches compassion, pluralism is essential to unite differences, and democracy is essential to prosperity and peace (Tempo, 2016).

The principle of tolerance in the BDF also influenced by the norm of non-interference. As mentioned earlier, the idea of the BDF was inspired by the Bali Concord II which became an ASEAN agreement to establish an ASEAN Community with a commitment to uphold democracy and human rights in Southeast Asia. As a result, promoting democracy in the region cannot be done without referring to ASEAN norms. The non-interference principle constrains how states behave towards each other by avoiding intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries. According to Rizal Sukma, it is hard to think

about democracy promotion in ASEAN due to its principle of non-interference. Sukma argues that democracy building requires all countries to become democracies. This means that democracy can be built exclusively by individual countries; democratic aspiration arises from their own country, not other countries (Sukma, 2009, p. 7). This pessimistic view does not prevent Indonesia from promoting democracy. But for Indonesia, it is possible to do so by incorporating regional norms into BDF. BDF reflects how the principle of non-interference can go hand in hand with the agenda of democracy promotion. Indonesia does not intend to force democracy upon others because it could ruin cooperative relationships among participants. This approach is supported by other BDF delegates. The Qatari government, for example, states that democracy depends on how each country defines its own society, thus it is important to respect states' sovereignty and promote peaceful coexistence among peoples (Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). The East Timorese government has also expressed the importance of ASEAN norms, especially the non-interference principle as a framework for the BDF (Government of Timor Leste, 2014). In essence, if an international relations policy is expected to succeed in Asia, then countries' norms and culture must be considered as crucial variables.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that there is no single approach in promoting democracy. The Western approaches, despite involving soft means, are universalist in nature and tend to ignore cultural dimensions of targeted countries. Borrowing a phrase from Rudyard Kipling, the belief in the 'white man's burden' has led the West think that they have a moral responsibility in spreading their values to the rest of the world. Consequently, being democratic is equal to adopting Western (liberal) values regardless of a society's unique characteristics. In fact, any ideology exported to another country will inevitably interact with the cultural dimensions of the target community. Most non-Western societies are resistant to absorbing external values because of their own pre-existing deep-rooted traditions. Before it can be adopted, societies will filter new values and determine whether or not they fit with local culture. In short, democracy promotion does not follow a 'one size fits all' rule.

In contrast to Western-led democracy promotion, the BDF has become a platform to promote democracy from a different angle. Instead of using 'naming and shaming' strategy, the BDF emphasizes on dialogue and tolerance. Through BDF, Indonesia employs a soft approach called 'leading by tolerant example'. It means that Indonesia does not force participants to adopt democracy nor does it criticize the internal affairs of other countries. *Pancasila* as the national ideology of tolerance has a great impact on Indonesia's external relations. In addition, regional norms of non-interference also play a crucial role in constraining the style of Indonesia's democracy promotion. The BDF also shows that cultural diversity is not a barrier to democratic development. Instead, democracy can go hand in hand with local cultures as exemplified by Thailand with Buddhism and Indonesia with Islam. Pluralism should replace universalist paradigms in promoting democracy in non-Western societies.

However, employing tolerance to democratize 'undemocratic' regimes seems paradoxical. How can one encourage democracy using 'you are your own' approach? On one hand, the strategy of tolerance may be successful in convincing participants of the BDF that

democracy matters. There have not been any negative reactions from BDF participants regarding Indonesia's soft approach. China's delegation, for example, stated that the BDF 'provides an important platform for countries with various cultural backgrounds and in different stages of development to hold dialogues and discussions on the issue of democracy' (China Embassy, 2011). Tan Wu Meng of Singapore argued that the BDF plays an important role in promoting democracy with Asian characteristics since 'there is no one-size-fits-all approach to democratic governance' (Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). Furthermore, the government of the Philippines also mentioned that the BDF accurately represents ASEAN's preferred mode of engagement, tending to consider other members as brothers to embrace democratic values (Official Gazette, 2014). Positive comments have also been expressed by the then-Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs and later Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, who said the BDF was not 'a public lecture from the West to the East' but rather an 'indigenous project within Asia itself' (Australian Former Minister for Foreign Affairs, 2010). Even the US government praised the BDF that 'promotes peaceful transitions to democracy while respecting varied processes of democratization' (US Department of State, 2010). In short, BDF participants agree that democracy is a better political system than authoritarianism. On the other hand, it is hard to believe that democratization occurs by simply letting others to choose their own preferences, and because of its consultative nature, the BDF lacks the power to encourage democratization. Changing political systems in a country is not an easy task. However, the BDF remains important for the agenda of democracy promotion in Asia-Pacific. Indonesia's consistency in supporting the BDF will be a test case of its seriousness in projecting its identity as the world's third largest democracy.

This paper underscores the different strategy of democracy promotion by Indonesia as an Asian country. It is important to note that there is no golden standard to guarantee that any democracy promotion will be effective in altering other countries political system. Several studies have shown that one typical instrument of Western style democracy promotion—financial assistance—does not actually succeed in promoting democracy in targeted countries (see for example, Djankov et al., 2008; Grimm & Mathis, 2017; Knack, 2004; Savage, 2015; Scott & Steele, 2005). Crawford (1997, p. 102) found that 'aid sanctions had been successful in only a minority of cases'. Similarly, Collins (2009, p. 385) concluded that 'In many cases incentives and aid have failed completely to induce democratic reform'. In addition, there has not been any direct impact identified between foreign aid and democratization since it depends on both external conditionalities such as geopolitical context (Dunning, 2004) and the role of international actors (Brown, 2005) and domestic conditionalities such as dictator's decisions over whether to democratize (Wright, 2009) and survival strategy of the recipient country's political regime (Bader & Faust, 2014). Thus, the key variable of the effectiveness of democracy promotion is not determined by the instrument employed by democracy promoter but how they deal with the conditionality that inhibit democratization. Indonesia's soft approach in the BDF is an alternative strategy for democracy promotion. Its effectiveness depends largely on how BDF participants overcome their own resistance to adopt democratic principles. Besides, democratization never takes place overnight; it requires great commitment and consistency of all to prevent it from backwards.

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Notes on contributor

Mohamad Rosyidin is an assistant professor at the Department of International Relations Universitas Diponegoro. He holds BA from Universitas Jember and MA from Universitas Gadjah Mada. His research interests include Indonesia's foreign policy, constructivism in international relations, culture and foreign policy, security in Southeast Asia, and non-Western international relations theory. His recent books are Teori Hubungan Internasional: Dari Perspektif Klasik sampai Non-Barat (2020), Politik Luar Negeri Indonesia dalam Perspektif Budaya Jawa: Dari Sukarno sampai Joko Widodo (2020), and Indonesia Menuju Kekuatan Global Abad-21: Politik Luar Negeri Joko Widodo (2019). His articles appear in South East Asia Research, East Asia, Asia-Pacific Social Science Review, Contemporary Security Policy, global Responsibility to Protect, and International Politics. He can be reached at: mohamad.rosyidin@gmail.com or mohamadrosyidin@lecturer.undip.ac.id

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