

EXTENDING THE DISCOURSE OF INDONESIAN DIASPORA: UNPACKING THE STRATEGIC VALUES OF INDONESIAN DIASPORA TOWARDS THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF INDONESIA

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Abstract

The discourse on diaspora roles among scholars and government officials has gained momentum in recent decades, confirming its important position in a country's advancement. In the context of the Indonesian Diaspora, the Indonesian government has recognized that it has great significance as it can contribute to national development. Indonesian Diaspora, spread across five regions in the world, accounting for roughly 6-8 million diasporas where 4.7 million of them have been officially documented. Responding to such development, the Indonesian government convened the Congress of Indonesian Diaspora (CID) to cultivate its capacities to advance Indonesia's development. This article explores the strategic values of the Indonesian Diaspora and the strategic role of CID in mobilizing their capacities for Indonesia's national development. This article uses the concept of diaspora and diaspora engagement to comprehend Indonesian Diaspora dynamics further. By employing those concepts, this article eventually argues that Indonesian diasporas have vital resources and potentialities pervading the compactness of knowledge, ideas, skills, capital, expertise, technology and global networks essential to national development. Nevertheless, they are thousands of unconnected dots with immense potential but tenuous connectivity towards their home government. This article further argues that the CID presence has assisted the Indonesian government in resolving those gaps as it has performed strategic roles in cultivating, accommodating, harmonizing, solidifying, and further mobilizing the Diaspora's capacities and resources for national development.

Keywords: Diaspora, Indonesian Diaspora, national development, Congress of Indonesian Diaspora (CID)

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the trend of diasporas' increasing role in the national development of their country of origin has gained much attention among scholars and government officials. The Diaspora's capacities encompassing the denseness of capital, knowledge, skills, technology, expertise, ideas, and networks have contributed magnificently towards the development of several developing countries such as China and India, thus causing them to rise powers in global politics and economy. This backdrop has prompted an inquiry about the increasing role of Diaspora in other developing country like Indonesia. It is deemed necessary since it has become a country that slowly but confidently standouts in the global political-economic constellation, proven through its stable economic performance during the global financial crisis in 2008 and its membership in the G-20. In this respect, Indonesia has also had quite a large number of diasporas around the world, accounting for roughly 6-8 million diasporas, where 4.7 million of them have been officially documented (Bachtiar 2015, xvii-xix). Given the immense number of Indonesian Diasporas abroad, the Indonesian government has recognized that they have substantial strategic values to be explored similarly to Chinese and Indian Diasporas. Accordingly, it has then resolved to give them greater attention for the past five years by

convening the Congress of Indonesian Diaspora (CID) in 2012 in Los Angeles, USA and 2013 and 2015 in Jakarta, Indonesia. In this regard, the CID has been directed to accommodate, govern, and synergize the Indonesian Diaspora's interests, voices, and resources to contribute to Indonesian national development. With this background, this article then extends several research questions encompassing "what are the strategic values of Indonesian Diaspora? Why are they essential for the national development of Indonesia? Then what and how is the strategic role of CID in mobilizing the Indonesian Diaspora's resources for national development? Furthermore, has it been enough to encounter the Indonesian Diaspora's strategic values and aspirations? Having these questions, therefore, this article aims to investigate the strategic values of Indonesian diasporas further, the roles of CID in mobilizing their capacities to contribute to fostering Indonesia's national development, and the criticism regarding the effectiveness of CID in achieving its objectives (Bachtiar 2015, xvii-xxiv; Djalal 2013, vii-xi; Desk Diaspora Indonesia 2013).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DIASPORA, DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT, AND INDONESIAN DIASPORA

Before addressing all the research questions mentioned above, it is essential to define the concept of Diaspora. A diaspora is generally defined as a group of people living permanently or temporarily outside the area in which they or their ancestors lived for a long time. It also refers to the population movements from its original homeland. Terminologically, it comes from a Greek word of 'diaspeirein', generated from two sub-words of 'dia' meaning across and 'speirein' meaning scatter. In the past, it historically referred to the involuntary mass dispersions of the Jews people from Judea, the Greeks from Constantinople after its fall, and the Irish people during the Irish famine. The term Diaspora has become a global phenomenon where its meaning has evolved following the extended causes of people's movements. It has now covered not just involuntary movements of people across the border due to conflicts, wars, persecution, slavery, and natural disaster like in the case of asylum seekers and refugees, but also voluntary movements of people for many purposes like to have a better economic life, trade, education, marriage, jobs and other reasons. Besides those scopes of Diaspora, its discourse has even been extended to cover diaspora engagement. Accordingly, it is related to any policies advanced by migrant-sending states to engage their diasporas. At this juncture, a diaspora engagement policy is a purposive endeavour crafted by a government to maintain Diaspora's bonds and contributions at home. It could be through micro-level initiatives or ad hoc practices across different state agencies. Still, they are coordinated under macro-level initiatives of the government. In other words, a diaspora engagement policy could be understood as a deliberate and coherent state system linked with its diasporas. Eventually, a government has frequently used it to reconstruct the concept of Diaspora, aiming to control its populations overseas and to further mobilize its resources for its interests (Muhidin & Utomo 2015, 94-95; Baubock & Faist 2010, 11; Betts 2011, 579).

In the context of the Indonesian Diaspora, it is generally defined as Indonesian people or foreign nationals with Indonesian bloodlines staying overseas temporarily and permanently. Furthermore, the Indonesian government, through CID I had reconstructed and declared the

concept of Indonesian Diaspora to cover four categories, comprising: 1) Indonesians staying abroad that still legally hold Indonesian passports; 2) Indonesians who have become foreign nationals resulting from the naturalization process and do not hold Indonesian passport anymore; 3) Foreign nationals who have parents or ancestors coming from Indonesia; and 4) Foreign nationals who do not have any ancestral ties with Indonesia but they had ever stayed for a long time in it and have a great sense of belonging to the country. The CID initiator, Ambassador Dino Patti Djalal, illustrated that Paul Wolfowitz, former US Ambassador in Indonesia, is Indonesian Diaspora in this category since he had lived in Indonesia for a long time and is even fluent in speaking the Indonesian language. Overall, the story of Indonesian diasporas has existed for centuries, resulting from their historical trading activities, ethnic conflicts, wars, discrimination, expectations for a better life after the initial period of independence, and even globalization. Today, Indonesian diasporas can be found worldwide (Satrio 2014; Bachtiar 2015, xvii).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Dynamics of Indonesian Diaspora: Unpacking Indonesian Diaspora and Congress of Indonesian Diaspora (Cid) Strategic Values

3.1 The Challenges Of Indonesia's National Development And The Strategic Values Of Its Diaspora In Addressing Those Challenges

In the last decade, Indonesia has experienced progress in many sectors, including politics, economics, socio-cultural, Defence and security. With a total population of 250 million people, reckoned as the 4th largest in the world, it has performed to be more influential and has shown its leadership role in many international institutions such as G20, ASEAN, APEC, ARF, et cetera. Besides that, it has also had a stable economic growth of roughly around 5% each year. Nevertheless, behind all those predicates and achievements, it still faces many problems to realize a more prosperous and peaceful nation. It still encounters many challenges in its national development process. Accordingly, the Indonesian economic structure still focuses on agriculture, extractive industries, and exports of natural resources. Meanwhile, the industries oriented toward manufacturing goods are still limited. Besides that, the infrastructures supporting economic and business activities are still inadequate. They are problematic since they are essential to reduce transportation and logistical costs, leading to the product price reduction and its competitiveness both in the domestic and international market and thus would contribute to increasing economic growth. Not only that, Indonesia still struggles to improve the quality of its human resources, considering that 50% of Indonesian workers have elementary school diplomas and just around 8% of them have university degrees. Additionally, Indonesia's development imbalance between urban and rural areas is still prevalent (MP3EI 2011, 19-20).

3.2 The Strategic Values of Indonesian Diasporas

Considering all the problems above and challenges the Indonesian government faces, it is essential to involve Indonesian diasporas to contribute to national development. They are

communities with immense potentialities and resources, encompassing the denseness of capital, knowledge, skills, technology, expertise, ideas, and global networks which are substantial to address all those issues. There are roughly 8 million Indonesian diasporas overseas, where 4.7 million have been officially documented in 132 Indonesian representatives (Embassies & Consulates) abroad, distributed in 5 regions. They are both native Indonesians and foreign people of Indonesian descent with various professions, including entrepreneurs, researchers, students, professional workers, artists, engineers, teachers, politicians, ship crew, preachers, migrant workers, et cetera. Thereby, with all professions and modalities, they are assets to the Indonesian government. Accordingly, Indonesian President Joko Widodo emphasized their significance during his recent visit to Sydney, Australia, in February 2017, hoping that Indonesian diasporas in Australia could return home and contribute their expertise and knowledge to national development. He also further expects those diasporas still living abroad to promote Indonesia to foreigners continuously. Indonesian Diaspora has strategic values for the country (Diplomacy Magazine 2013, 5; Bachtiar 2015, xviii-xix; Indonesian Diaspora Network 2017). They can be further comprehended in the sectors as follows:

3.2.1 Capital and Investment

Indonesian diasporas are communities with a capital denseness needed to advance national development. Accordingly, they can financially contribute to the country through remittances and foreign direct investment (FDI). For instance, Indonesian migrant workers abroad have contributed to national income from remittances sent to their families and friends living in Indonesia. The Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BNP2TKI) exposed that Indonesia's total amount of remittances accepted in 2013 accounted for US\$ 7.4 billion. Such remittances are essential since they are one of the country's foreign income streams, considered even more substantial than the official development aid (ODA) provided by donor agencies/countries. Besides that, at the household level, those remittances are crucial to fulfilling the daily household expenditures of migrant workers' families in their home country. Furthermore, they can also be used for credits mobilization, savings, and investments. Therefore, in other words, they could become catalyzers towards government endeavours in eradicating poverty in Indonesia by effectively contributing to the grassroots economic development, particularly towards the households in rural areas facing immense hardship towards financial inclusion (IFAD 2007, 2; Bachtiar 2015, 19).

Besides migrant workers, Indonesian diasporas could individually extend a substantial foreign direct investment (FDI) contribution to the country. Many prominent Indonesian diasporas have such capacities. One of them, for instance, is Iwan Sunito, who has now become an Australian citizen. He is the CEO and Founder of Crown Group Holdings, one of Australia's largest property companies. In CID 2015 in Jakarta, he met with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) and affirmed that he was preparing for an investment project in the property sector worth US\$ 11.5 billion in Jakarta. From this example, it can be comprehended that Indonesian diasporas have immense resources to become potential considerable FDI investors. Not only that, they could even become an effective 'middleman' channeling FDI for Indonesia. Chinese diasporas have contributed around 60-70% of total FDI towards China's economic

development. Therefore, seeing such benefits, the Indonesian government should embrace more Indonesian diaspora entrepreneurs to contribute to national development (Djalal 2013, 88-136; Bisnis Properti 2013).

3.2.2 Networks Development

Besides the capital and investment significance of Indonesian diasporas, they also have a broad international network essential to advance Indonesia's economic interest. In this regard, they can assist the expansion and enhancement of Indonesia's trade ties with many countries, directed to increase exports of Indonesian products. It is evident how the Chinese Diaspora's social and business networks worldwide have helped China to overcome international trade barriers and further elevate its export values. Meanwhile, Korean diasporas in the US have become the middleman of successfully penetrating Korean cars into the US market. Another fact also shows that a double increase in Asian skilled migration in Canada has caused a 74% increase in Asian imports in Canada. The cultivation of international business and social networks of 8 million Indonesian diasporas would unleash immense economic and business opportunities similar to those countries (Diplomacy Magazine 2013, 8; Muhidin & Utomo 2015, 99).

3.2.3 Knowledge, Technology, and Entrepreneurship

Other strategic values possessed by Indonesian diasporas are knowledge, technology, and entrepreneurship skills. They are undoubtedly essential and intertwined with national development. In those criteria, many Indonesian Diasporas have immensely contributed to Indonesia's national development. Some of them are Anis Baswedan and Nadiem Makarim. In this regard, Anis Baswedan, for instance, had experienced living, studying, and working in the US. Having such experiences, he has then extended many contributions to advancing education in Indonesia by establishing Indonesian National Teaching Movement in 2010, recruiting the best and fresh graduates from many universities in Indonesia as temporary teachers for one year to teach in rural areas across Indonesia. It is directed to fulfil the lack of teacher squads in those areas, ensuring education and capacity building towards human resources can be evenly enjoyed at the grassroots level across the country, and to give them leadership experiences and grass root understandings simultaneously. For him, this is essential since education is the key to development (Indonesia Mengajar 2017).

Unlike Anis Baswedan, Nadiem Makarim has contributed to Indonesia's development in the technological and entrepreneurship sectors. To be specific, he is one of the phenomenal Indonesian Diasporas. After finishing his study at Harvard Business School, he established an innovative motor taxi technological company, namely GO-JEK Indonesia, in January 2015, providing services not only in public transportation but also in food delivery, massage, cleaning, shopping, and ticketing services in online basis through android and iOS apps ordering. In this regard, his company aims to open more jobs for Indonesians, further increase their prosperity in informal sectors, and simultaneously help consumers living in big cities in Indonesia to effectively encounter their activities against the traffic congestions they face every day. Since its establishment, it has employed roughly 200.000 motorcycle drivers to carry out

all the services above in 25 big cities in Indonesia. The values of technological entrepreneurship extended by Makarim are precious and have even made real benefits by creating more jobs for Indonesians and increasing the consumer's easiness in meeting their daily needs (Go-Jek Indonesia 2017). After all, the contributions of Baswedan and Makarim are just a few of the many kinds of contributions that Indonesian Diasporas can extend. Therefore, seeing their immense contributions to Indonesia in educational and technological entrepreneurship sectors, it is then imperative for the Indonesian government to further accommodate them and other Indonesian Diasporas to actualize their strategic values and resources for national development.

3.3 The Strategic Roles of CID: Mobilizing the Capacities of Indonesian Diasporas for National Development.

From the previous segment, it has been clear that Indonesian Diasporas are assets to the country. However, to maximize its potential for national development, the Indonesian government needs to ensure the existence of synergy and connectivity between them. At these junctures, the CID was then initiated by Indonesian Ambassador for the US Dino Patti Djalal, representing the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, DC., in cooperation with the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Indonesia. Upon its initiation, he asserted that Indonesian Diasporas are assets the government has not maximized in advancing national development. He then personified them as "thousands of unconnected dots", having huge potencies but weak connections with the home government. Therefore, through his initiation, the Indonesian government commenced three CIDs, encompassing the CID I in Los Angeles, the USA, in 2012, involving 2000 diaspora participants, and the subsequent CID II in 2013 and CID III in 2015 in Jakarta, Indonesia, involving 4000 and 7000 diaspora and non-diaspora participants respectively. Accordingly, they have extended strategic roles in accommodating, synergizing, solidifying, and further mobilizing the Diaspora's capacities and resources for national development (Desk Diaspora Indonesia 2013, 3-5; Bachtiar 2015, ix-xi).

3.3.1 How Does CID Work?

The initial works of CID to achieve the purposes above were started on CID I, where it generated the "Declaration of Indonesian Diaspora", extending the awareness to become a diaspora and the commitment to contribute to the motherland. Furthermore, it generated several talking points related to the Indonesian Diaspora's aspirations, including dual citizenship, the easiness of acquiring a visa, the Diaspora's representation in the national parliament, and the establishment of the global Indonesian Diaspora Network (IDN). Eventually, CID I instigated two institutions besides IDN as Indonesian Diaspora Business Council (IDBC) and Desk Diaspora Indonesia (DDI). In detail, IDN extends functions as an interaction and aspiration centre of Indonesian diasporas living in certain countries assigned to channel their aspirations towards the stakeholders at home. It has now had 60 Chapters in more than 26 countries. Meanwhile, IDBC aims to facilitate the development of the Indonesian Diaspora's careers, businesses, and entrepreneurship at home and abroad and to bridge Indonesian diaspora businesses with domestic business actors. Furthermore, DDI, based in the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jakarta, is tasked to channel the activities of IDN and IDBC with the government and other stakeholders in Indonesia (Diplomacy Magazine 2013, 9; Bachtiar 2015,

ix-xiv)

After all, those three institutions intensely coordinated to prepare and synergize the interests and aspirations of Indonesian Diasporas for further deliberations in CID II and III. Meanwhile, in the CID II and III, the government created Task Forces involving all diaspora participants and related Ministries to deliberate the issues exposed by DDI, IDN, and IDBC and to formulate policy recommendations for the government subsequently. In the Task Force's deliberations, the issues gaining lots of attention are similar to those in CID I. However, despite such similarities, those issues had attained many progressions within CID II and III. For instance, in CID II and III, Indonesian Diasporas had intense talks with the Department of Immigration of Law Enforcement Ministry about the legislation of government Act No.6/2011 that will allow foreign national's ex.

Indonesian citizens to acquire permanent stay permit cards. Furthermore, they had also received the approval of a material test from the Indonesian Constitutional Court and General Election Commission on the Diaspora's representation in the national parliament. Besides that, CID II and III also intensely discussed the application of multiple entry visas for Indonesian diaspora entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, despite the difficulties of dual citizenship realization, the government still tries to move such an agenda forward. Accordingly, Indonesian President Joko Widodo had conveyed to Indonesian diasporas during his visit to the US in early 2015 that the government would soon finalize the bill draft on dual citizenship and further include it in the National Legislation Program 2015-2019 (Desk Diaspora Indonesia 2013, 14; Bachtiar 2015, ix-xxiv, 97-105, Indonesian Diaspora Network 2017). Eventually, these progressions prove how CID has augmented the government's attention and response to the Indonesian Diaspora's aspirations.

Overall, observing the dynamics of CID processes in accommodating and facilitating the aspirations of Indonesian Diasporas, it is then imperative for the Indonesian government to actively and continuously supervise, respond, and realize them. Their proactive participation in CID I, II, and III exhausting their thought, time, and money to participate in the congress, have indicated that they want to contribute to the betterment of Indonesia. Therefore, the government must see those events as momentums in mobilizing the potentialities, capacities, and resources of Indonesian Diasporas for the development of Indonesia (Desk Diaspora Indonesia 2013, 3-14).

3.3.2 Has CID been enough to encounter the Indonesian Diaspora's strategic values and aspirations?

In the previous section, it has been evident that the institutionalization of CID has increased the government's attention toward Indonesian Diasporas. Still, many Indonesian Diasporas have criticized CID and the Indonesian government for not doing enough to cater for their interests and aspirations. It is particularly evident in the slow realization of dual citizenship due to the resistance of some parties in government, the national parliament, and general societies, which highly consider the security issues related to Diasporas, such as terrorism and border security. Nevertheless, despite the resistance, they have a high expectation of the government

on this issue. It has been crucial for them since it will crystallize the mutual ties and interests between the Indonesian government and its Diasporas. Consequently, it will reaffirm the government's recognition and further treatment of their status, thus formalizing their rights and responsibilities to the nation. These will give them more ease and leeway to contribute and mobilize their potential for national development (Artharini 2016; Al-Arief 2015, 44).

3.4 The Lesson Learns of Dual Citizenship Policy from the Philippines

To grant dual citizenship to Indonesian Diasporas, the Indonesian government could examine other countries' experiences that have implemented dual citizenship schemes for their Diasporas. Currently, at least 44 countries have applied for dual citizenship to their Diasporas, in which their Diasporas do not lose their original citizenship even if they become citizens of other countries. Accordingly, these countries have adjusted their immigration and citizenship policies to tremendously enable their Diaspora to contribute to the nation. Concurrently, their application for dual citizenship further displays the state's recognition of their Diaspora as part of an "extended nation", thus giving them a sense of inclusiveness and more access and freedom to manoeuvre both at home and abroad so that they can maximize their potentialities for their country's development. This policy has delivered a substantial result to those countries, seeing how they can obtain 78% higher remittance and asset circulations from their Diasporas than other countries (Al-Arief 2015, 45).

The benefits of the dual citizenship policy toward Diasporas have been apparent in the case of the Philippines. It has implemented dual citizenship policies since 2003 under The Citizenship Retention, and Reacquisition Act of 2003, extending that every Philippine citizen born in the Philippines and who has later become another country's citizen are allowed to have all those citizens altogether. Thereby, this policy has gradually generated significant economic benefits for the Philippines. Accordingly, the report of the Philippines' National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) in 2013 confirmed such results, exposing that it had received remittances worth US\$ 28 billion in 2013 or 4 times larger than the remittances obtained by the Indonesian government in the same period.

This figure had even become the fourth largest in the world after China, India, and Mexico in 2013. Additionally, those remittances had been generated by Filipino diasporas in the US, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, UK, and Japan. Overall, in 2013, they surpassed the total FDI and ODA received by the Philippines government, accounting for US\$ 3.86 billion and US\$ 2.7 billion, respectively. Therefore, considering such immense economic benefits gained by the Philippines after implementing the dual citizenship policy towards its Diasporas, it is then necessary for the Indonesian government to follow such practice. Still, it must be applied after a careful and deliberate government examination of its costs and benefits. For this sake, Indonesian policymakers and epistemic communities entangled with Diaspora engagement policy making need to extend their future research agendas to further deeply investigate the costs and benefits of dual citizenship policy (Al-Arief 2015, 45-48; Artharini 2016).

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it has been clear that Indonesian Diasporas have immense strategic values for national development. They could be in the form of capital, knowledge, skills, technology, expertise, entrepreneurship, ideas, and global networks. All of them are assets for Indonesia. Therefore, the government's move to commence CID is a way forward since it has accommodated their interests and aspirations and further mobilized their resources for the betterment of Indonesia. Nevertheless, it could not move even further to mobilize the Indonesian Diaspora's resources if it could not resolve to implement its dual citizenship policy proposal. For them, this has been crucial to increase their recognition and inclusiveness in the homeland and give them more room to maneuver both at home and abroad for Indonesia's national development.

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