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Islamic Identity, Elite Interest and Foreign Policy in Indonesia

Identitas Islam, Kepentingan Elit dan Kebijakan Luar Negeri di Indonesia

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the role of Islam as the marker of identity in Indonesia’s participation in international affairs. It argues that Islam’s role has faced constraints derived from the secular nature of the state’s identity, the politics involving elite’s interest and external environments. The argument is developed into three interrelated sections. The first section discusses the politics of identity construction in Indonesia. The second section looks at how elite politics and interests halt the intrusion of Islam in governance affairs. The third section brings the focus of discussion on the evolving Jakarta’s foreign relations and policy that have been devoid of substantive Islamic values – such mainly as Muslim solidarity. This article focuses on examining the role of Islam in the evolution of Indonesia’s foreign policy. It demonstrates that Islam’s role has faced constraints shaped by the nature of the state’s identity, elite interest and policy on Islam, and external situations. The formation of Indonesian national identity was characterized by the disputation between religious and secular expressions. The religious voice was represented by Islamic political groups who aspired for the establishment of an Indonesian state based on Islam. Against Islamic identity, the secular movements favoured a state free from religious identifications, including that of Islam.

Keyword : foreign, policy, , Islamic, identity, elite, interest, ,,

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