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**LEARNING FROM PAST POLICY:  
ASSESSING UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY OVER INDONESIA IN  
RESOLVING THE 1999 EAST TIMOR CRISIS**

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**Abstrak**

*Mengevaluasi luaran kebijakan luar negeri terdahulu merupakan hal yang penting bagi negara manapun guna mempelajari wawasan mengenai kebijakan, mengapresiasi pengalaman, dan memperbaiki praktik kebijakan luar negeri di masa depan. Untuk mendapatkan wawasan tersebut, tulisan ini menggunakan kerangka yang digagas oleh Baldwin dalam menilai kesuksesan dan kegagalan kebijakan luar negeri. Melalui studi kasus, artikel ini menilai upaya Amerika Serikat (A.S.) untuk memengaruhi Indonesia dalam menyelesaikan krisis kemanusiaan di Timor Timur pada tahun 1999. Keputusan Presiden Clinton dalam memengaruhi Indonesia ditujukan untuk mengubah kebijakan Indonesia sembari mendapatkan dukungan dari aliansi A.S. Artikel ini menemukan bahwa keputusan Clinton membuahkan kesuksesan. Temuan ini didasarkan pada beberapa faktor: (1) upaya yang dilakukan A.S. secara efektif berhasil mencapai tujuan primer dan sekunder dengan keberhasilan yang sangat tinggi; (2) upaya tersebut dilakukan dengan konsekuensi yang minim bagi A.S.; (3) upaya tersebut menimbulkan konsekuensi yang tinggi bagi Indonesia; (4) meningkatnya kepentingan Clinton memperkuat komitmen A.S. untuk memengaruhi Indonesia; dan (5) Clinton berhasil melakukan upaya sulitnya mengingat lebih tingginya kepentingan Indonesia di Timor Timur. Penemuan-penemuan tersebut memberikan pelajaran penting bagi pemangku kebijakan luar negeri A.S. dan Indonesia dalam memetakan hubungan bagi kedua negara di masa depan.*

**Kata kunci:**

*analisis kebijakan luar negeri, evaluasi Kebijakan luar negeri, Amerika Serikat, Indonesia, Timor-Leste*

**Abstract**

*Assessing the output of past foreign policy is instrumental for any country to learn policy-relevant insights, to appreciate its experience, and to improve its future conduct. To glean such insights, this article borrows Baldwin's framework in assessing the success and failure in foreign policy. Using a case study analysis, it assesses the United States' (U.S.) influence attempt towards Indonesia to resolve the 1999 East Timor humanitarian crisis. President Clinton's decision to undergo an influence attempt primarily aimed to change Indonesia's policy while gaining support from U.S. allies in the process. The article finds that Clinton's decision was a highly successful attempt. This finding is based on several factors: (1) the attempt effectively attained the intended primary and secondary goals at a considerably high degree; (2) it was conducted at a considerably low cost for the U.S.; (3) it inflicted a high cost towards Indonesia; (4) the increase in Clinton's stake strengthened the U.S. resolve to pursue the influence attempt; and (5) Clinton had successfully overcome the difficult undertaking as Indonesia possessed higher stake over East Timor. These findings provide some lessons for both U.S. and Indonesian foreign policymakers to chart future relations for the two nations.*

**Keywords:**

*foreign policy analysis, foreign policy evaluation, United States of America, Indonesia, Timor-Leste*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Assessing the past foreign policy is vital for the betterment of any nation's future foreign policymaking. This notion suggests that if any country aims to continuously improve its conduct of foreign policy, it ought to learn from its experience no matter how hard and unappealing the lessons of its history.<sup>1</sup> One subfield that is dedicated to studying the links between the theory and practice of International Relations (IR) is the study of foreign policy analysis (FPA) (Hudson & Vore, 1995). This subfield mainly scrutinises various aspects in the conduct of foreign policy and also contributes to the production of policy-relevant knowledge for decision-makers (Walt, 2005).

Within the vast literature on FPA, scholars also engage with the topic of Foreign Policy Evaluation (FPE): a topic that specifically focuses on the output of foreign policy, rather than the process of a particular country's foreign policymaking. Yet despite its valuable insights for both the policy and the academic community, the body of literature published in both academic as well as professional journals fairly neglects such an important topic (Baldwin, 2000). As David Baldwin (2000, pp. 168-170) contemplates, one of the reasons that might lead the study of foreign policy evaluation remains to be neglected is its deeply fragmented nature, full of analytical and conceptual anarchy. In addition, the empirical research dedicated to the FPE—like its main subfields, FPA—predominantly revolves around the experience of great power's foreign policy, mostly Western democracies like the United States (U.S.).<sup>2</sup> As a result, the study on the topic of lesser power foreign policy evaluation remains to be understudied.

To fill in this caveat, this article intends to contribute an empirical analysis on FPE by examining the case of U.S. foreign policy on Indonesia in resolving the 1999 East Timor crisis. The 1999 East Timor Crisis has been a widely discussed phenomenon in the broader literature on political science—and within the IR scholarship as well—especially in the U.S.-Indonesia relations.<sup>3</sup> Despite the vast amount of political science and IR scholarship on this topic, scholars have devoted little attention to exploiting the FPE angle on this topic. Hence, this academic exercise enriches both the FPE research agenda as well as the discussion on U.S.-Indonesia diplomatic relations.

To produce salient FPE insights against this case, the article posits the research question: did U.S. policymakers produce an effective and successful foreign policy over Indonesia to resolve the 1999 East Timor Crisis? What are the key criteria that can be accounted for such success or failure? More importantly, what is the lesson learned from this episode of U.S. foreign policy for both American and Indonesia's foreign

policy-makers? Borrowing David A. Baldwin's (2000) framework in determining the success and failure in foreign policy, the article argues that U.S. foreign policy was highly successful based on three criteria: it attained the intended goals at a considerably high degree; the attempt incurred a considerably low cost for the U.S. while inflicting the target state with a high cost; and for the U.S. as the policy user, it involved a relatively lower stake compared to Indonesia which had a relatively higher stake in the issue.

This article proceeds in the following manner to discuss this argument in a more structured manner. First, it starts by outlining Baldwin's (2000, pp. 171-176) criteria in assessing foreign policy success and failure as the main analytical framework. Following Baldwin's framework, this article outlines process tracing in a case study setting as the research methodology. It then examines Clinton's decision as an influence attempt towards Indonesia based on Baldwin's criteria. Finally, it concludes with the lessons learned for both U.S. and Indonesia policy-makers to contemplate upon charting the future relations for two nations by weighing the utility of the past policy against the context and settings whereby the policy option was invoked.

### ***ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK***

Success seems to be a vague concept, henceforth estimating the evaluation of successful and failed foreign policy brings at least another additional layer of analytical difficulty. To address the problem, this article employs one of the tools of foreign policy analysis coined by David A. Baldwin (2000). Baldwin asserts that one needs to consider at least three criteria to assess the success and failure in foreign policy: effectiveness in attaining goals; cost incurred both to the user and the target; and stakes for the user and the target.

#### **Effectiveness in Attaining Goals**

Baldwin (2000, pp. 173-174) notes that since policies are goal-oriented, effectiveness in attaining goals constitutes one of the essential criteria in estimating the success and failure in foreign policy. Furthermore, he adds three propositions in building the argument in determining the effectiveness in attaining goals: policy usually pursue multiple goals with multiple targets; policy change is not the same with behavioural change; and Herbert Simon's (1947, p. 176) argument that goal attainment is only a matter of degree. Complementing these three points, Baldwin also acknowledges Robert Dahl's (1957) argument that policy may produce a negative effect in terms of goal attainment.

### **Cost to the User and the Target**

The second criterion involves the cost incurred both for the user in conducting the influence attempt, as well as the cost affected—potentially and immediately—to the target states. Baldwin borrows the rationale in taking cost as one of the user-side criteria to estimate policy success from Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom. According to Dahl and Lindblom (1953, pp. 38-39), any policy should be rationally designed to maximise the net goal achievement to the extent it is also efficient. Regrettably, as Baldwin adds, scholars rarely incorporate cost as the criteria in estimating the success of foreign policy instruments. On the other hand, the cost to the target of an influence attempt is more often to be incorporated as a measure to estimate policy success (Dahl, 1976). In Baldwin's (2000, p. 175) word, "the higher the cost for non-compliance ... the more successful it is." Baldwin (2000, p. 175) also considers the opposing notion that cost for non-compliance should not be included in estimating policy success as noncompliance itself indicates a *total failure* of the policy (Pape, 1996, p. 197). However, Baldwin (2000, p. 175) deems such view would be misleading as he refers to Thomas Schelling (1984, p. 274) and Bueno de Mesquita's (1981, p. 90) logics that a target's noncompliance behaviour might imply an effort to *impose significant cost* towards the policy user.

### **Stake for the User and the Target**

The third criterion deals with stakes, both for the user and the target. Using stakes as an estimate, Baldwin advises looking at how each actor values the achievement of foreign policy goals. Weighing the user side of stake in estimating success is relatively simpler, "... the bigger the stakes, the more valuable is the degree of achievement, the more successful is the influence attempt" (Baldwin, 2000, p. 176). Based on the target's stakes, Baldwin (2000, p. 176) asserts that estimating success also needs to consider the difficulty of achieving the policy goals in estimating the value of the achievement: a harder task in achieving the objective results in an increase of the achievement value.

Taken together, these criteria serve as the building blocks in Baldwin's framework to estimate the success and failure in foreign policy. Baldwin's analytical framework for assessing an influence attempt is arguably best summarised in Table 1 below. The following section then briefly covers the research methodology to operate this analytical framework.

Table 1. David A. Baldwin Framework in Assessing Success and Failure in Foreign Policy

Effectiveness in Attaining Goals	Cost Efficiency and Effectiveness	Stakes
1. Multiple goals and target	1. Cost to the user - potential cost - actual cost	1. Stakes for the user How user perceives the value of an influence attempt.
2. Policy vs. behavioural change	2. Cost to the target - potential cost - actual cost	2. Stakes for the target How the target perceives the value of the issue potentially increases the difficulty of an influence attempt.
3. The degree of goal attainment		

Source: Baldwin (2000, pp. 173-176).

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This article proceeds with process tracing methodology in a case study setting (Vennesson & Wiesner, 2014). The purpose of using this methodology is straightforward. It seeks to reconstruct the process that leads to the outcome—whether the U.S. foreign policy to Indonesia to resolve the 1999 East Timor crisis was success or failure—by assessing the variables outlined in David Baldwin’s (2000) theoretical framework. In conducting the analysis, the article is supported by both primary resources, such as news archive, government documents, press releases, memoir, as well as secondary resources such as published academic materials.<sup>4</sup>

### **DISCUSSION**

In the previous sections, the article has outlined the analytical tools to guide the research in estimating the success or failure in U.S. foreign policy over Indonesia in resolving the 1999 East Timor crisis. This case was a monumental episode on U.S.-Indonesia relations which have been very dynamic despite its ups and downs (Murphy, 2010). Hence, before the article proceeds with evaluating such foreign policy, it will provide a summary of U.S.-Indonesia bilateral relations to provide readers with more context.

During the Cold War, subsequent U.S. governments also had a big part in shaping Indonesia’s policy in East Timor. Starting with the Ford administration in the mid-1970s, the U.S. government had paid some attention towards the then-Portuguese Timor and even gave tacit approval to Indonesia for its annexation plan in 1975 (Arif, 2013, p. 201).<sup>5</sup> Indonesia’s military campaign—which began on 7 December 1975 and lasted about a year— successfully deposed the FRETILIN-led (The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) state of East Timor, and annexed the region as Indonesia’s 27th province (Markas Besar ABRI, 2000, pp. 145-154).<sup>6</sup>

In the aftermath of the annexation, Indonesia kept sustaining resistance from the East Timorese and responded to the resistance using ABRI's (Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia, the Indonesian Armed Force) repressive means dubbed as "security operations" —an approach that later on revealed to be very costly for the Indonesian image. By the late 1980s, Indonesia's occupation was estimated to have caused ten thousand deaths of the East Timorese population caused by killings, hunger, and illness (Silva & Ball, 2006, p. 10). In the early 1990s, members of the international community began to change their stances towards Indonesia on the East Timor issue in the aftermath of the Santa Cruz Massacre, in which ABRI committed gross violence against civilians on 12 November 1991 (Braithwaite et al., 2012). While most governments around the world condemned the act, some had taken more serious measures including halting their aid programme to Indonesia. The United Nations (UN) responded by passing Resolution No. 1993/97 in which Indonesia had to oblige to a set of conditions including facilitating the visit of UN Special Rapporteur in the following year (UN. Commission on Human Rights, 1993).

Within the U.S. policy community, the Santa Cruz Massacre attracted divided responses. The George H.W. Bush administration did not pursue strong criticism, showed only mild concern for the post-massacre justice process, and even supported Indonesia at UN General Assembly ("Washington Pressuring Indonesia", 1991; ETAN, 1997; "U.S. Regrets East Timor Violence", 1991). By contrast, members of the U.S. legislative branch had urged the Bush administration to take firmer stances towards Indonesia (AFP, 1991a). In addition, the U.S. Congress also passed a bill banning Indonesia from participating in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programme in 1992 (Quinn, 1992). When the U.S. leadership was handed over to President Bill Clinton in 1993, it had an eagerness to work with the Indonesian government rather than paying attention to the East Timor problems despite its commitment to humanitarian issues ("U.N. resolution vote may signal shift", 1993). The Clinton administration had restored the Expanded-IMET (E-IMET) Programme in 1993 and repeatedly conveyed its intention to resume military-to-military training with Indonesia in 1994 ("House vs. White House", 1994; Rabasa & Haseman, 2002, p. 113; "U.S. Keen to Sell Weapons", 1995).<sup>7</sup> The administration also began talks on transferring selective military equipment—which includes nine F-16 Jet Fighters—in 1995, yet decided to review and postpone the arms sale due to Indonesia's use of the coercive measure in handling the political oppositions in mid-1996.

By the late 1990s, Indonesia experienced a massive and turbulent change which led to a disruption in its relations with the U.S. and its East Timor policy. In June 1997, President Suharto decided to back down from the E-IMET programme and refused the F-16 sale due to his weariness with U.S. Congress “unjustified criticism” (Niksich, 1998, pp. 7-9). Subsequently, Indonesia decided to eye for the Russian Sukhoi-30MK jet fighter and Mi-17 helicopter, yet it was suspended when the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis hit Indonesia (Rabasa & Haseman, 2002, p. 115). In addition, the financial crisis also created political and economic crises which brought Suharto to his downfall in May 1998. He was replaced by B.J. Habibie – one of Suharto’s protégé who previously served as Vice-President (Mydans, 1998).

Under President Habibie, Indonesia engaged in a new policy direction towards East Timor (Braithwaite et al., 2012, p. 92), starting with his request to the UN for holding a referendum in East Timor. On 5 May 1999, as a follow up to Habibie’s request, the UN invited Indonesia and Portugal as the former colonial authority of East Timor to discuss the question of East Timor future. Eventually, the three parties agreed that the referendum was going to be held on 8 August 1999. The referendum was on 30 August 1999, three weeks after the first-proposed date (Sebastian & Smith, 2000). The referendum resulted in East Timorese rejecting special autonomy from Indonesia and opted for independence. The result was announced on 4 September 1999. The military-backed, pro-Indonesia militia responded to the result with a scorched earth policy causing mass violence and displaced the entire population. To prevent the crisis from escalating any further, the international community demanded Indonesia to allow security forces to enter East Timor and to take over the authority from the Indonesian military (Crossette, 1999). Facing repeated demands, the Indonesian government remained unwilling to relent its authority to the international forces, claiming it was still capable of controlling and stabilising the condition in East Timor.

These accounts show that the U.S. had repeatedly pursued influence attempts toward Indonesia intending to change Indonesia’s policy towards East Timor. The U.S. Congress remained the most vocal foreign policy actor towards Indonesia even though both the Bush and Clinton administrations had directed several lenient policies towards Suharto’s New Order regime. However, whereas most U.S. Congress-sanctioned attempts had appeared to be relatively less effective—considering how both Presidents Suharto and Habibie had only made a little adjustment to Indonesia’s military policy—it was President Clinton’s decision on the eve of 1999 APEC Summit that eventually achieved

greater effectiveness (Niksich, 1999). Reiterating President Clinton's statement on Thursday 9 September 1999, his decision towards Indonesia was,

“...suspension of all programs of military cooperation with Indonesia, effective immediately. Our military leaders have made crystal clear to senior military officials in Indonesia what they must do to restore our confidence... our intentions are 1) to stop military-to-military cooperation right now, until this matter gets resolved, and 2) we have sent a clear signal about what we will do on economic cooperation if it is not resolved,” (“The Fate of East Timor”, 1999).

The policy statement implied that the Clinton administration had decided to (1) suspend US-Indonesia military cooperation, (2) threaten further economic sanctions, and (3) work with international financial institutions to halt the financial aid.<sup>8</sup> The following day, on 10 September 1999, the decisions to suspend all military cooperation with Indonesia and to pause U.S. funded financial aid to Indonesia effectively took place (Niksich, 1999). These policies were in place until Indonesia let the international community help in handling the East Timor Crisis (“The Fate of East Timor”, 1999). On 12 September 1999, just two days after Clinton's address, President B.J. Habibie announced a change of his policy. He commanded the Indonesian military to withdraw from East Timor, let the U.N.-authorised peacekeeping forces enter and help Indonesia in solving the East Timor violence (“World: Asia-Pacific”, 1999). On 19 October 1999, the then-newly elected Indonesian legislative council announced the decision that respected the referendum result and ended Indonesia's occupation in East Timor (de Mello & Shihab, 2000).

Understanding this context, the article proceeds in employing Baldwin's three criteria in assessing President Clinton's decision. By framing President Clinton as the user of foreign policy, his decision as a form of foreign policy, and the Habibie administration as a policy target it continues with the following analysis.

### **Policy Effectiveness in Attaining Intended Goals**

President Clinton had aimed towards multiple objectives with his decision towards Indonesia. Indeed, his primary intention was to demand Indonesia to stop the mass violence in East Timor. However, as the U.S. had lost its confidence in ABRI to maintain the situation in East Timor, President Clinton viewed that Indonesia needed to invite the international security forces to undergo such an objective. To reiterate his word,

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“...Indonesian Government and military are responsible for the safety of the East Timorese and of the U.N. mission there. If Indonesia does not end the violence, it must invite, it must invite the international community to assist in restoring security. It must allow international relief agencies to help people on the ground. It must move forward with the transition to independence.” (“The Fate of East Timor”, 1999)

In addition, the Clinton administration had other goals which revolved around the need to reassure U.S. partners and allies to pledge stronger commitment in the future of East Timor. As the previous section has briefly addressed, Clinton was addressing the demands of Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Portuguese Prime Minister António Guterres, and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan for pledging U.S. commitment to the East Timor issue. The nature of these demands would also affect how the Clinton administration had perceived the stake. Hence, Clinton was obliged to reassure U.S. allies and the United Nations that his administration was determined to support the UN-sanctioned peace process in East Timor.

In summary, Clinton’s objectives were (1) to push Indonesia in terminating the military operation in East Timor and opening East Timor for the entry of international peacekeeping forces to end the violence, restore order, and to let relief agencies provide aid; and (2) to reassure U.S. allies and the UN that his administration remains committed to support the process of transferring independence to East Timor peacefully. Having identified Clinton’s objectives, it is then imperative to ask two interrelated questions. First, how effective was Clinton’s foreign policy in achieving these goals? Second, would the East Timor humanitarian crisis end well without Clinton’s influence attempt towards Indonesia?

There was an initial scepticism that Clinton’s decision to employ military sanction and threaten economic sanction would not be effective in changing Indonesia’s policy nor stopping the violence on the ground. It was a fair scepticism based on two reasons: first, economic sanctions were considered to have a long-term impact rather than a short one (“Australia Says Sanctions”, 1999); secondly, as Indonesia was undergoing a political change – by which, ABRI remained as an important political actor at the time – Indonesia might not perceive the intended pressure and act according to the demands (Rinakit, 2005, p. 6; “Army Is Still”, 1999).

At the time of Clinton's address, Indonesia indeed had proven to be an unreliable target given that it had passed the 48 hours deadline set by both the UN and the Australian Government to prove that enacting martial law was effective in stopping the violence in East Timor ("Jakarta Given UN Deadline", 1999; "Australia steps up", 1999). Despite the situation in East Timor was improving on 9 September, Habibie failed to prove that the martial law was effective and reneged the "unrealistic deadline" as his administration claimed ("Jakarta Seeks 'Realistic' Deadline", 1999). Eventually, UN Secretary-General Annan gave an additional 24-hour extension to the deadline ("U.N. Sees 'Marginal' Improvement", 1999; "Annan gives Indonesia", 1999). However, Habibie remained adamant in refusing UN peacekeeping forces to enter East Timor, though he allowed UN observers to assess the situation on the ground ("Indonesia agrees to let UN", 1999; "PM's SETBACK", 1999; "Habibie's Future", 1999). ABRI Commander-in-Chief General Wiranto who had accompanied the UN observers found himself surprised when he witnessed the first-hand situation in Dili on 11 September (Nevins, 2005, pp. 105-107). As Joseph Nevins (2005, p. 107) notes, such experience would change General Wiranto's position on the need for the international security force's assistance.

Back at Jakarta, the Habibie administration received Clinton's address with a grim response. Even the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, Ginandjar Kartasmita protested the policy by stating that Clinton should not utilise IMF and World Bank as tools of influence ("Jakarta warns IMF", 1999). While such comment was unsettling, it implied that the Habibie administration was carefully weighing Clinton's statement and opening to the option for peacekeeping force ("Indonesia says may accept peacekeepers", 1999). On 11 September 1999, the pressure on Indonesia was heightened as Clinton received a report that led him to acknowledge that ABRI had been aiding the recent militia's raid on the UN mission in Dili ("East Timor Crisis", 1999). Previously, the Clinton administration had never acknowledged ABRI's involvement in militia's attacks on civilians and UN officials. On 12 September 1999, Clinton (1999) made another statement citing the incident and discussing U.S. policy response in a meeting with American and Asian Business leaders during the APEC Summit in New Zealand. In addition, U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Richard Holbrooke, had warned that Indonesia faced a "point of no return" in international relations if it did not accept the peacekeeping forces (Dodd & Hartcher, 1999; Fernandes, 2008, p. 90). Eventually, the change in U.S. attitude was the final nail in the coffin for Indonesia that led President Habibie to call a special cabinet meeting discussing its East Timor policy on the same day. The meeting

concluded with a statement from President Habibie announcing that his administration would yield to the international demand to let international security forces enter East Timor (“World: Asia-Pacific”, 1999).

Initially, there were doubts regarding President Habibie’s statement, as he was deemed a weak leader and incapable of harnessing ABRI which controlled the uniformed and ununiformed forces operating in East Timor (“World asks”, 1999). Without ABRI’s full cooperation, any peacekeeping forces would risk themselves getting into a conflict with the pro-Indonesia militia or worse, the ABRI forces. After all, some ABRI high ranking officers had repeatedly threatened to pursue a scorched earth policy and to engage the peacekeeping forces if they landed in East Timor. However, the situation was quite clear when President Habibie emerged with General Wiranto to make the 12 September speech. The appearance of General Wiranto—who held the dual position of ABRI Commander-in-Chief and Minister of Defence and Security—signalled ABRI’s alignment with President Habibie on the issue of East Timor (Fernandes, 2008, p. 95).

The effectiveness of Clinton’s policy also owed itself to U.S. official engagements with Indonesia’s military leaders. The military relationship had been critical in conveying each government’s intentions (Fernandes, 2008, p. 94). Before Clinton addressed the East Timor issue on 9 September, U.S. senior officials had conveyed the administration’s intentions on East Timor towards Indonesia’s political and military leaders. On 8 September, Admiral Dennis Blair, Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Armed Forces in the Pacific, had personally visited General Wiranto to inform the suspension of US-Indonesia military ties (“The White House: Press briefing”, 1999). In addition, U.S. Armed Forces Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Hugh Shelton, made several phone calls to General Wiranto demanding ABRI to cooperate with the UN mission after UNAMET announced the result of the East Timor referendum on 4 September 1999.

Arguably, Clinton’s military-to-military engagement had paid off well. By the time Clinton made a U.S. statement on East Timor, General Wiranto had already appointed Major General Kiki Syahnakri—a military reformist who was knowledgeable on East Timor—as the martial law administrator in East Timor (Dunn, 2002, pp. 85-86). When Habibie decided to allow international peacekeeping forces into East Timor, Major General Syahnakri obeyed and stated that he would remain in Dili until the peacekeeping forces arrived. He then welcomed Major General Peter Cosgrove—commander of the International Forces in East Timor (InterFET)—and left when President Habibie lifted the martial law (Dunn, 2002, p. 97).

Furthermore, the military aspect of U.S. foreign policy was critical in attaining the second objectives which were to reassure its allies and the UN that the Clinton administration remained committed to supporting the process of transferring independence to East Timor. After all, there had been next to no signal indicating that the Clinton administration would commit resources to the peace process preceding the East Timor referendum. However, Clinton decided to shift his foreign policy after receiving pressures from U.S. allies – prominently Australia and Portugal – and the UN. Clinton’s policy reversal eventually led to the U.S. committing barely minimum military resources that signified U.S. commitment in the eyes of its allies.

How effective was Clinton’s policy in achieving the second objective? I would argue that the U.S. was effective in reassuring its commitment based on two points. First, U.S. had changed its complacency towards a more assertive manner in dealing with Indonesia’s policy on East Timor. Second, by engaging Indonesia more assertively, U.S. had marshalled sufficient resources in the pursuit of a common goal with other U.S. allies. In addition, these two points could contribute—at least positively—to effectively achieving the primary objective.

As previously discussed, U.S. had approached Indonesia delicately, especially on sensitive issues like the independence of East Timor (“Moving Gently”, 1999). However, Indonesia’s regime change, the UN-supervised referendum, and the subsequent mass violence in East Timor changed the whole US–Indonesia relations. Siding with Indonesia’s government on the issue of East Timor turned into a liability, which may harm the U.S. relationship with its allies. The liability could be perceived as real. By 2 September 1999, just two days after the referendum took place, Portugal had raised its concern over the level of violence in East Timor (“Portugal asks UN”, 1999). By contrast, Australia—another U.S. long term ally—showed more hesitation than Portugal. However, the Government of Australia changed its stances when the mass violence occurred after the announcement of the referendum result.

When Clinton delivered his speech on East Timor on 9 September 1999, he was both showing assertiveness in U.S. foreign policy and addressing U.S. international allies’ doubts regarding his administration’s commitment. In his address, Clinton pointed out the necessity for Indonesia to invite international peacekeeping forces, and his administration’s willingness to support and to give Australia a bigger leadership part in the peacekeeping force. Following Indonesia’s invitation and U.S. commitment, the UN Security Council proceeded to authorise a multinational force to restore peace and

security in East Timor (UN Security Council, 1999). Eventually, the U.S. sent 200 military personnel—including communications, intelligence, and transportation specialists—along with equipment to the multinational force's operation (Dinger, 2000, p. 9).

In summary, the U.S. had achieved a high degree of effectiveness in attaining the primary and secondary goals. In attaining its primary objective, the U.S. was highly effective considering that it managed to influence Indonesia's stance and policy on East Timor. The U.S. was also effective in engaging both key civilian and military players in Indonesian politics, a vital move that contributed well to the whole policy. On the secondary objective, the U.S. was relatively effective considering that it sufficiently satisfied the demand of its allies—both Portugal and Australia—to take sides in pressuring Indonesia. In addition, the U.S. also committed some military resources to the peacekeeping operations as a gesture that signified its commitment. Without the influence attempt, it would be less likely for Indonesia to yield to the demand of the international community. The Indonesian military might have just perpetually resorted back to use violence to control the East Timorese population.

### **Cost to the United States and Indonesia**

Cost remains an important element in estimating the success and failure of foreign policy. Without assessing the cost of a policy, one might estimate that the policy could be effective without realising that it might have damaged oneself in the process. On the user side, the previous subsection had briefly mentioned that the Clinton administration tended to avoid excessive cost when conducting the influence attempt on Indonesia's policy towards East Timor. U.S. cost avoidance behaviour was induced by the U.S. experience that committing a military operation to undergo humanitarian intervention would cost the U.S. treasuries hundreds even billions of dollars.<sup>9</sup> At the time, U.S. had already engaged in humanitarian intervention in Kosovo—a conflict that had already cost U.S. coffers millions even billions of dollars (O'Hanlon, 2000). Considering such cost, the Clinton administration had devised a contingency plan to shift the cost of conducting intervention by letting Australia to lead the UN-sanctioned peacekeeping forces should the need arise for one (Dinger, 2000, pp. 8-9). Moreover, the threat of economic sanctions would not harm the U.S. economy considering that at the time U.S. was already in a trade deficit with Indonesia (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021a). Based on the economic calculation alone,

President Clinton's decision to employ sanctions was arguably more cost-effective compared to other tools of statecraft.

Apart from the economic cost, U.S. leadership was also factoring in the political cost carefully when it was about to conduct the influence attempts towards Indonesia. At the time, Indonesia was considered an important political and economic actor in South East Asia. Furthermore, Indonesia was undergoing a regime change and had just completed its national election. In addition, U.S. had developed military-to-military cooperation between U.S. Armed Forces and ABRI (Inkiriwang, 2020, pp. 378-379). Though it was not formalised into a military alliance, the military ties between the two countries could be traced back to the Cold War era. Hence, an influence attempt towards Indonesia would risk endangering the long-fostered relationship and greatly reducing U.S. influence over Indonesia's political and military leaders.

Arguably, the U.S. government understood both the economic and political consequences well when Clinton finally made the call. By employing both military sanctions and threatening economic sanctions over Indonesia, Clinton had minimised the immediate cost that it had to endure if he had opted for a military intervention towards Indonesia. However, Clinton had taken a moderate political risk that would eventually alienate U.S. influence over Indonesia's political and military elite. Eventually, US-Indonesia military-to-military relationship was restored when George W. Bush met with President Megawati Soekarnoputri in 2003 (Inkiriwang, 2020, p. 382).

On the other hand, Clinton's decision had incurred perilous economic and political costs towards Indonesia. At the time, Indonesia was undergoing a national economic recovery programme funded by the IMF and World Bank. The international financial institutions were supposed to pump a total of US\$ 12.9 billion into Indonesia, in which U.S. had contributed about US\$ 8 billion to the plan (Kivimaki, 2000). In 1999, the financial institutions were supposed to dispense another US\$ 3.3 billion as part of the economic package (Kivimaki, 2000, p. 528). Halting the funds would jeopardise Indonesia's economic recovery programme that would potentially bring Indonesia back to the level when it experienced the 1997 Asian financial crises. In addition, Clinton's threat to halt economic cooperation between the two countries would create another huge problem for the Indonesian economy. As previously mentioned, Indonesia was enjoying a trade surplus with the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021b). The consequences would be disastrous for Indonesia if the U.S. had decided to cut off its economic relations.

Apart from the economic cost, the political cost for Indonesia was equally immense. As previously discussed, Indonesia had been undergoing political reform and nearing a leadership transition through the 1999 national election. Initially, the post-referendum massacre had attracted international pressures towards Indonesia. These pressures had created distrust towards the Indonesian leaders which potentially led to instability within the regime. Even before President Habibie enacted the martial law in East Timor, there were rumours that ABRI would attempt a coup d'état on President Habibie. Clinton's decision had made the matters worse. When Habibie responded to the international demand in opening up East Timor, he risked off inciting another political instability, or at the minimum, losing the upcoming election in October 1999. In his memoir, Habibie (2006, p. 104) notes that Indonesia was facing a potential disintegration due to the unstable political and economic situation. Eventually, President Habibie dropped out of the presidential race after the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat RI, MPR RI) passed a vote of no confidence against his formal account ("Indonesia's Habibie Drops Out", 1999).

In addition, President Clinton's decision also imposed a hefty cost on the Indonesian military. While previously the cost for the U.S. can be measured through the loss of U.S. influence towards the Indonesian military, the Indonesian military had formally lost the credibility to engage with the U.S. military. The implication was quite dire: TNI had missed the opportunity to U.S. arms transfer, as well as training and education for officer corps (Inkiriwang, 2020, p. 385). Consequently, Indonesia had to turn for Russian armaments and diverged its weapons systems for subsequent modernisation programme before the sanctions were fully lifted in 2005 ("Indonesia seeks more Sukhois", 2004). Apart from formal consequences, "losing" East Timor also damaged the Indonesian military's source of informal business—as the military was engaged in profitable ventures during its occupation in East Timor (Moore, 2001, p. 29). In sum, this subsection has found that Clinton's decision was particularly cost-efficient in minimising the loss of U.S. political and economic resources while imposing a considerably high cost to Indonesian political and military elites. However, it was also fair to argue that such a decision was a gamble that pushed both Indonesian political and military elites to their limits. With that, this article proceeds with the last criteria.

### **Stake for the United States and Indonesia**

In the previous section, Baldwin reminds that in estimating stakes, one needs to look at how much the user values the foreign policy achievement. However, assessing Clinton's decision was problematic considering that initially his administration had less stake on the issue of East Timor ("The White House: Press briefing", 1999). Even the Bush administration had also displayed less attention and viewed Suharto's presidency as of bigger importance than the issue of East Timor. One of the primary reasons why the U.S. viewed its relationship with Indonesia as strategic was because Indonesia was located at the strategic sea lanes of communication, which served as an important trade route for the U.S. ("U.S. Department of State", 1999). While the view has been traditionally accepted within U.S. policy circles, several conditions would affect the dynamics of U.S. stake over a particular foreign policy issue.

Arguably, the conditions that managed to alter the U.S. perception was the international pressure from the UN, as well as the governments of Australia and Portugal ("UN Annan's statement", 1999). Reportedly, both Australian Prime Minister Howard and his Foreign Minister Downer criticised the Clinton administration publicly and pushed for more U.S. commitment in peacekeeping force (Braithwaite et al., 2012, pp. 100-101). Portuguese Prime Minister Guterres also threatened Clinton that he would pull Portuguese troops if Clinton did not provide support for a peacekeeping operation. Portugal was a vital U.S. ally on U.S. humanitarian intervention in Kosovo. In addition, Prime Minister Guterres had prevented 16 U.S. military flights from departing the Azores air base—a strategic airbase for U.S. operations in the Middle East (Braithwaite et al., 2012, p. 101).

In addition, Clinton was also answering to domestic political demands. In particular, the strategic planners within his administration were under heavy duress by U.S. Congress demands (Braithwaite et al., 2012, p. 101). The works of East Timor Action Network (ETAN) and other U.S. activism organisations were paying off.<sup>10</sup> Previously, only a few members of the U.S. Congress claimed to be sympathetic to the East Timor cause, including Senators Patrick Leahy and Russ Feingold. Both senators were important figures who introduced and rallied for the bills banning the cooperation between the U.S. and the Indonesian military. However, nearing the end of the 48-hours deadline set by the UN, these senators successfully rallied support in pushing President Clinton to make a firm decision regarding Indonesia's East Timor policy. The pressure eventually raised Clinton's stake on the East Timor issue.

On the other hand, Indonesia had a considerably higher stake in East Timor, especially during Suharto's New Order. By the time Habibie had taken the presidential position from Suharto, the stake was rather ambiguous. On one hand, President Habibie and the civilian leadership had sent a clear signal that they were eager to accommodate the U.N.-sanctioned East Timor independence process (Habibie, 2006, pp. 395-401). On the other hand, the existence of elements in the military that wanted to pursue scorched earth policy if the referendum resulted in independence showed that the military's stake was divided ("East Timor's Troubles", 1999).

The divided voices within the Indonesian elite then faced the harsh reality that the referendum resulted in mass violence which was either instigated by the militia or the Indonesian military. Facing such a condition, the leadership in Jakarta sought to tackle the problem on its own: by imposing martial law. On one hand, President Habibie and the civilian leadership repeatedly refused UN peacekeeping forces to help because they believed that the mass violence occurred in East Timor, which at the time remained within Indonesia's sovereignty. Such a reason echoed within ABRI-ranks, although the exact motivation to endure sanctions and threats remained questionable. However, as Habibie enacted the martial law and trusted Major General Syahnakri as its administrator, it was clear that the military had been aligned with the civilian leadership. Henceforth, the Indonesian political and military elites had the same view on how both actors perceived East Timor as Indonesia's stake.

In assessing Indonesia's stake, it is important to consider the difficulty that the U.S. had to undertake during the influence attempt. In my view, the U.S. had arguably experienced difficulty not when Clinton enacted the decision, but when it had to perceive the signals from Indonesia and to assess whether Indonesia might comply or refuse the international demand. When Indonesia had accepted the demand, it was clear that Indonesia was still able to exploit room for negotiation with the U.S. This indicated that the U.S. was successful in subduing Indonesia to let go of the high stake.

### ***CONCLUSION***

The 1999 East Timor humanitarian crisis was a prime example of a case when the U.S. had to conduct an influence attempt towards Indonesia—a high-risk and high-stake target—who posed as a "trouble state" (Murphy, 2010). The article finds that the U.S. influence attempt was highly successful. This finding is supported by three reasons. First, it effectively attained the intended primary and secondary objectives. Second, the attempt

was conducted efficiently while inflicting a high cost on both Indonesia's political and military leaders. Lastly, U.S. successfully captured the policy objectives without having a higher stake on the issue.

From this case, both Indonesian and U.S. Policymakers can learn transcending insight that can be adopted across different time and context. First, going beyond Anne Marie Murphy's (2010, p. 383) argument, national interest should not only dictate how policymakers shape the policy's objective, but also their willingness to accept the cost, and how they value the issue at hand. Aligning these three factors to national interest is crucial when policymakers must decide the optimal policy among various options. Tilting the balance that goes a bit against the national interest can produce ineffective or even unsuccessful policy.

In addition, policymakers also need to maintain some strategic manoeuvrability after the conclusion of any influence attempt. While the effective policy is consciously devised to achieve the intended goals, as Baldwin (2000) forewarns, it might also produce unintended negative consequences. In this regard, the intervention had set the U.S. image as a unilateralist power, whereas the U.S. views that Indonesia is full of ardent nationalist sentiment (Murphy, 2010, p. 383). On military-to-military relations, the intervention had made Indonesia constantly cautious of becoming too reliant on U.S. military hardware (Inkiriwang, 2020). Taken as a whole, these two lessons could guide the policymakers in charting future relations between both nations.

From this research, the article concludes that evaluating another country's foreign policy through a set of reliable criteria can indeed produce policy-relevant knowledge for decision-makers. It suggests that scholars also examine the output aspect of a certain country's foreign policy. This exercise would enable scholars to compare the various foreign policy tools that any particular state can utilise given the limitation and guide policy actors to choose the most feasible policy option.

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**Note:**

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<sup>1</sup> The author borrows the insight of this passage from the study of organisational science. See (Self & Schraeder, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> To reiterate the problem, it is far more accessible to find a study of foreign policy analysis (FPA), which focus on the process of foreign policymaking, rather than foreign policy evaluation (FPE), which focus on the output of foreign policy. Even the essential primers on Indonesia's foreign policy mostly fall into the realm of FPA. Above all, see Michael Leifer (1983), Franklin B. Weinstein (1976), Leo Suryadinata (1996), and Rizal Sukma (2008). On the other hand, literature on FPE remains scarce and, as Baldwin highlights, full of "analytical anarchy". One of the prime example of such article—which again, focuses on U.S. foreign policy—was Egalita Irfan's (2014) piece on assessing U.S. drone strike in Pakistan.

<sup>3</sup> The East Timor crisis—and the preceding episodes of Indonesia's security policy over its former province—is a topic that has been widely discussed in various discipline. Within the Political Science and International Relations scholarship, these include—among other literature—analysis of Indonesia's foreign policy making (Arif, 2013; Poole, 2015), U.S.-Indonesia relations (Murphy, 2010), the anatomy of the East Timor conflict (Dunn, 2002; Nevins, 2005), the East Timor experience as form of humanitarian intervention (Sebastian & Smith, 2000), and Indonesia-Australia relations (Braithwaite, Charlesworth, & Soares, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> For similar treatment with the primary data, see Priyandita (2019).

<sup>5</sup> Muhamad Arif's study depends on several primary sources on U.S. diplomatic relations with Indonesia which includes memorandum, documents, and telegrams from the Department of State.

<sup>6</sup> Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente, abbreviated as FRETILIN, was one of the major East Timorese political factions engaged in a civil war before the Indonesian invasion in 1975.

<sup>7</sup> E-IMET was specially designed to educate and to train Indonesian military officers on judicial and human rights issues.

<sup>8</sup> The following day, the undersecretary for U.S. Treasury Lawrence Summers gave the statement that the administration would work with IMF and World Bank to halt financial aid to Indonesia. See "U.S. wants Indonesia" (1999).

<sup>9</sup> To provide a comparison, U.S. peacekeeping operation in Kosovo costed between US\$ 3-4 billion throughout September 1999 alone. See "Washington Refuses to Consider" (1999).

<sup>10</sup> ETAN has compiled a comprehensive list of congressional action on East Timor & Indonesia. See ETAN (2004).