

India-Indonesia: Cultural Linkages and Socio-Political Relations between the two Countries

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INTRODUCTION

India and Indonesia have shared close cultural and commercial interactions for almost two millennia. Both countries share a relationship built over a long period of time and their bond remains strong and intact. The Hindu, the Buddhists and later the Islam travelled to Indonesia from the shores of India. The stories from great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata form source of Indonesian folk art and dramas. The shared culture, colonial history and post-independence objectives of political sovereignty, economic self-sufficiency and independent foreign policy have unifying effect on the bilateral relations.¹ In contemporary times, India and Indonesia have strong strategic relations based on growing economic partnership, mutual defense and security cooperation and a large scale high level of inter-governmental exchanges. It was due to the cordial proximity that India shares with Indonesia that it welcomed President Yudhoyono as the chief guest to India's Republic day on 26 January 2011. With this he became the second Indonesian President after the first Indonesian President and one of the close friends of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohammad Sukarno who was welcomed as a special guest to India's first Republic day Parade.²

In order to accomplish substantial growth in traditional bilateral areas of cooperation and mutual like-mindedness on issues of regional and global importance, both countries have signed an agreement on Strategic Partnership in November 2005. This partnership was intended to strengthen the bilateral relations, consolidating cooperation through ASEAN, tackle economic and security issues by mutual cooperation and to work towards building a more stable Asian geopolitical order providing global outreach.³

The stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have culturally converged both the countries. These epics have not only played an essential role in the history of Indonesia but also being a part of its unique culture, they have achieved great popularity in the socio-political life of people of Indonesia. Successively, in contemporary times, people of Islamic faith do perform the Ramayana during full moon nights in open theatre of the *Prambanan* in Java. This has considered as a reminder strength of its own religious and cultural roots. During the rule of *Sriwijaya* dynasty (around 7th century), many Indonesians went to Nalanda University in India which was a center of excellence of Buddhist learning. *Swarnabhumi* (Sumatra) is mentioned in Jataka stories while there is also reference to 'Yava Dwipa' or Java in

1. India-Indonesia Bilateral Relations, Indian, Embassy in Jakarta, https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Indonesia_december_28.pdf
2. Shekhar V. (2014), *Indonesia's Rise, Seeking Regional and Global Roles*, Pentagon Press, New Delhi 2014.
3. Ibid. pp. 125

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the Ramayana. The cult of sage Agastya was well developed in Java and we find his statue at the well-known *Prambanan temple*.⁴

Hindu culture and religion arrived in the Indonesian archipelago in the first century A.D., closely followed by Buddhism, which influenced the development of a number of Hindu-Buddhist empires. Hindu and Buddhist forms of theology and ritual combined over the centuries, and this fusion can still be found to some extent today. However, the Hinduism that came to Indonesia had not yet developed the bhakti tradition, thus the devotional aspect of Hinduism never became important there. Instead, the focus has been on dharma, understood as responsible and ethical behavior, in harmony with the universe.

The outreach of Hinduism was predominant throughout Java and it was not just exclusively Saivism. The Mahayana sect of Buddhism, as a separate and fundamental cult was prevalent mainly in the period of Sumatran rule in Central Java. In Bali, Buddhism and Saivism were intertwined and were hard to comprehend separately as well. After Sage Agastya's visit to Java⁵, Sage Markandeya followed and laid the foundation of the mother temple in *Besakih*, Bali.⁶ A Shaiva inscription discovered at *Dinaya* in Eastern Java, dated 760 A. D., describes the construction of a black stone image of Agastya Rishi. This was done by the order of king Gajayana, the patron of Brahmans and the worshipper of Agastya, who had seen an image of the Rishi constructed out of Devadaru wood by his ancestors. Furthermore, in order to get rain, this image of Agastya Kumbhayoni was sanctified in *kumbha-lagna* by the persistent king in the fine Maharshi-bhavan.⁷

There are a variety of theories of how Hinduism came to Indonesia. Gusti Putu Phalgunadi describes four of these, using the metaphor of the caste system.

According to Vaishya theory, Hinduism came with traders and merchants from India, whose voyages often included intermarriage with Indonesians. According to the Kshatriya theory, defeated warriors and soldiers fled India with their followers to take refuge and build alternative strongholds in Indonesia. The Brahmana theory postulates that priests and missionaries from India spread the religion, which was accepted because these people were believed to possess supernatural knowledge and power. In contrast, the Bhumiputra ("native son" or nationalist) theory proposes that Indonesians visited India, liked the culture, and brought back religious ideas. Indonesia (especially Bali) is mentioned in such ancient Indian texts as the Ramayana, Brahmanda Purana, Vayu Purana, and Jataka stories in the Buddhist Pali Canon. In these texts, Bali is usually called Suvarnadvipa ("Golden Island") or Suvarnabhumi ("golden land"). In the sixth-century encyclopedia, *Brihatsamhita*, and the eleventh-century collection of stories, *Kathasaritsagara*, Bali is called *Narikeladvipa*, "the island of coconuts."⁸

India and Indonesia also share architectural similarities. Earliest Sanskrit inscription found in Annam (Champa, Vietnam) is dated to 200 A.D. Which suggests that even before the 5th century, its contacts began with India. Indian immigrants in the Malay Archipelago are still called *Kaling* in Medan, Indonesia. It is a survival of the name Kalinga, by which the inhabitants of Orissa were once known. In old Javanese language, there is an assimilation of around 30 per cent of Sanskrit words, which shows the close and consistent linking between India and Indonesia for a long time. When Arab and Chinese trade flourished, Bali began to form close links with Java. Javanese culture had developed based on old Indian traditions that were Indonesian in essence. The old Javanese language became a vehicle of the classic epics. All ancient inscriptions found in Indonesia up to

4. Somvir. "Ramayana to films, Indonesia still loves India, The ties between Indonesia and India date back to the times of the Ramayana", *Spectrum, The Tribune*. December 11, 2005. Accessed on 12 May 2019. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/2005/20051211/spectrum/main2.htm>
5. A statue of sage Agastya is found in a Shiva temple in a temple complex at Pramban in Java. Similarly at a cave in Kombeng situated to the north of Muara Kaman in east Borneo we find the image of sage Agastya. Indradevi the queen of the ruler of Kambuja Empire, Indra Varman I (877-889 A.D.) is said to have descended from sage Agastya. In the old Javanese literature we have a work Agastya Parva, where Agastya describes to his son Driddasyu the creation of the world in puranic style.
6. 'Besakih, sacred mother temple', *The Bali Today*, 23 December, 2012, <http://www.thebalitoday.com/news/besakih-temple/>
7. Chatterjee B R (1933), *India and Java*, Kolkata: Prabasi Press, pp. 3.
8. Phalgunadi, I. Gusti Putu. 1991. *Evolution of Hindu culture in Bali: from the earliest period to the present time*. Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan.

5th century are in Sanskrit and the Pallava script has been used.⁹

The Hindu religion influenced kings and warriors on the major Indonesian islands of Sumatra, Java, Bali and Kalimantan. The most influential Hindu kingdom was the Majapahit Empire, which reached its peak in the fourteenth century. It was also last kingdom of Hindus which established its sovereignty over Palembang and Pahang in Sumatra, and over Malay from Singapore to Kedah and Trenggan. But there is no evidence of documented history between India and Indonesia after 1400 A.D.¹⁰

Hinduism lost its status as the dominant religion during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when the *Majapahit* Empire was conquered by Muslim armies. As that empire disintegrated, many of its priests, artists, musicians and leaders moved to Bali, and Islam became the state religion of Indonesia. Foreign merchants, especially Portuguese and later Dutch traders, were attracted by the spice trade of Indonesia. Dutch seamen came to the islands of Bali and Lombok in 1597, and the Dutch East Indies Company came to dominate much of Indonesia.¹¹ Indonesia gained its independence when the Dutch relinquished sovereignty over the former Netherlands East Indies in 1949, and Bali was integrated into the Republic of Indonesia. Its first president was Sukarno (1901–1970). To appease the Muslim majority, Sukarno proclaimed belief in One Almighty God to be government policy, thereby forging a compromise between secularism and Muslim law (sharia, or in the language of Bahasa Indonesia syariah). It was the first

of five constitutional laws in Indonesia, the pancasila, intended to build nationalism and discourage ethnic loyalties within a wide range of tribes, kingdoms and societies lacking common language, currency or culture. The other four laws are a just and civilized humanity, Indonesian unity, democracy and social justice.¹²

India-Indonesia Cultural Linkages:

The cultural bridge between India and Indonesia that has been in existence since the Neolithic period operates at several levels: art, architecture, popular drama and literature, Indian communities in Indonesia, and even the societal configuration of Indonesia and their struggle for freedom from colonialism. This speaks volumes about the historic linkages between the two countries. Today, both countries have the distinction of being termed ‘Mosaics of Cultures’.¹³

Hinduism connection between India and Indonesia:

Prior to the arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism, the indigenous population of the archipelago practiced forms of animism. But when Hinduism arrived in the western part of the archipelago through a trade network stretching from China to India in the first century AD, local rulers regarded this new religion as an asset to their power as they could start to represent themselves as Hindu deities, thereby increasing their status. The pre-existing animistic beliefs are thought to have become blended with Hinduism, resulting in the forming of new hybrid-types of Hinduism which contained specific features of its own, thus making it rather different from Indian Hinduism.¹⁴

9. Somvir. “Ramayana to films, Indonesia still loves India, The ties between Indonesia and India date back to the times of the Ramayana”, *Spectrum, The Tribune*. December 11, 2005. Accessed on 12 May 2019. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/2005/20051211/spectrum/main2.htm>
10. Somvir. “Ramayana to films, Indonesia still loves India, The ties between Indonesia and India date back to the times of the Ramayana”, *Spectrum, The Tribune*. December 11, 2005. Accessed on 12 May 2019. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/2005/20051211/spectrum/main2.htm>
11. Kehoe M. (2008), “The Paradox of Post-Colonial Historic Preservation: Implications of Dutch Heritage Preservation in Modern Jakarta”, *Online Student Journal of Urban Studies*. University of Wisconsin: Milwaukee. Issue 2 spring 2008. pp. 1-20
12. McDaniel June (2017), “Religious change and experimentation in Indonesian Hinduism” in *International Journal of Dharma Studies* 5(20), pages:1-14
13. Mishra, Rahul (2011), “India and Indonesia: Trade and Investment Complementarities”, Issue Brief, IDSA. <https://idsa.in/issuebrief/IndiaandIndonesiaTradeandInvestmentComplementarities> (accessed 1 August 2018)
14. Danes P.P. I.N. (2018), “Ancient Architectural Influence Between Bali And Majapahit: Drawing Upon The Affinities With Ancient Indian Architecture And The Way It Developed In Bali”, in *Cultural and Civilizational Links between India and Southeast Asia* by (Ed.) Shyam Sharan. Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 276-77

The caste system, for example, was never rigidly applied throughout the history of the archipelago. A number of important Hindu empires were established in Kalimantan, Sumatra and Java between the 5th and the 13th century; some of which had also absorbed Buddhist influences. The archipelago's last major empire, Majapahit (1293-1500), showed an interesting blend between Hinduism, Buddhism and animist beliefs. But after Islam had established itself in the archipelago as a socio-political force starting from the 13th century, Hinduism gradually lost ground to this quickly expanding religion. The only exception being Bali, where the ruler of Majapahit (originating from East Java) sought refuge from the conquest of Islamic forces.¹⁵

Solidification of Cultural Relations in Modern Times:

There is an active cultural exchange between the two countries. The Indian Mission in Jakarta operates Jawaharlal Nehru Indian Cultural Centre (JNICC) which conducts regular classes of Indian classical music, Indian classical dances such as Kathak and Bharatnatyam, Yoga, and also teaches Indian languages, Hindi and Tamil. In association with Indonesian art institutions, Embassy/JNICC invites folk artists, authors and scholars from India. Indonesian scholars and journalists are extended hospitality for visiting India under various schemes like Distinguished Visitors Program and Ministry of External Affairs' Media Exchange Program. Quality Indian movies are screened in Embassy auditorium from time to time for avid Indian movie fans. Sponsored by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), JNICC was established in 1989. Since its inception it is actively involved in promoting Indian art and culture in Indonesia and also cultural fusions in fine arts or performing arts. Bringing together the best of Indonesian and Indian talents to create an innovative fusion is an area of JNICC's core

interests. JNICC's well-stocked library of 10,000 books is frequently utilized by all interested. Many University and High school students and researchers as well as scholars seek the support of JNICC to gather information about socio-cultural scenario of India. JNICC also organizes all major festivals of India like Holi, Ganesh Mahotsav, Navratri, Durga Pooja, Diwali and more in order to constantly engage with the Indian Community of Indonesia.¹⁶

It continues to be a very active and a major Indian Cultural Center of South East Asia. For past 4 years, JNICC has been coordinating the celebration of International Day of Yoga in Indonesia and Timor Leste. The Mission is successfully organizing International Day of Yoga (IDY) since 2015.¹⁷ The IDY events organized by Mission and Consulates attract large participation. The Fourth International Day of Yoga (IDY) was organized by the Embassy in association with Ministry of Tourism, Indonesia on 23 June 2018 at Taman Menteng, Jakarta. Around 1500 persons of different age and professions participated in the event.¹⁸ The International Day of Yoga events were also organized in Bali at Lapangan Niti Mandala, Denpasar, on 17 June 2018; in Surabaya at Singapore National Academy on June 21, 2018; in Medan on 24th June 2018 at the Consulate premises; in Dili, Timor Leste on 30 June 2018; in Bandung on 1st July 2018 in collaboration with Bharat Club Bandung.

Embassy of India in association with the City Governments and the Universities, organise Indian Culture Week in different cities of Indonesia. The programmes during the Indian Cultural Weeks showcase different facets of Indian tourism, art, culture, music, food, Yoga and films spread over the week. There are four India Cultural Weeks have been organised in Indonesia.

- India Culture Week in Bandung: 30 December 2017 to 5 January 2018¹⁹
- India Culture Week in Malang: 21-28 April 2018

15. 'Hinduism in Indonesia', <https://www.indonesia-investments.com/culture/religion/hinduism/item250>

16. Partogi S. (2018), "69th Republic Day of India: Discover Indian culture at JNICC", The Jakarta Post, 26 January 2018. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/01/26/69th-republic-day-india-discover-indian-culture-jnicc.html>

17. "International Day of Yoga Celebrations in Jakarta", Antaranews.com, 22 June 2015. <https://en.antaranews.com/news/99283/international-day-of-yoga-celebrations-in-jakarta>

18. "Indonesia to celebrate 4th International Day of Yoga", The Financial Express, 30 May 2018. <https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/travel-tourism/indonesia-to-celebrate-4th-international-day-of-yoga/1187070/>

19. India Culture Week: Photo Exhibition on India-Indonesia Friendship, Press Release, Embassy of India, Jakarta. 31 December 2017. <https://www.indianembassyjakarta.gov.in/whats>

- India Culture Week in Surabaya: 7-14 September 2018
- India Culture Week in Yogyakarta: 17-23 December 2018

Educational Cooperation:

Indonesia is a major recipient of Indian Technical and Educational Cooperation Programme (ITEC) and Technical Cooperation Scheme (TCS) of Colombo Plan scholarships.²⁰ In financial year 2016-17, 125 slots has been allocated to Indonesia out of which 104 were utilized. For financial year 2017-18, 130 slots have been allotted to Indonesia. Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) offers 20 scholarships every year to Indonesian students and 5 slots each year to Students from Timor Leste for pursuing higher studies in India. Since 1994-95, nearly 200 Indonesian students have availed the ICCR scholarship.²¹

In May 2018, Prime Minister Modi paid an official visit to Indonesia where in a joint statement leaders of the both countries recognized the importance of encouraging greater people-to-people relations, especially among the youth and students as well as the ongoing cooperation between educational institutions and the efforts to institutionalize university-to-university linkages. Both Leaders gave the directive to officials of both countries to negotiate the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Education and finalize the Memorandum of Understanding in the Field of Higher Education. Meanwhile, they also welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in the Scientific and Technological Cooperation. Both Leaders underscored the importance of investment in education, human resources and skill

development to empower young generations in India and Indonesia. Thus, they encouraged to increase the number of scholarship offers from both countries.²²

Political Relations:

Convergence of Nehru-Sukarno Vision of Asia:

As colonialism ended, the new states formed a close alliance. In a 1946 letter Sukarno, Indonesia's first leader, wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru, his Indian counterpart: "The word 'India' must necessarily always be part of our life for it forms the first two syllables of the name we have chosen for our land and our race." But it was not long before the cold war created a rift: India drew closer to the Soviet Union, Indonesia to the US.²³

In modern times, it was the friendship between India's first PM Jawaharlal Nehru and first Indonesian President Sukarno that sowed the seeds for the close friendship between the two countries that we see today. Nehru championed the Indonesian cause as the infant nation struggled to end Dutch imperialism. In March-April 1947, Nehru hosted the first Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi to discuss the Indonesian problem. It brought together leaders of independence movements from across Asia, and was the first effort to forge an Asian unity. Biju Patnaik, later to become the chief minister of Orissa, responded to Nehru's call to pilot his aircraft to Indonesia to rescue vice president Mohammad Hatta, and PM Sutan Sjahrir from the Dutch to fly them to New Delhi to attend the conference. Years later, Sukarno made Patnaik an honorary Bumiputra.²⁴

Nehru followed the 1947 event by hosting the Indonesia Conference in January 1949 to discuss the Dutch aggression on the nascent republic. These two conferences were precursors to the Bandung Conference

20. Through the Technical Cooperation Scheme (TCS) of Colombo Plan, the Government of India provides a comprehensive and integrated training to participants from 18 member-countries of Colombo Plan with the purpose of assisting them to enhance their administrative and technical capabilities through human resource development.

21. India-Indonesia bilateral relations, Indian embassy in Jakarta, https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Indonesia_december_28.pdf

22. "Establishing Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Indonesia and India", India-Indonesia Joint Statement during visit of Indian Prime Minister to Indonesia, May 30 2018. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29932/IndiaIndonesia+>

23. Chilkoti Avantika (2016), "Indonesia India and Indonesia: rivals divided by a shared history" Financial Times, June 6 2016. <https://www.ft.com/content/e8750f9c-1de6-11e6-a7bc-ee846770ec15>

24. Mohan A. (2013), "India and Indonesia: Twins of a Kind", Focus Article, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, October 8 2013. <https://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?22301/India+and+Indonesia+Twins+of+a+Kind>

of 1955 that Indonesia hosted. It was the first Afro-Asian event where both Nehru and Sukarno invoked the “spirit of Asia” and laid the foundation for the non-aligned movement. In more contemporary times, the unveiling of India’s ‘Look East Policy’ in 1991 and with India becoming a partner of the ASEAN helped New Delhi and Jakarta revive ties which were disrupted when Indonesia came under military rule between 1965 to 1998. Indonesia is the most populous, largest and the most influential of the 10-ASEAN member states. Last few years have been marked by strengthening of defence and security cooperation.²⁵

Owing to struggle against colonial powers, democratic traditions, pluralist culture, and progressive leadership which both countries shared, India and Indonesia developed friendly relations. President Sukarno of Indonesia was the Guest of Honour during the first Republic Day of India in 1950. Independent India and Indonesia became chief votaries of independence of Asian and African countries, the spirit which led to historic Bandung Conference of 1955 and later formation of Non-Aligned Movement in 1961. Since the adoption of India’s ‘Look East Policy’ in 1991, there has been a rapid development of bilateral relations in political, security, defence, commercial and cultural fields. The current Government expressed its intent to further deepen the engagement with East Asia and by renaming the policy as “Act East”.²⁶

Key Visits and Other bilateral Engagements :
Visit of Indonesian President Yudhoyono in January 2011:

During the State Visit of President Mr. S. B. Yudhoyono to India in 2005²⁷, the two countries signed a

Joint Declaration on Establishing a Strategic Partnership.²⁸ In January 2011, President Yudhoyono visited India as the Chief Guest on the occasion of India’s Republic Day. During the visit, numerous Inter-Governmental Agreements were signed which included an Extradition Treaty, Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, and MoUs on Establishing a Biennial Trade Ministers’ Forum, Cooperation in Oil and Gas and Cooperation in Science and Technology. India and Indonesia agreed to launch negotiations for a Bilateral Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement and to organize a Trade and Investment Forum, an Energy Forum and a CEO’s Forum alternately in either country.²⁹

The most tangible outcome of the visit was the signing of trade and investment agreements worth over \$15 billion. This is just the latest reflection of the burgeoning economic relationship between the two countries. In 2005, India and Indonesia signed a Strategic Partnership in New Delhi, and since then trade volume between the two countries has tripled from \$4 billion to \$12 billion in 2010.³⁰

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh’s visit in October 2013:

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Indonesia on 10-12 October 2013. During the visit, MOUs on the issues such as combating illicit trafficking in Narcotic drugs; cooperation in disaster management; and cooperation in combating corruption were signed. Both leaders agreed to adopt a five-pronged initiative for strengthening the Strategic Partnership in the areas of Strategic Engagement, Defence and Security Cooperation, Comprehensive Economic Partnership, Cultural and People-to-People Links and Cooperation in

25. Ibid.

26. “India’s Look East - Act East Policy: A Bridge to the Asian Neighbourhood”, International Relations Conference 2014, Symbiosis Institute of International Studies, Pune.

27. “Indonesia’s Yudhoyono begins India trip”, China Daily, 23 November 2005. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-11/23/content_497306.htm

28. “Joint Declaration between the Republic of India and the Republic of Indonesia”, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 23 November 2005.

29. Roche Elizabeth (2011), “India, Indonesia sign 18 preliminary trade pacts”, Livemint, 25 January 2011. <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/W0gnQ6yIljP8rv77ZDrB9L/India-Indonesia-sign-18-preliminary-trade-pacts.html>

30. Bush R. (2011), ‘Indonesian President’s India Visit Highlights Partnership’, The Asia Foundation, @ February 2011. <https://asiafoundation.org/2011/02/02/indonesian-presidents-india-visit-highlights-partnership/>

Responding to Common Challenges.³¹

PM Narendra Modi and President Joko Widodo meet in November 2014 during ASEAN Summit:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met President Joko Widodo of Indonesia in Nay Pyi Taw (Myanmar) on 13 November 2014 on the sidelines of 25th ASEAN Summit. In the meeting, Prime Minister invited President Jokowi to India and President Jokowi invited Indian companies to invest in Indonesia, especially in energy, infrastructure and manufacturing industries. Both leaders underscored the importance of effective implementation of the five point initiative for strengthening India-Indonesia Strategic Cooperation; on early convening of the JWG on Energy and Coal; to task the Foreign Ministers to ensure early constitution of the India-Indonesia Eminent Persons Group (EPG) and early convening of its meeting to review existing cooperation. They also recommended a practicable roadmap for future cooperation; and regular meeting of the bilateral Joint Commission headed by Foreign Ministers, as also holding other Ministerial Meetings with increased frequency.³²

Visit of Vice President of India in November 2015:

Shri M. Hamid Ansari, Vice President of India visited Indonesia from 1-4 November 2015. Three MOUs were signed during the visit of Vice President viz., MOU on cooperation in the field of Culture; MOU on cooperation in new and renewal energy; and MOU for establishment of an Ayurveda Chair in Faculty of Medicine at Sudirman

Campus, Denpasar, Bali. Vice President unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi in Udayana University, Bali.³³

Visit of President Joko Widodo to India in December 2016:

Mr. Joko Widodo, President of Indonesia paid a State visit to India from 12-13 December, 2016 at the invitation of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. President Joko Widodo and Prime Minister Modi held talks and reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations.³⁴ Three agreements were signed during the visit; MoU on Youth Affairs and Sports Cooperation; MoU on Standardization Cooperation; and Joint Communique on Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) Fishing and To Promote Sustainable Fisheries Governance.³⁵ The two sides also issued a Joint Statement; A Statement on Maritime Cooperation which mandates both sides to draw up a MoU for cooperation in this area; and agreed to annual meetings of the leaders.³⁶ The two sides agreed to commence Strategic Dialogue, Security Dialogue and to negotiate a new Comprehensive Defence Cooperation Agreement. The India-Indonesia Eminent Persons Group submitted its report to Mrs. Retno Marsudi, Foreign Minister of Indonesia and H.E. Shri M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs on 12 December 2016.³⁷

Visit of Vice-President to Indonesia in March 2017:

Mr. Mohammad Hamid Ansari, Vice President of India, represented India in Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Leaders' Summit held in Jakarta from on 7 March

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31. "Joint Statement on five initiatives for strengthening the India-Indonesia Strategic Partnership" Press Information Bureau, Government of India. 11 October, 2013.
 32. Parameswaran P. (2014), "Modi Unveils India's 'Act East Policy' to ASEAN in Myanmar" The Diplomat, 17 November 2014. <https://thediplomat.com/2014/11/modi-unveils-indias-act-east-policy-to-asean-in-myanmar/>
 33. Parameswaran P. (2015), 'India's Vice President on ASEAN Voyage to Indonesia, Brunei', The Diplomat, 29 October 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/10/indias-vice-president-on-asean-voyage-to-indonesia-brunei/>
 34. "Indonesia keen to forge closer ties with India: President Joko Widodo", The Economic Times, 11 Devenber 2016. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/indonesia-keen-to-forge-closer-ties-with-india-president-joko-widodo/articleshow/55924892.cms?from=mdr>
 35. "List of Agreements/MOUs exchanged during the State visit of President of Indonesia", Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. 12 December 2016.
 36. "Statement by India and Indonesia on Maritime Cooperation" Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 12 December 2016.
 37. 'VISION STATEMENT 2025' prepared by India - Indonesia Eminent Persons' Group. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 12 December 2016.

2017. Gen. (Retd.) V. K. Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs represented India in IORA Council of Ministers Meeting held on 6 March 2017.³⁸

President Joko Widodo's visit to India to attend ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit:

President of Indonesia Joko Widodo visited New Delhi from 25-26 January, 2018 to be Chief Guest at the 69th Republic day celebrations of India along with other Heads of States of ASEAN countries and to participate in the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit. President Jokowi held a bilateral meeting with PM Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the ASEAN-India Summit on 25 January 2018. The two leaders discussed issues of bilateral interest, including efforts for increasing economic cooperation as the bilateral trade between the two countries had enormous potential. President Jokowi also invited PM Narendra Modi to visit Indonesia in 2018.³⁹

Visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in May 2018:

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Jakarta on 29-30 May 2018 at the invitation of the President of Indonesia Mr. Joko Widodo. During this visit, both Leaders agreed to strengthen cooperation in all areas by establishing a New Comprehensive Strategic Partnership to take Indonesia and India's bilateral relationship into a new era. During the visit, 15 agreements/MoUs were signed between the two countries including nine Government to Government level (G2G) MoUs in the areas of defence cooperation, cooperation in the

exploration and uses of outer space for peaceful purposes, Scientific and Technological Cooperation, Technical Cooperation in Railways sector, Health Cooperation, on Pharmaceutical, Biological and Cosmetics Regulatory Functions, on Policy dialogue between Governments and Interaction between Think Tanks.⁴⁰ Both sides also agreed on a Shared Vision of India-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.⁴¹

Leaders of the both countries also shared their view on the imperative need to eradicate radicalism and reiterated the importance of promoting peaceful pluralism that would lead to true civilisation harmony, and moderation through a holistic approach. They reiterated their strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations including cross-border terrorism and terror-related incidents in Indonesia and India and affirmed that perpetrators of these heinous acts must be brought to justice. Both leaders also affirmed that terrorism should not be associated with any religion, creed, nationality and ethnicity.⁴²

The Prime Minister and the President also jointly inaugurated the Kite Exhibition which was based on the theme of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Both Leaders acknowledged the Recommendations and Outcome Document submitted by the members of India Indonesia CEOs' Forum. The Leaders further instructed the regular convening of the forum and expansion of business sectors as it could function as constructive measure to tap more opportunities and potentials in developing bilateral cooperation in trade and investment with leading Indian companies was present.⁴³ Second India Indonesia

38. "Talk of The Week: Indian Vice President Ansari meets Jokowi", The Jakarta Post, 11 March 2017, Jakarta. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/03/11/talk-the-week-indian-vice-president-ansari-meets-jokowi.html>

39. "Commemorative Summit to focus on India-ASEAN shared values, common destiny (Curtain Raiser)", The Business Standard, 24 January 2018. New Delhi. https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/commemorative-summit-to-focus-on-india-asean-shared-values-common-destiny-curtain-raiser-118012401177_1.html

40. "List of MoUs/Announcements made during the visit of Prime Minister to Indonesia", Media Centre, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 30 May 2018. <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29931/List+of+MoUsAnnouncements+made+during+the+visit+of+Prime+Minister+to+Indonesia+2931+May+2018>

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Conclusion:

India-Indonesia relations hold much potential and

importance for both countries. The Cold War period forced the two nations to remain at a distance despite strong cultural links. But the emerging strategic scenario in the region calls for revival of historical links to meet the present challenges.

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