



Navigating the intermestic nexus: Strategic agency and multidimensional security in Indonesia's transition to the new order, 1966 to 1967

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the connections between the transition of the Indonesian regime, international diplomacy, and domestic economic development during the years 1966 to 1967. Utilizing a historical methodology that includes heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography, the study examines primary data from the *Angkatan Bersendjata* newspaper alongside contemporary archival literature to clarify how Suharto's administration redefined national threats. The research argues that Suharto's actions inferred an intermestic logic, where the prioritisation of domestic stability served as a foundation for normalising foreign relations. By analysing Suharto's leadership and strategic motives, the article shows a significant shift in Indonesia's perception of threats, moving from external confrontation to internal consolidation. This study contributes to both historiography and International Relations by framing the interregnum of 1966 to 1967 as a period of intentional and multifaceted statecraft. By articulating the intersection of economic rehabilitation and security policy, the article also adds to existing scholarship, asserting that the transition from the Old Order to the New Order was facilitated by a well-integrated balancing of the state's economy, foreign affairs, and national security.

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INTRODUCTION

States perceive national threats as threats to sovereignty, further underscoring the daily practice of states within the anarchical international system, where actors must ensure their interests are protected while securing themselves against external and internal threats (Williams, 2008). Meanwhile, threats to national security can vary across military, political, economic, environmental, and social aspects due to the expansion of security sectors in International Relations (Buzan et al., 1998). Consequently, any perceived threat to national security inevitably affects the sectors. This

case is especially relevant in newly independent countries, such as Indonesia in 1945, which face exceptional challenges during the early years of independence.

Since declaring independence in 1945, Indonesia has faced various national security threats, including success in forcing the Netherlands to recognize its sovereignty in 1949. Not only the return of the colonials, the early Indonesia involved in intense international political tensions, such as experienced another international conflicts in the following years, such as the Confrontation with Malaysia as well as military confrontations with the Netherlands over West Irian and the flourishing relationship with communist states like China and Russia which led to reactive responses towards Western hegemony, (Mohsin, 2019). Sukarno, as the first leader, perceived foreign threats as the primary factors undermining the nation's sovereignty and contributing to global instability, attributing them to the effects of neocolonialism and imperialism. Sukarno's reactive attitude towards external threats arguably led to the neglect of domestic issues, resulting in the emergence of separatist movements and political and economic instability that persisted throughout his reign (Cipto, 2007; Widjaja, 1986; Bhakti, 2018).

Furthermore, following the failed coup of 30 September 1965 by the Indonesian Communist Party, Indonesian domestic politics were volatile. The coup led to the transition of government from Sukarno to Suharto. The transfer of power occurred through a sequence of events initiated by public dissatisfaction with Sukarno's leadership, combined with a failed 1965 coup allegedly linked to Sukarno. However, the effective de-escalation of the Suharto-led coup, which garnered greater support from the Indonesian military and parliamentarians, led to his appointment as the new president on 26 March 1968 (Jaquet, 1971a; Vatikiotis, 1998; Said, 1998; Berger, 1997). Suharto's administration, which they called the New Order, introduced several transitional policies to address the remaining problems arising from the failed coup and earlier external and domestic encounters under Sukarno's administration. The New Order sought to alter the prevailing view that threats to national integrity could not be separated from the influence of the domestic political order, which was neglected during Sukarno's era (Kurniaty, 2020).

Despite the extensive historical literature comparing the Sukarno and Suharto regimes, a significant scientific gap persists on the specific interregnum between 1966 and 1967. Existing studies, such as (Arifin et al., 2021) and (Kusuma & Afwan, 2021), primarily focus on international politics influence and foreign policy aspects of the early Suharto era. They overlook the domestic aspects of Indonesia during that era. In contrast, Takdir et al. (2021) emphasise the domestic development strategy pursued by the New Order, prioritising economic growth, political stability, and technocratic governance. Like (Takdir et al., 2021; Tan, 2012) addresses national security in Suharto's era, which pinpoints the perception of common threats. Thus, this article intersects with the discussion by examining how Suharto's redefinition of national security threats during the 1966-1967 period simultaneously reshaped Indonesia's domestic and foreign policies. Additionally, by incorporating the intermestic logic, this interconnection highlights the importance of both foreign and domestic issues in shaping the actions of state actors (Cipto, 2007; Manning, 1977).

Building on (Manning's, 1977) work on the interested approach, which posits that international and domestic issues are interconnected and mutually influence each other, this paper also distinguishes itself by elaborating on the intersection between foreign policy and national security concerns during this pivotal transition. Unlike previous historical accounts by (Gin, 2020; Vatikiotis, 1998), we expand the narrative to explain how Suharto strategically responded to both external and domestic threats, thereby establishing new power relations and facilitating smooth political transitions. These topics have rarely been discussed in the context of Indonesia's transitional periods from Sukarno to Suharto in 1966-1967.

Consequently, this article aims to address the following research question: How did Suharto's redefinition of national threats between 1966 and 1967 influence Indonesia's domestic and foreign policies through an intermestic logic? We argue that Suharto's early New Order policies redefined national security through an intermestic logic, in which domestic stabilisation served as the underpinning for Indonesia's diplomatic normalisation. By framing the administration as a cohort of active agents, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how economic rehabilitation, diplomatic re-engagement, and military consolidation converged to shape Indonesia's development during the interregnum.

METHOD

This article employs a historical methodology comprising four interconnected stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. While primary sources from the interregnum between 1966 and 1967 are particularly scarce, we have selected the *Angkatan Bersendjata* magazine, accessible via the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia. As a comprehensively archived historical artefact, this publication provides a detailed account of the transitional period, aligning with the heuristic principle of gathering data from contemporary sources to ensure temporal accuracy (Kuntowijoyo, 2018).

The authors maintain a reflexive stance on the ideological bias within these historical records, acknowledging that the reproduction of history during the New Order era was tightly controlled. Despite its clear pro-government orientation, *Angkatan Bersendjata* remains analytically indispensable as it serves as a primary source for the administration's official rhetoric and policy directives. Furthermore, its affiliation with the Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia (ABRI) ensured its immunity from the media bans of the era. To mitigate this archival challenge, authors employ data triangulation by cross-referencing primary military accounts with a diverse range of secondary sources, including seminal monographs, archival materials, contemporary newspapers, official publications, and recent journal articles that examine foreign and domestic policy, reflecting the intermestic logic of the early Suharto era (Manning, 1977).

After collecting the data, categorisation was conducted through a thematic lens, sorting it into analytical clusters such as security sectors, economic stabilisation, and diplomatic actions. This selection process aims to identify actions that simultaneously bridge domestic and international aspects. During the verification and interpretation phases, both external and internal criticism were employed to validate authenticity, assess credibility, and understand the author's intent (Zulaicha, 2017). The data were further organised chronologically and thematically to synthesise the broader historiographical context. Such interpretation is vital for constructing a distinct compilation of facts during the historiography phase (Kanumuyoso, 2020). Ultimately, this study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, integrating political history with social science methodologies through incorporating the mentioned categories. This synthesis enables us to explain how the complexity of diplomatic normalisation, domestic economic stability measures, and the militarisation of bureaucracy converged to shape the trajectory of the Indonesian state (Abbas, 2014).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The Transition from the Old Order of Sukarno to the New Order of Suharto

The transition of government from the Old Order to the New Order was triggered by the catastrophic events of 30 September and 1 October 1965, which involved a violent clash between the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and the National Army (ABRI). This political and socio-economic crisis resulted in the killing of Indonesia's six senior generals, including the Chief of Staff, General Ahmad Yani, and one middle-ranking officer.

In accordance with established military protocol, Suharto assumed command, but failed to move swiftly to consolidate the various service branches, particularly the Navy and Police, under the de facto leadership of the ABRI (Yogaswara, 2012). After the top military leadership was lost, Suharto became the highest-ranking officer and was appointed to lead the military structure. He subsequently rose to national prominence, gaining the trust of President Sukarno as the Commander of the Operation to Restore Security and Order the name is *Pangkopkamtib* (Cipto, 2007). While security in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, had presumably been restored, the situation in other provinces remained explosive, such as Central and East Java, particularly in rural areas where PKI infiltration

of the military was suspected. In early 1966, Suharto implemented measures to restore the nation's deteriorating financial and economic stability amid chaotic circumstances (Jaquet, 1971b). General Suharto's legitimacy was significantly strengthened when President Sukarno issued the Letter of Instruction on 11 March 1966 the name is *Supersemar*, which carried immense legal and political weight (Vatikiotis, 1998). Suharto later argued, as noted by Vatikiotis, 1998):

"I never used Supersemar as an order to seize power, nor was it a tool for achieving a 'coup', but was rather the beginning of the strive for the New Order."

Thus, from Suharto's perspective as the mandate holder, he was empowered to act on behalf of the President to secure national security and governmental stability (Djojopranoto, 1966a). This transfer of authority marked the beginning of the transition period, as Sukarno's political influence diminished under the guise of restoring security.

Upon receiving the mandate, Suharto issued two decrees: the dissolution of the PKI via Presidential Decree No. 1/3/1966 (Djojopranoto, 1966b) and the detention of fifteen of Sukarno's cabinet ministers. The arrest of these officials served as a political demonstration of *Supersemar*'s efficacy, which Suharto further consolidated through the reshuffle of the Dwikora Cabinet on 28 March 1966. Notably, the removal of Subandrio, the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Intelligence Agency, indicates that Suharto was targeting a key Sukarno loyalist held responsible for the failed coup (Sitompul, 2018). In his previous diplomatic capacity, Subandrio had served as an intermediary for Sukarno's ideological stance toward the communist bloc (Anwar, 2009) and was regarded as a figure linked to the communist movement in 1965 (Hidayat, 2004).

Additionally, Suharto reorganised the ministerial positions after removing ministers who were seen as too supportive of Sukarno's policies. Firstly, Adam Malik, a figure recognised for his anti-communist stance, was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations (Djojopranoto, 1966d; Suryadinata, 2022). This appointment was a crucial step in the regime's broader 'international re-engagement' strategy, as Malik served as the civilian diplomatic architect who would later implement the normalisation of relations with the West and regional neighbours. This appointment was a crucial step in the regime's broader 'international re-engagement' strategy, as Malik served as the civilian diplomatic architect who would later implement the normalisation of relations with the West and regional neighbours. Following this appointment on 25 July 1966, Suharto declared the Ampera Cabinet (Afriadi, 2024). This cabinet was established based on the 4th General Session of the Provisional People's Consultative Assembly (MPRS), led by General A.H. Nasution, which elevated *Supersemar* to an MPRS Decree (TapMPRS), thereby ensuring it could not be revoked by Sukarno (Hindley, 1968). In this new structure, Suharto presided as the chairman of the cabinet praesidium, a position that arguably legitimised him as the second-in-command, controlling both military and executive agency. Suharto stated in *Angkatan Bersendjata* that the primary mission of this cabinet was to restore stability through a 'free and active' foreign policy aligned with the national interest (Soeharto, 1966).

Suharto, as the primary policymaker during this transitional period, gradually dismantled Sukarno's confrontational political legacy. In a strategic shift from the previous administration, he sought to reestablish diplomatic and economic relations with both Western and regional powers. This 'open-door' policy aimed to attract the foreign investment and funding necessary to revitalise the Indonesian economy, guided by his team of academic economic advisors (Anderson, 1983). To support economic revitalisation, the militarisation of the bureaucracy intensified under the ABRI dual-function (*dwifungsi*) doctrine, formalised during the Army Seminar in August 1966. This doctrine mandated military involvement across all sectors of society, resulting in the appointment of military officers to ministerial, administrative, and regional leadership positions (Crouch, 1988), including roles within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Suryadinata, 2022).



Figure 1. The chairman of the MPRS, General Nasution, congratulated General Suharto after he was inaugurated as the acting president of the Republic of Indonesia on 12 March 1967 (Yayasan Idayu & Perpusnas RI, 1967).

This transitional period, lasting approximately two years from 1966 to 1967, witnessed the diminution of Sukarno's authority. Following the MPRS's rejection of Sukarno's accountability speech (*Nawaksara*), under the leadership of General A.H. Nasution, the parliament enacted Decree Number XXXIII on 12 March 1967. This decree removed Sukarno's executive powers and designated Suharto as the Acting President, as depicted in Figure 1.

The transitional process, marked by the rise of Suharto, signalled a definitive end to Indonesia's alignment with the communist bloc. Previously, Western leaders, particularly in the United States, viewed Sukarno's confrontational stance as a threat to their interests in Southeast Asia, a concern that led to the CIA's involvement in shaping Indonesia's political trajectory (Kim, 2002). Although this topic remains a subject of intense historiographical debate, Oltmans (2001) asserts that Suharto was a general 'cultivated' by Washington. While the CIA denied the accusation by describing him as an 'apolitical and opportunistic' officer who emerged as a staunch anti-communist leader (Central Intelligence Agency, 1965).

Even though the elite-level transition between 1965 and 1967 proceeded with relative structural 'smoothness', the casualties at the grassroots level were catastrophic. The transition was accompanied by the systematic killing of hundreds of thousands suspected of sympathising with the PKI, with death toll estimates reaching approximately 500,000 (Oltmans, 2001). Despite the heavy casualties, both the U.S. government and Congress chose to remain silent. Moreover, research by (Tempo, 2015) highlights the involvement of Western powers in spreading disinformation about the PKI and in providing the TNI with equipment and lists of suspected individuals, thereby facilitating the strengthening of the New Order.

Security Policy Change: From Focusing on External Threats to Prioritising Domestic Security and Economic Recovery

The legitimate transition and the beginning of the New Order left Suharto, who took over, with a lack of economic and domestic stability in Indonesia from the previous era. In response to these challenges, Suharto sought to redefine the national threats by consolidating political power and enhancing security, viewing these as essential steps towards transforming Indonesia into a modern industrial nation (Hill & Narjoko, 2010). The New Order administration, under Suharto's leadership, took decisive action to address a range of inherited national crises. Suharto declared political stability, security, and economic development as the primary priorities.

This prioritization was supported by his previous swift efforts, as the second-in-command, to rehabilitate the national economy, which he initiated just one day after receiving the *Supersemar* mandate from President Sukarno. On 12 March 1966, Suharto issued Announcement Letter No. 2, urging national entrepreneurs in the production, distribution, and service sectors to help stabilise the

economy. He warned this group not to worsen the hardships faced by the population, emphasising the importance of providing essential goods such as clothing and food (Djojopranoto, 1966e).

A fundamental variance emerged, whereas Sukarno perceived the international system as the primary threat to national security, Suharto reoriented this perspective by focusing on the domestic sphere. This shift was arguably influenced by Suharto's experience as a soldier who had witnessed the proliferation of separatist movements and the chronic political volatility of the Sukarno era (Bhakti, 2018). Furthermore, social complexities, including the diverse ethnic and religious pluralism of the Indonesian archipelago, were perceived as potential catalysts for instability (Wilda, 2017). These measures were synthesised into the 'Development Trilogy' (*Trilogi Pembangunan*): an integrated framework comprising equitable development, economic growth, and national stability (Retnowati, 2018).

Several crucial factors led to a more reflective approach to domestic development (Cipto, 2007). One key aspect was the government's recognition of the urgent need to improve citizens' welfare and education, particularly given alarmingly high illiteracy rates. The geographical diversity of communities across the archipelago also posed significant challenges, primarily due to inadequate transportation and communication infrastructure. Political unrest and regional uprisings stemmed largely from these socio-economic issues; for example, the PRRI/Permesta incidents showcased the tensions between central and local leaders over equitable development. Additionally, the Old Order's failure to maintain security contributed to a serious economic crisis, marked by rampant foreign debt and hyperinflation. In response to these complex challenges, the New Order regime adopted a broader definition of national security that encompassed politics, economics, society, religion, and culture (Cipto, 2007).

The New Order prioritized political stability as the foundation for domestic security. Accordingly, the regime adopted an intolerant and anticipatory stance toward opposition forces and communism, which was identified as the primary threat. Reflecting on the chaotic partisan clashes of the Liberal Democracy (1950–1959) and Guided Democracy (1959–1965) eras, Suharto sought to simplify the political party structure to prevent mass polarisation and public disorder. An initial step toward this objective was the issuance of the MPRS Decree on 5 July 1966, which laid the groundwork for the future 'fusion' of political organizations (MPRS RI, 1966a). Although the regime claimed to uphold Pancasila Democracy, this process arguably restricted democratic development by merging parties based on narrow ideological orientations, including Islamic factions (Nurhuda et al., 2025). The political fragmentation of the previous era was also addressed through the formalisation of the ABRI's *dwifungsi* (dual function) doctrine. This concept enabled the military to exert agency within both the security and socio-political sectors. As (Honna, 2002) as cited in (Suparno, 2012) observes, the dual function of ABRI positioned it as a 'stabiliser-dynamist' in national development. This doctrine facilitated the active involvement of military personnel in government and politics, enabling them to secure the nation against radicalism while implementing socio-economic measures that affected the people (Cipto, 2007). As a result, military officers filled critical roles ranging from regional governorships to legislative positions (Raditya, 2016). In addition, the anti-communist policies were implemented with systematic rigour, beginning with MPRS Decree No. 25 of 1966 and culminating in the proscription of left-wing political parties (Cipto, 2007). Military operations were subsequently launched to neutralise remaining communist elements, notably the PGRS/PARAKU in West Kalimantan beginning in 1966 (Djamil, 2018), and the movements in Blitar in 1967 (Davidson, 2008; Gin, 2020; Pusjarah TNI, 2009).

Not only was the reorganisation of the political structure treated as a security concern, but economic recovery was viewed as one as well. Suharto argued that economic growth is essential for maintaining domestic stability and preventing public dissatisfaction that could lead to potential uprisings (Cipto, 2007; Retnowati, 2018). Based on the recovery plan outlined by Heinz Wolfgang Arnd (1984, as cited in Faisal, 2018), the administration adopted a three-stage strategy: stabilisation, rehabilitation, and development. The 'stabilisation' phase involved suppressing radical movements and linking opposition groups to threats against the national order (Wilda, 2017). This economic agenda was further supported by the dual function of the national army, leading to its legitimization through a slogan: "pioneer of political and economic stabilisation," which positioned the military's political role as a guarantor of economic success (Khairani & Suprijono, 2015).

These economic initiatives were significantly influenced by a group of experts from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Indonesia, led by Professor Widjojo Nitisastro. This technocratic team advised President Suharto on economic planning and helped build trust with Western and Japanese powers to secure economic assistance (Anderson, 1983). The Economic Team's responsibilities included negotiating debt rescheduling and attracting foreign direct investment through a series of diplomatic meetings in Tokyo and Paris, held between September and December 1966 (Hadi & Gayung, 2012). The meetings resulted in economic agreements in February and July 1967, which led to a gradual influx of foreign capital and further helped to shrink inflation (Yogaswara, 2012). The combination of domestic economic intervention and diplomatic measures proved highly effective, successfully reversing hyperinflation and achieving an average annual growth rate of 7% from 1967 to 1972 (Karsono, 2013).

Shift in Foreign Policy: Diplomatic Normalisation with Neighbours and Allies in the Early New Order Era

The contrasting threat perceptions between Sukarno and Suharto are also evident in a fundamental reorientation of Indonesia's foreign policy. Diplomatic normalisation is demonstrated as one of the primary differences from the previous administration (Mohsin, 2019). By adopting a more 'open-door' approach, the New Order aimed to rebuild international trust both regionally and globally (Hadi & Gayung, 2012). Thus, Suharto prioritised the principles of "good neighbours" and mutual respect, particularly within Southeast Asia, to foster a regional setting that supports Indonesia's domestic stability (Kusuma & Afwan, 2021).

The significant measure was the abandonment of the ideological alignment with the Eastern bloc that characterised Sukarno's administration (Gin, 2020). These actions were reflected in the suspension of bilateral relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC), which the Suharto administration perceived as a primary existential threat due to its alleged involvement in and support for the 30 September 1965 Movement. Mao Zedong was suspected of harbouring global revolutionary ambitions and providing consistent support to communist insurgencies across Asia (Pradana, 2016). Such concerns were substantiated by reports of PGRS/PARAKU personnel being trained in Hainan (Djamil, 2018). As a result, diplomatic ties were severed on 9 October 1967, followed by the reciprocal closure of embassies in Beijing and Jakarta (Sinaga, 2013).

Furthermore, the normalisation of relations with Malaysia served as the steppingstone to the regional rehabilitation. Despite the height of the Confrontation in 1963-1965, back-channel intelligence contacts between Lieutenant Colonel Ali Murtopo and the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had occurred as early as July 1965 (Djamil, 2018). The military establishment viewed normalization as a strategic necessity, driven by military, political, and economic imperatives (Sridiyatmiko, 2015). Concrete steps were formalized on 29 May 1966, during Thai-facilitated negotiations led by Adam Malik, which adhered to the spirit of the 1963 Manila Agreement (Djojopranoto, 1966e). The signing of the Jakarta Accord on 11 August 1966 effectively ended the conflict, with both nations pledging to work toward mutual prosperity (Djojopranoto, 1966f; Sridiyatmiko, 2015). This shift was necessitated by Indonesia's deteriorating economic condition, as the cost of prolonged warfare and swelling foreign debt had become unsustainable (Arifin, Jumadi, & Najamuddin, 2018). Normalisation with Malaysia did not automatically reduce Indonesia's concern about border security in Borneo. Following the August 1966 accord, the government demanded the surrender of PGRS/PARAKU guerrilla groups that had paradoxically received Indonesian military training during the Confrontation (Gin, 2020). While some surrendered, approximately 500 insurgents continued their struggle along the West Kalimantan border, necessitating the launch of Operation *Tertib* and Operation *Sapu Bersih* between 1966 and 1970, which was coordinated with the Malaysian military (Rucianawati, 2011).

Beyond severing relations with the PRC and normalizing diplomatic relations with Malaysia, Indonesia actively sought to rejoin the United Nations and initiate a collaborative regional framework (Gin, 2020). Simultaneously, Indonesia moved to end its international isolation by rejoining the United Nations. Sukarno's 1965 withdrawal was motivated by distrust of Western dominance and by an attempt to establish the Conference of New Emerging Forces (CONEFO) as a

rival power centre (Sulistiyanto, 2010). This isolation had restricted Indonesia's capacity to meet its national interests, tethering it almost exclusively to the communist bloc (Widjaja, 1986). From Suharto's perspective, re-engagement with the UN and Western nations was essential for securing the economic assistance and investment required for domestic survival (Angel, 1970). Indonesia officially resumed its membership in the UN on 28 September 1966, a move that accelerated domestic restructuring and bolstered international trust (Arifin et al., 2018).

Indonesia also played a role in enhancing regional cooperation by initiating the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on 8 August 1967. This initiative, proposed by Suharto during the DPR-GR Session in August 1966, aimed to expand the Maphilindo concept into a broader united Southeast Asia (Luhulima, 2019). The establishment of ASEAN was driven by the desire to hinder the spread of communism and ensure the region's capability to resist external military or economic interventions (Djojopranoto, 1966c; Karsono, 2013). By engaging in the creation of secure regions, the New Order could redirect its resources toward domestic development (Indrawan,



2021; Pramono et al., 2017).

Figure 2. News about Suharto's views on the need for cooperation and unity among countries in Southeast Asia. (*Angkatan Bersendjata, Augustus 18, 1966*).

From Suharto's rhetoric during this period (see Figure 2 for Suharto's view on regionalism), it can be inferred that security issues remained the primary driving force behind creating regional stability. He assured that regional security dynamics have a direct impact on national stability. Kamaruzzaman (2011) emphasizes that the security factor acted as a catalyst, encouraging Southeast Asian nations to foster cooperation based on shared, agreed-upon values. By approaching regional security through this lens, the administration sought to mitigate foreign threats, thereby allowing the government to focus exclusively on improving domestic order. Furthermore, the establishment of ASEAN was motivated by a collective desire to create a peaceful, secure, stable, and prosperous region, facilitating collaboration in economics, social sciences, and culture (Artnet, 2017). This emerged as a response to the conflict-prone environment of the 1960s, marked by ideological struggles between major military powers. Left unchecked, these tensions threatened to disrupt regional stability and impede developmental progress (Tavares, 2017). ASEAN members were thus positioned to help restore Indonesia's international reputation, as a foundation for economic recovery (Gill, 1988).

These diplomatic actions aimed to mitigate external threats and allow the state to focus on macroeconomic rehabilitation. Suharto's concept of "National Resilience" (*Ketahanan Nasional*) posited that security was interconnected to economic resilience (Tan, 2012). This was formalized by the MPRS Decree of 5 July 1966, which mandated a foreign policy doctrine based on "increasing friends rather than enemies" and on seeking harmony under the Pancasila philosophy (MPRS RI, 1966b). To support this 'open-door' foreign policy, the government also introduced economic legislation, including Law No. 1 of 1967 on Foreign Investment and Law No. 2 of 1967, which

confirmed Indonesia's return to the IMF and the World Bank. These regulations were drafted swiftly to meet the urgent need for foreign capital (Setia, 2023). As a result, for instance, the normalization of ties with the Netherlands led to the formation of the Inter-Governmental Group for Indonesia (IGGI). During its inaugural meeting in Amsterdam on 20 February 1967, Indonesia secured \$200 million in loans from a consortium of Western powers and Japan, providing a vital lifeline for the state budget (Ardi, 2007; Faisal, 2018).

The interregnum events illustrate a significant shift in threat perception, with domestic economic instability identified as the primary concern. This shift necessitated a militarized governance structure and the strategic use of economic stabilization and diplomatic normalization as security instruments. The 'intermestic' approach reflects the integration of military, political, and economic elements, along with an 'open-door' foreign policy. In the following section, this paper will examine how traditional security frameworks expanded to include economic security, reshaping Indonesian domestic policy from 1966 to 1967. It will analyze the 'interested' logic whereby the New Order administration established a solid domestic economic foundation before pursuing diplomatic normalization. Ultimately, the discussion will highlight how the regime's strategic integration of domestic priorities and foreign policy measures during this transitional period successfully restored national stability and enhanced international credibility.

DISCUSSION

Revisiting Intermestic Theory through the Indonesian Transition From Sukarno to Suharto

Following the failed coup, the transitional administration placed a strong emphasis on national security due to the risk of large-scale conflict after the assassination of high-ranking military leaders. These unstable conditions led to the rise of regional separatist movements and internal tensions, which were intensified by chronic hyperinflation and an ongoing economic crisis. Additionally, the Indonesian population recalls how Sukarno's ambitious, ideologically motivated international politics led to domestic economic hardship. This historical context highlights the New Order's redefinition of security, framing it within a more assertive foreign policy.

The policy adopted during this period focused on domestic security, leading to a shift in priorities. From Suharto's perspective, prioritising the welfare of citizens was crucial to establishing effective diplomatic relations, reflecting the importance of domestic economic security at the time. As a result, this transitional phase marked a significant shift in how security was conceptualised, broadening the discussion beyond traditional military concerns to include economic security as well. During this transition, Indonesia expanded its security focus to encompass economic and political sectors, which functioned alongside traditional military threats to secure the regime's political bargain.

The focus on a political security approach was largely facilitated by Suharto's consolidation of political power through *Supersemar*, which provided the legal and political basis for broadening the security mandate to include social order and economic stability. During this era, national security was also effectively translated into political security, which focused specifically on the stability of new government structures (Buzan et al., 1998). Suharto's systematic restructuring of ministries and the inclusion of military officials in civilian sectors were intended to undermine Sukarnoist influence and prevent elite fragmentation. The Suharto administration implemented a deliberate strategy to consolidate authoritarian rule and achieve national stability. Thus, security became intertwined with regime consolidation and the suppression of political difference, highlighting the complex nexus between governance and securitisation in the post-coup era.

The transition further underscores the strategic elevation of economic security as a substantial pillar of national policy. As (Anuar & Harun, 2019) argue, states must balance national security and developmental interests, which are calculated in response to specific threats. In the context of Indonesia, economic security is perceived as an existential threat due to its strong association with national stability during periods of crisis (Buzan et al., 1998). Rather than alienating the nation from the global system, the state made a rational choice to align the domestic stability with

international economic developments (Dewi & Sudagung, 2017, p. 26). By empowering the ABRI officials and collaborating with technocratic economists, Suharto integrated his political and economic security agenda, including utilising military officials in domestic roles to safeguard the nation following the communist purge. This interconnection between political and economic security, involving a coalition of loyalist military figures and academic experts, aims to mitigate the risk of recurrent hyperinflation.

Additionally, the military, political, and economic actions taken during this time demonstrate that domestic factors were the main influences on foreign policy, reflecting the intermestic logic. However, it is evident that Suharto prioritised internal stabilisation instead of integrating the domestic and foreign sectors simultaneously, as previously suggested by (Manning, 1977). This approach reflects Suharto's agency, highlighting his dominant influence in the policymaking process. It was also shaped by his patriotic military background and by his experience managing the early instability following Indonesia's independence.

The New Order administration also employed an intermestic approach to target both domestic and international audiences, thereby cultivating trust through diplomatic normalisation (Huang & Wang, 2023, p. 310; Huijgh, 2017). Accordingly, the New Order government utilised diplomatic normalisation as a means of supporting domestic stability and rebranding Indonesia's international credibility. By securing domestic trust through political and economic stabilisation, the administration signalled to the global community that Indonesia was prepared for renewed international relations, which aligns with findings that highlight economic resources as a key domestic determinant of foreign policy (AS, 2018).

Upon establishing a foundation of economic stability, the foreign policy measures were manifested in both bilateral and multilateral actions, as the state pursued international legitimacy through strengthened engagement with the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. The transitional government actively engaged with Western powers and Japan to reintegrate the Indonesian economy into the global system. The establishment of ASEAN and the acquisition of foreign aid through the IGGI consortium, comprising the United States, Japan, and Western European powers, further reinforces Indonesia's proactive international stance (Ardi, 2007; Faisal, 2018).

Additionally, it can be understood that the intermestic approach encompasses a dynamic interplay between foreign and domestic security sectors, as evident in the demilitarisation of the Indonesia-Malaysia border (Çağlar, 2025). By initiating diplomatic normalisation with Malaysia to support military operations in border regions, Suharto proceeded beyond traditional security measures to establish bilateral relations in the region. These efforts also demonstrate Suharto's intention to portray Indonesia as a nation committed to regional peace and cooperation. Research indicates that states can derive significant benefits from regionalism if they adopt a liberal perspective on economic security (Dewi & Sudagung, 2017). The 'open-door' foreign policy measures also represented a symbolic gesture that distinguished Suharto from Sukarno's provocative leadership, demonstrating how individual agency significantly influences foreign policy outcomes (AS, 2018). In the final analysis, these intermestic approaches enabled Indonesia to focus on addressing its national security challenges while securing international support to mitigate external threats during a volatile transitional phase.

CONCLUSION

The transition from the Old Order to the New Order between 1966 and 1967 represented a fundamental reconfiguration of the Indonesian state. This study demonstrates that the rise of Suharto was underpinned by an intermestic logic that prioritized internal stability over external confrontation. By consolidating control over military, political, and governmental infrastructures, the administration effectively bridged domestic necessities with international strategy. This framework reveals that during regime transitions, domestic legitimacy is intrinsically tied to global diplomatic standing, where internal order serves as the primary foundation for external engagement.

The early New Order's prioritization of domestic stability was an integrated response to a multidimensional crisis. By identifying existential threats as predominantly internal—such as socio-political volatility and hyperinflation—the administration utilized diplomatic normalization as a strategic instrument to secure the international trust required for economic recovery. The findings show that the militarization of the bureaucracy was complemented by an 'open-door' diplomatic strategy, intertwining political, military, and economic security sectors. This approach broadens the understanding of economic security, portraying it not just as a fiscal matter but as a cornerstone of national survival and regime legitimacy.

Furthermore, this research contributes to Indonesian historiography and International Relations by framing the 1966–1967 interregnum as a period of intentional statecraft. It challenges narratives that focus solely on military consolidation by highlighting how the state's economy, foreign relations, and national security functioned as a unified mechanism. The collaboration between military loyalists and technocratic experts was essential in navigating this transition, suggesting that domestic stability and international re-engagement were inseparable phenomena.

In the current political context, marked by the ongoing rehabilitation of historical legacies, providing a balanced academic inquiry into this period remains vital. While this study elucidates the strategic agency behind the New Order's formation, it also recognizes the need for future research to incorporate a wider range of non-military perspectives. Expanding the source base to include voices critical of the era's propaganda will offer a more comprehensive understanding of the transition. Future scholarship should also investigate the specific security mechanisms that paved the way for subsequent authoritarianism, perhaps through comparative studies of other post-coup regimes in Southeast Asia. Ultimately, the legacy of this intermestic transition continues to shape the Indonesian political landscape today.

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