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## Restoring Trusts without Losing Face: An Episode in the History of China – Indonesia Relationship

**ABSTRACT:** *The main factor of the frozen China – Indonesia diplomatic relationship was the loss of trusts of Indonesia toward China in connection with the G-30-S (Gerakan 30 September or 30<sup>th</sup> September Movement) in 1965. Interestingly, in this frozen diplomatic relationship era, there was a direct trade agreement between CCPIT (China Council for Promotion on International Trade) and KADIN (Kamar Dagang dan Industri Indonesia or Indonesia Chamber of Commerce and Industry). This fact leads to the question: is there and what are the real efforts of China to restore the trust from Indonesia? This research used the history research method and enhanced by the “Mianzi” concept. The result of this research shows that since PRC (People Republic of China) stipulate revolutionary diplomatic line, which makes China closer to the USA (United States of America), its relationship with the neighboring countries, especially those tied in the ASEAN (Association of South East Asia Nations) organization, is getting better. This improvement can be seen as a way to gain the trust from Indonesia again. It is also clearly seen that China uses the third party and makes the advantages of the opportunities given by the internal and external development to create a good image to Indonesia. All these steps have led the respect factors in the “Mianzi” concepts has showed very meaningful influences within the process. Although the CCPIT – KADIN agreement is not the mostly expected result, but it is the important moment for the growing trust of these two countries and the effort to normalize the China – Indonesia diplomatic relationship.*

**KEY WORDS:** *China-Indonesia relationship, trust, respect factors, “Mianzi” concept, third party, effort to normalize, and diplomatic relationship.*

### INTRODUCTION

China and Indonesia are the countries which are very potential to take a part in both regional and global levels. Since the dynasty era, China has developed the tributary relationship, which emphasizes on cultural superiority. About the “tributary relationship” in China history, it is a relationship between

the central government and sub-ordinate government or vassal, based on the understanding that the countries around China are barbarian and they are culturally required to be signified. The countries which need to be admitted by China have to do *ketou*, meaning that they have to send their messengers to give respects to China Emperors by kneeling and

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bowing the head to the ground and tributes periodically. As a return, China gives a stamp of recognition, aristocratic titles, and rights for trades in China seaports and gifts from emperors (Camilleri, 1980:4-5).

In the modern age, the diplomatic relationship of both China and Indonesia has developed since April 1950; but after dynamic partnership, this relationship was frozen in October 1967. This fact results from the peak tense and clash between two countries in connection with the 30 September Movement, commonly abbreviated as G-30-S (*Gerakan 30 September*), which took place in 1965 in Indonesia (Soeharto, 1989).

According to Indonesian history, G-30-S is a very brutal *coup de tat* done by Indonesian Communist Party, known as PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*); therefore, had to be eliminated. The chaotic Indonesian political condition, in line with G-30-S event, causes to staple down the *Orde Lama* Government (Old Regime), led by President Soekarno, replaced by *Orde Baru* Government (New Regime) led by President Soeharto. This new regime, who against Communism, is really convinced that China took a part in G-30-S event (Soeharto, 1989).

While China continues to insist that China is not involved in the coup, and filed a strong protest against the freezing of relations conducted by Indonesia. The book written by Anyu Huang entitled *The History of New China Diplomacy* illustrates that incident as follows:

[...] 对这场突发事变，中国事前一无所知，对印尼局势未立即表态[...] 这是两年以来的第 43 次武装袭击，是国际外交史上少有的法西斯暴行。中国政府曾对此向印尼政府提出强烈抗议和严正要求，但被印尼政府蛮横拒绝。接着，印尼政府来照宣布关闭其驻华大使馆，撤走全部人员；同时无理要求中国政府在印 30 日以前关闭驻印尼大使馆[...] 中国对印尼政府中断两国外交关系的行为，提出强烈抗议。由于印尼政府所采取的严重步骤，中国不得不宣布暂时关闭驻印尼大使馆和各领事馆，撤回使领馆全部人员 (Huang / 黄, 2005:153-155).

**Translation:**

[...] regarding the incident which all of a sudden took place, China previously did not know at all, (therefore) did not directly state its ideas on what had happened in Indonesia. [...] This is the

43<sup>rd</sup> armed attack (to the China Embassy) in the last two years (1965-1967), as fascist brutality which occurs in the international relationship. Regarding this issue, China is strongly protesting the Indonesian government, but it is impolitely refused by the Indonesian government. Then, the Indonesian government closed its embassy in China and pulled all personnel; at the same time, without any reason, asked China to close its embassy in Jakarta before 30 (October 1967). [...] China, regarding the diplomatic cut off by Indonesia, was proposing a strong protest. What Indonesia had done led China to temporarily close its embassy and all consulates, and to pull off all personnel in order that they had to return to China.

The above citation illustrates the rejection attitude of China against any ideas of what Indonesia had accused and against freezing of bilateral ties, but Indonesia did not take care of it. This shows how Indonesia, exactly President Soeharto, did not trust China anymore (Soeharto, 1989). The Indonesian attitude on China can actually be understood due to the fact that in 1966-1969, the efforts of China to spread Communism were terribly radical.

The Cultural Revolution in China was taking place, foreign policy tended to be “left”, and the spreading of Mao Zedong *sixiang*, or thoughts of Mao Zedong, became the main focus of Chinese diplomacy. The chaotic situation became worse when Mao Zedong strongly stated that revolution must also be executed in foreign countries.<sup>1</sup> This idea commonly known as “revolution export” policy; therefore, the neighboring countries gave stigma “China as a threat” (Camilleri, 1980).

The loss of Indonesia’s trust toward China leads to the diplomatically frozen relationship in a 23-years period. In fact, since 1969/1970, China foreign policy has changed drastically. At that time, Mao Zedong issued the Revolutionary Diplomacy Line, which made China closer to the United States of America, which was formerly the main enemy (Camilleri, 1980).

This drastic change, gradually but surely, has changed PRC (People Republic of China)’s

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, “USA Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence” in *Intelligence Report: Mao’s Red Guard Diplomacy, 1967*. Reference Title: POLO XXXI, 21 June 1968, p.14. Available online also at: <http://www.foia.cia.gov/CPE/POLO/polo-21.pdf> [accessed in Depok, Indonesia: January 25, 2015].

image in the world. In human interactions, “partner’s trust” is strongly connected to the values of “respect” and “self-esteem”. Chinese culture embroiders such values in *mianzi* or “face” concept. Therefore, the values in the *mianzi* concept being one of the main foundations of the Chinese nation’s behavior (Li / 李思辉, 2011).

The above discussion leads to the questions: (1) Are there and what are the serious efforts of China to get back the trust from Indonesia?; and (2) How do the concepts of *mianzi* internally influence the issue? This research tries to answer these questions. It is true that a mutual understanding is not connected to just one country or party; therefore, the attitudes, and social-politic developments of Indonesia are also paid attention in this research. But, the key focus oriented to what and how the attitudes or efforts shown by China and the influences of *mianzi* concepts in it.

These questions cause the research intended to reveal numerous activities or events during the freezing of diplomatic relations, which shows that there is an effort both parties, especially China, to approaching each other and to rebuild trust among them. The disclosure of facts based on historical and cultural approaches are expected to enhance mutual understanding between the two countries, so that a better relationship based on equality and mutual trust can be realized.

The temporal limit of this research is of 1969-1985, due to the fact that the year of 1969 is the time when China changed its policies; and the year of 1985 is the time when the agreement between CCPIT (China Council for Promotion on International Trade or *Zhongguo Guojimaoyi Zujin Weiyuanhui*) and KADIN (*Kamar Dagang dan Industri Indonesia* or Indonesia Chamber of Commerce and Industry) was reached. That event was the first milestone which marked the return of trust between the two nations. Therefore is considered as the ending point of this research.

## RESEARCH METHOD AND THE USE OF MIANZI CONCEPT

The research uses a history research method, covering heuristic process,

criticism on the sources, interpretation, and historiography (Gottschalk, 1986). The frame of *mianzi* concepts is used to sharpen the analysis in the interpretation process. The heuristic stage, or collecting data, carried out through the library research by examining the various kinds of publications discussing related topics. Considering the resources obtained are not entirely the primary sources, then the sources criticism stage done very carefully. The criticizing process is done by examining or comparing data from various sources in order that data validity is really convincing (Notosusanto, 1971).

The topic of this research relating to the interests of the two countries, then interpretation of data done with very carefully, so that researcher does not trapped into partisanship. The final stage is writing history, or historiography, carried out based on the rules of writing a narrative history that reveals the change of situation or something, which is caused by the occurrence of an event (Lemon, 2003:298-301).

The concept of *mianzi* or “face”, as a cultural concept, containing meaning of “honor or respect”, indeed not only belongs to China. But, unlike Western culture which emphasizing that an individual is responsible for what he/she does, in Chinese culture there is no one who can make the decision only upon consideration of its own interests, each individual almost completely dependent to others in term of values and societal roles (De Mente, 1996:247).

This social system has made the Chinese people has an obsessive sensitivity to “face” or “honor”. The honor or respect is something that is closely related to the behavior of individuals when interacting in the community. Similarly, the honor of a country will be obtained or given by his/her people as well as other countries, based on their behavior and accomplishments achieved (Li / 李思辉, 2011).

The importance of *mianzi* in China culture cannot be disputed (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998:53); and its roots exist in the Confucius doctrines (Cheng, 1986:337). Confucius teaching of *wulun*, or five relations, requiring or demanding human beings to behave

according to their roles in the community in order to reach harmony. The importance of *mianzi* concepts can also be seen from the large number of Chinese expressions using this word. Hsien Chin Hu notes that at least there are 21 expressions (Hu, 1944:55-60); while Ning Yu analyses the meanings of *mianzi* in depth (Yu, 2001:136). This research does not use all expressions due to the fact that some are irrelevant with the research topic.

The object of the research is what China did to obtain the Indonesian trusts, with the elements of respect and dignity, national sovereignty, within leading to risks. The parts of *mianzi* concepts used as references are *diu mian* (丢面) or “losing face”, *baoquan mianzi* (保全面子) or “saving face”, and *gei mianzi* (给面子) or “giving face”.

*Diu mian*, or “losing face”, illustrates the loss of reputation due to bad deed, like doing something unethical, corrupt, fraudulent, and other negative things. Such facts are advisably avoided because Chinese people tend to avoid frontal conflicts, but when these facts cannot be avoidable, accepting facts as they are is something someone needs to face (Li, 2011). Besides, someone should not make any other person or situation of being uncomfortably so as to make another feel “losing face”.

In many situations, this rule often leads an individual to prefer keeping a convenient atmosphere than honesty and truths (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998:64). Furthermore, this belief causes ambiguous statements or misunderstanding among interlocutors, who do not understand Chinese culture well. The third party, in this sense, plays an important role.

*Baoquan mianzi*, or “saving face”, is an expression closely connected to *diu mian* or “losing face”. The efforts to keep face are done in order to avoid losing face, although it is that complicated in any manner. The effort of *baoquan mianzi* can be illustrated in the *gu mianzi* expression (顾面子), literally meaning to keep face or pay attention to physical appearance to improve prestige. While, *gei mianzi*, or “giving face”, refers to respect others, such as praising, treating someone in a special way, and other activities which can lead to improve dignity. Generally, these all are reciprocally based.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Terrribly castigated by the Cultural Revolution which destroyed all Chinese previous diplomatic efforts, the 9<sup>th</sup> Chinese Communist Party Congress in 1969 issued some ideas, one of which officially stated that China issued the plan to develop mutual relationship with other countries, leading China to enter a new era since 1970. Mao Zedong believed that a globally threatening power at that time was a socialist imperialist, Soviet Union (SU), while the United States of America (USA) as the capitalist power was weakening due to its involvement in the Vietnam war and economic crises whipping USA. Mao Zedong's ideas, one of which was to cooperate with the United States of America and other Western countries to face the Soviet Union and to build up the cooperation with its neighboring countries, were decided as the key points to the revolutionary diplomatic lines (Choudhury, 1982:235).

This change of Chinese foreign policy, then, surely influenced the global powers, especially the fact that Chinese successfully replaced the position of Taiwan at the United Nations forum. That the relationship between Chinese and the USA became better made Allied Powers of the USA, like Japan, Thailand, and the Philippines also began to establish closer relations with China. Regionally, although this change had not made the Southeast Asian countries feel fully relieved, but these countries started to consider their foreign policies toward China. What attitudes of China to Indonesia and the influences on their internal-external development will be discussed in this paper.

**Improving Self-Image and Patiently Waiting.** Two facts blocking the relationship between China and its neighboring countries in the Southeast Asian are the tendency of China to practice its Communist hegemony and using the *Huaqiao*<sup>2</sup> people. When the revolutionary diplomatic lines were declared, China began to reduce their practice of publicizing the alleged successes of Chinese-

<sup>2</sup>*Huaqiao* is a term referring to overseas Chinese; in the later development until the period of the 1970s, this term was used to refer to all descendants of the Chinese who settled in other countries. See, for further information, Paul J. Bolt (2000).



backed insurgent activities in Southeast Asian countries.

China also did not denounce non-Communist Southeast Asian leaders as “stooges of American imperialism” (cited in Choudhury, 1982:236). In 1971, China even underpinned Malaysia and Indonesia in the case of Malacca Strait management to cooperate for betterment, urged to develop both countries’ cooperation in economy and sports and agreed on the decision of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) as the peaceful, free, and neutral zone in 1973 (Yahuda, 1983:220). All of these efforts done by China were to create a good image to its neighboring countries, including Indonesia.

That the ASEAN countries got closer to China is to what Indonesia paid attention. In November 1969, Adam Malik, who was then the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated that Indonesia hoped to improve its diplomacy with China. According to him, China was a power, “which we could not neglect”; and this understanding led Adam Malik to make a statement to indicate that Indonesia was an open country to negotiate the possibility of the normalization of its diplomatic relationship with China. In October 1970, he sent his secretary, Aboe Bakar Loebis, to explore the possibility of the diplomacy with China, but Aboe Bakar Loebis’s mission failed (Malik, 1978).

The Indonesian Consulate General in Hongkong stopped these efforts in as much as this idea was not in line with Indonesian official policies. This idea, considered as an “illegal effort”, merely initiated by Adam Malik, instead of by the Indonesian official government agency (Sukma, 1999:84-85), was then followed by BAKIN (*Badan Koordinasi Intelejen Negara* or State Intelligence Coordination Agency).

What Adam Malik initiated became a controversy and polemics in Indonesia. The accident took place due to the fact that in the early government of Soeharto regime, the determination of Indonesian foreign policy was not fully controlled under the Department of Foreign Affairs. There was a great influence played by the Indonesian military personnel, including DEPHANKAM

(*Departemen Pertahanan dan Keamanan* or Department of Defense and Security); LEMHANAS (*Lembaga Pertahanan Nasional* or National Security Institution); BAKIN (*Badan Koordinasi Intelejen Negara* or State Intelligence Coordinating Agency); and BAIS (*Badan Intelejen Strategis* or Strategic Intelligence Agency), so as to eradicate the roles of members and supporters of Indonesia Communist Party (Suryadinata, 1998:50).

It is true that Adam Malik was actually the Minister of Indonesian Foreign Affairs; however, the decision making was not then automatically representing the Indonesian government voice, what he initiated does not reflect the Indonesian government policy. President Soeharto himself considered what Adam Malik decided made Indonesia difficult, as stated in his biography book, following here:

What made a little difficult thing is what Bung Adam stated regarding the diplomatic normalization with China. Then, we limited our diplomacy, but as if what Adam Malik stated would have done in the following year. What Bung Adam stated is a difficult answer (Soeharto, 1989:333, translated by author).

The polemic triggered by Adam Malik then ended with a conclusion that the China – Indonesia diplomatic normalization had not yet been able to be discussed. Adam Malik himself tended to change and this change can be seen from what Adam Malik himself thought to give his opinion on the signed agreement of Shanghai Communique by Zhou Enlai and President Richard Nixon in 1972. Adam Malik stated that if China had stopped its subversion to Indonesia, the visit of President Richard Nixon of USA (United States of America) would have been useful for Indonesia (*cf* van der Kroef, 1973:513; and Malik, 1978).

China then kept on propagandizing its peaceful co-existence-based foreign diplomacy; and according to the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ji Pengfei, in a meeting in Paris in February 1973, China had cut off its relationship with *Huaqiao* people, or overseas Chinese, by dismissing the committee dealing with *Huaqiao* people (Choudhury, 1982:239). Adam Malik’s view on the issue of China – Indonesia relationship already changed in April

1973, and he then admitted the absence of meaningful improvement in regard with China – Indonesia relationship. President Soeharto himself urged that the China – Indonesia relationship was not something urgent to normalize, because China still supported the movements in the developing countries, meaning that China intervened other countries' matters (Sukma, 1999:88).

Up to 1975, four out of six ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) countries established their diplomatic ties with China. Nevertheless, Indonesia is an influential member of ASEAN, so it seems to be logical if China eager to improve relations with Indonesia, as often implicitly expressed through a third party. This can be seen from the fact that when the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Michael Somare, in his visit to Jakarta, said the Politburo Deputy of Chinese Communist Party, Li Xiannian, expressed an idea that China had an intention to normalize its diplomatic relationship with Indonesia if Indonesia was ready to do the same thing (*Suara Karya*, 15/1/1977); and this took place when Michael Somare visited China. Indonesia, however, kept firm to its stance not to normalize its diplomatic connection.

The China's official statement appeared on the 26 February 1978 news. The report of the Chinese Prime Minister, Hua Guofeng, in the opening ceremony of 5<sup>th</sup> session of the National People's Congress in Beijing, among other, stated that:

[...] a traditional friendship has united China and Southeast Asian countries, and China has opened its diplomatic ties with Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. It's also our intention to normalize diplomatic ties with other countries in such zone (cited in *Berita Buana*, 7/3/1978).

The above citation clearly illustrates the intention of China to improve its diplomacy with Indonesia, due to the fact that in the Southeast Asian countries, it's only Indonesia and Singapore who did not have the diplomatic ties with China. In 1976, Lee Kuan Yew, meanwhile, stated to wait Indonesia to make its decision regarding the diplomatic tie with China; and this waiting moment is really influenced by the fact that this island country

with 97% of China population did not want to make Indonesia suspicious to Singapore regarding the issue (*cf* Yahuda, 1983:224; and Suryadinata, 1990:695). The report of Prime Minister Hua Guofeng is an important reference to illustrate the seriousness of China to start approaching Indonesia. The statement of Li Xiannian in his visit to the Philippines further proved this seriousness (cited in *New China Agency*, 13/3/1978).

The chain of facts above shows two contradicting ideas. On the one hand, in the earlier period despite Adam Malik's intention to normalizing the diplomatic tie, the official Indonesia voice strongly refused his effort. On the other hand, China indirectly reflected its strong intention to getting closer to Indonesia. It is really clear that China as a nation with long historical backgrounds and high culture, who sees himself as one of the "world center", China does not want to be considered as a begging country. Especially, when it is associated with the view that the cause of diplomatic ties cut-off due to the loss of Indonesian trust to China.

In *mianzi* concepts, a trust from a partner is a part of self-respect, meaning that the loss of trust of a partner for an individual is *diu mian* or "losing face". It is the image of *diu mian* to which China does not want to be associated. Due to the fact that it is Indonesia who cuts off the diplomatic ties which is China never accepted; therefore, it is Indonesia who should normalize the frozen diplomatic ties.

The hope of China is actually reflected from what the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wu Xueqian, stated in 1985, "As far as diplomatic normalization is concerned, we consistently take a positive attitude toward this; we can wait if Indonesia still has difficulties" (cited in van der Kroef, 1986:915). The idea appeared on the news in Beijing, "the China government accepts the positive efforts to develop good neighboring relationship and friendship with Indonesia" (*Xinhua*, 1/7/1990). Therefore, it is not surprising that the observers in China formulated the Chinese attitudes to Indonesia in the case of normalizing efforts of diplomacy in the expression of "China keeps being encouraged, understanding, patient, and visionary" (Gao/高伟农, 1989:5).

The attitudes which are not frontal discussed above illustrates that China has done an action of *gu mianzi* or “keeping face”. The fact that China is worried to get frontally refused by Indonesia leads to the idea that China describes the efforts of showing *baoguan mianzi* or “saving face”, prior to *diu mian* or “losing face” taking place. In the other side, the attitude of China that been restraint and did not force the idea for normalization can be caused by the absence of necessity, but can be also because China influenced by the attitude of *gei mianzi* or “giving face”. The expression of Wu Xueqian, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, “[...] we can wait if Indonesia still has difficulties” illustrates that China gives an opportunity to Indonesia, because China willing to understand and respects Indonesia (cited in van der Kroef, 1986:915).

**Taking Advantages from the Cambodia Conflict Resolution Process.** The ending of Vietnam War marked by the withdrawal of American soldiers from Vietnam in 1975, temporarily reduce the conflicting situation in Indochina. This peaceful condition did not stay longer in as much as Vietnam differently interpreted China – United States of America approach. According to China, Vietnam “wrongly” understood as expressed in the following statement regarding how China perceived the Vietnam attitude:

世纪70年代初，中美关系暖和，这使越南做出了错误的反映。但当时越南国内战争尚未结束，还需要中国的援助。1975年抗美战争结束后，越南获得统一。于是，越南对外政策实行大调整，基本倾向是亲苏反华 (Huang / 黄, 2005:177).

**Translation:**

In the beginning of the 1970s, the relationship between China – the United States of America leads Vietnam to get inappropriate description. However, the internal war in Vietnam had not then ended, it still needed the support from China. In 1975, after the war against America ended, Vietnam got united. Therefore, Vietnam made a great regulation regarding its foreign policies, mainly directed to be closer to the Soviet Union against China.

The above China’s perception is much influenced by the belief that Vietnam was a

vassal country, who always kept loyal to China. Since the dynasty era, Vietnam has served as a buffer zone for China. For Vietnam, this position is not always beneficial, especially connected to the idea that Vietnam was always obliged to be loyal to China (Thayer, 1980).

After the withdrawal of American soldiers from Vietnam finished, Vietnam succeeded in uniting itself to become Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Initially, Vietnam was trying to maintain its relationship in order to get support from China, the United States of America, and the Soviet Union; but until 1977, such efforts were not cared by the USA (United States of America). Its approach to China up to the end of 1977 did also not get a real result (Yahuda, 1983:226).

This condition leads Vietnam to have no choice to approach the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. In the other side, the Soviet Union needed the cooperation with Vietnam to limit the movement of China. The geographic position of Vietnam makes it possible for the Soviet Union to establish its military base in order to get an easy access to the Southeast Asia (Porter, 1980:163).

The relationship between China and Vietnam was worsening at the end of 1978, when Vietnam attacked Cambodia and stapled down Pol Pot regime supported by China. This attack revealed the China – Vietnam conflict, and each tried to get the sympathy from Southeast Asian countries, especially those united in ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) by visiting these countries and provoking each other. Deng Xiaoping, Prime Minister of China, accused the visit of Pham Van Dong of Vietnam as an effort to create a new hegemony under the Soviet Union control. Meanwhile, Pham Van Dong answered it by reminding the existence of numerous *Huaqiao*, or overseas Chinese, in the ASEAN countries, which had a potential to be latent China Communists (cited in Choudhury, 1982:242-243). This tension continues in the form of border conflicts and bad treatments to Chinese minorities in Vietnam, and such conflicts causes China to do what is called “punishment attack” on Vietnam, leading to the cut-off of China – Vietnam diplomatic ties in 1979.

The reason why Vietnam attacked

Cambodia is to stop the cruelty of Red Khmer soldiers led by Pol Pot, who killed around one million civilians in Cambodia (Curtis, 1993). After that, Cambodia was controlled by a new regime under the control of Heng Samrin and Hun Sen. The Vietnam attack triggered a new conflict in Indochina and China protected both Pol Pot and Red Khmer soldiers against Hanoi, Vietnam; and King Cambodia, Prince Norodom Sihanouk. Meanwhile, Vietnam was trapped by being stigmatized as an aggressor because Heng Samrin regime, who was established, was not globally admitted. The Cambodia Representative in the United Nations was placed by the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) established by Norodom Sihanouk.

The Cambodian conflict had pushed ASEAN, as the organization of Southeast Asia countries, to dilemmatic position, whether ASEAN had to support CGDK, including Red Khmer underpinned by China and to curse Vietnam, or the other way around? This conflicting condition is actually connected with the interest and the perception of “threat” owned by its member. Geographically, Vietnam is located in the Southeast Asia and Thailand is across Vietnam. Thailand, politically, tends to follow the United States of America who is now getting closer to China; therefore, Vietnam is the main threat for Thailand. Indonesia and Malaysia on the contrary, in line with their experiences, tend to consider China as a main threat, despite the fact they cannot put the Vietnam threat aside (Ba, 2003:625-626).

In particular for Indonesia, as an influential member of ASEAN, such dilemma is getting more complicated; and this complexity is closely connected to the frozen of Indonesia – China diplomatic ties. Some scholars argue that the problems of Cambodia could be solved more easily, if Indonesia had had the diplomatic ties with China. Facing this intimidating condition, Soeharto regime did not care and Indonesia even kept firm to maintain its idea not to normalize its diplomatic ties with China, due to the fact that China was using ASEAN for its own advantages and ASEAN had implemented China policy (Sukma, 1999:96).

Regarding such view, Indonesia looked to be closer to Vietnam and proposed an

idea that Vietnam and the USA (United State of America) improved their diplomatic ties in order to make it easier to overcome the problem of Cambodia. What Indonesia proposed actually could push both China and the Soviet Union. If Vietnam had had a good diplomatic relationship with the USA, there would not have been a reason to extend the tense in this area. Vietnam aggression caused complicated problems, that is why all parties had to work together to solve the problem (Luhulima, 1997; and Sukma, 1999).

Indonesia strongly reacted to such aggression and urged all powers to leave Cambodia, but Vietnam did not pay any attention to such issue. Yet, Indonesia kept on doing another effort and ASEAN even chose Indonesia as *interlocutor*; and this choice forced Indonesia to play a role as a “dialogue partner” for Vietnam so as to find out the solution of the problem of Cambodia (Luhulima, 1997:242).

Qichen Qian, as China Foreign Affairs Minister, then responding developments in Indochina in the following expression:

这时,作为东盟六国之首的印尼,与中国的关系 如何发展, 成为决定东南亚地区和平与 稳定的关键 (Qian/钱, 2003:118).

**Translation:**

In such development, the relationship between China and Indonesia, as the leading country of ASEAN, becomes the key to determine the peace and stability in Southeast Asian.

This China’s point of view is not a mistake, China and Indonesia indeed have strategic role in Southeast Asia. This statement also implies a big hope to normalize the relations of both countries. In the frame of *mianzi* concept, the statement of Qichen Qian once again proves the existence of *gei mianzi*, or “giving face” or appreciation, from China to Indonesia.

In addition, China also has shown a cooperative attitude towards all of Indonesia’s efforts to resolve conflict in Cambodia. Two examples of such cooperation are a proposal of a cocktail party as an informal forum, in which the nations in conflict can meet and talk; and China also supported a more serious forum, like JIM (Jakarta Informal Meeting) I in 1988.



Then followed by Sino – Uni Soviet meeting in September 1988. Both ways are proven have reduced the tense between Vietnam and China.

Similarly, a further talk between Vietnam and China, Vietnam – Cambodia and Thailand, and JIM II implementation in 1989 played a quite significant role. The most significant result among other efforts was the readiness of Vietnam to withdraw all soldiers at the end of 1989 (Findlay, 1995:4-5). What China all did to underpin Indonesia cannot be separated from the fact that China wanted to create a good image in the eye of Indonesia. This matter can be judged as an example of the attitude of *gu mianzi*, or “keeping face” or paying attention, to the appearance and good deed to improve dignity.

The role that China and Indonesia had to play to reach peace and stability in this zone, in particular to solve the Cambodia crisis, led the officers of both countries to communicate. The unique thing, so as to counter a China’s misunderstanding, the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mochtar Kusuma Atmadja, during his service, always confirmed that the communication, between the China and Indonesian officers, was limited in term of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) cooperation, instead of representing Indonesia (cited in Sukma, 1999:123). Besides, Mochtar Kusuma Atmadja always confirmed the fact that Indonesia not ready yet to normalize the diplomatic relations with China.

Recognized or not that this complicated development actually resulted in the growing trust between these two countries, and leading to the normalization of China – Indonesia diplomatic relationship. In regard with the role of Indonesia as an ASEAN *interlocuter*, the open and co-operative attitudes of China are not only the attitude of *gu mianzi* or “keeping face” as discussed above, but also the attitude of *gei mianzi* or “giving face”, meaning that China shows its respect to Indonesia. Especially, when China does not show any objection on the questions raised by Mochtar Kusuma Atmadja, who always confirmed that Indonesia was still not ready for the resumption of relations.

**Supporting Direct Trade Ideas.** From the perspectives of trade, the relationship between

China and Indonesia has never been totally cut off, but this relationship is conducted through the third party: Singapore and Hong Kong. The fact that China has potential for development capital and share a big market causing Indonesian businessmen were interested in trade with China. These two factors led Indonesian businessmen to join the annual trade exhibition in *Canton Fair*, Guangzhou, China.

Business opportunity with the possibilities of profits certainly cannot be neglected by businessmen. Such considerations, causes the visit that coordinated by KADIN (*Kamar Dagang dan Industri Indonesia* or Indonesia Chamber of Commerce and Industry) take place, although this visit was not considered to represent the Indonesian government. The strict rule in order not to connect these business activities to the government is depicted by the fact that the government strongly reminded KADIN regarding such issue. This warning, according to Sukamdani Sahid Gitosardjono (1993), led to disadvantages for KADIN.

China actually has interests in connection with trade relationship with Indonesia. The implementation of *si ge xiandahua* (four modernization) program and *gaige-kai fang* (reform and openness) has made business activities as the main hope of Chinese peoples. Daogen Huang illustrates the situation in China as follows:

中国自1978年起实施四个现代化措施,接着又 开始采取改革开放 的政策。邀请外资流入 并鼓励联合投资。在社会上成一般企业主义浪潮, 中国年轻一代及知识阶层已有了新认识。加上 经济持续开放,似乎显示出这个亚洲巨人正面临着缓慢 而深刻 的转型,它 正重新燃起外国人涉足 这个全球最大的潜在市场的希望之火 (Huang/黄, 1990:68).

**Translation:**

Since 1978, China has materialized various facilities in connection with four modernization; furthermore, implementation of reform and openness policies, inviting foreign investments and encouraging the cooperation of capital investment, in the community which tends to establish the understanding of corporation, among China young generation and intellectuals with new perspectives, added with economic liberalization, seeing that the Asia giant is facing slow but in-depth transformation. She

is lightening the fire of hope from the foreign involvement in the biggest market and potential all over the world.

The description of the community tendency revealed above is in line with various policies of Chinese government, which reached a determination about the idea that the economic sector is the central issue of the development. Furthermore, the Chinese government decided the level of productivity as one of references with market economic implementation within such policy. The following is what Deng Xiaoping, Prime Minister of China, states as the reference for such policy making:

说市场经济只存在于资本主义社会，只有资本主义市场经济，这肯定不正确的。社会主义为什么不可以搞市场经济，这个不能说是资本主义，我们是计划经济为主，也结合市场经济，但这是社会主义的市场经济 (Xiaoping / 邓小平, 2008:236).

**Translation:**

It is said that market economy just exists in the capitalist community, if it is only a capitalist market economy, it is not really true. (The cause) why Socialism is not allowed to do market economy; this cannot be said that (because of) Capitalism, we make planned economy as the base and we combine it with market economy; and this is Socialist Market Economy.

On the basis of this Chinese economic development directions and foundation, at the beginning of the 1980s, the China government encouraged to increase community income through individual effort development. This encouragement is commonly called *xia hai* or “going down to the sea”; meanwhile, the Chinese government consistently focused itself on trade and foreign investment as the trigerring wheel to push national economy, including issueing 4 areas as special economic zones. Such startegic policies speeded up economic growths driven by the empowerment and added-value creation for local business activities and industries; therefore, business and trade activities spread all over communities interested in these activities (Yahuda, 1983).

Such changes led China to greet KADIN (*Kamar Dagang dan Industri Indonesia*

or Indonesia Chamber of Commerce and Industry)’s delegates to attending in Guangzhou in 1977 and 1978. Then, the discussions on the possibility to conduct direct trade relationship rose, but Jakarta, excluding a number of business community leader, did not show any interests regarding such ideas. The process was surrounded by cautious suggestion and qualification, at one point even by an outright disclaimer (van der Kroef, 1986:921).

The Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposed these ideas several times, considering as an influential member of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), Indonesia actually could get advantages from what changed in China, but these proposals did not develop much as expected. In 1980s, the oil prices in the world markets drastically leveled off, and this decrease pushed Indonesia to promote non-oil and gas exports. Yet, President Soeharto did not show any positive responds with the idea of direct trade relationship with China until the end of 1984 (Sukma, 1999:143-144).

According to Sukamdani Sahid Gitosardjono (1993), on 8 November 1984, President Soeharto gave a signal to do the possibility of the direct trade between China and Indonesia, by assigning Mochtar Kusuma Atmadja, the Indonesian Foreign Minister; Yoga Soegomo, the Head of BAKIN (*Badan Koordinasi Intelejen Negara* or State Intelligence Coordinating Agency); and Benny Moerdani as an individual whose ideas were always asked regarding this issue. Then, such possibility of trade relationship was directly coordinated by the MENMUD SEKAB (*Menteri Muda Sekretaris Kabinet* or Junior Minister of Cabinet Secretariat) under the responsibility of Moerdiono (Gitosardjono, 1993:344-351).

Upon this green light, KADIN then contacted the China trade organization, called CCPIT (China Council for Promotion on International Trade), to discuss the topic. A very warm welcome of China on this initiative can be seen from the spokesperson of the China Minister of Foreign Affairs that, “China will certainly strengthen all types of cooperation with Indonesia” (cited in van der Kroef, 1986:923).

In this approaching step, the role of Tong

Djoe, an Indonesian businessman with his reputation in Singapore, cannot be put aside, and it is Tong Djoe who bridged Sukamdani Sahid Gitosardjono with the China Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wu Xueqian; therefore, their meeting took place in Singapore, on 29 January 1985. Wu Xueqian, then, suggested that there had to be a further discussion with China trade representative in Singapore (Gitosardjono, 1993).

Tong Djoe also helped KADIN to do further approach to CCPIT, especially when the negotiation process got blocked. China, then, required the written document stating that what KADIN initiated was officially approved by the Indonesian government; meanwhile, the Indonesian Government insisted on not giving such mandate. For the Indonesian government, the trade matters were actually initiated by KADIN, and just for the sake of trade interests (cited in *Tempo on line*, 13/7/1985).

Tong Djoe succeeded in bridging both parties; therefore, CCPIT understood the position of KADIN and this success of Tong Djoe in term bridging these two parties approved, what Ge Gao & Stela Ting-Toomey (1998) argued in connection with the concept of *mianzi*, that the role of the bridging individual in term of the negotiation with China is unquestionably essential in order to avoid "losing face" of any party, or *diu mian* (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998:64).

The efforts to make this direct trade faced another difficulty, i.e. there is disappointment on the results of the China Foreign Minister visits to Indonesia. Since the freezing of diplomatic ties, Wu Xueqian became the first China high ranking officials who was invited to visit Jakarta and Bandung to attend the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Asia-Africa Conference on April 1985. Many parties expected this visit will be an important momentum in the process of resumption of China – Indonesia relations. On the basis of the meeting result in Singapore, Sukamdani Sahid Gitosardjono scheduled the meeting between KADIN and Wu Xueqian, the China Foreign Minister, to be conducted in Jakarta. China itself wished to be able to conduct a special meeting between Wu Xueqian and President Soeharto; however, this plan did not take

place (Gitosardjono, 1993).

The planned meeting between Wu Xueqian and President Soeharto did not happen due to some reasons, showing to "keep face" of both sides. The Indonesian official reason is due to the fact that this plan did not match their schedule, meaning that Wu Xueqian intended to have the meeting on 25 April 1985, but he was scheduled to meet President Soeharto on the following day, on which Wu Xueqian could not fulfill to attend because he had to leave Indonesia soon. Besides this official Indonesian notice, there was the news that actually Indonesia intentionally to postpone the meeting regarding the fact that President Soeharto believed that the time to discuss the diplomatic normalization between Indonesia and China would not come to take place (Suryadinata, 1998:137).

The news spreading in Hong Kong was that the failure of the Soeharto – Wu Xueqian planned meeting happened in as much as Wu Xueqian actually did not bring the letter of apology from China to Indonesia with him in connection with its involvement in the G-30-S (*Gerakan 30 September* or September 30 Movement) affairs as expected by Indonesia (cited in Gao / 高伟农, 1989:5).

The existence of deliberate factor, which causes the failure of Wu Xueqian – Soeharto meeting, seems more rational. According to Sukamdani Sahid Gitosardjono (1993), he had to find a reason to leave Jakarta when Asia-Africa conference anniversary took place, in order to create a "positive reason" regarding the cancellation of the meeting between Wu Xueqian and KADIN as planned. Sukamdani Sahid Gitosardjono's reason actually was because President Soeharto suggested that "we should not do this in a hurry", when discussed the direct trade relationship (cited in Gitosardjono, 1993:366-369).

In addition, regarding the official position and characteristics of Wu Xueqian's visit, it sounds illogical when there was no fixed visit schedule. It is also irrational that Wu Xueqian just forgot the schedule to see President Soeharto without any reason; meanwhile, the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs clearly refused the existence of the letter of apology and really stated that there was no enquiry to ask for such letter (cited in van

der Kroef, 1986:914).

The case of Wu Xuequan is strongly felt with the concept of *mianzi* within, especially as the efforts of both sides to avoid *diu mian* or “losing face”. Both China and Indonesia did not want to make them ashamed or being ashamed; therefore, certain reasons were created following their interests.

Despite the failure of Wu Xuequan – Soeharto meeting, but still reached an agreement that KADIN and CCPIT would further discuss the issue as a result of meeting between the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mochtar Kusuma Atmadja, and the China Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wu Xuequan, in the opening ceremony of Asia-Africa Conference, leading to the KADIN and CCPIT negotiation about such issue.

Finally, the agreement of KADIN and CCPIT on the direct trade relationship between these two countries was signed in Singapore on 5 July 1985. The weakness of the agreement is that this agreement did not cover other issues beyond the agreement. The Indonesian government admitted this agreement by issuing INPRES (*Instruksi Presiden* or Presidential Instruction) No.9 Year 1985, on 23 July 1985; and this instruction becomes the manual of conducting direct trade relationship between Indonesia and China.

## CONCLUSION

The above discussion illustrates the dynamics of both parties to develop trusts, although the diplomatic ties were frozen. The key point exists in needs, respects, and trusts. From the sake of needs, both parties really need each other, especially realizing the more complicated internal and external development, influencing each country’s conditions and international roles. Until the end of the 1980s, it is clear that China actually intends to get the Indonesian trust again.

Yet, the facts that China – America relationship became better, China succeeded in getting the roles in the UN (United Nations), and the relationship between China and some members of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), and normalizing diplomatic relationship between China and Indonesia still needed time, made China tend to be “patient”.

There is a respect factor, which become the first priority; therefore, this attitude is recognized as *gu mianzi* or “keeping face”, *baquan mianzi* or “saving face”, and *gei mianzi* or “giving face”.

In line with the patience attitude, China keeps using any opportunities, including to use the third party to convince or at least to create an image of being good to Indonesia. The above description illustrates how China does not use its force to impose its intention to Indonesia; and this fact cannot be considered just for the sake of how important Indonesia is and neither is the urgency of China’s needs, but merely the idea that imposing is believed to make Indonesia trust to China less and such imposition can lead to worsen the relationship.

The choice of such attitude cannot be separated from the influence of *mianzi* concept strongly embedded in the Chinese community. As Ge Gao & Stela Ting-Toomey (1998) states that the *mianzi* concept is illustrated from the tendency of Chinese to avoid conflicts, especially when there is a great interest behind the conflict (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). For China, it is not difficult to do such behavior because in the Sun Zi’s war strategies, there is a well known strategy “plum tree sacrifices itself for peach tree”, meaning that to get a better one, it is accepted to scarify what we have (Tzu, 2003).

From Indonesian perspectives, the debate on the approach is more caused by excessive concern against China. As a result, despite the fact that China has shown its cooperative and appreciating attitudes to Indonesia several times, these attitudes have not yet made Indonesia fully believed or satisfied. In another case, the polemics between the pros and cons regarding the diplomatic ties normalization between China and Indonesia are the ones that the Indonesian government should not neglect.

The various conditions above lead Indonesia to be difficult to make a decision, and at the same time cause the position of President Soeharto as the “determination factor” to normalize Indonesian relationship with China, as something we cannot deny.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>**Statement:** I hereby declare that this article is an entirely my own work, not a product of plagiarism, not to be submitted, reviewed, and published by other scholarly journals.



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**Deng Xiaoping of China and Soeharto of Indonesia**

(Source: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), 28/3/2015)

In the modern age, the diplomatic relationship of both China and Indonesia has developed since April 1950; but after dynamic partnership, this relationship was frozen in October 1967. This fact results from the peak tense and clash between two countries in connection with the 30 September Movement, commonly abbreviated as G-30-S (*Gerakan 30 September*), which took place in 1965 in Indonesia. [...] What China all did to underpin Indonesia cannot be separated from the fact that China wanted to create a good image in the eye of Indonesia. This matter can be judged as an example of the attitude of *gu mianzi*, or “keeping face” or paying attention, to the appearance and good deed to improve dignity.