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Foreword

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This fourth edition of our journal is dedicated to discussing topics of international relations. This focus is timely, as the international community is grappling with seismic changes in humankind's societies, politics, and economies. The Western world is facing a downward trajectory of human development due to aging populations, stagnant economic growth, and the rise of social and religious extremism that threaten systems of democracy and meritocracy. All these changes are shaping not only government policies, but also the lives of billions of people across the world, and hence, their developments are necessary to follow. The Muslim world is not immune to the changes and must also adapt to the changes that occur both within the Muslim world and in the West. Some Muslim majority countries, such as Indonesia, continuously try to find their right position in the global world.

In this edition, **Farish Noor** engagingly questions scholars' 'presentism' propensity among Asian scholars in debating Asian civilization, which includes the majority of Muslim populations. He suggests that, instead of continuously submitting into the East and the West division trap that are "limiting and compartmentalising" and hence maintaining Asian civilization's status as postcolonial subjects, Asian scholars need, among others, to learn from Asian's pre-Westphalian states on the "examples and models of alternative modes of diplomacy and international relations". This is imperative to help Asian scholars in "repositioning and re-presenting" themselves in political world stage. **Nazhath Faheema** discusses the profound change in predominantly Muslim Gulf states' stance against Israel at the time of writing. She argues

the change occurred due to the shift of priority among the Gulf states. Previously, pan-Arabism mattered for the states, but now, they consider that good relations with Israel are needed to boost their economies. In Southeast Asia, **Khaidir Hasram** explores how the Muslim minority in Cambodia enjoys relative religious freedom in that Buddhist country, and even thrive politically. The author argues that their presence in the country's politics is possible due to “an extension of the historical patron-client relationship that existed between Muslims and local rulers”.

Three articles discuss the diplomacy efforts of the government and non-government actors of Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country in the world, in response to the world's current most pressing issues. **Andar Nubowo** writes about soft power diplomacy by Indonesia's biggest Muslim organizations, Nadhlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. He explains that in response to the rise of Islamist militancy and terrorism, these two organizations have marshalled their resources to promote moderate Indonesian Islam on the world stage in an attempt to make it the world's mainstream Islamic ideology, replacing the existing rigid interpretation of Islam stemming from the Middle East. **I Gusti Bagus Dharma Agastia** analyses Indonesian President Joko Widodo's announcement that Indonesia would seek to be the Global Maritime Fulcrum. However, this vision has not succeeded, with its strategic discourse receding due to the overlap between maritime narratives and development narratives. Finally, **Saru Arifin** explains the shift in foreign policy objectives under the government of Widodo. During the first term of Widodo's presidency (2014-2019), foreign policy efforts were primarily aimed at helping boost domestic economic growth, whereas his second term saw foreign policy tilt further toward contributing to global peace. Saru recommends that in helping enhance global peace, the Government of Indonesia should empower major Muslim organizations in Indonesia to help the former attain its objectives and gain more legitimacy.

While the six articles we present in this edition surely do not represent all major issues in international relations today, we nevertheless hope that this small endeavour meaningfully contribute to existing

scholarship. It is also hoped that this edition can boost public understanding on several key aspects of international affairs that impact our life.