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Navrekha Sharma and Baladas Ghoshal, *India's Relations with Indonesia*,  
Research Asia, Singapore, 2014.

Pages 306, price not indicated

Gurjit Singh, ed. *Masala Bumbu: Enhancing the India-Indonesia Partnership*,  
Beritasatu, Jakarta, 2015.

Pages 229, price not indicated

In 1951, at India's first Republic Day celebration, during that high tide of India-Indonesia relations, Sukarno was our guest of honor. Contrast that with what I witnessed in 2007 in Jakarta at the launch of a *Festschrift* in honor of a noted Indonesian intellectual Yusuf Wanadi (I was there for a track-two meeting): that in that fine collection of over 80 essays, not one was by an Indian. It was a striking demonstration of the mutual lack of intellectual contact. Both sides have rather neglected this relationship in recent years.

These two works enrich knowledge of Indonesia, providing needed focus to our bilateral relationship. In the same genre, two recent works on Myanmar by former Indian ambassadors to that country, Rajiv Bhatia and PMS Malik, have also fleshed out India's 'Act East' policy in the intellectual arena.

Former Ambassador to Indonesia Navrekha Sharma has teamed with Prof. Baladas Ghoshal, to produce an authoritative, detailed study that updates our information. Navrekha has contributed the first four chapters; the next three come from Prof. Ghoshal, while the final chapter is a joint product. The former sketches the ancient cultural links, and the arrival of Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia, in both through India—which often does not get much attention—and via the direct Arabian link. Chapter 3 covers the links in the colonial era between the leaders of the two countries; Soekarno (named after Karna of *Mahabharata*), steeped in

domestic tradition, ‘resembles Gandhi more than Nehru’ (p. 45). Reading of the close connections of those times, right up to the early independence era, one asks why that affinity did not endure.

Indonesia declared independence in 1946, but the Dutch fought a rearguard action with military intervention, and the issue went to the UN; a final settlement and Dutch intervention ended only in 1949. In April 1947, India ‘followed the United Kingdom’ and extended de facto recognition, but even an August 1947 secret visit by Mohamed Hatta (in a Dakota aircraft piloted by Biju Patniak) did not convince India to extend de jure recognition; India felt it would be ‘counterproductive for India’s relations with the Netherlands’ (p. 64).

This narrative of the Indonesian revolution years 1945-49 underscores the role India played: helping with its sizable presence at the March 1947 Asian Relations Conference; opening consulates in Batavia and Jogjakarta that sustained contact with revolutionary leaders and facilitated their communication with the outside world; hosting two conferences on Indonesia in 1948 and 1949; and Nehru’s continuous interventions with the Dutch, Americans and the UN. ‘For four years Nehru rarely spoke on world affairs without drawing in the subject of Indonesia’ (p. 89). Was it India’s refusal to let the leaders, Soekarno, Hatta and Syahrir set up a government in exile in 1948, though shelter was offered if needed? Or was it that support the extended was offset against a concern for credibility with the West?

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