

Analysis of the Changes and Reasons for the ethnic Chinese Policy of Indonesian Government in the post-Suharto era

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Abstract: After the May 1998 "May riots", Suharto stepped down from power and Habibie was sworn in as president, marking the beginning of the post-Suharto era in Indonesia. During the successive presidencies of Habibie, Wahid, Megawati, Susilo, and Joko Widodo, they each adjusted policies towards the Chinese Indonesians, respecting Chinese customs and safeguarding their political and cultural rights, resulting in an improvement of their status. The Indonesian government's policy adjustments towards the Chinese Indonesians went through a gradual and multi-faceted reform process, reflecting progressive values. Internationally, peace and development, democracy and progress became the trend of the times and Indonesia-China relations rapidly developed. Domestically, the rise of the democratic reform movement, the urgent demand to revitalize the economy, the advocacy of the Chinese Indonesians, and the personal traits of leaders all became significant driving forces behind the adjustment of ethnic Chinese policies.

Keywords: Post-Suharto era, Chinese Indonesians policies, Influencing factors.

1. Introduction

Currently, the total number of Indonesian overseas Chinese is nearly 10 million, accounting for about 5% of the total population of Indonesia. More than 90% of them have obtained Indonesian citizenship, making Indonesia the country with the largest Chinese population in the world. Since its establishment in 1945, Indonesia has gone through the presidencies of Sukarno, Suharto, Habibie, Wahid, Megawati, Susilo, and Joko Widodo. The academic community usually defines the period from Habibie to Joko Widodo's tenure as the "post-Suharto era" after Suharto stepped down due to the outbreak of political, economic, and social conflicts triggered by the 1997 financial crisis.

2. Adjustments of the Indonesian government's policies towards Chinese Indonesians in the post-Suharto era

During the period of the Suharto government, a policy of forced assimilation was implemented towards Chinese Indonesians. They were required to change their names to Indonesian names and were forbidden from using Chinese language. Chinese schools were closed down, various Chinese organizations were banned, and the identity cards of Chinese Indonesians were marked with a "[0]" or other special symbols to distinguish them from the indigenous population. In May 1998, Indonesia experienced a shocking "May Riot", which caused great damage to the lives and property of overseas Chinese in Indonesia. The ruling government received strong criticism from public opinion. After the riot, Indonesia began to reflect on its previous assimilation policy, and the government began to adjust its policies towards Chinese Indonesians, starting from the Habibie government, and shifting to a policy of multiculturalism.

2.1. During the Habibie government period

After taking office as president, Habibie faced pressure from the democratic reform movement and the need to stabilize society and restore the economy. Firstly, he opened up public opinion and lifted the ban on political parties. In February 1998, important laws and regulations such as the "Party Law," the "General Election Law," and the "People's Consultative Assembly, Parliament, and Local Assembly Organization Structure Law" were promulgated, all of which applied to Chinese Indonesians. Subsequently, Chinese political parties such as Partai Pembauran Indonesia, Partai Budhis Demokrasi Indonesia, Partai Reformasi Tionghoa Indonesia, and Partai Bhinneka Indonesia emerged. Secondly, Habibie supported ethnic equality and the elimination of racism and issued a series of related policy regulations. For example, on September 16, 1998, he signed Presidential Decree No. 26, which announced the cancellation of discrimination against Chinese Indonesians. The government demanded that leaders at all levels not use terms like "indigenous" or "non-indigenous" and re-examine various unfair laws or government regulations in commerce and government fields.[1] On May 5, 1999, Habibie issued another presidential decree, requiring all government departments to lift the ban on teaching Chinese language and regulations that discriminated against local Chinese despite obtaining Indonesian citizenship. The government was also required to implement the policy of prohibiting government agencies and officials from practicing ethnic discrimination, which had been released earlier.[2] In conclusion, although the Habibie period only lasted for one year and five months and few reforms were made, it did open a new historical beginning for Chinese policies. The adjustment to its policy towards the Chinese was the starting point for post-Suharto Indonesia to adjust its policy towards Chinese, laying the foundation for later governments to adjust their Chinese policies based on this foundation.

2.2. During the Wahid government period

At the time of Wahid's inauguration, he immediately claimed that his grandfather was of Chinese descent and that he himself had Chinese blood. He also promised on many occasions that his government was determined to be friendly and kind to the Chinese Indonesians in Indonesia. On October 21, 1999, Wahid solemnly declared at the presidential inauguration ceremony, "All Indonesian citizens, regardless of race, religion and culture, are equal." He believed that the Chinese Indonesians should not be considered a problem, and the government would gradually abolish all policies and regulations that discriminated against the Chinese Indonesians, so that they could enjoy the same rights as other ethnic groups.[3] On January 18, 2000, Wahid signed Presidential Decree No.6, which annulled "Presidential Decree No.14 of 1967 Regarding Cina Religious Beliefs and Customs", allowed Chinese Indonesians to celebrate the Chinese traditional festival - Spring Festival in public places.[1] In February of the same year, when the Chinese in Indonesia celebrated Chinese New Year for the first time in years, Wahid personally participated in the New Year celebration organized by the Confucian General Association(MATAKIN), in which he recognized Confucianism and declared that it was a legitimate religion in Indonesia, with equal status and rights as Islam.[3] In January 2001, Wahid announced that ethnic Chinese people were welcome to use their Chinese names again. The official Antara news agency quoted President Wahid as saying during a Lunar New Year celebration, "Those who were forced to change their Chinese names can now restore their original names." On February 21, 2001, Decree No. 62 of 2001 was signed by the Indonesian Minister of Trade and Industry, which announced the revocation of the 1978 Decree of the Minister of Trade and Cooperation No. 286. The previous decree had prohibited the import, distribution and trading of Chinese language reading materials. Additionally, the new decree permitted books, magazines, printed materials, pamphlets, and newspapers in Chinese to be imported and traded in Indonesia from the date of its announcement. From these facts, it can be seen that Wahid, with his characteristic courage and determination, has made a lot of statements about the good treatment of Chinese Indonesians, and his adjustment of ethnic Chinese policies in terms of lifting the ban on Chinese culture and probation from the Chinese Indonesians sentiment has done a lot of work. However, the discriminatory policies and regulations formulated during the Suharto era were not completely abolished after he came to power because they needed to be passed by the National Assembly, and no formal laws were enacted to guarantee the Chinese Indonesians legitimate rights and equal opportunities.

2.3. During the Megawati government period

After 21 months in power, Wahid was impeached and removed from the presidency by the People's Consultative Assembly, and Vice President Megawati was elected to succeed him for a total of three years and two months. After Megawati came to power, she acknowledged that the Chinese Indonesians were the third-largest ethnic group in Indonesia and advocated equal treatment of all ethnic groups. She continued the Wahid government's policy of treating the Chinese Indonesians well and modified and improved relevant policies. In 2001, the Megawati government amended the constitution to provide for the right of any Indonesian citizen to run for the presidency, abolishing the

previous discriminatory rule that Chinese Indonesians could not run for president. On April 19, 2002, Megawati issued Presidential Decision No. 19, declaring Chinese New Year as a national public holiday.[4] On March 24, 2002, Megawati led a delegation to Beijing and spoke to Chinese journalists about treating the Chinese Indonesians well: "The Chinese Indonesians have made important contributions to the development of Indonesia's economy and society, and as members of the Indonesian nation, they are constitutionally entitled to the same fair and equal treatment as other citizens, and in order to maintain domestic unity and stability, the Indonesian government has the responsibility to enforce this provision." [5] On June 30, 2002, the Indonesian government suspended the issuance of the "Indonesian Nationality Certificate", relieving the plight of ethnic Chinese in applying for passports, and allowing them to apply for passports with their ID cards and birth certificates.[6] In 2002, the Megawati government announced that it would allow Indonesian universities to open Chinese language departments. Since then, Chinese language departments have been established in many universities and various Chinese language tuition classes have sprung up.[7] In addition, Megawati also focused on the role of Chinese Indonesians in developing the economy, such as appointing Chinese Indonesians Guo Jianyi(Kwik Kian Gie) as the director of the National Construction Planning Committee, supporting Chinese Indonesians' small and medium-sized enterprises, and encouraging the development of the Chinese Indonesians economy. In general, the ethnic Chinese policy in this period continued the policy in the Wahid period and continued to advance in anti-discrimination and good treatment of the Chinese Indonesians.

2.4. During the Susilo government period

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was the first president in Indonesian history to be directly elected, serving two terms and ruling for ten years. Compared to the previous three presidents, he had sufficient time to adjust policies towards the Chinese Indonesians. During his presidential campaign, Susilo promised to eliminate all discriminatory laws and treaties against the Chinese Indonesians and achieve equality and harmony among all ethnic groups once he came into power.

Firstly, a new Nationality Law and Anti-Racism Law were promulgated, and the Population Registration Law was passed to properly address the nationality issues of Chinese Indonesians, granting them equal status under the law. On August 1, 2006, President Susilo signed Decree No. 12 of 2006, and repealed Decree No. 62 of 1958 and Decree No. 3 of 1976.[8] The new Nationality Act is also based on the 1945 Constitution, rather than the Interim Constitution of 1950. Compared to the old Nationality Law, the new Law eliminates the distinction between "pribumi"(indigenous) and "non-pribumi"(non-indigenous) and removes discriminatory provisions against Chinese Indonesians and other ethnic minorities in terms of race, gender and marriage. Under the new law, Chinese Indonesians who hold an Indonesian birth certificate and do not have third-country citizenship will regain Indonesian citizenship. On December 30, 2007, the Indonesian Parliament passed the Administrative Law on Population Registration, which repealed the Dutch colonial law on registration based on blood and ethnicity. Many scholars believe that the enactment of the Administrative Law on Population Registration in Indonesia means that the issue of Chinese nationality has finally been legally guaranteed. [9]

On October 28, 2008, Susilo signed Law No. 40 of 2008, the Anti-Racial Discrimination Law. The law declares that all Indonesian citizens have the same rights and duties regardless of race, color, or place of birth, and establishes the National Human Rights Commission as an independent body to evaluate, investigate, and monitor measures taken by the central and local governments that may give rise to racial discrimination. [8]

Secondly, the term "Cina" was abolished and replaced "Tiongkok". In 2014, Susilo signed Presidential Decree No. 12 of 2014, officially banning the discriminatory term "Cina" for China and replacing it with "Tionghoa"(Chinese Indonesian) or with "Tiongkok"(China). This move was seen by the Chinese Indonesians community as an important manifestation of ethnic progress.

Finally, Chinese Indonesians' political participation is encouraged, and the active role of Chinese Indonesians elites is valued. After Susilo's successful election campaign in 2004, he appointed Feng Huilan(Mari Elka Pangestu) as Minister of Trade, and Feng became the first ethnic Chinese to serve in the cabinet. After Susilo's successful re-election in 2009, Feng Huilan was reappointed as the newly formed Minister of Tourism and Creativity. With the advancement of democratic reform, the awareness of Chinese Indonesians' participation in politics has also increased, and a number of new political stars have emerged. For example, in December 2007, Chinese Indonesian Huang Shaofan(Hasan Karman) became the first Chinese Indonesian mayor of West Kalimantan Province when he was appointed as the mayor of the city of Singkawang. Huang Hanshan (Christiandy Sanjaya), who served as the Vice Governor of West Kalimantan Province(2008-2013), became the first Chinese Indonesian to hold a provincial executive office in Indonesia's history in 2008. During this period, compared to the three previous presidents, most of Susilo's adjustments to ethnic Chinese policies were determined by law, and the political life and legal rights of Chinese Indonesians were fully protected.

2.5. During the Joko government period.

By the time of Joko Widodo's presidency, most of the discrimination against ethnic Chinese people at the legal level had been resolved in the Indonesian government. However, in practice, further efforts are still needed to ensure that ethnic Chinese people in Indonesia truly enjoy equal status. After taking office, Joko Widodo continued the policy of equal treatment for different ethnic groups as his predecessors did and made some progress in ensuring that ethnic Chinese people have access to their political, economic, cultural, and other basic rights. During the presidential campaign in 2014, Widodo promised the Chinese community to ensure their safety if elected. In his first week in office as President, Zhong Wanxue(Basuki Tjahaja Purnama) was appointed as Jakarta's first ethnic Chinese governor in November 2014, marking a historic breakthrough for ethnic Chinese participation in politics in Indonesia. However, in 2016, Zhong Wanxue was sentenced to two years in prison for "blasphemy" against the Quran. This shows that radical religious forces in Indonesia still have a significant influence, and prejudice and suspicion against ethnic Chinese people still exist.

3. Characteristics of Indonesian Chinese Policy in the Post-Suharto Era

Indonesia's policy towards the Chinese Indonesians underwent a long process of adjustment after the post-Suharto era. Due to domestic politics and historical reasons, the policies towards the Chinese Indonesians in this era had distinct characteristics.

Firstly, the adjustment of Chinese Indonesians policies was a gradual process. Each government in the post-Suharto era had some degree of progress and characteristics in its policies towards the Chinese Indonesians. The Habibie government's change in policy towards the Chinese Indonesians was mainly to stabilize the situation, under pressure from public opinion and the hope that Chinese capital would revive Indonesia's economy. Wahid implemented a policy of treating the Chinese Indonesians well with his unique courage, with a focus on cultural aspects, but with fewer legal measures. Megawati continued Wahid's policies and advocated for a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural society. She sought cooperation with China and focused on encouraging and supporting the economic development of the Chinese Indonesians. Susilo served the longest term and was elected directly, giving him the legitimacy and time to push Chinese policies into the legal domain to protect the legitimate rights and interests of the Chinese Indonesians. Joko Widodo continued the policies of his predecessors, more needs to be done to protect the rights of the Chinese Indonesians in practice. It can be seen that the Indonesian government first abolished some discriminatory legal provisions, then gradually delved into the cultural customs and economy of the Chinese Indonesians, and finally ensured the legitimate rights and interests of the Chinese Indonesians through legal recognition. Although this process of change was not fast, compared to the Suharto era, it made progress step by step and did not face interruption, which is commendable.

The second point is that the adjustment of ethnic Chinese policy in Indonesia reflected progressive values and demonstrated freedom, equality, openness, and inclusiveness in the democratic era. After Habibie came to power, almost all laws and regulations limiting freedom of speech and licensing controls on the publishing industry were abolished. This promoted the revival and vigorous development of Chinese-language media and allowed the voices of the Chinese Indonesians to be freely expressed. After Habibie lifted the ban on political parties, Chinese Indonesians were able to establish and participate in political parties. since then, the enthusiasm of the Chinese Indonesians for political participation has continued to increase, and they have enjoyed their due rights in a democratic society. The Indonesian government abolished a series of discriminatory regulations and gave the Chinese Indonesians equal status with other ethnic groups. The Indonesian government also recognized the unique cultural customs of the Chinese and lifted bans, respected, and supported them, demonstrating the openness and inclusiveness of a diverse democratic society.

Furthermore, the policy adjustments covered multiple aspects, including politics, economy, and culture, and were more comprehensive and specific than in the past. The adjustment of ethnic Chinese policy in the post-Suharto era could not be limited to a single aspect or superficially, but required a comprehensive set of reforms. In the Suharto era and previous eras, there were proposals to change ethnic

Chinese policies during the anti-Chinese wave, but they were not implemented. After China-Indonesia diplomatic relations improved, the Indonesian government considered using the Chinese economy to promote Indonesian economic development and made some changes, such as allowing the tourism department to open Chinese language training courses to cater to the growing number of Chinese tourists. In addition, in order to attract Taiwanese investment, they also allowed Taiwan to conduct Chinese language education at the Taipei School in Indonesia. However, these were limited to one-dimensional changes in the economic aspect and did not involve equal identity and status of the Chinese Indonesians. In the post-Suharto era, the Indonesian government's adjustment involved various aspects such as Chinese political participation, cultural customs, religious beliefs, Chinese language education, the economy of the Chinese Indonesians, and so on.

Finally, compared with other Southeast Asian countries, the formulation and implementation of Chinese policy adjustments in Indonesia have demonstrated lagging and incomplete measures. Singapore has a sizable Chinese population and heavily promotes ethnic integration, granting equal legal status to the Chinese and showcasing their economic achievements while preserving their cultural customs. After Malaysia gained independence, it emphasized the concept of "Malay first," although this concept began to fade in the 1990s, reducing economic restrictions on the Chinese and maintaining a complete Chinese-language education system. Thai Chinese society is highly integrated with local residents, acknowledging Chinese immigrants as subjects and appointing several Chinese politicians to serve as prime ministers in the government cabinet. Thailand has relatively few restrictions on the ethnic Chinese economy and focuses on using ethnic Chinese economic development to promote economic growth. Overall, the Indonesian government was relatively slow to adopt policies toward the ethnic Chinese, even after learning from other Southeast Asian countries. The need for domestic rule resulted in significant delays in reform efforts. After more than thirty years of exclusion and forced assimilation policies during the Suharto era, the Indonesian government reflected on the problems with its previous policies following the May riots and began the process of adjustment for over a decade. This led to some recognition of the identity and status of Chinese Indonesians. However, local anti-Chinese sentiment persists, and policies toward the ethnic Chinese still require continued deepening and implementation. It will take a considerable amount of time for harmony between the ethnic Chinese and other ethnic groups to be achieved in Indonesia.

4. Motivations for the Adjustment of Chinese Indonesians Policy in the Post-Suharto Era

The reasons for the adjustment of ethnic Chinese policy by the Indonesian government during the post-Suharto era are both domestic political and international factors, summarized in three aspects.

4.1. Changes in Indonesia's domestic political and economic environment

Firstly, the changes in Indonesia's domestic political situation, including the end of the Suharto regime, provided the possibility for a change in ethnic Chinese policies. The

subsequent lenient environment for democratic reforms provided the soil for such changes. After 30 years of Suharto's authoritarian rule, various problems such as corruption, inequality, and ethnic conflicts remained. Subsequent governments began to reform the national system and economy. The violent attacks against Chinese Indonesians during the "May Riot" severely damaged Indonesia's international image. The international community's condemnation forced the new government to change the anti-Chinese policies of the Suharto era, ease ethnic conflicts and stabilize public opinion. Against the backdrop of democratization and facing conflicts between the ethnic Chinese and other ethnic groups, the Indonesian government realized that it should adopt realistic and constructive ethnic Chinese policies.

Secondly, Indonesia was severely impacted by the financial crisis and needed the participation and help of Chinese Indonesians businesses to revive its economy. The financial storm of 1997 had a disastrous impact on Indonesia's economy, leading to a severe decline in GDP, the bankruptcy of many enterprises, a mass exodus of foreign firms, and a sharp rise in unemployment rates. The Chinese Indonesians economy played an important role in Indonesia's national economy, and the role of Chinese Indonesians economic power in reviving Indonesia's economy has been increasingly valued since the post-Suharto era. During the Wahid administration, Guo Jianyi was appointed as the Minister of Finance, Industry, and Commerce. During the Megawati administration, Guo Jianyi was appointed as the Director of the National Development Planning Committee. In addition, Fung Huilan was appointed as the Minister of Trade during the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono administration. These appointments demonstrate that successive governments have recognized and valued the contributions of the Chinese Indonesians economy to Indonesia's development.

Thirdly, the personal factors of the President, who is the policymaker, cannot be ignored. The values, ethnic perspectives, religious beliefs, and views on Chinese issues of national leaders have a significant impact on adjusting ethnic Chinese policies. Wahid came from a Muslim family, and was originally exposed to Javanese culture and Islamic doctrine. Later, he traveled to the Middle East and studied Middle Eastern history and literature. In 1970, Wahid visited universities in Paris, Heidelberg, Bonn, and other cities in Europe, and received the baptism of Western democratic culture. Upon returning to his home country, Wahid dedicated himself to the research and promotion of multiculturalism. His experience and knowledge of both Eastern and Western cultures made him a Muslim elder who drew from many sources and could accommodate others' ideas, leading to civilized progress. After being elected President, Wahid was able to influence ethnic Chinese policy from a humane perspective, which was inseparable from his multicultural ideas. Additionally, he claimed, "I am also half Chinese and half Arab. My ancestor's name was Chen Jinhan 500 years ago. I have Chinese blood, so I cannot accept racial differences in Indonesia."^[4] This also had an impact on his decision-making regarding ethnic Chinese policies. Megawati, like her father Sukarno, had a deep affection for China. This was related to her personal growth experience. After Suharto replaced Sukarno as President, the status of the Sukarno family plummeted. In addition, with the corruption and malfeasance of the Suharto family, Megawati deeply resented the Suharto regime. Her own tragic destiny made her very

sympathetic to the persecution of the Chinese Indonesians. All of these factors might have influenced her stance on the government's ethnic Chinese policy.

Finally, there are factors related to the Chinese Indonesians themselves. The Chinese Indonesians are hardworking, diligent, and wise, and have made significant contributions to the development of Indonesia's economy. During Suharto's time in office, in order to increase national wealth, he relaxed economic policies towards the Chinese Indonesians. From the 1960s to the 1980s, which was the "golden age" after World War II, Chinese Indonesians businesses gradually grew in strength and became an indispensable part of Indonesia's national economy. In addition, the majority of Chinese Indonesians have already obtained Indonesian citizenship, and have gradually identified with Indonesia as their own country in terms of living and emotions. They have made many efforts to actively integrate into mainstream Indonesian society. Furthermore, the demand for identity recognition and equal status among Chinese Indonesians has been increasing, especially after the "May Riot". They have become increasingly politically awakened, with enhanced political and democratic awareness, and have sought legitimate rights and interests through the establishment of political parties, associations, and other forms.

4.2. The development of the international situation

After the end of the Cold War, there were significant changes in the international situation. Peace and development, democracy and progress became the mainstream of the current era. These changes in the international situation have prompted the Indonesian government to continuously adjust its domestic and foreign policies, including its policies towards the Chinese Indonesians. In 1998, the "May Riot" occurred in Indonesia, and various countries' media and groups condemned it. Overseas Chinese also marched to demand that the perpetrators be brought to justice. Indonesia's international image was severely damaged, and its reputation plummeted. Indonesia has always hoped to become a powerful country in the region and even the world. However, its long-term stamp of authoritarianism has led to human rights abuses, from the "May Riot" in 1998 to the massacre in East Timor in 1999. Faced with strong international public opinion pressure, academics and the government in Indonesia began to reflect on Suharto's assimilation policy, which prompted them to begin adjusting their policies towards the Chinese Indonesians. For the Indonesian government, maintaining a tolerant attitude towards the Chinese Indonesians, conforming to the mainstream of the international community, improving human rights, and promoting harmony among ethnic groups are all requirements for harmonious coexistence and equal development in the international community, thus strengthening Indonesia's connections with the world.

Indonesia is an important member of ASEAN, and its policies towards the ethnic Chinese are also influenced by the policies of other Southeast Asian countries towards their ethnic Chinese population, especially Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. The generous policies towards the ethnic Chinese in these countries have provided Indonesia with references and comparisons. Economic cooperation, free trade, and investment within ASEAN also require the social networks and economic networks of Chinese Indonesians businessmen. All of these factors have prompted the

Indonesian government to change its policies toward the Chinese Indonesians.

4.3. Changes in Sino-Indonesian Relations

The improvement of Indonesia-China relations has prompted Indonesia to adjust its policies towards the Chinese Indonesians. After the Suharto era, there were frequent high-level political visits and rapid economic and trade development between the two countries. The friendly exchanges continued to expand, and there was good cooperation in international and regional affairs. In 2005, China and Indonesia established a strategic partnership, and bilateral relations developed rapidly, officially upgraded to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2013. Under the good development of China-Indonesia relations, Indonesia's recent governments have highly affirmed the contributions made by the Chinese Indonesians in Indonesia, seeing them as an important bond to strengthen China-Indonesia relations, resulting in increasingly fair policies towards the Chinese Indonesians and the protection of their rights. The Chinese government has also attached increasing importance to overseas Chinese affairs, actively communicating with the Indonesian government, and continuously promoting the improvement of Indonesia's policies towards the Chinese Indonesians.

As China's economy develops rapidly and its regional influence continues to increase, the Indonesian government has realized the importance of its relationship with China, and its relationship with China requires adjusting its policies towards the Chinese Indonesians. China's remarkable achievements after its reform and opening up, while Indonesia, having experienced financial crises, needs to utilize external resources to develop its domestic economy. China has a broad cooperation space with Indonesia in infrastructure construction, agriculture, and fisheries, and Chinese tourists are also important to the development of Indonesia's tourism industry. Under the impetus of these demands and motivations, the Indonesian government has started to try to enhance its relationship with China by changing its policies towards the Chinese Indonesians and utilizing its bridge-building role.

Lessons from history have also forced Indonesia to adjust its policies towards the Chinese Indonesians. China-Indonesia relations have undergone ups and downs since World War II, with many ethnic Chinese being arrested and killed in 1965, the diplomatic relations rupturing between the two countries in 1967, and resuming diplomatic relations in 1990, when high-level interaction began. After the Suharto era, Indonesia's policies towards the Chinese Indonesians began to develop in a tolerant and inclusive direction, and the two countries had deep cooperation in various fields such as economy, security, and culture. This has resulted in a substantial leap in their bilateral relationship. Therefore, it can be seen that Indonesia-China relations and Indonesia's policies towards the Chinese Indonesians are closely related. When the Indonesian government discriminates against or persecutes the Chinese Indonesians under extreme nationalism, the relationship between the two countries will deteriorate, but when policies towards the Chinese Indonesians are adjusted to be more friendly, the relationship between the two countries will improve and become close in terms of communication and cooperation. Therefore, this consequential relationship is also an important reason and reference for the Indonesian government to consider adjusting

its policies towards the Chinese Indonesians.

5. Conclusion

Indonesia's policies towards the ethnic Chinese are particularly unique and typical in Southeast Asian countries. The number of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia is the largest in the world, but their proportion is relatively small. During the Suharto era, the policy towards the Chinese Indonesians was the harshest. However, the transformation of Indonesia's policies towards the Chinese Indonesians took a long time. In the post-Suharto era, due to domestic and international factors, there were adjustments to the policies towards the Chinese Indonesians, bringing significant changes to the lives of the Chinese Indonesians.

Although there are still many areas that need to be improved and adjusted in Indonesia's policies towards the Chinese Indonesians in the post-Suharto era, and some discriminatory regulations have not been abolished, the economic development space for the Chinese Indonesians has been enhanced, and there is a trend of rejuvenation in Chinese Indonesians traditional culture from being discriminated against and marginalized to obtaining equal citizenship. At the same time, anti-Chinese sentiment still exists in Indonesia, and there is a need to be vigilant that the ethnic policies of pluralism may turn towards forced assimilation.

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