

## INDONESIA AND ASEAN IN 2025: A POLITICAL AND SECURITY PERSPECTIVE

*Yanyan Mochamad Yani & Ian Montratama*

### Abstract

*This essay is motivated by an interest in a particular aspect of Indonesian foreign policy. Indonesia's foreign policy has been called upon to serve the goals of national development. The national development takes place within a regional and global environment. Indonesia's most immediate environment is the sub-region of Southeast Asia, and for that reason the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which remains the cornerstone of Indonesian foreign policy.*

*ASEAN Community is a continuing process. It will continue to promote the expansion and then deepening of the implementation of ASEAN Community Blueprints beyond 2015. ASEAN Community Vision 2025 was approved and signed at ASEAN Summit Meeting, 21 – 22 November 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In the mean time for Indonesia itself, there are some impediments in the implementation of Indonesia's maritime nexus will continue to hedge against the ASEAN Economic Community as well as the major powers interests, especially with RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership led by ASEAN but heavily influence by China and the Trans Pacific Partnership that once led by the United States of America and seems abandon in Donald Trump era.*

*The study reveals that the strategic implication of the above possible development appeals the need of new approaches to Indonesia. Some basic assumptions can be derived from the foregoing examination of Indonesian foreign policy concepts, a changing Asian strategic environment, and uncertainties of interdependence. It may be reasonable to assume that Indonesia has the capability to increasingly strengthen linkages among defense, security, and foreign policy aspects which leads to an adequate Indonesian national security policy.*

*Key words: foreign policy, Indonesia, ASEAN Community, strategic implication.*

## ASEAN Community Vision 2025

ASEAN Community is a continuing process. It will continue to promote the expansion and then deepening of the implementation of ASEAN Community beyond 2015. ASEAN Community Vision 2025 was approved and signed at ASEAN Summit Meeting, 21 – 22 November 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Along the summit, there other documents that have been approved, which are the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together; ASEAN Community Vision 2025; and Blueprint of APSC, AEC, and ASCC 2016 – 2025 (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2015).

In the ASEAN Blueprint, it contains the second road map of ASEAN Community (2016 – 2025), which is directed to make ASEAN as a more peace, stable, economically integrated, outward looking, people centred, people driven, and people oriented region in the next ten years of ASEAN community building process. To realize those vision, the ASEAN member state leaders have agreed to put more attention on development cooperation with priorities on the adoption of aspirational goals to double the regional GDP and halve the regional poverty by 2025 and the development of Post-MDG's, the development of the Second Generation Partnership, and the development of Indo-Pacific Wide Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (Liow, 2014).

The development of ASEAN Vision 2025 needs to stand over agreed principles. Some of the principles are very classic to ASEAN like continuing the creation of a peaceful and stable ASEAN, promoting prosperity with equity, people centered, people oriented, increasing ASEAN's stance in the global community of nations,

reaffirm enhanced commitment for the maintenance of peace, security, and stability, which is in the regional and global interests (Asean Secretariat, 2017). However, those principles always got challenges with regional security issues like South China Sea disputes and Rohingya refugees. Therefore, the ASEAN Vision 2025 will need more concrete guidance in their implementations.

Although it may be hard to set up practical guidance, but ASEAN at minimum should further maintaining the stance as peace-loving nations and strengthening peace oriented values through, *inter alia*, respect for universally recognised principles of international law, and upholding the principle of moderation (The Asean Secretariat, 2013). In the case of resolving disputes, ASEAN should use peaceful means including through dialogue and consultations. The peaceful means should always be interpreted of renunciation of the threat or use of force and in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law. ASEAN should address any disputes by enhancing dialogue and cooperation to promote the rule of law, good governance, democracy, and human rights; and strengthening cooperation on disaster management, UN Peacekeeping Operations, non-proliferation and disarmament, counter-terrorism, transnational crime and maritime security, among others (ASEAN Regional Forum, 2018).

In the 2015 ASEAN Summit, all the ASEAN members also agreed to deepening and expanding the implementation of ASEAN Community Blueprints. Furthermore, there are some continuing efforts in the field of regional economic cooperation within ASEAN

Economic Community framework to obtain prosperity in the region among others and developing economic resilience. Economic resilience gain substantial attentions, especially when the region got hit by monetary crisis in 1997-1998 and global financial crisis in 2008.

Some of policies to leverage regional economic resilience have been investigated. Deepening of the bilateral currencies swap arrangement was discussed among ASEAN major players to reduce the impact of exchange rate turmoil, especially from the US Dollar. As for food security, ASEAN has even gone further by optimizing the ASEAN Plus Three engagements with CMIM and APTER. In energy security, ASEAN has made initiatives in constructing of an ASEAN Power Grid (APG) in 1997 and a Trans-ASEAN Gas Pipeline (TAGP) in 2000. Those three policies would become the security net for ASEAN in facing the most scared crisis: monetary, food and energy (Puja, 2015).

However, another layer of security should be built to leverage the regional economic power. ASEAN should foster the development of regional economy by implementing Master Plan of ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC). That connectivity will stimulate and grow more businesses. Supported by ASEAN-led trading block of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the ASEAN's economy should be maintained in high economic growth at the average of 5,3 – 6% and even aspire to double the combined GDP (OECD Development Center, 2018).

### **ASEAN: The Cornerstone of Indonesia's Foreign Policy**

Indonesia's foreign policy has been called upon to serve the goals of national development. The national development takes place within a regional and global environment. Indonesia's most immediate environment is the sub-region of Southeast Asia, and for that reason the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which remains the cornerstone of Indonesian foreign policy.<sup>2</sup>

Within ASEAN, Indonesia pressed on for regional political, economic, and cultural cooperation, emphasising the importance of national and regional resilience. Over four decades, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been the cornerstone of Indonesia's foreign policy. Utilising goodwill and cooperation from its immediate neighbours, Indonesia benefited from external assistance, foreign investment and inflow of managerial skills which it distinctly lacked. From being a regional recalcitrant in the mid-1960s, Indonesia became the prime mover of regional peace making.

At the same time, Indonesia steadfastly maintained the need to strive for regional stability and resilience: the 1971 ZOPFAN (Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality) concept, the 1976 ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and the Declaration of ASEAN Concord were made regional benchmarks, reflecting Indonesia's vision of regional self-reliance. At the January 1992 ASEAN summit, Indonesia was set on projecting a more prominent role within the

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<sup>2</sup> Its original members were Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei joined in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, and Laos and Burma in 1997, and Cambodia in 1999.

ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA),<sup>3</sup> and in-the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).<sup>4</sup>

Indonesia now plays a more active role in regional politics, economics and security. Towards a closer interaction with countries in East Asian region, Indonesia, through ASEAN has developed ASEAN Plus Three (APT) process involving China, Japan and South Korea. ASEAN promotes dialogue with Europe through the Asian-Europe Meetings (ASEM).<sup>5</sup>

From the point of view of Indonesia's political importance within ASEAN, it is vitally important that Indonesia reassert itself as the anchor and the leader of ASEAN, which is still very relevant in the field of politics and conventional security and can moderate political and security disagreements among members. The organisation remains a hope of countries in the Southeast Asia. ASEAN can be expected again to serve as driving force in the world economy.

Moreover, multilateralism in the regional context has proven its utility as evinced by the successful establishment

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<sup>3</sup>Since January 2003 AFTA has been implemented in six ASEAN members (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Thailand, and Philippine). They decreased trade tariff from 0 to 5 per cent based on the scheme of Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT).

<sup>4</sup>The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum (ARF) meeting, first held in July 1994 in Bangkok, Thailand. The ten ASEAN states today are Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippine, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Dialogue partners are the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, the European Union, Australia, New Zealand, China, India, and Russia. Other countries are observers. For ASEAN, the key to the ARF's *raison d'être* is in dialogue to "avoid the potential for regional conflicts in the Asia Pacific." ASEAN members emphasise that the ARF aimed to build "mutual confidence, preserve stability and ensure growth in the Asia-Pacific by creating a network of constructive relationship."

<sup>5</sup>ASEM, which was first held in Thailand in 1996, is a biennial informal meeting of heads of state and government of 10 Asian countries and 16 EU member states, including the president of the European Commission. In order to facilitate cooperation in various fields, finance, economic and foreign ministers meet annually.

and consolidation of ASEAN. Today under the forum of ASEAN, Indonesia and the other members are presently engaged in promoting a transformation of the region to be a prosperous Southeast Asia region through the building of ASEAN Community which is people oriented, people centred, and people driven.

So far ASEAN has been the cornerstone of Indonesia's foreign policy. In spite of its shortcomings and without in the least overlooking them, Indonesia's perception of national and regional stability is closely linked with the nature of her relationship with her immediate neighbours. Here lies the strategic significance of ASEAN (Anwar, 1994).

#### Indonesian Foreign Policy Under President Joko Widodo

Indonesia's foreign policy, like that of any other country, is shaped by various factors such as the nation's history, geographic conditions, demography, security and national interest. These factors prompted Indonesia to adopt a foreign policy that is independent and active, as espoused in 1948 by Mohammad Hatta, then Indonesia's Vice President.

Indonesia's *Independent and Active Foreign Policy* is not about being "neutral" or taking "equidistant" positions on international issues, nor is it a policy of "neglecting" or "ignoring" developments in world affairs. The word "independent" means that Indonesia alone will decide and determine its own position on world issues without external pressures or influence. The word "active" means

that Indonesia is committed to participating in constructive efforts that help build and maintain a just and peaceful world.

Being part of the Asian and the Pacific theatre, Indonesia considers relations with Asian and Pacific nations are part of paramount importance, especially with those in the Southeast Asian and Asia-Pacific regions. In this context Indonesia will take part in any collective effort leading towards the creation of a climate which is conducive for the initiation of cooperative ventures between countries of above mentioned regions.

The Southeast Asian and the Pacific region is in the innermost circle of the concentric circle on which Indonesia patterned its priorities in international relations. In fact, the two regions are mentioned “in one breath” in the Guidelines of State Policy formula. Being the direct environment of Indonesia, it is only natural that priority is given to those regions of which Indonesia is an integral part. This innermost circle is followed immediately by the next comprising Asia and the Pacific, then follow the circles comprising other areas of the globe.

Juxtaposed to the concentric circles defined region-wise are the concentric circles forum-wise, starting with ASEAN as the innermost and the United Nations (UN) as the outermost circles, with in-between the circles comprising forums such as the Islamic Conference Organization (ICO), the Non-Aligned Movement, APEC, and other such groupings in which Indonesia participates.

The concentric circles mentioned above should not be understood as a rigid and fixed way of patterning Indonesia's foreign policy. Trends and events of the international scene may

have an impact on Indonesia's national interest, or may provide for Indonesia an opportunity to assume a special role. In this regard, the above mentioned concentric circles should be perceived as oscillating circles as well. Oscillating as it may, the order of circles remains as Indonesia's ground-work for international role-taking and posturing.

Concerning with the Indonesian current government under President Joko Widodo, the performance of the Indonesian foreign policy has changed. Today Indonesia focuses on its efforts to be a great maritime country in the region. Jokowi's first foreign policy speech was made before world leaders attending the East Asia Summit, Myanmar, November 13, 2014. They are so called as five pillars of Jokowi's Global Maritime Nexus Doctrine. *First*, rebuild **Indonesia's maritime culture**. As a country consisting of 17,000 islands, Indonesia should be aware of and see the oceans as part of the nation's identity, its prosperity and its future are determined by how we manage the oceans. *Second*, maintain and manage marine resources. With focus on building marine food sovereignty through the development of the fishing industry. *Third*, provide priority to the development of maritime infrastructure and connectivity. By constructing sea highways along the shore of Java, establish deep seaports and logistical networks as well as developing the shipping industry and maritime tourism. *Fourth*, maritime diplomacy. Indonesia invites other nations to cooperate in the marine field and eliminate the source of conflicts at sea, such as illegal fishing, violations of sovereignty, territorial disputes, piracy and marine pollution. *Fifth*, to develop maritime

defense forces. This is necessary not only to maintain maritime sovereignty and wealth, but also as a form of our responsibility to maintain the safety of shipping and maritime security (Witular, 2014).

### Hegemonic Competition in the Southeast Asia Region

There are some impediments in the implementation of Jokowi's maritime doctrine for the next three years ahead in the region. It is well known that Indonesia's global maritime nexus will continue to hedge against the ASEAN Economic Community as well as the major powers interests, especially with RCEP. The US has continued to recognize Southeast Asia region as an area of critical importance. Strategically, Southeast Asia constitutes part of the US forward line of defense against a potential attack from across the Pacific.

Southeast Asia is a critical component in a series of strategic interests that extend from the Persian Gulf to the West coast of the US. Guam is host to strategically vital US air and naval bases, which are Washington's largest military installations outside the US. Together with bases in Japan, South Korea, Australia and Hawaii, they serve as a reminder of US military presence in the western pacific, as a deterrent to conflict and reassurance to allies and friendly governments, and as a forward defense of American territories in the Pacific. It also provides a means of projecting military force into the Indian Ocean.

As the Asia-Pacific is emerging as the future epicenter of global economic and political power, so is ASEAN seen to be ascending as a regional force in Asian regionalism (Tickner & O. Waever,

2009, p. 122). In this respect the crucial countries whose program designs will tend to influence American relations with ASEAN is China. China is the only great powers that borders on Southeast Asia. Due to this geographical proximity, Southeast Asia looms large in Beijing security considerations. The countries bordering its southwestern provinces – namely, Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar— may create assumed or real threats to China’s security on its frontiers (Fifield, 1977, p. 309).

It is only natural that as a great power, China, has taken the great interest in Southeast Asia’s regional development. In so far as its security interests, the Chinese do not wish to see hostile or potentially hostile power assume direct or indirect control of its neighbors. China has therefore continuously opposed any assumption of dominance in the region by any other major powers, especially if such a position could pose a potential threat to its security (Fifield, 1977, p. 309).

Despite China’s attempts to cultivate close relations with the ASEAN states through maritime silk road, some of these countries still harbored suspicion of China’s intention due to their historical experience with the Chinese Communist Party’s continued ties to their local communist parties supporters. At the same time, the diminishing presence of the US following the end of the Vietnam War, the improved relations between China and ASEAN, and ASEAN’s growing economic importance have prompted the United States to forge stronger economic and political ties with Southeast Asian countries. This is probably one of the main factors that has led to recent the United States attempts to help resolve the South

China Sea dispute as well as its involvement in East Asia Summit (EAS).<sup>6</sup>

However, with respect to the projection of the US regional security challenges for the Indo-Pacific Region in 2020 with a focus on South East Asia, it is assumed to give more attention on the dispute settlement of South China Sea (SCS) conflict.<sup>7</sup> It should be much aware of the great economic potential of the economic and strategic value of the disputed maritime territory. As a result, whoever controls the South China Sea will be in a position to influence development in adjacent countries. The attainment of the resourceful and strategic SCS territories would entail an enhanced growth of the economies and status of these countries (McDougall, 1997).

The SCS is not an interest only of the claimants – China, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan – but also everyone else who uses the sea lanes for merchant vessels to pass through. However of notable developments in the SCS is the antagonizing involvement of two great powers i.e. China and the U.S within the region which has become a situation in which East Asian nations themselves have to face another thorny issue.

The U.S have reiterated shifting to the Asia Pacific and its concern regarding the rise of China. Of course the US interest here is not only about resolving dispute peacefully, but it is also a well-known fact that the U.S would like to maintain its traditional foothold within the Asian region. As a result the U.S has

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<sup>6</sup> East Asia Summit members are 10 countries of ASEAN, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, India, USA, and Russia.

<sup>7</sup> The claimants states of SCS are China, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan.

strategically partnered with some ASEAN countries to achieve its goal. But China already has more influence in ASEAN than the U.S has. Take for example China's huge stock of investment in Southeast Asian countries.

China has long been involved in the region more than the U.S but even now as the U.S tries to make a come-back some ASEAN states are supporting its move to balance China's rise and influence. Vietnam and U.S relations are improving with more positive prospects for the future, but at the same time Vietnam is neighbor to China and has been greatly influenced by China, particularly in its political system. This issue is a real headache for the Vietnam leadership because they do not want to provoke China by openly allying with the U.S an 'arch-enemy' of China on the subject of the SCS dispute. The U.S and China may be portraying a picture of rivals yet in the process they may actually be dividing the resourceful SCS between themselves. After all, only they are equipped enough to exploit the resources. The U.S could exploit on behalf of its ASEAN partners but with more to gain for itself whilst China exploits within its already claimed territories (A. Bader, 2014).

New regional reality is that the regional is witnessing the return of U.S. and China military presence and reach out at regional scale. Without careful and clear policy, it can pose new danger to the already volatile world. At this point ASEAN member states are left in a crux of a dilemma when one takes into account the U.S-Sino rivalry within the region. In regards to the SCS dispute, even though ASEAN countries turn to the U.S for strategic reassurance,

they do so in full knowledge that their economic future depends on closer cooperation with a booming China.

Yet it is unfortunate that action-wise ASEAN can do little about the Sino-American current dispute, it would be devastated by a trade war. An undeniable fact is that ASEAN does need the U.S influence and a strong military as a form of defense mechanism (Medcalf, 2013). At the same time ASEAN needs China's economic momentum to survive. In facing the geo-political and geo-strategic development in the region Indonesia needs a clear, synergic, and comprehensive grand strategy in the framework of US and China diplomacy while remains to keep the ASEAN centrality or ASEAN led process in the Southeast Asia region (Richards, 2014; Hiebert, 2013).

#### Strategic Implication

The above possible development appeals the need of new approaches to Indonesia. Some basic assumptions can be derived from the foregoing examination of Indonesian foreign policy concepts, a changing Asian strategic environment, and uncertainties of interdependence. It may be reasonable to assume that Indonesia has the capability to increasingly strengthen linkages among defense, security, and foreign policy aspects which leads to an adequate Indonesian national security policy. In addition, it would be in such an attempt that an appreciative local government collaboration all over Indonesia would be forthcoming in facing ASEAN Vision 2025. Indonesia is a big country with 34 provinces, 412 regencies, 93 cities, 6994 municipalities, 8309

districts, and 72994 villages (Ministry of Internal Affairs Republic of Indonesia, 2015).

All parties in this country should go hand in hand to involve in the ASEAN Community action line. The consequences of interdependence include a sharing of the responsibilities of regional leadership supported by ASEAN partners. Indonesia is already consulting jointly other states will become part of this strategic engagement. The effect of this collaboration, and on future cooperation, is still challenging.

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