

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

There are many ways to perceive the world. One can make sense of the world through the lens of its geographical boundaries; meanwhile, the other make sense of the world through its political boundaries such as islands, territorial seas, exclusive economic zone, etc.¹ The third way of interpreting the world is via an imagination of space that transcends both of the above.² Such kind's imaginative space might not be found on geographical maps, but it is constructed in policy-makers minds. The Indo-Pacific is one of the imagined maps that has gained its value recently. The Indo-Pacific is regarded as a geopolitical concept with economic opportunities and security challenges. The Indo-Pacific's contemporary use is referred to the interconnected region between the Asia-Pacific, South Asia, and Africa.

By the turn of the 21st century, Indo-Pacific's concept has gained significant importance in geopolitical and strategic discourse. Nowadays, the concept is often used by policy-makers, scholars, and analysts in Asia.

To begin with, the Indo-Pacific region's idea was first brought up in 2006-2007 for a geopolitical amalgamation of the Indian Ocean and the western pacific regions. However, at first, the region was not addressed as 'Indo-Pacific' rather

¹Udayan Das, "What Is the Indo-Pacific?" THE DIPLOMAT, July 13, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/what-is-the-indo-pacific/>.

² Das, "What Is the Indo-Pacific."

than 'Asia-Pacific', but as China's politico-military assertiveness increased, the region was renamed "Indo-Pacific."³ The other reason for the Indo-Pacific to be renamed was India's rise as an important power that could influence regional affairs. The US desired New Delhi to be incorporated in the region-wide security architecture and be a regional "net security provider."⁴ Thus, it led the US to expand the geographical boundaries and rename 'Asia-Pacific' into 'Indo-Asia Pacific', including the Indian and Pacific Oceans. At first, the 'Indo-Asia Pacific' concept served as a means for the US to maintain its resident power in Asia. However, under Trump's administration, the term was shortened to 'Indo-Pacific' to focus on the security dimensions to collaborate with US allies to counter the rise of China in the region.

What's more, with the rise of China's assertiveness in the region and the adoption of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision by the US and the others, it has contributed to the revival of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. The Quad grouping consists of 4 countries such as the United States, Australia, India, and Japan. The revival of the dialogue contributes much to the promotion of regional stability and peace. Simply put, the Quad serves the agenda of the FOIP.

With the revival of the Quad grouping and other countries' efforts to articulate the Indo-Pacific in their respective foreign policies, the region has gained certain universally accepted interpretations. Firstly, the Indo-Pacific region is located within two oceans, such as the Indian Ocean and the western and central

³ Mercy A. Kuo, "The Origin of 'Indo-Pacific' as Geopolitical Construct, THE DIPLOMAT, January 25, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/the-origin-of-indo-pacific-as-geopolitical-construct/>.

⁴ Kuo, "The Origin of 'Indo-Pacific' as Geopolitical Construct."

Pacific Ocean, and the surrounding countries. Secondly, the size of the Indo-Pacific region is 228 million km², and by its definition, it is 56% of the total surface of the areas around our globe.⁵ In other words, the region itself is quite significant as it covers more than half of the global surface. However, despite some commonly agreed interpretation, some countries have different definitions of 'Indo-Pacific,' and it is crucial to understand each country's definition for two reasons. First, each country that has a definition of the Indo-Pacific has implemented its policies under the Indo-Pacific concept within its own geographical lens.⁶ Misunderstanding or ignoring the country's outlook on the Indo-Pacific might negatively affect possible diplomatic dialogues and cooperation.⁷ Second, it is essential to analyze each country's definition in order to understand policies and possible change because changes in the geographical definition of the Indo-Pacific will result in a shift in policies.⁸

As it had been mentioned before, since the Indo-Pacific is an imaginative space, the interpretation of the concept is contested, meaning that each state has its own lens of seeing the borders of the Indo-Pacific region. Simply put, countries have drawn their own articulations for the region that are included in their respective foreign policies.

⁵ Kuo, "The Origin of 'Indo-Pacific' as Geopolitical Construct."

⁶ Wada Haruko, "The "Indo-Pacific" Concept: Geographical Adjustments and Their Implications," (working paper, NUS, 2020), 3, <https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/handle/10356/143604?mode=simple>.

⁷ Haruko, "The "Indo-Pacific" Concept: Geographical Adjustments and Their Implications," 1.

⁸ Haruko, "The "Indo-Pacific" Concept: Geographical Adjustments and Their Implications," 1.

To begin with, according to the United States Department of State, the US has outlined a free and open Indo-Pacific vision where all states can prosper as sovereign, independent states.⁹ From America's perspective, the Indo-Pacific region stretches from the west coast of the United States to India's west coast.¹⁰ However, the Indian government has defined the Indo-Pacific as a region that spans through the whole Indian and Pacific Oceans along with the surrounding countries. Japan and Australia, as the Quads, are also seen as important players in the Indo-Pacific region, and therefore the countries have also outlined their boundaries of the region. According to Australia's vision, the Indo-Pacific region consists of North Asia, south China, and SLOC in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.¹¹ On the other hand, Japan's geographical vision, the Indo-Pacific region, stretches from The Indian Ocean to the Middle East and Africa, including some of the Pacific island countries as well as ASEAN member states.¹²

Having said it, despite the fact that the United States, Australia, India, and Japan are all the members of the Quad grouping, trying to promote commonly agreed values such as rule-based order, peace, prosperity, and so on. Their ideas of the Indo-Pacific and the definition of its boundaries have some dissimilarities. Simply put, the mapping out of the Indo-Pacific region is contested.

⁹ "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (2019).

¹⁰ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision."

¹¹ Haruko, "The "Indo-Pacific" Concept: Geographical Adjustments and Their Implications," 7.

¹² Haruko, "The "Indo-Pacific" Concept: Geographical Adjustments and Their Implications," 9.

As a response to the revival of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2019 adopted 'ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific'.¹³ The AOIP emphasizes the importance of maintaining ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific region based on the ASEAN mechanism. What's more, AOIP focuses on economic-functional cooperation with isolating ASEAN member states from strategic competition. However, the ASEAN's developed approach to the Indo-Pacific region is less concerned with security-driven issues instead, it is more focused on economic and connectivity-linked constructs.¹⁴ The outlook provides a scope of common actions that ASEAN member states should undertake in response to external pressure. The AOIP builds friendly relations with all partners, including great powers; it promotes dialogues and cooperation and addresses common challenges.¹⁵ Having said it, it seems that the AOIP is more orientated to a soft-policy approach, unlike the US, where the main focus is towards material power. However, the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" seems unclear as it has no precise geographical boundaries, unlike countries involved in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.

It is important to note that Indonesia took a leading role in drafting and pushing it to ASEAN when it comes to the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. Indonesia's argument for pushing the Indo-Pacific concept to ASEAN was that

¹³ Hoang Thi Ha, *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific: Old Wine in New Bottle*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2019, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_51.pdf.

¹⁴ Yadav, "Indian foreign policy toward ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific framework," 12-13.

¹⁵ Ha, *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific: Old Wine in New Bottle*.

ASEAN's Centrality was important to construct a regional architecture, ensuring the development of the free, inclusive, and open Indo-Pacific region.

To begin with, in 2017, Japan tried to promote the “Indo-Pacific Strategic Proposal” to the Indonesian government, trying to catch Indonesia’s attention on the concept.¹⁶ However, the proposal was not well received by Joko Widodo, stating that Indonesia would prefer to stay neutral in the great powers' rivalry.¹⁷ Jokowi was less concerned with security issues, and rather he focused more on the economic sector. Nevertheless, in January 2018, the Indonesian foreign minister, Retno Marsudi, proposed an 'Indo-Pacific Concept,' which is based on some principles such as openness, a spirit of cooperation, and a habit of dialogues.¹⁸

As in recent years, both China and the US try to draw Indonesia over to their side, despite Indonesia’s effort to adhere to its free and active foreign policy. Indonesia is trying to avoid taking sides at any cost. As a result, Indonesia urged ASEAN for a comprehensive Indo-Pacific policy as it did not want to be a theatre for great power competition and be divided into blocks. Indonesian government encouraged ASEAN to be proactive in a strategic reaction to bring changes to the region.

Indonesia is located in the Indo-Pacific heart, facing the Indian Ocean on the west, the Pacific Ocean on the east, and the South China Sea on the north.¹⁹ Having said it, Indonesia's position is seen as a cross-road location or strategic funnel.

¹⁶ Leo Suryadinata, Indonesia and its Stance on the “Indo-Pacific, Singapore: ISEAS, 2018, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2018_66@50.pdf.

¹⁷ Leo Suryadinata, Indonesia and its Stance on the “Indo-Pacific.”

¹⁸ Suryadinata, Indonesia and its Stance on the “Indo-Pacific.”

¹⁹ David Scott, “Indonesia Grapples with the Indo-Pacific: Outreach, Strategic Discourse, and Diplomacy,” *GiGa* 38, no.2 (2019), 196.

Indonesia links two oceans and serves as a bridge-builder between the two of them. Therefore, the country needs to develop a strategy aligned with its interests and secure itself from the Great Powers' competition.

Considering this context, Indonesia has developed its Indo-Pacific cooperation concept, which was pushed to ASEAN. After the discussions regarding the Indonesia-proposed Indo-Pacific Cooperation Concept, the AOIP was finally adopted in June 2019 at the Bangkok Summit.²⁰

Considering all the information mentioned earlier, it would be interesting to see how Indonesia, located at the heart of the Indo-Pacific, manages relations with the US and China as Great Powers using the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. Since Indonesia's position is strategically important to both the US and China, they put some pressure on the country. However, in order to preserve its foreign policy principle not to be dragged into a conflict that would threaten its bargaining power, Indonesia pushed the AOIP.

1.2 Research Questions

Amid the political dynamics that are happening in the region between the US and China as Great Powers and Indonesia's position as a bridge-builder between the two oceans, this thesis would answer the following main questions:

1. How does Indonesia use the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific to manage relations with the US and China?
2. Why does Indonesia pursue its Indo-Pacific strategy through ASEAN?

²⁰ Suryadinata, Indonesia and its Stance on the "Indo-Pacific."

1.3 Research Objectives

The thesis should be able to achieve the objectives as follows:

1. To examine how Indonesia uses the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific to manage relations with the US and China as Great Powers in the region.
2. To understand why Indonesia pursues its Indo-Pacific strategy through ASEAN.

1.4 Research Significance

I hope this research will be able to contribute as further considerations for students, scholars, and relevant institutions to understand how Indonesia utilizes the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific to manage relations with the US and China as Great Powers. This research will also examine why Indonesia decided to pursue its Indo-Pacific strategy through ASEAN. The research is significant to the International Relations major as the issue discussed is contemporary that requires deeper understanding.

What's more, I hope the research will provide insights and information that are useful for the public. The research aims at refining the public knowledge on international affairs that exist outside of the public knowledge. It is believed that the research will be beneficial to both scholars and the general public to understand the issue comprehensively.

1.5 Structure of Thesis

The first chapter of this thesis consists of the background, research questions, research objectives, research significance in order to give a reader brief information what is to be discussed further in this research.

The second chapter of this thesis will be divided into two parts which consists of literature reviews from books and peer-reviewed journals written about topics related to this research and the theoretical concepts to be used as a framework to further discuss Indonesia's position on the Indo-Pacific as a response to U.S and China rivalry.

The third chapter focuses on discussing the methodology being used to finish this research, which includes the research method, data collection technique and data analysis technique of gathering the information for this research.

The fourth chapter analyzes the data that has been collected and analyzed regarding Indonesia's position on the Indo-Pacific as a response to U.S and China rivalry.

The fifth chapter wraps up everything that has been discussed throughout this thesis. The last chapter will conclude the answers of the research questions, examining Indonesia's position on the Indo-Pacific and how and why Indonesia manages its relations with the United States and China as great powers.