

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

As a nation exposed to two oceans, the Indo-Pacific region serves as a pivotal region for Indonesia to operate its foreign policy. In geographical terms, the Indo-Pacific region refers to a unification of two oceans—the Indian and Pacific Oceans—as a unified regional construction.¹ In geopolitical terms, the significance of geoeconomics and security have encompassed the struggle of policy implementation within the region.² In stark, the Indo-Pacific region, as a geographical connection between the Indian Ocean and the western Pacific Ocean, induces tangible opportunities in geoeconomics and security.³

Hence, various countries, namely the United States, China, India, Japan, Australia and to this extent, Indonesia, have sought out policy implementation within the Indo-Pacific region. In this regard, policymakers from various states have an inter-subjective understanding of the existence of the Indo-Pacific region. The main difference is how various states enact their

¹ Axel Berkofsky and Sergio Miracola, *Geopolitics by other means: The indo-pacific reality* (Italy: Ledizioni-LediPublishing, 2019).

² Gurpreet Khurana, “The Origin of ‘Indo-Pacific’ as Geopolitical Construct: Insights from Gurpreet Khurana,” *Academia* (2018).
https://www.academia.edu/35764996/The_Origin_of_Indo_Pacific_as_Geopolitical_Construct_In_sights_from_Gurpreet_Khurana?auto=citations&from=cover_page

³Ibid.

policy implementation within this shared-understanding of the Indo-Pacific Region.

Various states and their practice in the Indo-Pacific region have induced a complex dynamic within the region. For instance, the United States essentially acknowledges the Indo-Pacific region as a pivotal region to exercise hegemonic expansion through maintaining order in security. Subsequently, it leads the United States to landmark a prominent position within the region.⁴ Therefore, the policy implementation of the United States is inclined towards traditional approaches in view of its ambitious security deployments and security alliances. Moreover, China has projected geopolitical and geo-economic interests. Geopolitically, China has explicitly exposed their interest to attain control of the South-China Sea.

The ambition that China exercises has certainly triggered and raised tensions with various countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia. Geoeconomically, China has portrayed their attachment in the Indo-Pacific region through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) initiative.⁵ For Indonesia, in 2014, President Joko Widodo has announced the concept of Indonesia that optimizes its maritime identity. Indonesia recognizes the forces within the Indian and Pacific Ocean, hence, as the

⁴ Shreya Upadhyay, "The Indo-Pacific & the Indo-US Relations: Geopolitics of Cooperation," *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies* (2014).

⁵ David Scott, "China's Indo-Pacific Strategy," *The Journal of Territorial and Maritime Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2(Summer/Fall 2019): 95-97. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26912752>

largest archipelagic state in the world, President Jokowi declared Indonesia as a Global Maritime Fulcrum.⁶ In view of the aforementioned instances, the highlight of the Indo-Pacific geopolitics is the presence of struggle within the level of policy implementation and practice.

Therefore, foreign policy serves as a critical instrument in this phenomenon. The concept of foreign policy pivots to the volatility of the international system which encompasses multilateral stakeholders and how to engage with one another. In view of the sovereignty of states within the international system, the struggle of national interest emerges. Thus, foreign policy serves an underlying instrument in achieving national interest while sustaining the complexities of the international system.⁷ Furthermore, foreign policy—as a central factor of international relations—reciprocates to history and institutional practices.⁸ This complements the notion of foreign policy as a bridge between states and international relations. In light of the increasingly globalized world, an array of contemporary issues within international relations are displayed.⁹ However, it is imperative to underline that the variety of issues, fundamentally translates to the maintenance of peace and averting

⁶ Witular, "Jokowi Launches Maritime Doctrine to the World", *The Jakarta Post*, 2014, accessed March 4, 2021. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/11/13/jokowi-launches-maritime-doctrine-world.html>

⁷ Rifki Dermawan, "The National Interest Concept in a Globalised International System," *Indonesian Journal of International Relations* (2020): 32, <https://doi.org/10.32787/ijir.v3i2.101>

⁸ Chris Alden and Amnon Aran, *Foreign Policy Analysis: New Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2017): 1

⁹ Marijke Breuning, *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 16

war.¹⁰ In 1951, John F. Kennedy has expressed the idea that foreign policy overshadows everything else in which various issues of expenditure, taxation, and social services hinge on the primal issue of war and peace.¹¹

Indonesian foreign policy, with regard to this writing, is essentialized with the notion of an ‘independent and active’ foreign policy. History has cultivated Indonesia in becoming a country that strives for a peaceful atmosphere. In view of the variety of objectives in foreign policy, Indonesia aims to enforce the principles of international law vis-à-vis the United Nations (UN) Charter and establishing good relations with countries within the international sphere.¹² Therefore, upholding the notion of an ‘independent and active’ foreign policy is fundamental for Indonesia to achieve peace. The former, an independent foreign policy, refers to the venture of Indonesia to establish friendly relationships with countries leaning towards any bloc—or no bloc at all—under the motive of mutual respect.¹³ The latter, an active foreign policy, refers to the role of Indonesia in becoming an active actor in international or global affairs that is based on national interest and the achievement of world peace.¹⁴

¹⁰ Jean-Frédéric Morin and Jonathan Paquin, *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Toolbox* (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018): 4-5

¹¹ Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963* (United Kingdom: Hachette UK, 2003).

¹² Mohammad Hatta, “Indonesia’s Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 31, no. 3 (1953): 441, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20030977>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Franklin B. Weinstein, *Indonesian Foreign Policy and the Dilemma of Dependence: From Sukarno to Soeharto* (Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur: Equinox Publishing, 2007): 166.

As a subject towards the development of history and institutional practices, Indonesian foreign policy is externally influenced by its geography, and extensively the geopolitical dynamics. Predominantly, it is pivotal to underline that Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world that consists of approximately 17,000 islands ranging about 5,100 km—that lies within the Indian and Pacific Ocean.¹⁵ Consequently, Indonesia is inherently graced with strategic bargaining power and bargaining positioning.¹⁶ However, the geostrategic positioning of Indonesia is exposed to an array of communication links with neighboring states, thus, exposing the geopolitical volatility of the region to Indonesia.¹⁷ The influences that the external environment has on Indonesian foreign policy is fundamental to how Indonesia responds to the international system.

However, it is also imperative to underline that Indonesian foreign policy is also internally influenced. In addition to the need to respond to the external environment, foreign policy bears the basic of pacifying national interest. Therefore, there are a variety of domestic factors to be taken into account regarding Indonesia's foreign policy making.

¹⁵ Asvi Warman Adam, "Indonesia," *Britannica Encyclopedia* (2022).
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Indonesia>

¹⁶ Finsha Rahadian Putra, "Pengaruh Geopolitik terhadap Kebijakan Laut Indonesia" (Bachelor's diss., Univeristas Negeri Jakarta, 2021), 1-2.
<http://repository.unj.ac.id/13259/2/BAB%201.pdf>

¹⁷ Ukar Wijaya Soelistijo, "The influence of geopolitics and strategical factors upon the development of natural and human resources in Indonesia," *Social Sciences* 2, no. 6 (2013): 200-211.

Tensions have risen in the Indo-Pacific region, primarily between the United States and China. The growing security alliances of the United States with other countries—AUKUS and the Quad—triggered aggressive responses from China. Given the strategic positioning of the United States and the geographic positioning of China, it is notable that Indonesia is positioned between the forces of two great powers. In view of the limited material capability of Indonesia, it remains fundamental for Indonesian foreign policy decision-making to mainly fend off any forms of power contestation. Tracing back to the basic principles of Indonesian foreign policy, Indonesia operates its foreign policy within the Indo-Pacific region under the notions of national interest and peace. Therefore, it is fundamental for Indonesia to exercise foreign policy objectives that strives for peace in the region and achievement of national interests in economic recovery, global recovery, maritime security, and international affairs, primarily in ASEAN and the 2022 G20 Presidency. Thus, with the aforementioned considerations, it triggers this writing to apprehend the navigation of Indonesian foreign policy amidst the geopolitical contestation in the Indo-Pacific region.

1.2 Research Question

The struggle of policy practices within the shared-understanding of the Indo-Pacific Region is a crucial matter to apprehend this event. Considering the presence of great powers in tandem with their conflicting interests, tensions within the region have risen. As an emerging power, it is imperative for Indonesia to fend off any forms of power contestation in the

region to maintain regional stability while advancing national interest. In this regard, the foreign policy analysis reflects on how Indonesian foreign policy under the leader, President Jokowi, responds to the international and external factors.

Therefore, this thesis is guided by a set of research questions which are as follows:

1. What is the nature of the Indo-Pacific region that causally explain the geopolitical dynamics within the region?
2. How can Indonesia maintain the integrity of its own independent and active foreign policy within the geopolitical contestation of the Indo-Pacific region considering the domestic interests and perceptions?
3. How does Indonesia respond to the growing security tensions among great powers, primarily the US and China, within the Indo-Pacific region during the administration of President Jokowi?

1.3 Research Objective

In light of the research question within this writing, this thesis bears the research objective to:

1. Identify and analyze the external factors of Indonesia's foreign policy making, namely the dynamics within the Indo-Pacific region,
2. Identify and analyze the internal factors of Indonesia's foreign policy making,
3. Comprehending and re-affirming the independent and active foreign

policy as the main guide for Indonesia to pursue its national interest amid the regional turbulence.

1.4 Research Significance

In consideration of the fundamental and basic principles of Indonesian foreign policy, this thesis bears the research significance of highlighting the independent and active foreign policy as an instrument to conciliate geopolitical tensions and mediating power contestation in international affairs.

1.5 Research Structure

This writing's structure is divided into five chapters in which each chapter serve its own purpose. For the first chapter, introduction, it conveys an opening to the paper in order to get a glimpse of the context behind the issue. The first chapter establishes the objective and significance of the paper, and most importantly, the questions that guide the paper.

For the second chapter, theoretical framework, it serves as the analytical grounds of the paper. The Neoclassical Realist theory that this writing follows, significantly contributes to the scope of analysis.

For the third chapter, research methodology, it recalls the steps and means that have been undertaken in order to answer the research questions.

Generally, it entails the approaches, methods, and techniques that has been used to grasp and analyze data.

For the fourth chapter, analysis, it serves a purpose to answer the research question explicitly. The fourth chapter has been structured based on the Neoclassical Realist tenets to strengthen the integrity of this research answer.

The final chapter, conclusion, summarizes the expansive research. This recalls upon the crucial matters that were addressed and creates a brief understanding of the paper as a whole.

