

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Indonesia is constantly confronted with various threats both internal and external. Internally, Indonesia has endured a number of rebellions which many resulted from political, to socio-economic grievances that could reemerge any time¹. Meanwhile, its external security interest stems from its desire to have a peaceful neighbors and stable regional environment. While these type of threats could differ from one another, historical examples show a pattern of reinforcing relationship of the two. For example, Indonesia's relatively weak capacity to enforce its territorial integrity could allow foreign warships and submarines to traverse the archipelago unregulated. While this could ameliorate Indonesia's external threat, the implication to its internal security is significant whereas secessionist group could receive clandestine support from external source via unpatrolled high seas between its islands². Yet focusing too much on defense against external threat could risk economic and social development to be overlooked and ignite internal conflict that can then be capitalized by foreign powers³.

¹ Bob Lowry, "Key Security Fault Lines-Unresolved Issues and New Challenges", in *Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, And The Regional Order*, 1st ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

² Leonard C. Sebastian, Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto and I. Made Andi, "Beyond The Archipelagic Outlook: The Law of the Sea, Maritime Security and the Great Powers", in *Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, and the Regional Order*, 1st ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

³ Michael Leifer, *ASEAN and the Security of Southeast Asia* Oxon: Routledge, 1989.

During the Cold War, attempting to balance between internal and external security often worsened when great power outside Southeast Asia control or influenced a state to contain one another. This has been shown when Indonesia launched military campaign against Malaysia that is suspected to be part of British strategy to contain Indonesia⁴. Or in other example, both China and the Soviet Union engage in proxy war that culminates in the Vietnam-Cambodia war.

Therefore, Indonesia's pursuit of security is connected with its external environment. Due to this reason, Indonesia has taken great interest in forming a regional order that would remain consistent with its Free and Active foreign policy principle while catering to its security interest. This resulted in the creation of Association of Southeast Asian Nation or ASEAN. ASEAN is not an explicit defense pact organization but security issues nevertheless remain central⁵. With Great Power rivalry in the region, ASEAN aims to insulate itself to be embroiled in its geopolitical conflict and prevent its member states to become entangled in proxy wars⁶. This neutral characteristics of the organization is hoped to bring about stability and peace. Among its members, ASEAN has agreed to settle disputes through the non-violent means as agreed in Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). With this, the member states are eased to focus more on its internal development and security.

⁴ Adam Leong Kok Wey, "The War That Gave Birth to ASEAN", Thediplomat.Com, Last modified 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/09/the-war-that-gave-birth-to-asean/>.

⁵ Ooi Kee Beng, "ASEAN No Longer Perihperal to Global Events", in *International Security in The Asia-Pacific: Transcending ASEAN Towards Transitional Polycentrism*, 1st ed. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

⁶ Ralf Emmers, "Unpacking ASEAN Neutrality: The Quest for Autonomy and Impartiality in Southeast Asia", *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 40, no. 3 (2018): 349-370, doi:10.1355/cs40-3a.

The success of ASEAN as a regional organization is significant despite some ongoing animosity. According to data gathered by Uppsala Conflict Data Program Database (UCDP), ASEAN members experienced a decrease in conflicts despite the opposite global trend⁷. Its international prestige has also increased marked by the greater interest of becoming a dialogue partner from other great powers such as China, US, India, Japan, and Australia. With the stable international situation and the increasing engagement from great powers, ASEAN find itself no longer able to insulate itself from great power interaction but to remain as impartial and inclusive as possible⁸.

While ASEAN members and consequently Indonesia has benefitted from stable and peaceful regional environment, events such as the South China Sea dispute and emerging great power rivalry has reignited tensions within the region. ASEAN as a primary regional organization is then expected to act as an indispensable security manager of the region, yet the opposite occurs. In 2012, ASEAN failed to release a joint communique on the matter of South China Sea after China successfully convinced Cambodia that the dispute should be solved bilaterally. ASEAN that used consensus couldn't afford a disunity among its members if it wishes to maintain its Centrality. ASEAN Centrality refers to the capability of ASEAN to shape the regional architecture where it's the primary driving force in managing the relations with external partners.

⁷ Angela Pennisi di Floristella, *The ASEAN Regional Security Partnership*, 1st ed. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

⁸ *Ibid* Beng P: 351

The failure of reaching consensus in 2012 further push ASEAN into further polarization that incapacitated its ability to act as one voice. A survey is conducted by the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute towards 1308 pundits from ASEAN. 40% comes from the public sector, 36% academia and think tanks, 24% from business, media, and nongovernmental organizations. Out of all the respondents, 73% believe that the region has become a staging ground for great powers struggle. If forced to make a choice, the differences are very marginal considering 53,6% would opt for the USA and the 46% would choose China⁹. On top of this, recent development has shown that Great Powers are increasingly emboldened to act unilaterally and shape their own regional arrangement while discounting ASEAN.

The term to describe this new regional arrangement is called Indo-Pacific. In the summary of National Defense Strategy, the United States of America (USA) has made its priority interest explicit in winning the strategic competition against revisionist powers particularly China Indo-Pacific region. To that end, it has sought to build more lethal force while strengthening its existing alliance¹⁰. This implies that despite its affirmation of ASEAN Centrality, US action is either unilateral or prioritizing its traditional allies which happens to be the member of ASEAN and not ASEAN as a whole. Since, the election of President Donald Trump, the US military has escalated its Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP) in the South China Sea. While this operation yields relative support from countries like

⁹ Kentaro Iwamoto, "7 Of 10 ASEAN Members Favor China Over US: Survey", Nikkei Asian Review, Last modified 2020, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/7-of-10-ASEAN-members-favor-China-over-US-survey>.

¹⁰ Department of Defense, "Summary of The 2018 National Defense Strategy" Department of Defense, 2018.

Singapore, and Vietnam, Indonesia doubt that such operations would bring stability in the region¹¹. Instead, it worries that any great power projection could have destabilizing effect that would hamper the region and its own security. Nevertheless, the US military area of operation in the region has doubled by the renaming of Pacific Command to Indo-Pacific Command.

Meanwhile, China develops its most ambitious projects called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Under it, China also develops Maritime Silk Road that would connect all littoral states along the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean through infrastructural investment and loans. This time, Indonesia's concern is about the potential of being overshadowed by the sheer economic influence coming from China. despite being part of it, Indonesia tread carefully.

Out of all Great Powers, India too has ramped up its effort to engage eastward. Out of concern that it would be encircled by China's presence overbearing presence in the Indian Ocean, it chooses to increase its engagement in the region not dominated by China yet at the Pacific Ocean. Indonesia has welcomed its Act East Policy by India. However, India's engagement to Southeast Asia is low compared to China and too focused on its neighbors.

All these trends by Great Powers shows that ASEAN members are now part of a wider regional arrangement that spans the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean called the Indo-Pacific. While it is no doubt that ASEAN led mechanism are not

¹¹ David Larer, "In Challenging China's Claims in the South China Sea, The US Navy is Getting More Assertive", Defense News, Last modified 2020, <https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2020/02/05/in-challenging-chinas-claims-in-the-south-china-sea-the-us-navy-is-getting-more-assertive/>.

going to be irrelevant, its Centrality may be diluted as Great Powers treated it selectively while building regional arrangement on its own. With stark polarization of its members, and the absence of its own official stance in the region, ASEAN members could be divided along different Great Power alignment such in the Cold War or even be dominated by single power in the region.

For these reasons, Indonesia has pushed for ASEAN's own stance in the regional arrangement. In April 2018, during the 32nd ASEAN Summit in Singapore, President Joko Widodo proposed Indo-Pacific strategy that carried ASEAN's distinct characteristics¹². Indonesia pushed for ASEAN to carry a bigger role into the Indo-Pacific region that are marked by increasing tensions among the great powers. Then during the East Asia Summit in November, Indonesia once again proposed ASEAN Indo-Pacific outlook¹³.

The Outlook is drafted by Indonesia and circulated among ASEAN member states. Unlike the other great power proposals, the outlook does not offer a new program nor strategy but merely reaffirmation of ASEAN Centrality and the existing ASEAN-led mechanism such as the East Asia Summit. After almost a year

¹² Marguerite Afra Sapiie, "Indonesia Wants ASEAN to Take Central Role in Developing Indo-Pacific Cooperation", The Jakarta Post, Last modified 2018, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2018/04/29/indonesia-wants-asean-to-take-central-role-in-developing-indo-pacific-cooperation.html>.

¹³ Evan Laksmiana, "Buck-Passing from Behind: Indonesia's Foreign Policy and The Indo-Pacific", Brookings, Last modified 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/11/27/buck-passing-from-behind-indonesias-foreign-policy-and-the-indo-pacific/>

of deliberation, ASEAN members officially adopted the ASEAN Outlook during the 2019 ASEAN Regional Forum in meetings in Thailand¹⁴.

Essentially, the Outlook is meant to be a reminder for ASEAN states to stick together and not to be divided by great powers as what happened during the Cold War era. Consequently, it becomes a soft criticism that the US and China exclusionary characteristics in their own strategy of Indo-Pacific are not welcomed by ASEAN member states. Therefore, it calls for a halt of any tension and brings all parties to work on common interests such as maritime cooperation, regional connectivity, and UN Sustainable Development Goals while still accepting that strategic difference exist.

ASEAN Outlook has been also called as a display of collective leadership in order to be an honest broker and emphasizing dialogue and cooperation under the adherence of existing international laws including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)¹⁵. Indonesia as the main proponent of the Outlook has also followed up by immediately hosting the High Level Dialogue on Indo-Pacific Cooperation in 2019. The dialogue was aimed at enhancing cooperation and building trust in the Indo-Pacific region that will lead to inclusive cooperation¹⁶.

¹⁴ Dian Septiari, "ASEAN Leaders Adopt Indonesia-Led Indo-Pacific Outlook", The Jakarta Post, Last modified 2019, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/seasia/2019/06/23/asean-leaders-adopt-indonesia-led-indo-pacific-outlook.html>.

¹⁵ Pooja Bhatt, "ASEAN'S Outlook for The Indo-Pacific: An Attempt to Set Rules of the Game", South Asian Voices, Last modified 2019, <https://southasianvoices.org/aseans-outlook-for-the-indo-pacific-an-attempt-to-set-rules-of-the-game/>.

¹⁶ "Renewing Concrete Indo-Pacific Cooperation and Trust Building - ANTARA News", Antara News, Last modified 2019, <https://en.antaranews.com/news/122951/renewing-concrete-indo-pacific-cooperation-and-trust-building>.

At glance the Outlook seems to brush over the persisting security issues and focused on cooperative behavior. But, the points within the Outlook may hints that ASEAN remain engaged in the regional flashpoint such as the South China Sea dispute. It does so by declaring that the Outlook also promotes freedom of navigation and overflight under the UNCLOS.

In addition, the Outlook is considered by Indonesia to aligns with its interest of becoming a global maritime fulcrum. Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) was announced by President Joko Widodo in East Asia Summit last 2014. Nevertheless, the Outlook is not without its criticism. It has been branded as more aspirational and not strategic in their substance. ASEAN led mechanism are even branded as insufficient as regional tensions no longer seem to rely on ASEAN in solving its issues as they used to. And thus, the Outlook is grossly over optimistic without any meaningful and genuine results of its engagement such as in the South China Sea dispute¹⁷.

As suggested by explanations above, Indonesia is shown to placed importance in its surrounding strategic environment for its security. Despite its flaws, ASEAN is inferred as a crucial platform for Indonesia's foreign policy and even dubbed as its cornerstone from its founding until now. Recently with the emerging Indo-Pacific regional arrangement, Indonesia pushed for the creation of ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific so ASEAN members can have a common

¹⁷ Pou Sothirak, "Re-Thinking 'Asean Outlook On Indo-Pacific'", <https://www.bangkokpost.com>, Last modified 2019, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1715795/re-thinking-asean-outlook-on-indo-pacific>.

voice. As Indonesia placed a great hope for the organization capacity to benefit its security interest, it is interesting to conduct research on “The Pursuit of Indonesia’s Security Through the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) Centrality in the Indo-Pacific Region”.

1.2 Research Question

Based on the problems explained above, this research will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How does Indonesia use ASEAN as the regional platform of its foreign policy?
2. How does ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific can serve Indonesia’s security interest in the Indo-Pacific arrangement?

1.3 Research Objectives

ASEAN’s credibility as a regional organization is not just scrutinized by Great Powers, but occasionally by Indonesia itself. The increasing tension in Indo-Pacific has once again brought Indonesia’s attention to utilize ASEAN in a way to adapt in its regional arrangement. Indonesia has achieved in convincing other members to adopt a common outlook, yet its aim and potential for success is yet to be studied. This purpose of this research is then to investigate the myriad of interactions between Indonesia’s and ASEAN through its foreign policy. Along with that, it is also crucial that this research investigates such relationship specifically with the outset of ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific and how it can be useful for Indonesia’s security interest.

1.4 Research Contribution

I hope that this research will provide new insight on how ASEAN can serve Indonesia's security interest particularly under the Indo-Pacific region. As this research will analyze how Indonesia use ASEAN as a platform to its foreign policy, and how its current Outlook will further its security interest in relation to the Indo-Pacific region, the results could become a reference for future researcher that is interested to investigate deeper on the role of ASEAN on regional order and Indonesia's security.

As the research would also dig deeper on Indonesia's national interest as well as its strategies and how it can be achieved through foreign policy specifically to ASEAN, the results of this research could become useful as a reference for Indonesia's policy makers in relevant institution such as Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia National Resilience Institute, and Indonesia's Military. Knowing what is in Indonesia's security interest could guide them to formulate relevant security and foreign policies along with grand strategy. Meanwhile knowing the nature, potentials, and challenges of ASEAN could prevent miscalculation.

Lastly, this research could enrich the public knowledge in International Relations field regarding Indonesia's foreign policy and ASEAN. Thus, it is very significant to provide the public on relevant information regarding the topic.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter provides the background and broad overview of the content of the thesis. This include the introduction on the events related to the thesis, the questions that arises from the introduction and are aimed to be addressed by this thesis, and the purpose as well as the significance of this thesis.

In the second chapter, this thesis will cover the theoretical framework. It will discuss the relevant International Relations theory that will be incorporated in this research alongside with other concepts. This chapter will also include previous scholarly studies in Indo-Pacific region, how state reacts to regional politics, Indonesia foreign policy, Indonesia foreign policy towards ASEAN, and on the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific.

The third chapter will lay out the methodology that is used in this thesis. It includes research approach, research method, as well as data collection techniques.

The fourth chapter is the discussion of this thesis and will be divided in two sections. The first one will address the first research question on how Indonesia use ASEAN as the regional platform of its foreign policy. Within this section this research will cover briefly on Indonesia's national interest and how it is operationalized through its foreign policy with ASEAN. This part will also specifically discuss the utility of ASEAN led mechanism such as ARF, APSC, and ADMM and ADMM + for Indonesia's national interest.

In the second section, this thesis will attempt to answer the second research question. It will be divided in separate subsection which are the Indo-Pacific

regional arrangement, what is Indo-Pacific regional arrangement, and how ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific can complements Indonesia's interest.

The fifth chapter will conclude the thesis including all the previous chapters and provide recommendation for future research.

