“Indonesia’s Foreign Policy in the Jokowi Era”

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ASEAN Centre in MGIMO University Online Online Discussion
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• How does today’s Indonesia see the region and the world?
• How different is Jokowi’s foreign policy vis-à-vis his predecessors?
• What are the key domestic factors influencing Indonesia’s foreign policy?
• Does the current dynamic of the Indo-Pacific discourse meet Indonesia’s expectations?
• Amidst China-U.S. contradictions, what are Indonesia’s choices and opportunities?
• What could we realistically expect from Indonesia and Russia in their eighth decade of diplomatic relations?
• First “outsider”:
  ➢ not part of political elite or military
  ➢ Modest furniture salesman before entering politics

• Meritocratic rise:
  ➢ Mayor of small central Java town (Surakarta), 2005-2012
  ➢ Governor of DKI Jakarta, 2012-2014
  ➢ President of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014-present
Some Caveats

• “Vote-winner”:
  - 2005 elections: 36.62% of votes
  - 2010 elections: 90.01%
  - 2012 elections: 53.82% (after second round)
  - 2014 elections: 53.15%
  - 2019 elections: 55.50%

• Good image:
  - “Man-of-the-people”
  - Clean from corruption
  - Pro-human rights
  - Business-minded
  - “Action-man”
Some Caveats

• When Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo was sworn in as the seventh President of the Republic of Indonesia, taking over from Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the change in personnel at the highest executive office of state naturally raised questions about the likely changes in government policies between that of the outgoing Yudhoyono Government and that of the incoming Widodo Government.

• This was especially so in the area of foreign policy given that Yudhoyono was widely lauded for his efforts and achievements on the international stage; and the general perception that Widodo lacks sufficient foreign policy experience and knowledge.
How different is Jokowi’s foreign policy vis-à-vis his predecessors?

• **Foreign policy disinterest:**
  - Never attended UN General Assembly, even when Indonesia was campaigning for non-permanent seat for UN Security Council
  - Reluctant to attend/host international events

• **Undermining Foreign Minister:**
  - Liaison ministers to handle specific countries
  - Israel visa-free fiasco
  - New Vice FM reports directly to Jokowi

• **Upsetting other countries**
  - ‘Sink the boat’ policy for foreign vessels caught IUU fishing in Indonesian waters
  - Executing foreign drug offenders/ignoring pleas for clemency.
How different is Jokowi’s foreign policy vis-à-vis his predecessors?

• ‘Indonesia First’/Transactional consideration
  ➢ Jokowi only interested in countries that could provide massive investment for Indonesia’s infrastructure projects.
  ➢ Less interested in geo-strategic considerations
It could be argued that Jokowi’s 1st term did not reach the same high point in foreign policy when compared to his predecessor. However, it cannot be said that it represented a low point either.

Just as Indonesia secured a non-permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council during Yudhoyono’s presidency, so too did it win a seat under Jokowi.

Just as the then-FM Natalegawa engage in shuffle diplomacy over a regional crisis, so too did the Jokowi-appointed FM Marsudi when the SE Asian region was in the spotlight over the Rohingya issue.

And just as Yudhoyono tried and came up short in his attempts to lead ASEAN towards a certain direction, so too did Jokowi struggled in his own efforts to push the regional organisation towards adopting its own ‘Indo-Pacific’ concept.

In this sense President Jokowi perhaps deserves the same praise and criticisms leveled at Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.
What are the key domestic factors influencing Indonesia’s foreign policy?
How does today’s Indonesia see the region and the world?
In June 2019, ASEAN endorsed the **ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)**. Heavily pushed by Indonesia, the initiative aims to ensure ASEAN Centrality amidst competing concepts of the ‘Indo-Pacific’ regional architecture by major powers.

Whilst the ‘Indo-Pacific’ term was not a new concept, it gained new attention after it was used by U.S. President Trump during his trip to the region in 2017.

In addition to the U.S., countries such as Australia, India and Japan have all pushed forward their own vision for an ‘Indo-Pacific’ regional architecture.

Such **competing visions threatened to undermine Indonesia’s preference** for an **ASEAN-led regional architecture**, underpinned by the ASEAN Plus Three, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the East Asian Summit (EAS) mechanisms, among others.

**Does the current dynamic of the Indo-Pacific discourse meet Indonesia’s expectations?**
Does the current dynamic of the Indo-Pacific discourse meet Indonesia’s expectations?

- Indonesia dedicated enormous effort to the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific
- FM Marsudi was reportedly dubbed ‘Miss Indo-Pacific’ by her peers in Southeast Asia due to her tireless persistence
  - President Jokowi brought it up at the 32nd ASEAN Summit in Singapore.
  - followed up by further discussions at the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting and Related Meeting in August 2018 where Indonesia shared a concept paper
  - organized a one-and-a-half track meeting in Jakarta that was held in September 2018.
- That the document was formally adopted by the ASEAN Leaders in less than two years was a notable achievement given the ‘notoriously slow ASEAN diplomacy, where all decisions must be by consensus.'
Amidst China-U.S. contradictions, what are Indonesia’s choices and opportunities?
What could we realistically expect from Indonesia and Russia in their eighth decade of diplomatic relations?

• Indonesia-Russia relations have not reached the same heights that they once were in the past, especially when Sukarno was president.

• Despite a strong Russian legacy that can be found in Indonesia (monuments in Jakarta, military hardware imported from Russia), most Indonesians would attach higher importance on relations with the U.S. and China as well as Japan, South Korea and Australia.

• Russian presence is arguably not strongly felt in Indonesia and vice-versa. Last state visits were in Dec 2006 (President Yudhoyono to Moscow) and Sep 2007 (President Putin to Jakarta).

• Complicated by geostrategic competition/pressure from other powers (example: Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets and U.S. Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act).
What could we realistically expect from Indonesia and Russia in their eighth decade of diplomatic relations?

![Chart showing cooperation and its impact on Indonesia]
Thank You

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JOKOWI'S INDONESIA AND THE WORLD
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