

A STRATEGIC VIEW OF MINILATERALISM: INDONESIA, QUAD, ASEAN, SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN, AND IMPEDIMENT TO ASEAN CENTRALITY?¹

PANDANGAN STRATEGIS MINILATERALISM: INDONESIA, QUAD, ASEAN, KOREA SELATAN, JEPANG, DAN HAMBATAN TERHADAP SENTRALITAS ASEAN?

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Abstract. This paper elaborates on how Indonesia and ASEAN could synergize their role on more strategic views in ensuring ASEAN-led centrality. With minilateralism concerns growing, this paper addresses the importance of maintaining external relations for constructive dialogue and how foreign policy restructurization of Indonesia should be executed at a more normative and ideational level. This paper employs qualitative analysis through document-based research on previous literature to formulate the contention and discussions that have been very Comprehensive and wide in scholarly analyses. Will Indo-Pacific prevail with ASEAN as the central player? What Jakarta has to do about it?

Keywords: Quad; Minilateralism; Indo-Pacific; ASEAN; Foreign Policy.

Abstract. Artikel ini menguraikan bagaimana Indonesia dan ASEAN dapat mensinergikan peran mereka pada pandangan yang lebih strategis dalam memastikan sentralitas yang dipimpin ASEAN. Dengan berkembangnya minilateralisme, makalah ini membahas pentingnya menjaga hubungan eksternal ASEAN serta dialog yang konstruktif di Indo-Pasifik. Serta bagaimana restrukturisasi kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia harus dijalankan pada tingkat yang lebih normatif dan ideasional. Makalah ini menggunakan analisis kualitatif melalui document-based research dari literatur sebelumnya untuk merumuskan diskusi yang telah mendalam pada analisis topik ini. Akankah Indo-Pasifik menang dengan ASEAN sebagai pemain sentral? Apa yang harus dilakukan Jakarta?

Keywords: Quad; Minilateralisme; Indo-Pasifik; ASEAN; Kebijakan Luar Negeri

1. INTRODUCTION

The transition from the Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific era has always been the

¹ The analysis on this paper doesn't represent the author's institutional official position/ analysis/ or representation. All of the analysis within this paper is formulated for mere academic research and a more personal opinion in nature.

favorite narrative to be debated when perceiving the strategic importance of the region. The Indo-Pacific ideas themselves were constructed around the concept of Indian Ocean – Pacific region connectivity alongside its neighboring East Asian region (Qudsiati & Sholeh, 2020). The ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) has always been the narrative for the Southeast Asian states to stay pragmatic and refrain from unnecessary multipolar rivalry. According to previous research, the AOIP is supposed to stabilize and bind all parties to exercise “self-restraint” to respect the ASEAN centrality and keep the region staying in its collaborative posture amid the global competition (Pangestu, Hikmawan, & Fathun, 2021). The region has always been prone to major power rivalry pertaining to its geostrategic importance and the key hub that connects the Pacific and the Indian Ocean region. This geostrategic importance narrative was proven to be real as Joko Widodo with its foreign policy activism introduced the “Global Maritime Fulcrum” or GMF as part of Indonesia’s Indo-Pacific strategy succeeding the “[Wawasan Nusantara” vision (Aufiya, 2017).

The presence of security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific is the main consideration for the regional players in forecasting the regional stability and its ASEAN centrality at play. It is noteworthy that the presence of China, for instance, is a vital part of the proliferation of subregional groupings and intra-regional military/ security dialogue formation that involves the ASEAN states or its dialogue partners. China plays a very important determinant factor as it draws the Indo-Pacific norm-setting. Chinese foreign policy and its political economy efforts also draw attention towards the BRI cooperation that is often regarded as the key problem of Indo-Pacific geopolitical dynamics (Saha, *The Quad in the Indo-Pacific: Why ASEAN Remains Cautious*, 2018). Not limited to the security context, it also involves many considerations of predicaments such as the Indo-Pacific connectivity and competitions in trade related to the Indo-Pacific, Chinese growing role, and the major power intervention. Linkages between the reality and the respective visionary narratives of the AOIP also put Indonesia, as the key initiator and the leader of AOIP to be paid more attention from the major power and middle powers surrounding or within the Indo-Pacific region (Laksamana, 2011).

The current Indo-Pacific statecraft is now changing, hence the redefinition or the rethinking of Indo-Pacific geopolitics are imminent. The presence of inter-regional groupings like the Quad and the Five Power Defense Agreement (FDPA) for instance, could trigger turbulence for the ASEAN centrality. This paper wishes to dig deeper into that question, particularly on how minilateralism can affect the implementation of the AOIP. This paper also elaborates on how Indonesia should restructure its regional foreign policy to stabilize ASEAN regionalism and perseverance against threats and any efforts that kick ASEAN from the driver’s seat.

The Indo-Pacific region is an important region, not only because of its normativity in regards to political control but also as a place for countries to showcase and tailor their naval power and state sovereignty; in which these are the main part of the discourse as the Indo-Pacific region unravels a tremendous geoeconomic potential. The strategic importance for international security, non-traditional security, and economic connectivity made the region pivotal in determining the major power revisionist position that is coping with the regional order while achieving their agenda (Khurana, 2019). Rivalry in Indo-Pacific will

continue unless a balance of power is achieved, however that is not the case right now as the ASEAN is moving forward to enforce their centrality as the main regional order-building key actor. The norms and principles come into play, and everyone that wishes to benefit should abide, one of which is by signing the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) as the main prerequisites of becoming an ASEAN external partner. A previous study argued that Indo-Pacific aggravates both major power attention and middle power struggle; and encourages the players to become more outward-looking instead of being self-centered in deliberating their Indo-Pacific strategy (Saeed, 2017).

There are many considerable contentions regarding Indo-Pacific ranging from a unilateral need to connect with their bilateral partner, an urgency to substantially increase their regional contributions and politics, and to project multilateral movements that shape norms to influence the regional process in establishing its rule-based order. China, according to a previous study is utilizing the Indo-Pacific as their bridge for their connectivity to the IOR and beyond with their African partner, Pakistan economic corridor, and to secure their trade lines that are responsible for most of the Chinese imports (Brewster, 2017). Previously it was also argued that the Indo-Pacific comprehensive securitization through regional norm-setting and institutional building from regimes are being done to provide a clear outlook on how to respond towards foreign intervention; while at the same time also pursuing interactions and treating a peaceful environment through confidence-building (Tertia & Perwita, 2018). Some literature was also discussed that the importance of small states and a middle power in Indo-Pacific regional architecture is influencing a particular dynamics where rethinking small states' power will be the most important thing in providing a cooperative environment for all to play and abide in nurturing peace and stability in Indo-Pacific (Rahman, 2009; Moodie, 2000).

Foreign Policy Re-structurization as the Analytical Framework

In terms of foreign policy re-structurization, it's important to remember that this theory is attempting to provide a framework for analysis that can accommodate the actor's shifting patterns of foreign policy. According to Holsti (2016), foreign policy re-structurization is aimed at implementing synchronized and complete adjustments to their foreign policy and goals (Holsti, 1982). Meanwhile, according to Hermann (1990), there are multiple levels of realigning a state's foreign policy, including: (1) a lower-level, more quantitative adjustment of a specific foreign policy.

The adjustments address who is targeted and how they are targeted, but the overall purpose remains the same. (2) Adjustments to a specific foreign policy program which are more qualitative than the preceding one, involving additional actors and more instruments, but no adjustments to the end-goal; (3) concern or goal adjustments on a specific foreign policy that encompass extra major changes and realignment to the level of aims and the ultimate goal; and (4) global orientation shifts that entail the orientation of numerous international stakeholders and are interconnected with one or more issues and events. This brings about plenty of adjustments in a variety of countries all at once (Hermann, 1990).

There are numerous models for interpreting foreign policy changes at the unit level, including (1) checklist models that are based on typological changes to change the foreign policy's program and true purpose (Holsti, 1982).

Adjustments, according to Hermann (1990), will result in graduate models, in which a program within a foreign policy is adjusted and further graduated level changes are made (Hermann, 1990); (2) structural limitations models concentrating on both verbal and non-verbal foreign policy programs just in terminology change (Godmann, 1982) or only the general foreign policy program on evolutionary/ irregular adjustments (Skidmore, 1994); and (3) cyclical models which alter the program and results of a specific foreign policy without a stated change (Carlsnaes, 1993), and solely on a graduated level of program changes (Rosati, 1994). These three models largely explain the significance, rational explanation, and empirical research of foreign policy changes in terms of the mapped variables that Gustavsson (1999) explained, and this mapping was also described by Setiawan and Yani (2019).

2. METHOD

This paper employs qualitative analysis and review past studies to answer the research question of how Indonesia should strategically restructure its foreign policy to maintain ASEAN centrality against the impediment of Quad and minilateralism in Indo-Pacific? According to Bryman (2008), social research is using past experiences, cases, and past studies in exploring new findings and discussions on social-science research.

3. DISCUSSIONS

ASEAN is a strategic region, and the AOIP adoption can be seen either as serendipity or significant progress for the Southeast Asian countries in restructuring their position as a vital part of the world's geopolitics. The AOIP may give ASEAN more space to be leveraged upon, however, it could also stand as a "carrot-or-stick" nightmare; especially against major actors that bound the region to play by their book because of its economic aid to ASEAN states (Jose, 2021). As explained before, the specific impediment questioned here is the Quad plus initiative. The author argued that the Quad plus indeed is the ramification of the US' upscaling strategy to counterweigh China in the Indo-Pacific. However, the converging issues relevant to the question now also leave a narrow place for ASEAN to navigate their regionalism and maintain their centrality. This means that the ASEAN strategic autonomy may become an ill-fated history for the region over the next few years, and the concept may not be relevant and struggle to prevail over the next decades to come.

Strategic autonomy for ASEAN is one of Indonesia's golden regional diplomacy objectives, and it will remain persistent as Indonesia wishes to develop AOIP and leverage Jakarta's visionary foreign policy. Long-lasting disputes, great power interventions, regional disintegration, and the worsened communal tension within or outside the ASEAN will give Indonesia tremendous setbacks and harder obstructions in nurturing a strategic environment for the AOIP to prevail and refraining negative implications for ASEAN (Gindarsah & Priamarizki, 2015). While previously the UN is concerned with ASEAN potential threat of becoming the world's new nuclear weapons stronghold, now it's all about how the region asserts its pragmatic approach against major power designation for their "pivot to Asia" alike policies. Even the US considers ASEAN as a vital region for

US' geopolitical dominance in the future and to counter China's significant stretch over the Indo-Pacific regional architecture (Medcalf, 2018). It is also about how the region can move forward and reshape its regional community security as learned from the Cold War where power balancing is a red line for Southeast Asia (Acharya, 2001).

3.1. The Indo-Pacific Minilateralism: ASEAN and its External Cooperation on Strategic Issues

a. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Plus)

Minilateralism in Indo-Pacific is something sexy for some actors, where the contestation of the ASEAN-led mechanisms is challenged by foreign powers meddling in the regional rules-based order process. The author argued that no minilateralism can even make it to shake the ASEAN centrality if the said minilateral platform couldn't resist the reality that one of its member states couldn't afford to alienate China. One of which is the menopause of the old Quad dialogue where Kevin Rudd, the Australian PM is reluctant to disseminate efforts in alienating Beijing as it will jeopardize the Australian economy (Flitton, 2020). The 10-year hiatus of Quad means something significant for the ASEAN, where Japan, the US, and India couldn't push a significant blow to Beijing's ambition. Instead, it's gotten bigger over the past few years ever since Donald Trump took the trade war to China. However, the changing of Australian leadership and the agreed revival of Quad in the 2017 ASEAN Summit and the creation of Quad plus dialogue brought new discourse to the region, where the AOIP will be questioned of its ability to remain as the ASEAN's unified stance in Indo-Pacific.

The author argued that China can't be contained simply through Quad, and involving ASEAN member states like Vietnam in the Quad plus for instance, may project a different scenario. For ASEAN, it means that involving Vietnam on Quad plus will make the regional consensus-driven norm-setting weaker. This is because Vietnam may be reluctant to pursue or endorse the full implementation of AOIP. Hence this will be homework for Indonesia to revisit their approach to bound everyone on the same page. For Vietnam, this means that they have to sacrifice their security as they shared borderlines with China. The author argued that Quad plus won't become a significant blow, although logically it may become a sour reality for the ASEAN centrality dream itself.

Why is that so? Vietnam isn't interested to pursue traditional issues to be deliberated in Quad plus, and interestingly – South Korea also felt the same. Seoul doesn't want to cooperate with Quad on traditional issues and only opens for non-traditional issues like development and other non-militaristic cooperation. Although South Korea for instance, relies on the US for their securitization against North Korea, Seoul tends to be reluctant to meddle around with China in sensitive issues. One of the reasons as concluded from previous studies was because of Japan, where Seoul felt that Japan is dominating the Quad agenda on East Asian affairs, hence the Blue House sees little to no benefit for Seoul in joining the high-political bandwagon of Quad (Huynh, 2021). South Korea regional foreign policy mentality is yet to be ready in facing the exclusivity of Quad, hence that is also the reason why South Korea is creating their Indo-Pacific strategy that wasn't based on the US FOIP concept – called the "New Southern Policy" to play

strategically with ASEAN whilst maintaining confidence building with Beijing (Wilkins & Kim, 2020).

Moving back to the Vietnam context previously, it is evident that Hanoi wishes to maintain the same tone – to play as a middle power, and not as an ambitious state pursuing to counterweigh their old and traditional ally under the same ideology. Vietnam also plays the same tone with South Korea, where they are open for cooperation in Quad plus dialogue only to non-sensitive substances and recalibrate its dialogue with the US although most of the surveys show that Vietnamese strategic experts approve Vietnam's endeavor with Quad (Poling, Hudes, & Natalegawa, 2021). Hence, the author concludes on this part that minilateral threats coming from the Quad plus initiative should be concerned only to the extent of non-traditional issues, while the current state of play still leaves maritime security and security dialogue involving Vietnam remains insignificant. Hence, this means that the turbulence won't be as severe compared with the Quad Malabar exercise that for several times triggers Chinese inconfidence in Indo-Pacific maritime security.

Again, the Outlook on Indo-Pacific can be perceived here as the key answer to embrace the regional values while at the same time implicitly acknowledging Chinese rising popularity as the new non-traditional and promising partners of Indo-Pacific (Khurana, 2017). What matters also is that the AOIP can stand as a guide for the ASEAN member states' foreign policy restructurization, because it will stand as the only perimeter before breaking ASEAN further. The author argues that minilateralism is no joke for both Jakarta and the ASEAN as a whole. With the world is moving to its multipolar structure, ASEAN has to be awake because eventually the world would be comfortable and the fate of ASEAN needs to be drawn imperatively. The structural dimension of the global political landscape for ASEAN will be the main judgment criterion for the international community in depicting the fate of ASEAN regionalism (Choiruzzad, 2017).

b. Selective Trilateralism in Indo-Pacific Rule-based Order: Japan, South Korea, and the United States

Then the other question would be, what it means for the Quad states and other strategic ASEAN external partners? The author argued that it was entirely dynamic and has no harmonized tone to project the fate of ASEAN external cooperation on strategic issues as different partners mean different priorities and norms. To begin with, the author second the argument from Kitaoka (2019) where Indo-Pacific is no longer about regional integration, but it is about the redefinition of global politics as a whole. Therefore, it made the ASEAN external relations worth be scrutinized to explain the emergence of the Indo-Pacific century as a rule-based region, with ASEAN as the central dot in the convoluted web of global geopolitics (Montratama, 2016). However, what made regional security in Indo-Pacific attractive isn't merely about the ASEAN and US-China tension, but the geoeconomic potentials and important hub for the world's supply chain (Al-Syahrin, 2018).

Beginning with Japan, the ASEAN-Japan relation is strategic both to Indonesia's regional diplomacy in inter-regional cooperation and to the ASEAN-

Japan connectivity as a whole. Historically, the ASEAN-Japan relation is greater on development and non-high politics issues rather than the traditional one, because Japan's military isn't that expansionist compared to the US. ASEAN is also an important pillar for Tokyo's foreign policy outlook, as the region has been historically connected with many facilitation and accommodation coming from both parties, with most on trade issues and comprehensive economic cooperation. A previous study in 1991 argued that ASEAN-Japan relation is something dynamics, not only intertwined to only US and China but also the European Community and Indo-China relation with the great powers – in which these will affect the bargaining power, however, these narratives may no longer be relevant as back then the polarization was happening between the US and Russia (Soviet) (Imagawa, 1991). ASEAN-Japan relation is an important matter in deliberating the sub-complex nature of Indo-Pacific issues that covers the connectivity between the South and East Asia, and ASEAN regional securitization and its architecture partook vitally on it (Buzan, 2003).

In regards to minilateralism in Indo-Pacific, the relation between ASEAN and Japan will be an interoperable context for the Indo-Pacific maritime, economic, people-to-people, and transregional issues. In particular, minilateralism, it will stand on the proposition where Japan will be a great contender for ASEAN partnership in developmental issues. Please understand that AOIP is not merely limited to maritime security, as the early harvest of AOIP depicted a significant potential in development and sustainable cooperation. To prove this, Japan is ASEAN's strategic partner in the East Asia Summit (EAS) and Japanese tech advancement is useful for ASEAN sub-regional synergies within the IMT-GT, BIMP-EAGA, and IORA (Saha, ASEAN's Indo-Pacific outlook: An analysis, 2019). This was outlined as the Japan-ASEAN strategic partnership framework even before the AOIP was implemented. The presence of JIETRO, JICA, JODC, and other mechanisms that are interlinked with the ASEAN 2025 Community Blueprint can be supported through Japanese Funding and Transfer of Technology. Pertaining to the research calculation also where CLMV Countries with larger development gaps in ASEAN, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand are acquiring positive growth on development financing since 2000-2005 and beyond 2010 (Yoshimatsu & Trinidad, 2010). Additionally, Japan is also the prime Society 5.0 leader that catalyzed the Asian industry even faster than China (Rojas, et al, 2021). Thus, the ASEAN-Japan relation would be more if Japan could replace BRI and introduce a more advanced development and transfer of technology, utilizing the momentum of RCEP. However, politically these will be possible if ASEAN-Japan can find some points of convergence in traditional issues, to show that the cooperation is significant and able to reward both parties, as the intra-ASEAN regime building through the ASEAN CoC on SCS is stuck. To link this with society 5.0, we need to understand that an individual-technology relationship complemented by a comprehensive merger of cyberspace and physical spaces will support ASEAN regional integration, hence the AOIP will be felt at the grassroots level (Rojas, et al, 2021).

Speaking specifically on a more geopolitical context, since the defeat of Japan in World War 2, Tokyo's military ambition was then being limited by the treaty that was signed with the Allied Forces, and it was enshrined in Article 9 of the Japanese constitution where Japan can't settle international conflicts with their force, but only to maintain their national security (Kingston, 2012).

However, the provocative North Korea, offensive China, and the rising escalation in the Indo-Pacific theatre in particular eventually forced Tokyo to renew its defense policy, and this is pretty much encapsulated normatively within the Japanese defense white paper. The improving and the increasing number of Japanese armaments may seem logical if we are considering Tokyo's intention to rejuvenate its Arsenal. However, it's going to be contradicting and somehow can even mean a power projection effort in a more realist/ geopolitical context. The previous study argued that Japanese military proliferation and the defense upgrades should be scrutinized, and it's not merely because of the past Japanese imperial military ambition, but as a changing defense paradigm of Japan where they transit from a pacifist-isolationist post-war Japan into a more active player from East Asia in line with their economic growth and tech advancement (Marsono, Deni, & Asmoro, 2018). Indeed these dynamics are not separated from the political interest of Tokyo's regime in increasing their defense and power to bargain or contribute to the international landscape, especially considering China as their biggest rival is standing face-to-face on their Southern Japanese sea.

Although bargaining power context is always intertwined with economic power and trade capabilities, the discourse is also relevant when explaining the process in war from what cause the war, how the prosecution between actors are happening, what terminates a war, and how it will cost the aftermath (Reiter, 2003). The previous study argued that Japanese proliferation is consistent with the Chinese expansionist maritime and defense posture that was perceived by Tokyo as a form of insecurity especially on the Eastern China Sea that is vital to the Japanese economy and livelihood of Okinawa, and the Kyushu island (Matsuda, 2014). The author suggests that Japanese willingness to participate in Indo-Pacific regional security discourse is also high, and it contributes to the discussion of this paper's thesis. The author argued that the adventurism of Japanese surrounding foreign countries made 1954 established Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) vision become irrelevant. However, this is not something that should be centric to Japan per se as it also means that the US security assurance in the Asia-Pacific is consistently being challenged by China, and forced Japan to be more ready and independent in securing the region. We can't also deny that the nationalist actors in Japanese politics are also yielding tremendous pressure to normalize Japanese military rise on international issues to become more assertive rather than passive/ pacifist (Hughes, 2004). Interestingly, this came with a cost, where the other parties who are historically abused by Japan would feel more anxious in witnessing these events, as Japan has yet to fully confront their historical wrongdoings to the actors who wronged them (Nytagodien & Neal, 2004). This means that the post-war Japanese politics and defense is also influenced by the institutional memory of the previous pre-1945 Japanese status as the East Asian major power. The author would like to emphasize the current sentiment rising from the expansion of Japanese defense, whether it could mean that Tokyo is willing to return to its pre-1945 ambition as an East Asia major power or this is just a mere effort to contain China and corroborates with the free and open Indo-Pacific vision.

Japan in this regard, has the constructive role to engage and partake in the open regionalism that is being designed by ASEAN to collaborate with China while navigating Southeast Asian centrality forward. This will be more than the conflict of Senkaku/ Diaoyu Islands, as the Japanese alliance status with the US

under the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and the presence of US forces in Japan and the Korean peninsula have deliberately triggered inconfidence from Beijing to both Tokyo and Seoul. From what we are witnessing, it is evident that Chinese self-assurance that its neighbor won't meddle with its ambition in the South China Sea, Indian Ocean Region, South Pacific, and beyond has been shattered because there are little to no relevance that can increase Chinese self-confident to Japan and its allies. Japan will eventually continue to play an important constructive role, especially through its capabilities to become a new non-traditional power that can provide new middle power engagement in Indo-Pacific minilateral operational level. Therefore, ASEAN and the international community don't have to worry to develop their region only based on traditional foreign aid and or development assistance that is prone to politicization. To bolster the hope for this narrative, the author would like to refer to the ASEAN-Japan Joint Statement on Cooperation on the AOIP that was adopted in November 2020. The summit agreed and endorsed that ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership Framework on AOIP will cover human security, development, digital economy, 4IR, people-to-people, ASEAN smart cities enhancement, and the SDGs gap solutions (MoFA Japan, 2020).

Into the context of South Korea, for sure the Blue House won't be taking an aggressive posture against China, although recently in December 2021 were Australia and South Korea signed a military deal worth more than 1 billion USD for the procurement of 30 Howitzers canon and 15 armored ammunition resupply vehicles (Greene & Dizedzic, 2021). Both countries have just recently upgraded their bilateral relationship to the level of "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" during their 60th bilateral anniversary. Seoul however has informed their western allies that South Korea is still interested in joining the Quad's discussion but only in non-traditional security issues, which is largely irrelevant to the Indo-Pacific geopolitical hedging done by the Quad member states. As elaborated previously, Japan impeded Seoul because of its cold-and-warm relations (Kim J. , 2017).

However specifically on this part, the author would like to bring up the old nightmare, the THADD defense system. The so-called Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THADD) that was built in Seoul has provoked Beijing tremendously and caused the Blue House to sign a memorandum with China back in 2017 to press THADD back away, and Seoul can't advance deeper defense ties within the US strategic military networks. Political tension was circumventing around Chinese Concern of THADD that might jeopardize their spy satellites system and Chinese defense weapons. THADD has crippled Seoul's directive in the economic field after China sanctioned the Korean entertainment sector back in 2016 (Yang, 2019). This event has also obstructed a deeper strategic reality of the US-Japan-South Korea trilateral nexus against Kim Jong Un's regime and Xi's Chinese regime that could eventually overpower the whole security threats and establish a new deterrence (Stangarone, 2019). The author suggests that the inexistence of solid South Korean strategy of Indo-Pacific made Seoul consistently stand on grey areas hence prolonging its strategic dilemmas. The author argued that the mental mapping of South Korea foreign policy activism in the Indo-Pacific is still needed and the US needs to readjust its boundaries in compromising certain elements that are still considered "too exclusive", which has been impeding Seoul from taking a more solid stance with Washington. The Korean government is reliant on China for its cheap labor market and China is

one of their strategic outbound market for Korean entertainment sectors in the East Asian creative industry that was proven by the 40 billion USD trade surplus that Seoul enjoys from its ties with Beijing (Kim, Kim, & Lee, 2006).

Moving to the United States, we all know frankly that the US pivot to Asia is no longer something questionable, especially after the Biden administration took in and swiftly being more cooperative with ASEAN countries after being so protectionist under the Trump administration. From the recent VP Kamala Harris visit in August 2021 in several ASEAN states like Singapore, the author felt that what Harris convey is way too normative. Why is that so? Because if the US is willing to leave their vast and secure Atlantic front, why would they only do the bare minimum for Indo-Pacific amid the enthusiastic Chinese major power. US did go through a reality check on its FOIP vision, however, it is no longer a subtle stance as they need to focus more on asserting their presence in Indo-Pacific, with a harder demeanor. This is being hardened by Washington through its joint Malabar exercise with Quad states, and currently trying to contain Beijing by inviting G7 countries to discuss BRI's new contender partnership (Barrett, 2021).

Some argue that the US is willing to put China in a hard position with policies that could deliver a series of "net effects" by engaging with ASEAN states (Nguyen, 2016). This is a tangible minilateral creation, however, it won't be significant if the ASEAN states can employ the appropriate small-state approach against hegemonic power. AOIP may patch the gap, but the author argues that it won't last if no rejuvenation is taken by ASEAN, in particular through Indonesia's leadership as a pilot on the AOIP spectrum. US obstructed vision to achieve the "Pivot to Asia" concept that was formulated by Obama's administration also meant that the US needs South Korea and Japan to synergize in order to extend their ambition (Clinton, 2011).

3.2. The AOIP Implementation and Indonesia's Regional Diplomacy: Going Inward or Outward-Looking?

Before answering the question mention in the subtitle of this part, the author would like to begin with a more pragmatic outlook. It is evident enough that Indonesia is playing collaboratively, although Jakarta seems to be adjusting its stance after explicitly mentioning that Indonesia will cooperate with the US to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific, as stated by FM Retno Marsudi after meeting Secretary Blinken. Indonesia's bilateral meeting with the US in 2021 seems to be more frank and open in catalyzing more concrete security cooperation in Indo-Pacific, for sure this was approved in the awe of President Jokowi (Oladipo & Brunnstrom, 2021). This means that Indonesia is restructuring its AOIP strategy to be more concrete while putting the US at play through its joint security cooperation.

The author argues that Chinese maritime and high stake agendas won't be limited only to the South China Sea. Previous studies argued that China will be thrusting forward to the Indian Ocean Region, especially since 80% of their hydrocarbon imports were passing from the IOR; and their BRI is purportedly extended to the West and not only in ASEAN (Malik, 2014). Although US and China is contradicting in Indo-Pacific, both countries shape their minilateral gameplay, where China is aiming to prevent a traditional confrontation with the

US through its minilateral building through BRI, while the US is building minilateral relation through Quad plus initiative and other traditional militaristic means.

As a rational actor in playing its role, China and other major powers' intervention mustn't be driven by hard power. The engagement of China and friendly exchanges to most of the member states in the Indo-Pacific region is mostly on a cohesive economic interdependence. The implementation of BRI as part of Chinese geoeconomic efforts in increasing their hegemony to the regional players shows that China is implementing more outward-looking approaches. Considering the increasing economic potentials and the uncomparable growth to the other region made Indo-Pacific favoritism being more tangible over the past decades. Although China might have numerous issues in regards to human rights against the Muslims in Xinjiang and several other issues with their BRI in the African region, the reality check resulted in a contradictive situation compared to the common logical understanding. African debts which were exacerbated by the bad practices of governance and corruption, made Beijing's presence becoming more implanted to the African and Middle Eastern society. This means that China's popularity on both the macro and micro actors is tangible and popular enough amid the international contestations (Friedrichs, 2019).

Indonesia as the key leader and the most tangible bridge-builder in ASEAN should have enough self-awareness, this is pertaining to the situational analysis that recent developments from Myanmar to AUKUS, South Pacific uprising against Beijing to the rising concerns within the Indian Ocean Region made it imperative that Look East or West policies from Indonesia are not necessarily enough. The state interplay within Indo-Pacific will continuously substantiate the hurdles against the prevailing open-regionalism spearheaded by ASEAN, which then strongly stood as a significant factor in determining domestic calculations related to the state's rationality in IP hedging (Nagy, 2021). This means that Indonesia should be more proactive in sharpening the edges of their pragmatism that are prone to interferences and external shocks from China, the United Kingdom, and other players who are standing against China with little compromises and more clear red flags. ASEAN is already struggling with intra-regional development, and China is there to help with its own Beijing Consensus-driven principles and policies (Rahman, Kim, & De, 2020).

Infrastructure and development financing will always pose new gaps, hence it requires a larger resilient institutional setting that can address political dilemmas while maintaining a robust ASEAN-centrality that leaves flexible rooms for AMS to negotiate. To conclude, Indonesia surely needs to maintain a partial inward-looking and should actively substantiate the outward-looking posture. Indonesia should also realize that their Western front is more contagious to regional dilemmas and political tension as India, Pakistan, and China's pressure on New Delhi's ambition and wish for stronger modalities are becoming more and more evident to be resolved by Australia or any other western countries when engaging in Indo-Pacific (Yadav, 2019). Both India, Pakistan, and China are still fighting for the same cause "establish/ maintain economic influence through the politicization of development policies. The Indonesian government also has the mandate to formulate the appropriate segments of cooperation. There needs to be a maritime security and political dialogue regime for instance, that also connects the dots between academic networks and subsectoral cooperation that

is relevant with the domain of Indo-Pacific geopolitical discourse (Corder, 2010).

Intersectional issues like the ruling regime in each AMS, priority issues under Cambodia's, Brunei, and Indonesian chairmanship in ASEAN are important in benchmarking the future and legacy issues pertinent to the discourse. The presence of authoritarian regime affects ASEAN, especially developing countries in the political context and the quality of democracy that eventually implicate the situational analysis of political features that influence the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific. This is evident from the political discourse in Thailand, Myanmar, and the Philippines. Cambodia will be the Chair of ASEAN in 2022, and in 2022 the situation in ASEAN is certainly different from the situation when Cambodia became Chair of ASEAN a dozen years ago. Cambodia is under pressure to bring ASEAN to the fore like Myanmar too. The situation for the 2022 Philippine elections deserves further scrutiny, and the development of opposition in the Thai parliament still leaves a question mark on the future of the Thai monarchy. These democratic and domestic leadership changes will impose persistent foreign policy changes and re-orientation in ASEAN especially in determining the fate of the AOIP strategy and the progress of ASEAN 2022 Chairmanship under Cambodia. Certainly, this will require Jakarta to restructure their regional foreign policy, in particular, whether to change the modalities/ definitions/ or the "programming" as a whole (Doeser, 2011; Gustavsson, 1999). Indonesia needs to pay attention to the strategic issues to anticipate things that hinder might Indonesia's achievements, especially in the implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific under the chairmanship of Cambodia in ASEAN in 2022.

Indonesia could also deepen its foreign policy re-orientation in the context of ASEAN external cooperation with dialogue partners. When we are talking about the ASEAN+3, people often associated the term with economic cooperation, while in fact that ASEAN+3 is vital and relevant to the ASEAN external cooperation needs. All of the East Asian partners of ASEAN (China, Japan, and South Korea) tangibly play a crucial role in ASEAN transformation and regional community-building. However, this narrative means that the ASEAN external partners must not meddle with ASEAN centrality, and it stood as the red line as we realized the danger posed by the foreign intervention that might trigger a prolonged conflict in Southeast Asian architecture (Muni, 2013). However, it's not enough as it will need a more concrete implementation to prevent the region from chasing its tail while foreign entities try to deliberately move the ASEAN from the driver's seat of open regionalism. The author suggests that although ASEAN has made an active contribution, we need to acknowledge that the unconstructive engagement, scattered usage of political tools, and the inability of the region in obliging geopolitical powers to respect the ASEAN's pacifism and soft power will divide the region even beyond the South China Sea and Myanmar issues (Kusumaningrum, 2013). In the normative aspect, we realized that ASEAN already acquired enough modalities as a legitimate risk-based approach of the Southeast Asian regionalism to advance and maintain its centrality and determine steps to navigate forward – especially because the region has a positive track

record.² Additionally, it's noteworthy that ever since the NAM establishment and the cold war era, the ASEAN has acquired both historical experiences and sufficient modalities to balance the frustrating proliferation between US-China in Indo-Pacific theatre.

To advance the implementation of the AOIP and continue the narrative above, this is no longer an intra-ASEAN work. The nature of the cooperation and the framework implementation going to be multidimensional and eventually will involve its external partners, especially because the ASEAN+3 states are an important resource pool for ASEAN in strengthening its soft power and political capitalization. The previous study argued that ASEAN external partnership is needed to counterweigh Washington's hegemonic presence in Asia-Pacific, and give room for the East Asian countries to approach their ASEAN potential markets pertaining to the absence of a direct trilateral comprehensive relation between East Asian countries (Stubbs, 2002). The ASEAN external relation is something important, to prevent the region from going into the zero-sum situation of the global landscape. Additionally, this is also to realize the hidden potentials to increase prosperity and shared values amid the "Asian Century". ASEAN+3 nowadays is normally perceived as the key platform to respond in the strategic link of the Pacific and Indian Ocean Region, however, the author would like to go deeper beyond that. The nature of Asian confluence and the designated norm-setting that resulted in the implementation of the ASEAN 2015 community pillars' establishment shows that the region is trying to enhance its competitive and comparative advantage, and moving to more and-depth policy coordination with external actors (Bi, 2021). From this reasoning, the author argued that if ASEAN wishes to manifest more concrete policy coordination with a larger set of actors in the global landscape, it will require more legitimate prerequisites, in which these can be fulfilled from the presence of East Asian neighboring partners. Why are these legitimacy-building processes important? It will show to the world that ASEAN strategic regionalism is attractive enough and able to attract wider attention, with the goal to depict that ASEAN centrality can be accepted by its strategic dialogue partners and not just mere Jakarta's daydream for a wider global impact. Hence, indeed these are important to promote the rules-based order and shouldn't be narrowed only to economic interdependence and commercial diplomacy, thus it will be necessary for ASEAN+3 to establish bargaining power with the major powers on political and security issues in Indo-Pacific.

In promoting a rule-based Indo-Pacific through the ASEAN+3 relation, a previous study argued that norm diffusion is the central pillar for the political-security cooperation, in which this can be enabled through states' role as norm-maker or norm-taker (O'Malley, 2013). The idea of this norm-maker/taker is foundational and important in understanding the dynamics of Asian regionalism institutionalization and its regime-building process from norms agreed by the state actors. Acharya (2004) argued that the norm-taking or norm-making process even to the extent of its implementation is very dependent on how the norm-maker deliberate their approach to the prior norms that are localized in each

² Elaborated by Prof. Dewi Fortuna Anwar at the 50th CSIS Indonesia Anniversary Webinar "Dialog Arah Kebijakan Luar Negeri Indonesia at 14 September 2021

member state (in this case, the ASEAN countries); and whether the local agents can facilitate the norms brought by the foreign (or in the paper was coined as the “transnational actors”) to create changes (localization) or even facing impediment (resistance), and even norms-displacement (Acharya, 2004).

In conjunction with this paper’s topic, the involvement of South Korea, Japan, and China as the ASEAN partners can enable ASEAN expectations if the norm-diffusion, and the leadership or the so-called political entrepreneurship of norm-maker from ASEAN countries (like Indonesia for instance as the leading power), can eventually match with the norm-taker which are the 3 countries. We can see that the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) as the requirement of ASEAN external partner is one example of norm-diffusion, where South Korea, Japan, and China eventually has to oblige their regional foreign policy with ASEAN to match the ASEAN’s demands and principles. However, changing landscapes that were different from the ASEAN+3 creation back in 1997 means that ASEAN+3 needs to be revisited and all involved actors should level up their engagement to be more constructive towards the current situation.

Cross-pillar synergy is needed to promote their open regionalism amid the global political fragmentation, and at the same time, ASEAN also needs to dissect the explorable path to generate the needed feeling of pride. This is surely wanted by the AMS as the feeling of being exclusively privileged as a region will depict more rigid achievements amid the complex norm-setting and mechanisms that are pragmatic but demanding. To conclude, the ASEAN+3 states in regards to the AOIP implementation should be agile and ready to move, either moving to counterweigh negative sentiments, moving from a transactional to transformative solutions (Dermawan & Rohmaniah, 2019), and or engage with ASEAN and willing to endorse ASEAN centrality and the AOIP implementation.

With preventive diplomacy becoming the main spirit of the ASEAN external cooperation, the forum still abides to adhere to non-interference and exercise full control to prevent any contradictive implementation of the preventive diplomacy (Emmers & Tan, 2011). The ARF was also established to promote security and stability for ASEAN through its principal approach in realizing the intersectional security dimension and conflict resolution through its versatility in managing peace and manifesting the ASEAN working mechanisms (Manopo & Sari, 2015). ARF in this regard is a vital instrument for Indo-Pacific outlook implementation, particularly on high-political issues. With 27 member states, the ARF continues to strive and establish its ministerial and senior officials’ meetings to stipulate a more sustainable and constructive pattern in ASEAN security and prosperity (MoFA Indonesia, 2019). The ARF here was also utilized for states in engaging bilaterally to solve issues in Indo-Pacific, external assistance is also useful for countries to combat security issues and terrorism, while also promoting bilateral ideas (Haacke, 2009). To conclude, Indonesia has so many tools, but it is up to Jakarta’s discretion to determine which one has an easier political burden to be tied up. Because loose ends on foreign policy especially in the contested Indo-Pacific will just pose another burden to the states’ strategic interests on both ideational and technical levels. Jakarta usually goes to trilateral/ bilateral options to approach each member states to find a synergy on their Outlook on Indo-Pacific.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper simply concludes on 3 main important ideas: First, ASEAN centrality isn't impeded fully by external minilateralism like Quad, however, Jakarta could use that to deepen constructive ties and contain China indirectly by using more sufficient actors as ASEAN's proxy in promoting freedom of navigation and open regionalism in Indo-Pacific; Second, this paper doesn't elaborate deeper on historical context, hence further research should cover deeper on historical context, however previous studies and many strategic events in the region proved that Quad and the US, especially under Biden's leadership, will likely to escape its strategic ambiguity soon as China day-by-day is becoming aggressive; and Third, ASEAN external cooperation should be synergized both on political and the economic aspect, to ensure a prosperous Indo-Pacific with deeper ideational arrangements and outward-looking posture rather than mere commercial diplomacy.

Foreign policy tools will just be a mere dialogue and engagement platform if ASEAN, Indonesia, and US-China stay too pragmatic without drawing the solid lines for the other parties to recognize because solving geopolitical rivalry requires a far more overarching norm-settings that involves deeper specific analysis, which will require all parties to have their demands and offers tangibly to prevent miscalculation. Lastly, the reason why the author suggested Japan, South Korea, and the US as the selective trilateral is that Japan and South Korea are both middle power who are closely engaging with China rather than Australia that has just recently toned up their policy against Beijing after the Sino-Aussie trade war. The author felt that Japan and South Korea have their proposition that can be considered unique and because many previous studies have been using Australia as a benchmark, especially in Quad. The author would like to show how South Korea can be a prospective Quad plus member.

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