


Available online at

<http://hkjoss.com/index.php/journal>

Open Access Article

 <https://doi.org/10.55463/hkjss.issn.1021-3619.63.43>

Indonesia is the Last Stronghold of Balancing Power in Indo-Pacific

Abdullah Zulkifli¹, Makarim Wibisono¹, Anak Agung Banyu Perwita¹,
Jonni Mahroza¹

¹The Republic of Indonesia Defense University, Bogor, Indonesia

Received: August 13, 2024 ▪ *Reviewed: September 9, 2024*

▪ *Accepted: September 15, 2024* ▪ *Published: September 30, 2024*

Abstract

This article explores Indonesia's strategic role in maintaining regional stability within the Indo-Pacific amidst escalating US-China rivalry. Through qualitative analysis of diplomatic activities, defense policies, regional cooperation frameworks, and related previous studies, this study delves into Indonesia's approach to conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts through dialogues, negotiations, and adherence to international law in alignment with the spirit of ASEAN's cooperative principles.

The main findings reveal that Indonesia, together with ASEAN, emphasizes diplomatic engagement and regional mechanisms such as the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) to address geopolitical challenges. This conciliatory stance contrasts with the ongoing militarization in the region, as evidenced by increased defense spending among ASEAN countries in response to heightened security concerns, particularly over the South China Sea disputes. Despite these challenges, ASEAN efforts aim to maintain a status quo that fosters collective well-being and avoids being drawn into external conflicts.

This article underscores Indonesia's pivotal role in balancing power dynamics through impartial diplomacy, which avoids alliances favoring one major power over another. This strategy is instrumental in de-escalating conflicts and fostering a sense of neutrality and peace in the region.

While ASEAN member countries have different proximities, Indonesia makes its best efforts to maintain ASEAN's neutrality as a regional power in the middle of a major power rivalry. This article presents an argument regarding Indonesia's strong support for AOIP implementation. Although Indonesia is Southeast Asia's largest economy, military, and population, it tries to keep national interests in line with regional interests rather than pursue its agenda and neglects its neighbors' concerns.

Corresponding Author: Abdullah Zulkifli, The Republic of Indonesia Defense University, Bogor, Indonesia; email: catatanzulkifli@gmail.com



Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. Licensee HKJSS

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons

Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)

This study contributes to the discourse on regional security by highlighting the uniqueness of Indonesia and ASEAN's approach to navigating the complex web of international relations in the Indo-Pacific, marking a significant departure from traditional power politics. The exploration of ASEAN's diplomatic and defence strategies in maintaining regional stability offers fresh insights into cooperative security mechanisms, presenting a novel perspective on conflict resolution in a globally strategic area.

Keywords: Indonesia, ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific, Balance Power, Middle-Power, South China Sea.

印尼是平衡印太力量的最後據點

摘要：

本文探討在中美競爭升級的情況下，印尼在維持印太地區穩定的戰略角色。本研究透過定性分析外交活動、國防政策、區域合作架構以及相關的先前研究，深入探討印尼透過對話、談判以及遵守國際法來解決衝突與維持和平的努力，以符合東協合作原則的精神。

主要研究結果顯示，印尼與東盟強調外交接觸和區域機制，例如「東盟印度太平洋展望」(AOIP)，以因應地緣政治挑戰。這種和解的立場與該地區持續的軍事化形成了對比，這從東盟國家為了應對日益嚴重的安全問題（尤其是南中國海的爭端）而增加國防支出可以看出。儘管面臨這些挑戰，東盟仍致力於維持現狀，以促進集體福祉，避免卷入外部衝突。

這篇文章強調了印尼在通過公正外交平衡勢力動態方面所扮演的關鍵角色，這種外交避免了結盟時偏向於一個大國而忽略另一個大國。這種策略有助於緩和衝突，並在該地區培養中立與和平的意識。

雖然東盟成員國有不同的近似性，但印尼盡最大努力維持東盟在大國競爭中作為地區大國的中立性。本文提出有關印尼大力支持 AOIP 實施的論點。雖然印尼是東南亞最大的經濟、軍事和人口體系，但它試圖讓國家利益與區域利益保持一致，而不是追求自己的議程，並忽視鄰國的關注。

本研究透過強調印尼和東盟在印太複雜的國際關係網中的獨特穿梭方式，標誌著與傳統強權政治的重大差異，對區域安全的論述有所貢獻。對東盟在維持區域穩定的外交與防衛策略的探討，提供了對合作安全機制的新觀點，為全球戰略領域的衝突解決提供了新視角。

关键词：印尼、東盟展望印太、平衡力量、中間力量、南中國

1. Introduction

Indonesia has long played an active role in maintaining peace in the Indo-Pacific region and has strictly avoided armed confrontation. Indonesia always chooses to discuss, negotiate, and prioritize adhering to international laws in resolving disputes, including territorial boundary disputes, in line with the spirit of cooperation within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

ASEAN already has the so-called ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) for dealing with geopolitical and geostrategic dynamics. It invites all countries outside Southeast Asia to participate in maritime cooperation, strengthen connectivity, eradicate poverty, empower small and medium businesses, and form other collaborations.

As an organization, ASEAN has never regulated how a country carries out its defense policy, including cooperation with other countries outside ASEAN. This is a gap that the US and China are exploiting to gain a

strategic position in the Southeast Asian region, which is an important trade route in the world. Every year, more than 70,000 merchant ships pass through the Strait of Malacca, which lies between Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia (*Geoeconomic Crossroads: The Strait of Malacca's Impact on Regional Trade*, n.d.). In addition, sea routes in Southeast Asia are very important for the survival of Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific countries to trade and obtain their needs from other countries. On the other hand, China, Japan, and South Korea rely on Southeast Asian sea routes to import domestic needs such as coal, palm oil, crude oil, natural gas, nickel, and tin.

In facing the rivalry between the US and China in the Indo-Pacific region, Indonesia and ASEAN always prioritize discussions and negotiations involving all parties. There are not many discussion forums in the world that can bring together Australia, China, India, Russia, Japan, the US, the European Union, and South Korea in one room, as has been the case for years at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). The peace and increasing prosperity that has occurred in

Southeast Asian countries for almost six decades is the result of the real work of state leaders, military leaders, diplomats, and businesspeople who realize that ASEAN centrality is important to respect and maintain for the good of all parties.

However, the authors do not deny that the escalation of border conflicts in the South China Sea continues to increase to dangerous levels. The Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia played cat-and-mouse games with Chinese coastal guards. The current situation is more worrying than ever as the US and the Philippines renew defense agreements and designate strategic areas for war games and an unprecedented Japan-Philippines defense agreement (Gomez & Nuga, 2024).

Indonesia and ASEAN countries have been forced to increase their defense budgets because they are worried about the current security situation. Since 2019, Indonesia has continued to purchase the latest weapons packages, including 42 rafale fighter jets, two scorpene submarines, surveillance radar from France, two Italian warships, multilayer missile defense and attack drones from Turkey, and a number of other defense equipment (Laksmiana, 2023). Thailand was also included, having chosen the newest Gripen-E/F to increase the number of its fighter aircraft. Singapore bought F-35 stealth jets and German U-218 submarines, and the Philippines bought frigates and F/A-50 fighter jets from South Korea. There are real concerns from ASEAN leaders that their countries will be drawn into armed conflict despite their efforts to maintain neutrality.

ASEAN's collective efforts can be briefly described as follows. If we cannot make the situation positive and more productive, let us maintain the status quo and continue to work together to improve the welfare of the people. China pays attention to and supports this effort by pouring billions of US dollars in investment and assistance for infrastructure development, although the dispute in the South China Sea is ongoing. Meanwhile, the US views the importance of freedom of navigation at sea and maintaining territorial integrity, so it continues to invite ASEAN countries to join forces to face territorial conflicts in the South China Sea. The US is concerned about losing influence in Southeast Asia and has difficulty accessing both sides of the Indian and Pacific oceans. Moreover, there is a major US ally, Australia, on the southern side, which will be very threatened if Southeast Asia sides with China.

This article offers reasons why Indonesia is the last stronghold of balancing power in the Indo-Pacific region and why its balanced position must continue to be respected.

The authors argue that Indonesia's way of compromising with all parties is the best way to antagonize the other party rather than alliances with one party. Indonesia is trying to reduce the conflict by talking to all parties, negotiating, keeping public views away from sensitive issues, not embarrassing any party, and being willing to compromise. This article also offers a perspective on how the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP), supported by the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) dialogue forum and the ASEAN Defense Minister Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), is the best forum for all parties to fight for their interests without swords and guns.

2. Literature Review

This research aims to explain Indonesia's efforts to balance power in the Indo-Pacific and generate ideas about how the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) can be accepted and implemented by all countries involved in the region.

2.1 Balance of Power Concept

Balance of power theory traditionally refers to a situation in which no one country dominates another. It also refers to the policy of promoting a balance of power with the assumption that unbalanced power is dangerous.

The concept of the balance of power explains that a large country must be balanced with another large country to provide stability in world political conditions. Countries that achieve a balance of power must be equally large and strong. This concept prevents one country from hegemonizing another (Griffiths & O'Callaghan, 2013).

HI: one large and powerful country must be balanced with another large and powerful country.

2.2 Middle Powership Concept

(Cooper et al., 1993) recognize that middle power involves more than just economic size or military strength. Middle-power countries may have economies smaller than great powers. However, they tend to have sufficient economic stability and military capabilities to play a role in security at regional and global levels. Nossal described middle power as the ability to influence international policy, actively cooperate in achieving common goals, and be involved in global issues. Despite their economic and political powers, middle-power countries tend to rely on diplomacy and international cooperation to achieve their goals.

In international relations, middle powers are described as countries that can influence regional or global policies through their agendas and interests. However, it should be noted that their power is limited compared with large, established powers. The concept of middle power has become a growing framework for understanding how Western countries, especially Australia, Canada, and Nordic countries, operate on the

international stage. Middle-power countries rely not only on military strength but also on well-developed middle-power diplomacy. This diplomacy is the result of developed countries' efforts to overcome the limitations of military power by utilizing knowledge, resources, and diplomatic expertise.

Middle-power countries actively promote peace, stability, and security at the global level. They often participate in multilateral diplomatic initiatives and build partnerships with other countries to achieve their common goals. Middle-power diplomacy also involves the role of a mediator or peace builder, demonstrating a tendency towards good international citizenship. Despite limitations in military strength, countries belonging to the middle powers have succeeded in distinguishing themselves in the international arena with intelligent and effective diplomatic strategies. With a focus on knowledge, resources, and diplomatic expertise, they form a strong international identity and actively shape the global policy direction.

The role of middle powers in Global Diplomacy includes several vital aspects. First, middle-power countries can become regional leaders by leveraging their influence at a regional level. This allows them to shape the political and economic dynamics of their respective regions. Furthermore, as recognized conflict mediators, middle powers play a significant role in easing tensions between great powers and managing regional conflicts to promote peace and stability. Middle powers also function as brokers and liaisons, facilitating dialogue and connecting the interests of various parties to resolve complex global issues. In global power shifts, middle powers can play a more active role by forming alliances and partnerships to overcome global challenges, especially when facing significant economic and geopolitical changes.

Meanwhile, regional partnerships and cooperation are the focus of middle powers to build a balance of power at the regional level in line with their goal of supporting stability and joint development. However, in carrying out their role, middle powers also face geopolitical challenges, such as those experienced by South Korea with competition for influence between the US and China and military provocations from North Korea. In addition, consistency in middle-power diplomatic practices is not always maintained among governments, as noted by (Cooper et al., 1993). However, in the middle-power concept, despite their limitations, middle-power countries still have the potential to shape the direction and stability of international relations, making them influential players in global dynamics.

H2: Middle powers play a significant role in easing tensions between great powers and managing regional conflicts to promote peace and stability.

2.3 Great Power Competition (GPC)

GPC is a framework for understanding global interstate relations that dominated the field and issues of global politics for centuries before World War II. The eras that explain competition between global powers provide a picture of strong countries competing for status and positions as global powers. During the Cold War (1945–1991), GPC was an analytical framework to explain the two-state competitive edge between the US and the Soviet Union (Lynch, 2024).

The competitive interaction between two or more countries that have global influence and power on various issues, especially economics, politics, and security, illustrates the dynamics and shifts in global development, which are influenced by the policies of each country, considering that the global influence and power of these countries is broad. In the context of competition, countries with a global power influence global issues.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand the meaning of competition, which explains the differences in interactions between competition and conflict. Competition differs from conflict. Interactions between great powers tend to be confrontational, or even more extreme. However, it must be realized that competition exists in a series of interactions between strong countries that can be differentiated with conflict or confrontation.

H3: Competition exists in a series of interactions between strong countries, which can be differentiated by conflict or confrontation.

2.4 Previous Research

Previous research conducted by other researchers was used as a comparison and a source of data reference to provide a sharp analysis for future researchers. Previous research must be relevant to the research topic of *Indonesia's role as a Balancing Power in the Indo-Pacific*.

The first research was written by Evan A. Laksmana (2021) in the article *Stuck in the Second Gear: Indonesia's Strategic Dilemma in the Indo-Pacific*. The research objective was to provide an overview of Indonesia's interest in improving security in the Indo-Pacific, especially security interests, maritime, and navigation from great power countries that compete to increase influence and power in the region. Therefore, Indonesia encourages ASEAN involvement through an AOIPs within the framework of multilateralism. This study uses qualitative methods. This study also uses security dilemma theory and strategy. Based on the results of research conducted by researchers, it was concluded that under the conditions of the perceived security dilemma, Indonesia felt the

need to develop policy as a strategy by involving ASEAN as an institution to build and increase mutual trust and to encourage the creation of norms as a strategy to increase security in the area. Based on the findings of this research, several things that can be learned to support this article are a) jointly analyzing increasing mutual trust as an important point in defense diplomacy and b) involving ASEAN in AOIP to encourage and improve security in the Indo-Pacific region.

The second journal, written by (Scott, 2019) and is entitled *Indonesia Grapples with the Indo-Pacific: Outreach, Strategic Discourse, and Diplomacy*. This study aims to evaluate Indonesia's efforts in the Indo-Pacific region. The analysis emphasizes three factors: Indonesia in the Indo-Pacific, its strategic discourse in the Indo-Pacific, and diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific. This study uses qualitative methods. Geopolitics, geoeconomics, and maritime security are used as analytical tools or theories to analyze Indonesia's strategic direction in the Indo-Pacific. Based on the results of research conducted by researchers, it is concluded that Indonesia has succeeded in expanding its presence as an actor in the Indian and Pacific Oceans but has been less successful in building capabilities as a maritime power, and so far Indonesia's encouragement of cooperation agreements and Indo- The Pacific, namely the Indo-Pacific Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (IPTCF), and the Indo-Pacific Cooperation Concept (IPCC) have been relatively ineffective in dealing with continued Chinese expansionism and increasing Great Power competition in the region. Based on the findings of this research, several things that can be learned to support this research are: a) jointly analyzing excellent power competition in the Indo-Pacific and especially discussing Indonesia's involvement and presence in the region.

The third article by (Agastia, 2020), entitled *Understanding Indonesia's Role in the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP): A Role Theory Approach*. In his writing, Agastia aimed to examine Indonesia's national role in the Indo-Pacific concept. He drew from the literature on role theory, especially role conceptions and locations, and analyzed the foreign policy narratives adopted by dominant actors in the Indo-Pacific region. By using role theory, this paper concludes that Indonesia's role in the Indo-Pacific is an example of the role of a middle-power country in the new structure of the Indo-Pacific. Dominant actors in the Indo-Pacific as global powers have generally accepted Indonesia's Indo-Pacific concept, which shows that Indonesia has achieved expectations befitting a middle power through the role of regional leaders and bridge builders between ASEAN and countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

Finally, this study offers a new perspective on how managing relations between two great powers does not always mean having to choose either side. Indonesia is the most influential country member in ASEAN, with all its capacities and capabilities to divert its course of history – an interesting research subject to explore.

3. Research Methods and Materials

First, this research is used as a broad explanation for the following elements: behavior and attitudes. It can then be supplemented by constructs, variables, and hypotheses. Second is the use of theoretical perspectives in qualitative research to explore issues of class, gender, and race. Third, qualitative research uses theory as its ultimate goal. Finally, some qualitative research prefers to avoid explicit theory (see Figure 3.1) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:108-109). Researchers search for documents in plans, reports, and data that can later be used as additional information. The literature study uses books relevant to this research, including books and similar research on AOIP, defense diplomacy, and power rivalries in the Indo-Pacific.

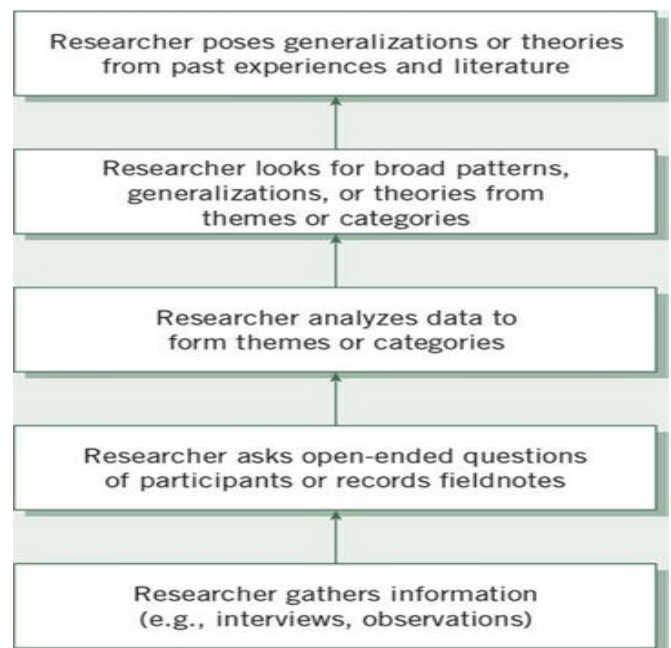


Figure 3.1 The Inductive Logic of Research in a Qualitative Study

Source: Creswell and Creswell (2018, pp. 110)

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Indonesia's Strategy for Indo-Pacific Security Through AOIP

Indonesia, geographically located at the heart of the Indo-Pacific region, has a strategic interest in ensuring that the region remains peaceful, stable, and prosperous. As the largest maritime country in ASEAN, Indonesia understands that regional security and stability greatly influence national prosperity and security. The AOIP is an important initiative issued by ASEAN member countries at the ASEAN Summit in Bangkok, Thailand, in 2019. The main objective of the AOIP is to promote cooperation and sustainable development in the Indo-Pacific region through an inclusive and international rule approach (“ASEAN OUTLOOK ON THE INDO-PACIFIC,” 2019). This is considered ASEAN's response to the changing security dynamics and geopolitical growth in the region, especially with regard to the presence and policies of prominent actors, such as the US, China, and other countries.

In the context of defense diplomacy, AOIP play a strategic role by emphasizing the importance of dialogue, practical cooperation, and building trust among countries in the region to address emerging security and defense challenges. It addresses issues such as maritime security, terrorism, and natural disasters. Through the AOIP, ASEAN seeks to maintain its role as a central player in the regional security architecture and avoid dependence or domination by any one major power.

When Indonesia held the Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2023, the Concept Paper on the Implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific from a Defense Perspective was adopted by the 17th ADMM, Jakarta, Indonesia, November 15, 2023. Activities to support this concept will be implemented through dialogue (conferences or seminars), joint military exercises, and military education (to strengthen military training and improve technology). The implementation of the AOIP has scope and cooperation in the defence sector, such as the future connectivity of various sectors and maritime cooperation based on the 1982 Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (*Downloads | ADMM Concept Papers | Public Library*, 2012).

As a strategic country in the Indo-Pacific, Indonesia plays a critical role in promoting regional cooperation and stability through the AOIP. By prioritizing diplomacy, inclusive cooperation, and strengthening multilateralism, Indonesia is attempting to ensure that the Indo-Pacific remains a peaceful, stable, and prosperous region. According to Anwar (2022), Indonesia's AOIP strategy is as follows.

Diplomacy and dialogue: Indonesia plays an active role in encouraging dialogue and diplomacy between countries in the Indo-Pacific region in order to prevent conflict and increase trust. Through the AOIP, Indonesia encourages strengthening multilateral mechanisms and open regionalism, in which ASEAN plays a central role.

Maritime cooperation: Considering its position as an archipelagic country, Indonesia emphasizes the importance of maritime cooperation in the AOIP. This includes issues such as maritime security, eradicating piracy and theft at sea, and protecting marine resources.

Increased connectivity: Indonesia advocates increased physical and digital connectivity in the region as a means to encourage economic growth and integration. This includes supporting infrastructure projects and promoting cooperation regarding standards and regulations.

Sustainable development: In the context of the AOIP, Indonesia encourages initiatives that support sustainable development, including environmental management, climate change mitigation, and blue economy development.

Engagement with great powers: Through the AOIP, Indonesia seeks to manage its relations with great powers, emphasize ASEAN's independence and active role in regional diplomacy, and seek balance to prevent domination by one power.

However, implementing an AOIP will present challenges, including coordination between ASEAN member countries and external influence from major powers. Indonesia and ASEAN's success in pushing for AOIP will depend on their ability to overcome internal differences and navigate complex geopolitical dynamics (Laksmana, 2019).

Implementation of the AOIP faces various challenges originating from ASEAN's internal dynamics, changes in the global geopolitical environment, and interactions with external actors. The following are some of the key challenges in implementing an AOIP.

ASEAN Cohesiveness: Maintaining solidarity and unity when facing complex regional issues is critical. Differences in opinion and priorities among member countries can hinder the coherent and effective implementation of the AOIP (Collinson, 2020).

Interaction with great powers: Maintaining ASEAN's balance and autonomy amidst pressure and influence from great powers, such as the US and China. Navigating these relationships without getting caught in competition is a significant challenge Storey I. (2019);

Funding and resources: Securing adequate funding and resources for initiatives and projects under AOIP is essential. Lack of resources can hinder the progress and sustainability of implementation Ha T. (2020);

Implementation of concrete policies and projects:

Developing and implementing concrete projects and policies that reflect AOIP principles require intensive coordination and cooperation. Aligning these initiatives with member countries' national interests is also challenging (Chongkittavorn, 2019).

Engagement with external stakeholders: Ensure that engagement with partner countries and international organizations supports AOIP objectives without compromising autonomy or ASEAN leadership. Maintaining openness while protecting ASEAN's core principles is essential (Parameswaran2019).

Changing geopolitical dynamics: The rapidly changing geopolitical environment demands adaptation and flexibility from ASEAN in implementing the AOIP. Responding to emergent issues while remaining loyal to AOIP principles requires careful and responsive diplomacy (Laksmana2019).

By addressing these challenges, ASEAN and Indonesia can maximize the potential of the AOIP as a framework for enhancing regional cooperation, strengthening stability and peace, and advancing sustainable development in the Indo-Pacific region.

4.2 The future of AOIP implementation from an Indonesian perspective

Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi stated that a business cooperation plan would be launched at the ASEAN Summit in October in Vientiane, Laos, in the following AOIP forum (L. A. Anwar, 2024). Indonesia realizes that maintaining peace is not attractive enough for countries in the Indo-Pacific, and there needs to be mutually beneficial economic cooperation.

If territorial boundaries and geopolitical rivalries can be put aside, economic cooperation in the AOIP will be more favorable. However, the US and Europe want ASEAN to be more assertive in dealing with regional border problems and human rights issues in Myanmar before broader economic cooperation is implemented. The Egg and Chicken situation with the US and Europe makes China ASEAN's leading partner in economic cooperation because they do not require many things to start economic cooperation.

The exclusion of Indonesian nickel products from subsidies from the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) program exemplifies how the US-China rivalry influences economic cooperation. US senators' refusal to support Indonesian nickel derivative products is due to the dominance of Chinese companies in the nickel processing industry in Indonesia, and they consider that giving subsidies to Indonesia is the same as giving subsidies to China (Writer, 2023).

Apart from the IRA, Indonesia is also worried about sanctions from the US and Europe if it partners with Russian companies. This would hamper several projects, such as the exploration of oil fields in the

Tuna Block with Zarubezhneft (Afanasiev, 2023) and the construction of an oil refinery with Rosneft.

The rivalry between big powers dramatically impacts ASEAN countries' economic cooperation. This prompted Indonesia to include business cooperation on its agenda at the next AOIP forum meeting. Indonesia wants economic cooperation based on market situations, not geopolitical situations, where developed countries such as China, the US, Europe, Canada, Australia, Russia, Japan, and South Korea have created proxies and are reluctant to cooperate.

At the next ASEAN Summit meeting, the best formula is expected to emerge so that all competing parties outside the region can at least forget their rivalries for a moment and do business as usual with ASEAN countries.

5. Conclusion

As part of the regional order, Indonesia contributes to building a balance in the region with an inclusive approach, and open dialogue involves all parties. This study contributes to regional studies, especially on how to establish what the so-called *norms building*. In the AOIP case, norm building prioritizes common interests rather than the interests of selected countries.

The article also underscores the critical role Indonesia plays in maintaining equilibrium in the Indo-Pacific amid escalating geopolitical tensions, particularly between the US and China. Indonesia's commitment to peace, demonstrated through continuous dialogue, negotiation, and adherence to international law, set a precedent for the region. This, coupled with ASEAN's collective stand on non-interference in defence policies, highlights the group's strategy to preserve its centrality and foster cooperation amidst global superpowers' strategic maneuvers for dominance in Southeast Asia.

Despite daunting challenges, including the alarming escalation of conflicts in the South China Sea and increased defense spending among ASEAN countries, the bloc's efforts to improve regional welfare and maintain neutrality underscore the importance of a balanced power dynamic. Indonesia and ASEAN's approach of engaging all parties in discussions, their endeavor to maintain the status quo, and work collectively for the region's economic prosperity serves as a model for conflict resolution and diplomacy. The narrative not only reinforces the significance of Indonesia's balanced stance in international affairs, but also calls for respect and support for this approach in maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

However, changes in the Indonesian government and the US may soon create a new situation. The new US government could leave Southeast Asia and focus on the Middle East or develop its domestic economy. Likewise, the new Indonesian government could prioritize bilateral cooperation rather than committing to multilateral cooperation, which could potentially hamper its ambitions.

All of this will be answered in the next few months, but one thing is certain: Indonesia's free and active politics may not change, and ASEAN countries must be skilled at sailing between the two big reefs.

6. Limitations and Further Study

This article limits the discussion to Indonesia's efforts to implement AOIP in balancing power between the great powers and the results that Indonesia, through AOIP, has achieved in maintaining peace and increasing prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. Even though ASEAN does not regulate how member countries should implement their defense policies, some ASEAN member countries try to implement AOIP in their ways.

However, this article does not discuss the code of conduct in the South China Sea, which ASEAN and China are still negotiating. Further studies are also needed to anticipate whether Indonesia or most ASEAN countries have lost appetite for the AOIP; thus, a better cooperation platform should arise to replace the AOIP.

Acknowledgments

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest, and that this research was funded independently. This article presents a personal opinion that does not represent government policy.

References:

- [1] Goeconomic Crossroads: The Strait of Malacca's impact on regional trade | The National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR). (n.d.). <https://www.nbr.org/publication/geoeconomic-crossroads-the-strait-of-malaccas-impact-on-regional-trade/>
- [2] Gomez, J., & Nuga, H. (2024, July 8). Japan, Philippines sign defense pact allowing deployment of forces for military exercises | AP News. AP News. [https://apnews.com/article/japan-philippines-reciprocal-access-agreement-0e37d57563d475d7507f1647b440e4c2#:~:text=Japan](https://apnews.com/article/japan-philippines-reciprocal-access-agreement-0e37d57563d475d7507f1647b440e4c2#:~:text=Japan%20and%20the%20Philippines%20have,Japan%20for%20joint%20combat%20training.)
- [3] Laksmana, E. (2023, September 18 2023). What Indonesia's retail approach to defence modernisation means. IISS. <https://www.iiss.org/en/online-analysis/military-balance/2023/09/what-indonesias-retail-approach-to-defence-modernisation-means/>
- [4] Griffiths, M. & O'Callaghan, T. (2013). International Relations: Key concepts. In Routledge eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203402801>
- [5] Cooper, A. F., Higgott, R. A., Nossal, K. R. (1993). Relocating middle powers. At University of British Columbia Press eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.59962/9780774853736>
- [6] Lynch, T. F. (2024). The future of great power competition. In Routledge eBooks (pp. 303–326). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003340997-29>
- [7] Laksmana, E. A. (2021). Stuck in the Second Gear: Indonesia's Strategic Dilemma in the Indo-Pacific. ISEAS Yusof Ishak, Singapore. ISEAS Perspective 170(2021).
- [8] Scott, D. (2019). Indonesian Grapples with the Indo-Pacific: Outreach, Strategic Discourse, and Diplomacy. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 38(2), 194–217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103419860669>
- [9] Agastia, G. B. D. (2020). Understanding Indonesia's Role in the 'ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific': A Role Theory Approach. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*, 7(3), 293–305. <https://doi.org/10.1002/app5.308>
- [10] Cresweel, S. & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=id&user=ZYhYmFcAAAAJ&citation_for_view=ZYhYmFcAAAAJ:8AbLer7MMksC
- [11] ASEAN OUTLOOK ON THE INDO-PACIFIC. (2019). In asean.org. Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Retrieved August 11, 2024, https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific_FINAL_22062019.pdf
- [12] Downloads | ADMM Concept Papers | Public Library. (2012, December 5 2012). <https://admm.asean.org/index.php/2012-12-05-19-05-19/admm1/concept-papers.html>
- [13] Anwar, D. F. (2022). ASEAN centrality. In Routledge eBooks (pp. 155–170). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003342311-13>
- [14] Collinson, L. (2020). "The Challenge of ASEAN Centrality in the Indo-Pacific." *The Diplomat*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-7693-1_9
- [15] Storey, I. (2019). ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific: ASEAN's New Indo-Pacific Outlook. ISEAS Perspective.

- [16] Ha, H. T. (2020). "ASEAN's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific: Old Wine in a New Bottle?". ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.
<https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/201951-asean-outlook-on-the-indopacific-old-wine-in-new-bottle-by-hoang-thi-ha/>
- [17] Chongkittavorn, K. (2019). Fine-tuning ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. Bangkok Post.
- [18] Parameswaran, P. (2019). "Exploring Indonesia's Indo-Pacific Strategy." The Diplomat.
- [19] Laksmana, E. A. (2019). "Indonesia's Indo-Pacific Strategy: Between ASEAN Centrality and the US-China Rivalry". The Pacific Review
- [20] Anwar, L. A. (2024, August 8 2024). ASEAN Semestinya Lebih Tegas dalam Isu Global. kompas.id.
<https://www.kompas.id/baca/internasional/2024/08/08/asean-semestinya-lebih-tegas-dalam-isu-global>
- [21] Writer, S. (2023, November 1). U.S. senators oppose the Indonesian FTA, which paves the way for nickel subsidies. Nikkei Asia.
<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Supply-Chain/U.S.-senators-oppose-Indonesia-FTA-that-paves-way-for-nickel-subsidies>
- [22] Afanasiev, V. (2023, July 19 2023). Zarubezhneft heads to exit from the Tuna Project in Indonesia. Upstream.
<https://www.upstreamonline.com/field-development/zarubezhneft-heads-for-exit-from-tuna-project-in-indonesia/2-1-1488333>
- 参考文:**
- [1]地緣經濟的十字路口 The Strait of Malacca's impact on regional trade | The National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) (n.d.).
<https://www.nbr.org/publication/geoeconomic-crossroads-the-strait-of-malaccas-impact-on-regional-trade>
- [2] Gomez, J., & Nuga, H. (2024 年 7 月 8 日) 日本與菲律賓簽署防禦協定允許部署軍隊進行軍事演習 | AP News. AP News.
<https://apnews.com/article/japan-philippines-reciprocal-access-agreement-0e37d57563d475d7507f1647b440e4c2#:~:text=Japan%20and%20the%20Philippines%20have,Japan%20for%20joint%20combat%20training>
- [3] Laksmana, E. (2023, September 18 2023). 印尼對於國防現代化的零售方式意味著什麼? IISS.
<https://www.iiss.org/en/online-analysis/military-balance/2023/09/what-indonesias-retail-approach-to-defence-modernisation-means>
- [4] Griffiths, M. & O'Callaghan, T. (2013). 國際關係關鍵概念 In Routledge eBooks.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/978020340280>
- [5] Cooper, A. F., Higgott, R. A., Nossal, K. R. (1993). 重新定位中間力量 At University of British Columbia Press eBooks.
<https://doi.org/10.59962/978077485373>
- [6] Lynch, T. F. (2024) 大國競爭的未來 InRoutledge eBooks (pp. 303-326).
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003340997-2>
- [7] Laksmana, E. A. (2021). 卡在第二檔 印尼在印太地區的戰略困境 ISEAS Yusof Ishak, Singapore ISEAS Perspective 170(2021).
- [8] Scott, D. (2019) 印尼與印太地區的對抗 外聯、戰略論述與外交 Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, 38(2), 194-217.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341986066>
- [9] Agastia, G. B. D. (2020) 瞭解印尼在「東盟印度太平洋展望」中的角色 角色理論方法 Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies,7(3), 293-305.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/app5.30>
- [10] Cresweel, S. & Creswell, J. D. (2018) Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches.
https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=id&user=ZYhYmFcAAAAJ&citation_for_view=ZYhYmFcAAAAJ:8AbLer7MMks
- [11] ASEAN OUTLOOK ON THE INDO-PRACE. (2019). 在 asean.org 東南亞國家聯盟 2024 年 8 月 11 日 擷取 , https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific_FINAL_22062019.pdf
- [12] Downloads | ADMM Concept Papers | Public Library (2012, December 5 2012).
<https://admm.asean.org/index.php/2012-12-05-19-05-19/admm1/concept-papers.htm>
- [13] Anwar, D. F. (2022) 東盟中心地位 InRoutledge eBooks (pp. 155-170).
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003342311-1>
- [14] Collinson, L. (2020). "The Challenge of ASEAN Centrality in the Indo-Pacific The Diplomat.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-7693-1_
- [15] Storey, I. (2019). 東盟與印度洋-太平洋 ASEAN's New Indo-Pacific Outlook. ISEAS Perspective.
- [16] Ha, H.T. (2020) "東盟對印太地區的展望：新瓶中的老酒？". ISEAS-Yusof Ishak 研究所
<https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/201951-asean-outlook-on-the-indopacific-old-wine-in-new-bottle-by-hoang-thi-ha/>
- [17] Chongkittavorn, K. (2019) 微调东盟对印太地区的展望 曼谷郵政.

- [18]Parameswaran, P. (2019) "探索印度尼西亚的印太战略"外交官
- [19]Laksmiana, E.A. (2019) "印度尼西亚的印太战略：东盟中心地位和美中竞争之间"太平洋评论
- [20]Anwar, L.A. (2024, 8月8日) 东盟 Semestinya Lebih Tegas dalam Isu Global. [kompas.id...https://www.kompas.id/baca/internasional/2024/08/08/asean-semestinya-lebih-tegas-dalam-isu-global](https://www.kompas.id/baca/internasional/2024/08/08/asean-semestinya-lebih-tegas-dalam-isu-global)
- [21]作家, S. (2023, 11月1日) 美国参议员反对印度尼西亚 FTA, 这为镍补贴铺平了道路 日经亚洲
<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Supply-Chain/U.S.-senators-oppose-Indonesia-FTA-that-paves-way-for-nickel-subsidies>
- [22]Afanasyev, V. (2023, 7月19日) Zarubezhneft 将从印度尼西亚的金枪鱼项目中退出 上游
<https://www.upstreamonline.com/field-development/zarubezhneft-heads-for-exit-from-tuna-project-in-indonesia/2-1-1488333>