

## THE ROLE OF INDONESIA IN ASEAN UNDER JOKOWI'S PRO-PEOPLE DIPLOMACY

Muhammad Tri Andika<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

2016 is the very important moment for ASEAN, particularly ASEAN will be economically integrated under ASEAN Economic Community framework. Certainly this would be a challenge for all ASEAN members, including Indonesia. In making AEC could produce more benefit for the members, inevitably it needs more active role from state in the region. However, it seems interesting case for Indonesia when this situation linked with the current foreign policy. Under Jokowi's administration, he promoted "down to earth diplomacy" or also known as "pro-people diplomacy". It seems this policy will mostly be inward-looking paradigm compared with his predecessor who emphasized strengthened role of Indonesia in the region. Against this background, this article explores the role of Indonesia in ASEAN under a new and inward-looking president. How Indonesia should take significant presence in ASEAN under Jokowi's "down to earth diplomacy"? What are the most likely challenges for Indonesia in dealing with ASEAN that would arise under this new situation? This article suggests that Jokowi's administration should take careful action in defining pro-people diplomacy in order to avoid signaling a wrong message to other ASEAN members, otherwise the Jokowi's new paradigm will easily misunderstood in the region.

Keywords : Jokowi, Foreign Policy, Pro-People Diplomacy

### Introduction

Indonesia foreign policy direction under Jokowi's administration invites serious attention from regional and global level. Arrived in power with lack of international experiences, Jokowi made surprise with his new inward looking foreign policy direction. In another word, he promotes "down to earth diplomacy" or also known as "pro-people diplomacy". Moreover, it becomes more interesting under current situation when ASEAN's trend diplomacy now is moving towards integration in which it is inevitably needed more active role from each members, while Jokowi brings Indonesia foreign policy into domestic orientation. How does this style of diplomacy works under this circumstance?

Jokowi's step to swift direction to be more inward looking on his foreign policy to some extent understandable. He needs to figure out domestic problems by

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<sup>1</sup> International Relations Program, Department of Political Science, Bakrie University Jakarta

instrumentalizing foreign policy dimension. As Indonesia's position in ASEAN has been very significant, inward-looking diplomacy appeared as contradiction with the Jakarta's image. Jakarta's active role in the region has been important and strategic position among the neighborhood. Consequently ASEAN expects more active role from Indonesia's foreign policy. Under the new approach, what are the most likely challenges for Indonesia in dealing with ASEAN that would arise under this new situation?

This article is designed to elaborate these questions. It is very imperative to have clear understanding the roots, background of the nature of Jakarta's current diplomacy, and the impact of new pro-people diplomacy proposed by Jokowi's administration. The following part will cover these points.

### **The nature of Indonesian foreign policy**

Provided with large population and rich strategic resources, it is the strong reason for Indonesia prominence in regional and global affairs. Indonesia's ascent in regional and global is resulted from several factors; resources and clear vision hold by Indonesia's leaders. Indonesia's leadership has been admitted by world since its independence. Although as the new nation, leadership became dominant characteristics of Indonesia's post colonial in the region. But, internal instability appeared to destabilize the country. Vision of leaders was quite related with their perspective on nationalism and independence. These perspectives backed up Indonesia in interacting with international community.<sup>2</sup>

Trying to see domestic needs as a focus, it inevitably presented a contradiction between Indonesia's own aspirations for strengthening domestic capacity and its expansionist policies in ASEAN to maintain regional security. The commencement of regional cooperation provided Indonesia with its chance to seize a leadership role, as stability could not be achieved without the support Indonesia, as Southeast Asia's largest nation. Yet, despite its role in ASEAN, Indonesia continued to be dependent on external powers which exposed Indonesia internal vulnerabilities.

Independent and active, or is known as "bebas dan aktif", have been the main principles of Indonesia's foreign policy since the early period of the nation. It became doctrine for Jakarta in interacting with other states in the regional and global level. Through these couple words, Indonesia stated to be independence from any alliance or political block which exists in the global stage. At the same time it also implies Jakarta's willingness to enhance its role in international community.

The first dimension of "bebas dan aktif" doctrine shows Indonesia's respect for the sovereignty over the other states. By placing this dimension in the doctrine, it demands Indonesian government to not to interfere other state domestic political issues. As sovereignty has been sensitive aspect of every state, offending this aspect

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<sup>2</sup> Sue Thompson, "The Historical Foundations of Indonesia's Regional and Global Role", (Australia: National Security College Issue Brief, 2014) p.3

could easily bring countries to the conflict.<sup>3</sup> Indonesia perceives each state has its own national autonomy that should be mutually respected. It thus also becomes one of main principle in ASEAN where Indonesia play pivotal role.

Under Yudhoyono first term administration, it clearly placed international engagement as main priority of Indonesia foreign policy. Adding friends and reduce enemies. Yudhoyono had tried to enhance Jakarta's role in the regional and global level. He directed Indonesia's foreign policy to an outward orientation based on democratic values. It can be seen in May 2005, in his first foreign policy speech since he was elected president. He defined Indonesian nationalism as 'a brand of nationalism that is open, confident, moderate, tolerant, and outward looking'.<sup>4</sup> It also can be found on the other event when President Yudhoyono stressing tolerance as an important ingredient of freedom and democracy. For instance, in 2011 Bali Democracy Forum, Yudhoyono stated that , 'we believe that freedom must be coupled with tolerance and rule of law, for without them freedom leads to unbridled hatred and anarchy'.<sup>5</sup> The same nuance also stressed at a speech when he was in London in 2012, Yudhoyono stated that Indonesia would be increasingly active in setting the norms related to overlapping territorial claims that would guide regional countries and would emphasis 'the importance of having a set of norms and rules that could prevent violence and conflict caused by hatred and intolerance.

From here we can identify clearly how the President Yudhoyono directed his approach on foreign policy based on non-violence way. Different with early post Suharto period, when the government was still busy with the democratic institution development, Yudhoyono started his first term presidency by building foundation for Jakarta's active role in the international stage. His foreign policy platform refers to what called as "thousand friends-zero enemies". This paradigm becomes the direction of Yudhoyono foreign policy. To strengthen this paradigm working in the regional level, Marty Natalegawa thus promoted the term known as "dynamic equilibrium". Through this term Natalegawa emphasized that the dynamic situation in the region is something that could be managed by linked it into three aspects; security, common interest, and partnership.

In the practice of these norms, the traditionally independent and active foreign policy of Indonesia – as formulated by the first Indonesian Vice President Mohammad Hatta – has been adapted to the current period. While Hatta made metaphor of 'rowing between the two reefs' of the Eastern Communist and Western Capitalist blocs, President Yudhoyono used the metaphor of 'navigating a turbulent ocean'. As implementation of this term, he then adopted 'constructive approach' as an instrument by which to interact with global and regional actors. This more active

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<sup>3</sup> Avery Poole, "The Foreign Policy Nexus; National Interests, Political Values, and Identity", (Australia: National Security College Issue Brief, 2014) p.45

<sup>4</sup> Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Speech before The Council on World Affairs (ICWA)", (Jakarta, 19 May 2005") available at <http://www.presidentri.go.id/index.php/pidato/2005/05/19/332.html>

<sup>5</sup> Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Opening Statement at the Bali Democracy Forum IV", Bali, 8 December 2011, available at <http://www.presidentri.go.id/index.php/eng/pidato/2011/12/08/1762.html>

approach thus expected Indonesia as a peace maker, confidence builder, problem solver, and bridge builder.<sup>6</sup>

Although the policy doctrine has been clear, however the goal seemed not clear yet. The real domestic situation showed less successful of Yudhoyono's administration in bridging the gap between foreign policy and the domestic policies. The instance can be seen from dimension of tolerance in domestic level. It has increasingly been viewed as paradoxical with the reality of Indonesian domestic. Conflict of religious triggered by intolerance had trend to increase. It is Indonesian Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and freedom to worship, but in fact the minority official religions such as Christians still face the possibility of discrimination. Increasingly, minority Muslim sects considered deviant, such as Ahmadiyya and Shiite Muslims, have also suffered from discrimination and violence.

The paradox becomes more severe when the government has often been indifferent or responded with discriminatory state legislation that encourages further attacks. For instance, in 2008 the national level policy through a joint decree of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Interior Ministry, and the Attorney General, barred Ahmadiyya Muslims from proselytizing. In the some local governments then issued legislation ranging from closing Ahmadiyya mosques, banning the building of Ahmadiyya religious facilities, to the banning of Ahmadiyya believers in the local area.<sup>7</sup> Provided with these official regulations, it then may facilitate some hard-lines Islamist group to take violence over the minority religious group. And in the other side, moderate Indonesian Muslim who take majority size in Indonesia Muslim population, seemed reluctant to deal with this situation.

There are some factors that enabling majority Indonesian Muslim remain reluctant to speak out. First, moderate Indonesian Moslem fear to be accused supporting idea or faith of minority groups. In fact, they just disagree with the way of hard-liner Islamist group by treating violence over minority groups. Second, it is also influenced by government policy to take decisive action to hard-liner Islamist groups. If doing so, it would appear that the government has been dictated by western power to control the hard-liners.

### **Indonesia regional position**

One of the imperative policy after power's transfer from Sukarno to Soeharto was to do away with the turmoil 1960s and at the same time making Indonesia's benign image in the region. The declaration of ASEAN in 1967 was as cornerstone for Indonesia's foreign policy post Sukarno. The active role of Indonesia initiating the creation of ASEAN succeeds to show its image as friendly and good neighbor for countries in the region. The presence in ASEAN was also important politically for Indonesia. As quoted by Dewi Fortuna Anwar, ASEAN has at least six political

<sup>6</sup> Ahmad D Habir, et.al, "Normative Priorities And Contradictions in Indonesia's Foreign Policy: From Wawasan Nusantara to Democracy", (Australia: National Security College Issue Brief, 2014) p. 53

<sup>7</sup> Rafendi Djamin, 'The Paradox of Freedom of Religion and Belief in Indonesia', available at [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Expression/ICCPR/Bangkok/RafendiDjamin.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Expression/ICCPR/Bangkok/RafendiDjamin.pdf)

functions for Indonesia, such as maintain the country's international credibility, as instrument to preserve regional harmony, ASEAN is as buffer for Indonesia's national security, to promote regional order, serve as international bargaining instrument, and to enhance Indonesia international stature.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover ASEAN also become arena for Indonesia to accelerate its benign image, as Indonesia perceived by neighbor state as country committed to peaceful and management disputes under regional institution. At the same time through ASEAN framework, given with large zone compared with other members, Indonesia could show its low profile characters and reduce prejudice of Indonesian hegemonic agenda in the region. It is very important to foster and preserve harmony among countries then could lead to the establishment of conducive regional environment. At this point, Indonesia played pivotal role for the region while increasing its international credibility.

Strong commitment added with the active role of Indonesia in the region can be traced through the contribution in developing ASEAN. For instance the born of ASEAN WAY, as an foundation of ASEAN members in interacting each other by emphasizing on the non interference principle, substantially had root in Indonesia's New Order operating techniques and legitimacy strategies. New Order norms such as *musyawarah* (consultation) and *mufakat* (consensus), strongly influenced the norms adopted in ASEAN. Jakarta's influence on ASEAN then also can be traced in ASEAN Charter 2007, by which ASEAN towards more institutionalized and rule-based organization. Indonesia's democratic value has much to do with the principle within the ASEAN Charter.<sup>9</sup>

Indonesia has also shared strong efforts in most critical moment in ASEAN. From the establishment of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) at the first Bali Summit in 1976, sponsored the birth to the Declaration of Concord), the second Bali Summit in 2003 (which established the concept of an ASEAN Community), the signing of the ASEAN Charter in Jakarta in 2007, and the third Declaration of Concord in Bali in 2012. Therefore from these explanation, we can see how significant Indonesia's engagement in ASEAN, based on its active principle.

The increasing integration of ASEAN to the global world has also made Indonesia shared its view based on its independent doctrine. Under strong turbulence of geopolitical constellation, Indonesia strengthens ASEAN independent dimension to bolster ASEAN's centrality in region. It is the strategic way to restrict ASEAN against external powers and to avoid big reliance over external partners.

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<sup>8</sup> Dewi Fortuna Anwar, "The Impact of Domestic and Asian Regional Changes on Indonesian Foreign Policy", (Southeast Asian Affairs, vol.2010), pp. 126-41

<sup>9</sup> Laurence Henry, "The ASEAN Way and Community Integration: Two Different Models of Regionalism", (European Law Journal, 13 (6), 2007), pp. 857-879

Marty Natalegawa expressed this way as “dynamic equilibrium”, emphasizing that the dynamic situation in the region is something that could be managed.<sup>10</sup>

### **Understanding Jokowi’s pro-people diplomacy**

What does “pro-people” means for Indonesia’s foreign policy under Jokowi’s administration? Simply understanding of this term could be defined as placing people’s interest as a centre of Indonesia’s foreign diplomacy. It aims to secure the needs of Indonesian people first and foremost. This idea also can be regarded as product of evaluation over his predecessor. Previous Indonesia’s diplomacy approach, “thousand friends –zero enemies”, seemed to have distance between the policy and domestic needs. Under this approach, foreign policy is often placed on the high profile level, but lack of roots in domestic aspect. Therefore, in practice Indonesia has often been viewed received less benefit from foreign diplomacy while other took more. Against this background, Jokowi’s administration embrace new approach which so called “diplomasi pro-rakyat” or pro people diplomacy. It locates domestic need as centre of Indonesia’s foreign policy.

However, that argument also could be strengthened by what people had expected from Jokowi during the elections. Provided with strong image as a figure who born from non-elitist people, Jokowi has been widely expected representing *wong cilik* or “poor people”. Under that image, Jokowi then respected as populist figure. This framing also influence the way of Jokowi in constructing policy. It should not be elitist but must be populist.

Following Jokowi’s direction on pro-people’s foreign policy approach, Indonesian foreign minister Retno Marsudi translated its new approach on her first annual policy statement on 8 January 2015. According to her, Indonesia will focus on three priorities: maintaining Indonesia’s sovereignty, enhancing the protection of Indonesian citizens, and intensifying economic diplomacy.<sup>11</sup>

In another occasion she also stressed three imperative direction as derivative of pro-people foreign policy. First, strengthening Indonesia’s economy through diplomacy activity. In order to achieve it, there must be mutually connection between dimension of foreign policy and economic development policy. Second, active in conducting bilateral mechanism as diplomatic instrument rather than multilateral forums. Resources would be directed to sponsors bilateral forum instead spending energy to active in multilateral forums. *Third*, enabling diplomat officers to be more active in promoting Indonesia’s competitive advantages economically.

<sup>10</sup> Marty M. Natalegawa, ‘Speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs: 2013 Annual Press Statement’, (Jakarta, 4 January 2013), available at: <http://kemlu.go.id/Pages/SpeechTranscriptionDisplay.aspx?Name1=Pidato&Name2=Menteri&IDP=791&l=en>.

<sup>11</sup> Indonesia’s Foreign Policy Priorities in 5 Year Ahead, (Sekab Kabinet : September, 2015), or can be seen <http://setkab.go.id/en/indonesias-foreign-policy-priorities-in-5-years-ahead/>

Diplomat officers are strongly expected to play necessary things to integrate Indonesia with world market.<sup>12</sup>

### **Challenges**

What are the most likely challenges for Indonesia in dealing with ASEAN that would arise under this new situation? The concrete action of Jokowi's administration in implementing pro-people foreign policy aiming to fulfill domestic interest indeed has been attracting public support. For instance, it can be seen from the policy of burning and sinking vessels which committed with illegal fishing. Indonesia minister of foreign policy stated that secure domestic needs are priority as well as protecting Indonesia's sovereignty. And it will be accomplished by responding firmly to any intrusions into Indonesian territory and by settling maritime borders. Moreover, Jokowi has repeatedly stated that around 5,000 ships which mostly from neighboring Southeast Asian states and China, illegally crossed and operated in Indonesian waters every day.<sup>13</sup>

Another instance may also be viewed when Jokowi come with death penalty of drug traffickers. The execution of death penalty for drug traffickers from Netherland and Brazil had invited strong critics from those countries. While in one hand Indonesia tried to enforce national law regarding drugs, in another hand it also produces diplomatic consequences among involved countries. Both of these cases had invited large critics from international community. Indonesia's image as friendly states has been deteriorated. However, it is indeed very impressive policy for domestic public, as the policy directly linked with Indonesia national interest.

Jakarta has confirmed would not turn its back on the world, outlining the active role it wanted to play in ASEAN as well as other regions including the Indian Ocean, the South Pacific and the Middle East. But given the opening action of Indonesian foreign policy in Jokowi's administration, the perception that Jakarta may focus less on ASEAN relative to other regions of the globe is likely to persist.

Moreover, inward looking foreign policies to certain degree also bring out international concerns for Indonesia's way in managing disputes with neighbors states. Reflecting from what Jokowi's did on sinking vessels and death penalty, he seemed very stick and gave limited space to solve the case through diplomatic way. It is true that policy like sinking illegal fishing vessels or death penalty over drug traffickers is to fulfill Jokowi's commitment to domestic audience. However, it has certainly great implication in shaping Jakarta's performance in the international community. Jokowi's inward looking foreign policies give impression that Jakarta

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<sup>12</sup> Ismira Lutfia, "Indonesian's new foreign minister: What does she bring to the table?", available at <http://www.rappler.com/world/regions/asia-pacific/indonesia/73758-foreign-minister-retno-marsudi-diplomacy>

<sup>13</sup> Prashanth Parameswaran, "The Trouble With Indonesia's Foreign Policy Priorities Under Jokowi" available at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/the-trouble-with-indonesias-foreign-policy-priorities-under-jokowi/>

cares less for regional diplomacy. And it is one of important challenges that Indonesia has to deal.

Maintaining this situation for the long term is also not good for Indonesia's interaction in the region. It is because the international perception could move to any direction without control. Therefore, this article suggests that Jokowi's administration should take careful action in defining pro-people diplomacy in order to avoid signaling a wrong message to other ASEAN members, otherwise the Jokowi's new paradigm will easily misunderstood in the region. As Indonesia has been admitted as unofficial leaders of ASEAN, it is necessary for Jakarta to keep its active role not only through bilateral level but also multilateral forums.

Subsequently, to be one among equals in the region, President Jokowi needs to formulate a pragmatic foreign policy. As he goes about strengthening his credentials at home, he should not burn the proverbial diplomatic bridges. It can be done by intensifying Indonesia's regional communication. Jakarta could instrumentalizing ASEAN forum, APEC, or G-20 forum, to show its commitment in handling regional and global issues. But at the same time these moments should also bring direct benefit for Indonesia's domestic needs.

## **Conclusion**

To sum up the discussion, Jakarta's "down to earth diplomacy" or also known as "pro-people diplomacy" is quite interesting discourse provided by Jokowi's administration. It has been quite significant due to while ASEAN's trend diplomacy now is moving towards integration in which it is needed more active role from each members, Indonesia's new foreign policy is moving toward domestic.

Jokowi's decision to swift direction to be more inward looking in his foreign policy to some extent understandable. But at the same time this new policy posses challenges in particular on Indonesia's relation with other ASEAN members.

Jakarta's active role in the region has embraced important and strategic position among the neighborhood. It is quite understandable if ASEAN put more expectation from Indonesia's foreign policy. However, in order to avoid misunderstanding from other ASEAN members, Indonesia to make sure its diplomatic position in the region.

This article suggests that Jokowi's administration should be careful in defining pro-people diplomacy in order to avoid signaling a wrong message to other ASEAN members, otherwise the Jokowi's new paradigm will easily misunderstood in the region. As Indonesia has been admitted as unofficial leaders of ASEAN, it is necessary for Jakarta to keep its active role not only through bilateral level but also multilateral forums.

Jakarta also has to be more creative in building or formulating pragmatic foreign policy without neglecting regional role. In order to be one among equals in the region, President Jokowi should not burn the proverbial diplomatic bridges.



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