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National Interest*

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## Abstract

When Joko Widodo first came into power, there were some signals of the alteration of Indonesian foreign policy. In response to tensions in Natuna Islands in the beginning of his administration, Jokowi was ambivalent in carrying his maritime ambition, Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF). The maritime vision has successfully gained international statement and attention, especially from superpowers. Drawing on government official documents and qualitative interviews, this paper analyzes Indonesian Strategic Culture under Jokowi's administration to attain national interest under GMF framework. Throughout his administration, the level of sovereignty protection is escalating, whilst national interest was intensified by building tighter economic ties with China. In this regard, complexity relies on his personal approach to articulate national interest to the outside world without harming national sovereignty.

*Keywords: Global Maritime Fulcrum, Strategic Culture, National Interest, New International Affairs Paradigm, New Develop-mentalism, Indonesia-China Relations.*

## **1. Introduction**

Contemporary global and regional politics has been an unpredictable situation that leads states to formulate a policy aimed to secure their national interests. The complex situation is timely for states to react in order to take any potential advantage and reduce possible risk. Politics in Asia-Pacific has been stirred with the longstanding territorial dispute, the South China Sea and the dominance of regional hegemon, United States (U.S.) and China. The contested water is highly significant for all claimants or globally to the rest of the world. The South China Sea contains the major international trading sea lanes wherein abundant resources lies.

Indonesia has been the middle power in benevolently trying to survive in the complex security situation in the region. Even though Indonesia has never been the claimant of the contested water, its role is moderately for peaceful means settlement. Given that Indonesia is one of the founding father of ASEAN and the initiator of Non-Aligned Movement, Jakarta has always been the one to mitigate any potential harm. Besides, Indonesia also must have determined national interest at a stake. In order to deal with the tensions in Natuna Islands, it is relevant to say that Indonesian latest maritime strategy has salient approach and implementation.

The end of 2014 marked the beginning of Joko “Jokowi” Widodo’s administration. He came into the position along with several shifts and a new paradigm. Maritime affairs is an output taken into account generating Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) as a supreme maritime strategy. It covers five major affairs including maritime culture, security, resource protection, infrastructure, and diplomacy. The vision is aimed to engage the internal and external affairs to be more closely related to maritime, which is known as Indonesian major identity and power. Laid in more than 14,000 islands, the country holds its identity as an archipelagic state.

Even though there is no claim on the South China Sea, escalating tensions triggered the two countries in reacting to illegal fishing cases. However, it would not appear that Indonesia is also building an even more significant partnership with China due to infrastructure realization as the main agenda. Whilst, earlier in the first few months of his administration, Jokowi did his first visit to the U.S. and succeeded a deal with Obama, particularly in maritime security matters. Indonesia had built the strong cooperation with the U.S., whilst currently, the relation has tightened through the strategic partnership.

Those are Jokowi's approach in expanding Indonesia's appointment in foreign affairs and articulating national interest. The maritime vision has brought a complex mixture of economics, political, and security concern to the inclusive sphere. The maritime-based approach tries to balance every aspect of shared opportunities among states and global peace given that Indonesia is the non-bloc state. This study will mainly concern how neutrality has been taken into account in the implementation of GMF. Since the "Free and Active" remains the singular manifestation of Indonesian foreign policy, therefore, question to explore in this research would be: "How has non-alignment foreign policy helps to contain the tensions between Indonesia and China over the South China Sea disputes under President Jokowi's administration?"

The Author would examine on how Indonesia, through Jokowi's maritime vision could guarantee the reflection of national interest without neglecting Indonesian Free and Active doctrine. The data will support the analysis are following; Jokowi's approach in interstate cooperation to regional hegemon, his persona, and continuation of Indonesia-China economic relation.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Strategic Culture**

Earlier findings, analysis, and studies in constructed ideas and identity are useful in describing states' behavior in international affairs. The assumption started from the basic principle of the preserving national identity as neutral state and peace contributor. Weatherbee (2002) generally and Aplianta (2015) specifically in the South China Sea disputes mention the development of Indonesian foreign policy. Weatherbee began with the idea of nonaligned stance as the projection of struggle for Indonesian freedom and independence as stated by Vice President Hatta in 1948. Moreover, the nonaligned is significant to its neutrality actions, also condition whereas the great power presence would be decreased while Indonesian regional role could rise (Weatherbee, 2002, p. 205). Specifically, Aplianta began with Indonesian leaders to respond to South China Sea disputes while, for example, Suharto was more focused on the domestic economy, and regional reputation in ASEAN (Aplianta, 2015, pp. 1-21). Those perceptions of Indonesian Foreign Policy are palpable to Indonesian tradition

and culture in the persistence of national image both internally and externally. Indonesia would like to express its concern toward peace and stability, and cautious in engaging international challenges.

In concept, states behave on behalf of inward-looking values. Withholding national image, values, culture, and tradition are more initial rather than balancing power efforts. In spite of seeing the world as an anarchic realm, states are built from constructed ideas and values within its complexity. Moreover, Acharya succeeds to contribute a clear and meaningful analysis in comparing Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism in Asian International Relations on the merits of “analytical eclecticism”. The relevance of this study is that states, transnational knowledge communities, and moral entrepreneurs are the main actors. Whilst, global and regional security communities forged through shared norms and collective identity and its socialization through principles and institutions (Acharya, 2014, p. 105). One obvious illustration is the establishment of ASEAN and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in carrying the collective values of non-interference and put peaceful means above all. The “ASEAN Way” has been a long-lasting adopted manner to remain salient to put aside the power competition among its members.

Indonesia, one of the founders of those two organizations, has always been playing a key role. Meanwhile, as a sovereign state, national interest is compulsory to be able to thrive in the middle of the unpredictable world. National strategy and behavior matter to meet the equilibrium. Given that “Free and Active” foreign policy is mandatory for Indonesia; it is relevant to call it as a national doctrine that each leader needs to adapt. Democracy is a determinant factor in interpreting “Free and Active”.

In that regard, it is significant to apply strategic culture in measuring Jokowi’s GMF doctrine. Consistently, as a new strategy, the study would focus on how its implementation could linear to main “Free and Active”. Strategic culture is a new method to explain national security that it has become fashionable in the international relation during the post-Cold War. Snyder (1977), emphasizes that strategic culture is “The sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior that members of the national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other with regard to nuclear strategy”. Booth (1990) further described strategic culture in more specific meaning as “A

nation's traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behavior, habits, symbols, achievement and particular ways of adapting to the environment and solving problems with respect to the threat or use of force" which outlast but major changes are possible regarding military technology, domestic arrangement or the international environment (Sondhaus, 2006, pp. 124-125).

Strategic Culture lies on patterned ideas and traditions into national approach in Indonesian scholar Yohanes Sulaiman added that Indonesia's national security inherent three important themes; the unity of different ethnic groups and an illustrious history as the successor state of the ancient kingdoms of Srivijaya and Majapahit covering the identity of '*Wawasan Nusantara*' or Archipelagic Insight; narrative the struggle for independence; and 'free and active' narrative shape Indonesian foreign policy meaning the independent from any military pacts or alignment with great powers (Sulaiman, 2016). Furthermore, the newest exploration of indicates strategic culture as a significant grand strategy and state behavior (Lantis, 2002).

In characterizing each variable, this study will adopt the Lantis's categorization on Strategic Culture shaping the country's political-military culture; sources and keepers (Lantis, Strategic Culture and Security Policies in the Asia-Pacific , 2014, pp. 172-175). The first source is the understanding of geographical context which in Indonesia's archipelagic landscape is vulnerable to outside threats. Another source is political culture as the nature of governance. This is critical to democratic transformation in Indonesia with the following history of its civil-military relations. Post-Suharto regime, military has become a non-political institutions. Last, myths and symbols are also considered as part of important expression of a state idea and culture lantis classified that myths are representing fascinating blend of fact and fiction. In Indonesia's case, official seal of Republic Indonesia articulates the independence date also the unity in diversity. Meanwhile, symbols act as 'socially recognized objects of more or less common understanding' and 'provide a cultural community with stable points of reference for strategic thought and action' (Lantis, Strategic Culture and Security Policies in the Asia-Pacific , 2014, p. 173). In the most obvious example is slogan used in Sukarno's administration "*Jalesveva Jayamahe*" meaning "Victorious in the Sea".

Major actors and institutions are recognized as the server and keeper of nation's culture. First, political leaders in whose engage in historical interpretation and development of the foreign

policy path. For instance, Indonesian leaders in referring the Free and Active foreign policy. Second keeper is elites which Berger recognized the fact that strategic culture is best characterized as a “negotiated reality” among elites (Lantis, *Strategic Culture and Security Policies in the Asia-Pacific*, 2014, p. 174). During the candidacy, Megawati had a crucial role in supporting Joko Widodo. Besides, she is happened to be President Sukarno’s daughter, this made it possible to conclude that there is some Sukarno’s influences in Global Maritime Fulcrum. Lastly, political institutions including political parties and domestic coalitions are also affecting foreign policy behavior. In the case of Indonesia’s parliament, the strong coalition is essential to establish resilient government.

Drawing upon the relationship between Global Maritime Fulcrum and “Free and Active” foreign policy, the strategic culture will examine how the current administration pursues to maintain the internal and external complexities. The author will concentrate on Indonesia’s reflection of national interest throughout Global Maritime Fulcrum.

### **3. Methodology and Data**

The form of this research would be comprehensive descriptive analytic. Hence, two most substantial principles meet focus in this study are the struggle for independence as the sovereignty protection and free and active narrative stressed in the entire Indonesia’s foreign policy. In order to gather comprehensive finding and to be able to generate deep analyzes, the study will cover domestic and international behavioral aspects.

The following time frame of the study will start from the beginning of Jokowi’s administration until a recent period. There are two main resources to gain the data in this studies. First, secondary data from the government drafts, official websites, statements, articles, and news articles. To measure the hypotheses, the data such as position paper, keynote speech, presidential, ministerial, and diplomatic speeches will be primary to find a conclusion in the study. Second, primary data or interview from the foreign policy, South China Sea, and defense experts and government officers as supportive data by describing the empirical information in the field.

### **4. National Interest Reflection**

#### 4.1 New International Affairs Paradigm

Jokowi's determination in foreign policy is rather distinctive compared to any previous administrations. This finding will pinpoint that the new international approach is relevant to "Flexible engagement and strong fencing". Indonesia pledged to engage deeper interstate cooperation with regional superpower, in this matter, China, United States, Japan, and Australia. On the other side, as stated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi, that Indonesia will concentrate in settling border issues with neighboring countries in a diplomatic way. She also emphasized in the annual press statement that Indonesia will never back down if there is a threat to Indonesian sovereignty. Beside territorial issue, foreign policy concerns in migrant workers protections. At this point, Indonesia built a interstate cooperations with the gulf states by Gulf Cooperation Countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Indonesia, 2017).

Additionally, there is a shift from the previous administration. Compared to his predecessor, President Yudhoyono, by carrying out "Thousands friends, zero enemy", Jokowi has more flexible way. Agusman mentioned, Widodo's way is rather flexible but strict when it comes to Indonesian sovereignty. The mindset of "*we are all friends, as long as there is no disturbance to our (Indonesia) sovereignty*" contains of a firm sense in national sovereignty protection. In sum, there is a major alteration in interpreting Indonesia's foreign policy. These efforts are strongly integrated with the attainment of national interests.

#### 4.2 New Develop-mentalism

Joko Widodo was adapting new complexity for Indonesian economic development plan. Author finding in this section will discuss on Indonesian new develop-mentalism led by Jokowi in three economic tiers; fostering connectivity, securing national assets, and shifting from consumption to production. Starting his career as businessman, Joko is trying to understand the problem-roots of Indonesian economic problem. Lies in more than 14,000 islands, Indonesia still lack of infrastructure. He realized that the factor that hinder Foreign Direct Investment inflow to Indonesia is poor infrastructure.

Based on the latest budget statement of 2018, Jokowi revealed the infrastructure project in the following year. There is 40% of total national strategic projects planned which 9% had

been completed, 5% were in transaction stage, and 37% were still in planning stage. In term of numbers, there are 225 projects nationwide; highway, non-toll roads, railway lines, urban trains, airport revitalization and airport development, port construction and three phases of the One-Million-Homes program (Sundaryani, 2017).

Besides, Jokowi's economic push is complex in a sense that Indonesia should be more efficient to discover national 'leaks' and/or 'hidden' assets. The country is home to almost 260 million inhabitants while only 10% has been registered as taxpayers, it leads to the immense deficit which burdens the development of infrastructure (Varagur, 2017). It is eminent that Jokowi pledged economic reforms through his contentious power in the representative; protectionism and nationalism. Warburton stated that Jokowi has brought the 'new develop-mentalism' into an account throughout narrow pragmatic economy programs which full clarity especially in building infrastructure, deregulation, and de-bureaucratization (Warburton, 2016, p. 298).

The main concern of Jokowi's administration is an economic sector which reflected the economic diplomacy. During the 24<sup>th</sup> World Economic Forum on East Asia, Jokowi stated that

*"Today, we must shift from consumption back to production...to investment in our infrastructure, investment in our industry, but most importantly, investment in our human capital, the most precious resource of the 21st century."*

(Tay, 2016, p. 1).

In sum, it is important to look at the complexity of GMF and its relevance with economic development. Economic Diplomacy is relied in the current foreign policy framework. In order to carry this out, he pledged more open and easy market in order to attract Foreign Direct Investment inflow. Accordingly, he also improve robust infrastructure development to facilitate economic boost.

### **4.3 Personal Business Attitude**

As one of the diplomacy products, Global Maritime Fulcrum is a complex combination of geopolitics, geo-economics, geo-cultures, and historical. This platform is used to interpret Indonesia's movement in both internal and external. In its application is not surprising to

assume that Jokowi tends to be more pragmatic than his predecessors. He has lack of politics and diplomacy experiences although his successful business track may be more straightforward in interpreting national interests. Jokowi's persona is full of simplicity but straight to the point of how he could carry out national interest.

First, Jokowi's approach is rather pragmatic than normative compared to his predecessors. Syailendra also classified that there are three characteristics in Jokowi's foreign affairs; i) rely on a lot of individual in his cabinet to connect and in charge of international affairs; ii) more focused on economic policy and courting investment; iii) less concern about 'big ideas' such as Korean issues (Syailendra, 2017).

Second, Jokowi's pragmatic way also expressed in any diplomatic, ministerial, and presidential visits. In the interview, Agusman stated that Jokowi always make use of good relations to achieve national interest. Similar to Syailendra, he emphasized that Jokowi is not into being an international statesman to be international 'hero'. Foreign Minister Retno, in accordance, always carry the 'down to earth' diplomacy pattern particularly in echoing economic diplomacy (Agusman, 2017).

Leader's persona and approach is important to look at in understanding Strategic Culture. Leaders are national agents holding substantial role in shaping nation's interest. Even though, there won't be change of "Free and Active" foreign policy, but it does not mean that the application will not evolve through period. Jokowi's personal simplicity and friendliness is a sign of national interest reflection, it is reliable in building further and deeper interstate cooperation.

#### **4.4 Indonesia-China Relation**

Indonesia-China relation has been facing ups and downs since the normalization. Even though the current condition is conducive, the Natuna tensions had shaken it, engagement is likely more significant. Jakarta seems to seek China's involvement to maximize the national gain. A timely moment from American influence withdrawal in Asia has given China to be more nimble to expand its rise in Asia. In economic term, Indonesia has two initiatives intersects with China's mainly in infrastructure drive.

First, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) which particular to Jokowi infrastructure priority. Until 2017 AIIB has approved to finance three Indonesian projects; Dam Operational Improvement and Safety Project Phase II; Regional Infrastructure Development Fund Project; National Slum Upgrading Project (AIIB, 2017). Second, China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) is aimed to connect Asia, Europe and Africa in term of economic which inspired from the Silk Road Spirit of 'peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit' Ocean (The State Council of The People's Republic of China, 2015). Until May 2017 there are six projects signed into OBOR; Commercial Office, Hotel and Shopping Mall covers Hospitality & Tourism, Property Development, Infrastructure Project covers Ports, Oil and Gas Block Project covers Oil & Gas sector, Jet Engine Power Generator covers power plant sector, Clean Eco Fuel covers CleanTech sector, and Waste Treatment Improving Carbon Efficiency covers CleanTech and Waste Treatment sector (Belt and Road, 2017).

Tensions in northern Natuna Islands are not disruptive to Indonesia-China relations. It is presumably modest for Indonesia to leave out strains and just 'jump to what's important'. In this case, economic engagement, which is more beneficial for Indonesian economic gain. However, the cooperation condition remains under the Jokowi's foreign affairs approach; "as long as no disruption or threat to Indonesian territory".

## **5. Conclusion**

The main intention of this study is to examine the implementation of GMF strategy to express national interest. Given the constructive ideas of preserving national ideas, images, and identity, Jokowi has been adapting his personal approach in engaging international political realm. This study found three crucial tiers in expressing national interests to the outside world. First, in order to guarantee the neutrality that has been endured through time, Indonesia's role in international arena is to become an intermediary roles. This indicator is closely related to Indonesia and other state in building stronger relation without reliance to one particular country. Second, Joko Widodo is trying to sum up the national interest aspects with his flexible and friendly approach aimed to gain the timely advantages from the recent global order. His persona carries more pragmatic sense rather than normative. Last, in general meaning, Joko Widodo is utilizing Free and Active foreign policy in a nimble movement towards GMF realization.

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