

Indonesia and the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific

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At their 34th summit in Bangkok on 23 June 2019, after 18 months of intensive lobbying by Jakarta, the leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) officially adopted Indonesia's proposed *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific*. This represented the establishment by ASEAN of a common position *vis-à-vis* the Indo-Pacific discourse, achieved at length and only after overcoming initial hesitancy among some member states over the extension of geostrategic concerns from the Asia-Pacific to encompass the wider Indo-Pacific region. The *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific* will also be offered to other countries outside ASEAN as a possible common platform for promoting regional dialogue and cooperation, with the potential to transcend the various disparate visions of the Indo-Pacific already put forward by different countries.

The Indo-Pacific region is defined either broadly, to cover the geographic area between the western shores of the United States and the east coast of Africa, or, in most geostrategic discussions, more narrowly as the triangular area with Japan, Australia and India at its points. Several countries have come up with different perspectives on the Indo-Pacific construct, reflecting different ways of understanding the nature of the region's problems and the means of addressing them.

The Indo-Pacific concept has been around at least since August 2007, when the Japanese prime minister, Shinzo Abe, in a speech to the Indian parliament, first proposed drawing a strategic link between the Indian and Pacific oceans, 'the confluence of the two seas', to develop cooperation aimed at ensuring a 'free and open' Indo-Pacific region for international public goods.¹ The US pivot to Asia which started in 2011 emphasized the strategic unity of the region 'stretching from the Indian subcontinent to the western shores of the Americas', spanning the Pacific and the Indian oceans, as stated by former secretary of state Hillary Clinton in her article 'America's Pacific century'.² In its 2013 defence white paper,

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¹ 'Confluence of the two seas', speech by HE Mr Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, at the Parliament of the Republic of India, 22 Aug. 2007, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmvo708/speech-2.html>; Rohan Mukherjee, 'Japan's outreach to India and the prospects of a Japan-India alliance', *International Affairs* 94: 4, July 2018, pp. 835-60. (Unless otherwise stated at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 28 Aug. 2019.)

² Hillary Clinton, 'America's Pacific century', *Foreign Policy*, 11 Oct. 2011; Christopher Layne, 'The US-Chinese power shift and the end of Pax Americana', *International Affairs* 94: 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 89-112.

Australia for the first time redefined its 'region of security concern as the Indo-Pacific rather than the Asia-Pacific'.³ In the same year, Indonesia's then foreign minister Marty Natalegawa made a proposal for an 'Indo-Pacific Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation'.⁴

Nevertheless, the term Asia-Pacific continued to be most regularly used in official statements until US President Donald J. Trump reintroduced the 'Indo-Pacific' concept during his speech at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit of chief executive officers in Danang, Vietnam, on 10 November 2017.⁵ In his first important speech in Asia, President Trump shared the US 'vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific—a place where sovereign and independent nations, with diverse cultures and many different dreams, can all prosper side-by-side, and thrive in freedom and peace'.⁶ Since then, US official statements have included the term Indo-Pacific instead of Asia-Pacific, and the US Pacific Command in Hawaii has been renamed the Indo-Pacific Command. The concept has become a new focus of regional debates and discussions, with some embracing it more enthusiastically than others.

While there may be disagreements about what this new strategic construct is all about, it is generally well understood that the shift in terminology from 'Asia-Pacific' to 'Indo-Pacific' is not just a simple change of nomenclature but carries substantial conceptual significance. The growing interest in the Indo-Pacific region in recent years has been driven in part by the rise of India as an economic powerhouse with growing influence in regional affairs, which is seen to parallel the earlier and continuing rise of China, and India's own growing interest in engaging with countries to the east. The maritime domain has also become an increasingly important focus for security, economic and environmental reasons. In recent decades, the Asia-Pacific (in particular east Asia) has been a centre of both economic growth and various security concerns (particularly the South China Sea dispute and the North Korean nuclear threat).⁷ Today, the indivisibility of the Indian and Pacific oceans as the primary lifeline for international trade and transport has also gained greater salience. The emergence of new centres of economic growth around the Indian Ocean rim has been accompanied by multiplying threats to regional security (particularly non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, forced migration and human trafficking) that have also forced east Asian countries to pay increasing attention to the Indian Ocean region and

³ See Rory Medcalf, 'Defence white paper 2013: treading water in the Indo-Pacific', *The Interpreter* (Lowy Institute), 3 May 2013; Tomohiko Satake and John Hemmings, 'Japan–Australia security cooperation in the bilateral and multilateral contexts', *International Affairs* 94: 4, July 2018, pp. 815–34; Maryanne Kelton, Michael Sullivan, Emily Bienvenue and Zac Rogers, 'Australia, the utility of force and the society-centric battlespace', *International Affairs* 95: 4, July 2019, pp. 859–76.

⁴ Marty Natalegawa, 'An Indonesian perspective on the Indo-Pacific', *Jakarta Post*, 20 May 2013.

⁵ Doug Stokes, 'Trump, American hegemony and the future of the liberal international order', *International Affairs* 94: 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 133–50.

⁶ 'Remarks by President Trump at APEC CEO summit, Danang, Vietnam', 10 Nov. 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-apec-ceo-summit-da-nang-vietnam/>.

⁷ Douglas Gilfoyle, 'The rule of law and maritime security: understanding lawfare and the South China Sea', *International Affairs* 95: 5, Sept. 2019, pp. 999–1017; Xiangfeng Yang, 'China's clear and present conundrum on the Korean peninsula: stuck between the past and the future', *International Affairs* 94: 3, May 2018, pp. 595–612.

beyond. Moreover, it has also become evident that the rivalry between the major powers that has long characterized the Asia–Pacific landscape has also spilled over into the Indian Ocean region.

Indonesia and other ASEAN member states have become increasingly concerned, in particular, with the intensifying rivalry between the United States and China, which could jeopardize the long period of peace, stability and prosperity that the Asia–Pacific region has enjoyed.⁸ China's emergence as a new superpower challenging the United States has given birth to pessimistic prognoses of an inevitable open confrontation between the United States as the established power and an ascending China, in line with the 'Thucydides trap' scenario, unless serious efforts are undertaken to prevent it.⁹ China's expansive and assertive foreign policy, as exemplified by its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its activities in the disputed South China Sea area, backed by its massive economic and military prowess, is coming to be widely perceived as threatening the rules-based multilateral order in the Indo-Pacific region.¹⁰ An informal grouping called the Quadri-lateral Security Dialogue (the Quad), comprising Australia, India, Japan and the United States, formed in 2007 but largely inactive in its first decade, has been revived since 2017, with the objective of ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific based on the rule of law.¹¹ China tends to regard the various Indo-Pacific initiatives with suspicion, particularly the Quad, which it sees as a US-led balancing strategy aimed at containing China.¹²

Wishing to preserve south-east Asia's regional autonomy, Indonesia and ASEAN as a whole have preferred to engage with both the United States and China, benefiting from what both these rich and powerful countries have to offer, and do not want to have to choose between Beijing and Washington. More than simply hedging between the two competing superpowers, ASEAN has long taken a proactive role in constructing a more inclusive multipolar regional architecture in the Asia–Pacific region, with the aim of promoting confidence-building measures, preventive diplomacy and cooperative security, and focusing on the development of friendship rather than the identification of enemies.¹³ Though often seen as little more than talking shops, the various ASEAN-led regional mechanisms—such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus—whose memberships include both the United States and China along with other major regional powers, have remained

⁸ Nana de Graaff and Bastiaan van Apeldoorn, 'US–China relations and the liberal world order: contending elites, colliding visions?', *International Affairs* 94: 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 113–32; Xiaoyu Pu and Chengli Wang, 'Rethinking China's rise: Chinese scholars debate strategic overstretch', *International Affairs* 94: 5, Sept. 2018, pp. 1019–36.

⁹ See Graham T. Allison, *Destined for war: can America and China escape Thucydides' trap?* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

¹⁰ Astrid H. M. Nordin and Mikael Weissmann, 'Will Trump make China great again? The Belt and Road Initiative and international order', *International Affairs* 94: 2, March 2018, pp. 231–50; Wu Xinbo, 'China in search of a liberal partnership world order', *International Affairs* 94: 5, Sept. 2018, pp. 995–1018.

¹¹ Premesha Saha, 'The Quad in the Indo-Pacific: why ASEAN remains cautious', ORF (Observer Research Foundation) Issue Briefs and Special Reports, 26 Feb. 2018, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/asean-quad/>.

¹² Tan Ming Hui and Nazia Hussain, 'Quad 2.0: sense and sensibilities', *The Diplomat*, 23 Feb. 2018.

¹³ Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a security community in southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 199.

the only multilateral forums for fostering security dialogue and cooperation in the Asia–Pacific region. With the intensifying rivalry between the United States and China and the emergence of several different Indo-Pacific initiatives put forward by different countries, ASEAN is clearly concerned about the increasing regional polarization and the possible marginalization of its role as the primary regional convener.

Indonesia has taken a leading role in pushing ASEAN to take an active part in the discourse about this new ‘Indo-Pacific’ strategic concept. Because south-east Asia is located at the geographic midpoint between the Indian and Pacific oceans and all the lands around and within them, ASEAN must, in Jakarta’s view, continue to retain its centrality in the evolving Indo-Pacific construct. ASEAN’s centrality is regarded as essential in ensuring the development of a truly open, transparent and inclusive Indo-Pacific regional architecture that will try to bridge rather than accentuate differences. Jakarta’s interest in the Indo-Pacific concept is also related to the policy of President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) of establishing Indonesia, an archipelagic state, as a global maritime fulcrum (GMF), leveraging its location at the intersection between the Indian and Pacific oceans into something greater than a mere physical presence. The general widening (not shifting) of focus from Asia–Pacific to Indo-Pacific pays more attention to the interconnecting oceans, and helps to ensure that the current and successive Indonesian governments will continue to pay more attention to the country’s maritime domain.

Roberts and Sebastian have written that, as ‘Indonesia’s economy grows, it is increasingly being referred to as a rising middle power, and ... there is mounting speculation that it might eventually join the ranks of Asia’s great powers’. These two authors have argued that, regardless of how far Indonesia rises, it will become increasingly influential in terms of regional leadership. The question is what a more independent and more assertive Indonesia means for the future of ASEAN: whether ‘Indonesia will strengthen this body as Indonesia strengthens what many regard as its natural leadership role within ASEAN, or [whether it] will ... threaten ASEAN’s continued viability and strategic centrality as a more assertive and independent Indonesia opts increasingly to forge its global path independent of other regional nations’. Roberts and Sebastian also posed the question of whether a rising Indonesia will lean more towards China or towards the United States, or whether it will remain a ‘swing state’.¹⁴

With the emergence of more countries regarded as middle powers, and the challenge to US predominance posed by a rising China, usually regarded as the lodestar of the middle powers, there has lately been a renewed interest in middle powers’ diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific region.¹⁵ Following the emergence of the post-Second World War ‘traditional middle’ powers Australia and Canada, Indonesia is usually counted among the first wave of middle powers, based on

¹⁴ Christopher B. Roberts and Leonard C. Sebastian, ‘Ascending Indonesia: significance and conceptual foundations’, in Christopher B. Roberts, Ahmad D. Habir and Leonard C. Sebastian, eds, *Indonesia’s ascent: power, leadership, and regional order* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 1.

¹⁵ See Tanguy Struye de Swielande, Dorothee Vandamme, David Walton and Thomas Wilkins, eds, *Rethinking middle powers in the Asian century: new theories, new cases* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

both its capabilities and its hierarchical rank (between the great and small powers) and its foreign policy activism since the mid-1950s.¹⁶ How to define middle powers, however, is a question that has been hotly debated among scholars, with varying emphasis on capabilities, function, behaviour, norms or combinations of some or all of these factors. Thies and Sari propose a 'role theory approach' to understanding middle powers, judging a country's qualifications as a middle power by the yardstick of the roles that middle powers are traditionally expected to perform, which include being good international citizens, coalition-builders, bridge-builders, peacekeepers, third-party conflict mediators, and supporters of multilateralism and the existing US-led international order.¹⁷ According to Thies and Sari's analysis, Indonesia qualified as a middle power under presidents Suharto, Megawati, Yudhoyono and Jokowi, but not under presidents Sukarno, Habibie and Abdurrahman Wahid. Other studies have been critical of western-centric paradigms which exclude countries that do not conform to the traditional role consigned to middle powers. Ping has criticized definitions of middle powers based on ideology and has proposed instead a theory of 'hybridization', arguing for the need to combine statistical, perceived power and statecraft approaches.¹⁸ Ping argues that middle powers are states that have an inherent form of statecraft and level of perceived power owing to their size, classifying Indonesia and Malaysia as natural middle powers.

In his article 'Middle powers: a comprehensive definition and typology', de Swielande offers a more holistic approach, integrating the different paradigms used in analyses of middle powers to avoid western ethnocentricity.¹⁹ He identifies five characteristics of middle powers, namely their capacities, self-conception, status, regional impact and systemic impact. While most traditional analyses of middle powers see them as passive followers or status quo powers, de Swielande argues that middle powers can also be critical followers, toxic followers, reformists or swing states. Furthermore, de Swielande distinguishes three different types of middle powers, following Wendt's 'three cultures of anarchy'.²⁰ These three types are: Hobbesian middle powers, which view the regional/systemic structure as anarchic, base their policy on power politics, pessimism, security, alliances and a narrow interpretation of national interests, and prioritize high politics; Lockean middle powers, which regard the regional/systemic structure as less anarchical and pursue a mixture of high and low politics, the latter primarily focusing on economic and other material interests; and Kantian middle powers, which interpret the anarchic world in a more positive way, emphasizing low politics (without

¹⁶ See Carsten Holbraad, *Middle powers in international politics* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 89; Enrico Fels, *Shifting power in Asia Pacific? The rise of China, Sino-US competition and regional middle power allegiance*, PhD diss., University of Bonn, 2016 (Basel: Springer, 2017), doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-45689-8, p. 697.

¹⁷ Cameron G. Thies and Angguntari C. Sari, 'A role theory approach to middle powers: making sense of Indonesia's place in the international system', *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 40: 3, Dec. 2018, pp. 397–421.

¹⁸ Jonathan H. Ping, *Middle power statecraft: Indonesia and Malaysia*, PhD diss., University of Adelaide, 2003.

¹⁹ Tanguy Struye de Swielande, 'Middle powers: a comprehensive definition and typology', in de Swielande et al., eds, *Rethinking middle powers*, pp. 19–31.

²⁰ Alexander Wendt, *Social theory of international politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 246–312.

excluding high politics) and therefore a greater involvement in activities such as bridge-building, cooperation and mediation. Countries can pursue a mixed policy combining the three different perspectives.

This article will analyse Indonesia's policy *vis-à-vis* the Indo-Pacific from the perspective of its position as a middle power. Holbraad suggested that the greatest contribution middle powers can make is at the regional level, arguing that if 'they found it possible to construct relations and pursue their interests with an eye to order and justice among the states of the region, they could make a valuable contribution to the pursuit of the basic goals of international society', namely 'to maintain stability, control conflict and uphold international law in their regions'. Holbraad further observed that a middle power 'at the head of an association of states might pursue stability by maintaining a diplomatic concert'.²¹

This article will first look into Indonesia's new maritime thrust to become a GMF in the Indo-Pacific region, recalling an earlier age when the maritime Sriwijaya and Majapahit empires were at the hub of international commerce and exchanges of ideas between India, the Middle East and China. Second, it will briefly outline Jakarta's response to the various regional initiatives of the major Indo-Pacific powers, which re-emphasizes Indonesia's 'free and active' foreign policy doctrine and omnidirectional foreign policy. Third, it will demonstrate that, amid growing speculation that Indonesia may be following the second course of policy mentioned by Roberts and Sebastian above—namely, that it is pursuing a more independent 'post-ASEAN' foreign policy—the growing discourse on the Indo-Pacific has in fact reinvigorated ASEAN as the cornerstone of Indonesia's foreign policy and reinforced the importance Jakarta attaches to ASEAN centrality. Fourth, it will further argue that, in promoting the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific* within ASEAN and beyond, Indonesia is displaying the typology of a 'Kantian middle power', as put forward by de Swielande, as Jakarta tries to promote a more positive outlook on the Indo-Pacific region based on cooperation rather than rivalry. Finally, the article will analyse the proposals contained in the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific* and discuss the extent to which it can really add value to the evolving Indo-Pacific construct.

Strengthening control over Indonesia's maritime domain

Jakarta's embrace of the widening of the geostrategic landscape from the Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific, uniting the Indian and Pacific oceans into one integrated geostrategic space, is closely related to President Jokowi's policy of making Indonesia into a GMF. As the world's largest archipelago, Indonesia clearly considers the control and management of its maritime domain of critical importance to its national interests—political, security, economic, social, cultural and environmental. The Indonesian term for 'motherland' is *tanah air* or 'land-water', which signifies that the islands and waters comprising the archipelago make up

²¹ Holbraad, *Middle powers*, p. 211.

one unified and inseparable entity. When Indonesia first gained independence,²² however, the reality was very different. Prior to the passing of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982, which finally recognized the rights of archipelagic states, the islands in the Indonesian archipelago were separated from one another by international waters that lay beyond the jurisdiction and control of the Indonesian government. Each island was accorded only 3 nautical miles of territorial seas, thus leaving Indonesia and other archipelagic countries vulnerable to the possible unfriendly activities of foreign vessels within their archipelagos.

Seeking international recognition of Indonesia as an archipelagic state was Indonesia's highest priority during the first three decades of its independence. First the Indonesian government, through the Djuanda Doctrine of 1957²³ and the enactment of Law No. 4 of 1960 on Indonesian Waters, unilaterally proclaimed national sovereignty over all islands and waters inside its archipelagic baselines, drawn between the outermost points of the outermost islands. In subsequent years, Indonesia took the lead in the lengthy and tough negotiations, often against strong opposition from major maritime powers, for the international acceptance of UNCLOS, which would contain important principles on the status and rights of archipelagic states. Under UNCLOS, which was concluded in 1982 and ratified by the Indonesian government through Law No. 17 of 1985, Indonesia is officially recognized as an archipelagic state, with sovereignty and rights over huge expanses of waters and continental shelves.²⁴ Indonesia's activism in seeking international recognition of its archipelagic status through multilateralism was one of the earliest instances of its middle-power role. As noted by Cooper, middle powers could assume leadership through niche diplomacy in three ways: namely, as catalysts or initiators of diplomatic proposals, as facilitators of a programme of action, and as creators or managers of international institutions that regulate issue areas.²⁵

Despite the fundamental importance of the archipelagic outlook or *wawasan nusantara* as part of Indonesia's strategic culture, throughout most of the army-dominated New Order period under President Suharto (1966–98) the Indonesian government paid little attention to the country's maritime development.²⁶ The political, security and economic priorities of the New Order government were predominantly land-based and focused on the densely populated islands in the

²² Indonesia declared its independence on 17 Aug. 1945, but the Netherlands, which had colonized the country until the Japanese occupation of 1942–5, tried to retain its former colony by force after the Second World War and only transferred sovereignty to the new Republic of Indonesia on 27 Dec. 1949.

²³ The proclamation made by Prime Minister Djuanda on 13 Dec. 1957 asserting that all the islands and the waters between them are one inseparable unit.

²⁴ An archipelagic state has full sovereignty over its internal and archipelagic waters (12 nautical miles of territorial seas measured from the archipelagic baselines of the outermost points in the outermost islands), as well as jurisdiction and rights over 200 nautical miles of exclusive economic zone measured from the archipelagic baselines and over continental shelves. See Parts II and V of UNCLOS, https://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf.

²⁵ Andrew F. Cooper, 'Niche diplomacy: a conceptual overview', in Andrew F. Cooper, ed., *Niche diplomacy. middle powers after the Cold War* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, 1997), pp. 1–24.

²⁶ See Dewi Fortuna Anwar, *Indonesia's strategic culture: ketahanan nasional, wawasan nusantara and hankamrata*, Australia–Asia Papers no. 75 (Brisbane: Griffith University Centre for Study of Australia–Asia Relations), May 1996.

western part of Indonesia. While the limited financial resources available for development of a strong navy and other elements of maritime capacity were a real constraint on Indonesia's ability to become a true maritime power on a par with the old Sriwijaya and Majapahit empires, the real impediment to the realization of *wawasan nusantara* at this time was the army's stranglehold on politics (particularly its focus on security in maintaining social and political control over the population).

Calls for greater attention to be paid to Indonesia's maritime domain began to be voiced during the New Order period, but gained traction only after the fall of President Suharto in 1998. Today, Indonesia is under pressure to pay greater attention to the increasing threats to its maritime environment. Traditional threats to security include rising Great Power rivalry, maritime territorial disputes and militarized competition over maritime and marine resources. Non-traditional security threats include piracy, people smuggling, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destruction of the marine ecosystem.

At the same time, because of Indonesia's transition towards democracy, the military is no longer allowed to play an active part in politics but must become a professional force that protects the country from external threats to security, leaving internal security primarily in the hands of the police. As part of this shift in focus, successive Indonesian governments since the onset of the reform era, popularly known as *Reformasi*, have begun to pay more attention to Indonesia's status as an archipelago, with all the concomitant weaknesses and potential. Strengthening the Indonesian navy and air force, ensuring better control over Indonesia's outermost islands, finalizing national maritime boundaries, enhancing law enforcement at sea to ensure the security and safety of navigation, husbanding the country's rich marine resources and improving sea transport to improve connectivity—these have all become national priorities.

While all the post-1998 presidents have paid greater attention to Indonesia's maritime domain, it is the incumbent President Jokowi who has elevated maritime-related affairs to the top of the national agenda. Strengthening Indonesia's maritime identity was one of his campaign pledges; soon after he was sworn in as president in October 2014, he followed up with the plan to make Indonesia into a GMF. The GMF vision has five pillars: (1) rebuilding Indonesia's maritime culture; (2) managing marine resources; (3) developing maritime infrastructure and connectivity; (4) strengthening maritime defence forces; and (5) advancing maritime diplomacy.²⁷

Pursuant to Law No. 32/2014 on Ocean Affairs, Jokowi passed a presidential decree on Indonesian Ocean Policy (IOP), the first of its kind, which will be the primary reference point for all programmes and activities related to the country's maritime domain. Besides the decree, the IOP consists of two annexes: (a) the National Document on Indonesian Ocean Policy, which provides the explanatory narrative on the IOP; and (b) the Plan of Action for implementing the various programmes. The goal of the IOP is to realize the GMF vision of 'Indonesia as a sovereign, advanced, independent, strong maritime nation that is able to provide a

²⁷ See Dewi Fortuna Anwar, 'The emergence of Indonesia's ocean policy', *RSIS Commentary*, 21 Feb. 2018.

positive contribution for peace and security in the region as well as to the world'. The roadmap of the IOP highlights seven policy pillars: (1) marine and human resources development; (2) maritime security, law enforcement and safety at sea; (3) ocean governance and institutions; (4) development of the maritime economy; (5) ocean space management and marine protection; (6) maritime culture; and (7) maritime diplomacy.²⁸

The IOP is generally aimed at developing the country's internal capability, and as such can be seen as a continuation of the country's long-established multidimensional national resilience policy, which prioritizes concerns about internal threats to security over external ones, and regards economic development as the primary means for achieving national security. Nevertheless, the IOP is not a wholly inward-looking policy. The National Document repeatedly stresses Indonesia's strategic position, along with its geographic factors and socio-economic conditions, which, it argues, 'has also put Indonesia in an important position in the global environment, namely in influencing political and economic stability and also influencing regional and international security'. Among the IOP programmes on defence and security is a plan to enhance Indonesia's participation in regional and international cooperation on maritime defence and security. On maritime diplomacy, the IOP explicitly enjoins Indonesia to play a leadership role in various maritime cooperation initiatives at both regional and multilateral levels. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), established in 1997, held its first summit in Jakarta in 2017 during the final year of Indonesia's chairmanship (2015–17); at this meeting, the top national leaders of the 21 IORA member states agreed on cooperation across a broad range of areas.

While the IOP does not specifically refer to the Indo-Pacific concept, the National Document repeatedly emphasizes Indonesia's strategic location and its past great maritime heritage, as well as its strong historical connections with both India and China. The document also alludes to the great Sriwijaya maritime empire of the ninth century that controlled the Strait of Malacca and was successful in developing equal relations with the Chola Nalanda of India and the Tang dynasty of China. In the light of the current strategic rivalry between the United States and China, the IOP draws from the past the lessons that Indonesia should continue to engage with all powers on both sides of the Indian and Pacific oceans and take full advantage of the economic opportunities that arise from competition between the major powers, adapting to the dynamics in the external environment while resisting domination. Ping points to the importance of the archipelago's early experience in hybridizing various influences, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, the stimulus of Chinese hegemony and resistance to western colonialism, in the development of Indonesian and Malaysian middle-power statecraft, which, he argues, is essentially adaptive and competitive in character.²⁹

²⁸ 'Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 16 of 2017: Indonesian Ocean Policy'. See 'Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia No. 16 Tahun 2017 tentang Kebijakan Kelautan Indonesia', <https://www.hukumonline.com/pusatdata/detail/lt58cf446587a79/nprt/lt51063805382a5/peraturan-presiden-nomor-16-tahun-2017>.

²⁹ Ping, *Middle power statecraft*, pp. 153–222.

Indonesia's response to the regional initiatives of major Indo-Pacific powers

Since the end of the Cold War Indonesia has reinvigorated its 'free and active' foreign policy doctrine, first formulated in 1948 at the start of the Cold War, while changing its characterization from 'navigating between the two reefs' of the bipolar system to 'sailing in the turbulent oceans' of the current strategic uncertainty. Notwithstanding Indonesia's non-aligned foreign policy, which prevents it from joining in military alliances with any powers against others, throughout the Cold War Indonesia had been pulled towards one camp or the other. During Sukarno's Guided Democracy period (1959–65) the country became closely aligned with China with the establishment of the Jakarta–Phnom Penh–Hanoi–Beijing–Pyongyang axis to confront western neo-colonialism and imperialism,³⁰ while under the anti-communist, military-dominated New Order regime it entered into a de facto alliance with the United States and froze its diplomatic relations with China (1967–90).³¹ Since the end of the Cold War Indonesia has been able to pursue a more omnidirectional foreign policy, with primarily economic aims; this has included restoring its bilateral ties and developing close cooperation with the emergent economic powerhouse of China. Indonesia has signed comprehensive strategic partnerships with all the key players in the Indo-Pacific region, including China, India, Japan and the United States. Notwithstanding the existence of Great Power rivalry and the resultant strategic uncertainty, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–14) stated that Indonesia's foreign policy was characterized by 'a million friends and zero enemies'. While that slogan is not heard much any more, the basic premise that Indonesia does not have any external enemies has continued to inform the country's foreign policy, including in the Indo-Pacific region.

The resurgence of interest in the Indo-Pacific concept has undoubtedly been driven by geo-economics. China's BRI, particularly the Maritime Silk Road component, is marked by huge investment in infrastructures from south-east Asia to the eastern coast of Africa.³² The BRI, spanning the Indo-Pacific region, has attracted a lot of attention. On the one hand, China's massive investments have been welcomed because they are helping to speed up infrastructure development in countries that need it; on the other hand, the BRI has also attracted criticism for causing unacceptable indebtedness and dependence in a number of countries, to the point of potentially jeopardizing their sovereignty. Critics have even labelled China's BRI as 'predatory' investment. Not to be outdone, Japan has also intensified its investment activities as far as Africa, claiming to offer higher-quality investment, while India's 'Act East' policy has provided a rubric under which to

³⁰ See David Mozingo, *Chinese policy toward Indonesia, 1947–1967* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1976).

³¹ Juwono Sudarsono, *Indonesia and the United States, 1966–1975: an inquiry into a de facto alliance association*, PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 1979.

³² Masanori Hasegawa, 'The geography and geopolitics of the renminbi: a regional key currency', *International Affairs* 94: 3, May 2018, pp. 535–52; Shahar Hameiri and Darren J. Lim, 'China challenges global governance? Chinese international development finance and the AIIB', *International Affairs* 94: 3, May 2018, pp. 573–94.

enhance its relations with countries in the Asia–Pacific region, notably with the ASEAN member states.³³

The IOP states that the GMF vision should take into account the various regional initiatives such as the ASEAN Community, China's BRI, India's 'Act East' policy and the US 'pivot to Asia'. The IOP advocates synergy between the GMF vision and the other regional initiatives only if they are in line with Indonesia's national interests and if they can make positive contributions to peace. Indonesia was initially cautious about the BRI, unsure of how it would relate to its own GMF initiative. Lately, however, Indonesia has decided to participate in the BRI to realize the Jokowi government's ambitious infrastructure development. Jakarta needs huge amounts of investment funding to build ports, highways, railways, power plants, industrial estates and so on to improve connectivity and boost economic growth throughout the archipelago. Indonesia has also joined the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Indonesia, however, has not allowed itself to become too dependent on China. Besides the possible economic ramifications of overdependence on one source of investment, an overly visible Chinese presence in Indonesia (particularly the presence of large numbers of Chinese workers) would have negative socio-political consequences.³⁴ While the award of major infrastructure projects to China (such as the Jakarta–Bandung high-speed railway project, in which China's bid beat Japan's) has made headlines, Japan's role has not been overshadowed. Japan has long been a trusted economic partner of Indonesia and a top investor in infrastructure development and various sectors of the Indonesian economy. It should be noted that Japan has won the bid for, and started to build, the much longer medium-speed railway between Jakarta and Surabaya. While Singapore is the largest single investor in Indonesia, China and Japan are the other two top investors, and Indonesia benefits from their competition to win contracts for various large-scale infrastructure projects. To show that it is impartial towards Chinese and Japanese investment, Jakarta has awarded China the contract to build the Kuala Tanjung Port in north Sumatra, and Japan the contract to build the Patimban Port in west Java.

At the same time, the bilateral relationship between Indonesia and India has also intensified, with exchanges of high-level visits by the two countries' top leaders and cooperation agreements over a broad range of areas. What has attracted particular attention is the joint Indonesian–Indian proposal for India to invest in infrastructure in Sabang (Indonesia's northernmost island, in Aceh, close to the Andaman Sea) by building a port and a hospital there. Indonesia's coordinating minister for economic affairs, Luhut Panjaitan, during his visit to India prior to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Jakarta in late May 2018, was reported to have said that cooperation between Indonesia and India was important to maintain the power balance in the Indian and Pacific oceans so that no single

³³ Corey Wallace, 'Leaving (north-east) Asia? Japan's southern strategy', *International Affairs* 94: 4, July 2018, pp. 883–904.

³⁴ See Dewi Fortuna Anwar, 'Indonesia–China relations: coming full circle?', in Daljit Singh and Malcolm Cook, eds, *Southeast Asian Affairs 2019* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2019), pp. 145–64.

'superpower' could create instability.³⁵ Reports that India could use Sabang as a naval base, however, are clearly misleading: Indonesia does not allow foreign countries to have military bases on its territory as this would violate its 'free and active' foreign policy doctrine. During his state visit to Indonesia on 29–30 May 2018, Prime Minister Modi signed a joint statement with President Jokowi, entitled 'Statement on shared vision on maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific between India and Indonesia', which reaffirmed the importance of achieving a free, open, transparent, rules-based, peaceful, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.³⁶

Indonesia also welcomed the US rebalancing or 'pivot' towards Asia when it was put forward by President Barack Obama early in his first administration.³⁷ Indonesia, along with other ASEAN member states, had lamented the relative neglect of the east Asian region by President George W. Bush owing to his preoccupation with the Iraq War. Having tried unsuccessfully to get the United States to join the EAS since its inception in 2005, ASEAN was pleased to finally welcome President Obama to the summit in Bali in 2011, when Indonesia held the ASEAN chair. Continuing US high-level engagement in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in ASEAN-led regional mechanisms such as the EAS, is regarded as critical for ensuring regional peace and stability based on the concept of a 'dynamic equilibrium' among all of the participating powers.

Obama's rebalancing towards Asia, however, was focused too strongly on security and not enough on economic cooperation. The new US Indo-Pacific strategy is still unfolding, but it offers both prospects for more US investment and the threat of punitive American actions against countries (including Indonesia) that have enjoyed trade surpluses with the United States. The launch of the US trade war against China and the latter's retaliation is already causing financial instability around the region. The Indonesian economy, among others, has suffered a plunge in the value of its currency and a stock market decline. At the same time, Indonesia will clearly welcome the Trump administration's promise, as conveyed by former secretary of defence James N. Mattis at the 2018 Shangri-La Dialogue, of more private-sector-led development.³⁸

As far as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is concerned, there have been no official comments from Indonesia. Observers have noted, however, that ASEAN member countries have differing views about the Quad. A recent study showed that 57 per cent of ASEAN respondents support the Quad initiative as playing a useful role in regional security, while the rest are concerned that it might sideline ASEAN.³⁹ The study found that concern was highest among respondents in

³⁵ 'Menko Luhut sebut India lirik investasi di Sabang' [Coordinating Minister Luhut said that India is interested in investing in Sabang], CNN Indonesia, 18 May 2018.

³⁶ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 'Shared vision of India-Indonesia maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific', https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29933/Shared_Vision_of_IndiaIndo.

³⁷ See Dewi Fortuna Anwar, *An Indonesian perspective on the US rebalancing effort toward Asia* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 26 Feb. 2013).

³⁸ Terri Moon Cronk, 'Alliances, partnerships critical to US Indo-Pacific strategy, Mattis says', Department of Defense press release, 2 June 2018, <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/News/Article/Article/1538620/alliances-partnerships-critical-to-us-indo-pacific-strategy-mattis-says/>.

³⁹ Huong Le Thu, 'How southeast Asians really perceive the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue', Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, AMY update, 12 Nov. 2018, <https://amti.csis.org/how-southeast-asians-really-perceive-quad>.

Indonesia and Singapore, while the most supportive respondents were from the Philippines and Vietnam, the two countries engaged in territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea. The study argues that there are general misperceptions among ASEAN citizens that the Quad is too confrontational towards China, and that it challenges the centrality of ASEAN as the primary convenor of multi-lateral security forums in the Indo-Pacific.⁴⁰

Indonesia is not the only ASEAN member country that has tried to engage with all the major Indo-Pacific powers equally and avoid taking sides in the unfolding strategic rivalry between the United States and China. Developing close relations with all of the major powers in the region is regarded as important not only for economic reasons, but also to avoid excessive dependence on any one power, though some of the smaller ASEAN members have not been able to escape this. In the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific*, the various bilateral relationships between individual ASEAN member states and the other Indo-Pacific countries are regarded as important building blocks in the development of Indo-Pacific cooperation.

Indonesia as a middle power in the development of the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific

Indonesia's position and role in ASEAN since the association's establishment in 1967 is seen as one of the indicators of its status as a middle power.⁴¹ Despite being much larger than the other ASEAN member states, Indonesia has taken care to avoid being seen as a regional hegemon and thereby reviving memories of the confrontation with Malaysia in the 1960s. Instead, throughout the New Order period Indonesia pursued a policy of 'leading from behind' (*tut wuri handayani* in Javanese), promoting various policies and initiatives within ASEAN, which was designated the cornerstone of Indonesia's foreign policy.⁴² Indonesia's leadership within ASEAN in promoting regional cooperation to strengthen national and regional resilience, and its role in mediating intraregional conflicts and in managing the region's relations with extraregional powers, can be regarded as examples of traditional middle-power functions and behaviour.

After the fall of Suharto and Indonesia's transition to democracy in the wake of the Asian financial crisis, the country has continued to lead in trying to transform ASEAN, though with mixed success. Departing somewhat from its earlier low-profile approach, Indonesia adopted a much more robust style in pushing ASEAN to accept democratization and the protection of human rights as parts of the regional agenda. While these new values were included in the draft of the ASEAN Charter, many in Indonesia were deeply disappointed that the final Charter that was signed in late 2007 diluted many of the proposals on democracy and human rights that had been put forward by the country's negotiators. A

⁴⁰ Huong Le Thu, 'How southeast Asians really perceive the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue'.

⁴¹ See Thies and Sari, 'A role theory approach', pp. 404–406.

⁴² See Dewi Fortuna Anwar, *Indonesia in ASEAN: foreign policy and regionalism* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1994).

number of civil society activists even suggested that Indonesia should not ratify the ASEAN Charter. Critical voices began to be heard in Indonesia about ASEAN in general and its place in Indonesian foreign policy in particular.⁴³ Rizal Sukma, a leading analyst of Indonesia's foreign policy and later a foreign policy adviser to Jokowi, wrote an op-ed entitled 'Indonesia needs a post-ASEAN foreign policy',⁴⁴ triggering debates about whether ASEAN would no longer be considered the cornerstone of national foreign policy.

Whereas President Yudhoyono enjoyed appearing on the regional and global stage, taking a leadership role in various regional and multilateral initiatives, Jokowi during his presidential campaign emphasized a much more down-to-earth foreign policy primarily geared towards economic development. While Indonesia has continued to maintain its position in various regional and multilateral forums, during the early years of Jokowi's presidency the country's foreign policy was mostly regarded as transactional, focusing on a few key bilateral relationships, with less interest in playing a leadership role within ASEAN. However, as noted above, Indonesia did elevate the IORA meeting to summit level when it was in the chair. In this context, Indonesia's new maritime focus on becoming a GMF and the broadening of its interest to the Indo-Pacific region have been interpreted by some as indications of diminishing interest in ASEAN. Shekhar, for instance, has argued that Indonesia is no longer satisfied with its restricted role in ASEAN and so has widened its geostrategic interest to encompass the Indo-Pacific region. Shekhar asserts that Indonesia's foreign policy is undergoing a 'radical adjustment', that 'the principle of institutional multilateralism that drove the middle power diplomacy has faced serious questioning' and that the principles of 'ASEAN centrality' and 'ASEAN as the cornerstone' of its foreign policy have largely fallen into disuse under Jokowi.⁴⁵

In fact, as later became apparent, the development of the wider discourse on the Indo-Pacific has reinvigorated Indonesia's foreign policy within ASEAN. High on Indonesia's foreign policy agenda is the unity of ASEAN and its continuing centrality in regional affairs. In an increasingly complex regional environment, the only way for Indonesia and ASEAN to achieve the desired regional order of strategic autonomy and ASEAN agency is to play an active role in shaping it. With ASEAN as the primary convenor of regional dialogues and forums involving its many dialogue partners, the various ASEAN-led mechanisms have become the main building blocks for cooperation in the wider region beyond south-east Asia. However, not only is the emergence of various Indo-Pacific initiatives seen as a possible challenge to ASEAN centrality; there are also concerns that these different initiatives may polarize the region further. Responding to these new regional developments, the Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi remarked in her annual press statement on 9 January 2018:

⁴³ Jurgen Ruland, *The Indonesian way: ASEAN, Europeanization, and foreign policy debates in a new democracy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017).

⁴⁴ Rizal Sukma, 'Indonesia needs a post-ASEAN foreign policy', *Jakarta Post*, 30 June 2009.

⁴⁵ Vibanshu Shekhar, *Indonesia's foreign policy and grand strategy in the 21st century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 1–2.

In the midst of regional and global geopolitical changes, Indonesia, along with South-east Asian countries, which are located at the crossroads of the Indian and Pacific Oceans MUST continue to be the prominent player in the creation of a regional architecture ... Indonesia wants the eco-system of peace, stability, prosperity to be established not only in ASEAN, but also in the Indian and Pacific Oceans Rims or the Indo-Pacific.⁴⁶

Marsudi also stressed that Indonesia will continue to work with ASEAN to develop 'a strong positive cooperation' in the Indo-Pacific 'that would not be based on suspicion or worse, a perception of threat'. She further stated that Indonesia would work together with other countries to develop 'an Indo-Pacific umbrella' to enhance confidence-building measures, mutually beneficial cooperation and a habit of dialogue.

Both Foreign Minister Marsudi and President Jokowi lobbied the other ASEAN countries intensively for support for Indonesia's draft on the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific*. At the 32nd ASEAN summit on 28 April 2018 in Singapore, Jokowi reiterated the necessity for ASEAN to take the lead in the formation of an enabling environment in the Indo-Pacific region that will foster the habit of dialogue, of resolving disputes peacefully and of avoiding the use of force. He stressed that ASEAN must be able to use a full repertoire of means to overcome the various security threats, and must be proactive in creating new centres of growth in the Indo-Pacific region. Jokowi also emphasized the importance of ASEAN's centrality in developing the Indo-Pacific concept and of basing the concept on the principles of openness, inclusivity and transparency as well as on cooperation and friendship.⁴⁷ Jokowi restated his views on the Indo-Pacific concept at the EAS on 15 November 2018 in Singapore.

Besides the Foreign Minister and the President, the Indonesian Minister of Defence has also expressed his support for paying greater attention to the Indo-Pacific security architecture, particularly in facing the threat of terrorism. At the 17th Shangri-La Dialogue, convened by the Institute for International and Strategic Studies in Singapore on 2 June 2018, Defence Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu said that 'the need to recalibrate the security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region is an urgency that needs to be realized or materialized so that we can navigate every threat and challenge in the region appropriately, correctly and proportionately'. Reflecting on Indonesia's preoccupation with terrorist threats amid the rise in suicide bombings inspired by the extreme ideology of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, Ryacudu pointed to the need to identify those terrorists when they are still in Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria so that they can be identified when they return to their country of origin, thus highlighting the importance of cooperation between Indo-Pacific countries in this matter.⁴⁸ It was noteworthy that the

⁴⁶ 2018 Annual Press Statement of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, H. E. Retno L.P. Marsudi, <http://fpcindonesia.org/beta/images/files/PPTM%202018%20English.pdf>.

⁴⁷ 'Kerjasama Indo-Pasifik: Jokowi usulkan tiga ide untuk ASEAN' [Indo-Pacific cooperation: Jokowi proposed three ideas for ASEAN], *Tempo.Co*, 28 April 2018, <https://bisnis.tempo.co/read/1084015/kerja-sama-indo-pasifik-jokowi-usulkan-tiga-ide-untuk-asean>.

⁴⁸ Reiny Dwinanda, 'Recalibration of regional security important: Ryacudu', *Republika.co.id*, 3 June 2018, <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/en/national-politics/18/06/03/p9puwl414-recalibration-of-regional-security-important-ryacudu>.

minister highlighted the non-traditional threats of transnational terrorism as the main reason for enhancing Indo-Pacific cooperation, without touching on the issue of Great Power rivalry.

It was apparent that initially the other ASEAN members were not too enthusiastic about the Indo-Pacific construct. In early 2018, a senior foreign policy observer from Singapore, which held the ASEAN chair at the time, remarked that 'at present ASEAN is at best agnostic' about the 'free and open Indo-Pacific concept' as it still lacked clarity.⁴⁹ The Singaporean chairman's statement at the 32nd ASEAN summit did not dwell on the 'Indo-Pacific' concept at length. The second point of that statement noted that ASEAN leaders 'reaffirmed the importance of ASEAN centrality and unity in our Community-building efforts and engagement with external partners'; it further noted that they also 'welcomed initiatives that reinforce an ASEAN-centric regional architecture that is open, transparent, inclusive and rules-based' and that these 'initiatives will be built upon ASEAN-led mechanisms'. It then added that the ASEAN leaders 'look forward to further discussion on recent initiatives, including the Indo-Pacific concept', indicating that ASEAN will view this concept favourably only if it meets all of the criteria laid out by ASEAN.⁵⁰ Indonesia was tasked by ASEAN leaders with developing an Indo-Pacific concept that could be proposed to the association's members for adoption.

After extensive consultations inside and outside Indonesia between 2017 and 2018, the Indonesian foreign ministry, in particular the Policy Analysis and Planning Agency headed by Siswo Pramono, produced a draft document entitled *Indonesia's perspective for an ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific: towards a peaceful, prosperous, and inclusive region*.⁵¹ This draft underlined the principles of openness, inclusiveness, transparency, respect for international laws and ASEAN centrality. It proposed that cooperation be carried out through a two-pronged building-block approach: first, strengthening the ASEAN-led mechanisms, particularly the EAS, and then connecting these mechanisms with other non-ASEAN regional mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific region. It outlined three main objectives of the cooperation: (1) to create an enabling environment for peace, stability and prosperity; (2) to address security challenges, both traditional and non-traditional; and (3) to promote economic cooperation. Three areas of concrete cooperation were put forward: maritime cooperation; infrastructure and connectivity; and sustainable development goals.

Indonesia also launched a national initiative to hold a 'high-level dialogue on Indo-Pacific cooperation' in Jakarta on 20 March 2019. The dialogue was attended by the foreign ministers, vice-ministers and senior officials of the 18 members of the EAS. At the dialogue, the Indonesian foreign minister laid out the Indonesian proposal on the Indo-Pacific construct. In an article published in the *Jakarta Post* on the same day, Marsudi wrote that the high-level dialogue would 'serve as a

⁴⁹ Bilahari Kausikan, 'ASEAN: agnostic on the free and open Indo-Pacific', *The Diplomat*, 27 April 2018.

⁵⁰ 'Chairman's statement of the 32nd ASEAN summit', Singapore, 28 April 2018, asean.org/chairmans-statement-of-the-32nd-asean-summit.

⁵¹ See Dian Septiari, 'RI pushes for shared ASEAN position on Indo-Pacific', *Jakarta Post*, 15 Aug. 2018.

dynamic and interactive platform for sharing each and every one's view on Indo-Pacific cooperation' and that 'by recognising the available and potential opportunities for regional cooperation, we can dismiss unnecessary suspicion and mistrust that cloud the Indo-Pacific discourse'.⁵²

Indonesia's foreign policy activism in promoting the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific* bore fruit when the Indonesian draft was formally endorsed by the ASEAN leaders at their summit in Bangkok in June 2019 with only minor changes. The whole process, from start to finish, of getting the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific* formally adopted by ASEAN was a clear demonstration of Indonesia's status and role as a middle power: it deployed the full array of a middle power's tools of trade, including agenda-setting, coalition-building and convening to achieve its goal.

As noted above, de Swielande differentiates three types of middle powers, Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian, and this article argues that Indonesia has for the most part displayed the characteristics of a Kantian middle power, prioritizing a positive and collaborative approach towards its strategic environment. Writing mostly about the Yudhoyono period, Acharya wrote: 'Indonesia is an emerging power of 21st century Asia and world order, but it is not moving towards that position in the traditional manner.' According to Acharya, the pathway to Indonesia's status, rather than being based merely on military and/or economic capabilities—for in these areas Indonesia still lags behind many of its Asian neighbours—lies in its ability 'to develop a virtuous correlation among three factors—democracy, development and stability—while pursuing a foreign policy of restraint towards neighbours and active engagement with the world at large'.⁵³ In asserting a prominent role for Indonesia in developing the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific*, notwithstanding earlier criticisms of his more transactional foreign policy, Jokowi has again demonstrated a Kantian middle-power approach to the evolving Indo-Pacific geopolitical dynamics.

Conclusion

According to Foreign Minister Marsudi, Jakarta's role in conceptualizing the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific* and seeking agreement from ASEAN and its dialogue partners is significant for at least three reasons. First, it cements Indonesia's unofficial leadership in ASEAN and its status as a global middle power. Second, it entrenches ASEAN centrality, placing the association in the driver's seat in managing regional security and economic challenges. Third, it could provide a cogent Indo-Pacific partnership strategy to offset Great Power politics, by offering a view that is independent of China, the United States and other stakeholders, such as Australia, India and Japan.⁵⁴

In the section of the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific* entitled 'Background and rationale', it is stated that the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions are among the

⁵² Retno L. P. Marsudi, 'Time to deepen Indo-Pacific cooperation', *Jakarta Post*, 20 March 2019.

⁵³ Amitav Acharya, *Indonesia matters: Asia's emerging democratic power* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2015), pp. 1–2.

⁵⁴ Jansen Tham, 'What's in Indonesia's Indo-Pacific cooperation concept?', *The Diplomat*, 16 May 2018.

most dynamic in the world and have for decades been centres of economic growth, but that continuing geopolitical and strategic shifts are providing both opportunities and challenges. While, on the one hand, the region's economic growth provides opportunities for cooperation, on the other, the rise of economic and military power 'requires avoiding the deepening of mistrust, miscalculation, and patterns of behaviour based on a zero-sum game'. The ASEAN concept avoids mentioning any countries by name or identifying any specific challenges to regional security.

The *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific* has four key elements: first, a perspective on the Asia–Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, not as contiguous territorial spaces but as a closely integrated and interconnected region, in which ASEAN plays a central and strategic role; second, the identification of this Indo-Pacific region as one of dialogue and cooperation rather than rivalry, and, third, of development and prosperity for all; and fourth, a recognition of the importance of the maritime domain and perspective in the evolving regional architecture. Its underlying principles include the importance of strengthening ASEAN centrality, openness, transparency, inclusivity and a rules-based framework, as well as adherence to international law. Furthermore, the *ASEAN outlook* would be guided by the purposes and principles contained in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. There are four broad areas of cooperation, namely the maritime arena, connectivity, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the economic field (which includes other possible areas of cooperation). So far as the practicalities of operation are concerned, the *ASEAN outlook* is primarily driven by ASEAN-led mechanisms, while recognizing the potential for cooperation with other regional mechanisms in the Asia–Pacific and Indian Ocean regions.

While some commentators have hailed the launch of the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific* as providing ASEAN with a common platform on which to engage in the evolving Indo-Pacific construct, others have expressed scepticism. The scepticism is centred on the efficacy of ASEAN in driving the Indo-Pacific regional process, in view of the problems of disunity it has faced, its weakness in standing up to China over the South China Sea disputes, its weak institutions and slow decision-making process.⁵⁵ Questions have also been raised over the geographical scope of the *ASEAN outlook*, which is not clearly defined, and whether ASEAN would be willing to deal with issues in south Asian countries. If the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific* is just more of the same, that is no longer considered sufficient to deal with the new regional challenges.⁵⁶

How one views the prospect for the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific*—whether as an initiative likely to bring about fruitful cooperation and build strategic trust among the large numbers of stakeholders, including the major regional players, or as doomed from the start—is determined to a large extent by one's theoretical perspective. Acharya, a strong believer in constructivism, has highlighted

⁵⁵ Sophie Boisseu du Rocher, 'Great expectations: ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific concept', *The Diplomat*, 17 June 2019.

⁵⁶ Tang Sieu Mun, 'ASEAN found its voice with its Indo-Pacific concept. Now it has to use it or risk losing it', *South China Morning Post*, 29 June 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/3015809/asean-found-its-voice-indo-pacific-concept-now-it-has-use-it>.

ASEAN's noteworthy efforts to anchor an inclusive multilateral regional forum such as the ARF in such a way as to promote cooperative security, suggesting that such initiatives 'may help shape the balance of power by providing norms of restraint and avenues of confidence building among the major powers'.⁵⁷ Jones and Smith, clearly of a more realist persuasion, published a book entitled *ASEAN and east Asian international relations: regional delusion*,⁵⁸ in which they voiced scathing criticisms of the celebratory writings about ASEAN, and basically debunked most of ASEAN's claims to success as delusional.

ASEAN leaders will clearly need to pay some attention to the constructive criticisms about the efficacy of their leadership in driving regional cooperation in the much larger Indo-Pacific region. One positive factor for ASEAN is that its *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific* is likely to receive endorsement from its dialogue partners, including the major powers grouped in the EAS. The next step for ASEAN will be to establish a detailed strategy and plan of action on how cooperation will be carried out in practice in the different areas identified. As one observer has pointed out, 'missing from the outline of the Indonesian strategy for the Indo-Pacific was how the good intentions could be turned into real policy'.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, lingering doubts about ASEAN's ability to stand united on key issues will continue to weaken the association's centrality.⁶⁰ In this context, Indonesia's role as a middle power in ensuring ASEAN unity, as it has often done in the past, will become even more critical.

⁵⁷ Acharya, *Constructing a security community*, p. 230.

⁵⁸ David Martin Jones and M. L. R. Smith, *ASEAN and east Asian international relations: regional delusion* (Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2006).

⁵⁹ Donald E. Weatherbee, 'Indonesia, ASEAN, and the Indo-Pacific cooperation concept', *Perspective* (ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute), no. 47, 7 June 2019.

⁶⁰ Vibanshu Shekhar, 'Is Indonesia's "Indo-Pacific" strategy a weak play?', *PacNet*, Pacific Forum, Honolulu, 17 July 2018.