

# The Vision of Global Maritime Fulcrum within ASEAN Centrality to Maintain Regional Stability

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this study is to discuss the vision of Global Maritime Fulcrum precisely for Indonesia's foreign policy in the region. This study also in addition to examine the essential needs for coherence and collective response of ASEAN toward strategic rivalries US-China, then bring great risk in the vicinity, notably territorial disputes in South China Sea and following with the logical consequence of the Quad. By using the theory of Regional Security Complex by Barry Buzan, primary and secondary data related to Indonesia's GMF in the regional architecture were processed using qualitative methods. This study also links the concept of dynamic equilibrium by Indonesia then-Foreign Minister, Marty Natalegawa, which emphasized trust and norms among all actors who were involved in the region, of which aligned with ASEAN centrality. The research result leads to the capability of Indonesia which implies if Indonesia is keen to improve its capabilities through the GMF, this vision can be considered as a tangible complementary and modality in the midst of emerging turbulence power in the region.

## 1. Introduction

Since former President of Republic of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhiyono, took the office in 2013, Indonesia's foreign policy started to develop the maritime potential roles through regional cooperation. Sustaining by the current Indonesia's President, Joko Widodo, the Global Maritime Fulcrum was designed and promoted to focus on maritime diplomacy. This is grounding on Indonesia's diplomacy by the engagement in Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), US-Indonesia strategic relationship and other cooperations for multilateral and bilateralism frameworks. This shall be acknowledged as one of many steps to support geostrategic, geoeconomic and geopolitics improvements for Indonesia. However, noting that the strategic geopolitical position for Indonesia, unfortunately it involves an inevitable disputed issue in the region, where it stranding around the South China Sea and Straits of Malacca [7]. Not to mention, US-China rivalry beyond SEA, which is in Indo-Pacific within the competitive regional vision.

On such grounds, this research used the previous research by Greta Nabbs-Keller whom argue that Indonesia's GMF committed to prevent hegemony of major powers with expanding Indonesia's defense, political and economic engagement in bilateral and multilateral level in essence at the center of the emerging Indo-Pacific concept [1]. This research also continuing according to the workshop discussion held by S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in regards to debate the maritime fulcrum challenges. The discussion mentioned that Indonesia eventually decided not to back-down and inspired to go along with the GMF [2]. Another side to analyze, the US-China rivalry remained as the main challenges in geopolitics turbulence, this research also lies the previous publication by Andrew Scobell whom argue the historical context of why the rivalry happened between these two countries. Additionally, the concept of rivalry itself lies upon the definition by William Thompson whom argue

how rivalry endure within specific timeframe and assumption [3]. In deep-dive theory context, this research also used the publication by Michael J. Nazzar et al., in defining how a certain country would emerge in the contemporary era, not to mention Indonesia has been acknowledge as a middle-power country. However, not many previous research connecting the variable issue of GMF and the rivalry in the region, such as whether Indonesia would actively play a certain role or keep passive as a spectator in the regional dynamic.

The purpose of this study is to discuss the extent of Indonesia's efforts in realizing the vision of the Global Maritime Axis, precisely for Indonesia's foreign policy in the region. This includes reviewing important issues that must be faced collectively by ASEAN over the US-China strategic competition which has a big impact, especially territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

## **2. Method**

This research will be using the qualitative research method to have better understanding regarding the Global Maritime Fulcrum in the regional architecture. The author used qualitative research method in order to explore, analyze, and explain the connection between the theory and the research topic. This paper used qualitative analysis methods that are written based on primary, secondary and tertiary literature review that include speech text, primary report, e-book, academic articles, think tank review dialogues, newspaper, official website and handbooks. At the end of the research, authors will find result from analyzing the theory.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### *3.1. The Capability of the Global Maritime Fulcrum as Dynamic Equilibrium*

### *3.2. Geopolitics Shifting into Indo-Pacific*

Since Soeharto's New Order regime, Indonesia has been convinced to leave behind *Konfrontasi* alignment and saw that regionalism was essential for national development. Therefore, Indonesia also enthusiastically saw ASEAN as a regional forum that could display Indonesia's leadership in Southeast Asia. However, seeing the historical context, Indonesia and other ASEAN member states had an acute problematic relationship, for example, Indonesia and Malaysia confrontation in 1963-1966. Not only these two vulnerable countries but Singapore and Malaysia also had a similar problematic relationship in 1965, which left bitterness in bilateral cooperation between the two countries. Despite some bitter historical background, ASEAN Member States (AMS) has been realize the benefits in Southeast Asia. Illustrated by the geo-economic shift to East Asia, the Asia-Pacific or until now called Indo-Pacific as the pivotal of the region reflected from an extensive network growth of regional economic architecture-building, which was led and initiated by ASEAN. This has been proven in 2015, combining the GDP of ten countries of ASEAN members would reach up to the sixth-largest economy globally. Thailand and the Philippines also recognized this positive light for the region stability. Indeed, a few decades have passed and witnessed tremendous GDP and a significant number of population in Asia. Following the shifting of the region, major powers also expand its interest into Asia region.

On such grounds, there's bold assumption which all countries learned from the World War as such avoid potential war as the consequence of long-standing rivalries among the major power countries. With bigger attention from major countries, such as US, India, Australia, Japan, South Korea, even European countries, this would turn on the geopolitics dynamic – not to mention the motivation of US allies to pressure and prolong the strategic rivalry with China in the region.

Strategic rivalries would endure due to limited room for ASEAN centrality with the gap of degree in terms of power between ASEAN and the major power, not to mention interdependency with external power. Geopolitics in Asia are taken by the major power which is India, China, US and Japan with the relations in between, such us, India-China, China-US and China-Japan [4]. In order to ease strategic rivalries in primary geopolitics in Asia, these major powers seem have interest to adhere and legitimize the norms and regional policies that are promoted by ASEAN. Although ASEAN's most important advantages why these major powers desire to adhere is the access of economic and logistic to Southeast Asia which could influence geopolitical stability in region. However, if the rivalries still enduring, later

ASEAN power doesn't have enough leverage to curtail confrontation pressure. ASEAN contribution to maintain stable region remained with the use of diplomacy and dialogue without use of force is unable to address such upcoming security issues. Hence, ASEAN centrality remain questioned on how this organization should do and to what extent they could address such issue as the consequences of rivalries in region.

### *3.3. Indonesia's advantages through the design of Global Maritime Fulcrum in domestic and regional level*

With Indonesia's key purpose behind its membership of ASEAN, this country presumes would reduce the growing tension amid uncertainty threat against major power countries. Recognized as one of the most-populated countries, Indonesia stands between two oceans and is seen as a bridge of Asian continent and the Indian Ocean [5]. Furthermore, notice the opportunity to have a leadership role in a regional forum which stood as *primus inter pares* for Indonesia expression within ASEAN. To avoid many possibilities from the increasing of traditional and non-traditional threats, Indonesia formulated a grand design called *Poros Maritim Dunia* or Global Maritime Fulcrum which would advance their foreign policy, in particular their reputation as the archipelagic country. The Indo-Pacific within ASEAN big role has become more significant for the world nowadays. Hence, maritime power needs to advance because Indonesia has been notable for lies at the heart of the geographical position between two significant oceans.

President Joko Widodo formed the GMF notion into five pillars, such as rebuilding Indonesia's maritime culture, better management of Indonesia's maritime resources, development of Indonesia's maritime infrastructure and connectivity, intensifying Indonesia's maritime diplomacy and strengthening Indonesia's maritime defense force [6]. Maritime activity covers Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) and trade shipping lines or other sea-based activities. Putting the maritime-based notion to manage the possibility of shifting global power in this region, Indonesia undertook multilateral and bilateral approach and built a coalition in multilateral forums in ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting (ADMM) and East Asia Summit (EAS). ASEAN was undeniably seen as a potential forum for peaceful settlement and being able to fulfill mutual interests. This attempt to reduce rivalries among great power. Within the grand design of GMF, Indonesia makes some efforts to have capability while rolling its leadership in ASEAN over regional dynamics.

The Global Maritime Fulcrum could be seen its capabilities from internal and external elements. From external elements, Indonesia is seen undoubtedly dependent upon external support for investments and funding [2]. Since 2014, President Joko Widodo (or Jokowi) declared the notion of GMF officially at the East Asia Summit in Myanmar, this attempt tries to recreating its maritime legacy. Without forgetting the importance of ASEAN, the GMF would actually present Indonesia's geopolitics and provide opportunities to its domestic needs as well which means we see it from internal elements. This grand notion would reduce the development gap from Sabang to Merauke for Indonesia as the Archipelago country.

Based on domestic needs, implementing the notion of GMF involves maritime interconnection through sea toll program. Sea toll program integrated with the Global Maritime Fulcrum strategy to improve connectivity and maritime infrastructure in order to pressing price disparities between east and west parts in Indonesia, especially high gap between Java Island and outer Java (Kurniawati Sa'adah, 2019). This program consists of six-lane highway freeway that will connect ports throughout Indonesia. Connectivity within this archipelagic country expected reduce disparity in which Indonesian people from various parts will no longer gain price gap with the scarcity of commodities. As a result of this implementation, Indonesia managed to reduce logistics cost from 25.7% of GDP in 2013 to 22.1% in 2018. Although these numbers still needed to be pushed down compared with Malaysia and the Philippines that only need 19% of GDP for logistics. Based on the World Bank report in 2018, Indonesia was ranked 46 of 163 from ranked 63 prior two years according to Logistics Performa Index (LPI) [7].

**Table 1.** Indonesia’s Rank in Trade Logistic

Year	Rank	LPI Score
2007	43	3.01
2010	75	2.76
2012	59	2.94
2014	53	3.08
2016	63	2.98
2018	46	3.15

Following the domestic needs, regional level could give geopolitics and geoeconomics advantages for Indonesia. Through the Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity, Indonesia has been discussed through to create maritime interconnection and strengthen delivery routes within region. Over 47 routes, 14 of them located in Indonesia among ASEAN countries (Figure 1.). Nevertheless, extend beyond regional level, the advantages might touch the global turbulence which attract many actors put interest in the heart of Asia.



**Figure 1.** 47 Regional ports are targeted to improve performance based on the ASEAN Transport Strategic Plan for 2015-2025.

*3.4. Determination of the grand vision*

Maintaining stability in the midst of regional turbulence, Indonesia must keep dynamic equilibrium within free and active foreign policy. Under President SBY, Indonesia’s strategy keeps a policy of “thousand friends and zero enemies” involved in various international forums actively. In addition, during President Jokowi presidency, he emphasize the “down to earth” kind of foreign policy’s strategy in which economic diplomacy became a priority [8]. This kind of diplomacy actually emphasized foreign policy into domestic orientation [9]. Also, it stressed on trade, tourism and investment where the Indonesia diplomats act as salesperson to promote Indonesia products. Nonetheless, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> term of President Joko Widodo some analysts and government institutions argue contradictory regarding if the vision of GMF still remain or vanish up until now. Some analysts would say that this vision still remains and is implemented even though it doesn’t mentioned verbally (Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia, 2020).

The fortunate of GMF, the determination lies upon Indonesia’s capacity to fetched into dynamic equilibrium for geostrategic. The capacity of sea power between the twin oceans of enmeshing regional great powers in cooperative relationship while facilitating back-up deterrence against their potential aggression [10]. The sea power that build-up through the GMF will be able for middle power country, notably Indonesia, to exercise autonomy and independence and is less prone from external control and

influence [2]. With the emerging idea of Indo-Pacific, this model could support Indonesia as dynamic equilibrium for the diversity of powers and inclusive regionalism [11].

### 3.5. ASEAN Centrality

#### 3.6. Overview

ASEAN centrality known as the stabilizer to advance security prosperity and to keep the dynamics in the region [12]. Ever since 2013, ASEAN already acknowledge its role in the middle of major power, notably US and China and ASEAN should remain serve as stabilizing factor to the regional environment which capable of influencing the strategic balance in the Asia-Pacific as a whole. In order to reflect ASEAN's existence which its centrality is also reflect directly on its effectiveness as a regional leader, ASEAN create three pillars – the ASEAN Economic Community, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community and ASEAN Security Community – and ASEAN Charter to upgrade the areas of cohesion and cooperation of strategic interest [4]. However, the stabilizer role is limited in which ASEAN doesn't have independent capabilities of influence without dependent not only internally relations, but also external leverage in the region.

Ideally, lack of cohesion needs to be address to prevent any potential of uncomfortable position to choose side. It can't be denied by historical context of AMS tension which indicated some stormy relations that still remained covered by containing the tension among its member states. Without any provision or mechanism for dispute settlement agreed by AMS, this organization will not prepare of potential conflict in the future due to rising insecurity and uncertainty in the region [13]. ASEAN's room will continue to be limited in terms of power between inter-AMS, even the major powers. However, some would argue that this tension would happen only in early years of ASEAN in which nowadays the capabilities of ASEAN centrality look promising.

#### 3.7. Discourse of the ASEAN Way

In the light of the centrality of ASEAN, this organization will continues adhere to the principle called "ASEAN Way". The ASEAN Way reflect of rule of interaction for ASEAN, both among member states or with external states. These values are upholding the idea of non-interference in internal affairs, informality, backdoor diplomacy, consensus-building, non-harsh mechanism in dispute settlement mechanism and emphasize in progressive and constructive changes [14]. Scholars should distinct that the ASEAN Way also encompass two important norms. Behavioural norms and procedural norms are constructing the AMS to decision-making based on consultation and consensus, in addition to the general code of conduct within the international community. Ideational factors from identities are important for constructing the concept of ASEAN Way. Collective identity was formed among AMS as they shared norms created based on their interaction over time and led to peace [15]. Therefore, it should be noted the process in which they shared norms first then build and develop ASEAN Way as regional identity. Following that, the principle of non-interference also remains demonstrated by AMS in present decade. Even though we can't conclude that would be the unique of ASEAN alone aside from the fact that this principle already written and acknowledge in the UN Charter, but it should be highlighted that this principle is very important as each of them is respect for sovereignty. This idea is also useful for build confidence from each member to prevent the escalation of conflicts, although they might be hold mutual suspicious highlighting their national interest.

On the cynicism point of view, many scholar critics the ASEAN Way in which not enough to address crisis issue in the region, for example Myanmar issue. The non-interference principle presumed only hampered ASEAN fast response to its decision-making, particularly humanitarian crisis. Although ASEAN member already adopted the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 1976, the idea of non-interference principle already written but not legally binding for participating actors. The blurred line in the idea of ASEAN Way that prevent state behaviour would give the perception that ASEAN doesn't have enough capacity to response domestic issue in respecting member state with the possibility that the issue could spread beyond that state's border into the region.

On the contrary, Dewi Fortuna Anwar, argue that ASEAN have the capability for managing relations with major powers. Even Jakarta still believe that this regional institution should be ambitious about

emphasizing and promoting its code of conduct to resolve conflicts to countries outside the bloc within the regional architecture [16]. In addition, it also ASEAN's interest to moderate relations between the major power to its best abilities [4]. The rivalry in the region keeps ASEAN to remained become the equilibrium which in line with its desire position as regional balancer. It can be interpreted based on the nature of Asia which always look for a harmonious way to resolve dispute in a peaceful manner. Following with flexible in decision-making process and certain with no enemies and a million friends are made in many aspects [12]. ASEAN will keep looking for balancing and not to bandwagon to powerful states. Marty Natalegawa called this nature as dynamic equilibrium in his speech in Washington DC in 2013.

That notion would enhance the arena of ASEAN Regional Forum in which ASEAN could facilitate a constructive dialogue with external major and emerging powers in forum to play a particular role, such as bridge-builder, peace maker and/or confidence builder under its centrality. This forum now aspires to be actively expanding its role that need to address a number of issues and practical dilemmas in regional's uncertainty [17]. This is underlining the Southeast Asia architecture which lies as Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality as the importance principle, hence, any kind of geopolitics turbulence in the region driven by the rivalry from the competing actors could affect the regional forum as well. ASEAN Regional Forum as the primary forum also involving the presence of the US, China, Japan, India, Australia and South Korea besides ASEAN.

Indonesia always prevails its stance on the centrality of ASEAN in the regional architecture. This stance comes from a concern based on preceding phenomena of Cold War of which within ASEAN, try to reduce the fate of geopolitical beyond Southeast Asia through the rivalry of Sino-US. In line with ASEAN values to create inclusive regionalism – without diminishing the regional centrality – Indonesia act upon the free and active foreign policy by engaging to build inclusive relations with every state.

### *3.8. Strategic Rivalries in the Region*

#### *3.9. The concept of rivalry and its application*

Strategic rivalries often linked to a set of territorial conflicts, arms races, alliances building, hard-liners in power and other behaviour that would move the chance of war [3]. The idea of “rivalry” also refers to “a contest for some honor, prize and advantage” and “an activity done by a number of states, each of which is trying to do better than all the others” [18]. With contradict and competitive power which make rivalry, when the rivals engage each other, their suspicious and hostilities easily heighten from the outset. This relationship happened between states that have long-standing conflictual relationship which also connected across space and time. However, we can't simply suggest their interaction only with those indicators.

Great powers in Southeast Asia were fundamentally increasing – US, China, India, Japan and Russia – that unfortunately continue depends the relations among them in terms of the region dynamics. Regional stage involved the relationship of US-China that remained critical as rival to each other since the Tiananmen Square event in 1989 that created worst perception of US-China relations eventually [17]. The United States takes geostrategic step with engage of its allies, Australia, by upgrading its relations into security relations. Following this step, India also growing its strategic interest in the region within their suspicious perception toward China that could hampered India's interests. Japan also seems align with India suspicious linger for China and strive to building its capability to protect their geostrategic and geoeconomics interest. With those complex relations, those major powers seem used Southeast Asia as their theater and object of geopolitical rivalry.

#### *3.10. Sino relations with the US and its allies*

China relations with the United States is very dynamic seeing that these countries were allies since 1971 as anti Uni Soviet until its fallout then changed into confrontation that shaped the tension in this century. The United States relation with Taiwan and the perception toward China of the Tiananmen event in 1989 began to see as a threat for China. Since the Obama administration that shift US foreign policy “return to Asia” in 2010, signaled the US interest to build up its military posture in the region. China historical claim in the South China Sea also triggered against the United States while the US lies that

sea for freedom of navigation and China with their nine-dash line claims on the sea which not written in the UNCLOS. Sino-American relations play in not only in regional level in Asia but their assertive presence is going global.

Following the main pivotal rivalries in the region, Japan also in line with the US as the rival for China. Similar starter points of rivalry with the US, since the end of Cold War that gives question and leaves uncertainty in Southeast Asia, this marked the contradict bilateral relations. Yet someone would describe this kind of rivalry relations as “two tigers sharing a mountain” [19]. This also lies that East Asian becomes arena for Japan and China to seeking more active profile ever since the end of Cold War. Japan decided to be more engage in Southeast Asia in 1977 (this motivation called Fukuda Doctrine) and China heightened their involvement in the region by the late 1970s. The growing rivalry Sino-Japanese consist in three domains of economics, security and politics [20]. In economic comparison, Japan seems fall behind from China as China successful survive during the Financial Crisis in 1997-1998 that surprisingly build good image for ASEAN countries, especially Indonesia and Thailand for committing aid packages of US\$1 billion. This aid well received from China as “responsible country” for the most affected country. Meanwhile, Japan was seen not entirely responsive and coherent. With reliant with the IMF that had not go down well to the ASEAN hindered Japan as the regional power in the region. While in politics comparison, both China and Japan try to look for benefit in multilateralism table, such as ASEAN Regional Forum, ADMM+, and East Asia Summit (although China also play well in bilateral talks). Both countries looking to play with conducive and more active in the region and try to not oppose each other openly with the creation of ASEAN+3 which addition member of China, South Korea and Japan. Last, in security comparisons could be seen widely ever since in the 1990s China play more actively and prominent in SCS which signaled alarm for respecting countries, including Japan. With Abe’s administration that declare “proactive pacifism” has prompted Japan more involved in maritime of Southeast Asia. In 2015, Japanese navy already conducted joint exercises with the Philippine navy near the dispute Scarborough (Chinese-occupied). In September 2010 when a Chinese fishing boat caption had been detained by the Japanese coastguard create a clear path of relation which intense between these two countries, in particular the territorial dispute over the East China Sea [4].

In the case of China rivalry between US and Japan, strategic rivalry between India is likely increase its participation in geopolitical relations [4]. Boundary dispute is become the main issue between these two countries who is less willing to adhere in for earlier political understanding. China rapprochement with Pakistan, of course, has always been upheaval for tension escalation Sino-Indian relationship. China’s surprisingly interest on Jammu and Kashmir through increasing military presence in Pakistan, linking infrastructure Xinjiang and Gwadar, and other strategy that secure Pakistan capabilities in the region is threaten India [21]. China also blocked India’s application for a loan in Asian Development Bank for development projects in the Arunachal Pradesh while China remained claim that area as a part of its own territory. All of those were China’s strategy that viewed to counter US-India nuclear pact. China will always reject India nuclear issue as it would recognize India status as a nuclear power. China also supplying nuclear reactors to Pakistan as it makes clear decision that China will always align with Pakistan in terms of Kashmir occupation. Nonetheless, India catch-up by aiming its relative power in the Asia-Pacific. India’s emerging capability to put a carrier task force in the South China Sea and the Persian Gulf has driven Indian Navy’s blue-water to induct a third aircraft carrier in 2017. This country also decided to develop natural gas with Japan in the Andaman Sea and military exercises with United States, India, Australia and Japan that proof of India’s emerging priorities. Through the policy of “Act East” aimed at enhancing economic ties with Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore as part of ASEAN members.

### 3.11. *China capability as the revisionist*

Reemergence of long-term strategic rivalries in the region could give higher chance for China as revisionist power. China’s fast rise caused shift of the Asian balance of power within China’s in it. This shift unlikely push the US to yield to China without some pushback. Of course, it can’t be denied due to the other option to counter China’s revisionist by counting on India, Japan, South Korea and Australia to limiting China’s action in the region. The Trans-Pacific Partnership incorporated the US interest to

strengthening economic in the world without China's participation then so-called "Anyone But China" (ABC). This counter push China to be more assertive with "Marching West" by strengthening economic, defense capabilities and diplomatic in Central Asia [22]. Another attempt from China is the establishment of ASEAN+3 that considers as easier arena for China to play decisive action without the United States. China's also respond directly to the attempts by establishing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) to control the geoeconomics in the region.

### 3.12. *The arrival of emerging power*

This reality within Realism view, each participating state in strategic rivalries will always be ambitions whether in small or big actions. However, for great power in classical view which consist its interest in territory, colonial or quasi-colonial and sufficient military power for wars are not likely to re-emerge [18]. Even though the United States, China, Japan, ASEAN and Australia as well try to showing of their capabilities, this attempt doesn't lie over survival or nations in the region. It is over relative strength around the emerging regionalism. Relative power over non-traditional power such as dominating certain industries, innovative breakthroughs, attracting investment, increasing domestic growth and social prosperity. Some analysist viewed that the US try to win back the position similar to the end of Cold War, but it was ironically due to other participation with emerging power comes up, made the US only managing the situations and pursuing strategies for long term. This strategy stands as long as the terms of democracy values remained in the Southeast Asia and even beyond it.

## 4. Conclusion

In order to promote the absence of preponderant power – not through the enduring rivalry – the region needs dynamic equilibrium in the midst of uncertainty of multipolar dimension, especially in Indo-Pacific. This is lies that ASEAN still remained and acknowledged as an important entity in the region. Even every non-ASEAN Member States eventually will keep engage with ASEAN through ASEAN-led mechanism that emphasizing its centrality as the principle of regional architecture. Over debatable perspective of the GMF from some scholars, the author would like to highlight that based on this research, it seems the GMF could enhance Indonesia's performance in global stage that might appear in 2034 which Indonesia has control and consolidates well its maritime capabilities. Thereafter, Indonesia as the natural born leader in ASEAN would empower the regional power as the modality against the great power. However, since the 2nd term of Jokowi administration, the GMF didn't came out explicitly but some believed this grand design was working on progress in domestic sphere.

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