

Received: 28 May 2021  
Accepted: 15 Juni 2021  
Published: 30 Juni 2021

## **The Moment of a Rising Power: Indonesia's Foreign Policy Activism, 2004-2014**

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### ***Abstract***

*During the reign of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Indonesia's foreign policy showed a high level of global participation. It had been recognized as a pivotal state by the international community. It played an important role in many international issues ranging from international security, economy, democracy and human rights, to climate change. In addition, the robust economic growth and the defence budget policy had contributed to the road toward a rising power status. This paper is a critical review of the literatures on the moment Indonesia's rise in international politics during the Yudhoyono presidency. The focus of this paper is to identify the driving factors behind the rise of Indonesia towards a global power. This paper concludes that ideational factors primarily the idea of the elite play a crucial role beyond the economic and military structures.*

**Keywords:** Indonesia's foreign policy, the Yudhoyono presidency, rising power, ideational factor

### **Abstrak**

Pada masa pemerintahan Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, politik luar negeri Indonesia menunjukkan tingkat partisipasi global yang tinggi dan diakui oleh masyarakat internasional. Artinya, Indonesia memainkan peran penting dalam banyak masalah internasional mulai dari keamanan internasional, ekonomi, demokrasi dan hak asasi manusia, hingga perubahan iklim. Selain itu, pertumbuhan ekonomi yang kuat dan kebijakan anggaran pertahanan telah berkontribusi pada jalan menuju peningkatan status kekuatan. Tulisan ini merupakan tinjauan kritis terhadap literatur tentang momen kebangkitan Indonesia dalam politik internasional pada masa kepresidenan Yudhoyono. Fokus tulisan ini adalah mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor pendorong kebangkitan Indonesia menuju kekuatan global. Makalah ini menyimpulkan bahwa faktor ideasional terutama gagasan tentang elit memainkan peran penting di luar struktur ekonomi dan militer.

**Kata kunci:** Kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia, kepresidenan Yudhoyono, meningkatnya kekuatan, faktor ideasional

**Indonesia Rising: The Repositioning of Asia's Third Giant**, edited by Anthony Reid, Singapore, ISEAS, 2012, xxiv + 198 pp., \$20.90 (hardcover), ISBN: 978-981-4380-40-9

**Indonesia Matters: Asia's Emerging Democratic Power**, by Amitav Acharya, Singapore, World Publishing, 2014, xii + 136 pp., \$26.00 (softcover), ISBN: 978-981-4619-85-1

**Indonesia's Rise: Seeking Regional and Global Role**, by Vibhanshu Shekhar, New Delhi, Pentagon Press, 2015, xvi + 242 pp., \$65.95 (hardcover), ISBN 978-818-2748-17-0

**Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, and the Regional Order**, edited by Christopher Roberts, Ahmad Habir, and Leonard Sebastian, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, xxiv + 372 pp., \$90.49 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-349-48494-2

## Introduction

Indonesia's foreign policy has always been attracted many people, especially for non-Indonesians. There are a lot of books, journals, academic papers, and so forth written by non-natives depicting Indonesia's behaviour in

international stage. This is primarily due to the country's potentials such as its strategic location, natural resources, cultural diversity, and population. Many observers recognised Indonesia as one pivot in Asia other than China, India, Japan, and South Korea. This is not surprising that Chase, Hill, and Kennedy almost two decades ago put Indonesia at the first among nine pivotal states that matter for the US foreign policy in the developing world (Chase, Hill & Kennedy, 1999). Although pivotal states are caught in the middle of great powers competition, it can "shape the security environment through policies of their own" (Sweijts et.al, 2014). Daniel Kliman pointed out the strategic opportunity of Indonesia as a 'global swing state' to take responsibility in managing global architecture. He goes further that Indonesia has capacity to defend and strengthen international order due to its large and growing economy, strategic location, and commitment to democracy (Kliman, 2012). From this point of view, it is possible for Indonesia to become a great power in the next decade.

Since the era of independence in 1945, Indonesia's foreign policy has been studied by sorting its periodisation; from the reign of one leader to another. It is not hard to find books entitled 'Indonesia's

foreign policy under Sukarno’, ‘Indonesia’s foreign policy under Suharto’, ‘Indonesia’s foreign policy under the Reform era’, ‘Indonesia’s foreign policy under Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’, ‘Indonesia’s foreign policy under Joko Widodo’, and so forth. This method provides an appropriate understanding given the characteristics of the foreign policy of any government often shows a striking difference between one and the other. In addition, it also facilitates observers to identify continuity and change across history.

Unlike the previous era, academic works on Indonesia’s foreign policy during the reign of Yudhoyono were relatively abundant. This is likely motivated by several reasons. First, the domestic context in which democratisation has opened the taps of freedom of thought for anyone which is almost impossible during the Suharto era. Soon after the demise of the New Order in 1998, democratisation was taking place, searching for its format, and ultimately gaining momentum in the Yudhoyono presidency in 2004 onwards. Second, two periods – 10 years – of Yudhoyono’s tenure gave clues on the direction of Indonesia’s foreign policy. This is in contrast with the Reform era when the duration of the power of each leader was no more than four years. It is

much more difficult for any leader to concentrate on foreign policy issues by such limited time. Third, and arguably the most important, during Yudhoyono presidency Indonesia increasingly played prominent roles on the global stage that is unprecedented in modern Indonesian history. The activist nature of Yudhoyono’s foreign policy had been preoccupied with a high attention from the vast majority of people who has a concern about Indonesian politics.

With regard to the latter, the key question is: what is the underlying cause of Indonesia’s rise? This paper is a critical examination of the four books written by experts on Indonesia’s foreign policy during Yudhoyono presidency. This paper discusses several basic questions that will be broken down into three sub-themes: whether Indonesia is categorized as an emerging or rising power, the driving factors behind Indonesia’s foreign policy activism, and Indonesia’s role in regional and global scope.

### **Categorising Indonesia’s Rise**

The emergence of new powers in international politics is crucial because it would change our understanding of the world. The rise of a number of countries which he called ‘new emerging powers’ have challenged the assumptions that have been prevalent in world politics and

transform the pattern of international relations, even geographical category (Hurrell, 2013). The emergence of new powers' groups such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa), BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, China), and MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, Australia) marked a new era of the 21st century world politics. All of those countries – except Russia and Australia – were developing countries that never be considered as global powers. Moreover, the phenomenon of 'club diplomacy' as performed by those groups is intended to provide an alternative way of how to manage a better world considering the failure of the Western-led international system (Cooper & Antkiewicz, 2008). The global system has moved towards the condition of the 'post-Western world' (see for example Zakaria, 2008; Flermes, 2009); Jongryn, 2015; Stuenkel, 2015).

Perhaps it was no coincidence that the moment of Indonesia's rise occurs in the midst of such geopolitical transformation. After wrecked by the economic crisis in 1998, the top priority agenda of the government was focusing on restructuring domestic architecture. Democratic consolidation, human rights protection, rule of law reinforcement, as well as economic restructurisation were

four main pillars of the what so-called Reform Agenda. After Yudhoyono became president in 2004, his administration focus had begun to shift from domestic affairs to increase Indonesia's role in international arena. He was fully aware that international politics had been changing dramatically and Indonesia should take a bigger leadership role. This is not only as a strategy to restore domestic conditions but also to seek status as a 'global player'.

In dealing with Indonesia's outward-looking foreign policy, there have been enduring debates among scholars whether Indonesia is a rising or emerging power. Of the four books reviewed in this paper, only one book which agreed on the category of Indonesia as an emerging power. Acharya's *Indonesia Matters* asserts that Indonesia is an emerging power not a rising power simply because Indonesia has no ambition to become a great power. Indonesian political elites do not consider their country as a great power and are more comfortable with the label of emerging power (p. 4). Acharya seemed to agree with the definition of emerging power as an economically powerful country but did not seek to change the status quo. In this regard, Indonesia is economically strong and could be a greater impact but did not attempt to change its status as well as international order.

On the contrary, three other books considered Indonesia a rising rather than emerging power. As Anthony Reid put the term in his edited book *Indonesia Rising: The Repositioning of Asia's Third Giant*; Indonesia is projected to be the 'third giant' after China and India. Reid argued that Indonesia had been a "punching below its weight" (p. 11). In other words, given the fact that Indonesia has large resources it should have been conducting assertive foreign policy. Yet, Indonesia behaves like a low-rank country. Indonesia's foreign policy does not reflect its status as a rising power. Likewise, Donald Emmerson in this book assumed that whether Indonesia is a rising power or not depends on what the elite see, say, and do to enhance the role of Indonesia or detract from it (p. 50). He concluded that, "The rise of Indonesia is led by the country's prominence and lagged by its performance" (p. 72). This is confirmed Reid's argument regarding Indonesia's limp diplomatic posture.

The idea of Indonesia as a rising power is also supported by Vibhanshu Shekhar in his book *Indonesia's Rise: Seeking Regional and Global Role*. Shekhar defined rising powers as "... an indeterminate and intermediate category of states between established great powers and middle powers, experiencing sustained rise in its composite capabilities (both

material as well as non-material) in relation to its own strength in any time frame in the past, strength of the existing powers in the international system, or in relation to the state's capacity to influence the international debate and agendas of the regional and global politics" (p. 4). Explicitly, Shekhar mentioned three Asian countries undergoing rising moment; China, India, and Indonesia (p. xi). In the preface he wrote optimistically about "... the various aspects of Indonesia's success story, outline its changing outlook and roles in the region and the world, and analyse emerging contours of Indonesia's long-term strategy as a rising power" (p. xii). The similar categorisation is also found in the book *Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, and the Regional Order*. Christopher Roberts and Leonard Sebastian argued that along with the rapid growth of its economic, Indonesia is a 'rising middle power' and will soon join the ranks of great power states (p. 1). In contrast to Acharya's assumption, they challenged the idea of emerging power in which a country has no intention to improve its status as a great power.

Despite the central theme of four books is Indonesia's rise, they lack of clarity concerning the definition of a rising power. With the exclusion of Acharya who reject the notion of rising power and

Shekhar who has defined quite clear of the term, the work of Reid, Roberts and Sebastian do not provide a clear definition nor use it as a conceptual framework. Similarly, in the academic debates there is a conflating problem in differentiating between rising and emerging power. Most scholars tend to equate both. Nau and Ollapaly pointed out that rising power has the desire to change the world order (Nau & Ollapaly, 2012). This implies that rising powers demand the division of global leadership (Paul, 2016, p. 3). Rising powers are countries that position themselves as opposed to established powers because it seeks to change the global governance (see for example Alexandroff & Cooper, 2010; Kahler, 2013). Rising powers perceive themselves as veto-players in international system although not having agenda-setting power (Narlikar, 2013). By veto-player it means that rising powers tend to change the status quo in international politics. These overlap with emerging powers concept. Cooper and Flesmes, for instance, are conflating the term 'rising' and 'emerging power' by defining the later as a country that demonstrates a willingness to collaborate with multilateral institutions as a strategy for improving its status (Cooper & Flesmes, 2013, p. 947). Emerging powers have similar characteristic with rising powers in

terms of foreign policy behaviour, that is, sought to reform or review of international order (Fonseca, Oliveira & Cunha, 2016, pp. 51-52). No matter how their economics look like, emerging powers tend to place themselves in the forefront of the global discord and collaboration.

This conflation problem complicates us to define whether Indonesia is a 'rising' or 'emerging'. If we agree with this conflation, then Indonesia can be categorised both as a rising and emerging power. As a result, Acharya's conception of Indonesia as an emerging instead of rising power would be flawed since he focuses on the economic performance rather than global political agenda of a given country.

For the sake of conceptual clarity, this paper argues that a rising power is a country that demonstrate an *ambition* to play a *greater role* in international politics. The term 'a greater role' means that rising powers demand power and burden sharing from existing global powers. Consequently, the rise of new powers in international politics almost always transform global balance of power. It is not only due to their relative power but also their aspiration or ambition to change global leadership. By conducting assertive foreign policy at the global level, a rising power is preparing the road to achieve



great power status. As Miller has argued, a rising power is simply a country who has an ambition to become a great power (Miller, 2016, p. 216). Ambition should be represented by states' action at the global level, not merely official statements of the government; saying is one thing, but doing is another. As shown later of this paper, Indonesia had been actively involved in various international issues and having enthusiasm to solve global problems. The ambition of a given country at the global level is the critical indicator – although not the only one – since there are many countries having large material capabilities have no ambition to be a global power. Saudi Arabia and Singapore, for example, may be strong states in terms of material capability since they have spent a huge defence expenditure over the years. Yet, in terms of foreign policy orientation they remain a regional power and relatively pay a little attention to the global politics. Thus, national power is necessary, but it is not a sufficient condition for a given country to become a great power.

If ambition matters, then to what extent does Indonesia's rise challenge international system? As mentioned before, the rise of new powers in international politics will bring global transformation as exemplified by the emergence of BRICS countries and other

'like-minded' multilateralism. Yet, unlike BRICS that challenge the West, Indonesia's rise will not alter international system nor stand in opposition to the West. The main objective of Indonesia's activism is to become a global 'problem-solver'. In his inauguration speech for the second term of his leadership, Yudhoyono stated that Indonesia will always conduct free and active foreign policy and strive for world peace and justice. He committed to make a better world order by playing leadership role in various global issues such as climate change, reforming global economy through the G-20, as well as harmony among civilizations (Kompas, 20 October 2009). As we will see next, the prominent role of Indonesia on many issues has become empirical evidence to support the very idea of Indonesia's rise. By playing leadership role Indonesia does not seek hegemony nor replace the Western dominance. Indonesia offered peaceful transformation of global order not by confrontation but rather by cooperation. Indonesia's 'peaceful rise' committed to global partnership and connectivity. Yudhoyono coined the famous jargon 'a million friends zero enemy' reflecting Indonesia's spirit to build a peaceful, just, democratic, and prosperous world (Faizasyah, 2012, p. 77).

Indonesia's assertive behaviour at the global stage has paved the way towards country's great power status. Ambition alone, however, cannot determine a rising power status in international affairs. As Donald Emmerson in his chapter suggested, whether Indonesia is a rising or not is not merely depend on what elites see, say, and do but the country's performance on the global level. We need to look at the reality how Indonesia behaves and the underlying factors behind it. The next section addresses the question of what is the causal variable that drive Indonesia's rise during Yudhoyono era? And which approach is more convincing in explaining Indonesia's rise?

### **Explaining Indonesia's Rise**

The rising of new powers in international politics can be explained by two perspectives; material and ideational. The materialist perspective contends that the rise of new powers is driven primarily by material factors, especially economic and military. Scholars in International Relations associate this idea with the neorealist premise which considers material capabilities as the key determinant of whether a state is influential or not (Waltz, 1979). On the contrary, the ideational perspective proposes an assumption that non-material

elements such as ideas, identity, norms, status, reputation, and so on play an important role in the success story of certain countries to improve their global ranking. In the academic realm of International Relations, this view is represented by constructivism. Constructivist believes that international relations, including foreign policy, are influenced by ideational rather than material factors (Rosyidin, 2015).

Among these books, Amitav Acharya represents the constructivist perspective proposing that ideas matter in world politics. He argued that Indonesia is a 'normative power'; a state that promotes norms in managing its relationship with others. In contrast to other rising powers that tend to employ economic and military instruments, Indonesia promotes positive images, which is based on three pillars; democracy, development, and stability (p. 1). One of these positive images reflected on Indonesia's role as 'norms-setter'. Acharya pointed Indonesia is very active in promoting peace both in the region and the world. Indonesia conceptualised norms of Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, proposed the idea of 'dynamic equilibrium' as the rule of the game of interstate relations in the Asia-Pacific, as well as initiated the Bali Democracy Forum as a manifestation of Indonesia's



commitment to democratic norms and human rights. By playing a role as norm-setter, Indonesia's foreign policy based not solely on the traditional national interest conception but the ethical consideration in order to create peace and stability.

Meanwhile, the volume edited by Anthony Reid used materialist view in describing Indonesia's rise. At the beginning of the book he asserted, "The chief reasons for optimism derive from Indonesia's recent economic growth performance and favourable economic fundamentals" (p. 4). Put simply, Indonesia's rise is by-product of magnificent economic performance. M. Chatib Basri in his chapter confirmed the argument, "It is true that Indonesia has the potential to play an important role in regional and global economy" (p. 46) which means the robustness of Indonesian economy plays a crucial role for state's diplomatic posture. However, the book also recognises the importance of non-material factors though not the main variable. Frank Jotzo in Chapter 6 of this book analysed Indonesia's leadership role in the climate change issue. He argued that Indonesia has the commitment to the issue because of its awareness as a responsible and constructive global actor (p. 94). In addition, the identity as a world's largest Muslim country also plays an important

role. Martin van Bruinessen in Chapter 7 of this book revealed the fact that Indonesia's leadership in the Muslim world have long been an integral part of its foreign policy since the New Order era.

Vibhanshu Shekhar in his book did not exclusively separate one to another. Rather, he combined material and ideational elements. Despite using neoclassical realism that gives priority to material factors, he tried to incorporate structural variable that is to say geopolitical landscape and domestic variables namely political elite perception and country's strategic culture (p. 16). Structural variable especially the dynamics of geopolitical transformation marked by the rise of 'Asian Century' seems to be neglected by previous works. With this respect, the rise of China and India represents the rise of emerging countries in Asia, including Indonesia. According to Shekhar, "The emergence of new power-configuration in the Asia-Pacific and growth of ASEAN-driven multilateral cooperative processes have offered Indonesia opportunities for regional leadership roles" (p. 37). In addition, Indonesia's strategic culture is an underlying factor behind the diplomatic conduct, particularly within the region. This strategic culture underlies Indonesian defence doctrine deriving from the empires

history, the struggle for independence and identity as a democracy (p. 194). In short, this ideational element reflects elite perception of the potential threats as well as how to deal with conflicts.

Unlike Shekhar, Christopher Roberts, et.al viewed other factors, especially how Indonesia is projecting its power to the outside world. They use the rationale that power is the ability of a country to use the material resources (tangible) and immaterial (intangible) to influence other countries (p. 6). With regard to non-material resources, they follow Joseph Nye's conception of soft power which includes cultural, political ideology, and ethics in diplomacy. Mark William in Chapter 4 of this book discussed the role of Indonesia's identity as a Muslim and democratic country. He exemplified one of prominent Indonesia's foreign policy agenda during Yudhoyono era is to promote the values of Islam and democracy. Indonesia wants to convince international community that Islam and democracy are not contradictory as well as to show that Indonesia is the most successful country that implements both (p. 86). Identity as a democratic country performed when Yudhoyono initiated Bali Democracy Forum in 2008. According to Avery Poole, Indonesia endeavours to promote democratic values abroad through

this forum (p. 159). Indonesia's commitment to the values and norms are also quite prominent in ASEAN. As demonstrated Christopher Roberts and Erlina Widyaningsih in Chapter 13, Indonesia has been playing a leadership role in developing ASEAN norms and institutions since ASEAN's birth in 1967 (p. 269). This is consistent with Acharya's thesis mentioned before that Indonesia's normative power is a source of soft power that contributed to its outward-looking foreign policy.

The mixed approach that combining materialism and idealism is seemingly convincing. Except Acharya who employs tacit constructivism, most contributors in three other works recognise the importance of both material and ideational elements. Shekhar's proposition perhaps is the most convincing account of the underlying factor behind the Indonesia's rise. Although he put geopolitical transformation in Asia as an independent variable and seemed to overlook economic and military capabilities, his argument incorporated ideas as a crucial element. Obviously, Shekhar is not a constructivist; he is a (neoclassical) realist. He meant that ideational elements represent "domestic consolidation and expression of its growing ambitions" (p. 17). This idea is

quite sophisticated given the fact that Indonesia's foreign policy has been dominated by elite decision maker. Meanwhile, constructivist accounts that put identity, norms, and culture in explaining Indonesia's rise also convincing. According to constructivist proposition, identities of a country define its interest and in turn direct foreign policy. As Wendt (1999, p. 231) pointed out, "Interests presuppose identities because an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is." Identity-based arguments, however, are inappropriate because it does not directly drive foreign policy. In other words, identities have a significant impact on foreign policy if elites as policymakers perceive so. Indonesia's identity as a 'norms-setter' (argued by Acharya and Roberts and Widyaningsih), 'largest Muslim country' (argued by Bruinessen and William) as well as 'democratic country' (argued by Poole) are insufficient to explain why Indonesia is rising. Those multiple identities have been enduring for decades and have no greater impact on Indonesia's foreign policy than that of during Yudhoyono era. If constructivist true, then Indonesia would have been risen since the Reform even the New Order era given the fact that Indonesia at that time had been attributed by those identities. In

short, identity matters, but factors behind its implementation are more important.

This paper argues that ideational elements plays a major role in determining whether Indonesia is rising or not. This is not to say that material elements primarily economic and defence posture are not important; it matters since a country would not be able to uphold its global visions without robust national power. However, domestic capabilities alone is inappropriate to explain Indonesia's rise. This ideationalist approach differs from constructivist in the sense that it defines ideas in a personal way. While constructivist focuses on how ideas are socially constructed, this paper focuses merely on the impact of (elites) ideas on foreign policy. Thus, ideas and beliefs, particularly held by Indonesian leader plays a crucial role. Ideas, mainly take the form of world views, have the broadest impact on foreign policy (Goldstein & Keohane, 1993, p. 8). World views are modes of thought, discourse, and paradigm which define the world and what action should be taken in dealing with certain situations. Similarly, Miller underlined the importance of beliefs, that is, ideas held by political elites in conducting foreign policy as a root of state's ambition to be a great power (Miller, 2016). Beliefs help policymakers to understand international

environment in which they are embedded. Conversely, beliefs also define who they are and what they want. In short, beliefs shape state's identity and interests. Beliefs about attaining status as a great power derived primarily from elites debates about its role in world affairs (Miller, 2016, p. 219). Thus, in order to understand why Indonesia is rising, we need to focus on how Indonesian leader defines its country and what it wants in the midst of global competition.

Indonesia's rise reflects elites ideas in understanding trends in the global politics and what kind of diplomatic conduct that should be implemented by his country to address it. For Yudhoyono, the nature of Indonesia's foreign policy is internationalism or outward-looking. He interpreted 'free and active' principle as the connectivity that would determine state's influence and capacity to shape international order as well as projecting Indonesia's international identity. For the later, Yudhoyono pointed out the importance of Indonesia's status and reputation in the world. He added, "International identity defines a country's role, place and standing in the world community. We should be a country that has a solid national identity, but also a strong international identity" (Yudhoyono, 20 May 2005). As Yudhoyono had an

ambition to drive its country toward a global stage, Indonesia's concentric circle was no longer regional in Southeast Asia but global. This systemic view of foreign policy orientation was clearly expressed by Yudhoyono in his most cited speech at Wilton Park in 2012. On a global scale Indonesia had multiple roles, namely, norms-setter, consensus-builder, peacekeeper, bridge-builder, and voice of the developing world (Yudhoyono, 2 November 2012). Indonesia's activism during especially during the second half of Yudhoyono presidency (2009-2014) reflects these ideas.

It can be concluded that ideas and beliefs held by President Yudhoyono are critical elements behind the ambition and aspiration of Indonesia's foreign policy. It transforms material capabilities into influence. How a given country exploits its national power will determine its international leverage. As David Baldwin suggested, "The distinction between 'possessing' power resources and using them – between having power and using it – is fundamental" (Baldwin, 2016, p. 68). Possessing large armies and weapons as well as enjoying a GDP boom do not necessarily mean achieving a great power status. The key is leadership; the *ideas* inside his/her head in order to enhance

his/her country's influence in world affairs, and, more importantly, how they translate those ideas into policies. The next section will address Indonesia's implementation of the 'great power's idea' especially during the second half of Yudhoyono presidency.

### **Indonesia's Role In Regional and Global Scope**

Indonesia's outward-looking foreign policy requires high engagement both regionally and globally. In Southeast Asia, Indonesia has long been played a role as a 'regional power' or the leader of the region. Indonesia's leadership stood out primarily related to the existence of ASEAN as a regional organization in Southeast Asia. For Indonesia, the ASEAN is a 'cornerstone' of its foreign policy (Anwar, 1994). Since founded in 1967, ASEAN and Indonesia are mutually interdependent. Without Indonesia, ASEAN would not have been strong regional institution. Conversely, without ASEAN Indonesia would not have been gained prestigious status as well as economic and political opportunities.

However, according to Shekhar, Indonesia is no longer oriented to ASEAN but more broadly by reaching the Asia-Pacific region (p. 70) or the 'post-ASEAN foreign policy' (Sukma, 30 June 2009). On

the contrary, See Seng Tan in Chapter 14 of the book *Indonesia's Ascent: Power, Leadership, and the Regional Order* argued, ASEAN remains important for Indonesia because of three reasons; first, ASEAN remains useful to contain major powers; second, ASEAN is useful to invite East Asian countries as strategic partners; and third, ASEAN is not an exclusive forum where Indonesia rely on it in order to achieve security (pp. 288-289).

Though Shekhar emphasised Asia-Pacific centrality in contemporary Indonesia's foreign policy, it does not mean that Indonesia neglects ASEAN as a diplomatic stage. Shekhar mentioned three aspects of Indonesia's leadership in ASEAN; as intellectual leader, crisis manager, and the anchor of community-building (p. 86). Meanwhile, according to Christopher Roberts and Leonard Sebastian Indonesia's regional leadership refers to 'cooperative hegemony' approach that emphasises the institutionalisation and strengthening of regional integration (p. 8). As intellectual leader, Indonesia is the 'mastermind' behind the ASEAN institutionalisation, for instance, initiated the existence of ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in 2009 and the ASEAN Institute of Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) in 2013. According to Acharya,

AICHR is not formed 'to protect' but rather 'to promote' human rights values (p. 58). In addition, Indonesia also contributed to engaging ASEAN in the G-20 forum in order that ASEAN interests can be accommodated in the forum.

As a crisis manager, Indonesia strives to mediate conflicts involving ASEAN members. Since New Order era Indonesia's role is quite prominent, such as mediating conflict between Cambodia and Thailand in Jakarta Informal Meeting (JIM) in 1988 and continued on the Cambodia-Thailand dispute over Preah Vihear in 2011. Indonesia also strived to create a regional security and stability by conducting shuttle diplomacy in 2012 to reach an ASEAN's 'six points principle' related to a common view of the South China Sea disputes. Indonesia's commitment to prevent conflict escalation between ASEAN members and ASEAN disunity reflect Indonesia's role as a 'consensus-builder'. Yudhoyono (2 November 2012) stated, "In reality, it is not always easy to attain agreement on a set of norms and principles. We will need extra efforts to build a consensus."

As an anchor of regional community-building, Indonesia has a strong commitment to encourage ASEAN to become a single community that has similar views, identities, and interests.

According to Christian Roberts, the idea of ASEAN Security Community was the proposal of Indonesia's Foreign Minister, which was subsequently endorsed in the Bali Concord 2003 in order to, "... 'share dependable expectations of peaceful change' and 'rule out the use of force as a means of problem solving'" (p. 270). According to Donald Weatherbee, the proposal of ASEAN Community had been overlooked by the government during the Reform era. Yudhoyono has a plenty of time, resources, priorities, and political mandate to promote the establishment of ASEAN community (Weatherbee, 2013, pp. 6-7). This commitment had evidently implemented through the executive order such as Presidential Instruction No. 5/2008, Presidential Instruction No. 11/2011 and Presidential Instruction No. 6/2014 which are all intended to integrate the Indonesian economy into the ASEAN Economic Community (Fitriani in Aspinall, Mietzner & Tomsa, 2015, p. 79).

At the global level, Indonesia's prominent role was significantly high. This is reflected in the multiple roles played by Indonesia in various international issues. These roles represent Indonesia's identity conception in the eyes of international community. As mentioned earlier, Indonesia played multiple roles; as a norms setter, bridge builder, consensus



builder, peacekeeper, and voice of the developing world. Anthony Reid in his edited book did not address Indonesia's global role except at a glance. The book contained only two chapters on Indonesia's global role, e.g. Indonesia's role in climate change (Chapter 6) and in the Muslim world (Chapter 7). While Acharya in his book assessed Indonesia's role in various multilateral institutions such as the G-20, NAM, OIC, UN Security Council, Bali Democracy Forum, and UN peacekeeping operations. In the G-20, Indonesia plays a role as a 'bridge-builder' (p. 101) along with 'voice of developing world' as stated in the previous section. At OIC, according to Avery Poole Indonesia plays a role as a 'problem-solver' and 'peace-builder' particularly when addressing the humanitarian issue in Myanmar (pp. 159-160).

Given the active role in various multilateral institutions, Shekhar called Indonesia as a 'global multilateralist' (p. 103). Multilateralist is one of the characteristics of middle power diplomacy. As Cooper, Higgott and Nossal suggested, middle power foreign policy can be identified from the tendency to use multilateral institutions to find solutions for global problems or be part of global problem solving (Jordaan, 2003, p. 166). Australia, Indonesia, Mexico, Korea, and

Turkey are middle powers carrying the notion of 'multilateralism pivot' to get the recognition and attention from international community (Wright in Jongryn, 2015, p. 21). According to Acharya, Indonesia utilises multilateral institutions not only to achieve the national interest, but also improve Indonesian image abroad (p. 99).

In addition to Acharya's account of Indonesia's normative power stressing on ethical behaviour in international politics, Indonesia's global role in many multilateral forums has also a significant contribution. Take for example Indonesia's membership in the G-20. As suggested by Yulius Hermawan and Ahmad Habir in *Indonesia's Ascent* book, "Indonesia's engagement in the G-20 was a breakthrough in the history of Indonesian diplomacy" (p. 184). Its involvement in the most prestigious multilateral forum defines Indonesia's international identity as a voice of developing countries. In addition, Indonesia's role as a regional power also brings a greater impact on its diplomatic posture in the eyes of international community. For example, Indonesia played major role behind the ASEAN decision to bring Russia and the US into East Asian Summit (EAS) in 2011. According to former Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa, the

decision to invite two great powers into EAS would help ASEAN to balance against China in the region (Antique & Adiati, 21 July 2010). This represents Indonesia's conception of 'dynamic equilibrium' which promotes the equal relations among great powers as well as encouraging multilateral cooperation that will benefit all of states. In his conversation with James Zirin of the Council on Foreign Relations, Marty defined dynamic equilibrium as a notion that, "...there is no dominant power for our region. But unlike the classic balance-of-power approach where we achieve this by having containment, by having a group of friends or similar, like-minded countries to address, to manage, to contain even a rising country, we create the notion of common security, common prosperity, and basically dilute -- put into context a certain rising country so that that country becomes a part of the -- like, an established -- a country that has a vested interest in maintaining the peace and the stability of the region rather than a (revisionist?) country" (Council on Foreign Relations, 27 September 2011). Put simply, Indonesian's idea of dynamic equilibrium means absorbing great powers rivalry into a multilateral cooperation in which there is no a single

dominant power enforcing its policy upon others.

The rising character of Indonesia's foreign policy also evident in its contribution to make a better world. It sounds a sort of 'wishful thinking' since traditionalists often argue that states conduct foreign policy to achieve national interests. Yet, national interest is not 'the only game in town' when discussing foreign policy. Sometimes states are more inclined to promote values and norms. Indonesia is not the exception. Acharya in *Indonesia Matters* was right stating that the normative power of Indonesia has been contributing to its rising. In addition to promoting democracy – for example through Bali Democracy Forum – and human rights – such as initiating AICHR – committing to the Kyoto Protocol by reducing carbon dioxide emission, as well as active participating in the UN Peacekeeping Operation, Indonesia also take a responsibility to help other countries suffering from humanitarian disasters. From 2006 to 2013, Indonesia had sent humanitarian assistance to fellow ASEAN countries due to tropical cyclone. For example, in 2008 Indonesia sent 23.000 tons of humanitarian aid to Myanmar following cyclone Nargis, US\$ 2 million to Philippine following cyclone Haiyan. Indonesia also sent humanitarian aid to

Japan following tsunami in 2011 (US\$ 2 million), Australia due to huge flood in 2010 (US\$ 1 million), Haiti due to earthquake in 2010 (30 medical team) and Turkey (US\$ 1 million) (Rosyidin & Andika, 2017, p. 182). The most salient example of Indonesia's humanitarian assistance is aiding the Rohingya people in Myanmar. Indonesian government not only sending foods and shelters but also building four schools for Rohingya children in 2013. The amount of aid might be small from the perspective of developed nations. But for developing countries like Indonesia, these humanitarian aids beyond its national interest but rather commitment to what so-called 'good international citizen' (see for example Evans, 27 August 2015). Just like the commitment to send peacekeeping force under the UN umbrella, Indonesia's commitment to the humanitarian aid reflects ethical foreign policy of 'global good Samaritans' and 'good international citizens' (Hutabarat, 2015, p. 52). Instead of focusing on narrow interest-seeking, the rise of Indonesia was aimed to prove its role as a 'responsible stakeholder'.

### **Indonesia And The World: A Critical Review**

In many respects, this paper agrees with all authors in explaining the rise of

Indonesia as a global actor as well as Indonesia's role at the regional and global stage. This paper specifically agrees with Shekhar stating that structural constraints namely the shifting of global balance of power provides a setting for Indonesia to adjust its foreign policy orientation. This paper also in line with the argument that economic performance plays the most crucial factor that encourages Indonesia's self-confident to engage globally.

However, this paper argues that there are a number of shortcomings of some of the authors in understanding contemporary Indonesia's foreign policy. The first issue relates to the debate over whether the rise of Indonesia is categorized as a rising or emerging power. As discussed earlier, except for Shekhar's book that clearly provides the conceptual definition of rising power, the three other books did not address details indicators of a country classified as a rising power. Acharya's definition of emerging powers is too simplistic. Likewise, Reid failed to provide a conceptual framework for defining what a rising power is. The book contains excessively empirical studies and lack of theoretical framework. While Christopher Roberts, et.al offers an analytical framework in the Introduction, they failed to give a clear distinction between the term rising and emerging

power. In the last chapter of the book asked, “Why should we view Indonesia as an emerging power?” (p. 335). This inconsistency stems from the beginning of the book that does not provide an adequate conceptual framework so the contributors have different perspectives to define Indonesia’s rise.

The second issue relates to causal factors of Indonesia’s rise. All authors seemed to ignore the idiosyncratic variable in building their argument. The only explanation that associates this variable is Donald Emmerson who suggested that whether Indonesia is rising or not is primarily determined by the vision and mission of policymakers (p. 50). As mentioned frequently before, understanding of Indonesia’s foreign policy is incomplete without taking elite’s ideas and beliefs into account. This is because Indonesian politics including foreign policy tends to be dominated by elite who undertake decisions and policies. According to an Indonesian expert, foreign policy has long been domain of the ruling elite (Wibisono, 2009). Individual factor is very important because foreign policy of a country is almost always in line with the character of the president. Therefore, personality and especially ideas and beliefs of the elite should not be ruled out. For example, the idea of ‘million friends zero

enemy’, ‘navigating turbulent ocean’, ‘all directions foreign policy’, and ‘dynamic equilibrium’ reflect how Yudhoyono perceives the world around him which in turn affects how he conducts foreign policy.

The third issue relates to the strategic culture as an ideational element of Indonesia’s rise. Shekhar’s thesis in his book stated that Indonesia’s foreign policy is influenced by its culture and history as well as beliefs and worldviews (p. 171). In academic literature, the very nature of strategic culture is inclined to national security and defence policy rather than the foreign policy doctrine in general. Strategic culture is a set of symbols that define, “... the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs” (Johnston in Katzenstein, 1996, p. 222). Foreign policy doctrine usually translates into a ‘grand design’ or a ‘white paper’ which contains not limited to the security and defence policy but rather multisectoral. Thus, the use of strategic culture in explaining Indonesia’s rise as proposed by Shekhar’s book seems inappropriate. This is not to say that culture is not important in influencing Indonesia’s foreign policy. Indonesia’s strategic culture deriving from the struggle of independence in 1945 is inappropriate to explain, for example, ‘soft diplomacy’

approach as implemented by Yudhoyono in several occasions, let alone ‘million friends zero enemy’ slogan. This is because, as an Indonesian scholar put it, Indonesian history especially the struggle of independence brings the military mindset into the decision-making process as well as fostering the syndrome of fear towards external powers (Sulaiman in Tellis, Szalwinski & Wills, 2016).

The fourth issue associates with optimism versus pessimism regarding Indonesia’s prospect as a major power. At first glance, all authors showed an optimistic projection about the status and reputation of Indonesia in the global sphere. However, Reid’s edited volume contains several chapters indicating contradictory arguments. Reid seemed exaggerating when he said, “Goodbye China, hello Indonesia” (p. 1) as if to say the era of China’s rise has ended and replaced by Indonesia. Conversely, there are contributors who are pessimistic to the issue at hand. Donald Emmerson, for example, criticised using the ‘eagle’ metaphor that Indonesia, “... has not taken flight from the multilateral nests where it is necessarily out-numbered” (p. 74). Sharper criticism delivered by Rizal Sukma that Indonesia does not have an economic capability, political, and diplomatic resources to contribute to the

world (p. 90). In short, there is an inconsistency in the Reid’s edited volume with regard to the projection of Indonesia’s rise. While the editor was very optimistic about the prospect of Indonesia to become a great power, some contributors were pessimistic based on their critical arguments. It would jeopardize the core argument of the volume as entitled ‘Asia’s Third Giant’ which sound optimistic about Indonesia’s status.

In spite of several weaknesses, these books are entirely have similarities and complementary to each other. In terms of the debate whether Indonesia is rising or emerging power, all authors tend to agree with the former instead of the latter. Indonesia’s global engagement is a strong indicator of a rising power. In terms of the main factors behind the assertive nature of Indonesia’s foreign policy, ideational variables act more as an intervening variable rather than the independent variable. Most authors consider economic and geopolitical structure in Asia as the main variable. In terms of Indonesia’s role, all authors equally agree that national identity – democracy, Islam, and pluralism – as well as the constitutional mandate of the vision of world peace, have encouraged Indonesia’s self-confidence to engage globally and improve its status and

reputation in the eyes of international community.

### **Conclusion**

Many Indonesian experts frequently ask: is Indonesia rising? The books reviewed in this paper share a common idea that Indonesia's rise is inevitable. During the decades following independence, the degree of Indonesia's foreign policy activism has never been high. All books under review confirm the materialist proposition – despite anyone of them put more emphasis on ideational elements – that economic capability is a major determinant of a rising power in order to be able to compete at the global level with a high degree of confidence. Without good economic performance, a country would 'punch above its weight'. However, economic factor alone is necessary but not a sufficient condition for a country to become a major power. It should be combined with a strong leader who has outward-looking vision. Without this idea, it would be very difficult for a country to improve its status and reputation globally.

Indonesia's foreign policy currently has been undergoing dramatic change. In contrast to his predecessor, President Joko Widodo – popularly known as Jokowi – puts a higher priority on

domestic affairs rather than actively engage at the global level. He turns foreign policy orientation from internationalism to domestication while maintaining Indonesia's role in international politics. However, Indonesia seems to overlook ASEAN as the cornerstone of its foreign policy. One of key Jokowi's foreign policy adviser had proposed an idea suggesting that Indonesia should not stick to ASEAN (see for example Sukma, 5 October 2009). Indonesia gradually pulls away from ASEAN and settled into Indo-Pacific, a region that will serve Jokowi's doctrine of 'Global Maritime Fulcrum'. Indonesia under Jokowi also prefers bilateralism to multilateralism to maximize its national interest, mainly to gain economic benefits. Recently, Indonesia is reviewing some of the membership in international organizations which are not considered important to save national budget.

The question is: with the President Jokowi's leadership style, will Indonesia still rise? Using argument proposed by these books, the answer is least-likely. First, Indonesian economy has not shown a good performance despite fairly stable. The economic growth rate is not the same as the previous era that was relatively stable at around six to seven percent a year. According to the IMF Indonesia's real GDP growth (2014-2017) is constant



at five percent a year. The government even take a decision to cut budget in a number of ministries in order to save money. The second and most crucial factor is leader's lacks of ideational motivation in bringing Indonesia into a global stage. Contemporary Indonesia's foreign policy pays less attention to the notion of 'normative power' or 'cooperative hegemony' or 'global multilateralist' as mentioned before. The government focuses more on domestic issues and do not have plenty of time for active involvement at the global stage. Indonesia remains active in various multilateral cooperation. Yet, Indonesia seems uninterested in playing major role. Instead, Indonesia uses multilateral forum as an instrument to strengthen its bilateral relations with potential partners. For example, during the G-20 Summit in Hamburg 2017, President Jokowi arranged bilateral meetings with several delegates; the US, Dutch, Australia, Norwegia, Korean Republic, Vietnam, and Canada. Notwithstanding Indonesia's proposal of counter-terrorism strategy during the G-20 Summit, Jokowi inclined to bilateralism for the sake of domestic needs. In addition, during APEC and East Asian Summit Jokowi demonstrates a strong interest in conducting bilateral meetings with Indonesia's strategic partners.

The absence of internationalist paradigm makes Indonesia's road to be the 'third Asian giant' as clearly written on the cover of the book edited by Anthony Reid would be difficult even if not impossible. Strengthening domestic capabilities before playing active roles on the global scale is crucial in the first place. As an Indonesia's foreign policy expert once suggested, internal restructuring is a top priority before showing agility in responding external dynamics (Anwar, 2013). However, the present and next Indonesian leader needs a global vision in order to enhance Indonesia's diplomatic posture as one of strategies in an attempt to achieve great power status.

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