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Indonesia's Post-Election Foreign Policy: New Directions?

By Emirza Adi Syailendra

Synopsis

Indonesia's foreign policy under President Yudhoyono has led to a higher profile and more favourable global image for the country. What trajectory will Indonesia's foreign policy take after the 9 July presidential election?

Commentary

INDONESIA'S FOREIGN policy-making is now highly personalised. Indonesia's greater global diplomatic involvement has been associated with the growth of the economy and President Yudhoyono's vision. As his term comes to an end, uncertainty is emerging over whether the global-mindedness of Indonesia foreign policy under him can be sustained.

For the upcoming presidential election, both Joko Widodo ("Jokowi") and his rival Prabowo Subianto have been taking inspiration from the nationalist outlook of Sukarno. Jokowi has placed his own imprint on Sukarno's *Trisakti* principle centred on national pride that places importance on three basic propositions: freedom to proactively assert the right of self-determination in the international scene; economic self-sufficiency; and building a strong national identity. Coupled with Prabowo's posture as a strong leader in the image of Sukarno, the question arises as to the overall impact of a Sukarnoist influence on the future trajectory of Indonesia's foreign policy.

Foreign policy under Yudhoyono

A successful career in the military and government has shaped Yudhoyono's global-minded worldview and taught him the art of building personal ties with many leaders. Indonesia's foreign policy under him can be described in terms of three concentric circles: advancing Indonesia global image, promoting an outward-looking ASEAN, and expanding Indonesia's middle power and great power relations.

In the hands of Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa, Indonesia has been promoting ASEAN centrality and a more outward-looking Indonesian foreign policy as envisioned by Yudhoyono and his inner circle.

During his tenure, however, Yudhoyono's personal vision often veered away from the direction set by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (KEMLU). For instance, The KEMLU policy agenda attempting to connect APEC to ASEAN's interest was sidestepped by Yudhoyono. During APEC in 2013 the issues preferred by the President were those with domestic as well as global elements in relation to issues of connectivity and sustainable

development.

Differences in opinion over policies between Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa and Yudhoyono have also been frequent, such as the haze issue where the president has been more accommodating than KEMLU; the stationing of US Marines in Darwin; and addressing asylum seekers. This trend in which the president's personal views will influence priorities, the patterns of association, and global mindedness in foreign policy is likely to continue during a Jokowi or Prabowo term.

Jokowi's stance: High profile foreign policy?

Jokowi and Prabowo have been drawing inspiration from Sukarno's nationalistic stance as well as the first president's policy of self-reliance and greater government control.

Despite his limited experience in foreign relations, Jokowi's vision and mission recently published by the Indonesia National Election Commission (KPU) has much to say about foreign policy. The strong nationalist stance will not prevent Jokowi from projecting Indonesian activism in the Asia Pacific region.

Several priorities have been set: resolving border disputes in the region; expanding middle power diplomacy; building up the Indo-Pacific regional architecture; enhancing the diplomatic infrastructure of KEMLU such as its research capacity; and enhancing public diplomacy especially to widen public participation in foreign affairs. Jokowi has emphasised the importance of the maritime sector. His vision coincides with Indonesia's 2015 chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Rim of Association (IORA).

On the defence front, the policy is broadly to increase the defence budget by 1.5 percent from 2014-2019; to develop the local defence industry; and to diversify defence cooperation. Another distinctive element is his commitment to resolve human rights abuses in the past, which also will be promoted through regional mechanisms like ASEAN.

Prabowo's stance: Looking inward?

Prabowo's vision and mission, also published by KPU, continues Indonesia's long-standing principle of a free and active foreign policy while being short on specifics. His focus is mainly on transforming the domestic landscape as highlighted in Gerindra's manifesto "The Six National Transformation Action Programmes". Prabowo's emphasis is more on greater government control and restructuring the management of natural resources.

The domestic focus of his vision can be seen from the issues that he has primarily targeted: labour, various sectors like agriculture, fisheries, and small and medium enterprises. Nevertheless, Prabowo's administration is unlikely to be totally protectionistic. He stresses the importance of foreign investment and supports his running mate Hatta Rajasa's masterplan for accelerated economic development (MP3EI) that will depend significantly on collaboration with the private sector to develop the country's infrastructure.

Coming from a big coalition of six parties, Prabowo's cabinet will be vulnerable to the interest of the coalition members. Backed by many Islamist parties, he will be more conscious of global Islamic issues.

Post-election foreign policy

There are two possible scenarios post-election: either Jokowi or Prabowo will continue to personalise their foreign policy agenda; and/or the foreign ministry will be at the forefront running the show.

Both leaders will have their own reading of issues, or will be influenced by their inner circle and their respective coalition's many stakeholders, such as parties and public. The strong infusion of Sukarno's nationalistic vision may also influence choices of the playing field and the level of assertiveness to be projected by Indonesia.

While Yudhoyono has been ambitious in broadening his playing field by aiming for Indonesia to have a place among great and regional powers, the Jokowi conception of middle power relations emphasises South-South cooperation as well as collaboration between developing and developed countries.

Other scenarios may emerge should KEMLU be empowered with greater room to pursue a more ASEAN-centric path. Among the favourites to become the next foreign minister are two prominent foreign ministry bureaucrats Dian Triansyah Djani and Arif Havas Oegroseno. This reflects a preference for someone who will carry the ministry's long-standing position on championing ASEAN.

The ministry will continue to focus on bridging the trust deficits and managing disputes in the region, amidst the

shaky cohesiveness of ASEAN. Other equally important issues will be the push to create the ASEAN community 2015, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and exploring the idea of ASEAN Development Goals. As Indonesia's economic profile rises and its status as a G-20 state grows in tandem, emphasis on globalism will inevitably shape its foreign policy trajectory.

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