Chapter 1

Indonesia's *Dynamic Equilibrium* and ASEAN Centrality*

Leonard C. Sebastian

Introduction: ASEAN's Strategic Autonomy in a New Regional Architecture

Indonesian foreign minister Marty Natalegawa's use of the term *dynamic equilibrium*, while vague, describes the existent strategic dilemma currently faced by the archipelagic state.[1] Its ambiguity serves a wider purpose within a region increasingly stymied by problems of trust deficits, territorial disputes and strategic change. Bounded within the parameters of an "all-directions foreign policy" of "a million friends and zero enemies," Indonesia is cautious in being definitive over its foreign policy objectives.[2] Indonesia has also refrained from taking sides between the United States and China, despite escalating tensions now surrounding the region and in particular the South China Sea. Rather than addressing growing regional tensions directly, Indonesia has opted for a "free and active principle/politics" (*politik luar negeri bebas dan aktif*), preferring a "middle power" approach through a series of *strategic* or *comprehensive partnerships*. Nonetheless, such ambiguity has not been helpful when it comes to Indonesia's longstanding and often tenuous relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as the urgency of establishing an ASEAN Community by 2015 looms large on the horizon.[3]

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1 For the full text of the Natalegawa's speech, see Marty Natalegawa, "Speech of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Annual Press Statement of the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Indonesia Dr. R.M. Marty M. Natalegawa."

2 Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, "SBY's Inaugural Speech: The Text," *Jakarta Globe*, October 20, 2009, http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/archive/sbys-inaugural-speech-the-text/, accessed October 10, 2013.

3 The rubric of an "ASEAN Community" is predicated on an umbrella vision sheltering three separate but integrative initiatives: an ASEAN Security Community (ASC), an ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and an ASEAN Social and Cultural Community (ASCC).

Indonesia's lead within the ASEAN Community has always been pivotal to ASEAN's unity and centrality. Nonetheless, the shifting security environment in the Asia-Pacific region threatens to tear the existing regional architecture asunder, via the internal tussles and intramural dealings among ASEAN member states (i.e. Thailand and Cambodia border issues) as well as external pressures prescient within the condominium of US-China rivalry in the region. ASEAN centrality has been important in this aspect, as it is seen to be acting as "the driving force in charting the evolving regional architecture."[4] Indonesia's response to these particular issues in recent years, however, has been taciturn, leaving many wondering whether ASEAN is still the cornerstone of Indonesian foreign policy or merely just a vacuous diplomatic formality. In principle, it is understood that Indonesia's interests are best served by averting the possibility of the region from becoming a theatre of power-rivalry. It prescriptions have always been one of non-alignment and a certain wariness towards major powers. Nonetheless, while emphasis on ASEAN centrality has been perceived as the panacea to the potential splits within the regional architecture, it has also been increasingly seen as a hindrance towards Indonesia's own grandiose foreign policy pursuits elsewhere. Is Indonesia's *dynamic equilibrium* (shorthand for Indonesia's regional foreign policy goals) merely a descriptive, grandiloquent attempt at reconciling all aspects of the security implications present in the region without a dominant, prescriptive strategy? If so, how does "ASEAN centrality" feature or rank within its parameters? Has Indonesia run out of steam in its commitments towards ASEAN given the current geostrategic challenges in the region, or is Indonesia still engaged with the ASEAN agenda, albeit not as actively?

Indonesia, ASEAN and the forlorn quest for strategic autonomy

The clarion call for the duration of Indonesia's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2011, under the second presidency of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (or SBY for short) through its promulgation of a "Bali Concord III," was an appeal for solidarity among ASEAN member-states to unite as a single international voice in their common positions on crucial issues of politics and security cooperation with themes as diverse as climate change, yet carefully avoiding the more contentious issues that

[4] ASEAN Political and Security Community (APSC) Blueprint, www.ASEANsec.org/5187-18.pdf, accessed October 14, 2013.

might raise the spectre of fragile regional security fault-lines.[5] Indonesia's ambiguous stance was criticised by observers noting a lack of leadership, due to Indonesian proclivity for making declaratory formulations requiring no concrete commitment or coordinated policy actions.[6] The Bali Concord III also differed markedly from its predecessor the "Bali Concord II" (2003) that provided progressive ideas for the establishment of an "ASEAN Community." To ASEAN's detriment, the ASEAN-centric agenda was given a short shrift in the Sixth East Asia Summit (EAS) that took place on 19 November in the same year. While the previous EAS pledged to "reiterate strong support for ASEAN's central role" within the Summit, under Indonesia's leadership, the voice for ASEAN centrality within this current EAS was unceremoniously skirted. The expansion of EAS as a *de facto* avenue for high politics was understandably a hedge by China-wary ASEAN members. Nonetheless, it also served to dilute the political significance of ASEAN and the ASEAN plus Three (APT).

Overall, the much anticipated leadership of ASEAN under Indonesia's helm seemed disappointingly weak, lacking panache. Indonesia's implicit preference for conflict avoidance and norm building via a set of revisited commonalities in an already shaky ASEAN framework continued an existing tradition, but allowed for an uneventful and lackadaisical leadership in a largely evolved regional landscape. This was perhaps in contrast to Indonesia's more active historic role and interests within ASEAN as *primus inter pares* following the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia (signed 1976)—enshrined as the legal basis for ASEAN's cooperation (Chapter 1, Article 2).[7] Indonesia's lapse of interest within ASEAN was also felt, particularly in contrast to its pledge in the Bogor APEC Summit in 1994 to maintain ASEAN's and the region's visibility. Many felt that Indonesia could have done better. On the other hand, ASEAN was also not what it used to be.

Cambodia's chairmanship in 2012 was a further demonstration that ASEAN's centrality and saliency can be vulnerable to compromise and departure in times of discord and rivalry, especially given the contentious issues bordering developments

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5 A full account of the "Bali Concord III" proceedings can be assessed at http://www.aseansec.org.

6 Donald E. Weatherbee, "Southeast Asia and ASEAN Running in Place," *Southeast Asian Affairs*, Vol. 2012, pp. 4-5. Weatherbee argued that the "Bali Concord III" did not go beyond the norms of an "ASEAN talk shop," staying within the safe boundaries of polite and platitudinous officialdom.

7 C.P.F. Luhulima, "Indonesia and ASEAN Beyond 2014," *The Jakarta Post*, February 7, 2013, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/02/07/indonesia-and-asean-beyond-2014.html, accessed October 11, 2013.

in the South China Sea and Cambodia's own backyard.[8] Although many initiatives were conducted under the leadership of Cambodia, including the Phnom Penh Agenda and the Phnom Penh Declaration, Cambodia as chairman of ASEAN refrained from taking a definitive stance towards China's actions in the South China Sea. For the first time at the ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting in Phnom Penh, there was a failure to agree on a communique under what many saw as pressure from China in avoiding specific mention of disputes surrounding the South China Sea. Cambodia's inaction as ASEAN's chair dealt a heavy blow to the integrity of ASEAN's cohesiveness and its desire for strategic autonomy. Internally, perennial strife over the Preah Vihear temple ensued as Indonesia pledged to take on an observer/brokering role as a neutral participant. Nonetheless, tempers and recriminations between Cambodian and Thai forces flared. While Cambodia was unable to extricate itself from its extant baggage, Indonesia's intervention appeared at first to be superfluous, saved only by the change in Thai government from Abhisit to Yingluck that defused tensions formally.

Overview: ASEAN's Fragile Centrality in a Stormy Sea of Contention

ASEAN has come a long way since its inception in 1967 by the five member states of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Membership has expanded further to include Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam to an ASEAN-led core of ten, while Timor-Leste is slated to be next in line. With expansion within its membership ranks, ASEAN has been in a state of flux, growing both in scope and complexity. Post-Suharto Indonesia under Yudhoyono has been eager to re-establish its pre-eminent position in the region and ASEAN, after a long hiatus accompanied by a period of ineffectual leadership following the "crash of 97." Its initial forays under Yudhoyono's first presidency had been seen as promising with the assertion that "as the single largest member of the group, Indonesia is expected to assume the leadership position within ASEAN."[9] In the

[8] The disputes over the 11-century Preah Vihear temple along the Thai-Cambodia presented a clear challenge to Cambodia's chairmanship in ASEAN. China's continued aggressive stance in the South China Sea also presents a mounting challenge for an economically-beholden Cambodia to make a decisive stand. Rodolfo C. Severino, "Cambodia Faces Tests with 2012 Asean Chairmanship," *Jakarta Globe*, February 22, 2012, http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/archive/cambodia-faces-tests-with-2012-asean-chairmanship/, accessed October 11, 2013.

[9] Opinion and Editorial, "Leading ASEAN," *The Jakarta Post* online, August 12, 2004, http://m.thejakartapost.com/news/2004/08/09/leading-asean.html, accessed October 14, 2013.

past, by stating that "the future of more than 500 million people, to a large extent, depends on Indonesia's leadership,"[10] its rhetoric presumed a historic "sense of regional entitlement."

While ASEAN states neither ask nor seek Indonesia's protection, they implicitly acknowledge Indonesia's centrality in ASEAN processes for as long as it serves their national interests. During the Yudhoyono era, Indonesia's commitment to ASEAN was backed up by Yudhoyono's appeal to the "free and active" principle that was reminiscent of the policy first articulated in 1948 by Mohammad Hatta. It conjured up images of Indonesia's non-aligned posture of the past, and the centrality of the region within Indonesia's foreign policy. Unfortunately, the preceding decade saw Indonesia's putative leadership decline in lustre, as an increasingly disjointed ASEAN spluttered with its member-states being tugged in several directions by politicking from within and external power plays from without.

ASEAN's centrality has been called into question following changes in the new security climate. The first is the imminent rise of China. Thoughts on Chinese exceptionalism have deemed its rise as a "peaceful" one with the explicit intention of not remaking the world in its own image. On the contrary, China's rise has triggered reverberations throughout the region in the last few years, threatening to tear apart ASEAN from within. In particular, China has been keen to reassert itself as the dominant player in the ASEAN region, and is not afraid to use aggression if pushed to the brink. Militarily, Beijing's build-up of its naval capabilities and maritime fleet has alarmed onlookers. China's pursuit of economic investment in Indo-China has been met with both success and wariness. To ease tensions, China joined the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia in 2003. Economic interdependence was bandied as beneficial for Beijing and ASEAN in which Chinese investments to ASEAN increased exponentially. China eventually emerged as the top foreign investor and aid donor to Cambodia and Laos, with substantial investments in Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Indonesia.[11] In its most recent charm offensive, Beijing pushed for a new treaty of friendship and cooperation with ASEAN, with the intention of transforming China-ASEAN relations from its "golden-decade" to a "diamond-decade" — an upgrade from the 2003 commitment.[12] Chinese President Xi

[10] Micheal Leifer, *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*, Allen & Unwin, 1983, p. 173.
[11] Ang Cheng Guan in "IndoChina," http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/reports/pdf/SR015/SR015Guan_.pdf, accessed October 14, 2013.
[12] Wu Lin, "New 'Diamond Decade' for China and ASEAN," *China.org.cn*, October 12, 2013, http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2013-10/12/content_30268898_2.htm, accessed October 14, 2013.

Jinping in October 2013 became the first leader to address the People's Consultative Assembly in the process, reinforcing Beijing's hope that Indonesia plays the leading role in ASEAN-China relations. In ASEAN-China bilateral trade terms, China is closing the gap on the United States. In 2012, bilateral trade with ASEAN in 2012 was US$400 billion and as of August 2013, $284.3 billion, reflecting a gap of between $40 billion and $50 billion between the ASEAN and US figures.[13]

The second is the countervailing "pivot," or rebalancing efforts of the US in its Asia-Pacific strategic re-engagement. Denying that such a strategy is meant to contain an emerging China, "re-pivot" efforts of the US have received their fair share of criticism. Among them: American "rebalancing" efforts "not matched by additional financial or human resources," and government cut-backs following the recent US government shutdown and long-term economic woes.[14] Enhanced engagement by the US has also ignited considerable contentions, especially with China, regarding increased US deployment of its marines on rotation in Darwin, Australia.

Third, territorial disputes in the South China Sea have become a major concern for security developments in the region. China has declared sovereign jurisdiction over most of the South China Sea, most of it also claimed by Southeast Asian littoral states. This has sparked a series of heated clashes, particularly between the affected states of Vietnam and the Philippines, as well as accusations of interference by the US. This issue is further aggravated by China insisting on bilateral modalities for dealing with the affected Southeast Asian state(s) on their own terms, while ASEAN and Washington view the conflict as a regional one requiring a multilateral approach. ASEAN is thus now faced with a quandary between American insistence on its common interest with ASEAN on equal and open access in the South China Sea, and China's adamant refusal of multilateralism as an approach. The ASEAN strategy has consistently been one that is focused on a code of conduct for the South China Sea. While China did sign a non-binding "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea" (DOC) calling for voluntary adherence to the principles of

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[13] "Xi to Break Tradition and Make Historic Speech at RI Parliament," *The Jakarta Post*, October 2, 2013, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/10/02/xi-break-tradition-make-historic-speech-ri-parliament.html, accessed December 20, 2013.

[14] Cameron Stewart, "US 'Failing to Back its Asia Pivot,' Says Government Report," *The Australian*, October 9, 2013, www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/policy/us-failing-to-back-its-asia-pivot-says-government-report/story-fn59nm2j-1226735103923#sthash.WEzEkVyU.dpuf, accessed October 15, 2013.

peace, self-restraint, functional cooperation, and consultation, it did not put a stop to China's aggressive pattern of harassment and intimidation in the seas to claimants of territory, EEZ, and self-jurisdiction.

According to Marty Natalegawa, power struggles and external strife have threatened to deepen the chasm of "trust deficits" already inherent within the fragile ASEAN Community and the regional security architecture. Some have speculated on a growing divide between mainland and maritime ASEAN member-states predicated not only upon democratization and democratic rule, but inherent allegiances to the major powers of the US and China. Given the changing security climate of Southeast Asia, other ASEAN-related extra-regional platforms, such as the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) have also been losing their appeal.[15] A loss of focus in particular is evident, with security dialogues within the ARF in recent years increasingly redirected towards defence matters relating to the Defence Minister's Dialogue (ARF DOD) and counter-terrorism issues, with even regional trade liberalization platforms such as APEC making pronouncements on terrorism. ASEAN centrality has also been steadily undermined by the United States' domination of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations. In light of these discordant developments within the fragile ASEAN landscape, it is imperative to ascertain Indonesia's stance on ASEAN's centrality and relevancy within its foreign policy directives under the auspice of *dynamic equilibrium*.

ASEAN Centrality no longer predominant in Indonesia's Foreign Policy Agenda

On the back of Indonesia's steadily rising economic profile, it has been argued that ASEAN is no longer the *de rigueur* cornerstone within Indonesia's foreign policy. Instead Indonesia should be looking at a post-ASEAN foreign policy. Proponents of a post-ASEAN foreign policy such as Jusuf Wanandi and Rizal Sukma have pointed out that "Indonesia should free itself from any undeserving obligation to follow the wishes of any state or grouping of states, including ASEAN, if by doing so we sacrifice our own interests." They see Indonesia as being increasingly

[15] Thitinan Pongsudhirak, "Mainland Southeast Asia, ASEAN and the Major Powers in East Asian Regional Order," Jun Tsunekawa, eds., *Regional Order in East Asia: ASEAN and Japan Perspectives*, NIDS Joint Research Series No. 1, National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan, 2007, pp. 104-110.

featured as an outlier within ASEAN, being more active exponents of human rights and democracy. While they see older ASEAN members-states latching on to Indonesia's lead in such trends rather lukewarm, the newer members of ASEAN, comprised of Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam were significantly more hesitant.[16] State-sovereignty, non-intervention and non-interference, on the other hand, have been the preferred approach by these newer member-states. Furthermore, competition over preponderance in the region by major powers, the US and China, has somewhat consolidated such a view. A two-speed ASEAN has been suggested on this aspect — one that is premised upon complementary underpinnings of two ASEANs under a single centrality.[17]

Pursuant to a post-ASEAN foreign policy, advocates felt that Indonesia should expand its priorities into more globalized domains such as the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) and the G20, instead of Indonesia's latent attachment to the ASEAN-centric agenda.[18] Others argue that Indonesia should redefine the notion of the "concentric-circle," in which ASEAN is seen merely as a forum to sustain good neighbourliness in the region in order to fulfil Indonesia's greater interests and ambitions while strengthening other regional and global strategic partnerships concomitantly with the major powers of Japan, Australia, China, India and the United States.[19] Rizal Sukma has also reiterated that Indonesia should be more assertive by virtue of Indonesia's role and position within ASEAN, being willing to take on different positions if necessary so as to forward her own interests first.[20] This is in contrast to Indonesia viewing ASEAN and its centrality as "*harga mati*" (or a non-negotiable issue). On Indonesia's current "middle power" approach, Rizal Sukma posited a tacit shift in its definition. Rather than seeing Indonesia's pursuit of "middle power" status in terms of their power projection capabilities, Rizal defined it more in terms of its non-alignment role rather than status (or "*negara tengah*" which meant

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[16] Barry Desker, "Is Indonesia Outgrowing ASEAN?" *RSIS Commentaries*, No. 125, September 29, 2010.

[17] Peter A. Petri and Michael G. Plummer, "ASEAN Centrality and the ASEAN-US Economic Relationship," *Social Science Research Network*, SSRN Working Paper Series, September 2, 2013.

[18] Rizal Sukma, "A post-ASEAN Foreign Policy for a Post-G8 World," *The Jakarta Post*, October 5, 2009.

[19] Evan A. Laksmana, "Challenges for Indonesia's Foreign Policy in Transition," *Today Newspaper*, February 27, 2010.

[20] Rizal Sukma, "Indonesia Needs a Post-ASEAN Foreign Policy," *The Jakarta Post*, June 30, 2009, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/06/30/indonesia-needs-a-postasean-foreign-policy.html, accessed October 16, 2013.

"power-in-the-middle" as opposed to "*negara sedang*").[21] This is probably a prelude to how Indonesia should pursue its policies beyond the ASEAN agenda — sticking to its non-aligned historical roots, but also moving away from ASEAN, giving consideration to newer forms of bilateral and multilateral approaches, starting with the "middle power" group.

Under the post-ASEANists, it seemed that the obsolescence of ASEAN centrality is but a moot point. According to them, unstinting adherence to an ASEAN-centric agenda and centrality trailing Indonesia's rise on the international arena, as well as the growing divisions within ASEAN, is untenable and may pose stumbling blocks to Indonesia's own interests elsewhere. Although it was not suggested that ASEAN centrality should be relegated to a less than favourable priority, it does suggest that ASEAN centrality can and should be superseded by what Indonesia deems more relevant when it comes to advancing the country's own lofty pursuit of global and international clout.

ASEAN Centrality is central to and part of Indonesia's Foreign Policy Agenda

An opposing view of sustained ASEAN engagement by Indonesia has been propagated by the pro-ASEANists, admittedly deriving largely from people in the government. They have maintained that ASEAN centrality is an undeniable facet of Indonesia's foreign policy and has been consistent since 1976, when Indonesia formally acknowledged ASEAN as its cornerstone. An important aspect in this Indonesia-ASEAN relationship is Indonesia's emphasis on cooperation rather than coercive action; consensus rather than solidary action.[22] Indonesia set the tone earlier for its leadership in advancing ASEAN centrality following the implementation of other similar and related platforms such as the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), and the Southeast Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty SEANWFZ, with the intention of boosting ASEAN recognition. *Dynamic equilibrium*, they argued, will be no different. After all, Marty Natalegawa had signalled Indonesia's continued and sustained interest in

[21] Interview with Rizal Sukma at Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), September 30, 2013.

[22] Dewi Fortuna Anwar in *Indonesia in ASEAN: Foreign Policy and Regionalism*, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1994, p. 7.

ASEAN as well as the Asia-Pacific by "aggressively waging peace."[23] Nonetheless, he also did allude to the fact that "ASEAN's centrality, or place in the driving seat, is not a given." ASEAN on the other hand has indeed earned its centrality through "its intellectual leadership and capacity to engage and serve as equilibrium-maker."

In its own way, pro-ASEANists view Indonesia as advancing the ASEAN-led agenda in a much wider scope despite taking a cut from its more lofty international goals; and strained relationships, especially with Malaysia. One of them is Indonesia's on-going engagement in the South China Sea dispute as a vocal advocate for the possibility of a viable Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea. Indonesia is also an active promoter of human rights and democracy in the region.[24] Indonesia has shown that it is not merely a bystander when it comes to resolving issues within ASEAN, by volunteering to take on a brokering role over clashes in Preah Vihear between Thai and Cambodian forces. An independent stance was also adopted by Indonesia through its refusal to support the imposition of sanctions on Myanmar by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UN Security Council. In addition, Indonesia has been proactive in ameliorating violence between the Arakan Buddhist and Muslim Rohingyas in Rakhine state, Myanmar, in its own way.[25] These myriad actions are not without their criticisms and detractors. Nonetheless, they have cumulatively demonstrated Indonesia's constant engagement and support of ASEAN as an institution and unitary organization.

Continuing on an ASEAN-centric path, Indonesia has singled out the bridging of "trust deficits" within ASEAN as the next step forward in the grand design of ASEAN centrality. Commenting on Indonesia's latest moves to cement trust in ASEAN, I Gede Agung Wesaka Puja, Director General of ASEAN Cooperation in Ministry of Foreign Affairs Indonesia, spoke of four specific agendas: 1) converting "trust deficits" into reservoirs of mutual confidence and strategic partnerships; 2) Managing disputes in the region; 3) Pushing for the creation of the ASEAN Community in 2015 forward and beyond by leveraging on ASEAN institutions; and 4) Expounding on the ASEAN Development Goals with a mission to create

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[23] Dr Marty Natalegawa, "Aggressively Waging Peace: ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific," *Strategic Review: The Indonesian Journal of Leadership, Policy and World Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 2, November-December 2011, pp. 40-46.

[24] Rizal Sukma, "Do New Democracies Support Democracy? Indonesia Finds a New Voice," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 22, Issue 4, October 2011, pp. 110-123.

[25] Margareth S. Aritonang and Bagus BT Saragih, "RI Ready to Fight for Rohingya," *The Jakarta Post* Headlines, July 31, 2012, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/07/31/ri-ready-fight-rohingya.html, accessed October 16, 2013.

a poverty-free ASEAN.[26] Several concrete efforts have been undertaken so far. Indonesia has offered to help in the peaceful resolution of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) insurgency in Mindanao, the Philippines. Indonesia has also been closely engaging with China formally at the senior official level. A conference was held in Suzhou, China recently in which Chinese and Indonesian officials pledged to collaborate on a roadmap and working group on the South China Sea issue. New institutions such as the ASEAN Institute of Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR), although limited to non-governmental institutions from ASEAN member-states only, have been promulgated.[27] Other initiatives include the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) and ADMM Plus mechanisms. According to Brigadier General Jan Pieter Ate, Director for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Indonesia, ADMM Plus has been quite successful in its dealings on non-sensitive issues surrounding maritime security, such as piracy and defence of the sea.[28] To maintain stability and security in the Asia-Pacific region, Indonesia has also proposed for an Indo-Pacific Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation — a well-intentioned attempt at adhering to its promises of maintaining peace and trust in the region.[29]

While these observations may sound more optimistic than actual implementation on the ground, it is undeniable that certain concrete steps are taken by a more assertive Indonesia of a continuous engagement with ASEAN priorities post-*Reformasi*. This is in spite of the new realities of the *Reformasi* government, with the extra burden of having to respond to domestic opinion as expressed by the local media — a new dimension that Indonesia often have to contend with. Pro-ASEANists have maintained that although Indonesia's track record with its engagement with ASEAN have waxed and waned during the tumultuous transition of the then-Suharto government to the current *Reformasi*-led cabinet due to circumstantial events, Indonesia have never

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[26] Interview with I Gede Agung Wesaka Puja at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 4 October 2013. On a related note, Pak I Gede has also expounded on a 3 + 1 formula in Indonesia's foreign policy circle on tackling the current "trust deficits" inherent within the ASEAN architecture, namely through peaceful management efforts: building confidence, avoiding accidents, creating mechanisms and creating a climate suitable for conflict resolution and cooperation.

[27] Lina A. Alexandra, "Bringing Peace and Reconciliation to ASEAN," *The Jakarta Post*, May 31, 2011, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/05/31/bringing-peace-and-reconciliation-asean.html, accessed October 16, 2013.

[28] Interview with Brigadier General Jan Pieter Ate at the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia, October 3, 2013.

[29] Bantarto Bandoro, "Will Good Intentions in Indonesia's Blueprint for Asia-Pacific Security Collide with Harsh Realities?" *ISEAS Perspectives*, No. 54, October 3, 2013.

deviate from the path of ASEAN centrality and will continue to engage ASEAN in the near future.

ASEAN Centrality is but only a part of Indonesia's Foreign Policy Agenda

The last contending viewpoint posits a more nuanced interpretation of Indonesia's *dynamic equilibrium* towards the ASEAN-centric agenda that ties in intimately with domestic politics within the archipelagic state. Many observers notice Indonesia's more frequent diplomatic involvement and appearances on the world stage, and have associated it both with the rise of Indonesia and President SBY's penchant for directing the affairs of the foreign ministry without institutionalized consultation. Indonesian presidents are no strangers to leaving their own personal imprint when it comes to directing the course of foreign policies. However, it turns out that SBY's personal hand in matters has been less discreet and more eager than others. More often than not during his second term, the image-conscious president has been seen courting international attention in issues ranging from Egypt and Syria to Malaysian's electoral politics.[30] Some have cited this as urgency in sealing his legacy and image as Indonesia's foremost "foreign policy" president internationally and domestically. Nonetheless, this has oftentimes been at the behest of being distracted from long-held priorities in the region.[31] ASEAN centrality and the region of Southeast Asia has always been a prevailing theme in Indonesian foreign policy circles; however SBY himself has demonstrated that particular domestic concerns and close relationships between particular sets of leaders can sometimes override ASEAN and regional dominancy. As a result, there is a perception that institutional and organizational

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[30] For SBY's controversial speech on Syria, see Dina Y. Sulaeman, "Syria: SBY's New Imagery?" *The Global Review Analysis*, September 11, 2013, http://www.theglobal-review.com/content_detail.php?lang=en&id=10785&type=4#.Ul9pc2z2OM9, accessed October 17, 2013. For SBY's opinion on the crisis in Egypt, see Bagus BT Saragih, "SBY Criticizes the Use of Military Force in Egypt," *The Jakarta Post*, August 15, 2013, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/08/15/sby-criticizes-use-military-force-egypt.html, accessed October 17, 2013. See also "Indonesia's SBY Concerned About Malaysia's Alleged Electoral Fraud, Says Anwar," *Malaysia Today*, June 17, 2013, http://www.malaysia-today.net/mtcolumns/newscommentaries/57495-indonesias-sby-concerned-about-malaysias-alleged-electoral-fraud-says-anwar, October 17, 2013.

[31] Interview with Dr. Adrianna Elisabeth at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI: *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia*), October 4, 2013. See also A'an Suryana, "Image-Conscious SBY: Balancing Compassion and Guts," The Jakarta Post, July 30, 2010, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/07/30/imageconscious-sby-balancing-compassion-and-guts.html, accessed October 17, 2013.

incoherence within Indonesia's foreign ministry exists not because of the dearth of policymaking continuity, but because of a personalization issue.

Instances of tacit differences in opinion over issues between Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa and SBY have been frequent, including Indonesia's stance on June's haze issue, the stationing of US Marines in Darwin, asylum seekers and the controversies surrounding the "Free Papua Movement." Domestic consideration frequently played a significant role in some of SBY's interference and pronouncements, particularly on the Muslim world in the Middle East. On the other hand, a personal hand in foreign relations has also led to deep relationships and eventual strategic partnerships between a few preferred nations seen as "middle powers." Foremost among them is the special relationship South Korea enjoys with Indonesia, fostered under the auspice of the previous Korean president, Lee Myung-Bak.[32] The warming of ties between South Korea and Indonesia has increased exponentially within recent years. In the economic field, two-way trade value has increased from US$11 billion in 2007 to $30 billion in 2011. While the total value of Korean investment in Indonesia reached $5.7 billion in 2011, Indonesia, on the other hand, is South Korea's biggest Southeast Asian buyer of its defence industry, only recently inking a deal for the purchase of submarines and T-50 Golden Eagle supersonic trainer jets.

Such close bilateral relationships between particular nations may not come as an expense to ASEAN's centrality and regionalism however it does place the ASEAN-centric agenda at a subordinate level. Pursuing greater international voice and appeal may raise Indonesia's, and perhaps ASEAN's, profiles on the world-stage; however it also has the effect of diluting Indonesia's prior commitments to ASEAN as its cornerstone, due to the multiple commitments Indonesia has to undertake. With a hefty foreign policy agenda on its plate, this has often led to Indonesia not giving ASEAN and its institutions the requisite engagement, publicity and support it deserves.

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[32] Desy Nurhayati and Novan Iman Santosa, "South Korea's Lee Myung-Bak Honored," *The Jakarta Post*, November 9, 2012, http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/11/09/south-korea-s-lee-myung-bak-honored.html, October 17, 2013. See also interview with Yayan G. H. Mulyana, October 2, 2013. In particular, Lee Myung-Bak has described the relationship with Indonesia as "heartfelt."

Conclusion: *Dynamic Equilibrium* and ASEAN Centrality Mutually Inclusive but not Necessarily Top of the Agenda

Post-ASEANists have often cited ASEAN's abandonment of Indonesia's imperatives as reason for a foreign policy agenda that does not make ASEAN the first and foremost priority. Such a contention, though, remains problematic. Despite ASEAN's own inherent problems from within and external skirmishes without, is there a persuasive reason or incentive to discard the ASEAN-centric agenda that has served Indonesia and the region well? ASEAN as a loose-binding platform has been built upon the values of consensus, non-interference, cooperation, and consultation. On that aspect, it is even more imperative that member-states preserve this ethos collectively, and build on defusing "trust deficits," especially in an increasingly tense security climate.

Pro-ASEANists have ruminated over Indonesia's track record in leading ASEAN, and have listed numerous instances of continuous engagement with ASEAN-led initiatives. However, these rose-tinted images of Indonesia-ASEAN engagements leave out the *depth* of commitment from Indonesia itself, despite the superiority of frequencies. Apparently, Indonesia's bilateral and strategic partnerships with South Korea and Australia carry more significance over cooperation and deals inked within the ASEAN context. In such instances, obligatory acquiesce to ASEAN's centrality often clouds the actual reasons behind why it is carried out.

Proponents of an "all directions" foreign policy under SBY's second presidency position their perspectives somewhere in the middle. Domestic developments and politics within Indonesia, and the often personalistic role the Indonesian President takes up, feature prominently in their arguments. While a post-ASEAN outlook would have reflected a landscape that is unconcerned with internal developments and the strong immutable ties Indonesia enjoys with ASEAN, a pro-ASEAN narrative would only seem overly sanguine and lamentably officious. Their argument coincides with a legacy-making attempt by the incumbent SBY presidency, and rightly points out that ASEAN's centrality and role can inevitably be sidestepped over the issue of raising Indonesia's and SBY's own profile as a statesman internationally. While it is almost certain that the priorities of the ASEAN agenda occupy a vacillating and often ambiguous position within Indonesia's standpoint, it also does not exclude the fact that *dynamic equilibrium* and ASEAN centrality are mutually inclusive and complementary. More than that, Indonesia engages ASEAN on a frequent basis;

nonetheless, the *depth* and *significance* of its engagements are oftentimes a reflection of the *depth* of personal relationships among country leaders.

It is not certain that ASEAN centrality will indefinitely feature within Indonesia's foreign policy circles. However, Indonesia has made strides in factoring ASEAN within its international projections. In a statement made by SBY marking the entry into force of the ASEAN Charter, he commented and acknowledged ASEAN's role as the indispensable driver of the ARF, ASEAN plus 3, and the EAS.[33] On other instances, SBY has also pledged to position a more outward-looking ASEAN as a central building block in the Asia-Pacific region progressively, through increasing ASEAN's leverage and standing in the world.[34] In its previous settlements on the border clashes between Cambodia and Thailand in 2011, Indonesia has sought to highlight ASEAN's expediency in its resolution in accordance to TAC and the ASEAN Charter in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).[35] There is also a tangible attempt at regionalizing domestic issues with the member-states of ASEAN. On the region's vulnerability towards natural disasters, ASEAN has being singled out as the working hub to settle these issues in the Asia-Pacific.[36] All these actions have indicated adjoining interests of both Indonesia and ASEAN, and Indonesia's ambitious attempt at elevating ASEAN and its leadership onto global circles.

ASEAN's centrality may take a backseat in the meantime due to the current political situation within Indonesia, whereby the nation is steadily gearing up for the 2014 general elections. SBY's personal hold on foreign policy is short-lived. However, there is a glaring lesson to be learnt here — that is, the strong element of personalization and reliance upon the direction of leaders, instead of institutions, in Indonesia. ASEAN centrality will be a recurring issue on the plate of Indonesia's

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[33] See for instance Statement by H.E. Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of Republic of Indonesia at the Ceremony to Mark the Entry Into Force of the ASEAN Charter on Thursday, July 26, 2012. Posted in Leaders Views Print, ASEAN Secretariat, December 15, 2008.

[34] See for instance Lecture by H.E. Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia, on the Occasion of the 44th Anniversary of ASEAN Change and Continuity towards Attaining the ASEAN Community in 2015 and Beyond Jakarta, August 8, 2011 on Thursday, July 26, 2012. Posted in Leaders Views Print.

[35] See for instance Statement by H.E. Dr. R.M. Marty M. Natalegawa, Indonesian Foreign Minister, Chair of ASEAN, Before the UNSC New York, February 14, 2011, www.deplu.go.id/Pages/Speech TranscriptionDisplay.aspx?Name1=Pidato&Name2=Menteri&IDP=701&l=en, accessed October 17, 2013.

[36] See for instance Lecture by H.E. Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia, on the Occasion of the 44th Anniversary of ASEAN Change and Continuity towards Attaining the ASEAN Community in 2015 and Beyond Jakarta, August 8, 2011 on Thursday, 26 July 2012. Posted in Leaders Views Print. Also interview with Yayan G. H. Mulyana, ibid.

foreign policy. On an optimistic note, one must not rule out the fact that a new president after SBY may look upon the role of ASEAN centrality more deliberately and favourably. That is, perhaps, a silver lining to look out for in the future for ASEAN.