

The Successful of Strengthening ASEAN Centrality Through the ASEAN Way: Under the Indo-Pacific Strategy

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Abstract

Southeast Asia is a region with a strategic geographical location in global politics. History has proven that international political contestation occurred in this region from the era of colonialism at the end of the 16th century until now. This article explores how the Southeast Asian region is still a place of power rivalry and influence of major world powers such as China and the United States and, in the broader scope, the Indo-Pacific region. The research implemented Immanuel Kant's triangle of global politics and liberalism perspective to inquire into ASEAN countries' policy due to regional security and peacebuilding. It also uses literature study as a research method. The result indicates that ASEAN, established in 1967, has played a significant role in regional politics, especially in maintaining security and stability. The success of ASEAN is inseparable from the way ASEAN diplomacy with external partners by holding the principles and values believed by ASEAN member countries, known as the ASEAN Way. The values embodied in the ASEAN Way are vital to ASEAN's success Under the Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Keywords: ASEAN, ASEAN Way, Indo-Pacific, Geo-Politic, Regionalism



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I. INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia is a very strategic region. The history has proven that the Southeast Asian region has a significant role in world politics. The history of the Southeast Asia region is complex and diverse, with a rich heritage influenced by various indigenous civilizations, empires, colonial powers, and regional conflicts. Throughout its history, Southeast Asia region has witnessed the rise and fall of powerful kingdoms and empires, such as the Khmer Empire in Cambodia It was between 802 and 1432 AD., the Majapahit Empire in Indonesia established in the 13th to 16th centuries., and the Ayutthaya Kingdom in Thailand from 1351 to 1767. These kingdoms and empires played a significant role in shaping the political, economic, and cultural landscape of the region. The era is part of the ancient historical period of Southeast Asia.

Entering the era of colonialism, the Southeast Asian region became an area that Europeans desperately wanted to conquer and colonize, the mastery of the natural wealth of spices at that time was the reason. Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, British and French major countries in Europe during the era of colonialism were once the rulers of territories in Southeast Asia. Even in the era of the second world war until the cold war, this region still remained a priority for super powers interest at that time such as Japan, the United States and the Soviet Union became strategic areas and priorities to be controlled. In 1967 the Southeast Asian region began an important stage by establishing an organization of cooperation between countries under the name *Association of Southeast Asian Nations* known as (ASEAN). The purpose is to further national interest through a more efficient allocation of resources in those areas of state activities where complementary interests can be harmonized by collective decision making in terms of maximizing national interest through regional cooperation.¹ Since its establishment in Bangkok in 1967, The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been through enormous transformation. ASEAN was established with the primary objective of promoting regional peace and stability, but has now expanded its mandate to include economic, socio-cultural, and political-security integration and has evolved from increasing its membership from five to ten members, establishing bodies or institutions within the organization to expanding cooperation with ASEAN partner countries from outside the region in discussing important issues such as economics, politics, and security. Through the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), ASEAN has made progress toward the formation of a single market and production base. This has improved the region's competitiveness and economic potential by facilitating the free flow of commodities, services, investment, and skilled labor.

Socio-culturally, ASEAN has worked towards fostering a sense of community among its diverse member states. Efforts have been made to promote cultural exchange, protect human rights, and advance social development. This has helped to strengthen the

¹ Donald Weatherbee E, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy, ASEAN And Regionalism In Southeast Asia* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2009), chap. 5, page 91

social fabric of the region and promote mutual understanding and respect among its peoples. Politically, ASEAN has played an important role in maintaining regional stability. Through mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN has provided a platform for dialogue and cooperation on key security issues. ASEAN has experienced significant transformation over the years. From humble origins, it has developed into a dynamic and prominent regional organization that plays a crucial part in determining Southeast Asia's future. ASEAN is prepared to meet new challenges and opportunities in its quest of regional peace, progress, and prosperity as it evolves.

ASEAN has been able to play a very significant role in regional politics, especially in maintaining security stability. The success of ASEAN is inseparable from the way ASEAN diplomacy with external partners by holding the principles and values believed by ASEAN member countries, known as the ASEAN Way. The ASEAN way have been described by many scholars who have studied the organization, as a characteristic feature in the way ASEAN manages conflicts and maintains peace and security in Southeast Asia.² The ASEAN Way is a guiding principle that shapes the approach of member countries in Southeast Asia to conflict management. It places great emphasis on consultation and consensus building. The ASEAN Way based on four principles: non-intervention, quiet diplomacy, non-use of force, and consensus decision-making.³ And the most important principles is non-intervention that the member of ASEAN countries do not interfere with internal issues.

Since ASEAN's creation, international relations in Southeast Asia have played out at two levels: the state-to-state bilateral level and the ASEAN multilateral level. At each level there are two sets of relationships. At the bilateral level, there are the relationships among the Southeast Asian states themselves and the relationships of the Southeast Asian states to external actors, in particular the great powers. At the ASEAN level, there are the relationships of the member states to ASEAN and ASEAN's relationship to the external world, again particularly the great power.⁴ ASEAN as a regional cooperation organization of Southeast Asian countries, currently faced with a very crucial condition in the Indo-Pacific region is the rivalry of two major world powers between China and the United States. This is inevitable due to the geography and potential resources in Southeast Asia which is very strategic in the Indo-Pacific region. The Indo-Pacific region is a vast and diverse area that encompasses the Indian and Pacific oceans, as well as the landmasses and islands that border them. It is home to more than half of the world's population, and accounts for 60% of global GDP and 65% of global trade.⁵ The region is

² Mely Caballero Anthony, *Regional Security in Southeast Asia: Beyond the ASEAN Way* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005).

³ Harsh Mahaseth, "The Use of The ASEAN Way In Resolving Disputes," *Modern Diplomacy*, June 22, 2022, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/06/22/the-use-of-the-asean-way-in-resolving-disputes/>.

⁴ Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy, ASEAN And Regionalism In Southeast Asia*, 3.

⁵ Kavaljit Singh, "The What, How and Why of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework," *The Wire*, 2022, <https://thewire.in/economy/the-what-how-and-why-of-the-indo-pacific-economic-framework>.

also a hotspot for geopolitical rivalry, maritime disputes, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, piracy, climate change, and natural disasters.

The suggestions from a number of academics in the context of the Indo-Pacific are not new, as they do not explicitly refer to the Indo-Pacific. The concept of Indo-Pacific strategy is vast and differs from one another among key supporting countries such as Australia, Japan, India and the United States in terms of geostrategic context, but the basic concepts overlap. All of them pursue a free and open Indo-Pacific, emphasizing the rule of law and securing prosperity, peace and stability. The term of “*Indo-Pacific*” has become a widely-recognised regional conception. The United States, Australia, Japan, India, France, the United Kingdom, Indonesia and ASEAN have adopted “*Indo-Pacific*” as a policy symbol of regional engagement and have started taking actions to make “*Indo-Pacific*” an ideal region for themselves based on their values.⁶ In brief, the term of “*Indo-Pacific*” began to be discussed in strategic circles about a decade ago, but has rapidly gained importance in recent years. It has entered the geopolitical discourse, replacing the term of “*Asia-Pacific*”, although its geographical boundaries are not yet well-defined. Today, the Indo-Pacific is the world's most contested maritime zone due to the growing strategic rivalry between the US and China and the security interests of other major players in the region. ASEAN (southeast asia region) is part of “*Indo-Pacific*”.

The ASEAN position in the Indo-Pacific is very important and a decisive factor for other small and peripheral countries in the Indo-Pacific region to support and be part of its development. A critical determinant for ASEAN to support the Indo-Pacific Strategy is whether it can maintain and exercise its centrality. ASEAN centrality in international relations and cooperation with external actors is one of ASEAN's goals stated in the ASEAN Charter. “*To maintain the centrality and proactive role of ASEAN as the primary driving force in its relations and cooperation with its external partners in a regional architecture that is open, transparent and inclusive*”⁷ Underlining this purpose and adhering to the principle of the centrality in external political, economic, social and cultural relations, ASEAN reconfirms its position *vis-à-vis* Indo-Pacific. What is expected is that Indo-Pacific is a closely integrated and interconnected region with Southeast Asia (ASEAN).⁸ ASEAN has managed to maintain its centrality amid the influence and presence of major world powers China and the United States in the Indo-Pacific region. This success cannot be separated from the way ASEAN diplomacy uses The ASEAN Way. The success of ASEAN diplomacy skills through the ASEAN Way with external partners in managing cooperation and competition in the region can be proven by several things such as: *Political stability and security, Economic Cooperation dan Regional and international partnerships*. In

⁶ Wada Haruko, “The ‘Indo-Pacific’ Concept : Geographical Adjustments and Their Implications,” Working Paper, The RSIS Working Paper Series (Singapore: S. Rajaratnam School Of International Studies, 2020).

⁷ ASEAN, “The ASEAN Charter” (ASEAN, 2007), <https://asean.org/asean/asean-charter/charter-of-the-association-of-southeast-asian-nations/>.

⁸ Masataka Fujita, “Can ASEAN Retain Centrality in Indo-Pacific Region? - From a GVC Point of View,” *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies* 10, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 108–22.

general, ASEAN through its ASEAN Way has succeeded in making the Southeast Asian region, especially the Indo-Pacific, generally a stable region free from open conflict. Otherwise ASEAN centrality is not guaranteed nor achievable. This paper examines ASEAN success in maintaining its centrality Under The Indo-Pacific regional strategy through the ASEAN Way. To answer this, the writer will use the concept of regionalism as it applies to ASEAN.

Adopting the Indo-Pacific Strategy presents a complex challenge for Indonesia as it seeks to balance its commitment to the ASEAN Way with the changing geopolitical landscape. The ASEAN Way, rooted in principles of non-interference and consensus-building, has provided a stable framework for regional cooperation. However, the Indo-Pacific Strategy introduces external dynamics and significant power competition, which may test the resilience of ASEAN's principles. As a critical member, Indonesia must carefully navigate these waters to ensure that the cooperative spirit of the ASEAN Way is not compromised. One crucial point of consideration lies in the potential impact on regional security. While the Indo-Pacific Strategy emphasizes security cooperation, Indonesia must assess how such initiatives align with its national security priorities without compromising the non-confrontational stance advocated by ASEAN.

In this evolving landscape, the future of Indonesia's civil society becomes a pivotal aspect to consider. The engagement with the Indo-Pacific Strategy demands active participation from various sectors, including civil society organizations. Indonesia's civil society can play a crucial role in shaping the discourse around the country's involvement in the Indo-Pacific, ensuring that the voices of its diverse population are heard and represented. However, there is also the risk of civil society being marginalized or co-opted in pursuing geopolitical interests. As Indonesia engages with external partners in the Indo-Pacific region, a critical point of view within civil society can contribute to transparent decision-making processes and hold the government accountable. The challenge lies in maintaining a vibrant civil society that actively contributes to policy discussions while navigating the complexities of international partnerships.

II. METHODOLOGY

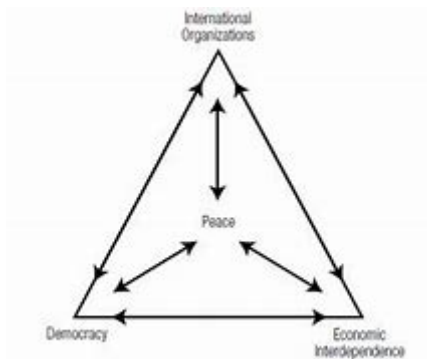
In this paper, the methodology used to measure the success of ASEAN centrality in the indo-pacific strategy is ASEAN success in strengthening and using ASEAN values known as The ASEAN Way, which is further written in *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific* to address the constellation of international politics in the Indo-Pacific. ASEAN centrality is seen in the values of the ASEAN Way followed by ASEAN Cooperation partners from outside the Region in establishing ASEAN Cooperation relations. The more partners from outside Southeast Asia that want to establish cooperative relationships with ASEAN, the stronger ASEAN centrality becomes. Because the values of The ASEAN Way must be the main foundation in working together.

The method in this paper is qualitative. Qualitative research can also be understood as an effort to interpret phenomena by presenting interpretations by others

to complement our understanding. The characteristics of qualitative research are exploratory, flexible and flexible, driven by data and sensitive to context.⁹ This research uses 2 technics to collect data, namely: (1) literature study and (2) data analysis. Literature study is a researcher's effort to exploring many kinds of literature related with the topic, like journal articles, social science, books, news and official data such as from ASEAN Secretariat.

III. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Liberals in the study of international relations believe that states and global structures as a shared community are capable of working together to address problems collectively. Liberalism also emphasizes interdependence and cooperation can create peace. Quoting Immanuel Kant's view of global politics, Kant has illustrated it with a triangle which became known as Kant's triangle which is about an interdependent system of influences, which are seen to exist in a series of 'feedback loops' with each of the major forces strengthening the other.¹⁰



Using the above liberalism and quoting Kant's thought, it can be mention that ASEAN actors see the regional organization as a forum to achieve cooperation as a way to improve the region as a whole. By using the Kant triangle, stability and peace in the Southeast Asian region can be realized under the influence of the ASEAN organization and the values of the ASEAN Way within it. The theory of liberalism underlies the decision-making process in ASEAN since the goal of the ASEAN Way is to reach consensus with a shared understanding that each country has equal power. shared understanding that each country has equal power. Although the ASEAN Way in its implementation can be explained by using these approaches, I will use the concept of regionalism as an approach to the integration process of countries in the Southeast Asian region as the embryo of the ASEAN Way.

⁹ Jennifer Mason, Alan Bryman, and Bob Burgess, "Linking Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis," in *Analyzing Qualitative Data* (Routledge, 2002), 103–24.

¹⁰ Bruce Russett, "Liberalism," in *International Relations Theories; Dicipline and Diversity*, ed. Timothy Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, Third Edition (Oxford University Press, 2013), 106.

The concept of regionalism in international relations in southeast asia signifies the formal association of three or more of the nation-states in the geographic region in political, economic, or other functionally related multilateral structures promoting international cooperation. The purpose is to further national interest Through a more efficient allocation of resources in those areas of state activities where complementary interests can be harmonized by collective decision making in terms of maximizing national interest through regional cooperation. It also enhances through a kind of pooling process the capabilities of the individual states in their relations with extra regional powers with greater capabilities. In ASEAN this is called “*regional resilience*”.¹¹

ASEAN is able to create a conducive environment that allows the organization to pursue its idealistic goals. In addition, the ASEAN Way as a decision-making process supports efforts that enable member states to cooperate both bilaterally and multilaterally and lays the foundation for cooperative activities. ASEAN is the most significant expression of the drive for regionalism in the Southeast Asian region and after the European Union (E.U), ASEAN is often considered the most successful regional grouping in the developing world. The future of ASEAN depends in part on the value that its member states will continue to place on the Southeast Asia-based organizational unit as they integrate into a more inclusive, expansive and sometimes competitive pattern of inter-state interaction. Only by strengthening the ASEAN Way, the centrality of ASEAN remain intact and strong in global politics.

IV. INDO-PASIFIC STRATEGY

The Indo-Pacific refers to a region geographically within the waters of the Indian Ocean, the western and central Pacific Ocean, and the area connecting the two oceans along the South China Sea. It excludes the polar regions and the temperate countries of Continental Europe and the Americas. Indo-pacific in the study of international relations as part of the framework of regional and multilateral cooperation in the fields of economics, politics, and defense, involving countries in the water area.

Geographically, this region has a strategic position that has economic value by being a connecting major world powers, such as the US, Japan, Russia, China, as well as ASEAN member countries. ASEAN members. About 20% of the total 73.56 million square miles of the earth's ocean surface is part of this region, which is a combination of the Indian Ocean and ASEAN member states. of this region, which is a combination of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.¹² The term has gained popularity since former US President Donald Trump frequently mentioned the “*Indo-Pacific region*” as a new perspective in his various visits to Asian countries.

¹¹ Weatherbee, *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy, ASEAN And Regionalism In Southeast Asia*, 91.

¹² David Michel and Russel Sticklor, *Indian Ocean Rising: Maritime Security and Policy Challenges* (Washington D.C: Stimson, 2012).

The term actually has been popular since it was first proposed in Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's speech regarding the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) VI in August 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya.

“In 2016, during my second administration, I formally announced the idea of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in Nairobi. Later, US President Donald Trump changed the name of the “Pacific Command” to “Indo-Pacific Command,” and the US began to align its military and diplomatic strategy with the strategy advocated by Japan”¹³

This region has become a strategic battle of the rivalry between two major world powers, China and the United States. Beginning with the success of the Belt and Road Initiative foreign policy strategy around 2013, this economic success has resulted in China's increasing power in the region. In addition, China is also expanding its military dominance in the South China Sea and East China Sea. The Indo-Pacific has increasingly become the center of attention since 2016 after the announcement of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific concept by Japan and continued by the United States in response to China's BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) has formed a rivalry relationship between the two countries in the Indo-Pacific region and this raises the perspective of threats to regional security stability.

From the explanation above, it can be explained briefly, Strategy in the Indo-Pacific region is a concept that describes the vision and common interests of countries in the Asia and Pacific region in maintaining stability, security and prosperity amid global and regional challenges. The strategy also recognizes the importance of maintaining a balance of power and respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region. Strategies in the Indo-Pacific region can cover several areas, here are some of the strategies taking place in the Indo-pacific region :

- a. **Regional cooperation** : Countries in the Indo-Pacific region have increased regional cooperation through multilateral forums such as APEC, ARF, East Asian Summit, BRI, QUAD etc. From several examples of regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, it is clear the presence and influence of the United States and China in the region. Both countries compete for influence through forms of regional cooperation. In this regional cooperation, ASEAN through the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is able to play a very important role. The ARF has succeeded in becoming an important actor in the Southeast Asian region that cooperates with partners outside the region in maintaining regional security stability. Regional corporations will play an important role in the implementation of the Indo-Pacific strategy. They may help to build a more wealthy, sustainable, and peaceful Indo-Pacific area by their actions. However, it is critical that these firms act in accordance with the Indo-Pacific strategy's values, which include respect for sovereignty, adherence to international law, and a commitment to sustainable development.

¹³ Shinzō Abe, “Realizing a Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” Project Syndicate, September 26, 2022, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/realizing-vision-of-free-and-open-indo-pacific-by-abe-shinzo-2022-09>.

- b. **Economic partnership** : The Indo-Pacific region has great economic potential. Countries in the region are enhancing economic partnerships through the establishment of free trade zones, increased investment, and exchange of knowledge and technology. This can benefit all countries in the region by increasing economic growth. Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) is an example of multilateral economic cooperation in this area it was initiated by the United States. In May 2022, the United States launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) This framework will advance resilience, sustainability, inclusiveness, economic growth, fairness, and competitiveness for our economies. Through this initiative, the IPEF partners aim to contribute to cooperation, stability, prosperity, development, and peace within the region. This framework will offer tangible benefits that fuel economic activity and investment, promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and benefit workers and consumers across the region.¹⁴ IPEF involves countries in the southeast Asian region and does not involve the presence of China. ASEAN in the field of economic partnership is also able to play its role through The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in the absence of the United States. RCEP aims to enhance regional economic cooperation among member countries. It seeks to foster partnerships in various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, services, technology, and intellectual property. RCEP promotes collaboration in areas such as supply chain connectivity, industry standards, innovation, and sustainable development.¹⁵
- c. **Maritime security** : The Indo-Pacific region is a strategic trade route and has abundant marine resources. Countries in the region cooperate in securing their waters and protecting their maritime interests. But also for potential cause of conflicts. One of the key issues affecting maritime security in the Indo-Pacific is the ongoing territorial dispute in the South China Sea, where several countries have competing claims to islands and maritime boundaries. This has led to increased military presence, naval exercises and occasional confrontations, raising concerns about potential miscalculations and conflict escalation. As the Indo-Pacific continues to play an important role in global geopolitics and trade, ensuring maritime security remains a top priority for the nations involved. By addressing challenges and fostering collaboration, the region can work to protect its vital maritime domain and promote peace and stability for the benefit of all stakeholders. Under the Indo-Pacific strategy, maritime security is a critical component due to the strategic importance and complex challenges in the region. Maritime security in the Indo-Pacific is of paramount importance due to the strategic importance of the region and the complex challenges it faces. The United Nations on the law of the sea known as UNCLOS is plays an important role in maintaining maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is a comprehensive international treaty that establishes the legal foundation for the

¹⁴ Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), "United States Trade Representative (Ustr.Gov)," Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), accessed January 3, 2024, <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/agreements>.

¹⁵ Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), "Member Countries," accessed January 3, 2024, <https://www.studyiq.com/articles/rcep-regional-comprehensive-economic-partnership>.

use and management of the world's oceans and seas.¹⁶¹⁷ It emphasizes the importance of maintaining freedom of navigation and overflight, safeguarding the freedom of commercial and military vessels to transit international waters, and ensuring they can exercise all rights and uses of the sea and airspace recognized under international law. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) addresses a wide range of concerns, including maritime boundaries, navigation, environmental protection, marine resources, dispute settlement, and cooperation. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) seeks to balance the rights and interests of many governments and parties while also promoting peace, security, and prosperity in the marine domain. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea is based on the recognition of humanity's common inheritance, the sovereign rights of coastal states, and the freedom of the high seas. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea defines and delimits numerous marine zones, including the territorial sea, the exclusive economic zone, the continental shelf, the high seas, and the Area. UNCLOS also governs states' and other actors' rights and obligations in these zones, including as the right of innocent passage, the need to conserve the maritime environment, and the obligation to share the benefits of seabed exploration and exploitation outside national jurisdiction. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea also allows for the peaceful resolution of disputes arising from the interpretation or application of the convention.

- d. **Dialogue diplomacy** : Dialogue and diplomacy are key to addressing disagreements and potential conflicts in the Indo-Pacific region. Countries in the region should continue to communicate and negotiate to peacefully resolve existing disputes, as well as promote a more open and transparent security dialog. The strategy emphasizes the importance of dialogue diplomacy in maintaining a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. It also underscores the importance of partnership and collaboration in addressing regional and global challenges.

The conclusion of the strategy in the Indo-Pacific region is that regional cooperation, economic partnership, maritime security, dialogue diplomacy and capacity building are important factors in building stability and prosperity in the region. Countries in the region need to cooperate and support each other in overcoming differences of opinion, securing waters, strengthening economies and enhancing their capacities. Using these strategies, it is hoped that the Indo-Pacific region can become a safe, stable and prosperous region for all countries involved. The strategy in the Indo-Pacific region mandatory to enhance regional security, stability and prosperity, and promoting a rules-based order that respects the sovereignty and interests of all countries. It involves strengthening partnerships and alliances, deepening economic and trade ties, supporting regional institutions and norms, and advancing human rights and democracy. It also seeks to address challenges posed by China's growing influence and assertiveness,

¹⁶ United Nations, "UNCLOS," accessed January 6, 2024, https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf.

¹⁷ a statement by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi quoted from Thea Fathanah Arbar, "China: Strategi AS Picu Perpecahan Di Kawasan Indo-Pasifik," May 23, 2022, <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/news/20220523141619-4-341098/china-strategi-as-picu-perpecahan-di-kawasan-indo-pasifik>.

as well as other threats such as terrorism, cyberattacks, climate change and pandemics. The strategy is not intended to contain or confront China, but rather to encourage China to comply with international law and norms, and to cooperate in areas of mutual interest. The strategy is based on the principles of inclusiveness, openness, transparency, and respect for international law. But This strategy has also generated some controversy. For example, China has criticized this strategy.

*“The Indo-Pacific strategy is constructed by the United States under the banner of 'freedom and openness', but it does want to create a 'small circle' with the aim of changing the environment around China in an attempt to contain China, using Asia-Pacific countries as 'pawns' for US hegemony”.*¹⁸

V. THE SUCCESSFUL OF THE ASEAN WAY UNDER INDO-PASIFIC STRATEGY (ASEAN OUTLOOK ON THE INDO-PACIFIC)

ASEAN perspective of viewing the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, not as contiguous territorial spaces but as a closely integrated and interconnected region, with ASEAN playing a central and strategic role. ASEAN has successfully maintained peace and harmony in the region since its establishment in 1967. ASEAN declared purpose is *"the collective will of the nations of Southeast Asia to bind themselves in friendship and cooperation and, through common efforts and sacrifices, secure for their peoples and for posterity the blessings of peace, freedom and prosperity"*. ASEAN has played an important role in maintaining a friendly and peaceful environment in the region among its members. Apart from minor disputes between countries, Southeast Asia has managed to avoid serious regional conflicts and problems. This success is inseparable from the values and beliefs of Southeast Asian countries in the ASEAN Way.

The ASEAN Way is a term used to describe a unique way of working and approach within the framework of ASEAN Cooperation. The ASEAN Way reflects Southeast Asian cultural, historical, and political values, such as deliberation, consensus, non-intervention, and kinship. The ASEAN Way aims to maintain peace, stability, and progress in the region through dialogue, consultation, and mutually beneficial cooperation. The ASEAN Way also emphasizes the importance of respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national identity of each member state. The non-intervention approach refers to the principle that each country has the right to manage its own internal affairs. This means that ASEAN member states are committed to non-interference in the internal affairs of other member states. In the context of ASEAN, non-intervention is an important foundation for maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states. According to Amitav Acharya, who takes a socio-constructive approach in the study of Southeast Asian regionalism, defines the ASEAN way as a set of norms and processes of identity-building, which ‘relies upon the conventional modern principles on interstate relations, as well as traditional and culture specific modes of

¹⁸ Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 2009).

socialization and decision-making that is prevalent in Southeast Asia”. Dialogue and diplomacy are important tools in the ASEAN Way. Open and honest discussions among member states are meant to achieve better understanding and promote peace. Diplomacy is conducted through regional cooperation and negotiations to resolve differences of opinion and strengthen relations among member states. Mutual respect is the underlying value of the ASEAN Way. Each member state is respected and recognized for its interests and differences. This creates an inclusive atmosphere and supports ASEAN sustainability as a strong regional forum. ASEAN Way has been perceived as the main contributor to success and failure of ASEAN.

The proponents of ASEAN Way argue that this decision-making process helps the member countries to respect each other and produces peace in the region. As mentioned in the previous section, ASEAN success to keep regional peace meets its original goal as a regional organization and it has been considered as one of the most successful regionalism in the world.¹⁹ In looking at contestation in the Indo-Pacific, ASEAN has a guide, namely: The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. It’s a strategic framework adopted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). It aims to guide ASEAN’s engagement in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, which are among the most dynamic in the world and centers of economic growth.²⁰ Through the ASEAN Way, ASEAN has successfully built sustainable cooperation and stability in Southeast Asia. These principles help overcome differences and promote open dialogue to achieve common goals. With the ASEAN Way, ASEAN has become a successful example of regional cooperation in the world. This approach has allowed ASEAN to maintain unity and centrality in the region, despite the diverse political systems and economic development levels of its member states.

The success of the ASEAN Way can be seen from the following aspects:

- a. **Political stability and security:** The ASEAN Way, as part of the Indo-Pacific strategy, has made substantial contributions to regional political stability and security strategy formation. This approach, characterized by consensus-building, non-intervention and peaceful conflict resolution, has been instrumental in maintaining peace and stability among countries in the Indo-Pacific. In terms of security policies, the ASEAN Way promotes a cooperative and inclusive approach. It encourages dialogue and consultation as the primary means of resolving disputes. This approach has been effective in managing and mitigating conflicts in the region, thereby enhancing regional security. One of the key achievements of the ASEAN Way, as it creates a conducive climate for security, cooperation and economic growth, through sustained dialog and peaceful resolution of conflicts among ASEAN Member States and Indo-Pacific region. The ASEAN Way further emphasizes the need of preserving a regional balance of power. It aims to involve all major powers in

¹⁹ Hans Blomqvist, “ASEAN as a Model for Third World Regional Economic Co-Operation?,” *ASEAN Economic Bulletin* 10, no. 1 (1993): 52–56 in Susy Tekunan, “The ASEAN Way: The Way to Regional Peace?,” *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional Universitas Pelita Harapan Jakarta* 3, no. 2 (October 2014): 142–47.

²⁰ ASEAN, “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific Final,” accessed January 6, 2024, https://asean.org/asean2020/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific_FINAL_22062019.pdf.

the Indo-Pacific, preventing any single state from dominating the region. This approach has been critical in navigating the Indo-Pacific's complicated dynamics and ensuring regional peace and security. One of the main achievements of the ASEAN Way is the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which is the primary multilateral platform for security dialogue and confidence-building measures in Asia-Pacific. The ARF involves not only the ASEAN members, but also other major powers such as China, Japan, the United States, Russia, India, and Australia. The ARF has provided a venue for addressing regional and global issues such as terrorism, maritime security, nuclear proliferation, and humanitarian assistance. Another achievement of the ASEAN Way is the creation of the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), which is one of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community. The APSC aims to enhance political and security cooperation among the ASEAN members, as well as to promote democracy, human rights, and good governance.²¹ The APSC also encompasses various mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution, such as the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC), the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (SEANWFZ), and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). The ASEAN Way has been successful in supporting political stability and establishing security policy in the area as part of the Indo-Pacific strategy. Its consensus-building, non-interference, and peaceful conflict settlement principles have proven effective in maintaining peace and stability in the varied and vibrant Indo-Pacific region. These ideals will definitely continue to guide the region's journey toward a peaceful and secure future as it evolves.

- b. **Economic cooperation** : Another major achievement of the ASEAN Way is to promote regional economic integration, such as the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community, ASEAN Plus three and East Asian Summit which opens up great opportunities for economic growth, investment, and trade among member states also in Indo-Pacific region. In the Indo-Pacific area, the East Asia Summit (EAS) has been a shining example of how to promote diplomatic, economic, and security communication. Since its founding in 2005, the East Asia Summit (EAS) has developed into a potent forum that unites leaders from eighteen nations, including the 10 ASEAN members and other significant powers like the US, China, India, and Russia. The EAS' contribution to promoting regional peace and stability is one of its greatest achievements. By offering a venue for frank and productive discussions on sensitive topics, the EAS has helped uphold peace and security. This has been made possible by the EAS' inclusive policy, which encourages equal participation from all member states. The EAS has promoted talks on trade liberalization, investment facilitation, and connectivity in terms of economic cooperation. Various measures that have accelerated regional economic integration and growth have resulted from these talks. The East Asia Summit (EAS) has been successful in promoting cooperation and integration under the Indo-Pacific strategy. The EAS, with its diverse membership including ASEAN countries, Russia, and the United States, has

²¹ ASEAN, "Political Security Community," ASEAN Main Portal Accessed, accessed January 4, 2024, <https://asean.org/our-communities/asean-political-security-community/ASEAN>.

become a significant platform for strategic dialogue in the Indo-Pacific region.²² The EAS's role in increasing ASEAN's position is one of its main successes under the Indo-Pacific strategy. The EAS has assisted ASEAN in enhancing cooperation in a variety of areas, including politics, security, economics, and socio-cultural issues. The EAS has also helped to promote the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" (AOIP). This perspective, which emphasizes characteristics like openness, inclusion, transparency, and rule-based systems, has gained traction as a suitable foundation for developing a new regional architecture. The AOIP is consistent with the Indo-Pacific strategy, emphasizing collaboration and development above conflict. Overall, the East Asia Summit has been successful in promoting the Indo-Pacific strategy, fostering regional cooperation, and advancing ASEAN's role in the region. Emphasizes the power of communication and cooperation in international affairs. Its success stems from its capacity to bring together disparate nations to collaborate toward common goals, building a feeling of community throughout the Indo-Pacific area. This accomplishment reflects the "ASEAN Way" of consensus-building and non-confrontation that underpins the EAS. The EAS will definitely continue to play an important role in determining the region's future as it evolves.

- c. **Regional and international partnerships:** The ASEAN Way is crucial in building regional and international collaboration as part of the Indo-Pacific strategy. This approach, characterized by consensus building, non-intervention and peaceful conflict resolution, has enabled ASEAN to maintain a leading role in the evolving regional architecture. Beyond its 10 member states, ASEAN's partnerships involve major powers such as the United States, China, India, Russia, and others. These collaborations are made possible by ASEAN-led platforms such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), which acts as a forum for discourse on political, security, and economic problems. The ASEAN Way encourages a collaborative and open approach to regional integration. It encourages all nations, regardless of size or power, to participate equally in debates. This has resulted in the formation of a sense of community among the Indo-Pacific region's various nations. As part of the Indo-Pacific strategy, the ASEAN Way emphasizes the importance of maintaining good relations with all major countries. This approach avoids a one-sided relationship, even as tensions between the United States and China rise. This approach has enabled ASEAN to manage the complex dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region while promoting peace and stability. Finally, the ASEAN Way has been successful in developing regional and international collaborations as part of the Indo-Pacific strategy. It has established a discussion and collaboration platform that has helped to the Indo-Pacific region's peace, stability, and development. As the region evolves, ASEAN's approach will surely play an important role in molding its future.

ASEAN centrality is further strengthened under the Indo-Pacific strategy. The strategy, which aims to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific, is in line with ASEAN principles of openness, inclusiveness and respect for international law. ASEAN role as a major player in regional mechanisms, such as the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN

²² Prapat Thepchatree, "Expanding ASEAN's Indo-Pacific Role," 2019, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/08/15/>.

Regional Forum, has been recognized and strengthened under this strategy. ASEAN plays an important role in the Indo-Pacific strategy. In the context of the rivalry between the United States and China in the region, ASEAN, with Indonesia as the natural leader, is trying not to stand still in observing the changing strategic environment. Indonesia initiated the concept of "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" as a foreign policy strategy to respond to the dynamics in the region. The concept encourages dialog and cooperation, approaches that are much needed in the face of rising tensions.

The objectives of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific are based on The ASEAN Way. ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific involves the further strengthening and optimization of ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) and others such as the relevant ASEAN Plus One mechanisms. ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific is meant to contribute to the maintenance of peace, freedom, and prosperity.²³ ASEAN's Indo-Pacific Outlook envisages ASEAN Centrality as the core premise for advancing Indo-Pacific collaboration, with ASEAN-led institutions such as the East Asia Summit (EAS) functioning as platforms for dialogue and implementation of Indo-Pacific cooperation while retaining its structures

The ASEAN Way, on the other hand, is confronting new obstacles in the context of the Indo-Pacific strategy, which seeks a free and open region encompassing the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Major powers such as the United States, China, India, Japan, and Australia, as well as other stakeholders, are involved in the Indo-Pacific strategy. The policy seeks to improve regional stability, prosperity, and connectivity, but it also involves strategic competition and rivalry among the major countries. Therefore, it is imperative for ASEAN to strengthen its centrality and unity in the Indo-Pacific strategy, and to uphold the ASEAN Way as a distinctive and effective approach to regional cooperation. This can be achieved by:

- ❖ Improving ASEAN's institutional capability and coherence in response to the region's complex and changing environment.
- ❖ ASEAN's interaction and discussion with external partners should be strengthened on the basis of mutual respect, trust, and benefit.
- ❖ Promoting ASEAN's norms and values, such as inclusiveness, openness, and respect for international law, as the foundation for regional order and cooperation.
- ❖ Advancing ASEAN's interests and priorities through a variety of regional platforms and activities, including the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum, and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.
- ❖ Fostering a culture of cooperation and partnership among all Indo-Pacific parties, while avoiding zero-sum games and exclusive blocs.

²³ ASEAN, "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific Final."

VI. CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of rivalry that occurs between the US and China triggers regional instability and has an impact on cooperation between countries in the Indo-Pacific region. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been recognized as one of the most successful regional organizations in the world. ASEAN has been the driving force behind the establishment of regional institutions in the Indo-Pacific. The informality of these arrangements, as well as the imprint of ASEAN's approach in regional procedures addressing security issues, are fundamental aspects of ASEAN-led institutions. As one of the regional organizations in the Indo-Pacific region, ASEAN is responsible for maintaining regional security stability, promoting and reacting to the interests of its member states as well as major powers engaged in geostrategy in the Indo-Pacific through the ASEAN framework in a cooperative manner.

ASEAN key role through the ASEAN Way, reaffirmed in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific as a cooperation initiative as well as rivalry management can be a solution to the process of cooperation between countries in various fields in the region. ASEAN with The ASEAN Way diplomacy has proven successful and strong in Indo-Pacific Geo-strategy (Politic, Security, Economy & Partnership). Despite a changing strategic landscape that includes new challenges such as Myanmar's political crisis, China's increasingly aggressive stance on the South China Sea issue, growing rivalry between the US and China, and a slew of cross-border non-traditional security threats, ASEAN's informality remains the preferred modality in regional security governance. ASEAN has been viewed as an effective instrument for peaceful development not just for its capacity to manage intra-mural relations, but also for its leadership in the establishment of a number of multilateral institutions that bring together a number of states in the Asia-Pacific region. As a result, ASEAN can ensure that the Indo-Pacific strategy is consistent with its vision of a rules-based, people-oriented, and people-centered community that contributes to regional and global peace, stability, and prosperity.

Looking ahead, the future of Indonesia's civil society will depend on its ability to adapt and actively participate in shaping the country's role in the Indo-Pacific. The government's commitment to open dialogue, protection of civil liberties, and inclusivity in decision-making processes will be critical in ensuring that civil society remains a dynamic force in contributing to Indonesia's regional engagement. Balancing the needs of the state with the diverse perspectives within civil society is an ongoing challenge that requires careful consideration as Indonesia positions itself in the evolving landscape of the Indo-Pacific.

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