

# The Significance of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum Vision

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This research will analyse and give an explanation about the significance of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for helping Indonesia achieve its maritime diplomacy known as the “Global Maritime Fulcrum” Policy. As one of the active members, Indonesia has become quite vocal in promoting the main vision of the association, which is the vision of a global blue economy. Proved by the latest IORA summit in 2017, Indonesia was trusted to be the host for the event. This is of no surprise given Indonesia is eager to achieve the blue economy itself by making the strategic maritime policy called the “Global Maritime Fulcrum”. However, the problem is why Indonesia seems to choose IORA over other associations, for instance ASEAN even though ASEAN also has the rather similar policy called “ASEAN Master Plan Connectivity”. The other question is how significant the cooperation really is. This research will use the qualitative method with an analysis-oriented writing, based on two basic theories which are neoliberal institutionalism and geopolitics. The conclusion of this research is that a state's interest determines how its foreign policy is made, in this case, from a geopolitics perspective. Indonesia's interest in achieving the “Global Maritime Fulcrum” vision is considered the main goal of the country, and that is why Indonesia has been active in the cooperation; which has the most beneficial offer. Furthermore, like the neoliberal institutionalists say, an international association is supposed to help the members gain interest through strategic cooperation. This topic is a new and important issue as the global maritime fulcrum has become crucial for the future of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy. It can also be the reference for future research related to a similar topic.

**Key words:** *IORA, Global Maritime Fulcrum, Neoliberal Institutionalism, Geopolitics.*

## Introduction

Since 2014, the Government has encouraged a national vision, which is Indonesia as the Global Maritime Fulcrum. Widodo was even the first president of post-democratisation in 1998 that publicly conveyed the doctrines of maritime security (Shekhar, 2015). The Maritime Vision reign of Widodo manifested through maritime diplomacy as a medium to National interests and strategic issues in the field of maritime, especially establishing cooperation between countries. Maritime diplomacy has become an important part of maritime doctrine of Government of Widodo. One example, on 21 December 2016, is when Indonesia signed a strategic bilateral cooperation with Japan in the form of an Indonesia-Japan Maritime Forum (IJMF) in security, economics, infrastructure, and maritime education.

Through IORA, the modern and innovative maritime diplomacy gains an ability to accommodate a wider range of issues and more diverse actors to build a creative strategy in dealing with the complexity of cooperation between countries (LIPI, 2017). Indonesia should strengthen the power base of regional relations through bilateral relations. Indonesia has actually made diplomacy efforts on every maritime issue, but the dynamics encountered are increasingly complex. The state cannot do its own diplomacy process, but it takes the process of communication with related actors such as society. Nevertheless, only two of the six IORA pillars relate directly to maritime issues, and Indonesia can encourage more maritime cooperation, both between countries, countries and communities, as well as society and society.

IORA itself has special projects in the fields of technology such as Maritime Transport Council (MTC), Fisheries Support Unit (FSU), and IORA Centre of Excellence on Ocean Science and Environment. IORA also has a cross cutting issue, like the concept of a Blue Economy in responding to environmental security issues in the IORA area. In the Indian Ocean Dialogue September 2015 held in Perth, it recognised that the effectiveness of maritime security is a prerequisite in developing the concept of a blue economy. The IORA Economic Declaration, also emphasised that the concept of a blue economy such as marine economic activities – fishing, renewable energy, mineral exploration and coastal tourism – emerged as a source of innovation growth and new employment creation in the Indian Ocean area (Bateman, 2016).

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) or the Indian Ocean Circumference Cooperation Association is one of the real forms of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy implementation. Furthermore, IORA's members are well known to be concerned with achieving a blue economy, and this is very complementary with new Indonesia's maritime and foreign policy, to make Indonesia the future global maritime fulcrum.

This situation has encouraged Indonesia to commit in various governance efforts, to develop into an alternative area for new economic growth. Indonesia's attitude towards IORA is seen as an effort to find a new alternative forum after Indonesia slowly considered to reduce its commitment in the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN). Indonesia's commitment

to the IORA is inversely proportional to the change of Indonesian foreign political orientation, which is more domestic oriented since the beginning of Joko Widodo's presidency. Therefore, Indonesian interests in building this IORA raises a lot of questions.

### **Problem Statement and State of Art**

This paper will analyse why Indonesia is so willing to join IORA, is so active in this regional organisation and even became the chairman in 2015 - 2017 period. What is the importance of IORA for Indonesia? In contrast to other research, this research will show how Indonesia's policy, as the founding member of ASEAN, is leaning Indonesia towards Indo-Pacific cooperation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### ***Neoliberal Institutionalism***

There are some basic assumptions adopted by understanding neoliberalism. The first basic assumption is that neoliberalism recognises that the country is the main actor who plays an important role in international relations. The assumption is similar to the understanding of neorealism, but neoliberalism also recognises the important role of non-state actors who were influential at the time.

Neoliberalism is also often referred to as institutional neoliberalism or institutional liberalism. Institutional neoliberalism sees an institution that is a mediator that aims to achieve a coherent relationship within the international system. Institutional neoliberalism also believes that the cooperating relationship produced by an international institution, can prevent any war that could harm the countries involved in it.

Like what the famous neoliberalist, Robert Keohane (Keohane, 1989) said, it is defined as the principal view on the role that international institutions ought to have in international relations among states, both economically and politically. As Joseph M. Grieco and G. John Ikenberry suggested in *State Power and World Markets* (Grieco, 2003), its main purpose is to serve as a mediator to find solutions to interstate problems.

It is here, when institutions such as the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organisation (WTO), and any regional cooperation like ASEAN and IORA, step in. Their role is to be a guide for affiliated countries to promote cooperation to resolve global economical or political issues; thus, making member states better off. If each nation had to deal with issues independently it would not only most likely result in war, but it would also be more costly and certain. This is why it is better for member states to rely on international institutions to resolve problems. International institutions enhance this by providing information and advice to member countries on economic and politic matters. In the eyes of Grieco and Ikenberry, neoliberal institutional theory "sees institutions as agreements

or contracts between actors that reduce uncertainty, lower transaction costs, and solve collective-action problems.”

### ***Geopolitics***

The geopolitical concept is a concept of international relations stating that one region/geography holds a significant role in determining the direction of one country's foreign policy. Elements such as location, area, climate, topography, demographics, natural power, and the utilisation of science/technology become very important (Cohen, 2014). Geopolitics sees the power of one country from two points of view, namely land power and sea power.

Land power here refers to the concept of the Heartland by Harold Mckinder (Mackinder, 1904), a British politician and geographer who focuses his theories on the Eurasian continent, which extends from Siberia, China, central Asia to Central Europe. The region called the Eurasian area by Mckinder is categorised as a pivotal area. He said the area was a very important area because it could not be penetrated by maritime powers. In his opinion, Eurasia (heartland) can provide political and economic benefits for the country.

While Sea Power refers to the writings of Alfred Thayer Mahan in his writings *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* (Mahan, 1890), which presents that the mastery of sea lanes such as The Panama Canal and the Suez Canal is a Profit for the country that oversees it. He said that the world's trade and logistics' routes go through the sea areas. According to Mahan, this is precisely beneficial for the country that uses it because it can provide economic, political and military benefits. This theory was implemented by the U.S., with the policy of the Blue Water Strategy, whereby the U.S. annexed the Philippines, Hawaii, GUAM, and the Cuban islands, to consolidate its military power in world waters Countries that have an area/geography that is strategical and has potential, will make the country's foreign policy concerned to strive to explore more and maximise the region, and neighbouring countries will also try to benefit from the region, whether in the form of cooperation with the country of the owner of the region or by means of coercion. A land power owner or sea power can utilise its power and have a good bargaining position in cooperation related to the region with other countries. In this case, the Indian Ocean is long known as the “heart” of the world sea, from a geopolitical point of view this area is so crucial and strategic for any cooperation, and that is why it is no surprise that Indonesia is more than happy to participate in this regional cooperation, since Indonesia's concern is to be the global maritime fulcrum and the later axis in Indian Pacific ocean area.

### ***Global Maritime Fulcrum***

Indonesia is the second largest coastal country in the Indian Ocean circumference (IORA) region, and is at the intersection of the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. Overall the total area covered by the ocean is four times more than that covered by land. Indonesia also has a sea line of communication such as Sunda Strait, Malacca, Lombok, and Wetar/Omboi (Saha, 2016).

Indonesia divides its sea limits to 1,300 kilometres in the Indian Ocean with four countries including Australia, India, Malaysia and Thailand. It does not include the exclusive economic zone of about 1.5 million square kilometres in the eastern part of the Indian Ocean (Liow, 2014). As an archipelago country separated by many islands, Indonesia still has the same problem: lack of inter-island connectivity coupled with poor port infrastructure. It is also coupled with the exploitation of maritime resources such as illegal fishing, where Indonesia should potentially earn 60 billion tonnes annually (Saha, 2016).

The untapped potential of this, became the creation of a Global Maritime Fulcrum policy that was promoted by the President of the 9th East Asia SUMMIT. Indonesia's maritime axis policy emphasises the geopolitical position of Indonesia as an archipelago and puts emphasis on the maritime sector as a medium in articulating Indonesia's foreign policy and defence. The foreign policy emphasised that Indonesia is capable of being a maritime power in the regional sphere, not only in terms of power but also regional maritime diplomacy.

Furthermore, there are five pillars carried by Indonesia in an effort to realise the concept of the Global Maritime Fulcrum: Rebuilding the Indonesian maritime culture; Maintaining marine resources and creating sea food sovereignty by placing fishermen on the main pillars; Priority on infrastructure development and maritime connectivity by building sea tolls, a deep seaport, logistics, shipping industry, and maritime tourism; Increased cooperation in the maritime field and efforts to deal with conflict sources, such as fish theft, sovereignty violations, territorial disputes, piracy, and marine pollution; and establishing maritime power as the responsibility of safeguarding the safety of the Maritime Voyage and security (Kemlu, 2014).

In all, the policy of Global Maritime Fulcrum is referring to three things: strengthening Indonesia's military security; expanding regional diplomacy focused on the Indo-Pacific doctrine; and projecting the Indonesian navy as a regional military force in the East Asian region. The main idea in taking Indonesia as the Global Maritime Fulcrum, is to improve inter-island connectivity, and to improve the port infrastructure within the Indonesian archipelago, including thousands of islands, with a broad landscape reaching six million square kilometres. Inter-island connectivity will expand the choke-points and maritime corridors that are believed to be able to increase trade and business in and out of the country (Liow, 2014). It can be said that the concept of the maritime shaft Indonesia has emphasised, is the aspect of connectivity both outside and inside, and the creation of maritime security in order to create a safe area of water conditions so that marine resources can be maximally utilised.

Within the regional sphere, Indonesia's maritime policy is centred on expanding its involvement in the Indo-Pacific region. It is done by interfering with Indonesia's role in the Indian and Pacific oceans. The concept of Indo-Pacific developed by Indonesia, emphasises the habit of dialogue and cooperation, inclusiveness, and respect to international law (Perwita, 2015). If Indonesia has long been actively involved in the Pacific Ocean region, it is not so with the role of Indonesia in the Indian Ocean region. That is because the regional organisation

that bridges the relationship between the country in the circumference of the Indian Ocean, cannot be as smooth as in the Pacific region. For that, more comprehensive maritime cooperation between Indonesia and the countries in the Indian Ocean circumference is needed. This is done in particular through the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) as the only regional organisation in the Indian Ocean area (Bergin, 2014)

## Research Method

The collection of this data is purposive, and intends to strengthen the argument. The paper was conducted using the qualitative method, because the arguments are built based on a rational basis. This paper seeks to understand social reality by understanding the rational relationship between one concept with another concept. The research method used is the method of case studies which focuses on the analysis of the importance of IORA for Indonesia Global Maritime Fulcrum Policy. To obtain the data, the data collection techniques are also used in literature review, by searching, collecting, and discussing secondary data that comes from a variety of literature, such as the review of books, articles, journals, online data, news, journals, and magazines. While the primary data is obtained from interviews or downloaded documents or blueprints that are obtained directly from the website of ministry of maritime, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Website.

## Result (Finding and analysis)

In the IORA Forum, Indonesia encourages a number of important breakthroughs to strengthen the region's partnerships to preserve the peace and stability of the region, as a key prerequisite for increasing economic growth and welfare towards the ocean region, as a new hub of growth. In addition, as a strategic area which became one of the main lines of world trade, the Indian Ocean is very likely to remember the members of IORA covering twenty countries. The wealth of the sea and mines in it also become the economic development capital of the future. Other potential owned by IORA members, are oil, manganese, plantations, and technological innovations. In that context, Indonesia's interests are closely related to issues of stability, peace, and security of the region to be a key word in diplomacy at IORA (Schoettli, 2018). The three things that become collateral for economic cooperation need to be developed more optimally and bring prosperity together. The trend of security and economic potential has demonstrated the maritime urgency of the IORA for countries along the Indian Ocean, especially Indonesia.

In this context, maritime diplomacy is the implementation of a policy that makes Indonesia the global maritime fulcrum (Djumala, 2015). This can be traced to the presidential campaign on July 2014. Based on the promise of his campaign, Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla is more of a low-profile foreign politics by reducing the tendency of "over-performing overseas" and more focused on domestic affairs, or intended solely to and strengthening "inside". During the Indonesian leadership, IORA had a long-term vision (Santikajaya, 2014). First, maintain political momentum to make the IORA Association strong, effective, and efficient. Second,

strengthen the architecture of the area that ensures and maintains security and peace in the Indian Ocean. Thirdly, increase collective cooperation which is mutually beneficial for mutual welfare. Fourth, increase certainty to collaborate in the context of the IORA.

In the context of maritime diplomacy, IORA became a kind of new forum for Indonesia to realise its maritime vision and doctrine. The IORA Forum is a historic momentum that makes IORA a part of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy.

While having the position of the chairman of IORA, Indonesia encouraged three crucial agendas in the IORA SUMMIT of a high-level conference in Jakarta 2016. First, IORA will produce a legal agreement and norm in the form of IORA Concord. Secondly, the IORA Concord has six important cooperation areas and the action of its plan, namely maritime security, trade and investment cooperation, fisheries, natural disaster management, education, and tourism in the Indian Ocean. Third, the Declaration of the IORA states against the violence of extremism and terrorism. The commitment of the contribution of the government to IORA is said to be the answer to the criticism of various countries regarding Indonesia's tendency to ignore its diplomatic role in this region (Nugroho, 2014).

In the context of Indonesian foreign politics, the three agendas of the IORA SUMMIT actually reflect the priority of maritime diplomacy which is more based on pragmatic considerations (Shekhar, 2015). The pragmatism of Indonesian maritime diplomacy in the IORA can be traced to senior researchers' view of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Rizal Sukma (2009), who became the Victory team of Joko Widodo – Jusuf Kalla in the field of International relations. For Sukma, Indonesia does not need to place ASEAN as the only pillar, but as one of the pillars of international relations (Sukma, 2009), in this context, foreign politics. These policies demonstrate a fundamental change in Indonesia's attitude to carry out its maritime diplomacy and achieve global maritime fulcrum vision.

### ***Indonesia as the chairman of IORA***

The year 2017 became a turning point for Indonesia when for the first time, the IORA SUMMIT was held in Jakarta. The meeting between the members of the IORA Member State is increasingly giving a strong signal to Indonesia to spread its influence in the IORA area. Previously, Indonesia was appointed as the chairman of IORA for the period 2015-2017, after the previous position was held by Australia and India (Till, 2017). The President in his speech at the IORA SUMMIT confirmed that the Indian Ocean could potentially be the key to the current maritime axis policy. "In Indonesia, we believe that the Indian Ocean is emerging as a key global axis in world affairs". In the speech, it also confirmed that attention to the Indian Ocean has begun to increase. After this time the Atlantic and Pacific oceans dominated the sphere of modernism in the Dynamics of international relations.

IORA may be a new diplomatic space for the government of Widodo, which is from ASEAN-centric to the Indo-Pacific. The Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean areas are the real Immediate Strategic Environment for Indonesia.

## Conclusion

In the five years of his reign, President Widodo seemed to have affirmed his maritime vision commitments through various diplomacy forums, both at bilateral and multilateral levels, including the IORA. From the neoliberal point of view, the position of Indonesia as the chairman of IORA in 2015-2017, was a strategic momentum to realise its maritime vision in multilateral diplomacy. Although there are many problems and challenges faced by IORA, the Indonesian Government is able to perform a strategic role in utilising the forum to increase the profile of Indonesian maritime diplomacy (Madu, 2018).

Although Indonesia's activities in the IORA forums demonstrate a serious government effort to seek new opportunities in non-traditional areas to improve its maritime power, the ability of the Indonesian government to circumvent its interests in the IORA forum, still needs to be tested. This is considering the fact that Indonesia does not pay much attention to the IORA forum in the interests of its diplomacy since its membership from 1997 to 2015. Therefore, Indonesia's ability to realise the global maritime fulcrum can synergise with efforts to realise the results of the Indonesian leadership IORA SUMMIT. From a geopolitical point of view, the Indian Ocean is an important maritime sector for Indonesia. Because it is a liaison for Indonesian export commodities to Europe, India, east-Central and also Africa. In addition to today, Indonesia focused on centralising national economic growth, and needed a wider market in the South Asian region, the Persian Gulf and the East African coast (Shekhar, 2018). Therefore, Indonesia began to make the Indian Ocean a "great maritime Highway" for its sea transportation routes. Similarly, Indonesia occupies a strategic position in IORA, considering that some of the strategic chokepoints of IORA are in Indonesia, such as the Straits of Malacca, Sunda and Lombok, which play a strategic role in connecting the flow of trade between The Indies and the Pacific oceans (Atriandi, 2017). Towards the Global Maritime Fulcrum, Indonesia should emphasise more outside connectivity than only centred in the country. Of course, Indonesia should have begun to see the potential of other IORA member countries, especially in Africa and east-central region, to penetrate connectivity between countries through maritime lines.

In addition to the Global Maritime Fulcrum, the government also agreed to bring Indonesia to a country with middle power. This is in accordance with what is stated in one of the points of vision of the foreign policy mission, "increasing the global role through the middle-power diplomacy that puts Indonesia as a regional power with selective global involvement" (IORA, 2014) Maritime diplomacy through regional cooperation is important in order to articulate Indonesian interests in the region. It can be said that Indonesia's success to be recognised as



the country's middle power force, and relies heavily on how Indonesia is able to give its influence in the regional and global sphere.

## **Discussion**

Ever since the president (Joko Widodo) declared his intention to make Indonesia become the global maritime fulcrum, Indonesia has been committed to its activity as one of the members of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). IORA's vision to enforce the Blue economy is really complementary with Indonesia's vision to achieve global maritime fulcrum policy. Even as the member of ASEAN, Indonesia even tried so hard to convince other members to join its outlook, known as the Indo-Pacific outlook, which by June this year, has already been agreed by all ASEAN members. It is interesting how, as the founding member of ASEAN, Indonesia has been so willing to force so-called open regionalism especially toward the Indian Pacific Ocean area, thus, once again showing how important that area is for Indonesia's global maritime fulcrum policy. Some may think that Indonesia only joined IORA because of that lack of progress, and the funding ASEAN has, and once ASEAN opens its regionalism, Indonesia will not be as dedicated as before toward IORA. But instead, the author believes that the cooperation between Indonesia and IORA will be even more solid than before, as IORA also helped Indonesia to proceed its outlook (ASEAN's new Indo-Pacific Outlook). This will be complementary to IORA's vision in terms of mutual cooperation and achieving a blue economy.

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