

Japan and Indonesia as Middle Powers in Indo-Pacific: Towards AOIP – FOIP Synergy

Rafyoga Jehan Pratama Irsadanar

Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies, Kobe University

Abstract

This paper studies how a strategic bilateral relations between middle powers could advance the realization of a larger regional geostrategy. This paper took Indonesia - Japan relations to study how the two countries' strategic partnership could accelerate the realization of an inclusive, safe and well-connected Indo – Pacific area. Using middle power framework in international relations, this qualitative research paper sees that Indonesia and Japan are “assembler” type of middle powers in Indo-Pacific. This paper argues that two or more middle powers with solid regional leadership and shared geostrategic vision could get more partners to be on board to support the shared geostrategic agenda. This paper found that intensified engagement between Indonesia and Japan, as assembler middle powers, could advance the implementation of ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and accelerate the synchronization of ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). Contributing to the study of middle power in international relations, this finding implies that middle powers have a significant role in realizing a geopolitical vision, despite not as influential and powerful as great powers.

Keywords: Japan, ASEAN, ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

INTRODUCTION

The rapidly changing geostrategic landscape puts a renewed attention on Indo-Pacific region. Previously, many great powers made Asia-Pacific a cornerstone of their geostrategies, focusing on Asia and countries around Pacific Ocean. After that, the focus on Asia-Pacific has been expanded to also include Indian Ocean until African Continent, making it Indo-Pacific. The idea of connecting Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean by seeing it as one entity offers lucrative

benefits as it connects two global development centers comprising emerging markets and world largest economies. For that reason, many countries are up and on board to the idea to make Indo Pacific free, open, and prosperous.

Many great powers then came up with geostrategic visions and cooperation frameworks to grasp the opportunity of connecting Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. One of the notable ones is Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) by Japan in 2016, which

was adopted by its closest ally the United States. This vision is officially proposed by the Quad, consisting Japan, the United States, India, and Australia. Many other countries and regional organizations also formulated their own version of Indo-Pacific vision, including ASEAN. Indonesia led and intensively lobbied other ASEAN members to formulate ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) in 2019 (Anwar, 2020).

In the status quo, it could be seen that the main proponents and key actors in building “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP), who are the Quad, often dominate the discourse in establishing the mentioned regional architecture. The importance of United States, Japan, India, and Australia as “democracy security diamond”, as well as the Quad members, in the Indo-Pacific is rising due to the rise of China in mainland Asia. Aside from the Quad, ASEAN is also on the highlight as Southeast Asia is the “hinge” and between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023).

Despite of the noble purpose of FOIP to create an inclusive economic sphere where anyone could benefit from, political interest is still contingent upon the multilateral framework. The FOIP initiated and developed by the Quad is often seen as the political vehicle of United States and its allies to counter China’s Belt and Road

Initiative (BRI) (Grissler & Vargö, 2021). It sends the narrative to the global community that China is the antagonist destabilizing a safe and prosperous region.

The United States tendency to frame FOIP as the counterbalance against China is indeed worsening the initial great power competition in Asia-Pacific. Many of other countries are not interested in being part of this rivalry but to enjoy harmonious relationship and stability in Indo-Pacific. Southeast Asian nations, who firmly uphold neutrality and impartiality under ASEAN, are one of them (Shoji, 2021). In response to the great power competition between United States and China, ASEAN member states then formulated ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) to coordinate the two great powers preference impartially (Yoshimatsu, 2023). AOIP also aim to promote cooperation in Indo-Pacific under the principle of ASEAN centrality (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2021).

Aside from the power of the mentioned states and regional organization, it is still important to note that to establish Indo-Pacific free and open requires the intact participation from many countries across the region. The assertion arise since many coastal countries are located across Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. Furthermore, since the main spirit of creating the safe and prosperous Indo-Pacific is to amplify

maritime security, the close and active cooperation with those countries is important.

In mitigating the geopolitical risk along the way towards Indo – Pacific stability, this research sees that the role of middle powers is vital. Taking off from this context, this research focuses on the role of Japan and Indonesia as middle powers in realizing safe, prosperous and inclusive Indo – Pacific vision. In Indo – Pacific context, Japan – Indonesia security relations is important, both geographically and politically. Indonesia is one of the maritime countries located in the middle of Indo-Pacific. Strategically located connecting Indian Ocean and South China Sea, Indonesia's role in assuring the connectivity among the two seas could not be overlooked. Aside from its geopolitical value, Indonesia's has reputable political track record in Southeast Asian affairs as well as with ASEAN. Indonesia has been natural leader in Southeast Asia, a region connecting Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. Japan, at the other side, has a unique position that could engage both Southeast Asian partners and great powers in the QUAD side. Japan has built a long-lasting relationship with Southeast Asian states underpinning Fukuda Doctrine, while at the same time being FOIP proponents and QUAD member (Irsadanar, 2021).

Based on this background, this paper arises a research question of "how does Japan – Indonesia bilateral and strategic relationship potentially accelerate the realization of an inclusive, safe, and prosperous Indo-Pacific area?". Among many Indo-Pacific initiatives, this research focuses on the role of Japan – Indonesia relations as middle powers, in advancing the AOIP implementation. This paper is divided into three parts. First, this paper elaborates the importance of Japan – Indonesia relations as middle powers in Indo-Pacific context. Second, this paper analyses how the advancing cooperation between Japan and Indonesia in Indo-Pacific context could accelerate the AOIP – FOIP synchronization, in which projected to contribute to the stability and prosperity of Indo-Pacific area. This paper seeks to expand the current understanding of geopolitics and international relations in Indo – Pacific context, which focuses on the role of great powers in shaping the regional affairs. By discussing the role and potential of Japan and Indonesia in improving stability in Indo – Pacific, this paper implies that middle powers have a significant role in realizing a geopolitical vision, despite not as influential and powerful as great powers.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Middle Power in International Relations

According to Jordaan (2003), middle powers are states with neither great nor small power, influence, and capacity. However, middle powers demonstrate the tendency to encourage cohesion, harmony, and stability in the global structure (Jordaan, 2003). More specifically, Erskine (2022) defines 4 traits of a middle power: (1) it has middle range position in the system; (2) it has geographical advantage as its source of resource and capability; (3) it is content with its hierarchical status and not seeking to challenge the hegemon; and (4) it acts a “steward” that legitimize the current hierarchical order and bridges the great and low-tier powers. By the definition and the characteristics, this paper sees that middle power has the ability to shape and influence regional order despite being less-superior than great powers.

Aside from the characteristics, middle powers also have the behavior and motives that defines them. Middle powers relatively act as “activist” that concerns issues beyond their immediate concerns and focuses on minimizing the risk of conflicts in the global system by involving like-minded countries to compromise under multilateral frameworks (Jordaan, 2003). Jordaan (2003) also states that the middle powers are stabilizer and legitimizer. They seek to improve and maintain the stability due to the lack of power

it has compared to great powers in dealing with insecurity. Middle powers also legitimize the established system due to the privilege that they enjoy from the system compared to the low-tier powers in neoliberal system. More specifically, Hidayatullah (2017) categorizes middle powers based on their foreign policy behaviors into three types: (1) enforcers; (2) assemblers; and (3) advocates. While the enforcers tend to deploy its hard power instruments, the assemblers gather partners to build institutions to reach their common goals. The advocators play leadership roles in multilateral organizations to set and push a certain agenda using their soft power.

The conceptual framework is used to analyze the role of Japan and Indonesia as middle power in Indo-Pacific context. This framework fits the analysis of the current Indo-Pacific geopolitical dynamics since middle powers in Indo-Pacific areas are “swing states” with geopolitical hefts which could mitigate great power competition (Kupchan, 2023). This framework defines the two countries as middle power and explain the role it plays to achieve the common vision of the inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific through their geostrategies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs qualitative research method. Qualitative method

collects and analyze non-numerical data to draw causal mechanism between variables to understand a phenomenon (Lamont & Boduszynski, 2020). In other words, qualitative research focuses and relies on human perception and understanding to explain a phenomenon (Stake, 2010). Qualitative research collects non-numerical data in three ways, those are: (1) in-depth interviews; (2) observations; and (3) written documents (Patton, 2001). Among the three, this paper collects secondary qualitative data through exploring reliable written documents. The written documents involve peer-reviewed academic journals, official government documents, and reliable news reports.

This research method fits the objective of this research, as this research aims to add value to the current understanding of an international relations phenomena. Beyond understanding a phenomenon, qualitative research also aims to improve the understanding of that phenomenon. Qualitative research is an iterative process to make new significant distinction or an expanded understanding on a phenomenon (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Using this method, this research collected data related to the role of Japan and Indonesia as middle powers in shaping Indo-Pacific geostrategic landscape. This paper used archival-based research data collection techniques to gather

reliable secondary data, such as journal literatures, reliable journalistic pieces, and official government documents from both sides of Japan and Indonesia. Research instrument used to gather those data was online channels such as journal portals, online news outlet, and official government websites. This method allows the researcher to validate the data by screening the authority and credibility of the sources before incorporating them to the paper, on whether the information and data was published by reputable and authoritative source or not. This amassed data was then analyzed using middle powers concept in international relations to draw the conclusion on the significance of Japan and Indonesia as middle powers in Indo-Pacific.

DISCUSSION

Japan – Indonesia Partnership in Indo – Pacific: Assembler Middle Powers

By default, this paper categorizes Japan and Indonesia as middle powers in Indo-Pacific. Combining the definition and characteristic presented by Jordaan (2003) and Erskine (2022), both Japan and Indonesia have the hard power to stand by itself, but not to the extent of challenging the current hegemon or great powers. Economically, Japan is the 3rd largest in the world and Indonesia is G20 member who just finished its G20 presidency in 2022. Militarily,

Japan is able to provide security assistance to its partners and have the security cooperation in recent decade. Indonesia's military capability is ranked 13th worldwide by Lowy Institute Asia Power Index in 2023, while Japan is ranked 6th in the same Index (Lowy Institute , 2023). These two metrics reflects Japan and Indonesia's middle position in the current regional system.

Both Indonesia and Japan have the geographical advantages too as middle power. Indonesia is strategically located in Southeast Asia, connecting Indian Ocean and South China Sea adjacent to Pacific Ocean. Indonesia is also home for four of sixteen global strategic seaborne namely Lombok, Ombai-Wetar, Sunda, and Malacca (Dang & Yeo, 2017). In the context of Indo-Pacific, Indonesia is among the "swing states" middle powers with geographical advantage (Kupchan, 2023). Japan, despite of not being linchpin of Indian and Pacific Ocean, was among the first to envision the connection between the two oceans. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe introduced the concept of "Confluence of Two Seas" during his first term in 2007 and revived that idea into "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond" in 2012 before finally introduced Free and Open Indo-Pacific in 2016 (Abe, 2007; Abe, 2012; Abe, 2016). It reflects Japan's geographical vision as maritime nation,

which this paper sees as geographical advantage.

Both Japan and Indonesia also do not seek to become a hegemon or challenge the international order but to stabilize it. At one side, Indonesia is "natural leader" in ASEAN due to its contributive roles since the establishment of ASEAN in 1967 (Roberts & Widyaningsih, 2015). Indonesia, under its long-lasting foreign policy tenet of "free and active" and respect for ASEAN's non-intervention principle, does not seek to support or be part of any hegemons in great power competitions but to mitigate the escalation that might arise and contribute to regional stability. Japan, despite being a close ally of the United States, do not have the military capacity to become the hegemon due to the legal constrain it has. Japan also struggles to reframe its identity as pacifist nation after World War 2 while gradually remilitarize itself. It is not in Japan's best interest to provoke its neighboring countries to reflect its ambition to become a hegemon. Instead, Japan frequently introduces its strategy of "proactive pacifism" that aims to actively contribute to world peace despite of its limited security role.

In the Indo-Pacific context, both Japan and Indonesia are assembler middle powers. Citing Hidayatullah (2017), assembler middle powers utilize their diplomatic channel to gradually establish regional institution to

achieve shared regional interest. Japan and Indonesia, using their Indo-Pacific vision and outlook respectively, introduces and gather partners to endorse the geostrategic vision and institutions to connect the two Oceans. Aside from the shared vision and fortified capacity, it is important for regional “trendsetters” and lobbyists to get other states on board towards the same vision of an inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific. As assembler middle powers, Japan and Indonesia are two of the “trendsetters”.

Japan and Indonesia have solid strategic and security relations to begin with. By default, they shared a similar geostrategic context to maximize their potential maritime Japan came up with Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). Indonesia envisions itself to be a Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF). Both Tokyo and Jakarta formally recognized each other’s geostrategic ambition and, under Japan-Indonesia Maritime Forum, aim to synergize their policies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2017). Until 2022, Indonesia was also the only country that Japan had 2+2 Foreign and Defense Ministers’ Meeting with in Southeast Asia. Many practical defense and security initiatives are carried out from these strategic forums and summits. With these ingredients, Japan-Indonesia strategic relations could bring further positive impact in the broader Indo-Pacific context.

Despite the material and hard power that Japan and Indonesia have, this paper believes that both countries are not enforcer type of middle powers. Both Japan and Indonesia share the same value of rule of law and strategic objective of free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific area (Embassy of Japan in Indonesia, 2023). Rule of law in international relations context emphasize on the importance and supremacy of international law amidst the absence of central authority above state (Hurd, 2015). As Japan and Indonesia are committed to uphold rule of law, this paper believes that the rule of law prevents Japan and Indonesia to use its force to resolve dispute and use coercion to pursue its national interest.

Despite being the initiator of FOIP and leading proponent of AOIP respectively, this paper does not necessarily categorize Japan and Indonesia as advocate middle powers. This paper believes that both Japan and Indonesia emphasize on the inclusivity of those concepts and invites any likeminded partner to be on board, instead of taking exclusive ownership of FOIP and AOIP. Japanese government have officially stated that FOIP is not an exclusive concept aiming to override existing institution and uphold the spirit of partnership with any country shares the same vision (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2020). Indonesia, as ASEAN Chair, also stated that AOIP aims to create inclusive

cooperation architecture, focuses on collaboration, and discourage rivalry (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, 2023). As both geostrategies champion the spirit of collaboration, partnership, and inclusivity, Japan and Indonesia is more accurately categorized as assembler middle powers.

Accelerating Indo-Pacific Inclusivity and Framework Development

Aside from the strategic geographical locations, Japan and Indonesia are the two of the few countries located in the Indo-Pacific area whose Indo-Pacific initiative could go beyond one country's sphere. Japan's FOIP, first formally introduced by Prime Minister Abe in 2016, has been embraced by the United States and other like-minded countries (Suzuki, 2020). Meanwhile, Indonesia led and lobbied other ASEAN member states to form ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) in 2019, after 18 months of lobbying by Jakarta (Anwar, 2020). Indonesia's foreign minister in the Yudhoyono era, Marty Natalegawa, also introduced "An Indonesian Perspective on Indo-Pacific" back in 2013 (Weatherbee, 2019). Maintaining FOIP and AOIP frameworks synchronized is essential for a well-connected, free, and open Indo-Pacific. Strategically, Japan's FOIP is central to gaining support from global powerhouses

through the Japan-U. S alliance and the Quad. While Japan's FOIP deals with a broader global context, AOIP could mobilize ASEAN members in the regional context. Compared to other regions, Southeast Asia is geographically and strategically more vital as it works as a linchpin connecting the two development centers and oceans. Considering ASEAN's strategic independence and impartial nature, AOIP helps ASEAN members to have their own Indo-Pacific context, free from the external great powers' competition.

That being said, Japan and Indonesia must have a solid relationship with a synergized geostrategic vision to ensure connectivity between the Indian and Pacific oceans. By that, much practical cooperation could derive from the harmonious vision easier. One of the core spirits of any Indo-Pacific vision is inclusivity, which requires as many like-minded countries as possible to be on board. Should Japan-Indonesia's strategic tie be sustained, the existing framework for Indo-Pacific cooperation could develop and expand better, both in participation and scope. The two countries' position as trendsetters with a big say in the region will make it easier to convince and lobby other governments to support any advanced or new Indo-Pacific initiatives.

One of the examples is the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)

introduced in May 2022. IPEF commenced with the United States and “initial” 12 partners, with 7 of which are ASEAN member states and 4 of which are the Quad (The White House, 2022). Some analyst sees this framework as Biden’s counter against China. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi also considers the strategy “divisive” and is creating “small circles” (Yi, 2022). It could lead to the worsening U.S-China great power competition in the region, counterproductive to the mission of Indo-Pacific prosperity and inclusivity.

In mitigating the risk of worsening great power competition in the region, Indonesia, as one of the initial IPEF members, urged that the Indo-Pacific framework should be “inclusive and open to all countries” and the prosperity of the region should not be “enjoyed by certain countries” (Cabinet Secretariat of Republic of Indonesia, 2022). Indonesia also added that IPEF should “encourage synergy” with other regional frameworks, especially AOIP (Cabinet Secretariat of Republic of Indonesia, 2022). Seeing that not all ASEAN members are on the IPEF’s list yet, Indonesia’s support to synergize ASEAN’s vision with IPEF and even to lobby new ASEAN members to join is essential to accelerate Indo-Pacific inclusivity.

Japan keeps Washington’s ambition to alienate China in Indo-Pacific in check

despite being the United States’ closest ally in Asia and one of the Quad. Tokyo committed to bridging Washington and Asian countries, so IPEF becomes an inclusive framework, noting that this is not “to choose between U.S or China” (Prime Minister Office of Japan, 2022). Prime Minister Fumio Kishida also emphasized in its IPEF’s speech that the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which could provide access to the U.S market, and the Regional Economic Comprehensive Partnership (RCEP), of which China is a member in, should “coexist strategically” (Prime Minister Office of Japan, 2022).

The Indo-Pacific area’s safety, openness, and prosperity rely on the region’s comprehensive institution and cooperation network. Should Japan and Indonesia maintain their strategic relations intact and maximize their role as trendsetters, it would be easier to fully develop many synchronized Indo-Pacific visions and mitigate possible frictions along the way.

Towards AOIP – FOIP Synchronization

Japan – ASEAN anniversary in 2023 is unique as it makes an exceptional momentum to synchronize Japan’s geostrategic vision with ASEAN’s. After 50 years of friendship and cooperation, Japan has renewed its geostrategic focus on Southeast Asia. This year’s ASEAN chair

happens to be Indonesia, which shares a geostrategic ambition with Japan.

As ASEAN Chair, the shared geostrategic vision and focus of Japan and Indonesia could lead to the advancing synergy between ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). As ASEAN Chair and AOIP leading initiator, Indonesia has more authority and position to set the priority for accelerating AOIP. Japan could use this rare momentum to initiate more impactful and broader range cooperation strengthening FOIP – AOIP linkage.

On February 3rd, the Expert Panel on Japan – ASEAN 50th Anniversary submitted policy recommendations and reports to the Prime Minister's Office (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023). The report is the result of the Expert Panel's studies and research carried out a year before to help the Japanese government prepare for Japan – ASEAN 2023 Summit. The recommendation by the Expert Panel pushed the Japanese government to focus on AOIP – FOIP linkage. The report outlines "Three Pillars of New Japan-ASEAN Cooperation on Partnerships" consisting of (1) building regional order based on free and open rules; (2) realizing an inclusive society that satisfies economic development, sustainability, and fairness, and; (3) fostering mutual understanding and trust as the bases of new

Japan-ASEAN partnership (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2023). Among the three Pillars, the first and the second pillars emphasized the synergy of FOIP and AOIP as the backbone of multidimensional cooperation.

Even though not pointing out FOIP specifically, Indonesia's chairmanship focuses on making ASEAN contribute to Indo – Pacific stability and peace (National Committee of Indonesia's Chairmanship in ASEAN, 2023). The press release of ASEAN Coordinating Council Meeting and ASEAN Foreign Minister's Retreat on 3 – 4 February also emphasized the importance of "concrete steps" to achieve AOIP goals and to enhance defense cooperation with external partners while maintaining ASEAN centrality (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2023). Also, Indonesia's President Joko Widodo has a personal stake in having AOIP practically implemented as it aligns with Indonesia's geostrategic ambition to be a global maritime fulcrum (Bayuni, 2023). Indonesia will likely use its authority and capacity as ASEAN chair to explore any means necessary to advance AOIP's implementation, including cooperating with like-minded partners, including Japan. ASEAN also mentioned that it looks forward to the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan

Friendship and Cooperation (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2023).

Since introduced in 2019, the implementation and operationalization of AOIP remain a question (Darmawan, 2022). Japan could see this as an opportunity to help ASEAN operationalize AOIP since Southeast Asia is the linchpin of Japan's FOIP. On the other side, as ASEAN Chair, Indonesia could advance AOIP by welcoming Japan's support as a committed partner.

In his speech during the Commemorative Symposium for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation, Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa stated that Japan has three pillars to support ASEAN mainstreaming AOIP: (1) concrete cooperation in AOIP's four priority areas; (2) supporting the function of ASEAN Secretariat to mainstream AOIP and; (3) human resource development (ANTARA News, 2023). Even though not pointing out AOIP and FOIP in specific, in the same Symposium, Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi stated that Indonesia "counts on Japan's support", along with ASEAN, to make Indo-Pacific the Epicentrum of Growth (ANTARA News, 2023). Seeing the shared vision and commitment, this year's anniversary could likely be a tipping point to accelerate AOIP implementation and, in

parallel, lead to the advancement of Japan's FOIP.

Despite the opportunity, Japan and ASEAN need to consider several points to make things work. First, Japan needs to understand that ASEAN highly values its centrality. Japan must not approach ASEAN as a Quad member who seeks to drive Southeast Asian nations to balance China in Indo-Pacific. Unlike Japan, which is one of the most important United States allies in Asia, ASEAN has been prioritizing its centrality and openness to all like-minded parties. It explains why ASEAN has rarely formally mentioned FOIP or any external geostrategies. Second, ASEAN needs to intensify its external engagement with relevant partners with a shared vision, in this case, Japan, while mitigating the geopolitical tension. Under the AOIP banner, Indonesia must lead ASEAN to orient its centrality to provide solutions to the region, not avoiding problems.

CONCLUSION

This paper studies the role of middle power in advancing geostrategy. While many have discussed that geostrategies are mainly carried out by great powers, this paper sees that middle powers are the one legitimizing and advancing the geostrategy by gathering more partners to support it, by bridging great powers and low-tier powers. Taking off from

this context, this paper discusses the role of Japan and Indonesia as “assembler” middle powers in Indo-Pacific. This paper argued that Japan and Indonesia could accelerate the realization of stable and well-connected Indo-Pacific by “assembling” more partners to support Indo-Pacific initiatives and maintaining the inclusiveness of the initiatives. Indonesia, AOIP proponent and natural leader in ASEAN, could lead and engage all ASEAN members to stabilize Southeast Asian waters as linchpin of Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean. Japan, as FOIP proponent and long partner of Southeast Asian nations under Fukuda Doctrine, could bridge great power in the Quad and its partners in Southeast Asia. With the both countries leadership and access in AOIP and FOIP respectively, Japan and Indonesia could help synchronize AOIP and FOIP to accelerate the stability of Indo-Pacific region.

This paper’s conclusion contributes to the study of middle powers in international relations, especially in Indo-Pacific context. The paper’s finding implies that middle powers are important not only to initiate a geostrategy, but also to sustain that geostrategy by gathering as many partners to be on board. This paper’s conclusion contributes to the expanded understanding of geostrategy in Indo-Pacific area, which focuses on the role of great powers to shape the regional order and to achieve the

regional vision. In Indo-Pacific context, this paper has widened the perspective that middle powers with regional leadership and geostrategic vision, in this case Indonesia and Japan, is important to sustain the geostrategic initiatives to mitigate great power competition and to gather as many partners as possible to be on board.

REFERENCES

- Abe, S. (2007, August 22). *Confluence of the Two Seas*. Retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan: <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>
- Abe, S. (2012, December 27). *Asia’s Democratic Security Diamond*. Retrieved from Project Syndicate: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe>
- Abe, S. (2016, August 27). *Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Opening Session of the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI)*. Retrieved from Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs: https://www.mofa.go.jp/afr/af2/page4e_000496.html
- ANTARA News. (2023, February 14). *Committed to strengthening partnership with ASEAN: Japan*. Retrieved from Antara News: <https://en.antaranews.com/news/272661/committed-to-strengthening-partnership-with-asean-japan>
- ANTARA News. (2023, February 14). *Japan to promote three pillars to support*

- AOIP mainstreaming*. Retrieved from Antara News: <https://en.antaranews.com/news/272664/japan-to-promote-three-pillars-to-support-aoip-mainstreaming>
- Anwar, D. F. (2020). Indonesia and the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific. *International Affairs*, 96(1), 111-129.
- Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2019). What is Qualitative in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Sociology*, 42(2), 139–160.
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations. (2021, January). *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*. Retrieved from Association of Southeast Asian Nations: https://asean.org/asean2020/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific_FINAL_22062019.pdf
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations. (2023, February 3-4). *Press Statement by the Chair of the 32nd ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) Meeting and ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat*. Retrieved from Association of Southeast Asian Nations: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CHAIRs-PRESS-STATEMENT-32nd-ACC-AMM-RETREAT.pdf>
- Bayuni, E. (2023, January 17). *Time to ramp up ASEAN's Indo-Pacific strategy*. Retrieved from The Jakarta Post: <https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2023/01/17/time-to-ramp-up-aseans-indo-pacific-strategy.html>
- Cabinet Secretariat of Republic of Indonesia. (2022, Mei 24). *Cabinet Secretariat of Republic of Indonesia*. Retrieved from Trade Minister Highlights Four Issues on IPEF Launching: <https://setkab.go.id/en/trade-minister-highlights-four-issues-on-ipef-launching/>
- Dang, V. L., & Yeo, G. T. (2017). A Competitive Strategic Position Analysis of Major Container Ports in Southeast Asia. *The Asian Journal of Shipping and Logistics*, 19-25.
- Darmawan, A. R. (2022). ASEAN Indo-Pacific Outlook under Indonesia's Chairmanship: How Far Can It Go? *RSIS IDSS Paper*.
- Embassy of Japan in Indonesia. (2023, May 8). *Overview of Indonesia-Japan Strategic Partnership by Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Indonesia At Roundtable Discussion on Indonesia-Japan Bilateral Relations: Celebrating 65 years of Friendship and Cooperation, moving forward together*. Retrieved from Embassy of Japan in Indonesia: https://www.id.emb-japan.go.jp/news23_20.html
- Erskine, A. (2022). The Middle Power Dynamic in the Indo-Pacific: Unpacking How Vietnam and Indonesia Can Shape Regional Security and Economic Issues. *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*.
- Grissler, J. R., & Vargö, L. (2021, February). The BRI vs FOIP: Japan's Countering of China's Global Ambitions. *The Issue Brief*.
- Hidayatullah, N. L. (2017). Classifying Middle Powers based on their Regional and Multilateral Roles. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 143, 113-117.
- Hurd, I. (2015). The International Rule of Law and the Domestic Analogy. *Global Constitutionalism*, 365-395.

- Irsadanar, R. J. (2021, October 26). *Can Japan Be a Bridge Between AUKUS and ASEAN?* . Retrieved from The Diplomat:
<https://thediplomat.com/2021/10/can-japan-be-a-bridge-between-aukus-and-asean/>
- Jordaan, E. (2003). The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations: Distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional Middle Powers Distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional Middle Power. *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*, 30(1), 165-181.
- Kupchan, C. (2023, June 6). *6 Swing States Will Decide the Future of Geopolitics*. Retrieved from Foreign Policy:
<https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/06/06/geopolitics-global-south-middle-powers-swing-states-india-brazil-turkey-indonesia-saudi-arabia-south-africa/>
- Lamont, C., & Boduszynski, M. P. (2020). Collecting Data for Qualitative Methods. In C. Lamont, & M. P. Boduszynski, *Research Methods in Politics and International Relations* (pp. 97-113). London: SAGE Publication.
- Lowy Institute . (2023). *Military Capability*. Retrieved from Lowy Institute Asia Power Index 2023:
<https://power.lowyinstitute.org/data/military-capability/>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia. (2023, August 24). *Creating a Platform for an Inclusive Indo-Pacific Region, Indonesia Holds ASEAN-Indo-Pacific Forum (AIPF): Implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, AIPF is the flagship event of the 43rd ASEAN Summit and the East Asia Summit* . Retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia:
<https://www.kemlu.go.id/manila/en/news/26050/creating-a-platform-for-an-inclusive-indo-pacific-region-indonesia-holds-asean-indo-pacific-forum-aipf-implementation-of-the-asean-outlook-on-the-indo-pacific-aipf-is-the-flagship-event-of-the-43rd-asean-summit>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2017, December 13). *The Joint Press Release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and Coordinating Ministry of Maritime Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia on the occasion of the visit of Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs Lt. Gen. (Retired) Luhut B. Pandjaita*. Retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan:
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000323211.pdf>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2020). *Diplomatic Bluebook 2020*. Retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan:
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2020/html/feature/f0104.html>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2023, April 24). *Free and Open Indo-Pacific*. Retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan:
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000430632.pdf>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2023, February 3). *日本 ASEAN 友好協力 50 周年有識者会議報告書の提出（結果）* . Retrieved from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan:
https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/a_o/rp/page1_001497.html

- National Committee of Indonesia's Chairmanship in ASEAN. (2023). *ASEAN Matters*. Retrieved from ASEAN 2023 : Indonesia: <https://asean2023.id/en/page/asean-2023/asean-matters>
- Patton, M. Q. (2001). Part 1 : Conceptual Issues in Qualitative Inquiry. In M. Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Method, 3rd Edition* (pp. 1-143). California: Sage Publication.
- Prime Minister Office of Japan. (2022, May 26). *Speech by Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio at the 27th International Conference on The Future of Asia*. Retrieved from Prime Minister Office of Japan: https://japan.kantei.go.jp/101_kishida/statement/202205/_00014.html
- Roberts, C. B., & Widyaningsih, E. (2015). Indonesian Leadership in ASEAN: Mediation, Agency and Extra-Regional Diplomacy. In C. B. Roberts, A. D. Habir, & L. C. Sebastian, *Indonesia's Ascent : Power, Leadership, and the Regional Order* (pp. 264-286). London: Palgrave Macmillan .
- Shoji, T. (2021). "Belt and Road" vs. "Free and Open Indo-Pacific": Competition over Regional Order and ASEAN's Responses. *Security & Strategy*, 1, 3-24.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). Chapter 1 : Qualitative Research: How Things Work. In R. E. Stake, *Qualitative Research : Studying How Things Work* (pp. 11-35). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Suzuki, H. (2020, December 23). *Japan's Leadership Role in a Multipolar Indo-Pacific*. Retrieved from Center for Strategic and International Studies: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/japans-leadership-role-multipolar-indo-pacific>
- The White House. (2022, May 23). *FACT SHEET: In Asia, President Biden and a Dozen Indo-Pacific Partners Launch the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity* . Retrieved from The White House: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/23/fact-sheet-in-asia-president-biden-and-a-dozen-indo-pacific-partners-launch-the-indo-pacific-economic-framework-for-prosperity/>
- Weatherbee, D. E. (2019, June 7). Indonesia, ASEAN, and the Indo-Pacific Cooperation Concept. *ISEAS Perspective*, 1-9.
- Yi, W. (2022, September 7). *IPEF unlikely to succeed, for it serves US' own interests*. Retrieved from The Global Times : <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202209/1274886.shtml>
- Yoshimatsu, H. (2023). ASEAN and Great Power Rivalry in Regionalism: From East Asia to the Indo-Pacific. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 42(1), 25-44.