

Indonesia's Vision As Global Maritime Fulcrum: A Geopolitical Strategy To Address Geopolitical Shifts In Indo-Pacific

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Abstract

The world geopolitical situation has changed rapidly in the last two decades, especially in the Indo Pacific region. The situation is due to political, economic and military rivalries between the United States and China. The rivalries potentially have serious political, economic and security consequences for countries in the region, including Indonesia. Therefore, it is imperative for Indonesia to recalibrate its current geopolitical strategy to answer the challenges. The enactment of Indonesia's vision as a Global Maritime Fulcrum in 2014 can be read as the country's effort to reposition its geopolitical strategy. This paper discusses the Global Maritime Fulcrum vision from an economic, political, and military perspective to analyze whether this vision is the proper geopolitical strategy to deal with geopolitical changes in the Indo Pacific region at present and beyond as well as the extent to which the geopolitical vision has been implemented.

Keywords: geopolitics, Global Maritime Fulcrum, Indo Pacific, defense.

Introduction

Global geopolitics has undergone rapid changes in the last two decades, especially in the Middle East and North Africa, Europe, and the Indo Pacific regions. Such changes occurred as a result of political, economic and military rivalries among the global major powers, in particular the United States, Russia, and China along with their respective supporting countries. The United States and Russia are involved in competition for influence in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as well as in Europe. In Middle East, for example, the rivalries between the United States and Russia happened in Syria and Yemen which involving Saudi Arabia on the US's side and Iran on Russia's (Mohammed & Moorthy, 2019; Salloukh, 2013; Wastnidge, 2017).

Competition for influence between the US and Russia has also been happening in North Africa, especially during the Arab Spring that began in late 2010. The Arab Spring was political and security conflicts in MENA regions started

from a political upheaval in Tunisia in 2010 which then continued and spread to other neighboring countries such as Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Algeria and Bahrain (Devarajan & Ianchovichina, 2018). In the region, Russia and the US have involved in rivalries within the conflicts in Egypt, Algeria and Libya (Póti, 2018; Spadotto, 2020). Rivalry between the US and Russia also occurs in Europe, in which the European Union countries back the US and a number of Eastern European countries support Russia. Their rivalries in Europe happened because the US and its allies intended to hinder Russia's efforts to form a Geopolitical Superbloc, namely President Putin's vision to reunite the former Soviet Union countries (Popescu, 2014, p. 19).

The US is also involved in rivalry with China in Indo Pacific regions. The rivalry between the two countries along with their respective allies has triggered rapid and dynamic geopolitical changes in Indo-Pacific regions in the last two decades. There are three important

phenomena related to geopolitical changes and dynamics in Indo Pacific due to competition between the US and China, namely China's Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) (Cai, 2017), Japan's Free and Open Indo Pacific (FOIP) (Diplomatic Bluebook 2017, 2017), and the US's Pivot to Asia (Shambaugh, 2018; Silove, 2016). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or previously known as One Belt, One Road (OBOR) is President Xi Jinping's policy regarding global infrastructure development programs. Through BRI, China has the ambition to rebuild the historic trade routes, namely the Silk Road. The trade routes include land and sea routes connecting Central Asia with Europe as well as Central Asia with Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and Africa (Lily & Niko, 2018).

Meanwhile, Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) is Japan's international diplomacy concept launched in 2017 aiming to respond to China's BRI policy. Japan claimed it aims to build an inclusive economy and politics in the Indo-Pacific Region. The concept focuses on three major aspects, namely the development of international peace, stability and prosperity as well as universal values; the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and human security; and the achievement of mutual growth among developing countries as well as the contribution to the revitalization of regional roles through economic diplomacy (Diplomatic Bluebook 2017, 2017, pp. 26–27).

The third important issue related to geostrategic dynamics in the Indo-Pacific Region is the shift of US foreign policy's focus from the Middle East and Europe to Asia dubbed as Pivot to Asia. The foreign policy was launched by President Obama in 2011 to rebalance US strategic interests from the Middle East and Europe to Asian, particularly Southeast and East Asia regions. The policy aims to manage China's growth through a mix of balancing policies domestically and regionally in combination with expanding cooperation with China. This strategy is carried out through mutually beneficial and wider cooperation between the US and its allies and partners in Asia. The ultimate goal of the policy is to deter China's intention to grow into a new hegemonic power in the region replacing the US (Shambaugh, 2018; Silove, 2016).

BRI, FOIP, and Pivot to Asia are geopolitical strategies whose implementation covers the Indo-Pacific region where Indonesia is located in the middle. The three geopolitical strategies are competitive in nature, therefore they potentially have impacts on Indonesia's national interests. A number of events in the world demonstrate that geopolitical rivalries in a particular region have caused countries in the region, especially those involved in it, torn apart due to armed conflicts, economic, political and humanitarian crises. Some countries even have been suffering from prolonged wars. Under such circumstances, Indonesia must be vigilant and take precautionary measures to address current geopolitical changes in the Indo-Pacific Region, especially the competition between the US and China along with their allies because it has the potential to trigger an open war. If this situation occurs, Indonesia has the potential to be dragged into the war, either as a war theater or as a buffer zone for warring powers in the Indo-Pacific region, thereby threatening territorial sovereignty and the safety of the Indonesian people.

Under such circumstances, the decision of the Government of Indonesia to establish Indonesia's vision as Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) is seen as an effort to recalibrate the national geopolitical strategy in order to safeguard and secure the national interest. This study analyzes the development and dynamics of geopolitics in the Indo Pacific region in relation to the establishment of Indonesia's geopolitical strategy, namely Indonesia's vision as GMF. The discussion focuses on two important issues namely the impact of geopolitical changes in the Indo Pacific region on Indonesia and the repositioning of Indonesia's geopolitical strategy through establishing Indonesia's vision as GMF in order to anticipate and address these situations. This study limits the discussion of both issues only regarding the political, economic, and military aspects. Restrictions were made to make the discussion more focused. In addition, the phenomenon emerging from the competition between the US and China mainly occurred in the political, economic and military fields. The discussion on these two issues aims to provide an overview, analysis, and recommendation regarding Indonesia's geopolitical strategic repositioning through Indonesia's vision as GMF

to address geopolitical developments in the Indo Pacific region.

Methodology

The authors use a qualitative-descriptive analysis method through economic, political and military perspectives to discuss this topic. For the purposes, the authors use relevant secondary data sourced from publications of government and non-government institutions with the support of other literature such as scientific journal articles and relevant books. The discussion begins with an overview of geopolitical changes in the Indo Pacific as a result of three main phenomena occurring in the region, namely China's BRI policy, Japan's FOIP, and the US's Pivot to Asia foreign policy.

The following section discusses the impact of the three phenomena on Indonesia, especially from an economic, political and military perspective. Based on the discussion of both topics, the author analyzes Indonesia's vision as GMF associated with the repositioning of Indonesia's geopolitical strategy to address geopolitical changes in the Indo Pacific region. The focus of the discussion includes two things, namely whether the GMF policy is the best choice of geopolitical strategy for Indonesia and the extent of its implementation to the present. At the end, the author provides a number of conclusions and recommendations regarding the repositioning of Indonesia's geopolitical strategy in anticipating and dealing with geopolitical changes in the Indo Pacific region.

The Main Issues of Geopolitical Changes in the Indo Pacific

There are three main issues related to geopolitical changes and dynamics in the Indo Pacific region, namely BRI policy from China, the declaration of FOIP concept from Japan, and the US Government's Pivot to Asia foreign policy.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

The launching of BRI is believed to be aimed at increasing China's political influences on countries in the Asia-Pacific and Africa regions through an economic approach, especially investments in infrastructure. China provides facilities to partner countries to help them

building various infrastructure projects such as roads, railways, seaports and airports through loans and necessary technical assistance. In addition to increasing influence in the region, BRI also aims to spur domestic economic growth and reduce economic disparities between the relatively underdeveloped China's rear mainland and other areas along the South and East China Sea corridors. Another economic goal China wants to achieve through the BRI program is to dispose the surplus of domestic industrial production through infrastructure development projects in various countries (Damuri et al., 2019).

To date, the BRI program has involved 65 partner countries with a total investment value of around US\$ 4.4 trillion. Some analysts say this initiative is part of Xi Jinping's dream to realize socialism with Chinese characteristics. Although the construction of various infrastructure projects has been successfully carried out, the BRI program is considered to have caused a number of problems and is incompatible with the Sustainable Development Goals (Iqbal et al., 2014). One of the issues often gets the spotlight is allegations of China using a debt trap strategy to influence the economic and political sectors of partner countries as happened in the Maldives, Sri Lanka, a number of African countries, or countries in Southeast Asia, such as Myanmar (Carmody, 2020; Var & Po, 2017; Were, 2018).

Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)

Some international relations analysts argue the declaration of FOIP is a form of Japan's response to the BRI policy introduced by China since 2013. Through this concept, analysts argue Japan implicitly views China as a threat to regional and global order and prosperity as well as Western interests in the Indo – Pacific regions. The analysts see FOIP as a geopolitical strategy to counter China's influence and power in the region, for example through the establishment of maritime cooperation between Japan, Australia, India and the US, namely the Quadrilateral Security Cooperation (QUAD). In addition, FOIP is also seen as a geoeconomics strategy to match the BRI programs by providing alternative infrastructure projects to replace BRI projects in the region. However, there are also some observers who think otherwise. They view FOIP

as an inclusive concept that also includes China and other countries and parties into the political and economic system in the Indo-Pacific region. This view is in line with the message officially conveyed by the Government and Japanese officials regarding FOIP (Satake, 2019).

However, there are also other views saying that initially Japan's FOIP concept was intended to compete with China's BRI concept. However, over time and due to the dynamics of politics and security in the region, there is a tendency that FOIP and BRI will go hand in hand, not to compete with each other (Hosoya, 2019).

Pivot to Asia

The Pivot to Asia policy, which aims to rebalance the US power from Europe and the Middle East to Asia, has triggered political, economic, and military competition so that it has an impact on political stability and security in the Indo Pacific regions. In the political and military fields, for example, the competition takes the form of the establish political and security cooperation among the US, Australia, India, and Japan through the QUAD platform to deal with China. Meanwhile, competition in the economic field takes the form of a trade war between the US and China starting in early 2018. The trade war between the two countries began when the US imposed a 25% tariff on goods imported from China on July 6, 2018. According to China, the trade war carried out by the US is a form of US fear in facing the challenges of China's global hegemony (Liu & Woo, 2018; PWC, 2015).

Another form of their competitions is the rivalry for political and military influence in the South China Sea region. China is increasingly increasing its capabilities and presence in the South China Sea through the construction of artificial islands and military defense facilities in order to able to control the South China Sea from various scenarios that may occur. China has placed ships, radar installations, power plants, and airstrips for heavy-lift military aircraft on a number of islands in the South China Sea such as Mischief Reef, Johnson Reef, Fiery Cross Reef, and Subi Reef. Since 2016 the US has also continued to increase its military presence and activities in the South China Sea through the Freedom of Navigations Operation (FONOP) (Kindred, 2018).

The Impact of Geopolitical Changes in the Indo Pacific on Indonesia

Geopolitical changes in the Indo Pacific region due to the rivalry between the US and China have created a complicated situation and are believed to have serious impacts on many countries, including Indonesia. The complexity of the situation occurs because the rivalry involves various aspects of life, especially economics, politics and the military. In addition, each party involves other supporting countries in the rivalry. The following is an illustration of the impact of geopolitical changes in the Indo Pacific region on Indonesia in the economic, political and military fields due to China's BRI policy, Japan's FOIP policy and the US Pivot to Asia policy.

Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI)

China's BRI has the potential to benefit economies in the Indo Pacific region, including Southeast Asia. These economic initiatives have further facilitated China's engagement with Southeast Asia and have had a positive impact on trade flows and integration between ASEAN countries and China. BRI is also said to have a similar positive impact outside the ASEAN region (Foo et al., 2020). However, BRI is not free from flaws. China's economic policy is accused of potentially becoming a debt trap for partner countries in BRI projects and China is using it to gain political influence. For example, China is accused of using debt traps to gain geopolitical influence from poor countries in Africa (Were, 2018).

Several countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia and the South Pacific have also experienced such situation. Cambodia is one of the countries experiencing a debt trap from China. An IMF report in 2016 stated 80 percent of Cambodia's public debt comes from China, leaving the country under great political influence from China. A similar situation also occurs in South Asia, that is in Sri Lanka. China provided large loans to Sri Lanka for the construction of infrastructure projects such as seaports, airports and railways. Sri Lanka had difficulty paying debts to China for these projects, so finally a Chinese company took over the management of the infrastructure projects, namely the deep sea port in Hambatota and the airport in Mattala (Var

& Po, 2017). The debt trap experienced by Cambodia and Sri Lanka has the potential to have a major political impact on geopolitical dynamics in the Indo Pacific region. In the context of Cambodia, the percentage of Cambodia's debt, which majority comes from China, has the potential to make one of these ASEAN member countries dependent and indebted to China. The proximity of Cambodia and China has the potential to influence Cambodia's political attitude towards China in resolving conflicts in the South China Sea. In the context of Sri Lanka, by taking over and operating the deep sea port at Hambatota and the airport at Mattala China have the potential to use them for military purposes to obtain a strategic position in the event a conflict in the Indian Ocean break out.

Indonesia is also one of the countries that received loans from China within the framework of BRI to build infrastructure projects such as ports, railways, airports and toll roads. The percentage of loans from China is still relatively small when compared to loans from other parties. The Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM) stated the amount of investment loans from China to Indonesia was only about 10 percent of Indonesia's total debt in 2014. BKPM was optimistic investment loans from China would benefit Indonesia, especially to encourage economic growth and create new port cities (Lovina et al., 2017). But the situation has changed. In 2018 China became the second largest investor for Indonesia after Singapore with a focus on investment in the infrastructure and mining sectors such as hydroelectric power plants and facilities for converting coal into dimethyl ether (Yang, 2018).

China's investment in Indonesia within the framework of the BRI is recognized as having a positive impact, especially in supporting the Government's policies in developing infrastructure projects. Indonesia requires massive infrastructure development to create connectivity in order to strengthen Indonesia's position as a global trade axis, namely as a hub between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. Currently, Indonesia has not been able to obtain adequate benefits from this strategic position, especially economically, due to weak connectivity among regions in the country. Therefore, Chinese investment through the BRI

scheme receives a substantial support to create such connectivity. However, a number of parties are concerned about the massive inflow of Chinese investment.

There are four issues trigger these concerns, namely the arrival of foreign workers from China, transfer of technology and environmental issues, the balance of trade value and fiscal burden, and the involvement of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in BRI projects. Many parties oppose the arrival of foreign workers from China, which becomes an integral part of Chinese investments in BRI projects. The arrival of foreign workers from China is considered to have narrowed job opportunities for Indonesian citizens. Even without the arrival of foreign workers it is quite difficult for the citizens to get a job. Regarding transfer of technology and environmental issues, a number of ongoing BRI projects, such as the power plant project, are experiencing delays due to technical problems due to the use of outdated technology. It turns out the power plant use old technology that is not environmentally friendly and even China itself is no longer using this technology for domestic projects. In addition, China is also reluctant to transfer the technology used for the projects. Other issues related to BRI projects are concerning the trade balance deficit between Indonesia and China and Indonesia's growing fiscal burden. The trade balance deficit between Indonesia and China continues to increase because most of the materials for BRI projects are imported from China. The Government of Indonesia's fiscal burden is also increasing in line with the increase in debt to finance BRI projects. This condition occurs because on the one hand the Government's income from the tax sector is still low, which is only around 11 percent of GDP. On the other hand, BRI's infrastructure projects have not been able to boost national economic growth and increase government revenues significantly. As a result, the government is forced to take on new debts to pay the interest of the existing debts. Concern on SMEs is especially regarding the fact that small and medium-scale business actors have not involved and received tangible benefits from BRI projects. They have not involved in BRI projects because they have not been able to provide products, both goods and services, with the specifications required by these projects. This

condition occurs due to limited capital and human resources (Damuri et al., 2019).

Free and Open Indo-Pacific

As previously discussed, Japan's FOIP foreign policy is seen as an attempt to contain China, which is growing rapidly, both economically and militarily. However, some analysts state FOIP is not only aimed at restraining or balancing China's growing power, but rather a strategy to build a regional order so that over time there is potential for FOIP and BRI to work in harmony. One of the implementations of this policy is the establishment of the QUAD, a security cooperation among Japan and a number of countries in the Indo Pacific region, namely the US, Australia and India (Hosoya, 2019; Rossiter, 2018).

The implementation of Japan's FOIP concept has the potential impact on countries in the Indo Pacific region, including Indonesia. One of these impacts is caused by the involvement of other countries that support Japan's policy, such as the involvement of the US, Australia and India who are members of QUAD. The formation of QUAD has the potential to increase the political tension and security threats in the region because this cooperation can legitimize them to deploy their military assets in the Indo Pacific region, especially around Japan's territory in the East China Sea, either in the form of joint exercises or operations. This condition has an impact on Indonesia because it is located in the middle of the Indo Pacific region. Indeed, geographically Indonesia's position is relatively far from the East China Sea, but the territorial waters are bordered by the South China Sea, which is currently also an arena of conflict involving China. A number of countries, namely Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines, and Taiwan, have disputes with China over ownership and territorial boundaries in the South China Sea, especially over islands or maritime features in the Paracel and Spratly Islands. Brunei claims coral reefs in the Southern part of the Spratly Islands which China also recognizes as part of its territory. Malaysia is also in dispute with China over three islands in the Spratly Islands. China and the Philippines are also in dispute because each side claims eight islands in the Spratly and most of the South China Sea. The conflict has not only generated political

tensions but has also led to a number of armed incidents, such as those between China and other countries including Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia (Kaplan, 2014).

This condition has the potential to create greater political and military tensions because each party involved in the dispute receive the support and involve other countries from outside the region. China has the support of Iran and Russia. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines have the support of the US and its allies. The US involvement has the potential to disrupt political stability and security in the region because it involves military forces such as through FONOP which tends to be more intensive being carried out by the US military in the East China Sea and South China Sea. The impact on the political and security situation in the region is even increasing more substantially because the US and China have each started to drag their supporting countries to deploy military power in disputed areas. Two of the US allies, namely Britain and France, for example, have been actively present by sending warships to the South China Sea to support FONOP activities with the US (Luc, 2018). Although Russia send no military forces in the region, the country provides weapons to US rivals, namely China and Vietnam. Russia has made an agreement to sell large quantities of weapons to both countries (Korolev, 2019).

This situation has the potential to endanger Indonesia's security and national interests, in particular to protect the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the North Natuna Sea, which is directly adjacent to the South China Sea. In recent years foreign vessels, especially from Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and China frequently conduct illegal activities in the form of illegal fishing in the North Natuna Sea. This illegal activity is not only economically detrimental because it has stolen Indonesia's natural resources, it has also posed a security threat because it has caused a number of incidents involving Indonesian water authorities such as the Indonesian Navy and the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries with the water authorities, namely the Coast Guards of the respective countries (Fauzan et al., 2019). If these illegal activities and incidents continue to occur, it is feared they will develop into a more serious

conflict and drag Indonesia into a vortex of conflict in the South China Sea.

Pivot to Asia

The US foreign policy Pivot to Asia also has the potential to have an impact on Indonesia economically, politically and militarily, especially from two phenomena emerging from the Pivot to Asia policy, namely trade war between the US and China as well as the conflict in the South China Sea.

The US – China Trade War

The trade war between the US and China is one of phenomena emerging from the struggle for influence and interests between both countries in the Indo Pacific. The US foreign policy to pay greater attention to the Asian region is closely related to China's growth as a new power, not only in the region but also at global level. China's rapid economic growth since the 1980s has made the country become a new world economic power that rivals the US. The situation is certainly disturbing and even threatens the status of the US as the world's economic hegemon. Therefore, President Trump's decision to engage in a trade war with China is seen as an attempt to restrain China's further economic growth (Liu & Woo, 2018).

The feud between the two world economic giants has had a serious impact on the global economy, including hitting the economies of both countries. A study on the impact of the US-China trade war indicates the trade war affects import tariffs, investment, and productivity of the world economy. So far the trade war has reduced the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of China and the United States by 1.41 percent and 1.35 percent respectively. While globally it has reduced the world's GDP by \$450 billion. The trade war also caused a decrease in the volume of goods produced in the US and China by 3.91 percent and 2.67 percent respectively (Itakura, 2020; Taufikurahman & Firdaus, 2019).

The trade war between the two world economic giants also has an impact on Indonesia, both positively and negatively. One of the positive impacts is that Indonesia has the opportunity to become a new destination for industrial investment from China. The trade war made the competitiveness of industrial products

located in China decline because they had to pay high tariffs when exported to the US. In order to overcome this situation, industries from China need a new location such as Indonesia. One of the negative impacts is the decline in China's demand for industrial raw materials and commodities from Indonesia because industries in China experienced a production slowdown due to the trade war. In order to overcome this impact, the Government of Indonesia is making various efforts, including harmonizing regulations, developing an inclusive national economy to strengthen the national economy, as well as carrying out various diplomatic activities in the economic sector (Wangke, 2020). Under these circumstances, Indonesia needs to make corrective measures on the domestic economic sectors because it is believed the trade war will continue and no one knows when it will end. The corrective measures aim to increase investment in the real sector of the economy. Short-term steps that are required to be done for examples include increasing export competitiveness, productivity in the export-oriented industrial sector, market expansion and import restrictions (Taufikurahman & Firdaus, 2019).

South China Sea Conflicts

Another phenomenon including also a manifestation of the competition for influence between the US and China in the Indo-Pacific region is the conflict in the South China Sea. Even though the conflict actually occurred between China and countries in the region, namely Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, it also involved the US and its allies. In this context, US involvement includes, among others, Freedom of Navigation Operations as well as joint exercises with other countries in the South China Sea region (Berkofsky, 2018). Geopolitical changes and dynamics that occur in the Indo-Pacific Region, especially conflicts in the South China Sea, have a direct impact on Indonesia. Although Indonesia is not one of the countries that has a claim to ownership of one of the islands in the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands, Indonesia is directly adjacent to the South China Sea which is one of the hot spots where the two powers compete for influence and show off their military powers. In addition, China has also included parts of Indonesian territory in the

periphery of its military strategy, namely in the First Islands Chain and the Second Islands Chain (Erickson & Wuthnow, 2016). Currently, China is intensifying its military power in the Spratly and Paracel Islands by building airplane runways as well as deploying missiles, radars and military personnel on a number of islands in the region. The US military is also increasingly active in conducting FONOP within the Nine-Dashed-Line areas which China claims as its territory (Hawksley, 2018, pp. 122–141).

The increase of the US military activities in the South China Sea is a manifestation of the rebalancing policy launched by President Obama in 2011. The policy aims to relocate some US military forces from the Middle East and South Asia to the Indo-Pacific Region, including the South China Sea, to balance China's influence and power. The US has played a dominant role in the Asia Pacific Region for more than six decades and does not seem to be willing the growing military power and influence of China to replace its position as hegemon in the region. This situation has a direct impact on the political and security situation in the Indo-Pacific regions, especially in the South China Sea, where the military forces of the two countries and their alliances meet. A number of incidents and provocations involving the US military, China and countries claiming territory in the South China Sea such as Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia have occurred several times. Indonesia is indeed not one of the claimant countries in territorial disputes in the South China Sea. However, Indonesia has an interest because China has included Indonesia's EEZ in the northern Natuna Sea into its territory, included within China's Nine-Dashed-Lines. China's claim does not clearly state the coordinates of the area with the argument that it has been part of China's territory since ancient times. The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) rejected China's claim to the South China Sea area in 2016 (De Castro, 2017). However, China continues to conduct activities in the area, such as escorted illegal fishing involving Coast Guard patrol boats in the North Natuna Sea. As a result, the Indonesian security authorities were involved in several incidents with the Chinese Coast Guard when they were taking action against the Chinese boats illegal fishing activities (Wijaya, 2018).

Currently, the escalation of conflict in the South China Sea tends to increase and has the potential to become a serious regional security threat, including for Indonesia, because the conflict does not only involve disputing countries in the region such as Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei, and China but also other countries outside the region including the United States and its allied countries such as Australia, France, England, Canada, Germany, and Japan. There are indications that China has also begun to attract several countries into its alliance in the South China Sea, such as Russia and Iran. The disputing parties and their allies also began to use military forces which were increasing from time to time. As aforementioned, the potential threat is increasingly real for Indonesia because the conflict area is directly adjacent to Indonesian territory, especially Indonesia's EEZ in the North Natuna Sea. If the conflict erupts into an open war, Indonesia is required to be ready and able to defend its territory. If Indonesia is not ready and able to defend itself, it will bear serious consequences, that is being dragged into war and it is probable that Indonesian territory will become a war theater or at least a buffer zone.

Indonesia's Geopolitical Strategy: Indonesia as Global Maritime Fulcrum

In the midst of strategic competition between the US and China and their supporting countries in the Indo Pacific region through the BRI, FOIP, and Pivot to Asia concepts, President Joko Widodo declared Global Maritime Fulcrum concept. President Joko Widodo declared the concept at the 9th East Asia Summit in November 2014. The GMF concept is a vision to rebuild maritime culture and develop Indonesia's maritime-based economy that projects Indonesia as an influential and strong maritime power in the Indian Ocean region and Pacific Ocean. GMF has five development pillars, namely maritime culture, marine resources, maritime infrastructure and connectivity, maritime diplomacy, and maritime defense. The first pillar, the development of maritime culture aims to reaffirm the identity of Indonesian people as a maritime nation. The ancestors of the Indonesian people were seafarers so that identity must be maintained and developed for the benefit of the entire Indonesian nation and state. The second pillar, the

development of marine resources aims to build food sovereignty from marine natural resources through the development of fishing industries. This second pillar development program places fishermen as the main subject. The third pillar, infrastructure development and maritime connectivity aims to connect all parts of Indonesia as a unit through the construction of Sea Toll, deep seaports, logistics systems, shipping industry, and maritime tourism. The fourth pillar, the development of maritime diplomacy has the main focus and goal to reduce or eliminate conflicts that potentially occur in Indonesia's maritime territory. The fifth pillar, the development of maritime defense aims to build a formidable regional naval power in order to protect territorial sovereignty and marine resources, as well as create a safe and free trade routes for national interest (Gindarsah & Priamarizki, 2015).

Geopolitics is the practice and representation of territorial strategy, which is about how a country competes in controlling the territorial area and or the resources in it (Flint, 2006, p. 13). Based on this definition, the enactment of Indonesia's vision as GMF can be seen as an effort to reposition Indonesia's geopolitical strategy because the five pillars of GMF contain state policies related to territorial areas and the use of resources in them. Is Indonesia's vision as GMF the proper repositioning of geopolitical strategy for Indonesia and to what extent is this vision implemented?

The Proper Geopolitical Strategy?

President Joko Widodo's decision to declare Indonesia's vision as GMF is a proper decision. There are at least four reasons underlying this argument. Firstly, Indonesia's position which is located between two oceans, namely the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, makes Indonesia a very strategic country from a maritime perspective. The two seas are the veins of world trade because they are the main sea routes connecting Europe, Africa, Asia and America. Indonesia's position is important and strategic because the world's maritime routes must pass through Indonesian waters, especially through four choke points, namely the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Sunda, the Strait of Lombok and the

Strait of Makassar. More than fifty percent of the world's maritime trade fleets pass through these choke points, both transporting energy commodities such as coal, oil, and natural gas as well as other commodities, either raw materials or finished products (Kaplan, 2014, pp. 82–85).

Secondly, most of Indonesia's territory, which is about sixty percent, consists of oceans. The total area of Indonesia is around 7.81 million km². From the total area, 3.25 million km² is ocean and only about 2.01 million km² is land mass (Pratama, 2020). Indonesia also has a long coastline with a total of more than 81 thousand kilometers (Brotosusilo et al., 2016). With the dominant sea area and the total length of the coast stretching thousands of kilometers, Indonesia should have made the maritime area as the main orientation in all aspects of life. The vast sea and coastal areas have abundant natural resources and have the potential to be a source of life and welfare for the nation if they are managed and utilized properly.

Thirdly, Indonesian people have strong historical roots as a maritime nation and were known as a nation of sailors. In the past, the archipelago, which is now the territory of Indonesia, once stood several strong maritime kingdoms and were famous for having excellent sailors such as the Sriwijaya Kingdom (7-14 centuries), the Majapahit Kingdom (13-16 centuries), the Demak Kingdom (16th century), and the Kingdom of Gowa-Tallo (17th century). Based on the records of sailors, traders, and scholars from Arab, India, China, and Europe at that time, these kingdoms had a formidable maritime power, both in the military, trade, exploration and diplomacy aspects and were able to provide prosperous lives for their people (Ali & Sulistiyono, 2020).

Lastly, in this decade, namely 2020-2030, Indonesia has a demographic bonus that is the number of population within productive age range (15-64 years) is greater than those who are not productive (Wisnumurti et al., 2018). This situation provides an opportunity for massive maritime sector development because the number of available workforce is abundant. However, the Government have to prepare those in the productive ages with proper skills and knowledge to benefit from the demographic bonus, including

to support programs related to the implementation of Indonesia's vision as GMF.

The accounts show President Joko Widodo's decision in enacting Indonesia's vision as GMF have a strong basis and a high prospect of success. The enactment of GMF also can potentially accelerate the achievement of development programs in all sectors, covering economy, socio-culture, politics, as well as defense and security. In the economic sector, GMF has the potential to boost national economic growth through the use of marine natural resources, both to meet domestic needs and as export commodities. The social and cultural life of the community also potentially reaps great benefits because the implementation of GMF is predicted to create a large number of jobs in maritime sector. The availability of new jobs in maritime sector will contribute positively to increase the average people's incomes and reducing poverty and socio-economic disparities in society. Good social and economic conditions of the community will ultimately have a positive effect on political stability and national security.

GMF also has the potential to enhance Indonesian national defense capabilities. As a maritime country consisting of thousands of islands, the development of a national defense system in the maritime sector will further strengthen national defense capabilities because most of the threats are predicted to originate from and or use maritime media. However, to get the maximum benefit from the GMF national vision, a comprehensive, synergistic and quick implementation is needed in all sectors. Partial implementation in only a few sectors or comprehensively in all sectors but not synergistically will not provide optimal results. Slow implementation will also not provide optimal results because the demographic bonus only lasts for about ten years. The following section describes the progress of GMF implementation up to the present day.

The Progress of GMF Implementation

As the basis for implementing the GMF vision, the Government stipulated Presidential Regulation No. 16 year 2017 concerning Indonesian Maritime Policy. The Presidential Regulation is a general guideline for marine policy and steps for its implementation through

the programs and activities of Ministries and Agencies in maritime sector for accelerating the implementation of GMF. Indonesia's maritime policy has two functions. Firstly, it becomes a guideline for Ministries, Agencies, and local governments to plan, implement, as well as monitor and evaluate the development of maritime sector to materialize Indonesia as GMF. Secondly, it functions as a reference for the community and business actors in participating in the development of maritime sector to materialize Indonesia as GMF. Indonesia's maritime policy consists of two documents, namely the National Document of Indonesian Maritime Policy and the Action Plan for Indonesia's Maritime Policy. The stipulation of the Presidential Regulation aims to accelerate the implementation and achieve the goals stated in the GMF's vision (Peraturan Presiden Nomor 16 Tahun 2017 Tentang Kebijakan Kelautan Indonesia, 2017).

In general, Indonesia's maritime policy is considered to have lacking capacity to encourage the implementation of GMF according to community expectations because it does not fundamentally change the existing government policies in maritime sector. There are three reasons underlying this argument. Firstly, the Presidential Regulation contains many maritime programs but they do not clearly state the institution authorized to coordinate with the relevant Ministries and institutions so that the program can run synergistically. Secondly, the document focuses too much on domestic maritime issues and ignores international maritime issues. This document, for example, only briefly lists issues in the South China Sea. In the military aspect, this maritime policy also only includes existing programs from the Ministry of Defense and the TNI, such as the construction of a naval base, ship maintenance facilities and ship procurement plans. Third, the maritime policy can indeed become a legal umbrella for implementing GMF vision but does not propose a new program that can be a breakthrough in realizing Indonesia's vision as a GMF (Laksmana, 2017).

GMF implementation is not optimal yet from an economic, political and defense perspective. In the economic field, one of the GMF implementations that is part of the central Government's program is the construction of the

Sea Toll, which is a strategic infrastructure to create national connectivity through maritime routes consisting of 160 seaports, 50 pioneer shipping lanes, and 193 pioneer shipping lanes. The development of the Sea Toll aims to increase productivity and national competitiveness in the international market, both for human resources and Indonesian products. If successful, the program will have a positive impact on increasing the capability of the national economy. The government of President Joko Widodo is working with China to realize the construction of the Sea Toll through financing and investment programs under the BRI scheme. From an economic perspective, this step is considered quite successful because various infrastructure projects related to the Sea Toll have been successfully built. However, from a political perspective, the construction of the Sea Toll through BRI program scheme is considered to be more profitable for China because Indonesia's large debt to China has the potential to interfere with Indonesia's foreign diplomatic power towards China (Sriyanto, 2018).

The local government also implements GMF, as has been done by the Natuna District Government through a maritime-based development strategy through infrastructure development to integrate the fisheries sector and maritime tourism. However, these efforts have not been successful due to a number of obstacles. The development of the marine tourism sector has not been successful due to transportation, infrastructure and promotion problems. The development of the fishery sector faces problems with illegal fishing, lack of mastery of fish processing technology, as well as distribution outside the island of Natuna that has not been smooth (Ahmad, 2020)

In defense sector, the Government has also made efforts in the development of maritime sector as the embodiment of GMF. One of the focuses is the effort to balance the competition between the big powers through multilateral and bilateral international diplomacy. These efforts are conducted by sticking to the principle of a free-active foreign policy. In this context, Indonesia seeks to play a role as a middle power in order to contribute to solving political and security problems in the region, especially in the maritime sector. However, the implementation of

GMF has not been effective enough so far. There are a number of obstacles causing the ineffectiveness, namely corruption, inefficient bureaucracy and regulations, weaknesses in finance and infrastructure, as well as the inadequate strength of maritime defense and security organizations, both the Navy and the Maritime Security Agency (Aufiya, 2017).

The Indonesian government acknowledges that military forces, particularly the navy, have an important role in the implementation of GMF. Moreover, Indonesia's strategic environment, that is the Indo Pacific region, is undergoing rapid geopolitical changes and is accompanied by increasing maritime threats. Therefore, to answer this challenge, the Government undertakes naval development through the procurement of warships, maritime patrol aircraft, radar systems, submarines and naval defense systems based on the Minimum Essential Forces (MEF) doctrine. However, these efforts have not been optimal due to the limited defense budget (Zulkifli et al., 2020). The accounts shows the implementation of GMF vision has encountered substantial obstacles therefore it is successful yet. Regarding this, all stakeholders need to cooperate synergistically for improving the implementation of GMF so that Indonesia's vision as Global Maritime Fulcrum comes to reality.

Conclusions

Based on a strategic analysis of the ongoing geopolitical dynamics in the Indo Pacific region, it is concluded the US and its allies are fighting to maintain the US status as hegemon while China and its allies are fighting to make China as a new hegemon by implementing economic, political and military policies. The policies are packaged in three main concepts, namely BRI, FOIP, and Pivot to Asia. The implementation of these concepts is progress and has an impact on countries in the Indo Pacific region, including Indonesia, especially in the economic, political and military fields.

Amidst the geopolitical changes due to the struggle for influence and interests between the two powers, the enactment of Indonesia's vision as GMF is the suited strategy. This vision is a repositioning of geopolitical strategies to anticipate and respond to the challenges arising in the economic, political and military aspects as a

result of the rivalry. However, the implementation of the vision of GMF needs to be evaluated and improved because a number of aspects have not been implemented properly. The implementation of Indonesia's vision as GMF, which is part of President Joko Widodo's Nawa Cita (nine development goals), aims for Indonesia to develop into an advanced and strong maritime country so that it has a greater role in the Indo Asia Pacific region in the economic, political and military fields. The implementation of the GMF vision that is not optimal yet indicates that Indonesia has not succeeded in adapting appropriately to the complex and fast-paced global geopolitical changes, especially in the Indo Pacific region.

The rivalry between the US and China along with their respective supporting countries in the Indo Pacific region shows that the strength of a country comes from a combination of military power and non-military ones, especially economic and political powers. In this context, Indonesia has a good potential of political power in the form of diplomatic power as shown in foreign policy diplomacy at the ASEAN level and the election of Indonesia as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. In the economic field, Indonesia's strength should also be taken into account because Indonesia is a member of a number of influential economic forums and organizations at global level, namely the G20, WTO, APEC, and MEA. In addition, Indonesia has quite good economic potential and is predicted to become the world's 4th economic power after China, India, the US in 2050.

The most crucial issue for Indonesia to be able to play a role as a prominent geopolitical force in the Indo Pacific region is to become a middle power. To achieve this goal, the implementation of Indonesia's vision as a GMF must be improved, especially in the military field. This is in accordance to the increasing challenges and threats originating from military sources that endanger the sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as the safety of Indonesian people. The current defense budget allocation that is still around 0.8 percent of GDP needs to be increased to build an substantially strong defense force in the region. The budget strategy also needs to give priority to spending on defense equipment so that it can build a sufficiently strong and integrative

defense force that includes land, sea, air, cyber, and space forces.

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