



THE MEANING OF INDONESIA'S GLOBAL MARITIME FULCRUM

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President Joko Widodo (Jokowi)'s Global Maritime Fulcrum vision rests on five core pillars: maritime culture, maritime infrastructure and connectivity, protection of maritime resources, maritime diplomacy, and maritime defense; and two auxiliary pillars: maritime governance and maritime environment. The vision was announced at the 2014 East Asia Summit and formally introduced via Indonesia's Sea Policy presidential regulation in 2017.

The vision primarily serves domestic economic purposes by enhancing inter-island connectivity through infrastructure development and protecting maritime resources to fuel Indonesia's economy. Internationally, it envisions Indonesia as an interface between various regional initiatives – the Belt and Road Initiative, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, among others – by leveraging the country's strategic location at the crossroads of the Indian and Pacific Ocean.

The vision also embodies a military dimension: developing Indonesia's maritime defense capability to create a formidable regional maritime power to safeguard its sovereignty and wealth, along with navigational safety, maritime security, and maritime diplomacy.

Modest Implications?

Conceptually, the GMF could have a significant impact on Indonesia's strategic outlook, as it re-highlighted and prioritized maritime defense and security issues. This emphasis is not new: it is anchored in Indonesia's concept of the Archipelagic Outlook, first articulated in 1957 by Prime Minister Djuanda Kartawidjaja, which regards the inter-island sea as an inextricable part of Indonesia's territory. Soeharto's New Order government, however, interpreted and implemented the outlook with a land-centric and inward-looking emphasis to serve its interests. The GMF seeks to remedy the paradox in Indonesia's strategic outlook that emphasizes a continental Army to defend an archipelago. The vision also reflects the

evolution in Indonesia's security outlook that prioritizes the country's strategic environment.

The GFM's impact on the defense budget, defense expenditures, and procurement priorities is inconclusive, despite a clear directive to develop a maritime defense capability to address a spectrum of security challenges and President Jokowi's commitment to increase the Navy's budget and defense spending to 1.5 percent of GDP (under the condition that Indonesia's economy grow by 7 percent).

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Indonesia's defense spending continues to hover below 1 percent of GDP. While the defense budget has enjoyed a real increase of \$710 million in 2015, Jakarta initially cut its defense budget for the next two years because of stagnant economic growth brought about by the global economic downturn, weakening currency, and lower state revenue. The initial defense budget in 2016 was around \$7 billion, a decrease from the \$7.6 billion allocated in 2015. While the cut was later reversed in June 2016 after a fishing incident involving the Indonesian Navy, the Chinese Coast Guard, and a Chinese fishing vessel in the Natuna Sea, the Jokowi administration cut its defense budget again in 2017, before raising it in the middle of the year.

While a stagnating economy thwarts the aim to develop defense capability in a significant manner, Jakarta's defense expenditure indicates a more fundamental issue. Around 20 percent of the defense budget is earmarked for procurement and the remainder is spent on routine spending and capital expenditures, such as salary and welfare. Additionally, the small procurement budget is divided in relatively equal terms among the three services to prevent inter-service grievances. Despite the call to strengthen maritime defense capability, defense expenditure remains skewed toward the Army as its sprawling territorial structure necessitates a large number of personnel.

The Jokowi administration is keen not only to continue its predecessor's Minimum Essential Force (MEF) initiative given that its elements – the development of a green-water navy, enhancement of air combat capability, and formation of an agile land force – works with the GMF, but also to imbue the existing procurement plan

with greater maritime emphasis. To date, the extent of such modification remains unclear, as defense policy documents do not reveal the details of changes in Indonesia's procurement priorities. More recently, Indonesia reduced its MEF submarine force structure target from 12 boats to eight, as a sign that Jakarta may downscale, rather than increase, its maritime defense ambitions.

The GMF vision's modest impact is further reflected in Indonesia's defense strategy: it has yet to bring about the expected shift. Indonesia has a defense-in-depth strategy that hinges on deliberate protraction of conflict and guerrilla tactics. Although the Navy and the Air Force provide interdiction forces to forestall hostile forces from entering the archipelago, the emphasis of the strategy has been on the Army and its role in mounting resistance with the citizenry. In this context, the GMF vision presents an opportunity to remedy Jakarta's central paradox: a geographically maritime state that relies on a continental Army.

The vision presents an opportunity to develop and incorporate naval defense concepts – the Archipelagic Sea Defense Strategy and Indonesia's Maritime Defense Strategy – as part of a broader strategy. Policy documents including the Sea Policy document do not mention redressing Indonesia's strategy as a priority. Instead, the Ministry of Defense is more eager to carry out its flagship 'State Defense' program that aims to instill patriotism and enhance 'national resilience' – key aspects of the defense strategy – rather than revising the current emphasis in the defense strategy.

Inhibiting factors

The GMF's modest impact on the defense sector is attributable to three inter-related factors. First, the Jokowi administration's attention to GMF implementation over-emphasized the economic, rather than the strategic, dimension, which is unsurprising considering that he ran on an economic platform.

Second, architects of the vision, notably Rizal Sukma and Andi Widjajanto (currently the Indonesian ambassador to the UK and former Cabinet secretary, respectively) are no longer directly involved in policymaking or policy implementation. As Jokowi concentrates almost exclusively on the economic dimension, the role of proponents with the credentials to interpret and execute the vision becomes paramount. While proponents such as Ambassador Arif Havas Oegroseno play a pivotal role in translating the vision into an actionable regulatory framework, there are no authoritative figures that helped design the GMF's defense-related policy program.

Finally, Indonesia's defense programs under the Jokowi administration are implemented in a business-as-usual manner and, at times, inconsistently with the GMF vision. There are elements, such as the primacy of the Army in the archipelago's strategic planning and conservative

elements in the defense establishment, that also hinder the GMF's strategic impact.

A specific GMF defense policy blueprint that complements the broader Sea Policy needs to be formulated. Such a framework is critical to ensure that stakeholders have a common reference point regarding the vision's strategic dimension and the courses of action that needed to be executed.

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