

Indonesia's maritime strategy: Jokowi's gamble by Michael R. Calistro

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President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) announced his maritime strategy during a speech at the East Asia Summit in Myanmar last November. The strategy is Jokowi's response to one of Indonesia's most pressing economic problems: the high cost of moving goods through the islands. His plan is to turn Indonesia into a maritime nexus allowing the nation's ports and sea routes to be better utilized by the world's leading economic powers. But, the strategy's emphasis on the Indonesian Navy risks alienating and antagonizing the Army, which could have serious political consequences.

While the Maritime Strategy is for the most part an economic initiative, it has significant implications for Indonesia's security. It is built on five pillars. The first four deal with Indonesia's maritime culture, management of maritime resources through sea sovereignty, enhancement of the maritime economy, and maintaining a harmonious environment that encourages maritime diplomacy. The fifth pillar concerns "bolstering Indonesia's maritime defenses, both to support the country's maritime sovereignty and wealth, and to fulfill its role in maintaining safety of navigation and maritime security." This will require a significant increase in the capabilities of the Indonesian Navy, Tentara Nasional Indonesia Angkatan Laut (TNI-AL) and as such represents a major strategic shift for the military, since the Indonesian Army, Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI-AD), has maintained primacy for 70 years.

Indonesia's undersized, under-powered, and under-funded navy will need more than just Jokowi's promises to meet the expectations set forth by the maritime strategy. Increased defense spending on naval assets will greatly burden the already limited defense budget, which is a perilously low 1 percent of Indonesia's GDP. While there are efforts to marginally increase and reallocate the defense budget, it is likely that the TNI-AD will feel the brunt if funds are redistributed. Jokowi must balance the need to meet the goals of the strategy without marginalizing the powerful TNI-AD.

TNI-AD: more than just a military force

Indonesia's Army has assumed many roles in society, from a pseudo-political party to an agent in the business sector. It considers itself the protector of the nation's secular ideology, *Pancasila*, and is the driving force behind maintaining the nation's territorial integrity. During the 32-year reign of President Suharto, a former TNI-AD officer, the Army's power reached its pinnacle. Officers were the Cabinet in ministry positions while holding several dozen seats in the legislature. Since Suharto's fall in 1998, the TNI-AD's power

has declined. It no longer controls seats in the legislature, and military businesses have been curtailed for the sake of professionalizing the force.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), a former TNI-AD general, was one of the primary actors behind the professionalization effort, breaking the Army away from non-military responsibilities. Although SBY effectively took power from the TNI-AD, he had the trust of Army officers due to his military background. He also provided the TNI-AD with a specific role in Indonesia's future and ensured that it remained a first-class international military force. Under SBY the TNI-AD expanded its UN peacekeeping mission footprint through operations abroad, and by constructing a large peacekeeping training facility in Sentul, Java. SBY's leadership was instrumental in resuming military training with the US and overcoming years of sanctions resulting from accusations of human rights violations. Jokowi must follow SBY's example and give the TNI-AD a specific role in his maritime strategy. Otherwise, he will face a marginalized and uncooperative Army.

Jokowi publically has yet to declare a specific role for the TNI-AD in the maritime strategy. He is constrained not only by a limited defense budget but also by an impressive array of political problems. Since winning the presidency with limited political support and a short list of allies, Jokowi's former party ally Megawati Sukarnoputri has publicly feuded with him, and may have joined the ranks of his opposition. Megawati's allies in the police force have made an effective anti-corruption campaign nearly impossible.

In addition, Indonesia is attempting to limit rice imports by ramping up domestic production. Those efforts are hampered by a crumbling infrastructure and shortages of farming equipment and laborers. Indonesia also faces the specter of international terrorism, as it is estimated that about 200 Indonesians have traveled to the Middle East to join ISIS. All these seemingly separate problems have the same solution in Jokowi's eyes: assistance from the TNI-AD.

The TNI-AD has been Jokowi's solution for all problems Indonesia is facing. To balance Megawati's influence with the police, Jokowi brought the TNI-AD back into the civilian security sector by allowing the Army to sign special protection agreements with state-owned businesses, government ministries, and transportation hubs. He deployed the Army to help farming efforts through a jointly signed memorandum of understanding between the TNI-AD and the Agriculture Ministry. There have been calls to involve the TNI-AD in the government's anti-corruption effort, which pits Jokowi's anti-corruption ministry against Megawati's police allies. The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) recently welcomed two newly retired TNI-AD brigadier generals onto its staff, which may be the first step in increased Army

involvement in the civilian-controlled agency. Jokowi has worked to strengthen his relationship with the TNI-AD's senior leadership by allowing the TNI-AD to maintain its hold on the top military post, TNI commanding general, for the second straight term. This breaks with the traditional rotation that allows top officers from the Navy and Air Force to hold the position. These moves were made to improve Jokowi's standing amongst the TNI-AD, and provided him with a much-needed ally against political enemies.

Jokowi may look to his Army allies for assistance in achieving the other goals of the maritime strategy. The third pillar of the strategy states Indonesia will prioritize infrastructure projects, especially those that enhance maritime connectivity. The large-scale construction of ports, roads, railways, and airports may provide another opportunity for the TNI-AD to inject itself back into the civilian sector and would suggest that Jokowi is allowing the Army to move closer to the 'dual function' of the past. Jokowi may feel providing the TNI-AD with a sizable role in infrastructure development projects will offset financial constraints created by shifting funding prioritization to the TNI-AL. (Implementation of the minimum essential force (MEF) requirements set forth during SBY's administration also calls for shifts in funds to the Navy. Similar to the maritime strategy, MEF seeks to modernize the TNI-AL through development of an Indonesian defense industry capable of meeting more of the military's demand for materiel.)

Taking power and funding from the TNI-AD has cost Indonesian presidents in the past. Both President Abdurrahman Wahid and President Suharto fell from power in part because of a lack of support from the Army.

Jokowi, the gambler

Jokowi is gambling his new role for the TNI-AD will allow implementation of the maritime strategy without infighting in the military. He is hoping the Army will help him battle his political enemies, and that his new TNI-AD allies will not demand more access to the civilian sector or claim more government influence. Jokowi is banking on his army's will to remain just that – *his* army and one that will loyally retreat back from the civilian sector once he gives the order.

Indonesia's road to democracy has been a long and winding one. The TNI-AD has not always been the greatest defender of democracy; in fact the Army has occasionally worked against the elected government. The process of separating the TNI-AD from responsibilities outside the military realm took time and planning. Jokowi's plan may undo this professionalization process and return the TNI-AD to the civilian sphere. Jokowi is gambling with Indonesia's democracy.

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