

The United States and Indonesia: Re-converging Security Interests in the Indo-Pacific

by

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Front cover image

Honor guards with American and Indonesian flags in Jakarta during a welcome ceremony for then-U.S. Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis who was on a visit to Indonesia on January 22-23, 2018.

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ISSUES & INSIGHTS

CONFERENCE REPORT

VOL. 21, CR 2 | SEPTEMBER 2021

Issues & Insights

Pacific Forum's flagship peer review and open access publication, *Issues & Insights* is published in the forms of working papers, edited volumes and conference/workshop reports. Authored by academics, policy analysts and subject-matter experts from around the region and the world, *Issues & Insights* provides timely, contextual and innovative policy research and analyses on pressing political, security, and economic developments in the Indo-Pacific.

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About this Report

Pacific Forum, with support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) and in collaboration with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies Indonesia (CSIS), organized the inaugural Track 2 U.S.-Indonesia Security Dialogue on June 1-3, 2021. Thought leaders from the United States and Indonesia, including scholars, policy experts, and retired military and government officials, participated in the dialogue. This report contains the general summary of the discussions.

The recommendations contained in this report, unless otherwise specifically noted, were generated by the discussions as interpreted by the Principal Investigators. This is not a consensus document. Both the agenda and participant list are included in the appendix; all participants attended in their private capacity.

The statements made and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Pacific Forum, the project sponsors, or the dialogue participants' respective organizations and affiliations. For questions, please email jeffrey@pacforum.org.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Principal Investigators would like to thank Tom Connolly, Ariel Stenek, Jesslyn Cheong and Audrey Happ for their assistance in producing this report. This report is made possible with support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

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Key Findings and Recommendations

U.S.-Indonesia Security Dialogue

The United States and Indonesia, the world's second and third largest democracies, form a consequential relationship in the Indo-Pacific. However, despite common values and shared interests, U.S.-Indonesia relations have yet to realize their full potential, especially on the security front. Many strategic imperatives should drive closer U.S. security engagements with Indonesia. These include Jakarta's leadership role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other key regional institutions, its outsized role in promoting the security of vital sea-lines of communications and trading routes, its location as the archipelagic nation connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans, its shared interest with the United States in countering violent extremism and other trans-national threat networks, and its activist and independent foreign policy. These realities, when leveraged, can facilitate a more coordinated and effective response to a multitude of geopolitical, economic, and security challenges in the region, and can advance the United States' Indo-Pacific vision.

The Biden Administration has made clear that the Indo-Pacific is a "top priority," an enduring theme through several U.S. administrations. U.S. officials have also stressed that the United States will seek to "build a united front of U.S. allies and partners to confront China's abusive behaviors and human rights violations." While this framing alone is unlikely to generate in-depth Indonesian cooperation, Jakarta is interested in working with the United States to stand up to China when needed and take a leading role in ensuring Southeast Asia's strategic autonomy.

To this end, Pacific Forum, with support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) and in collaboration with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS Indonesia), organized the inaugural Track 2 U.S.-Indonesia Security Dialogue on June 1-3, 2021. The dialogue was aimed at building a body of knowledge on the bilateral security relations that DTRA and other interested U.S. Government agencies could use to conduct better military engagements, and provide a more responsive and complementary capacity-building, with greater impact to improve deterrence. The organized panels were aimed at increasing awareness and understanding in Indonesia and in the United States of the two countries' converging and diverging interests, defense and foreign policy doctrines, and views on key regional and global security issues. Doing so would achieve:

- 1) increased awareness and understanding in the United States about Indonesian thinking related to regional security issues such as maritime security threats brought about by China's expansive claims and assertiveness; nonproliferation; and nuclear security;
- 2) increased awareness among Indonesian policy circles of U.S. security priorities related to the Indo-Pacific in general, and Indonesia and Southeast Asia in particular. In sum, these new expert insights and contextual recommendations advance the security relations of the two countries.

The dialogue's agenda underwent extensive pre-dialogue "socialization" with key stakeholders from both the United States and Indonesia to ensure that topics for discussions and eventual actionable recommendations generated are relevant to the national security interests and priorities of both countries.

The recommendations contained in this report, unless otherwise specifically noted, were generated by the discussions as interpreted by the Principal Investigators. Both the agenda and participant list are included in the appendix; all participants attended in their private capacity.

The following are the key findings and recommendations:

Finding: There is a divergence between Jakarta and Washington in their visions of the Indo-Pacific. Whereas the United States is seeking a coalition of like-minded states to counter China's predatory and coercive behavior, and violations of international law, Indonesia seeks to avoid a binary (U.S. vs. China) vision of the region, and is instead focused on ensuring its strategic autonomy. Jakarta does worry about Chinese behavior, however.

Recommendations: U.S. policymakers and military leaders should continue to clarify that they do not demand a binary vision of the Indo-Pacific from Southeast Asian states; instead, the preservation of broadly accepted international norms is sought – inclusive of all, and respecting of large and small nations equally. Both Indonesian and American participants suggested that the United States focus on policies that help Indonesia flourish into an autonomous regional power, without pressing Jakarta into any strict alignment with Washington. Functional security cooperation between the two countries should be maintained and even expanded at the working level, where politics and controversy

are less likely to intrude in joint operations.

Finding: Jakarta regards the increasingly tense security environment in Southeast Asia as a by-product of the so-called "U.S.-China great power rivalry." Two unfavorable narratives have surfaced as a result: 1) false equivalence, which equates U.S. legitimate operations and presence in the region as akin to China's disruptive, illegal, and domineering behavior; and 2) Washington and Beijing are both implicitly forcing Southeast Asians to make a choice (hence the prevalence of the "do-not-make-us-choose" refrain from regional political leaders, elites, and interlocutors).

Recommendations: The U.S. Government should contextualize its strategic engagements with Indonesia and ASEAN away from "competition with China," and into defending the existing "rules-based international order"; Indonesian participants made clear that cooperation will be difficult if it appears to be "anti-China." This can be pursued in two ways. First, when meeting their counterparts in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, U.S. government officials should highlight shared principles, including adherence to, and defense of, existing international rules and norms. Meeting statements should reflect this emphasis. Second, U.S. activities in the region should underscore the defense of the rules-based order. Capacity-building efforts should be characterized as helping Indonesia and Southeast Asian states better fulfill their obligations, and enjoy their rights under international law. U.S. military operations should also be characterized as defending existing international rules and norms, and not about winning an abstract "competition with China." Functional cooperation should be maintained and expanded.

Finding: While Indonesia continues to insist that it is not a claimant to South China Sea disputes, Jakarta has clear disagreements with Beijing regarding the applicability of the nine-dash line claims, especially as they overlap with Indonesia's EEZ generated by the Natuna Islands.

Recommendations: The United States, when engaging with Indonesia on the South China Sea issue, should focus on advancing and preserving international law in the region's maritime commons and keep policy and operational discussions broad without appearing to target a single country. There should be no reference to "competition with China," rather, preservation and defense of universal global norms and international law. A ship rider agreement with Indonesia could promote trust between the two countries further narrow gaps in perception.

Finding: Notwithstanding the worsening strategic environment of the South China Sea, Jakarta's major priority remains non-traditional security threats, in particular, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUUF), piracy and armed robbery against ships, marine environmental degradation and stewardship, and porous boundaries complicating internal security challenges.

Recommendations: U.S. assistance related to improving Indonesia's maritime domain awareness and law enforcement capacity should address Indonesian priorities. These capacity-building efforts should be contextualized as assisting Indonesia to

fulfill its obligations under international law, and allow it to safeguard its legitimate maritime rights and interests as well as enhance its internal security interests. These efforts would demonstrate U.S. recognition of Indonesian maritime priorities.

Finding: The value of the U.S. Navy's Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) is not often appreciated in Indonesia. Indonesian participants noted that FONOPs appear to be unnecessarily provocative to China. While there is no consensus among Indonesians, many negatively view such operations as they directly confront China's illegal claims and result in friction. Officially, Jakarta has not stated whether it supports, opposes, or is indifferent towards FONOPs.

Recommendations: The United States should continue to communicate the value of FONOPs, as one means among many mutually reinforcing actions, in maintaining a rules-based maritime order in the region, and how preserving navigational rights and freedoms enshrined in international law through operational assertions benefits Indonesia, Southeast Asia, and the world writ large – a responsibility, in fact. The U.S. Navy should also explain how FONOPs keep the nine-dash lines from being enforced, supporting the Indonesian view that Beijing's expansive claim is without basis under international law (consistent with the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal findings).

Finding: The highly structured and transnational nature of local and regional extremist organizations is a major factor in their resilience. Ties between local groups and regional and international terrorist movements are forged through physical and virtual networks. Indonesians stressed the need for U.S. support in implementing both "hard" (i.e., counterterrorism) and "soft" (i.e., countering violent extremism/CVE) measures. U.S. participants stressed the need for greater intelligence sharing between the two nations and between the United States and regional partners in Southeast Asia. U.S. participants also acknowledged that the United States could learn from Indonesia's expertise, success, and long history in countering extremism.

Recommendations: The Department of Defense, through the Indo-Pacific Command, should continue to support Indonesia's military strategies to counter extremism by focusing on the transfer of capabilities that strengthen Indonesia's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations critical in countering movements of terrorists, illicit financing, and recruitment. Simultaneously, the U.S. Mission to ASEAN, the U.S. State Department and USAID should help advance counter-radicalism initiatives through projects that center on youth opportunities and education, women in peace and security, and other "soft" measures. To facilitate cross-fertilization of ideas, maintain an updated knowledge base on the state of extremism in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, and share best practices, the United States should support regular track 1 and 2 CVE dialogues and other study groups. U.S. assistance in the ongoing Sulu/Celebes Seas Trilateral Patrols could also help CT/CVE efforts.

Finding: The United States remains one of the top arms suppliers of Indonesia. However, domestic policy constraints from both sides inhibit greater cooperation. Jakarta's high-profile arms procurement is tied to developing its domestic defense industry. Washington does not share defense technology. Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) remains a challenge for U.S.-Indonesia relations, given that Russia is also a major arms supplier. Recommendation: Both governments should form two parallel working groups (one at track 1 official level, the other at track 2, non-official, academic level) to study and discuss Jakarta's defense requirements and priorities, and explore options, including financing and navigating political and institutional constraints. Some U.S. experts have suggested that Indonesia be given a waiver from CAATSA to reduce friction in bilateral relations.

Finding: The United States has already made important strides in bilateral military exercises. U.S. assistance was also instrumental in establishing national training centers, such as the Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement (in collaboration with Australia). Nevertheless, language barriers and lack of cultural familiarity have been cited by participants as constraints to closer military-to-military engagements. Indonesian participants highlighted the benefits that its Special Armed Forces (Kopassus) could reap from training in the United States.

Recommendations: The United States should expand existing training and educational programs. However, more Indonesians should be invited to study and train in U.S. institutions. Washington can also invest in military educational networks, including linking both countries' Defense universities, to foster better cross-cultural awareness. Language exchanges and cultural training centers should be established to reinvigorate U.S.-Indonesia defense relations.

Finding: There are three main issues that shape Indonesia's thinking on Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) policy. The first relates to Indonesia's challenge in balancing their unequivocal commitment to international nonproliferation regimes vs. domestic political sentiment against U.S. Middle East Policy. For instance, while Indonesia has been consistent in its broad support for the Nonproliferation Treaty, it abstained from signing UNSC Resolution 1803, a move seen as an appeasement of domestic public opinion, especially among conservative Muslim groups, that perceive the resolution as "intimidation" by Washington against Iran. The second issue is about the conflict between proponents of civilian nuclear energy and a skeptical public fearing nuclear accidents, such as Fukushima. Finally, the third issue relates to the growing threat posed by potential access to Chemical, Biological, Radioactive and Nuclear (CBRN) materials by terrorist networks.

Recommendations: Given the domestic political dynamics in Indonesia surrounding nuclear energy, WMD, and nonproliferation, the United States should immediately identify and reinforce converging interests (e.g., clear common interests in nonproliferation). To navigate the domestic issues

and assist Indonesia achieve its objectives vis-à-vis nuclear energy, regular track 2 dialogues should take place on this issue to help inform the most productive track 1 approach and focus areas on moving forward. DTRA should consider sponsoring such a dialogue. To help in depoliticizing nuclear-related discussions, Washington should offer to discuss cooperation in the context of advancing UN SDGs and UN TPNW.

Finding: The persistent delay in designating U.S. ambassadors to Southeast Asian missions creates doubt among Indonesian and Southeast Asian elites about American commitment to the region. Currently, the United States has no ambassador to important posts in Southeast Asia: ASEAN, the Philippines (a treaty ally), Singapore (a strategic partner), Thailand (an ally), and Brunei (the 2021 ASEAN Chair).

Recommendations: Designating U.S. Ambassadors to all Southeast Asian capitals, and to ASEAN must be prioritized as urgent. U.S. credibility in the region is significantly diminished if posts, including those in Manila, Singapore, Bangkok, and Bandar Seri Begawan, remain vacant come November ASEAN and East Asia Summits. “Say-Do” gaps in commitment to the Indo-Pacific will be noticed and exploited by U.S. competitors.

Finding: Indonesia sees ASEAN as critical to its national security and regional stability regardless of the regional bloc's shortcomings. Indonesian interlocutors characterized ASEAN as the “road to the foreign policy heart of Southeast Asia.” An exclusively bilateral security approach to cooperation without a multilateral element through ASEAN would be counterproductive --it would suggest to Jakarta “that it is forced to align itself with one particular power,” which would make cooperation more difficult. This “dual-track” approach improves shared objectives, especially since Indonesia

is the designated coordinator of U.S.-ASEAN relations in 2021-2024.

Recommendations: The United States should work more closely with Indonesia to strengthen ASEAN and its various institutions. Since Indonesia is the country coordinator for U.S.-ASEAN relations, Washington should invite Jakarta to co-chair several Expert Working Groups under the auspices of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus. U.S. officials should also coordinate to the extent possible with their Indonesian counterparts before every ARF and ADMM Plus meeting. Through those meetings and consultations, U.S. diplomatic and military officials can underscore the common elements between the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) concept and the Indonesia-led ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), offer opportunities to strengthen the region's strategic autonomy, and highlight the value of U.S. operations and presence in Southeast Asia. These meetings can also introduce mutually beneficial initiatives that Indonesia can advocate in ASEAN.

Finding: Non-ASEAN multilateral and mini-lateral defense cooperation mechanisms are seen by some U.S. participants as a productive supplement to U.S. engagements with the region. As Australia develops long-distance sea denial capabilities and the United States becomes more reliant on facility access in Australia, opportunities for complementary cooperation with Indonesia will become increasingly apparent.

Recommendations: Washington should coordinate with Australia and invite Indonesia to some forms of trilateral security cooperation, such as naval exercises. The United States should also formally consult with Quad members and invite Indonesia to Quad Plus engagements.

The United States and Indonesia: Re-Converging Strategic Interests in the Indo-Pacific

Given Indonesia's size and leadership role in Southeast Asia, Jakarta has always been a valuable security partner for Washington. Whereas bilateral cooperation had a parochial focus on supporting the global war on terror at the turn of the century, U.S.-Indonesia security relations have gradually broadened, especially under the Obama Administration. A Comprehensive Partnership was forged in 2010 to bring about high-level engagement on democracy and civil society, education, energy and trade issues, maritime security, and migration. This relationship was elevated to a Strategic Partnership in 2015, with cooperation extending to issues of regional and global significance. However, some Indonesian participants noted that the relationship reverted towards more parochial concerns under the Trump Administration. The inaugural U.S.-Indonesia Security Dialogue was an opportunity for participants on both sides to describe their visions for the Indo-Pacific, which had elements of convergence and divergence.

INDO-PACIFIC SECURITY PRIORITIES AND GOALS

Given Indonesia's size and leadership role in Southeast Asia, Jakarta has always been a valuable security partner for Washington. Whereas bilateral cooperation had a parochial focus on supporting the global war on terror at the turn of the century, U.S.-Indonesia security relations have gradually broadened, especially under the Obama Administration. A Comprehensive Partnership was forged in 2010 to bring about high-level engagement on democracy and civil society, education, energy and trade issues, maritime security, and migration. This relationship was elevated to a Strategic Partnership in 2015, with cooperation extending to issues of regional and global significance. However, some Indonesian participants noted that the relationship reverted towards more parochial concerns under the Trump Administration. The inaugural U.S.-Indonesia Security Dialogue was an opportunity for participants on both sides to describe their visions for the Indo-Pacific, which had elements of convergence and divergence.

Squaring the two countries' foreign policy perceptions and intentions in the Indo-Pacific is critical to advancing cooperation. Four key considerations were discussed during the opening panel:

1. Indonesia's critical view of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) concept, with several Indonesian interlocutors arguing that it is a mechanism to contain China more so than about promoting a rules-based order for the region;
2. The prevailing narrative that U.S. engagements and operations in the region are all part of the unfolding great power competition and rivalry;
3. Indonesia's preference for hedging between Beijing and Washington; and
4. Indonesia's prioritization of multilateral solutions to regional security issues.

The first point underscores one of the top concerns for Indonesian participants. Although Jakarta encourages freedom of movement throughout the strategically important waters of the Indo-Pacific, several Indonesian participants remain concerned that the U.S. FOIP strategy may be a mechanism to contain China more than promoting a secure, rules-based, and prosperous region.

To preserve their independent viewpoint, vice solely

86% of Indonesians are worried about Chinese presence in East Asia and the South China Sea, that did not translate into support for greater U.S. presence or intervention. Instead, 64% of Indonesians expressed concerns about the growth of U.S. strategic influence in the region, and only 40% welcomed a growing role for the United States.

The second point highlights the unintended consequence of the "competition with China" narrative. Jakarta regards the increasingly tense security environment in Southeast Asia as a by-product of that competition. Two unfavorable narratives have surfaced as a result: 1) false equivalence, which equates U.S. legitimate operations and presence in the region as akin to China's disruptive, illegal, and domineering behavior; and 2) Washington and Beijing are both implicitly forcing Southeast Asians to make a choice (hence the prevalence of the "do-not-make-us-choose" refrain from regional political leaders, elites, and interlocutors). Given the economic importance of China to Indonesia, Jakarta has no intention of becoming caught in the middle of that competition. Indonesian participants made clear that balance between the United States and China is an important component of Indonesian foreign policy. Indonesian experts pointed out that hedging is the preferred policy for Jakarta. U.S. attendees made it equally clear that only "China" was the one asking others to make a choice, and that FOIP (contrary to shaping by others) is fundamentally rooted in upholding not only regional –but global– norms that every country, large and small, have a stake in. Looking ahead, any U.S. –Indonesia cooperation suggesting that Indonesia is siding with one over the other will be ruled out from an Indonesia perspective.

Related to the previous point, some participants noted that Indonesia's distance from China or from areas where it is trying to operationalize its claims had enabled Indonesian policymakers to signal cooperation to both Beijing and Washington without taking significant risks. This made hedging Jakarta's preferred approach.

Finally, Indonesia wants regional states to have ownership in solutions presented to counter regional security threats. This addresses two concerns. First, multilateral solutions can ensure that Southeast Asia maintains its strategic autonomy, and is not indebted to any external great power, and second, that regional countries' interests are fully taken into account.

“...the United States should focus on policies that help Indonesia flourish into a strong autonomous regional power, without pressing Jakarta into any strict alignment with Washington.”

endorsing Washington's Indo-Pacific vision, Indonesia has taken a leading role in crafting a regional, multilateral version, the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)." In most ways, the AOIP mirrors FOIP's call for a region of dialogue and cooperation, where ASEAN centrality and respect for international law are maintained consistent with international norms. The ASEAN document adds the term "inclusive" to describe the ideal regional security architecture that does not exclude certain countries. It avoids emphasizing the term "free," which Beijing perceives to be anti-China.

U.S. experts pointed out a key finding of the 2021 State of Southeast Asia Survey conducted by the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore. Although

Recommendations

Shift rhetoric away from 'competition with China'

U.S. military and political leaders should continue to make clear that they do not demand a binary vision of the Indo-Pacific from Southeast Asian states; rather, the goal is the preservation of broadly accepted international norms – inclusive of all and respecting of large and small nations equally. Both Indonesian and American participants suggested that the United States should focus on policies that help Indonesia flourish into a strong autonomous regional power, without pressing Jakarta into any strict alignment with Washington. U.S.-Indonesia cooperation should also engage in other regional efforts

based on international law, in particular those with ASEAN.

The U.S. Government should contextualize its strategic engagements with Indonesia and ASEAN away from “competition with China,” and into defending the existing “rules-based international order.” This can be pursued in two ways. First, when meeting their counterparts in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, U.S. government officials should highlight shared principles, including adherence to, and defense of, existing international rules and norms. Meeting statements should reflect this emphasis. Second, U.S. activities in the region should underscore the defense of the rules-based order. Capacity-building efforts should be characterized as helping Indonesia and Southeast Asian states better fulfill their obligations, and enjoy their rights under international law. U.S. military operations should also be characterized as defending existing international rules and norms, and not about winning an abstract “competition with China.”

Pursue more functional security cooperation

Functional security cooperation between the two countries should be maintained and even expanded at the working level, where politics and controversy are less likely to intrude in joint operations.

ADVANCING MARITIME SECURITY AND STABILITY IN ASIA’S MARITIME COMMONS

Notwithstanding the worsening strategic environment in the South China Sea, Jakarta’s major priority remains non-traditional security threats, in particular, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (IUUF), piracy and armed robberies against ships, marine environmental degradation and stewardship, and porous boundaries complicating internal security challenges. IUUF in particular has become a national security priority owing to its impact on the economy and the livelihoods of millions of people. Indonesian participants noted that

“While Indonesia continues to insist that it is not a claimant to South China Sea disputes, Jakarta has clear disagreements with Beijing regarding the... nine-dash line claims, especially as they overlap with Indonesia’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ) generated by the Natuna Islands..”

IUUF costs Indonesia around US\$2-5 billion annually. Hence, the Widodo Administration has focused on measures that deter IUUF, especially from neighboring littoral states.

While Indonesia continues to insist that it is not a claimant to South China Sea disputes, Jakarta has clear disagreements with Beijing regarding the applicability of the nine-dash line claims, especially as they overlap with Indonesia’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ) generated by the Natuna Islands. These disagreements have occasionally surfaced since 2010, with Indonesian Navy and maritime law enforcement vessels clashing with China Coast Guard vessels at least seven times around the vicinity of the Natuna Islands. Beijing claims that Chinese fishermen have rights over those waters inside the nine-dash lines.

The value of the U.S. Navy’s Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) is not often appreciated in Indonesia. Indonesian participants noted that FONOPs appear to be unnecessarily provocative to China. While there is no consensus among Indonesians, many have a negative view of such operations as they result in friction. Officially, Jakarta has not stated whether it supports, opposes, or is indifferent towards FONOPs.

Recommendations

Focus on defending a ‘rules-based maritime order’

The United States, when engaging with Indonesia on the South China Sea issue, should focus on advancing and preserving international law in the region’s maritime commons and keep policy and operational discussions broad without appearing to target a single country. There should be no reference to “competition with China.” Rather, the focus should be on the preservation and defense of universal global norms and international law governing maritime spaces, which would appeal more to an archipelagic state like Indonesia.

Express interest in Indonesian maritime priorities

U.S. assistance related to improving Indonesia’s maritime domain awareness and law enforcement capacity should address Indonesian priorities. These capacity-building efforts should be contextualized as assisting Indonesia fulfill its obligations under international law, and allow it to safeguard its legitimate maritime rights and interests as well as enhance its internal security interests.

Proactively engage in official dialogues related to FONOPs

The United States should continue to explain the value of FONOPs, stressing that they are but one means among many mutually reinforcing actions that help maintain a rules-based maritime order in the region and preserve navigational rights and freedoms enshrined in international law through operational assertions benefits Indonesia, Southeast Asia, and the world writ large. The U.S. Navy should also explain how FONOPs keep the nine-dash lines from being enforced, which supports the Indonesian view that Beijing’s expansive claim is without basis under international law (consistent with the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal findings).

Sign ship rider agreement with Indonesia

To increase trust and confidence at the operational level, the United States should sign a ship rider agreement with Indonesia. Such an agreement will contribute to deeper interactions between Indonesian and U.S. Navies, and allow them to develop friendship while promoting interoperability, sharing of best practices, and views related to navigational rights, freedoms, maritime law enforcement and use of force at sea.

COMBATING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND OTHER TRANS-NATIONAL THREATS

Indonesia has long had to deal with the threat of violent extremism from a broad array of transnational networks. Following the 2002 Bali Bombing, Al-Qaeda-affiliated Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) networks in Indonesia and Southeast Asia gained prominence. Participants in the

dialogue demarcated terrorism in Southeast Asia into two distinct periods: post-2002, following the Bali Bombings, which was a period marked by significant international cooperation for dismantling Al-Qaeda affiliated networks, notably JI; and post-2011/2012, with the rise of Islamic State (IS) and its ideology reaching Southeast Asia.

Indonesian authorities assess that JI's most recent efforts to gain new ground have been thoroughly dealt with and the group is at risk of splintering. Meanwhile, the Islamic State's primary conduits in Indonesia—Jemaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) and Mujahideen Indonesia Timur—remain fractured and dormant. Over the past several years, Jakarta has had to contend with Indonesian fighters joining foreign theatres, both in the region, such as in the 2017 Battle of Marawi, and in the Middle East.

Although there has been a general decline in the frequency, lethality, and complexity of terrorist attacks in Indonesia, counterterrorism authorities, particularly Densus 88¹ and *Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme* (BNPT), remain active in arresting terror suspects. There has been a 120% increase in the number of arrests on the grounds of terrorism over the past twelve months, with 71 suspected Jemaah Islamiyah militants being detained among the 216 individuals arrested. IS-affiliated networks, primarily JAD and Mujahideen Indonesia Timur, still attract the most attention from authorities. The Al-Qaeda-affiliated JI remains a creeping concern for Jakarta.

Following the Bali Bombings of 2002, the Sukarnoputri administration was compelled to suppress home-grown terrorist networks attracting global attention by pushing the *Indonesia Anti-Terror Law 2002*, which conferred significant power to authorities to arrest, monitor, and detain individuals suspected of terrorism. Recently, the Widodo administration enacted two legislations to advance Indonesia's counterterrorism (CT) efforts: *Regulation no. 5/2018 on Counterterrorism and Presidential Decree no. 7/2021 on the National Action Plan to Prevent Terrorism*. The former extended the remit of CT authorities to arrest trainers, financiers, organizers, and ideologues, while the latter expanded government approaches to include developing society-based early warning systems, creating a CVE evaluation standard, and collecting and coordinating CVE approaches.

Indonesian and American experts at the dialogue welcomed the renewed emphasis on soft approaches to Indonesian CT efforts. Indonesian interlocutors stressed that gains through mere kinetic means are often transient as leaders are quickly replaced, and those incarcerated often return to extremist circles following their release.

Part of the soft approach was the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Action Plan to promote the role of women as peacebuilders and adapt to the increasing role of women in violent extremism (VE), which was especially notable in the 2018 Surabaya attack involving family units.

Compounding the threat of terrorism, Indonesian participants also highlighted asymmetric threats from the maritime domain. In particular, persistent threats from the

piracy-cum-kidnapping for ransom terror outfit, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) continue to destabilize the Sulu-Celebes Seas region. Unlike local ISIS affiliates, Abu Sayyaf is seen by Jakarta, Manila, and Kuala Lumpur as a criminal group, and not driven by any specific religious ideology. The Trilateral Maritime Initiative was launched by Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia in 2017 for the purposes of coordinating patrols in the tri-border sea areas. Indonesian participants noted that the trilateral cooperation reduced piracy and kidnapping in the Sulu-Celebes region.

Recommendations

Offer CT assistance focusing on bureaucratic and law enforcement reforms

Indonesia's counterterrorism programs and infrastructure should be modernized, and the United States should assist. Indonesia has enjoyed a large degree of success in its CT programs and agencies. However, Washington has an opportunity to help Jakarta improve its bureaucracy to better respond to transnational extremist threats that go beyond merely arresting terror suspects. The U.S. State Department should offer assistance on bureaucratic and law enforcement reforms and modernization that, while upholding human rights, can improve Indonesia's ability to counter terror networks and extremist religious ideologies. A meeting of CT agencies from both countries to assess needs and expectations would be timely.

Re-channel some CT funding into CVE and soft approaches

Indonesian participants highlighted the need for their country to place greater emphasis on prison reform and rehabilitation. CVE experts in Indonesia have been advocating for prison reform and post-incarceration financial and social support to better prevent convicted extremists from re-joining radical circles. They suggested that programs, such as Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group, can provide models for Indonesian rehabilitation initiatives. The United States should consider re-channeling some of its regional CT funding to support Indonesian initiatives related to the reintegration of those convicted of terror-related offenses into society as well as those related to soft approaches. The U.S. Mission to ASEAN, the U.S. State Department and USAID can help advance counter-radicalism initiatives through projects that center on youth opportunities and education, women in peace and security, and other "soft" measures.

Sponsor multitrack CVE dialogues for cooperation to be data-driven and policy-relevant

To facilitate cross-fertilization of ideas, maintain an updated knowledge base on the state of extremism in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, and share best practices, the United States should consider supporting regular track 1 and 2 CVE dialogues and other study groups.²

¹ Detasemen Khusus 88 Antiteror, or Densus 88 is a counter-terrorism squad under the Indonesian National Police formed on June 30, 2003, after the 2002 Bali bombings. It is funded, equipped, and trained by the United States and Australia.

² Track 1.5 dialogues are conferences and workshops that include a mix of government officials—who participate in an unofficial capacity—and non-governmental experts, discussing thematic issues and generate nonbinding recommendations. According to the United States Institute of Peace's (USIP) Primer on Multitrack Diplomacy, "neither track 1.5 nor track 2 discussions carry the official weight of traditional diplomacy, as they are not

Explore opportunities to assist in Sulu/Celebes Seas trilateral maritime patrols

The United States should also consider extending assistance to tri-lateral maritime patrols.

To bolster security in the maritime region, the United States and other regional powers (e.g., Australia, Japan) should coordinate and support trilateral patrols by Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia in the Sulu/Celebes Seas through the already established Trilateral Maritime Agreement (2016). U.S. techniques and technologies will advance and sustain the trilateral patrol's success: (1) U.S. assistance on surveillance and maritime domain awareness would enhance the efficiency of the trilateral patrols, thus contributing to the security and prosperity of the individual coastal states and the region more broadly; (2) active U.S. involvement would increase military-to-military trust and cultural learning, thus helping to chip away at the dearth of trust expressed by Indonesian participants; and (3) indirectly involving other regional powers, through U.S. leadership would provide the Biden administration a theatre to coordinate a coalition of like-minded states and improve bilateral relations with Jakarta through multilateral mechanisms. The idea is to "support and sustain" the trilateral patrols, not directly participating in them.

Build Indonesian capacity to counter terrorist movements, financing, and recruitment

Through the Indo-Pacific Command, the Department of Defense should continue to support Indonesia's military strategies to counter extremism by focusing on the transfer of capabilities that strengthen Indonesia's intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) operations critical in countering movements of terrorists, illicit financing, and recruitment.

SECURITY-SECTOR REFORM AND CAPACITY-BUILDING—THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES

U.S. and Indonesian participants highlighted the opportunities for, and challenges to, greater U.S. involvement in Indonesia's military modernization. The Widodo administration has made no secret of its intent to increase the strength and size of the Indonesian Military (TNI). Consistent with the 15-year Minimum Essential Force (MEF) Military Modernization Program initiated by his predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President Widodo increased funding for the Defense Ministry to US\$ 9 billion in the 2020 budget, from US\$ 7.6 billion in 2019. Accompanying the budget increase, building the capacity of the TNI, developing the country's domestic defense industry, and assembling regional constellations of cooperation have been squarely in the sights of the Widodo administration. Defense Minister Prabowo

Subianto's 2020 visit to the United States and his talks with then-Defense Secretary Mark Esper demonstrated mutual interest – on the one hand, U.S. interest in issues pertaining to the future of Indonesia's defense capabilities and Jakarta's role in regional security, and on the other hand, Indonesian interest in greater U.S. role.

The panel discussed specific capacity-building efforts that could enable Indonesia to deter conflict, and better contribute to regional peace and stability, along with the need to increase trust and confidence in the American military presence in the region. Some Indonesian interlocutors underscored that Jakarta does not fully trust Washington. They view the United States as an unreliable partner, a perception mainly shaped by historical issues. This view has been exacerbated by threats of sanctions against countries acquiring weapons from Russia, per the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

Apart from CAATSA and cost, another significant impediment to Indonesian acquisition of high-profile U.S. arms is structural – the Indonesian requirement of technology transfer to support its domestic defense industry, and U.S. policy on technology-sharing.

Weapons procurement and issues of interoperability figured heavily throughout the panel discussion. The United States provides 14% of Indonesia's military hardware, ranking "first among equals" in the eyes of Jakarta. Participants were largely in agreement that U.S. contributions to Indonesia's Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance (ISR) sector would be a niche sector of great utility to the TNI. Contributions to Indonesia's ISR sector appeal to Indonesian policymakers in light of the Widodo administration's "Global Maritime Fulcrum" concept introduced in 2014. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Indonesia will abandon its existing defense procurement agreements with Russia, for two reasons: Russian willingness to help the Indonesian domestic defense industry, and the cost-effectiveness of procuring Russian weapons.

Apart from CAATSA and cost, another significant impediment to Indonesian acquisition of high-profile U.S. arms is structural – the Indonesian requirement of technology transfer to support its domestic defense industry, and U.S. policy on technology-sharing.

Recommendations

Expand "menu" of military hardware available for Indonesia

The United States should consider significantly expanding the "menu" of military hardware available for Indonesia. This should extend to domains, such as anti-submarine technologies, which Indonesia has repeatedly flagged as a priority. The United States should also consider providing assistance in boosting Indonesia's ISR

government-to-government meetings. What they offer is a private, open environment for individuals to build trust, hold conversations that their official counterparts sometimes cannot or will not, and discuss solutions." Meanwhile, track 1 dialogues are official government-to-government discussions that may or may not result in binding obligations. For an explanation on track 2 dialogues, see footnote no.1 on page 4.

capabilities, which would greatly benefit Indonesia's maritime ambitions. Washington's superior technologies in this domain would give Jakarta a unique edge over other regional powers.

Significantly increase foreign military financing for Indonesian navy and air force

To allow Indonesia to afford high-profile military hardware, and to avoid touching on the technology transfer issue, the United States should consider increasing foreign military financing (FMF) for Indonesia with a focus on naval and air asset acquisition. Given Indonesia's role in securing the Malacca Straits, in countering transnational threat networks in the Sulu-Celebes Seas, and in pushing back against Beijing's claims further south of the South China Sea, increased FMF would likely find popular political support in Congress.

More training and educational programs for Indonesian armed services

The United States should expand existing training and educational programs. The United States has already made significant strides in bilateral military exercises. U.S. assistance was also instrumental in establishing national training centers, such as the Jakarta Center for Law Enforcement (in collaboration with Australia). However, more Indonesians should be invited to study and train in U.S. institutions. Indonesian participants highlighted the benefits that its Special Armed Forces (*Kopassus*) could reap from training in the United States. Washington can also invest in military educational networks, including linking both countries' Defense universities, to foster better cross-cultural awareness. Language exchanges and cultural training centers should be established to reinvigorate U.S.-Indonesia defense relations.

Working groups to discuss Indonesian defense requirements and acquisition

Both governments should form two parallel working groups (one at track 1 official level, the other at track 2, non-official, academic level) to study and discuss Jakarta's defense requirements and priorities, and explore options, including financing and navigating political and institutional constraints. Moreover, the United States should immediately issue a CAATSA waiver for Indonesia. This would serve two purposes—avoids potential friction in bilateral relations and demonstrates U.S. commitment to Indonesia's strategic autonomy and capacity-building. Cost-effective Russian hardware in the Indonesian military arsenal can help Jakarta maintain a robust presence in the South China Sea, especially in areas that overlap with China's nine-dash line.

WMD, NONPROLIFERATION AND ENERGY SECURITY: POTENTIAL FOR U.S.-INDONESIA COOPERATION

There are three main issues that shape Indonesia's thinking when it comes to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) issues. The first relates to Indonesia's challenge in balancing its "unequivocal" commitment to international nonproliferation regimes versus domestic political sentiment against U.S. Middle East Policy. For instance, while Indonesia has been consistent in its broad support for the Nonproliferation Treaty, it abstained from signing UNSC Resolution 1803, a move seen as an appeasement of domestic public opinion,

especially among conservative Muslim groups, which perceive the resolution as "intimidation" by Washington against Iran. The second issue is about the conflict between proponents of civilian nuclear energy and a skeptical public fearing nuclear accidents similar to the 2011 Fukushima nuclear reactor meltdown. Finally, the third issue relates to the growing threat posed by terrorists potentially accessing CBRN materials.

Despite public opposition, some Indonesian experts insisted that nuclear energy is essential to meet the future energy requirements of Southeast Asia's largest economy, and also to support the country's increasingly sophisticated industries. There are many peaceful applications of nuclear energy that Jakarta could benefit from, which include medicine, agriculture, clean water generation, and even in some aspects of COVID-19 detection.

Participants also noted that small modular reactors (SMR) are of particular interest to Jakarta and many Southeast Asian states. Because of their small size, SMRs are deemed safer, and can adapt to multiple uses. SMRs are also gaining popularity in Beijing, which intends to have a fleet of floating, mobile reactors in Hainan. SMRs raise a number of regulatory issues in U.S.-Indonesian cooperation: Should SMRs be regulated in the same manner as larger reactors? To what extent are these reactors more vulnerable to terrorist attacks and misuse? How will the safe transit of floating nuclear power plants be ensured in increasingly contested maritime spaces?

Additionally, the question of how Jakarta should treat radioactive waste, especially spent fuel rods that remain highly radioactive and must be disposed of following industry best standards, remains pertinent.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), a coordinator of the bloc's working group on disarmament and nonproliferation since 1994, and a founding member of Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ), Jakarta has been a prominent Southeast Asian voice in nonproliferation and disarmament issues. Indonesia was also an early signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear-weapon state, ratifying it in 1979.

In that context, Indonesian participants discussed the contributions of Jakarta in fostering nuclear security in Southeast Asia. They expressed suspicions relating to the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), however. Although Washington and Jakarta can find common interest in preventing WMD proliferation in Southeast Asia, and the Indo-Pacific more broadly, Indonesian participants expressed concerns about the potential for PSI to impinge on Indonesian sovereignty.

Recommendations

More regular, nuclear-focused track 1 and track 2 dialogues

Washington should endeavor to increase bilateral and multilateral cooperation on nonproliferation and disarmament. Participants were generally in agreement that nuclear dialogues between the United States and Indonesia remain under-institutionalized. Washington and Jakarta should hold more regular, nuclear-focused track 1 and track 2 dialogues. Pertinent topics in such discussions could include how SMRs should be regulated, given their potential for use and misuse, Indonesian nuclear energy ambitions, and potential safety and security issues. Additionally, the remaining bureaucratic obstacles to U.S. ratification of SEANWFZ should be

addressed and overcome. These would be especially useful in the lead-up to NPT Review Conference in 2022. DTRA should consider funding a separate, nuclear-focused track 2 U.S.-Indonesia dialogue.

Establish a U.S.-Indonesia consultation mechanism on UN TPNW

A U.S.-Indonesia consultation mechanism before, during, and after the meeting of UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) should be established. Given that the TPNW emerged as a result of dissatisfaction with the pace of disarmament, close cooperation between Indonesian and U.S. officials from the Departments of Energy and State at the 2022 meeting of the TPNW can allow for coordinated approaches, especially in shaping nuclear governance in Southeast Asia.

Jointly consider the relevance of nuclear technology to UN SDGs

Jointly explore ways in which nuclear technology can contribute to UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) aside from nuclear power. Inter-governmental workshops between U.S. and Indonesian officials should be convened. They would have two benefits: (1) sharing and building of expertise for the benefit of Indonesia, Southeast Asia, the Indo-Pacific, and potentially the world in relation to several UNSDGs – these could include the intersection of nuclear energy and poverty reduction, education, clean water and sanitation, responsible consumption and production, hunger alleviation, work and economic growth; and (2) workshops and conventions of experts would foster an environment of co-learning, which would contribute to reinvigorating U.S.-Indonesia expert relations and break down barriers pertaining to trust and cultural knowledge deficits.

Potential role for DTRA to shape regional nuclear governance

To navigate the domestic issues and assist Indonesia in achieving its objectives vis-à-vis nuclear energy, regular track 2 dialogues should take place to help inform the most productive track 1 approach and focus areas on moving forward. To this end, DTRA should sponsor those dialogues. For instance, Pacific Forum can lead sustained bilateral track 2 dialogues or workshops with Indonesia and other Southeast Asian states that have expressed interest in civil nuclear energy.

Additionally, there should be at least one track 1.5 or 2 regional dialogue on nuclear energy and security that can feed into track 1 ASEAN-related meetings. Pacific Forum, with DTRA's support, can also organize a Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) regional dialogue or study group on nuclear energy and security, which will not only consolidate findings from bilateral efforts but also focus on achieving regional consensus on standards, safety and security issues, and other topics. CSCAP, a network of government and private think tanks throughout the Indo-Pacific, is an ideal platform to discuss regional efforts and impact policy.

DE-CONFLICTING AND ALIGNING PRIORITIES IN ASEAN-LED SECURITY MECHANISMS

Despite the regional bloc's shortcomings, Indonesia sees ASEAN as critical to its national security and regional stability. Indonesian interlocutors characterized ASEAN as the "road to the foreign policy heart of Southeast Asia." As a result, an exclusively bilateral security approach to cooperation without a multilateral element through ASEAN would be counterproductive. It would suggest to Jakarta "that it is forced to align itself with one particular power," which would make cooperation more difficult. A "dual-track" approach improves shared objectives, especially since Indonesia is the designated coordinator of U.S.-ASEAN relations in 2021-2024.

Throughout the panel session, participants underscored the importance of ASEAN and Jakarta's desire to utilize its mechanisms to address as many regional issues as possible. Jakarta seeks to maximize the utility of ASEAN and its related mechanisms in dealing with extra-regional powers. Jakarta has no interest in participating in the so-called "U.S.-China competition." By insisting on ASEAN centrality, Indonesia hopes to maintain the region's strategic autonomy. Both U.S. and Indonesian participants in the dialogue emphasized that ASEAN is the primary vehicle through which Washington could develop good relations with Indonesia.

However, the United States has generally expressed more skepticism than confidence in ASEAN, particularly in the realm of security. U.S. experts acknowledged this, noting that ASEAN's consensus-based decision-making, and its principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states have led many in U.S. foreign policy circles to think that ASEAN is structurally incapable of dealing with high-stakes security issues. For instance, the

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consensus-based approach continues to inhibit meaningful progress in ASEAN's South China Sea initiatives, and the bloc's non-interference principle has prevented a concerted and effective regional response to the Myanmar coup. Nevertheless, participants were generally in agreement that small items of cooperation were possible, and that U.S.-Indonesia cooperation through ASEAN mechanisms has been a productive way of adding "meat to the bones" of the bilateral relationship.

In the realm of security cooperation, ASEAN shines in unconventional, non-controversial, and asymmetric security issues. In particular, counterterrorism (CT) and transnational crimes have proven to be particular areas of success. Indonesia and the United States co-chaired the ADMM-Plus Expert Working Group on Counterterrorism

(EWG-CT) in 2013, where they organized a number of regional military-to-military CT exercises. Notable accords related to CT achieved by ASEAN include the Declaration on Joint Action to Counter Terrorism (2001) and ASEAN Convention on Counter Terrorism (2007).

Recommendations

Coordinate with Indonesia on strengthening ASEAN's security institutions

The United States should consider working more closely with Indonesia to strengthen ASEAN and its various institutions. Since Indonesia is the country coordinator for U.S.-ASEAN relations, Washington should invite Jakarta to co-chair several Expert Working Groups under the auspices of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus. Co-chairing ADMM Plus Working Groups would be an effective means of reinvigorating intergovernmental cooperation, encouraging co-learning, and promoting trust between Washington and Jakarta. There is an array of Working Groups that could reinvigorate cooperation, among them, Maritime Security, Non-proliferation, and Counterterrorism.

Consider bilateral consultations before every ARF and ADMM Plus meetings

U.S. officials should coordinate with their Indonesian counterparts before every ARF and ADMM Plus meeting. Through those meetings and consultations, U.S. diplomatic and military officials can underscore the common elements between the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) concept and the Indonesia-led ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), offer opportunities to strengthen the region's strategic autonomy, and highlight the value of U.S. operations and presence in Southeast Asia. These meetings can also introduce mutually beneficial initiatives that Indonesia can advocate in ASEAN. Consultation meetings will ensure that both countries advocate for similar issues and cooperative mechanisms during the actual official ARF and ADMM Plus dialogues.

Convene more frequent dialogues

As noted earlier, Track 1 and Track 2 dialogues remain under-institutionalized in the region. Multilateral engagement needs to have a prominent place in these dialogues. They would effectively generate greater political, cultural, and social cohesion between Washington, Jakarta, and the broader region.

Of note, the U.S. State Department once sponsored a track II U.S.-ASEAN dialogue in 2019 in Jakarta. There was no follow-up, however. The State Department's Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs, the Defense Department's Indo-Pacific Security Affairs, or DTRA should consider sponsoring a regular track II U.S.-ASEAN Security Dialogue in Jakarta. For future dialogues, DOS EAP, ASD for IPSA and DTRA should consider closer collaboration and pool resources, for greater impact and to avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts.

Explore non-ASEAN multilateral and 'mini-lateral' security mechanisms

Complementary multilateral mechanisms should be explored to support bilateral security relations. Besides ASEAN, U.S. and Indonesian officials should explore other multilateral security mechanisms. These could include the Indian Rim Association and the Quad. To be

sure, participants stressed the need for the United States not to frame multilateral security cooperation as part of its "competition with China." Indonesians have repeatedly stated that they have no interest in siding with one over the other. A focus on rules-based order will generate Indonesian willingness to cooperate with non-ASEAN multilateral security mechanisms.

Mini-lateral defense cooperation was seen by some U.S. participants as a productive supplement to U.S. engagements with ASEAN. As Australia develops long-distance sea denial capabilities and the United States becomes more reliant on facility access in Australia, opportunities for complementary cooperation with Indonesia will become increasingly apparent.

In this regard, Washington should coordinate with Australia and invite Indonesia to participate in some forms of trilateral security cooperation, such as naval exercises.

CONCLUSION

Jakarta and Washington share an interest in a prosperous and strategically autonomous Indonesia capable of fulfilling a regional leadership role. As Indonesian participants made clear, a stronger, autonomous Jakarta will be a reliable regional partner for Washington in pushing for a more rules-based regional order. A prosperous Indo-Pacific where maritime trade and economic opportunity are not stymied by coercive state behavior is desired by both countries.

The concluding panel touched on a wide variety of topics, but maritime security focusing on non-traditional security issues, notably IUU Fishing and counterterrorism, were identified as key security priorities for Indonesia, and important areas for future cooperation with the United States at the bilateral and regional levels.

The discussion also reflected the need to expand the scope and reach of U.S.-Indonesia relations to include the economy, democracy, and civil society and engage younger members of Indonesia's population. The importance of carefully managing the perceived U.S.-China rivalry when engaging Indonesia was a recurring theme, especially among Indonesian interlocutors. This is seen by U.S. participants as the effect of U.S. framing of its Asia policy as mainly "competition with China." Indonesian participants repeatedly stated that they want to avoid placing Indonesia and other Southeast Asian states in the middle of "great power rivalries."

The persistent delay in designating U.S. ambassadors to Southeast Asian missions creates doubt among Indonesian and Southeast Asian elites about American commitment to the region. Currently, the United States has no ambassador to important posts in Southeast Asia: ASEAN, the Philippines (a treaty ally), Singapore (a strategic partner), Thailand (an ally), and Brunei (the 2021 ASEAN Chair). The current U.S. ambassador to Jakarta, Sung Kim, also doubles as U.S. Special Representative for DPRK. Some Indonesian interlocutors want the U.S. Ambassador to focus on U.S.-Indonesia relations exclusively. Designating U.S. Ambassadors to all Southeast Asian capitals, and to ASEAN must be prioritized as urgent. U.S. credibility in the region is significantly diminished if posts, including those in Manila, Singapore, Bangkok and Bandar Seri Begawan remain vacant come ASEAN and East Asia Summits in November. "Say-Do" gaps in commitment to the Indo-Pacific will be noticed and exploited by U.S. competitors.

Both sides recognized the importance of U.S. awareness of Indonesian security priorities, to better deal with divergent interests. There is also a recognition from both U.S. and Indonesian experts that non-security issues such as those related to the economy can impact Jakarta's security relationships, including with the United States.

Hence, conversations on security cooperation should not be detached completely from economic and political. U.S. participants want Indonesia to be clear about what specifically it wants the United States to do with regional security issues.

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Dr. David Santoro is President of the Pacific Forum. He specializes in strategic deterrence, arms control, and nonproliferation. Santoro's current interests focus on great-power dynamics and US alliances, particularly the role of China in an era of nuclear multipolarity. His new volume *U.S.-China Nuclear Relations - The Impact of Strategic Triangles* was published by Lynne Rienner in May 2021. Santoro also leads several of the Forum's track-1.5 and track-2 strategic dialogues. Before joining the Pacific Forum, Santoro worked on nuclear policy issues in France, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. In the spring of 2010, he was also a Visiting Fellow at New York University's Center on International Cooperation and, in 2010-2011, he was a Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. Santoro is co-editor, with Tanya Ogilvie-White, of *Slaying the Nuclear Dragon* (University of Georgia Press, 2012) and author of *Treating Weapons Proliferation* (Palgrave, 2010). His essays have been published in several foreign policy monograph series and journals, including *The Nonproliferation Review*, *Proliferation Papers*, *Survival*, and *The Washington Quarterly*, and his op-eds have appeared in *The Bangkok Post*, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, *The Japan Times*, *PacNet*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and the *Wall Street Journal*, among others.

