

CHAIRMANSHIP IN ASEAN: LESSON LEARNED FOR INDONESIA

KEKETUAAN ASEAN: PEMBELAJARAN BAGI INDONESIA

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Abstrak

Indonesia akan memegang Keketuaan ASEAN pada tahun 2023. Jika dibandingkan dengan situasi pada saat Indonesia terakhir kali memegang posisi ini, Indonesia akan menghadapi dinamika dan prioritas agenda yang jauh berbeda. Meski demikian, kepentingan Indonesia di ASEAN masih tetap sama. Sebagai fondasi kebijakan luar negerinya, Indonesia harus memanfaatkan posisi keketuannya untuk menegaskan kepentingan nasionalnya di dalam rencana kawasan. Makalah ini menganalisa tren dan dinamika Keketuaan ASEAN selama sepuluh tahun kebelakang (2011 hingga 2021). Tujuannya untuk menemukan isu-isu yang penting untuk menjadi fokus keketuaan Indonesia di ASEAN. Hasilnya, ada lima permasalahan yang penting untuk menjadi perhatian Indonesia, yakni: (1) situasi Laut China Selatan, (2) persaingan antara Amerika Serikat dan Tiongkok, (3) situasi di Myanmar, (4) pengimplementasian AOIP, dan (5) pemulihan kawasan pascapandemi. Selain itu, Indonesia juga dapat memanfaatkan momentum keketuannya di ASEAN untuk meningkatkan kesadaran masyarakat umum di Indonesia tentang ASEAN dengan melibatkan generasi muda dan komunitas akar rumput dalam penyelenggaraan berbagai forum dan meningkatkan pemberitaan tentang ASEAN termasuk melalui penggunaan media sosial.

Kata Kunci: ASEAN, Keketuaan ASEAN, Indonesia, pandemi Covid-19, Indo-Pacific

Abstract

Indonesia will lead ASEAN Chairmanship in 2023. Compared to the last time Indonesia held the position in 2011, Indonesia will face a different dynamic and agenda-setting in its next turn. However, what remains the same is Indonesia's interest in ASEAN. As the backbone of its foreign policy, Indonesia needs to take advantage of its chairmanship to affirm its national interests in the regional plan. This paper analyses the trends and dynamics of ASEAN Chairmanship within the last ten years. We aim to find several issues that will become the focus of Indonesia's Chairmanship in ASEAN. As a result, this study finds five problems that need to be focused on, namely: (1) the South China Sea, (2) rising tension between the US and China, (3) the aggravating situation in Myanmar, (4) the implementation of AOIP, and (5) regional recovery post-Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, Indonesia can also use her chairmanship in ASEAN to enhance ASEAN awareness in Indonesia by engaging the young generation and grassroots communities in holding various forums and increasing ASEAN news and social media coverage.

Keywords: ASEAN, ASEAN Chairmanship, Indonesia, Covid-19 pandemic, Indo-Pacific

Introduction

Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam are the ten member states that form the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a regional intergovernmental organization. ASEAN, founded on August 8, 1967, with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration, has successfully maintained regional peace and stability for over 50 years. In contrast to the growing pessimism that different civilizations cannot coexist, ASEAN thrives as a model of coexistence (Mahbubani & SNG, 2017).

To achieve that, ASEAN has developed mechanisms and institutional structures that build trust and confidence and encourage cooperation among its member states. Despite endless critics of its institutional mechanisms and structures (Hund, 2002; Wulf and Debiel, 2009; Nurhidayatulloh and Febrian, 2019), ASEAN has transformed Southeast Asia's relationship from one of "trust deficit" to one of "strategic trust" over five decades (Natalegawa, 2018). The central bodies of ASEAN decision-making are the ASEAN Summit and the ministerial meetings with consultation and consensus (or *musyawarah* and *mufakat* in Indonesia) as the basic principles (Nischalke, 2002; ASEAN Secretariat, 2008). ASEAN has a Secretary-General that acts as the Chief Administrative Officer of ASEAN and a Secretariat based in Jakarta. Both have no substantial role in decision-making, only in coordination between ASEAN bodies and between ASEAN and external partners or other international organizations (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008; Farhana & Nufus, 2017). Meanwhile, each ASEAN Member State (AMS) is assigned to take turns serving as ASEAN Chairman for a full calendar year.

As one of the member states of ASEAN, Indonesia will eventually hold the ASEAN chair. In 2023, Indonesia will hold the position for the fourth time. Compared to the last time it held its tenure in 2011, Indonesia will face a different regional dynamic and agenda-setting. Until 2020, ASEAN continued to impress the international community by positively impacting the region economically and politically.

According to Zhang (2020), especially after establishing the ASEAN Economic Community, ASEAN has a better trade term with the rest of the world by acting as one block rather than individual countries.

Meanwhile, politically, ASEAN has effectively served as a dialogue forum that helps defuse disputes between countries and ensure regional stability. However, 2020 came with the Covid-19 pandemic that delayed, hindered, and even thwarted various plans and achievements pursued by ASEAN over the previous years. Dynamics shifting from engagement to strategic competition between China and the United States (US) also add complexity in the challenging time of the pandemic. As the pandemic exacerbates the fundamental problem of the global economy, Southeast Asian countries, which believe that a stable relationship between China and the US is the foundation of regional stability, are wary of the growing tension between the US and China (Sutter, 2021).

Therefore, the current member state holds the chairmanship of ASEAN and must ensure ASEAN's central position amid a post-pandemic situation and the dynamics of strategic competition between the US and China, including Indonesia. Moreover, it is also Indonesia's interest to ensure that ASEAN remains solid in facing these dynamics and challenges. As ASEAN is the cornerstone of its foreign policy, Indonesia must take advantage of its chairmanship to affirm its national and regional interests. Hence, this paper would like to find several issues that will become the focus of Indonesia's Chairmanship in ASEAN.

This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze primary and secondary data compiled through media and literature research. Primary data consist of official statements and documents from the office of the ASEAN Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ASEAN Member States, National Secretariat of ASEAN Member States, and relevant Indonesian ministries under the aegis of the national secretariat. Secondary data consist of relevant documents, writings, and analyses related to the research topic but not from the primary source. The method of analysis chosen to process the data is content analysis.

The researcher will attempt to do a textual analysis of written content and a critical review of the rhetoric used in the official documents to come into the interpretation and analysis. However, there is a language limitation in which the researcher can only understand documents in English and Indonesian. Therefore, the official documents are limited to those written in English and Indonesian.

To achieve the purpose of this paper, the researcher will explore Indonesia's previous experience in holding ASEAN chairmanship and analyze the dynamics of ASEAN Chairmanship within the past ten years. The dynamics are essential to understand the current regional context Indonesia will face during its chairmanship. Furthermore, understanding the regional context will also help identify critical issues that ASEAN must address to maintain its centrality and relevancy within the region. Meanwhile, exploring Indonesia's previous experience will clarify Indonesia's interest in ASEAN and identify its strengths and weaknesses in leading ASEAN. Therefore, the analytical framework of this paper will follow the rule of understanding the regional context and identifying key issues in ASEAN so that Indonesia can prepare to address those issues during its chairmanship in ASEAN.

Chairmanship in ASEAN

The terminology of Chairmanship within ASEAN refers to the positions held by member countries on a rotating basis. It has a different meaning than leadership, combining the role of managerial, administrative, public relations and event organizer. Thus, the ASEAN Charter regulates the ASEAN Chairmanship in Chapter X: Administration and Procedure. Article 31 outlined how the Chairmanship should be rotated and the scope of the meeting to be chaired, while article 32 detailed the role as follows: (1) to promote and enhance the interests and well-being of ASEAN ardently, along with the efforts to build an ASEAN community, (2) to ensure the ASEAN centrality, (3) to ensure an effective and timely response urgent issues or crises affecting ASEAN, (4) to represent

ASEAN in strengthening and promoting closer cooperation with external partners, and (5) to conduct other tasks and functions as may be mandated (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008).

The placement of articles related to the ASEAN Chairmanship under Chapter X shows us at least three things: (1) that the ASEAN Chairmanship is a part of the ASEAN administrative matter – a routine – that should be anticipated by each member state; (2) it emphasizes ASEAN values each of its member states as equally capable and vital, and (3) although the Chairmanship is only part of the routine, it still provides a strategic position for member states who take their turn. Therefore, article 32 carefully restricts the role of the ASEAN Chair, which is not only limited to the five points but also emphasizes the mandate to ensure that there is no abuse of the strategic position.

According to Mun (2016), the Chair has three responsibilities: (1) acting as the spokesperson for the ten member states; (2) acting as the 'chief executive' in chairing and facilitating official meetings and task forces; and (3) putting new initiatives and agendas on hold to advance regional cooperation. However, Mun also argued that the most crucial role of the ASEAN Chair is its informal role as a consensus builder. As ASEAN necessitates general agreement among its member, the Chair must demonstrate leadership and diplomatic competence to find common ground among diverging viewpoints. (Mun, 2016).

Suzuki (2020) defines chairmanship based on the study of international negotiations and institutionalism as an institution for reconciling interests under the consensus rule and argues that agreement is more likely to be reached under this institution, which is proven in the ASEAN case. The chairmanship model is adequate for ASEAN as a regional intergovernmental organization since it gives responsibilities and legitimacy to the chairing country regardless of national power and competence (Franck, 1988). By doing so, ASEAN creates an equal footing for each member state to have agenda-setting power and contribute to the decision-making process. Using consensus as a decision-making

procedure instead of majority voting also helps promote this. Because every AMS is aware that they will soon have the opportunity to take the chair, and their success will be dependent on their ability to build consensus, they will respect the legitimacy of the chair's ability to set the agenda (Frank, 1988; Mun, 2016; Suzuki, 2020).

Further, as ASEAN Chairmanship is rotating annually, most of the issues discussed in a term of Chairmanship are a continuation of the issue discussed in the previous Chairmanship. As a result, it is critical to look back to the previous chairmanship period to forecast what issues will need to be discussed during the next Chairmanship, particularly for Indonesia's next turn in 2023.

Regional Dynamics Within the ASEAN Chairmanship in the Past Ten Years

Within the last decade, ASEAN Chairmanship has been alternately and successively held by Cambodia, Brunei, Myanmar, Malaysia, Laos, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and again Brunei and Cambodia. It should be noted that within the past ten years, ASEAN Member States did not always follow the alphabetical order of Chairmanship turn as instructed by the ASEAN Charter. A change in the turn was possible when all ten leaders of AMS agreed to grant Indonesia's request that in the 16th ASEAN Summit, Indonesia would swap its turns with Brunei (Cafta.org.cn, 2010). The request was not to be a precedence in the future or affect the next ASEAN chair. Therefore, Cambodia still assumed its turn in 2012.

When Cambodia took over the ASEAN Chairmanship turn from Indonesia in November 2011, it was her second time taking up the ASEAN Chairmanship and ASEAN as an organization had changed a lot due to the adoption of the ASEAN Charter in 2008. Several issues highlight Cambodia's Chairmanship: (1) potential more violent clashes over the disputed border area between Thailand and Cambodia; (2) potential disputes over the South China Sea; (3) Timor-Leste application for ASEAN membership; and (4) increasing interest of the

US to tighten their link with East Asia countries (Severino, 2013). Despite Cambodia's fiasco on South China Sea issues, which prevented ASEAN from issuing a joint communique for the first time, Cambodia did an outstanding job as ASEAN chair (Sarith, 2013). However, as the failure revealed ASEAN's limited capacity to deal with sensitive issues and China's creeping assertiveness in ASEAN, all other Cambodia's achievements during its Chairmanship were in vain (Bower, 2012; Chheang, 2012). Nevertheless, Indonesia's initiative to hold shuttle diplomacy to de-escalate tension helped dispel the view of ASEAN non-unity. As a result, ASEAN's six-point principle was issued to demonstrate to the global community that ASEAN remains united on the South China Sea issues (Chheang, 2012).

Then, Brunei's chairmanship in 2013 was initially greeted with pessimism due to the incident in the previous Chairmanship. Many doubt that Brunei, the smallest in size, can lead its ASEAN counterparts to progress regionally (Severino, 2013). However, under the theme "Our People, Our Future Together," Brunei decided to focus on intensifying the ASEAN community-building effort and the future of ASEAN beyond 2015 (ASEAN Brunei, 2013). Brunei determined not to make any strategic mistakes that would jeopardize ASEAN's unity and regional standing. Hence, they proceeded to ease tensions in the South China Sea between China and the ASEAN claimant states.

In July 2013, under Brunei's leadership, China agreed to begin consultations with ASEAN on a binding Code of Conduct (CoC) in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) (Noelan, 2013). This success is due to Brunei's decision to remain neutral despite being one of the dispute's claimants. In April 2013, Sultan Bolkiah visited Manila and Beijing to build trust between ASEAN and Chinese leaders. He meticulously managed the meeting's agenda and stakeholder concerns, which helped ensure ASEAN's integrity and earned an image of a credible player within ASEAN and the region (Noelan, 2013). Brunei's additional achievements during its ASEAN Chairmanship period were listed in the Chairman's statement of the 23rd ASEAN

Summit, which also highlighted ASEAN's progress across the three ASEAN pillars (ASEAN Brunei, 2013).

Myanmar's turn as ASEAN chair in 2014 is critical as the ASEAN Community is set to be established in 2015. Not to mention that it was Myanmar's first time in the position. Before that, Myanmar must give up its chance to prevent the US and other Western countries from boycotting the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in protest of Myanmar's poor human rights record (Brandon, 2014). Myanmar's Chairmanship theme was "Moving Forward in Unity, to a Peaceful and Prosperous Community," emphasizing ASEAN unity as the foundation of ASEAN efforts to realize the politically cohesive, economically integrated, and socially responsible ASEAN (ASEAN Myanmar, May 2014). Although the plan generated much scepticism, Myanmar has the benefits of consultations. Myanmar is supported by other AMS and its growing reformist credentials under President U Thein Sein (Thuzar, 2014). Two aspects determined Myanmar's success in leading the ASEAN Chairmanship: (1) Maintaining the momentum of ASEAN integration progress, including on the issues that are considered sensitive for Myanmar itself, such as human rights, religious freedom, democracy, and environment, and (2) Balancing its relationship both with their fellow AMS and ASEAN external partners, particularly China and the US (Thuzar, 2014). Myanmar not only kept both aspects but also emphasized the meeting's outcome, which discussed the importance of universal health coverage (UHC) and the advancement and bolstering of healthcare systems to adapt to Emerging Infectious Diseases (EIDs), the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-Cov), the Ebola virus Disease, and other diseases long before the Covid-19 pandemic hit (ASEAN Myanmar, November 2014).

As the ASEAN Community is expected to be fully realized by the end of 2015, Malaysia's Chairmanship under the theme "Our People, Our Community, Our Vision" was challenged by four issues: (1) creating an inclusive environment to bring people closer to ASEAN, (2) encouraging the fulfilment of the ASEAN common market,

(3) balancing its national interest with regional interest on the South China Sea issue, and (4) asserting ASEAN Centrality in shaping the regional agenda (ASEAN Malaysia, April 2015; Credo, 2015).

However, Malaysia not only successfully overcame those challenges while leading the ASEAN Chairmanship but also managed to maintain the ASEAN position on other issues, as outlined in the Chairman statement of the 27th ASEAN Summit, including trafficking in persons (TIPs including women and children), empowering senior citizens, strengthening social protection, eradicating violence against women and children, and environmental sustainability (ASEAN Malaysia, November 2015). Meanwhile, Malaysia completed three essential deliverables in the economic pillar: (1) concluded ASEAN Commitments to be part of the 2015 ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint; (2) launched the AEC Blueprint; and (3) concluded the ASEAN Strategic Action Plan for SME Development (2016-2025) (Sta Maria, 2016).

Laos' turn for Chairmanship in 2016 came a year after the ASEAN Community was established and a year before ASEAN's golden jubilee. Furthermore, it was the year that the South China Sea Arbitral Tribunal issued its ruling. Laos, on the other hand, was spared the task of building an ASEAN consensus on the South China Sea issue because, three days before the ruling, Cambodia issued an official statement saying that "they will not join in expressing any common position on the dispute between the Philippines and China." (Chalermphanupap, 2016). Another thing about the ASEAN Chairmanship of Laos was that it conducted two ASEAN Summits on a back-to-back basis in September 2016 (ASEAN Laos, 2016). Instead of focusing on the sensitive and high-profile SCS issue, Laos prioritizes (1) the execution of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025; (2) closing the development gap; (3) trade facilitation; (4) micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise (MSMEs) development; (5) development of tourism; (6) connectivity; (7) ASEAN transition to formal economy; and (8) reinforcing cultural heritage cooperation in

ASEAN under the theme of “Turning Vision into Reality for a Dynamic ASEAN Community” (ASEAN Laos, 2016).

After that, the Philippines chose the theme “Partnering for Change, Engaging the World” for its Chairmanship in 2017 and established six priorities as their main deliverables, namely: (1) A people-oriented and people-centred ASEAN; (2) regional peace and stability; (3) maritime security and cooperation; (4) inclusive, innovation-led growth; (5) ASEAN’s resiliency; and (6) ASEAN: a model of regionalism and a global player (ASEAN Philippines, April 2017). Although the Philippines just won its proceedings against China in the Arbitral Tribunal regarding the South China Sea in July 2016, the Philippines chose not to glorify the victory to maintain ASEAN-China relations. Instead, the Philippines has ASEAN signed the ASEAN Declaration on the Role of Civil Service as a Catalyst for Achieving the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 as one of the first steps toward achieving the priorities under the leadership of the Philippines. Along with the other 11 documents adopted during their Chairmanship, the Philippines, which is one of the top ASEAN countries in terms of sending migrant workers globally, managed to lead their fellow AMS to agree on the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (ASEAN Philippines, November 2017).

Singapore’s theme for its Chairmanship in ASEAN in 2018 is “Resilient and Innovative” to encapsulate its balanced view on security and trade issues (ASEAN Secretariat, January 2018). Resilience refers to promoting and upholding rule-based regional order to deal with emerging security challenges such as cyber security, transnational crimes, and terrorism. In contrast, innovation refers to regional economic integration and enhancing regional connectivity for ASEAN competitiveness and prosperity. Thus, the AMS can explore new ways to manage and harness digital technologies, equip its citizens with skills and capabilities, and create smarter cities (Garcia & Orgodol, 2018; ASEAN Singapore, April 2018). By committing to these critical deliverables, Singapore persuaded its

fellow AMS to adopt seven documents. These are the ASEAN Smart Cities Framework, the ASEAN Declaration on Promoting Green Jobs for ASEAN Community Equity and Inclusive Growth, and the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ASEAN Singapore, November 2018).

Thailand took over as ASEAN Chairman in 2019, facing the dual challenge of managing its political transition while guiding ASEAN through significant regional developments prompted by increasing tensions among major powers, trade protectionism, and the decline of multilateralism (Phuangketkeow, 2020). As a result, it has chosen the theme “Advancing Partnership for Sustainability” for its Chairmanship to look to the future while leaving nobody behind in a people-centred ASEAN community (ASEAN Thailand, 2019). Thailand also adopted the ASEAN Leaders Vision Statement on “Partnership for Sustainability” to ensure sustainability in all issues pertaining to the ASEAN Community’s three pillars and to highlight consistency and viability in ASEAN’s Community-building efforts and practices with external partners and the global community (ASEAN Thailand, November 2019). Thailand’s Chairmanship closed with a handful of accomplishments, including (1) the successful conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) negotiations; (2) the release of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP); (3) progress toward the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea; (4) advancement toward a digital ASEAN; (5) aligning the SDGs agenda with the ASEAN development plan; (6) connecting connectivity; and (7) enhancing ASEAN Centrality (ASEAN Thailand, November 2019; Phuangketkeow, 2020).

Viet Nam’s ASEAN Chairmanship theme in 2020 is “Cohesiveness and Responsive Attitude.” The theme was supported by five priorities, which were as follows: (1) contributing to regional peace, security, and stability by strengthening ASEAN’s solidarity and unity; (2) intensifying regional connectivity through the use of digital and novel technologies; (3)

promoting ASEAN identities and shared values; (4) strengthening global partnerships for peace and sustainable development; and (5) improving ASEAN's responsiveness and operational effectiveness (ASEAN Vietnam, 2020).

However, as the Covid-19 pandemic worsened, Viet Nam was forced to rethink its initial plans for leading ASEAN. The crucial meeting must be held virtually with the AMS and external partners, including the ASEAN Special Summit on Coronavirus Disease on April 14, 2020. Finally, the spirit of cohesive and responsive ASEAN drives AMS to remain united and act decisively to respond to the pandemic, ensuring Viet Nam's successful leadership of ASEAN Chairmanship, among other things: (1) encourage better cooperation on transnational crime, public security, and coordination among ASEAN law enforcement agencies; (2) initiate a dialogue between financial institutions and banking sectors in Southeast Asia, and address the need for developing financial institutions; (3) reaching consensus on 42 documents during the September meeting of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers, including adding more activities and responsibilities to ARF under the Hanoi Plan of Action II (2020-2025) and referring the South China Sea as East Sea during the ministerial meetings (Embassy of the Republic Indonesia in Hanoi, 2020; Jha, 2020; ASEAN Vietnam, 2020).

Brunei's vision as ASEAN Chair in 2021 is based on three fundamental areas: (1) caring for people and the well-being of each other, (2) preparing for future opportunities and challenges, and (3) prospering together as a unified region (ASEAN Brunei, November 2021). Brunei's agenda in political security (APSC) initially focused on dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and preparing for a post-pandemic future while preserving regional stability, which consists of 17 key deliverables; for ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), Brunei focused on leading ASEAN in its post-pandemic recovery, pursuing new opportunities with external partners, and ensuring continuous supply change, which is highlighted in 13 key deliverables; and for Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), will focus on the enhancement of the

standard and quality of life for all, engages and empowers people including youths, women, a person with disabilities and the elderly through 16 key deliverables (ASEAN Brunei, 2021; Rinith, 2021).

However, on February 1, 2021, a military coup happened in Myanmar and deposed the civilian government and replaced it with the leadership of a junta led by General Min Aung Hlaing. Reactions from each AMS were different, but Brunei took an unprecedented role as ASEAN Chair. Within 24 hours after the incident, it released a chairman's statement on behalf of ASEAN (Hayat, 2021). The statement urged Myanmar to recall the ASEAN Charter's purposes and principles, as well as to encourage the endeavour of communication, unification, and the reconstruction of normalcy in conformance with the will and interests of the Myanmar people (ASEAN Brunei, April 2021).

Following the statement, ASEAN Leaders' Meeting was held in April 2021 at the ASEAN Secretariat, where the Five Point Consensus was reached (AFP, 2022). Nevertheless, since the consensus was reached, there has been no significant change in the situation in Myanmar, leading to a challenging situation where Brunei, as the chair, should act. The 38th and 39th Summits in videoconference formats were later held without a representative from Myanmar because Brunei invited the highest-ranking veteran diplomat, as a non-political representative, instead of Min Aung Hlaing or other ministerial-level representatives (ASEAN Brunei Darussalam, 2021).

Currently, in 2022, Cambodia is chairing under the theme of "ASEAN A.C.T: Addressing Challenges Together," bringing the spirit of "togetherness" that emphasizes the action-oriented approach within the ASEAN family (ASEAN Cambodia, 2022). During this Chairmanship, Cambodia's leadership are tested, particularly on the South China Sea and Myanmar issues (KBRI Phnom Penh, 2021). However, Prime Minister Hun Sen's visit to Myanmar on January 7-8, 2022, was viewed as counterproductive to ASEAN's efforts to end human rights violations in Myanmar. The act was seen as a form of the legitimacy of military

power in Myanmar. Nevertheless, on the ASEAN Chairman's Statement on the situation in Myanmar (2022), this visit is regarded as part of the effort to solve the crisis (ASEAN Cambodia, February 2022).

Meanwhile, Cambodia's Key Deliverables this year are as follows: (1) APSC: strengthening ASEAN Centrality in the ASEAN-led mechanisms, ASEAN Community Post 2025 Vision and Sustainable Development, the regional contribution to global peace through peacekeeping operations, enhancing women's peace security agenda, promoting ASEAN external's relations, Timor Leste's application for ASEAN membership; (2) AEC: realize an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient post-Covid-19 pandemic ASEAN Community, strengthening ASEAN competitiveness and regional integration, future-proof ASEAN's growth and prosperity; and (3) ASCC: enhance ASEAN awareness and identity, promote human resources development and women empowerment, enhance health, well-being, and social protection for the people of ASEAN, strengthening ASCC institutional capacity and effectiveness (ASEAN Cambodia, 2022). Moreover, at the end of its chairmanship, ASEAN issued a Leaders' statement in which ASEAN leaders expressed that ASEAN, in principle, accepted Timor Leste as the 11th member of ASEAN and began the acceptance process by giving Timor Leste observer status as all ASEAN meetings (ASEAN Cambodia, 2022).

Indonesia's Chairmanship in ASEAN

Before its upcoming turn as ASEAN Chair in 2023, Indonesia has led ASEAN three times, namely in 1976, 2003, and 2011 (Humas Kemenko Polhukam RI, 2022). During these periods, Indonesia has always been considered successful in holding chairmanship. Indonesia is considered capable of leading ASEAN into transformations that not only make ASEAN stronger organizationally but also become more relevant in the political arena of the region.

Indonesia hosted the first ASEAN Summit in 1976, where the decision underlying ASEAN's transformation was made. The Summit's primary outcome is the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). According to Desker (2017), TAC emphasizes three points: (1) the TAC's accession provisions encouraged the integration of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam into the TAC post-Cold War in 1990. It became a form of a peaceful settlement reached in the Cambodian conflict; (2) the inclusion of a provision for the peaceful settlement of disputes through the establishment of a ministerial-level High Council of the Treaty's parties in the TAC is also critical because it encourages AMS to settle their disputes through bilateral negotiation or to use international fora, such as the ITLOS and the ICJ; (3) encapsulates the Indonesian concept of national resilience, which gained widespread acceptance among ASEAN policy elites years later, as it emphasizes the preservation of respective national identities of AMS (Desker, 2017).

Furthermore, during the first Summit, President Soeharto is critical to the Summit's success. Mun (2016) stated that the key to ASEAN Centrality comes from an unconventional precept: AMS usually subdues their national interest in favour of regional concerns. This phenomenon was apparent at the first Summit when Indonesia proposed formal ASEAN defence cooperation. However, because other AMS were concerned that Indonesia would become the dominant regional power in ASEAN following the withdrawal of American forces from the region, Soeharto did not press the Indonesian position and agreed to set aside their proposal. This strategy earned the respect of other ASEAN leaders. They regarded Indonesia as *primus inter pares* and later decided to locate the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, with an Indonesian serving as the first ASEAN Secretary-General (Desker, 2017).

In 2003, Indonesia once again had a chance to lead ASEAN Summit. At that time, Indonesia again steers ASEAN into a historic step toward regional integration (Xinhua News, 2003). There are two significant outcomes: (1) the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II or Bali

Concord II, which paved the way for ASEAN to become an ASEAN Community comprised of three pillars, the ASEAN Security Community (ASC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), and (2) the initiative to create a suitable framework for the Community (ASEAN Secretariat, 2003; Oratmangun, 2009).

The idea of creating a legal framework such as the ASEAN Charter can be traced back to the Declaration of ASEAN Concord 1 in 1976, which mandated the study of the need for a new constitutional framework for ASEAN (ASEAN, 1976). However, the momentum to start this effort only emerged after the initiative to form ASEAN as a community through the Bali Concord II. Therefore, Indonesia then actively contributed to drafting, negotiating, and finalizing the draft until it finally concluded and entered into force on December 15 2008 (Oratmangun, 2009).

In 2011, Indonesia once again successfully led ASEAN as a chair, focusing on three priorities: (1) progress on the realization of the 2015 ASEAN Community, (2) maintain the order and situation in the region to encourage development efforts, and (3) to conclude a post-2015 ASEAN Vision. As a step toward the realization of the ASEAN Community 2015, Indonesia ensure progress within the framework of the three ASEAN Pillars: ASEAN Political and Security Community (APSC), ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and ASEAN Social and Cultural Community (ASCC). Meanwhile, to ensure regional order and situation, Indonesia presented the US and Russia to join the East Asia Summit (EAS) for the first time. The presence of these countries was essential to balance the regional architecture and boost trust-building efforts in the region.

Indonesia was also successfully concluding a post-2015 ASEAN Vision with the approval and signing of the Bali Declaration on ASEAN Communities in the Global Community of Nations (Bali Concord III) (MOFA RI, 2012). Moreover, in the pillars of the political and security community, Indonesia is able to encourage the parties to disputes in the South China Sea to agree on the Guidelines on the

Declaration of Conduct in the South China Sea and to conclude negotiations with countries possessing nuclear weapons in the context of creating a Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ) (Humas Setneg, 2011).

Drawing from Indonesia's previous experiences in holding the ASEAN chair, Indonesia has played an active role, especially in political and security issues in ASEAN. This role is recognized and appreciated by other AMS and expected in some cases, given Indonesia's successes in the past in dealing with inter-AMS issues.

Lessons Learned from ASEAN Chairmanship in the Past Ten Years and Indonesia's Previous Chairmanship in ASEAN

Looking back on the ASEAN Chairmanship over the last decade, ASEAN will be defined in the future by how it acts in unity and maintains its centrality in the global dynamic. According to Tim Kajian ASEAN Pusat Riset Politik BRIN (2022), three aspects within the political and security areas that should be optimised during Indonesia's chairmanship in ASEAN. First, strengthening ASEAN Centrality to ensure the balance of power in the region, primarily on facing increasing tensions between the US and China and all the issues related to that, for example, the potential conflict in the South China Sea. Second, maintaining ASEAN relevance, including keeping up with the latest dynamics globally using ASEAN characteristics, particularly in implementing the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP). Third, enhancing ASEAN solidity, in particular dealing with the issue of member states that have an internal problems which impact the stability and prosperity of the region (Tim Kajian ASEAN Pusat Riset Politik BRIN 2022).

The analysis is in line with what has been shown in the dynamic during the past ten years. Drawing from the dynamics, there are at least five major issues that have always been in the global public eye and will likely be remained the focus during Indonesia's upcoming

chairmanship, namely: (1) the South China Sea; (2) raising tension between the US and China; (3) the aggravated situation in Myanmar; (4) the implementation of AOIP, and (5) regional recovery post-Covid-19 pandemic.

The South China Sea has been perceived as a threat to regional security mainly because of its potential to generate open conflict in the region. Even more so with increasing tension between the US and China which is becoming more open in that sea area. Meanwhile, Indonesia, in the beginning, tried to transform the potential for open conflict into a possibility for cooperation between the disputing countries (Djalal, 2014). With the spirit of enabling cooperation, Indonesia encouraged ASEAN-China to agree on the Declaration on the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea (DoC) (ASEAN Secretariat, 2012). However, China's growing assertiveness in the disputed area ultimately provoked Indonesia to no longer play the role of honest broker between the warring countries. Instead, Indonesia took several steps to assert its right to the exclusive economic zone in the North Natuna sea area (Farhana, 2022).

Further, it also formally sent an official letter rejecting China's nine-dashed lines claim to the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, in a letter dated May 26, 2020. The issuance of this letter emphasized the different approach taken by the Indonesian government and is the first step for Indonesia to consolidate its interests with other AMS in dealing with China on this issue. As the second reading of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text (SDNT) expected to be completed by the end of this year, Indonesia should closely follow the recent development in the negotiation.

The second issue is regarding Myanmar's aggravating situation which has resulted in the loss of many civilian lives. ASEAN needs to take firm steps to stop this. According to the UNHCR report (2022), there are around 1.443.000 internally displaced people in Myanmar as of November 1. Not only that, but there are also around 1.086.000 refugees and asylum-seekers from Myanmar to neighbouring countries as of June 30 (UNHCR, 2022). Thus, this situation has been directly impacting other

AMS. The escalating coercion and danger, compounded with the new wave of Covid-19 and the worsening economic situation, triggered the forced displacement. While all ASEAN external partners respect the ASEAN centrality to allow ASEAN to talk with Myanmar as part of the big family, when all the talking does not immediately result in the betterment of Myanmar's situation, ASEAN will lose its credibility in maintaining its solidity and centrality.

Furthermore, the collaborative process of implementing AOIP is also crucial for ASEAN. As a guide that crystallizes ASEAN's desire to become a player in the region, AOIP must transform into various forms of sustainable cooperation. Especially in the post-pandemic economic recovery process. Indonesia also has a great interest, especially in resuming plans for collaboration in the maritime sector under the AOIP framework, which was delayed due to the pandemic.

Aside from those issues, within the last decade, ASEAN has also consistently made progress on the following topics:

1. Strengthening the ASEAN institutional mechanism includes the efficiency of its internal institutional capacity and ASEAN-led regional mechanisms.
2. Planning the future of ASEAN includes the implementation of all ASEAN visions, master plans, plans of action, and sustainability of the organization.
3. Managing ASEAN external relations with dialogue partners and other international organizations.
4. Expanding ASEAN Membership, particularly by giving Timor Leste observer status to participate in all ASEAN meetings
5. Ensuring regional and global political stability, peace, and security issues.
6. Improving the economy and welfare of the people and the AMS in the region.
7. Exploring the potential of cooperation on strategic issues such as maritime cooperation, blue economy, digital ASEAN, SDGs, connectivity, disaster

management, and environmental sustainability.

8. Addressing social issues such as the ageing community, social protection for all ASEAN people, including minorities and vulnerable groups, smart cities, and ASEAN awareness and identity.

All of these are issues that have preoccupied ASEAN and Indonesia for many years. We learned from previous experience that Indonesia's participation in ASEAN has made significant contributions to ASEAN's transformation as a regional institution in Southeast Asia. Several Indonesian political values later became the prevailing norm at the ASEAN level in dealing with issues and initiatives within the ASEAN, such as encouraging the establishment of deliberation and consensus in discussing regional issues, promoting the principle of mutual respect for each member country's sovereignty, and prioritizing dispute resolution based on law and order (Desker, 2017, Mahbubani, 2017; Wheatherbee, 2019).

One note that also needs to point out is that to encourage the solidity of ASEAN within the internal community of ASEAN, Indonesia must use its chairmanship in ASEAN as a momentum to enhance ASEAN public awareness in Indonesia. This can be done by engaging the young generation and grassroots communities in various forums and campaigns and increasing ASEAN news and social media coverage.

Conclusion

Before this study, the writer of this article agreed with Mun's (2016) argument that in ASEAN, a country should sacrifice its national interest to achieve regional concerns. However, looking closely at the dynamic within the last ten years, we can see that relations among AMS within the framework of the ASEAN Community have become more mature. In the case of Indonesia, it is true that in the past years, Indonesia has had to subdue some of its national interests to gain the confidence and trust of its fellow ASEAN member. However, over time,

Indonesia's foreign policy has truly made ASEAN its cornerstone because, naturally, Indonesia's foreign interests are already in line with regional interests in ASEAN. Therefore, the argument that Indonesia always sacrifices its national interests for the sake of ASEAN is no longer justifiable because, currently, Indonesia does not need to do that.

On the contrary, Indonesia can achieve its regional interests by playing an active role in ASEAN. What was left now was how Indonesia could maximize its position as ASEAN chair in 2023 to strengthen ASEAN unity and centrality in the Indo-Pacific region by focusing on the issues that have the most significant impact. Indonesia's next turn in the chairmanship of ASEAN will tell whether this time Indonesia can once again lead ASEAN as *primus inter pares*

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