

Indonesia's Role as a Middle Power: a Neo-Liberalist and Constructivist Analysis

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisa peran Indonesia sebagai middle power dalam perspektif Realisme, Neo-Liberalisme dan Konstruktivisme. Middle power adalah negara dengan pengaruh menengah yang memiliki posisi strategis dalam sistem internasional, karena dapat menerapkan berbagai kebijakan yang membedakan identitas mereka tanpa harus bergantung pada keputusan great power. Berdasarkan sumber daya power yang dimiliki dan praktik kebijakan luar negeri, middle power dapat diklasifikasikan menjadi: Enforcer (hard power) dalam perspektif Realisme, misalnya Cina dan Rusia; Assembler (perilaku diplomatik) dalam perspektif Neo-Liberalisme, seperti Brazil, India, Mexico, Afrika Selatan dan Turki; dan juga Advocate (soft power) dalam perspektif Konstruktivisme, diantaranya Australia, Kanada dan Korea Selatan. Tulisan ini berargumen bahwa sejak kemerdekaan pada 1945, Indonesia telah menjalankan peran middle power Assembler di regional Asia Tenggara dengan konsisten. Pada masa pemerintahan Sukarno, Indonesia telah mewakili negara-negara dunia ketiga dalam ranah internasional dengan mempelopori Konferensi Asia-Afrika dan gerakan non-blok, serta menolak keberadaan neo-kolonialisme dan neo-imperialisme di Asia Tenggara. Sedangkan pada masa Soeharto, Indonesia ikut serta dalam mendirikan ASEAN, meningkatkan intensitas konsultasi antar negara regional berdasarkan ASEAN Way dan prinsip non-intervensi. Walaupun demikian, perhatian Indonesia terhadap ketimpangan ekonomi dan politik domestik di awal Era Reformasi telah menyebabkan kekosongan kepemimpinan regional ASEAN. Setelah itu sejak pemerintahan Yudhoyono pada 2004, Indonesia telah berhasil mengimplementasikan peran middle power ganda sebagai Assembler dan Advocate dengan memperlebar kerjasama regional dan mempromosikan demokrasi dalam forum-forum multilateral. Akhirnya, kemenangan Jokowi dalam pemilihan umum Indonesia 2014 juga berdampak regional.

Kata-kata Kunci: Middle Power, Indonesia, Enforcer, Assembler, Advocate

Introduction

This study seeks to examine the nature of Indonesia's regional and multilateral role according to the middle power variables from the perspectives of Realism, Neo-Liberalism and Constructivism. Since the end of the Cold War, a state's power is no longer solely measured by hard power resources such as military and economic capabilities (Gilboa 2014). Besides that, there is also soft power which derived from culture, contribution to the establishment of attractive political

values and morally legitimate policies which are generally accepted by other parties (Nye 2008, 96 & 2004, 6-11).

From a traditional perspective, the term 'middle power' refers to states with economic and military capabilities which are lower than great powers, but more advanced compared to smaller states (Jordaan 2003, 165). Even so, there are no clear limits of variables and indicators which could specifically determine whether a middle power is more or less powerful than others.

Holbraad (1984, 82-90) tried to rank middle powers based on their GNP and population size, yet those two indicators are dynamic (Bezglasnyy 2013, 18). For example, Soviet Union was previously a great power, but today Russia might be considered as a middle power as a part of BRICS.

On the other hand, the behavioral perspective identifies middle powers by their diplomacy which attempt to initiate coalition building in multilateral cooperation (Neack 2008, 162-163). For instance, IBSA accommodates trilateral cooperation between India, Brazil, and South Africa as representatives of Southern states (Flemes 2009, 403). Furthermore, middle powers tend to exercise diplomacy on international low-political issues to distinguish their identity and avoid dependency to great powers' foreign policies (Gilley 2012). For instance, earlier generation of middle powers such as Canada and Scandinavian states were known for their active effort in initiating multilateral coalition on human security issues (Behringer 2005, 307).

Indonesia, a state which was once devastated by the Asian Financial Crisis and political turmoil in 1998 has been described by some scholars as a 'rising middle power' (Roberts & Sebastian 2015, 1). However, Indonesia's political history has undergone various turbulence which questions Indonesia's credibility as a middle power. For instance, Sukarno declared a confrontation policy which had caused troublesome relation with Malaysia (Thompson 2014, 4). Besides that, Indonesia was not a functioning democracy during Suharto's 32 years of leadership (Aspinall 2005, 203). Finally, the 1998 Asian financial crisis turned Indonesia into an inward-looking state and suspended its leadership role in ASEAN (Smith 1999, 239).

In response, this paper argues that the nature of Indonesia's regional and multilateral role according to the middle power variables is in line with Neo-Liberalism by being actively involved in ASEAN and other institutions (Pakpahan 2012); as well as

Constructivism by promoting democracy and moderate Islamic values (Tan 2014, 119). Thus, it's important to examine Indonesia's historical development as a middle power; because being a regional power means having the active role in maintaining regional stability and good relations with neighboring states (Nolte 2010, 884).

Additionally, having firm stance on universal values (i.e. democracy, human rights, etc.) would uplift a state's international credibility (Nye 2008, 94). Finally by having the ability to organize multilateral coalitions among like-minded states, a middle power is more likely to achieve its foreign policy objectives (Schweller 2014, 6).

This is a descriptive-qualitative research (De Vaus 2001, 2); which tends to portray variables and indicators of current middle power states in the world from Realism, Neo-Liberalism and Constructivism. Data of current middle powers are collected through quantitative quasi-experiment and not survey (Creswell 2009, 115); by purposely selecting Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, India, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and Turkey as sample middle powers based on their membership in BRICS and MIKTA (Jordaan 2003, 165 & Yamasaki 2009, 89-92). Afterwards, those variables and indicators will be used to examine Indonesia's key foreign policies from the time of Sukarno (1945) until Jokowi (2014-now) which are relevant to the idea of middle power diplomacy, to improve the currently incomplete middle power theory.

Descriptive-qualitative research to portray variables and indicators of current middle powers from Realism, Neo-Liberalism and Constructivism

Table 1: Middle Power Roles based on their Resources

Approach (middle power resources)	Regional or Multilateral Role	Middle Powers' nature in relation to other states in its region
Realism (hard power)	Enforcer (China & Russia)	Fear, able to enforce policy, lack of trust, smaller powers dependent to middle power
Neo-Liberalism (diplomatic behavior)	Assembler (Brazil, India, Mexico, South Africa & Turkey)	Trust, long term mutual consultation, institutionalized cooperation, no veto, lack of force, non-interference
Constructivism (soft power)	Advocator (Australia, Canada & South Korea)	Issue-based coalition, <i>ad hoc</i> , beyond regional diplomacy, short term influence, need to be frequently renewed through agreements and protocols

Source: Middle powers' regional nature adopted from their foreign policies: Enforcer (Pant 2012, 239 & Mankoff 2009, 26-27); Assembler (Burgess 2013, 291; Rodriguez 2013, 3; Wanger 2010, 334; Westhuizen 1998, 437 & Yalçın 2012, 209) & Advocate (John 2014, 325-326; Lee 2014, 4-5; Li & Hong 2012, 45 & Scott 2013, 114).

The Middle Power Concept: Between Theory and Practice

Currently, the academic world hasn't established a universally accepted definition of the 'middle power' concept (Yamasaki 2009, 4 & Patience 2014, 210). There are at least four different kinds of approaches which tend to identify whether or not a state is a middle power, without being able to examine middle powers' regional and multilateral role:

First, Hierarchical approach identifies middle powers based on their national power, i.e. hard, soft, and structural power (Yamasaki 2009, 51); which is inaccurate since states' power potentials keep on changing (Bezglasnyy 2013, 18). Second, Functional approach defines middle powers based on their role in regional or international community (Yamasaki 2009, 50); although this approach is not used by academic scholars but politicians and foreign policy practitioners who promote their state as a middle power (Yamasaki 2009, 42). Third, Normative approach defines middle powers based on their humanitarian international policies which are different to greater or smaller powers (Yamasaki 2009, 51); however

this approach was based on Scandinavian states' practices, which might not be considered as middle powers today (Lee 2014, 3). Finally, Behavioral approach defines middle powers based on their particular behavior in international diplomacy (Lee 2014, 2); yet this approach was based on Glazebrook's 1947 observation on Canada as one of the earliest middle power, which needs to have clearer variables and indicators to examine middle powers today (Hurrell & Cooper 2003, 3).

In contrast, this paper tends to prove that 'middle power' is not merely a categorical concept; but consists of variables and indicators which enable states to practically determine their foreign policy strategy based on their prominent power resources, whether hard power, diplomatic behavior or soft power. In conclusion, middle powers are states with self-sufficient hard power resources, attractive soft power and important regional role. Thus, this paper differentiates middle powers' various regional and multilateral roles as Enforcers, Assemblers and Advocators.

Initially in line with Realism, this paper argues that middle powers with proficient hard power resources tend to act as an Enforcer (Baldwin 2013, 291 & Griffiths 2008, 258). Enforcers are capable of enforcing policies towards smaller powers within their regional outreach, especially when smaller powers are dependent to the middle power for resources. This is indicated by having the highest military budget and spending compared to other states in their region, the latest military technology (weapons, armed vehicles and defense bases) and skilled military force (army, navy and air force) in operations and utilizing defense technology (Holbraad 1984, 12).

Moreover, an Enforcer doesn't necessarily need to represent the regional interest of its neighboring states, and capable of countering threats from outside of the region. Enforcers have also attained significant economic development by their Gross National Product (GNP) and market size which are higher than small powers, but lower than great powers (Jordaan 2003, 165). Finally, Enforcers would establish regional geostrategic domination; which enables them to politically influence security policies of neighboring states, prevent foreign intervention in the region and conduct monitoring operations on territories beyond their region (Li & Hong 2012, 45).

For example, China and Russia are middle power Enforcers in their respective regions, i.e. Central Asia and Eastern Europe (Mankoff 2009, 26). China's military development has been successful in stopping US arms trade to Taiwan, thus limiting US's maneuver in the Western Pacific area (Pant 2012, 239). Additionally, China's regional enforcement has been evident in the acquisition of South China Sea, despite its statement to continue dialogue with neighboring states (Taneja 2014, 154). Meanwhile, Russia has also been

struggling to readjust its foreign policy approach since the fall of Soviet Union (Mankoff 2009, 11). Consequently by becoming Europe's main source for gas reserve, Russia persists to politically dominate the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as its main regional foreign policy direction (Tsygankov 2010, 46 & Mankoff 2009, 26).

In contrast based on Neo-Liberalism, middle power Assemblers are states which apply foreign policy and diplomatic behavior in order to establish regional institution for cooperation, engage in multilateral cooperation on behalf of regional interest, and develop institutional measures for regional dispute settlement (Cho 2012, 162). Before building a regional institution, an Assembler needs to develop trust between neighboring states in its region by pioneering long term mutual consultation (Hurrell & Cooper 2000, 1). Next, an Assembler would promote cooperation to reach common goals among regional member states (Cooper 2013, 26 & Nolte 2007, 10). For instance, a regional institution would regulate free trade which will benefit member states through economic interdependence (Balcer 2012, 5 & Cho 2012, 163-165). However, an Assembler cannot force to apply its national values as regional values, depending on the level of trust among regional member states towards the middle power (Almeida 2007, 8-9).

Additionally, an Assembler is expected to be involved in multilateral cooperation beyond its region along with other middle and major powers (Cooper 2003, 28). By participating in global forums, an Assembler has the opportunity to modify common rules through agenda setting and support international agreements which are more suitable to regional interest; not necessarily limited to great powers' standards (Lee 2014, 5; Guzzini 2013, 23 & Nolte 2010, 893). Finally, an

Middle Powers
could be classified as
Enforcers,
Assemblers and
Advocators based on
their regional and
multilateral roles

Assembler is also capable of developing institutional measures for regional dispute settlement by promoting equal membership status and non-interference principle (Almeida 2007, 8-9; Cooper et al. 1993, 25 & Wanger, 2010, 339).

For example, Brazil, India, and South Africa are concerned towards building institutions to support regional interests such as Mercosur and African Union (AU); as well as multilateral institutions in the form of IBSA, BASIC, and BRICS (Acharya 2014, 3). Even so, an Assembler cannot force to apply national values as regional values, as there are equal veto rights for all members of Mercosur in Brazil's case (Almeida 2007, 8-9); or India's reluctance of imposing territorial regulations to Pakistan and China (Wanger 2010, 339); and South Africa's compromise towards the demands of its neighboring states (Ngwenya in Tyler & Hofmeister 2011, 6). Furthermore, Mexico and Turkey implement their role as Assemblers through regional dispute settlement; which includes Mexico's engagement towards Cuba, Guatemala and Chile (Pellicer 2006, 4); and Turkey's mediation between conflicting parties in Sudan, Egypt, Libya and Syria (Bechev 2011, 173). In terms of multilateral role, both Mexico and Turkey are also a part of MIKTA informal forum (Engin & Baba 2015, 1 & Rodriguez 2013, 3).

Lastly derived from Constructivism, middle power Advocators have unique foreign policy identity by implementing niche diplomacy to shape their international image branding (Lee 2014, 2-5 & Griffiths 2008, 258). For example, leaders of Australia, Canada and South Korea have explicitly mentioned 'middle power diplomacy' as their foreign policy agenda, i.e. Australia's 'creative diplomacy', Canada's 'niche diplomacy',

or South Korea's 'global Korea' policy. This means, Advocators apply foreign policies by choosing low-political issues to be implemented based on their proficiency (Baxter & Bishop 1998, 86). Thus, an Advocate is willing to solve international problems when the small powers are incapable of addressing them; particularly on certain issues beyond the great powers' interest (Neack 2008, 161-164). For instance, states which uphold democratic values and human right protection are perceived as more credible members of the international community than other states which are not democratic (Baldwin 2013, 288-289 & Nye 2008, 94).

Furthermore, an Advocate would invite other states to collectively support international causes by carrying out leadership on *ad hoc* coalition-building to exchange ideas and values (Lee 2015, 4-5). Those values usually derive from the Advocate's foreign policies or regionally accepted values among the Advocate's neighboring states (Bezglasnyy 2013, 27). In order to establish leadership on multilateral forums, an Advocate needs to promote the importance of discussion on specific issues such as previous successful policies in like-minded states (Cho 2012, 162-164; Destradi 2010, 921-923 & Stewart-Ingersoll & Frazier 2012, 75-77). Since coalition-building among middle powers in multilateral forums are *ad hoc*, the effects of those forums need to be further sustained through signing or ratifying agreements and protocols, as well as organizing annual meetings (Scott 2013, 112 & Bezglasnyy 2013, 19-20). Ultimately, the coalition-building's success depends on to what extent the Advocate could assist participant states to conduct tangible actions in supporting the multilateral forum's causes (Nye 2008, 96 & 2004, 6-11).

Indonesia's Development in becoming an Assembler

This paper argues that since independence in 1945 until 2004, Indonesia had struggled to become a middle power Assembler. During Sukarno's Old Order (1945-1967), Indonesia represented regional interest in multilateral cooperation by pioneering the Asian-African Conference (AAC) held in 1955 and promoted the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (Wardaya 2012, 1056-1057). Through AAC in Bandung, Indonesia provided a venue where Asian and African states from different backgrounds could discuss their common interest while highlighting their foreign policy independency from great powers US and Soviet Union (Mulyana 2011). AAC produced the 'Bandung Code of Peaceful Existence 1955', which conveyed the message of empathy towards states under Western colonial domination (Djuraeva 2014, 149). As a result of AAC, 73 third world countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America had successfully liberated themselves from colonial powers (Mital 2016, 22 & Jati in Dhakidae 2013, 325).

On the other hand, regional institutions in Southeast Asia at that time did not function effectively without Indonesia's Assembler role. The Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) started by Malaya, the Philippines and Thailand in 1961 was inadequate due to unclear purpose of cooperation and territorial dispute between its members (Shimada 2010, 22 & Weber 2009, 4). Meanwhile, Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) established in 1954 was perceived as US' mechanism for containing Communism, and not to accommodate Southeast Asian states' interest (Ju 2012, 47). Being a non-aligned state, Indonesia refused to become a member of SEATO which was heavily influenced by the West.

Subsequently, Indonesia emphasized its regional leadership by launching confrontation policy, *Ganyang Malaysia* to oppose traces of

British neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism in Southeast Asia (Emmers 2005, 649 & Thompson 2014, 4). Sukarno believed that the Federation of Malaysia was against MALPHILINDO's 1963 agreement in Manila by not providing people of Sabah and Sarawak the right to referendum (Ongge 2015, 3). Consequently on 20 January 1963, Indonesia launched small-scale military operations across North Borneo's border, followed by Indonesian Navy patrol along the coastal area (Djokovic 2016, 1 & Ju 2012, 52). Indonesia's *konfrontasi* was successful in removing foreign influences in regional affairs, as there was no regional institution to conduct peaceful dispute settlement in Southeast Asia at that time.

Afterwards during Soeharto's New Order (1967-1998), Indonesia substantiated its role as an Assembler by co-establishing the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on 8 October 1967 as a regional institution in Southeast Asia (Emmers 2005, 648). To gain regional trust and maintain stability, Indonesia under Soeharto decided to stop Sukarno's previous confrontation policy and instigate regional diplomatic cooperation (Nolte 2010, 884). Through ASEAN, Indonesia attained a platform to engage in long-term regional economic and social cooperation, while reducing temporary foreign military involvement in the region (Weber 2009, 4-5). Accordingly, ASEAN has been successful in gradually fulfilling regional interest, proven by ASEAN's membership expansion into 10 Southeast Asian states (Putra 2015, 213 & Thearith 2009, 15).

Furthermore, Indonesia has been known as the *de facto* leader of ASEAN, or 'first among equals' due to its active contribution as ASEAN's norm entrepreneur and agenda setter (Heiduk 2016, 9; Pakpahan 2012 & Puspitasari 2010, 4). ASEAN's cooperation is conducted by implementing the 'ASEAN Way' mechanism of consultation and consensus (*musyawarah dan mufakat*); which originated from Indonesian

villages' practical politics emphasizing informal dialogue in decision making (Ju, 2012, 84-85). Additionally, Indonesia's regional leadership applies the principle of non-interference on other member states' domestic affairs (Smith 2004, 5).

Finally during the early Reformation Era (1998-2004), Habibie initiated democratization by reducing his presidential term from 2003 to 1999 to organize a national election earlier (Anwar in Aspinall & Fealy 2010, 102). Besides that, Habibie amended the previous New Order's undemocratic implementation of the Indonesian constitution, legalized decentralization, and acknowledged 200 newly-formed political parties with various ideologies (Anwar in Aspinall & Fealy 2010, 107 & Bunte & Ufen 2009, 12). Consequently, Indonesia's focus on domestic affairs had resulted in vacuum of leadership in ASEAN, which hampered ASEAN's performance as a regional institution (Smith 1999, 239). For instance, Thailand's proposal for 'flexible engagement' as a way to criticize Myanmar and Cambodia's domestic situation has denied the principle of non-intervention (Smith 1999, 250). Conclusively despite its suspended role as an Assembler, Indonesia under Habibie has set a foundation to democratic reformation, which enables Indonesia to act as an Advocate in the near future.

Afterwards, President Wahid enhanced bilateral diplomatic approach to recover Indonesia's international image as a moderate Muslim state which upheld tolerance and democratic values (A'la in Suhanda 2010, 21 & Bunte & Ufen 2009, 3). Wahid intensively travelled to various countries, while assessing the international community's opinion on Indonesia's newly elected government and adjusting Indonesia's foreign policies accordingly (Drajat in Suhanda 2010, 101-103). At last, Indonesia under Megawati had

successfully regained its role as an Assembler by improving regional counterterrorism policy "ASEAN Declaration on Joint Action to Counterterrorism" and transforming ASEAN into a community (Sukma in Lee 2011, 97 & Waluyo 2007, 126-127).

Indonesia's Contemporary Role as an Assembler and Advocate

This paper also argues that since 2004 Indonesia has consistently maintained its Assembler role in regional affairs, as well as successfully adopting the role of middle power Advocate by promoting democratic and moderate Islamic values (Aspinall 2015, 2). During Yudhoyono's term (2004-2014), Indonesia announced 'Dynamic Equilibrium' to refuse any major power domination in Asia Pacific (Putra 2015, 213). Yudhoyono perceived Asia Pacific as a region of complex interdependence, where middle and great powers would cooperate in political, security, economic, and socio-cultural affairs (Widyaningsih & Roberts 2014, 111). Therefore by participating in East Asia Summit (EAS), Indonesia makes sure that ASEAN becomes the driver of inter-regional partnership between Southeast Asia and East Asia (Pakpahan 2013 & Islam 2011, 167).

Secondly, Indonesia represented Southeast Asian interest through multilateral cooperation under the slogan of 'thousand friends, zero enemy' (Puspitasari 2010, 2). Indonesia is a part of MIKTA, an informal partnership among democratic middle powers along with Australia, Mexico, South Korea and Turkey (Engin & Baba 2015, 1). By having high regional diplomatic influence, Indonesia's participation in MIKTA becomes a stepping stone towards reforming agenda setting in international forums such as G-20 (Engin & Baba 2015, 26). Yudhoyono describes G-20 as more than an economic forum, but a global community which accommodates

Indonesia has always been an Assembler; and currently conducts dual role of Assembler and Advocate since Yudhoyono's term

multiple civilizations' interests (Hermawan 2014, 64). For instance, Indonesia and Turkey could promote their identity as democratic Muslim states as a bridge between the Islamic world and the West in G-20 (Flake & Wang 2017, 8). Furthermore, Indonesia proposed that G-20 should prepare funding for developing states' post-crisis relief (Hermawan et. al. 2011, 45).

Thirdly, Indonesia as an Advocator regularly holds Bali Democracy Forum (BDF); which welcomes Asia-Pacific states to discuss their experiences on democracy, human rights and rule of law regardless of their political system (Huijgh 2016, 22 & Islam 2011, 167-168). Subsequently, Indonesia also encourages BDF participants to voluntarily improve their political systems in regards to suitable democratic practices in each state's domestic context (Halans & Nassy 2013, 3). Moreover, Indonesia has organized various interfaith dialogues to promote religious tolerance and moderate Muslim values (Azra in Melissen & Sohn 2015, 143). Initially on 6-7 December 2004, Indonesia had cosponsored the first Asia-Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogue in Yogyakarta; as well as participating in follow up dialogues in Cebu, the Philippines in 2006 and Waitangi, New Zealand in 2007 (Djuareva 2014, 150). Besides that in July 2005, Indonesia has also co-sponsored the first Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Bali; as well as follow up events in Cyprus 2006 and sent representatives to Nanjing 2007, Amsterdam 2008 and Seoul 2009 (Azra in Melissen & Sohn 2015, 145).

Finally, the regional impact of Indonesia's presidential election has portrayed Indonesia's irreplaceable role as an Assembler in Southeast Asia, noting that changes or continuity in Indonesia's foreign policy direction heavily depends on the president's decisions (Weatherbee 2016, 4). In terms of policy changes, the international society expected Jokowi to

be more assertive than Yudhoyono in foreign affairs; by strengthening bilateral ties with states beyond Southeast Asia and making sure that Indonesia gets benefit out of its international cooperation (Huijgh 2016, 22-24). Thus related to Sukma's 'Post-ASEAN' notion, ASEAN member states were worried that Indonesia would no longer prioritize ASEAN as its cornerstone of foreign policy (Putra 2015, 215). Nevertheless in terms of continuity, Foreign Minister Marsudi and Vice President Kalla mentioned that ASEAN remains important for Indonesia in order to establish regional security and stability (Heiduk 2016, 33).

Conclusion

This paper concludes that since independence until now, Indonesia has persistently conducted the role of middle power Assembler by establishing regional leadership in Southeast Asia; and also adopted the role of middle power Advocator since Yudhoyono's administration. Seeing that Indonesia was already capable of establishing ASEAN before promoting democratic and moderate Islamic values; this proves that middle powers with strong regional support from its neighboring states are more capable of becoming an Advocator after previously conducting the role of an Assembler. However, Assemblers without strong regional trust from its neighboring states might not be able to adopt the role of an Advocator, such as Brazil and India (Almeida 2007, 3 & Efstathopoulos 2011, 87).

Finally, Indonesia's success in maintaining dual middle power roles as Assembler in ASEAN and Advocator in multilateral forums has been driven by its informal approach. As an Assembler, Indonesia's diplomatic behavior in favoring consultation and consensus has attained trust from ASEAN member states to represent regional affairs in global partnerships. Besides that, Indonesia's successful democratization and domestic stability has also improved its international image as an Advocator in promoting universal values.

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