

P-ISSN: 2338-1361  
E-ISSN: 2338-1353

# JAS

VOL. 11 NO. 1 AUGUST 2023

## JOURNAL OF ASEAN STUDIES



### CBDS

Centre for Business and Diplomatic Studies  
Serving The Nation through Research and Innovation

in cooperation with Indonesian Association of International Relations

**Binus**  
**Journal**  
Publishing



 **DOAJ**

# JOURNAL OF ASEAN STUDIES (JAS)

**Editor in Chief** Tirta Nugraha Mursitama

**Editor in International Relations**  
*Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia* Moch Faisal Karim

**Editor in Area Studies**  
*Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia* Lili Yulyadi Arnakim

**Managing Editors**  
*Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia* Noerlina  
*Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia* Miranda Paulina Tahalele

**International Editorial Board**  
*Australian National University, Australia* Pierre van der Eng  
*National University of Malaysia (UKM), Malaysia* Kuik Cheng-Chwee  
*University of South Florida, United States* Abbas Mardani  
*KEDGE Business School, France* Yahia H. Zoubir  
*Leeds University, United Kingdom* Adam Tyson  
*National Cheng Keung University, Taiwan* Jenn-Jaw Soong  
*American University, United States* Amitav Acharya  
*Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Malaysia* Nanthakumar Loganathan

**Editorial Assistant**  
*Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia* Dewi Novianti  
*Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia* Shavira Sarashita  
*Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia* Holil



# JOURNAL OF ASEAN STUDIES

Volume 11 Number 1 2023

## Contents

### EDITORIAL

#### **Tourism in ASEAN: A Catalyst for Regional Integration**

*Lili Yulyadi Arnakim, Moch Faisal Karim, Tirta Nugraha Mursitama,  
and Miranda Paulina Tahalele*

### ARTICLES

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| “Local Food” Consumption: Does Locality Matter?<br><i>Agustina Multi Purnomo; Gumilar Rusliwa Somantri; Ricardi S. Adnan</i>  | 1–20    |
| Institutional Dynamics of Halal Tourism Development<br>In Indonesia and Malaysia<br><i>Budiman Mahmud Musthofa; Diaz Pranita;<br/>Mohamad Sattar Rasul; Banu Muhammad Haidlir</i> | 21–41   |
| Harmonizing Halal in ASEAN: Analysis of Halal Food Guidelines<br>under the ASEAN Way Approach<br><i>Eva Johan; Maria Jose Plana-Casado</i>  | 43–67   |
| Agenda Setting within ASEAN: Thickening, Broadening, and Breaking Pressures<br><i>Ryan Ashley</i>   | 69–86   |
| Impact of Pluri-Lateral Free Trade Agreements on Innovation: Example<br>of ASEAN<br><i>Robert Smith; Nucharee Nuchkoom Smith; Mark Perry</i>                                      | 87–110  |
| A “Matter of Life and Death”? Patterns of Securitisation and Desecuritisation<br>of Food Resilience in Indonesia<br><i>I Gusti Bagus Dharma Agastia</i>                           | 111–141 |
| Indonesia’s Strategic Narrative on the New Dynamics of Great Power Rivalry<br>in the Indo-Pacific<br><i>Budi Riyanto; Darmansjah Djumala; Youzhi Tan</i>                          | 143–166 |
| The Characteristics of Indonesian Digital Diplomacy<br><i>Albert Triwibowo</i>  | 167–196 |

Family Business Dynamics in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Study of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand 197–218  
*Nugroho Sukamdani*

Going Back with Glee: A Case Study of Indonesian Migrant Workers Engaging in Circular Migration 219–243  
*Erna Setijaningrum; Asiyah Kassim; Rochyati Triana; Reza Dzulfikri*

[journal.binus.ac.id/index.php/jas](http://journal.binus.ac.id/index.php/jas)

## Focus and Scope

The Journal of ASEAN Studies (JAS) is an open-access international peer-reviewed bi-annual journal that enriches understanding of the past, current, and future issues relevant to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as regional organisation, community, and Southeast Asia as a region. The article shall address multidisciplinary research on theoretical and/or empirical questions. The topics addressed within the journal include a wide range of spectrum across social sciences and humanities such as but not limited to international relations, diplomacy, economy and business.

JAS expects the articles encourage debate, controversy, new understanding, solid theory, and reflection on ASEAN. The articles sent should have a sharp analysis and rigorous methodologies quantitative or qualitative as well as written in an engaging and analytical style. The JAS does publish original research articles, review article, book review, practice notes, and research notes. However, JAS does not publish journalistic or investigative style of article. The JAS would not be responsible for any implied or written statements of articles published. Each author would be responsible for their own writing.

*Journal of ASEAN Studies* publishes the following types of manuscripts:

- **Original research articles:** The manuscripts should be approximately 6000-8000 words. The manuscripts must contain a review of the current state of knowledge on the research question(s) of interest, then share new information or new ideas that will impact the state of theory and/or practice in the area of ASEAN Studies and/or Southeast Asian Studies.
- **Review article:** The manuscripts should be approximately 1500-3500 words. The manuscripts must contain the current state of understanding on a particular topic about ASEAN and/or Southeast Asian Studies by analysing and discussing research previously published by others.
- **Book review:** The manuscripts should be approximately 1500-4000 words. The manuscripts must contain a critical evaluation of book by making argument and commentary on the particular book discussed about ASEAN and/or Southeast Asian Studies.
- **Practice notes:** These are shorter manuscripts approximately 1500-3500 words that are of specific interest to practitioners. These manuscripts must present new development for the ASEAN.
- **Research notes:** Similar to practice notes, these are shorter manuscripts approximately 1500-3500 words that have specific implications for ASEAN. The manuscripts should employ rigorous methodology either qualitative or quantitative.

## Centre for Business and Diplomatic Studies

Centre for Business and Diplomatic Studies (CBDS) is established as part of the International Relations Department, Bina Nusantara (BINUS) University. Our aims are to undertake and promote research and deliberation on diplomacy, business, international relations and developmental issues particularly in Indonesia, Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific.

We also commit to build, connect and share research and others kinds of knowledge generating activities for the betterment of life of the people and earth. Our immediate constituency is International Relations Department, BINUS University and the larger constituency is the broader academic community of the BINUS University and other universities and institutions both national and international as well as policy community.

CBDS publishes scholarly journal, working papers, commentaries and provides training and consultancies services in the areas of diplomatic training, negotiations, commercial diplomacy, conflict resolutions for business, business and government relations, promoting competitive local government in attracting foreign investment, and understanding impact of regional economic integration on development specifically toward ASEAN Community 2015.

### CBDS

#### Secretariat

Kijang Campus, Binus University

Jl. Kemanggisan Ilir III No. 45, Kemanggisan/Palmerah, Jakarta Barat 11480

+62.21 534 5830 ext.2631

<http://ir.binus.ac.id/cbds>



### EDITORIAL

#### Tourism in ASEAN: A Catalyst for Regional Integration

Lili Yulyadi Arnakim, Moch Faisal Karim, Tirta Nugraha Mursitama,  
and Miranda Paulina Tahalele

International Relations Department, Faculty of Humanities, Bina Nusantara University,  
Jakarta, Indonesia 11480.

[lili.yulyadi@binus.edu](mailto:lili.yulyadi@binus.edu), [mkarim@binus.edu](mailto:mkarim@binus.edu), [tmursitama@binus.edu](mailto:tmursitama@binus.edu),  
[miranda.paulina@binus.ac.id](mailto:miranda.paulina@binus.ac.id)

**How to Cite:** Arnakim, L.Y., Karim, M. F., Mursitama, T. N., & Tahalele, M. P. (2023).  
Tourism in ASEAN: A catalyst for regional integration. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 11(1),  
<https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.10506>

---

**Keywords:** halal tourism, regional integration, cultural diversity, organized anarchy, non-state society

#### Introduction

Tourism has emerged as a potent force in shaping the landscape of global economies, and nowhere is this more evident than in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Comprising ten diverse nations, ASEAN has harnessed the power of tourism as a driving force for regional integration, fostering economic growth, cultural exchange, and sustainable development. Tourism serves as a powerful engine propelling ASEAN's economic growth forward (Musthofa et al., 2023). The seamless flow of tourists between ASEAN member states has significantly contributed to the region's prosperity, as a robust tourism industry can generate employment opportunities, stimulates local businesses, and supports livelihoods, especially in rural areas. As nations share their cultural, historical, and natural wonders, tourists explore a rich tapestry that transcends borders and fosters understanding.

However, we also identify the downside of massive tourism expansion in the region, including on natural ecosystem, local safety, and preservation of local culture and identity.

The implementation of ASEAN's Open Skies policy has played a pivotal role in boosting tourism in the region (Permana et al., 2020). Facilitating policies on air travel and enhancing connectivity between member states have not only eased travel for tourists but also paved the way for increased trade and investment. As airlines expand their networks, economies are interconnected, amplifying the potential for mutual growth within the region. Further, ASEAN's commitment to sustainable tourism underscores its dedication to responsible growth. By prioritizing sustainable practices, member states work collectively to preserve their natural heritage and protect their unique ecosystems. Intra-ASEAN travel holds immense potential in promoting regional integration and socio-economic growth (Fardhiyanti & Wee, 2022). With the ongoing efforts to streamline visa regulations and facilitate cross-border travel, exploring neighbouring countries has never been more accessible and appealing. Intra-ASEAN travel provides an opportunity for citizens to reconnect with shared histories, promote cultural exchange, and strengthen regional bonds.

With ASEAN cultural diversity, tourism industry transcends the connection between people and break down barriers between communities. From eco-tourism initiatives to local food experiences, ASEAN nations embrace tourism as a vehicle to promote conservation and sustainable development. Through collaboration and sharing of best practices, ASEAN member states amplify their impact, tackling common challenges such as cultural and spiritual diversity, climate change, wildlife protection, and responsible resource management. These collective efforts towards sustainability not only benefit the environment but also enhance the overall appeal of ASEAN as an eco-conscious and socially responsible destination. Moreover, Southeast Asian region is a vibrant drapery of multicultural communities, histories, and traditions, making it a melting pot of unique experiences for travellers worldwide. Beyond its breathtaking landscapes and vibrant cityscapes, ASEAN nations have long recognized the immense value of their rich cultural heritage in shaping their identity. ASEAN celebrates the cultural underpinning and delves into the significance of intra-ASEAN travel, promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of the region's cultural identity.

In line with the above, beyond its cultural diversity, ASEAN boasts a captivating identity, a drapery of colours that reflects the essence of the region. The cultural representation encapsulates the spirit of collaboration and cooperation that has been the cornerstone of ASEAN's growth. Moreover, the region's rich diverse cultural, extensive biodiversity, immerse hospitalities, and picturesque landscapes lend themselves to world-class tourism standards. Despite the expansion of tourism industries in the region with the international standard, each government also extend the scope into more unique approaches to promote more sustainable tourism in line with its national identity and culture.

Another issue that is, to some extent, being overlooked is the notion of halal tourism. Halal tourism has become increasingly important sector growing in Southeast Asia. Such growing halal tourism cannot be separated from the growing Islam both as political and social

powers in many Muslim countries including Indonesia and Malaysia (Saat, 2023; Saefullah, 2022). Such rise of burgeoning pietistic social activism presents both challenges and opportunities to Islamic political actors, and that failure to engage with these new forces will lead to further marginalisation and the risk of declining relevance (Fealy, 2022). Such activism has also, to some extent, increased the halal tourism industry in Southeast Asia.

One step further, halal tourism has emerged as a rapidly growing segment of the global travel industry, and ASEAN is well-positioned to leverage its potential (Mustofa, et. al, 2023). With a significant Muslim population and a diverse range of culturally rich destinations, ASEAN can capitalize on halal tourism to drive inclusive and sustainable economic growth. To do so, ASEAN needs to have proper political economy strategies in setting the agenda of halal tourism in Southeast Asia. This agenda setting should be able to outline key priorities and strategies to promote halal tourism in ASEAN, foster cultural exchange, enhance economic opportunities, and preserve the region's unique identity. Therefore, several aspects of expanding halal tourism have also been identified to foster ASEAN cultural identity.

First, ASEAN must prioritize the development of halal-certified infrastructure across member states. This includes halal restaurants, prayer facilities, and accommodation options that cater to the needs of Muslim travellers. Collaborative efforts among member states can establish standardized halal certification processes to build trust and confidence among Muslim tourists. Second, effective marketing and promotion are essential to position ASEAN as a premier halal-friendly destination. ASEAN can create a cohesive and compelling marketing campaign that highlights the region's diverse cultural offerings, natural beauty, and halal-certified services. Digital platforms and social media can play a significant role in reaching out to potential Muslim travellers worldwide. Third, Engaging the private sector is crucial for the success of halal tourism in ASEAN. Governments can foster partnerships with local businesses, travel agencies, and hospitality providers to expand halal tourism offerings. Incentives for private enterprises to obtain halal certification and implement sustainable practices will further strengthen the sector's growth. Fourth, improving transportation and connectivity within and between ASEAN member states is vital to facilitating halal tourism. ASEAN should invest in modernizing transportation networks, airports, and border crossings to ensure seamless travel experiences for Muslim tourists. Enhanced connectivity will also promote intra-ASEAN travel, encouraging tourists to explore multiple member countries.

Fifth, halal tourism provides an excellent opportunity for cultural exchange between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. ASEAN can organize cultural events, festivals, and workshops that promote understanding and appreciation of diverse traditions and practices. Such initiatives foster mutual respect, breaking down stereotypes and promoting social cohesion within the region. Sixth, Standardization of halal certification and adherence to international halal standards are essential to building credibility and trust among Muslim travellers. ASEAN can work collectively to establish a robust halal certification system, ensuring consistency and transparency across the region. Seventh, Sustainable practices must be at the core of halal tourism in ASEAN. Encouraging eco-friendly initiatives, responsible tourism, and support for local communities will ensure the long-term preservation of natural and cultural heritage. ASEAN can promote sustainable tourism through policy frameworks



and awareness campaigns. Finally, collecting data on the preferences and needs of Muslim travellers is crucial for informed decision-making. ASEAN can collaborate with research institutions and private enterprises to gather insights on the halal tourism market, including travel patterns, spending behaviours, and travel motivations.

### **Our Issues**

In relations with the above issues, Journal of ASEAN studies has covered various issues on tourism and food and its halal certification, which was deliberately discussed by respective authors such as Purnomo et. al. (2023), Musthofa et. al. (2023), and Johan and Plana-Casado (2023). These contributions are respectively providing an overview of the position of halal food, local food in urban tourism, and the components of halal tourism within ASEAN. This has been considered the main attraction of halal tourism in ASEAN countries, with two other articles intensively discuss several recommendations concerning the innovative aspect of halal tourism branding and halal food (Musthofa et. al.; 2023; Johan et. al., 2023). They argue that within the growth of halal tourism in a nation, debates surrounding the emergence of Islamic identity in aspects of halal tourism can potentially obstruct the advancement of cultural tourism commodities. Consequently, the research enhances our understanding of the complex interplay between political economy factors and the evolution of halal tourism from an academic perspective (Musthofa et. al., 2023; Johan et al., 2023).

On the issues of politics and international relations, this volume discussed three different important issues such as on “organized anarchy” of ASEAN by Ashley (2023) and foreign policy of Indonesia on digital diplomacy and Indo-pacific. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, foreign policy and international relations have taken centre stage in shaping the global landscape. For Indonesia, as the world's fourth most populous country and a key player in Southeast Asia, engaging in diplomatic efforts and maintaining strong international relations are crucial. Indonesia's foreign policy is anchored in principles such as sovereignty, independence, and a commitment to peace and cooperation. As a country with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, Indonesia seeks to promote tolerance, mutual respect, and a balanced regional and global order.

Furthermore, the debate on trade agreements on innovation embodies the delicate balance between embracing progress and protecting national interests. As innovation drives the global economy, countries recognize the need for collaboration to advance technologically and economically. However, these agreements must be thoughtfully crafted to address concerns related to intellectual property, national security, and sovereignty. By fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and responsible sharing of knowledge, trade agreements can contribute to a prosperous and interconnected world. The key lies in finding common ground, where nations can build a sustainable framework that promotes innovation while safeguarding their unique identities and interests. As the debate continues, it is crucial for policymakers, businesses, and researchers to engage in constructive dialogue to ensure that trade agreements on innovation benefit all stakeholders, driving progress while preserving sovereignty and ensuring a more inclusive global economy. Smith et. al. (2023) has discussed

at length, especially on the impact of trade agreement such as multilateral free trade agreement on the protection of patents and marks by the individual ASEAN members.

In relation to this strategic trade agreement, the geopolitical issue has become an important that culminates in the growing discourse on Indo-Pacific. Article by Riyanto et. al. (2023) shows how Indonesia's strategic narrative on the Indo-Pacific region is deeply rooted in its geographic location and historical ties to maritime trade. As a bridge between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Indonesia recognizes the strategic significance of the Indo-Pacific as a key region for economic growth, security, and geopolitical stability. Indonesia's approach to the Indo-Pacific is cantered on the concept of a "Global Maritime Fulcrum," which envisions the country as a hub for maritime cooperation and connectivity. This narrative emphasizes inclusivity, mutual benefit, and sustainable development, seeking to promote economic prosperity and maritime security for all nations in the region.

Indonesia advocates for a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, urging dialogue and peaceful resolution of disputes. As a proponent of regional cooperation, Indonesia is actively involved in regional mechanisms such as ASEAN participates in initiatives like the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum. Furthermore, Indonesia seeks to address transnational challenges, including piracy, human trafficking, and environmental degradation, through collective action and regional partnerships. By embracing a strategic narrative that prioritizes collaboration and constructive engagement, Indonesia contributes to the stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region.

In the digital age, traditional diplomacy has expanded its horizons to include digital diplomacy. Indonesia recognizes the importance of harnessing technology to engage with the global community and advance its foreign policy objectives. The work by Wibowo (2023) shows how digital diplomacy enables Indonesia to project its voice beyond physical borders, engaging with citizens, policymakers, and international audiences in real-time. Through active social media presence, Indonesia's government agencies and diplomats communicate directly with global audiences, fostering dialogue and providing insights into the country's policies and positions on various issues. Digital platforms serve as avenues for promoting Indonesian culture, tourism, and trade, enhancing Indonesia's soft power and global influence. Moreover, Indonesia deploys digital diplomacy to address contemporary challenges such as countering misinformation and promoting fact-based information. By participating in online dialogues and international fora, Indonesia contributes to shaping global narratives, reinforcing its role as a responsible and respected member of the international community.

This edition also includes topics that related to the role of non-state society in regional integration. The article by Sukamdani (2023) discusses how family businesses have long been the backbone of economies in the ASEAN region, contributing significantly to GDP and providing employment opportunities. In recent times, these family-owned enterprises have taken on an increasingly critical role in ensuring food security for the region. With a growing population, changing dietary preferences, and environmental challenges, family businesses play a vital part in fostering sustainable agriculture and bolstering food security in ASEAN.

In this case, Sukamdani (2023) has provided insight for professionals who work in the sector to gain insight into how family businesses work to maintain their entrepreneurial spirit. Another manuscript by Setijaningrum et. al. (2023) reveals that non-monetary incentives such as supportive and amicable workplace environments, including the possibility of career advancements and adequate accommodations, as well as productive and family-oriented communities, act as important motivators for Indonesian migrant workers to go back to host countries. Furthermore, the authors highlight the widening topography of migration studies by which it provides a broader picture in painting the “human” rationality behind circular migration in Global South.

This edition provides significant debates on the cultural, economic, and political aspects of the Southeast Asia region, not only from the traditional issues of regionalism such as diplomacy and foreign policy aspects of Indo-Pacific, but also contemporary approaches. Looking at ASEAN regionalism through tourism and food culture aspects have given different perspectives on how ASEAN’s commitment to integration can be expanded and narrated without losing its local identity components. In that sense, ASEAN integration in the future shall build upon better understanding of locality, national needs, and regional understanding.

Editorial Team,

**Lili Yulyadi Arnakim**

**Moch Faisal Karim**

**Tirta Nugraha Mursitama**

**Miranda Paulina Tahalele**

## References

- Acharya, A., & Buzan, B. (2009). *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives On and Beyond Asia*. Routledge.
- Fardhiyanti, G., & Wee, V. (2022). Enhancing Social Integration through Intra-ASEAN Travel. *JAS (Journal of ASEAN Studies)*, 10(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v10i1.6929>
- Fealy, G. (2022). Exploring the Social-Political Nexus in Islam: A Comparison of the Middle East and Southeast Asia. *Muslim Politics Review*, 1(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v1i1.52>
- Johan, E., & Plana-Casado, M. J. (2023). Harmonizing Halal in ASEAN: Analysis of Halal Food Guidelines under the ASEAN Way Approach. *JAS (Journal of ASEAN Studies)*, 11(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.9682>
- Musthofa, B. M., Pranita, D., Rasul, M. S., & Haidlir, B. M. (2023). Institutional Dynamics of Halal Tourism Development in Indonesia and Malaysia. *JAS (Journal of ASEAN Studies)*, 11(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.9431>
- Permana, P., Hoen, H. W., & Holzhacker, R. L. (2020). Political Economy of ASEAN Open Skies Policy: Business Preferences, Competition and Commitment to Economic Integration. *Journal of Asian Economic Integration*, 2(1), 44–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2631684620910520>
- Purnomo, A. M., Somantri, G. R., & Adnan, R. S. (2023). “Local Food” Consumption: Does Locality Matter? *JAS (Journal of ASEAN Studies)*, 11(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.7537>
- Riyanto, B., Djumala, D., & Tan, Y. (2023). Indonesia’s Strategic Narrative on the New Dynamics of Great Power Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific. *JAS (Journal of ASEAN Studies)*, 11(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.9406>
- Saat, N. (2023). The Impact of Non-Violent Muslim Extremism: Reflections on Indonesia and Malaysia. *Muslim Politics Review*, 2(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v2i1.141>
- Saefullah, H. (2022). “More Than Just Devotion”: The Conservative Turn Among Subcultural Muslim Youths in the Indonesian Underground Music Scene. *Muslim Politics Review*, 1(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v1i2.58>
- Setijaningrum, E., Kassim, A., Triana, R., & Dzulfikri, R. (2023). Going Back with Glee: A Case Study of Indonesian Migrant Workers Engaging in Circular Migration. *JAS (Journal of ASEAN Studies)*, 11(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.8610>

- Smith, R., Smith, N., & Perry, M. (2023). Impact of Pluri-Lateral Free Trade Agreements on Innovation: Example of ASEAN. *JAS (Journal of ASEAN Studies)*, 11(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.7975>
- Sukamdani, N. (2023). Family Business Dynamics in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Study of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. *JAS (Journal of ASEAN Studies)*, 11(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.9518>
- Triwibowo, A. (2023). The Characteristics of Indonesian Digital Diplomacy. *JAS (Journal of ASEAN Studies)*, 11(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.8525>

# “Local Food” Consumption: Does Locality Matter?

Agustina Multi Purnomo<sup>1</sup>, Gumilar Rusliwa Somantri<sup>2</sup>,  
and Ricardi S. Adnan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Communication Science Department, Faculty of Social, Political, and Computer Science,  
Universitas Djuanda, Bogor, Indonesia 16720

<sup>2,3</sup>Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Science,  
Universitas Indonesia, Depok Indonesia 16424

agustina.m@unida.ac.id; gumilar.r09@ui.ac.id; ricardi.s@ui.ac.id

**How to Cite:** Purnomo, A. M., Somantri, G. R., & Adnan, R. S. (2023). “Local Food” consumption: Does locality matter? *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 11(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.7537>

## Abstract

The research examined the possibility of food being socialized as local food to replace local food's role in food tourism. Food was one of the major attractions during a vacancy in ASEAN. The study of food in tourism rarely considered local food diversity in urban areas. The research addressed the other type of local food that is typical city food. In this case, there is no connection between the food and culture, traditions, history, or place, but the food is socialized as being indigenous. The local food consumption model was used to test whether the factors that affect tourists' local food consumption apply equally to foods socialized as local food. The research compared domestic tourist local food consumption factors in two food categories. 640 domestic tourists in a developed culinary tourism city in the Jakarta Metropolitan Area participated in this online survey. The comparative test of tourist characteristics found gender, the purpose of visit, age, and status of visit tourist characteristics associated with the food choice. The physical environment, exiting experience, and authentic experience were the motivational factors that differed between two food categories. It is possible that socialized foods will replace local food. The food locality did not always a matter. The results provide an overview of the position of local food in urban tourism. This has been considered the main attraction of food tourism in ASEAN countries.

**Keywords:** local food, food tourism, consumption, urban, Indonesia



## Introduction

Food was one of the major attractions for international tourists (Himanshu, 2015) and positively impacted tourism demands in ASEAN (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021). A taste of the diversity and authenticity of the culture in Asia and ASEAN was experienced through food (Lee et al., 2020; Naruetharadhol & Gebombut, 2020; Park, Kim, & Yeoman, 2019). The cuisine was featured in ASEAN's cultural education, awareness, and literacy initiatives (Kheng-Lian, 2014). The food was known as local food due to its heterogeneity and cultural authenticity.

Local food was an essential attraction in the food tourism study. Tourists felt authenticity, a sense of place, cultural experiences, and satisfaction through local food experiences (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019; Hsu & Scott, 2020; Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020; Tsai, 2016; Uehara & Assarut, 2020; Youn & Kim, 2017). However, the research gave less attention to the diversity in local food. There was diversity in local food definitions (Avieli, 2013). Due to the urban context, various food producers compete for customers by selling each other food, known as "typical food of the city" (Purnomo, 2022). The foods did not meet the local food definition as in previous studies. These foods have no culture or tradition tied to the area, and was relatively recent and can be found in other cities. However, they were particularly popular in the city as its typical food. The research called attention to the other "local food", which has been socialized as local food. It differed from previous studies (Avieli, 2013), which did not examine food consumption. Food consumption while traveling denoted the tourist gaze and determined what foods tourists consider local food (adapted from Korstanje & Seraphin, 2017; Urry, 1995). Tourists' consumption of local food while traveling determines which foods are considered authentic.

The research examines the possibility of food being socialized as local food to replace local food's role in food tourism. Taking into consideration the importance of locality in the food that is socialized as local food, the research advances the conceptualization of local food. Previous studies discussed local food attractions in food tourism as the locality of place, culture, tradition, and history (Chang, Kivela, and Mak, 2010; Choe & Kim, 2019; Zhang, Chen, and Hu, 2019). However, those studies largely neglect the possibility that tourists feel locality from the other "local food." This article proposes two types of locality in food, stemming from the history and tradition of place and socialization. The modification of the local food consumption model (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009) was used to test whether the factors that affect tourists' local food consumption apply equally to food socialized as local food. The same impact indicates that food can be combined with local food in order to replace local food. The results provide an overview of the position of local food in tourism, which has been considered the main attraction of food tourism in ASEAN countries. The research result contributes to the definition of local food by including food that is socialized as local food in the tourist perspective. The research challenges a single view of locality in urban food tourism that has dynamic inventions.

# Literature Review

## Local Food and Food Socialized as Local Food

Previous studies examined local food from three perspectives. First, local food was a specific geographical location (Hsu & Scott, 2020; Knollenberg et al., 2021; Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020; Zhang, Chen, & Hu, 2019). Second, local food reflected cultural characteristics of a place. Local food indicated a place's identity (Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2010; Chuang, 2009), native culture (Zhang, Chen, & Hu, 2019), unique, original, traditional, special (Avieli, 2013; Choe & Kim, 2019), indigenous herbs and food history from a particular place (Sims, 2009; Youn & Kim, 2017). Third, local food refers to people or producers of food from certain places (Scheyvens & Laeis, 2019; Slocum, 2016; Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2016). Local food in food tourism represents the culture, tradition, and history of a place.

Like the other ASEAN countries, Indonesia has a diverse food culture in each region. Every region in Indonesia has food that was linked to the region if it was sold anywhere in Indonesia. It was known as Java's food, Sundanese Food, Sumatra's food, Bogor food, or Balinese food. Indonesia also has food that did not indicate one particular region but denoted Indonesian food. For example, Indonesia's government introduced fried rice as one of The 30 Indonesian Traditional Culinary Icons. Fried rice was also known as the Indonesian Gastro Brand (Irwansyah & Triputra, 2016). Fried rice was a food found in almost all regions in Indonesia. It did not indicate a specific region. Both foods were local foods according to the definition of local food. How was the local food when the research took place in a particular city or region? The research proposes that the local food in a particular locality must fulfill the three local food indicators.

The study of urban food tourism in ASEAN should examine the famous foods introduced as the cuisine of the city. For example, Bandung Makuta cake was not a Bandung cultural food but considered Bandung's souvenir food (Chan, Tresna, & Suradipura, 2017). Famous Thai food poses a challenge to rice-based Thai ethnic cuisine in urban tourism (Berno, Dentice, & Wisansing, 2019), and Vietnamese food is considered Vietnamese even when it has been adapted from Chinese food (Avieli, 2013). Food indicated a specific city but did not meet the three local food indicators recommended as socialized as local food.

The study focuses on two categories of food that tourists perceive as local food. Local food refers to culture, tradition, history, and food's attachment to its place and maker. Local food was part of the unique culture of a particular region or city. Typical city food socialized as local food had no cultural, historical, or place attachment, but was considered typical city food. Food that is socialized is mostly known as souvenir food, national food, or other foods.

Consumers may not distinguish between local and socialized food. Tourists may consider any food they consume as local food, following their information about the food (Avieli, 2013; Lin, Pearson, & Cai, 2011; Sims, 2009). Food as a cultural characteristic may be replaced by the invention of regional communities, food providers, and tourists (Avieli, 2013;

Cohen, 1988). The invention and socialization process opens up the possibility that tourists might consider the food to be local food.

The tourist played a role in determining what food was considered local food through food consumption. Food consumption in tourism was divided into four perspectives: tourists' food consumption behavior or pattern; tourists' special interests in various foods and related activities in destinations; food as a tourist product, and tourists' special interests in various foods (Mak, Lumber, & Eves, 2012). The research is closer to the first perspective. The first perspective discussed food consumption as a tourist's food choice at tourist destination. It also discussed the factors that influence food consumption, and the perceived functional and symbolic nature of food choices. The tourists' food choices denoted the perceived functional and symbolic food choices that influence food consumption. The claim implies that socialized foods can replace local foods when local food consumption factors produce the same level of effect as socialized foods.

Previous studies explaining the tourist's perspective of food consumption behavior were conducted on international tourists. International tourists identify authentic Indonesian foods from food authenticity, variety, and uniqueness (Wijaya et al., 2017) or heritage, serving, food environment, variety, availability, sensory, and ingredients (Hendijani, 2016; Roozbeh, Ng, & Boo, 2013; Wijaya, 2019). Indonesian local food for international tourists was associated with flavor (rice-based, spicy, tasty, and sweet), herbs, spices, sauce, and halal as a significant characteristic (Wijaya et al., 2016). Therefore, both local food and food socialized as local food can be considered as local food by international tourists. Meanwhile, domestic tourists can recognize local food better than international tourists (Chen & Huang, 2018, 2019; Kim, Park, & Lamb, 2019). A study on domestic tourists illustrates the diversity of culinary tourism in Asia (Park, Kim, & Yeoman, 2019).

### **Research Framework**

The research uses a model of local food consumption (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009) that conforms to the first perspective of food consumption. This model has been tested empirically (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2013; Kim & Eves, 2012). According to this model, food consumption is determined by food choices. A model was proposed to test the influence of demographic, physiological, and motivational factors on local food consumption and the relationship between these factors. Their model did not address the possibility of a diversity of local food in a place. The research used this framework to examine two forms of food choice (local food and socialized as local food).

Physiological factors were not tested because these factors were primarily studied in local food consumption by international tourists (Hashemi et al., 2021; Jeaheng & Han, 2020; Osmana & Nazarib, 2020). Domestic tourists have a similar food culture. Thus, physiological factors as an impediment to local food would not occur (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Furthermore, the research did not examine the relationship between factors in order to examine the different impacts of the two factors on food choices.

The demographic factors are age, gender, education level, occupation, and income level. Additionally, two variables are similar to previous research, namely income rate (Choe & Kim, 2019; Kim, Park, & Lamb, 2019; Knollenberg et al., 2021; Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020), and occupation (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2019; Choe & Kim, 2019; Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020).

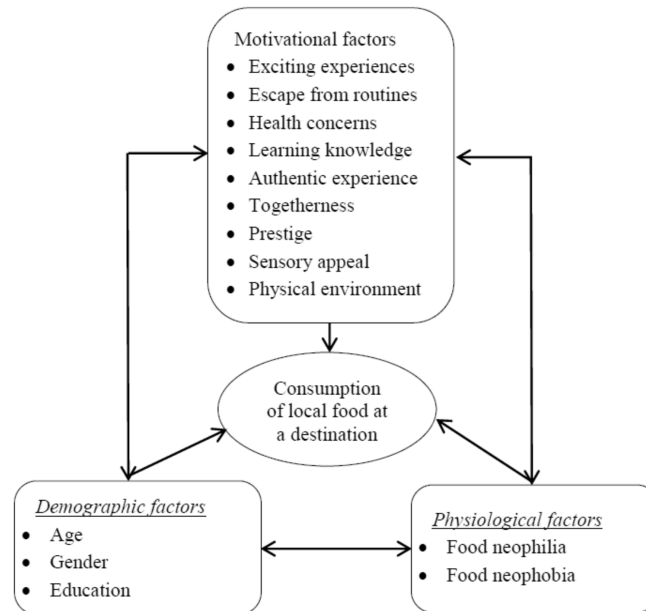


Figure 1 Local Food Consumption Model (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009)

Tourist characteristics that influence consumption include more than demographic factors. Travel objectives are added to differentiate tourists who come specifically for culinary tours and tourists who come for other reasons (Andersson, Mossberg, & Therkelsen, 2017; Chen & Huang, 2019). The length of the visit is also examined, which finds that tourists can explore a variety of foods during longer visit times (Avieli, 2013; Choe & Kim, 2019; Tse & Crotts, 2005). The visit status is added to determine the difference between tourists who came for the first time, many times, or had stayed at the study location (Tse & Crotts, 2005; Wijaya et al., 2017). The tourist characteristic factors were a combination of demographic and socioeconomic factors.

H<sub>1</sub>: Tourist characteristics have an association with food choices.

Motivational factors include exciting experiences, escape from routines, health concerns, learning knowledge, authentic experience, togetherness, prestige, sensory appeal, and the physical environment (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009). Previous studies have examined the same motivational factors (Choe & Kim, 2019; Hendijani, 2016; Kim, Park & Lamb, 2019; Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020; Uehara & Assarut, 2020; Wijaya et al., 2016, 2017; Zhang, Chen & Hu, 2019).

Learning knowledge and togetherness were not tested in this research. The togetherness variable was not asked about its origin in a Greek study that included time together at

mealtimes. This tradition was not found at the study site (Purnomo, 2022). Learning knowledge was also not asked. The preliminary research found there was no visitors' interest in the process of making, the origin of food, and the socio-cultural context of food as an indicator of learning knowledge. The research suggests that local and socialized food choices are motivated differently.

H<sub>2</sub>: Motivational factors affect food choices differently.

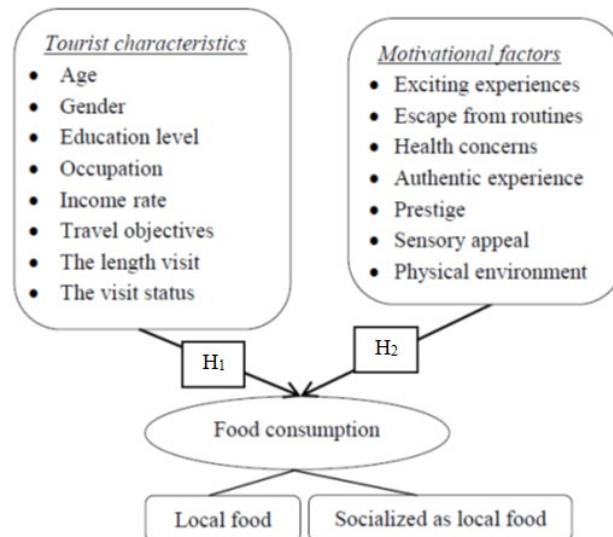


Figure 2 Research Framework

Source: adapted from Kim, Eves, & Scarles (2009)

## Research Method

Bogor is chosen as the research site because it has a variety of local foods well known in Indonesia (Purnomo, 2016). Furthermore, one local Bogor food is included in the list of The 30 Indonesian Traditional Culinary Icons. Bogor had the highest regional income from culinary tourism (BPS-Statistics of Bogor, Bekasi, Depok & Tangerang Municipality, 2020), and culinary was a significant tourism marker compared to other cities in the Jakarta metropolitan area (Purnomo, 2021).

The research uses mixed methods, where the main data collection technique is a survey. The survey population is determined based on the population of domestic tourists to Bogor City in 2018, 7.965.987 (BPS-Statistics of Bogor Municipality, 2019). The questionnaire is distributed online in March 2019 through social media. The samples are selected by a filter question, "have you visited Bogor City?" Of the 1414 questionnaires filled, only 640 are eligible for data processing. Respondents from Bogor City and Regency are excluded because they refer to the definition of tourists as people who come from "outside their environment" (UNWTO, 2020) or, in this research, tourists who come from other cities. The 640 samples are more than 385 people, meeting the confidence level ( $\alpha$ ) 95% (Adam, 2020).

The qualitative data is used to explore the food categories in the preparation stage. The categorization of food is done by interviews with five Bogor cultural participants. According to the interviews, twelve kinds of food have historically been known as Bogor local food. The foods are Bogor style sticky rice, Bogor style soup, Bogor laksa, doclang, Bogor style beer, Bogor noodle soup, cungkkring, nutmeg ice, ngohiang, nutmeg sweets, golosor noodle, and Bogor pickle. Next step is interviews with food traders or producers. Interview with food producers found that one type of food is not available for sale (Bogor style sticky rice). One type is non-halal food (ngohiang), three types of food are manufactured by the traditional factory (nutmeg sweets, golosor noodle, and Bogor pickle), and seven types of food are sold by street food vendors (Bogor style soup, Bogor laksa, doclang, Bogor style beer, Bogor noodle soup, nutmeg ice, and cungkkring). All food has been produced or sold for more than 50 years by the same producer or the second or third generation. Food that is not produced is excluded because tourists may not find it in the market. In addition, non-halal food is excluded to reduce the risk of halal issues. Therefore, the ten foods are defined as local food.

The next step is structured interviews with 100 Bogor City residents. They are asked two questions: 1) Do you agree that these ten foods are included in Bogor specialties? 2) Mention other foods that you consider as typical Bogor food. The ten local foods were chosen by 80-100% of respondents. The second question reveals the respondents' top ten favorite foods. The ten types of food are confirmed through observation, social media searching, and interviews with the food producers. The six types of foods were famous Bogor souvenir foods (Air Mancur sweet pancake, unyil bread, taro layer cake, pia apple pie, grilled macaroni, and klappetart huiz), two types were a famous restaurant (Lodaya durian soup and Mang Endang oxtail soup), and two types were sold by well-known Indonesian artists (Bogor princess cake/Syahrini and Bogor rain cake/Shireen Sungkar). The same type of food can easily be purchased anywhere in Indonesia. Food is sold in restaurants with modern environment, except for Mang Endang oxtail soup. Five Bogor cultural participants denied that these foods had any connection with the food history and culture of Bogor. These ten foods are therefore considered to be locally socialized foods.

The questionnaire regarding tourist characteristics is prepared based on Indonesian statistics' age, education, occupation, and income groupings. Indicators of the purpose and length of the visit are compiled based on a preliminary study in 2014 (Table 1). Respondents fill in the motivational factors for the type of food that has been previously selected. The local food is identified as Bogor's traditional food and socialized as famous food. Those questions are the most straightforward questions understood by respondents.

Responses to motivational variables are measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1-5 points for the scale (1=strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). It is recommended to use the midpoint of 1-5 points to measure the ordinal scale of statements that allows respondents to choose freely according to their opinion (Chyung et al., 2017). Questionnaire is designed for online use and easy completion. Respondents cannot fill out the questionnaires more than once on one device. The process of filling out the questionnaire is shown in Figure 3.



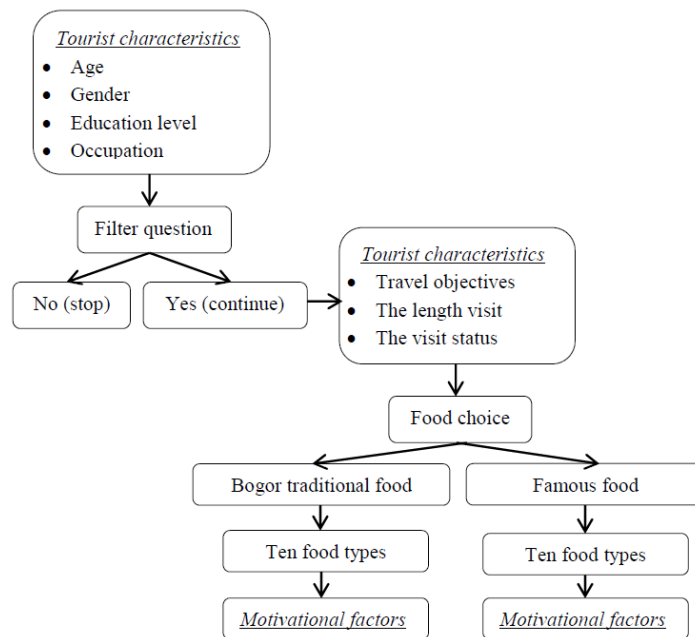


Figure 3 The Questionnaire Filling Flow

The validity test of 61 respondents is conducted using the Pearson Bivariate correlation techniques. The validity test results denote two indicators that measure the prestige variable that are omitted because they are considered invalid. The instrument reliability test uses the Alpha Cronbach formula because the research instrument is a multilevel scale. The reliability test results show an alpha value of 0,804. Therefore, it is concluded that the questionnaire has reasonably high reliability.

Since tourist characteristics and type of food choice variables are categorical variables with nominal or ordinal measurement scales, the association between the two categorical variables' level and type of food choice is measured by the Chi-Square test. The null hypothesis was rejected when the significance level was smaller than the specified error rate. An independent t-test is used to test the hypothesis since all the motivational factors are numerical variables and the type of food choice is a categorical variable. The null hypothesis should be rejected if the significance level is smaller than the specified error rate. Logistic regression is carried out to determine factors that influence food choice.

## Analysis

### Tourist Characteristics and Food Choices

ASEAN member states have obligations under treaties to which they are party and to agreements to which ASEAN is a party. In the latter case, individual member states accede to the agreements following the completion of their internal approval processes. The agreements usually have a threshold number of accessions before the agreement can enter into force. The

other potential state parties can accede to the agreement at any time after it enters into force and is then bound to the terms of the agreement.

Table 1 Tourist Characteristics and Food Choices

Tourist Characteristics	Food Choices		Total	
	Socialized as local food	Local food	Amount	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	156	162	318	49,69
Female	185	137	322	50,31
<b>Age</b>				
17 - 25 years	69	50	117	18,59
26 - 35 years	95	72	167	26,09
36 - 45 years	139	131	270	42,19
46 - 55 years	37	39	76	11,88
Upper 55 years	1	7	8	1,25
<b>Education</b>				
Junior High School	1	1	2	0,31
High school	56	55	111	17,34
Undergraduate	199	162	361	56,41
Graduate and Post Graduate	85	81	166	25,94
<b>The income per month (in a million IDR)</b>				
Less than 2,5	22	18	59	9,22
2,6 - 5	96	82	178	27,81
5 - 7,5	73	63	136	21,25
7,5 - 10	38	36	74	11,56
10 - 12,5	32	27	40	6,25
More than 12,5	80	73	153	23,91
<b>Occupation</b>				
School	254	230	48	7,50
Domestic worker	28	20	49	7,66
Working	23	26	484	75,63
Others	36	23	59	9,22
<b>Purposes of visit</b>				
Culinary tourist	61	27	88	13,75
Others	48	36	139	21,72
Weekend holiday	72	67	15	2,34
Long holiday	12	3	116	18,13
Visiting family	47	69	38	5,94
Visiting friend	21	17	137	21,41
Business purpose	71	66	23	3,59
Transit	9	14	84	13,13
<b>Length of visit</b>				
Less than one day	3	10	278	43,44
2 - 4 days	199	160	206	32,19
More than four days	139	129	156	24,38
<b>Statuses of visit</b>				
First time	3	10	13	2,03
More than one time	199	160	359	56,09
Once lived in Bogor	139	129	268	41,88

Source: Obtained from primary data by questionnaire, 2019

A Pearson Chi-Square test is carried out on the association between tourist characteristics and food choice. Table 2 indicates that tourist characteristics such as gender and purpose of visit significantly affect the choice of local foods over socialized local foods. This is at the 0,05 level of significance. Age and status of visit significantly differed at a 0,1 level of significance. Therefore, tourist characteristics such as gender, the purpose of visit, age, and visit status are associated with food choice.

Table 1 indicates that females are more inclined to select foods socialized as local foods than local foods. Tourists who come for culinary reasons are more likely to choose foods socialized as local foods. Visitors who visit just for transit are more inclined to try local foods. Younger tourists are more likely to choose foods socialized as local foods than older tourists. Therefore, the  $H_1$  criteria are accepted regarding gender, the purpose of the visit, age of the visitor, and status of the visitor.

Table 2 The Influence of Tourist Characteristic Factors on Food Choices

Characteristics	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Age	8,270 <sup>a</sup>	4	0,082
Gender	4,532 <sup>a</sup>	1	0,033
Education	1,146 <sup>a</sup>	3	0,766
Occupation	2,827 <sup>a</sup>	3	0,419
Income	0,279 <sup>a</sup>	5	0,998
Length of visit	0,112 <sup>a</sup>	2	0,946
Purposes of visit	23,639 <sup>a</sup>	7	0,001
Statuses of visit	5,647 <sup>a</sup>	2	0,059

Source: obtained from primary data by questionnaire, 2019

### The Difference of Motivational Factors on Food Choices

Motivational factors are measured on a Likert scale. Based on Table 3, exciting experience, escape from routine, and authentic experience had a higher mean value than other motivational factors. The three factors are the most influential in tourists' decisions about food. However, the mean value cannot yet show the differences in the choices of the two food categories.

An independent t-test for equality of means is carried out to test whether each motivational factor could have a different impact on food choice. Table 4 denotes a difference in motivational factors such as authentic experience, prestige, sensory appeal, and physical environment between purchasing local food and food socialized as local food. This difference is significant at a 0,05 level. Therefore, escape from routine was significant at a 0,1 significant level. Table 4 indicates the differences in the influence of motivational factors on food choices.

However, the results have been unable to demonstrate the degree of influence of one factor in comparison to other factors.

Table 3 Average of Motivational Factors by Food Choice

Motivational Factors	Food Choice	Group Statistics			
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Exciting experience	A	299	4,172	0,6236	0,0361
	B	341	4,122	0,5770	0,0312
Escape from routine	A	299	4,207	0,5954	0,0344
	B	341	4,125	0,5422	0,0294
Authentic experience	A	299	4,180	0,6730	0,0390
	B	341	3,740	0,7850	0,0420
Prestige	A	299	3,982	0,6300	0,0364
	B	341	3,787	0,6230	0,0337
Sensory appeal	A	299	3,767	0,5900	0,0341
	B	341	3,642	0,5270	0,0285
Physical environment	A	299	3,840	0,6490	0,0380
	B	341	3,990	0,5500	0,0300
Health concern	A	299	3,572	0,6600	0,0382
	B	341	3,558	0,6160	0,0334

A = Local food

B = Food socialized as local food

Source: obtained from primary data by questionnaire, 2019

Table 4 Independent t-Test for Equality of Means on Food Choice

Motivational Factors	t-test for Equality of Means				
	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Exciting experience	0,0505	0,0475	1,065	638	0,287
Escape from routine	0,0827	0,0450	1,839	638	0,066
Authentic experience	0,4420	0,0580	7,596	638	0,000
Prestige	0,1942	0,0496	3,916	638	0,000
Sensory Appeal	0,1252	0,0442	2,836	638	0,005
Physical Environment	-0,1480	0,0470	-3,129	638	0,002
Health Concern	0,0137	0,0505	0,272	638	0,785

Source: obtained from primary data by questionnaire, 2019

Table 5 indicates a significant correlation among the motivational factors, but there is no high correlation. The results indicated that there is no multicollinearity among the factors. Therefore, logistic regression is carried out without handling multicollinearity violations.

Table 5 Pearson's Correlation Coefficient among Motivational Factors

Correlations							
	Exciting Experience	Escape from Routine	Authentic Experience	Prestige	Sensory Appeal	Physical Environment	Health Concern
Exciting Experience	1	0,603**	0,473**	0,428**	0,385**	0,244**	0,198**
Escape from Routine	0,603**	1	0,465**	0,546**	0,511**	0,311**	0,259**
Authentic Experience	0,473**	0,465**	1	0,540**	0,492**	0,205**	0,270**
Prestige	0,428**	0,546**	0,540**	1	0,790**	0,297**	0,288**
Sensory Appeal	0,385**	0,511**	0,492**	0,790**	1	0,418**	0,443**
Physical Environment	0,244**	0,311**	0,205**	0,297**	0,418**	1	0,550**
Health Concern	0,198**	0,259**	0,270**	0,288**	0,443**	0,550**	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0,01 level (2-tailed).

Source: obtained from primary data by questionnaire, 2019

Table 6 indicates that motivational factors such as exciting experience, authentic experience, and the physical environment affect food choice. When motivated by exciting experiences or the physical environment, tourists are inclined to select socialized food over local food. An increased one-point average of exciting experience increases the likelihood of preferring socialized food over local food by 1.556 times. A one-point increase in the physical environment increases the likelihood of choosing socialized food over local food by 2.448 times. When motivated by authentic experience, tourists are inclined to prefer local food over socialized food. A one-point increase in authentic experience, 0,310 times more likely to choose socialized food than local food or 3.226 times more likely to choose local over socialized food. In terms of exciting experiences, physical environments, and authentic experiences  $H_2$  is accepted.

Table 6 Logistic Regression to Determine Effect of Motivation Factor to Food Choice

Variables in the Equation							
		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1 <sup>a</sup>	Exciting experience	0,442	0,199	4,938	1	0,026	1,556
	Escape from routine	0,055	0,214	0,066	1	0,797	1,057
	Authentic experience	-1,173	0,178	43,357	1	0,000	0,310
	Prestige	-0,180	0,249	0,525	1	0,469	0,835
	Sensory appeal	-0,114	0,280	0,167	1	0,682	0,892
	Physical environment	0,895	0,195	20,994	1	0,000	2,448
	Health concern	-0,090	0,175	0,265	1	0,607	0,914
	Constant	0,681	0,804	0,717	1	0,397	1,976

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: ExcitingExperience, EscapefromRoutine, AuthenticExperience, Prestige, SensoryAppeal, PhysicalEnvironment, HealthConcern.

Source: obtained from primary data by questionnaire, 2019

## Discussion

Researchers found that socialized foods have begun to replace local foods as the mainstays of food tourism. Most respondents chose foods socialized as local foods (53,28%). This finding complements previous studies of tourists' preference for food other than local food (Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2010; Lee, Scott, & Packer, 2014).

The tourist characteristic factors associated with food choices include gender, the purpose of visit, age, and visit status. Females were more likely to choose foods socialized as local foods than local foods, different from previous studies (Chen & Huang, 2018). Tourists who came for the culinary experience are more inclined to select foods that are considered local than local food. It was a new sight to previous studies that found the exceptional attention to food tourists will more likely to choose local foods (Andersson, Mossberg, & Therkelsen, 2017; Chen & Huang, 2019). In addition, tourists who have visited more than once or have lived in the city prefer food socialized as local food. It contradicts the previous studies that found that local food choice in ASEAN is influenced by familiarity with local food (Lee et al., 2020; Mohiuddin & Al Azad, 2019; Park, Kim & Yeoman, 2019). Tourists who are familiar with the city usually choose food socialized as local food. The chance to explore food variety during visit times did not encourage tourists to choose local food as in previous studies (Choe & Kim, 2019; Tse & Crotts, 2005; Wijaya et al., 2017).

Motivating factors that have an impact on food choice include exciting experience, physical environment, and authentic experience. Tourists with more exciting experiences and physical environment are more likely to choose socialized food. The exciting experience variable was measured by the questions "The food that is different from where I come from makes me excited to try," and "Enjoying food that is known as a specialty in the place where the food comes from makes me excited." The same question is asked in previous studies to find that it significantly influence local food consumption (Choe & Kim, 2019; Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2013).

The physical environment variable is measured by the questions "The dining area arrangement is interesting" and "I had a memorable experience where I bought the food." The physical environment variable is not used in testing the local food consumption model (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2013; Kim & Eves, 2012) and is not used in previous studies (Choe & Kim, 2019; Hendijani, 2016; Kim, Park & Lamb, 2019; Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020; Uehara & Assarut, 2020; Wijaya et al., 2016, 2017; Zhang, Chen, & Hu, 2019). The local food consumption model is proposed to measure the physical environment variable to analyze how local food give tourists a different experience from their familiar environment (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009). The respondent's preference is for a modern restaurant environment. Modern restaurants sell food that has been socialized as local food. Historical street food vendors and traditional factories sell local foods. The finding differs from the previous ASEAN study revealing that the regional restaurant dining environment significantly influences locality experience (Kim & Lee, 2022; Tan, Goh, & Lim, 2022; Zhu et al., 2022).



Local food choices are significantly influenced by authentic experiences rather than foods socialized as local foods. The influence of authentic variables on local food choices was consistent with previous studies (Chang, Kivela, & Mak, 2010; Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2013; Kim & Eves, 2012; Sims, 2009). The authenticity variable is measured by the questions “The taste of the food is unique/original from Bogor” and “The food makes me feel like I am in Bogor City.” The finding indicates that authenticity as the primary food tourism attraction is in the local food realm (Youn & Kim, 2017; Zhang, Chen, & Hu, 2019).

Variables in the local food consumption model represent factors that influence tourists’ consumption of local foods. The authentic experience contributes significantly to the authentic cuisine choice. However, tourists with more exciting experiences or the physical environment as a motivational factor were more likely to choose socialized food. Moreover, the choice of tourists who came for culinary purposes, females, and younger tourists challenged the sustainability of the local food industry.

## **Conclusion**

Food plays a crucial role in tourism in ASEAN. It is found that local food gives visitors an authentic taste of the heterogeneity and authenticity of culture in Asia and ASEAN. Food is the intangible cultural heritage in ASEAN. However, the results indicate that the sense of ASEAN’s heterogeneity and authenticity could be replaced by food socialized as local food.

The research findings indicate that local food socialization has replaced local food in exciting experiences and physical environments. The urban context produces a food and dining scene that gives motivational experiences equal to local food consumption. Unlike Thailand or Vietnam, the famous food does not take on regional characteristics. The tourists consider the foods socialized as local food is newer than local food. In addition, tourists familiar with the city tend to choose foods that are perceived as local. It is different from the previous studies that find that local food choice in ASEAN is influenced by familiarity with local food. The tourist attracted by the modern restaurant environment. As a result, the traditionality of local food seller environments is challenged, which is different from the previous studies in ASEAN.

The research proposes that food locality only sometimes matters. Local foods are being challenged by foods that do not relate to the region’s history and culture. The feeling of locality can be replaced by the invention of foods that are socialized as local food. The impact is on tourists who came for their culinary experience, females, and younger tourists. The group consumes a considerable amount of local food in the previous study.

The research has made substantive contributions to the literature on food tourism in the urban context. The research challenges a single view of locality in defining local food with dynamic food inventions. Its limitation was in determining which types of foods were surveyed. The process of developing foods socialized as local foods cannot be elaborated by this method. The process was essential to understand how a novel type of food became an

intangible cultural form. This limitation was because the study was focused on the tourist's consumption. The other limitation was that the study used a single case. Further research in a city with a similar character in ASEAN is recommended. This will enable us to develop a generalizable understanding of the role of socialized foods in ASEAN's urban food tourism.

## Acknowledgement

Many thank editors and reviewers for their comments and suggestions that improved and clarified the article. This research was funded by the Directorate of Research and Community Service Universitas Indonesia in Indexed International Publication Grants for the Final Project of Universitas Indonesia Students (PITTA) grant.

## About The Authors

Agustina Multi Purnomo is an active lecturer in the Department of Communication Science at Universitas Djuanda, Bogor. She has graduated from a Ph.D program in Sociology at University of Indonesia and serves as a reviewer on several international journals indexed by Scopus as well. She has published several articles in the fields of sociology of tourism and urban studies, indicating that she is interested in these fields. Recent publications are Urbanization and Tourism Development in Bogor City (2021), Attraction of Culinary Tourism Destinations to Promote Sustainability Development During the Pandemic (2022), Sociology of Food Tourism Research Opportunities: A Bibliometric Analysis (2022), Social Factors and Social Media Usage Activities on Customer Path 5A Continuity Due to E-Marketing Communication (2023).

## References

- Adam, A. M. (2020). Sample size determination in survey research. *Journal of Scientific Research & Reports*, 26(5), 90-97. <https://doi.org/10.9734/jsrr/2020/v26i530263>
- Andersson, T. D., Mossberg, L., & Therkelsen, A. (2017). Food and tourism synergies: Perspectives on consumption, production and destination development. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 17(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2016.1275290>
- Avieli, N. (2013). What is 'local food?' Dynamic culinary heritage in the World Heritage Site of Hoi An, Vietnam. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 8(2-3), 120-132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2013.767812>
- Berno, T., Dentice, G., & Wisansing, J. J. (2019). Kin kao laew reu young ('have you eaten rice yet')?: A new perspective on food and tourism in Thailand. In *Food Tourism in Asia* (pp. 17-30). Springer. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3624-9\\_2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3624-9_2)

- Björk, P., & Kauppinen-Räsänen, H. (2019). Destination foodscape: A stage for travelers' food experience. *Tourism Management*, 71, 466–475. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.11.005>
- BPS-Statistics of Bekasi Municipality. (2020). Bekasi City in number. Bekasi: BPS-Statistics of Bekasi Municipality.
- BPS-Statistics of Bogor Municipality. (2019). *Bogor City in number*. Bogor: BPS-Statistics of Bogor Municipality.
- BPS-Statistics of Bogor Municipality. (2020). Bogor City in number. Bogor: BPS-Statistics of Bogor Municipality.
- BPS-Statistics of Depok Municipality. (2020). Depok City in number. Depok: BPS-Statistics of Depok Municipality.
- BPS-Statistics of Tangerang Municipality. (2020). Tangerang City in number. Tangerang: BPS-Statistics of Tangerang Municipality.
- Chan, A., Tresna, P. W., & Suryadipura, D. (2017). Experiential value of Bandung food tourism. *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research*, 6(1), 184.
- Chang, R. C. Y., Kivela, J., & Mak, A. H. N. (2010). Food preferences of Chinese tourists. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(4), 989–1011.
- Chen, Q., & Huang, R. (2018). Local food in China: A viable destination attraction. *British Food Journal*, 120(1), 146–157. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-03-2017-0135>
- Chen, Q., & Huang, R. (2019). Understanding the role of local food in sustaining Chinese destinations. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22(5), 544–560. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2018.1444020>
- Choe, J. Y. J., & Kim, S. S. (2019). Development and validation of a multidimensional tourist's local food consumption value (TLFCV) scale. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 77, 245–259. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.07.004>
- Chuang, H.-T. (2009). The rise of culinary tourism and its transformation of food cultures: The National Cuisine of Taiwan. *The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, 27(2), 84–108.
- Chyung, S. Y., Roberts, K., Swanson, I., & Hankinson, A. (2017). Evidence-based survey design: The use of a midpoint on the Likert scale. *Performance Improvement*, 56(10), 15–23. <https://doi.org/10.22439/cjas.v27i2.2542>
- Cohen, E. (1988). Authenticity and commoditization in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15(3), 371–386. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(88\)90028-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(88)90028-X)
- Cohen, E., & Avieli, N. (2004). Food in tourism: Attraction and impediment. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(4), 755–778. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2004.02.003>
- Hashemi, S., Mohammed, H. J., Kiumarsi, S., Kee, D. M. H., & Anarestani, B. B. (2021). Destinations food image and food neophobia on behavioral intentions: culinary tourist behavior in Malaysia. *Journal of International Food & Agribusiness Marketing*, 35(1), 66–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08974438.2021.1943101>

- Hendijani, R. B. (2016). Effect of food experience on tourist satisfaction: The case of Indonesia. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 10(3), 272-282. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJCTHR-04-2015-0030>
- Himanshu, J. (2015). Evaluation of official tourism websites of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) using the balanced score-card approach. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Systems*, 8(2), 64-73.
- Hsu, F. C., & Scott, N. (2020). Food experience, place attachment, destination image and the role of food-related personality traits. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 44(3), 79-87. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.05.010>
- Irwansyah, I., & Triputra, P. (2016). Indonesia gastronomy brand: Netnography on virtual culinary community. *The Social Sciences*, 11(19), 4585-4588. <https://dx.doi.org/10.36478/sscience.2016.4585.4588>
- Jeaheng, Y., & Han, H. (2020). Thai street food in the fast growing global food tourism industry: preference and behaviors of food tourists. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 45, 641-655. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.11.001>
- Kheng-Lian, K. (2014). ASEAN Cultural Heritage-Forging an Identity for Realisation of an ASEAN Community in 2015? *Environmental Policy and Law*, 44(1/2), 237-247.
- Kim, M. & Lee, G. (2022). The effect of servicescape on place attachment and experience evaluation: the importance of exoticism and authenticity in an ethnic restaurant. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 34(7), 2664-2683. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-07-2021-0929>
- Kim, S., Park, E., & Lamb, D. (2019). Extraordinary or ordinary? Food tourism motivations of Japanese domestic noodle tourists. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 29, 176-186. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.01.001>
- Kim, Y. G., & Eves, A. (2012). Construction and validation of a scale to measure tourist motivation to consume local food. *Tourism Management*, 33(6), 1458-1467. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.01.015>
- Kim, Y. G., Eves, A., & Scarles, C. (2009). Building a model of local food consumption on trips and holidays: A grounded theory approach. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28(3), 423-431. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2008.11.005>
- Kim, Y. G., Eves, A., & Scarles, C. (2013). Empirical verification of a conceptual model of local food consumption at a tourist destination. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 33, 484-489. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2012.06.005>
- Knollenberg, W., Duffy, L. N., Kline, C., & Kim, G. (2021). Creating competitive advantage for food tourism destinations through food and beverage experiences. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 18(4), 379-397. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2020.1798687>
- Korstanje, M., & Seraphin, H. (2017). Revisiting the sociology of consumption in tourism. In S. Kumar Dixit (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Consumer Behaviour in Hospitality and Tourism* (pp. 2-16). Abingdon: Routledge

- Lee, C.-L., Lee, S.-H., Seo, G.-G., & Hong, J.-H. (2020). The effect of plating, ingredients, and cooking processes on the acceptance and authenticity of ethnic rice dishes. *Foods*, 9(8), 976. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods9080976>
- Lee, K.-H., Scott, N., & Packer, J. (2014). Where does food fit in tourism? *Tourism Recreation Research*, 39(2), 269–274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2014.11081770>
- Lin, Y.-C., Pearson, T. E., & Cai, L. A. (2011). Food as a form of destination identity: A tourism destination brand perspective. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 11(1), 30–48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/thr.2010.22>
- Mak, A. H. N., Lumbers, M., & Eves, A. (2012). Globalisation and food consumption in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(1), 171–196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2011.05.010>
- Mohiuddin, M., & Al Azad, M. (2019). Ethnic food products in International trade: ASEAN agro-food products' marketing strategy in Canadian market. In N. Faghih (Eds.), *Globalization and Development* (pp. 359–380). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11766-5\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-11766-5_14)
- Naruetharadhol, P., & Gebsumbut, N. (2020). A bibliometric analysis of food tourism studies in Southeast Asia. *Cogent Business & Management*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1733829>
- Nguyen, L. P., & Nguyen, H. T. (2021). Factors impacting tourism demand: An analysis of 10 ASEAN countries. *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics, and Business*, 8(1), 385–393. <https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2021.vol8.no1.385>
- Osmana, S., & Nazarib, N. (2020). Reviewing food as a tourism product. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 10(8).
- Park, E., Kim, S., & Yeoman, I. (2019). Eating in Asia: Understanding food tourism and its perspectives in Asia. In E. Park, S. Kim, & I. Yeoman (Eds.), *Food tourism in Asia* (pp. 3–13). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3624-9\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3624-9_1)
- Purnomo, A. (2016). The roles of food industries as a part of food tourism development for woman empowerment in Bogor. *Asia Tourism Forum 2016-the 12th Biennial Conference of Hospitality and Tourism Industry in Asia*, 375–380.
- Purnomo, A. M. (2022). *Produksi ruang wisata kuliner di Kota Bogor: Antara produksi, konsumsi dan lokalitas*. [Doctoral disertation Department of Sociology, Social and Politic Sains Faculty of Universitas Indonesia].
- Purnomo, A. M. (2021). Urbanization and tourism development in Bogor city. *Society*, 9(1), 393–409. <https://doi.org/10.33019/society.v9i1.338>
- Roozbeh, B. H., Ng, S. I., & Boo, H. C. (2013). Effect of food experience on overall satisfaction: comparison between first-time and repeat visitors to Malaysia. *International Food Research Journal*, 20(1), 141–146.

- Rousta, A., & Jamshidi, D. (2020). Food tourism value: Investigating the factors that influence tourists to revisit. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 26(1), 73–95. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356766719858649>
- Scheyvens, R., & Laeis, G. (2019). Linkages between tourist resorts, local food production and the sustainable development goals. *Tourism Geographies*, 23(4), 787-809. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2019.1674369>
- Sims, R. (2009). Food, place and authenticity: local food and the sustainable tourism experience. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 17(3), 321–336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669580802359293>
- Slocum, S. L. (2016). Understanding tourism support for a craft beer trail: The case of Loudoun County, Virginia. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 13(3), 292–309. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2015.1104381>
- Stoffelen, A., & Vanneste, D. (2016). Institutional (dis) integration and regional development implications of whisky tourism in Speyside, Scotland. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 16(1), 42–60. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2015.1062416>
- Tan, K. H., Goh, Y. N., & Lim, C. N. (2022). Linking customer positive emotions and revisit intention in the ethnic restaurant: A Stimulus Integrative Model. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 1-30.
- Tsai, C. (2016). Memorable tourist experiences and place attachment when consuming local food. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(6), 536–548. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2070>
- Tse, P., & Crofts, J. C. (2005). Antecedents of novelty seeking: international visitors' propensity to experiment across Hong Kong's culinary traditions. *Tourism Management*, 26(6), 965–968. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.07.002>
- Uehara, W., & Assarut, N. (2020). Foreign food consumption as an extraordinary experience: A comparative study on the perceived value of Japanese and Thai consumers. *Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal*, 68(2), 120–129. <http://dx.doi.org/10.37741/t.68.2.1>
- UNWTO. (2020). *Tourism term*. <https://www.unwto.org/glossary-tourism-terms>
- Urry, J. (1995). *Consuming Places* Routledge. London & New York.
- Wijaya, S. (2019). Indonesian food culture mapping: a starter contribution to promote Indonesian culinary tourism. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 6(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-019-0009-3>
- Wijaya, S., King, B., Morrison, A., & Nguyen, T.-H. (2017). Destination encounters with local food: The experience of international visitors in Indonesia. *Tourism Culture & Communication*, 17(2), 79–91. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3727/109830417X14966810027526>
- Wijaya, S., Morrison, A., Nguyen, T.-H., & King, B. (2016). *Exploration of Culinary Tourism in Indonesia: What Do the International Visitors Expect?* Petra Christian University.



- Youn, H., & Kim, J.-H. (2017). Effects of ingredients, names and stories about food origins on perceived authenticity and purchase intentions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 63, 11–21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2017.01.002>
- Zhang, T., Chen, J., & Hu, B. (2019). Authenticity, quality, and loyalty: Local food and sustainable tourism experience. *Sustainability*, 11(12), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11123437>
- Zhu, D., Wang, J., Wang, P., & Xu, H. (2022). How to frame destination foodscapes? A perspective of mixed food experience. *Foods*, 11(12), 1706. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods11121706>

# Institutional Dynamics of Halal Tourism Development In Indonesia and Malaysia

Budiman Mahmud Musthofa<sup>1</sup>, Diaz Pranita<sup>2</sup>,  
Mohamad Sattar Rasul<sup>3</sup>, and Banu Muhammad Haidlir<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Program Study of Tourism Business Management, Vocational Education Program,  
Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia 16424

<sup>3</sup>STEM Enculturation Research Center, Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi,  
Malaysia 43600

<sup>4</sup>Center for Islamic Economics and Business, Faculty of Economics and Business,  
Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia 16424

b.mahmud@ui.ac.id; d.pranita@ui.ac.id; drsattar@ukm.edu.my; banu.muhammad@ui.ac.id

**How to Cite:** Musthofa, B. M., Pranita, D., Rasul, M. S., & Haidlir, M. (2023). Institutional dynamics of halal tourism development in Indonesia and Malaysia. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 11(1), 21–41.  
<https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.9431>

## Abstract

In the context of Southeast Asia, Muslim-majority nations Indonesia and Malaysia had pioneered the development of halal tourism. Nevertheless, Malaysia has outperformed Indonesia in cultivating its halal tourism industry. The research sought to investigate the political economy factors contributing to this discrepancy. The research posited that the emergence of Islamic identity, the intensification of Islam's politicization, and the varying degrees of capitalizing on Islamic values are three crucial determinants influencing the relative success of Malaysia's halal tourism industry compared to Indonesia's. Firstly, the perception of Islamic identity in Malaysia is less threatening compared to that in Indonesia. Secondly, the politicization of Islam is less pronounced in Malaysia than in Indonesia. To examine these assertions, the research utilized a methodological blend of primary and secondary data, incorporating interviews with policymakers and stakeholders of halal tourism in both countries. In addition to identifying the critical factors shaping the development of halal tourism, the research contributed by offering several recommendations concerning the innovative aspect of halal tourism branding. It was argued that within the growth of halal tourism in a nation, debates surrounding the emergence of Islamic identity in aspects of halal tourism can potentially obstruct the advancement of cultural tourism commodities. Consequently, the research enhances our understanding of the complex interplay between political economy factors and the evolution of halal tourism from an academic perspective.

**Keywords:** Halal tourism development, institutional dynamics, Indonesia, Malaysia

## Introduction

Halal tourism, an intriguing concept for Muslim and non-Muslim nations alike, encompasses travel activities aligned with Islamic teachings and values (Slamet et al., 2022; Battour et al., 2018; Carboni et al., 2014; Oktadiana et al., 2016) and is often considered a subset of religious tourism (El-Gohary, 2016). The term “halal”, denoting permissibility in Islamic teachings, forms the foundation of this understanding. Muslims, encouraged to travel for both pilgrimage and leisure purposes, require accommodations, food, fashion, and medical care that comply with Islamic principles (Battour et al., 2018). Despite its potential, halal tourism remains a relatively nascent phenomenon requiring further elucidation due to the potential economic, political, societal, and cultural implications arising from variations in Islamic norms and religious beliefs (Rasul, 2019). Nevertheless, the halal tourism sector is anticipated to experience significant growth, as demonstrated by its increasing popularity in Muslim-majority and non-Muslim countries such as Japan, China, South Korea, and Thailand (Yousaf & Xiucheng, 2018). Governments have acknowledged this trend and are actively endorsing it as a branding strategy to bolster their economies (Battour et al., 2018).

Malaysia and Indonesia have emerged as pioneers in halal tourism development in Southeast Asia, attributable to several factors. Firstly, both countries boast sizable Muslim populations, facilitating the promotion and expansion of halal tourism. Secondly, the Malaysian and Indonesian governments have recognized halal tourism’s economic potential, implementing policies and initiatives to support its growth. For instance, Malaysia established the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board in 1991, which has been instrumental in fostering the halal tourism industry (Samori, Salleh, & Khalid, 2016). Similarly, Indonesia introduced the “Wonderful Indonesia” campaign in 2011 to promote its tourism industry, encompassing halal tourism (Slamet et al., 2022).

As popular tourist destinations, these predominantly Muslim nations have witnessed significant economic growth due in part to halal tourism. Since 2001, Malaysia has consistently attracted tourists, courtesy of its supportive Islamic environment, and has emerged as a model for other countries seeking to develop halal tourism. Conversely, Indonesia has recently initiated its halal tourism program as a strategic maneuver to stimulate local economic activity and entice more visitors.

Nonetheless, challenges persist in promoting halal tourism, particularly in Indonesia, where its application in certain regions is deemed inappropriate due to ethnic and religious differences (Slamet et al., 2022). Additionally, the term “halal tourism” may incite discrimination, prompting the suggestion of “Muslim-friendly tourism” as an alternative. Despite these challenges, halal tourism represents a burgeoning trend warranting further investigation, especially concerning its development across various countries.

This research endeavors to explore state-society relations' role in shaping halal tourism development in Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as the extent to which Islamic identity influences the success of these initiatives. The research aims to offer valuable insights and recommendations for countries aspiring to utilize halal tourism as a branding strategy and attract more international tourists. By scrutinizing differences in the politicization of Islam and the capitalization of Islamic values, this research seeks to illuminate the critical factors contributing to Malaysia's thriving halal tourism industry and the obstacles Indonesia encounters in implementing its program. Ultimately, this investigation can serve as an invaluable resource for policymakers and marketers endeavoring to enhance their halal tourism strategies and capitalize on this expanding trend.

The research posits that several factors are instrumental in explaining Malaysia's superior success compared to Indonesia in the halal tourism sector. Specifically, the emergence of Islamic identity, the politicization of Islam, and the degree of capitalization of Islamic values are argued to be crucial in this context. Malaysia is suggested to exhibit lower levels of Islam's politicization compared to Indonesia, and non-Muslim majority countries tend to perceive halal tourism as part of the state's responsibility in improving the political economy. By comprehending these factors, governments and countries marketing halal tourism can derive valuable insights and recommendations that can help augment the influx of international tourists.

The remainder of the research is organized as to: 1) provide a literature review on halal tourism, its potential growth, and the challenges it faces; 2) outline the research methodology employed, which includes the use of primary and secondary data, as well as interviews with policymakers and stakeholders in the halal tourism industry in both Indonesia and Malaysia; 3) present the findings of the study, which highlights the crucial factors contributing to the development of halal tourism in these countries and the implications of Islamic identity on their success; 4) discuss the results in the context of the broader literature and offers recommendations for policymakers and marketers aiming to capitalize on the growing trend of halal tourism; and 5) conclude the article by summarizing the main findings and discussing the potential avenues for future research in this domain.

Through this comprehensive examination of the halal tourism industry in Indonesia and Malaysia, the research aims to contribute to the scholarly understanding of the interplay between political economy factors, Islamic identity, and the development of halal tourism. By providing practical recommendations for nations looking to promote halal tourism as part of their branding strategy, this research seeks to foster the sustainable growth of this burgeoning sector, ensuring that it remains an inclusive and accessible avenue for tourists from diverse backgrounds.

## **Literature Review**

The nexus between halal tourism and Islamic identity has piqued the interest of scholars in recent years. As a vital social institution, religion significantly influences individuals' and

society's attitudes, values, and behavior, leading to an evident connection between religion and tourism, particularly in the context of halal tourism (El-Gohary, 2016). Though a relatively nascent concept, halal tourism has been the subject of extensive debate among researchers. Nonetheless, existing literature has established that it encompasses the provision of products and services catering to Muslim tourists' travel needs while adhering to Islamic teachings and values (Mohsin et al., 2016).

Derived from Arabic, the term "halal" denotes permissible actions according to Islamic teachings, whereas "haram" refers to proscribed actions. Within Islamic teachings, halal represents moral behavior encompassing all aspects of life, such as clothing, language, food, and drink (Vargas-Sánchez & Moral-Moral, 2018). Consequently, halal tourism entails the delivery of travel products and services aligned with Islamic principles and values, necessitating adherence to Islamic teachings and customs during development and marketing processes (Battour et al., 2018). As adherents of Islam, Muslims are encouraged to travel in accordance with religious teachings, extending beyond Hajj or Umrah to encompass recreation, socialization, and appreciation for all of God's creation (Oktadiana et al., 2016). Hence, halal tourism plays a crucial role in reinforcing Islamic identity and values among Muslim travelers.

Several studies have explored the dimensions of halal tourism and its implications for destination marketing and management (Henderson, 2016; Samori et al., 2016). These studies have identified various challenges and opportunities for the growth of the halal tourism industry, such as the need for standardized certification processes, accommodation and food services that cater to Muslim tourists, and the importance of cultural sensitivity in marketing strategies (Battour & Ismail, 2016; Jafari & Scott, 2014). Furthermore, research has underscored the importance of understanding the diverse preferences and expectations of Muslim tourists, who represent a heterogeneous market segment with distinct cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds (El-Gohary, 2016; Oktadiana et al., 2020).

In summary, the literature review indicates a robust relationship between halal tourism and Islamic identity. Grounded in Islamic principles and values, halal tourism constitutes a vital component of the tourism industry for Muslim travelers. It reinforces Islamic identity and values among Muslim tourists, offering them opportunities to partake in travel activities compatible with their religious teachings. This growing body of research underlines the need for further investigation into the development of halal tourism in various contexts, as well as the factors that contribute to its success or failure in different countries.

### **Islam and politicization**

The development of halal tourism faces various challenges, as noted in the literature. One of the primary management challenges is related to the lack of standardization and certification in the halal tourism industry. Due to the absence of a universal halal certification and accreditation system, different interpretations of what constitutes halal exist, leading to confusion and distrust among Muslim tourists. Another management challenge is the limited

availability of halal tourism products and services, which results in a lack of market diversity and ultimately reduces the appeal of halal tourism.

In addition to the challenges, another critical management challenge in developing halal tourism is human resource management. The success of halal tourism heavily relies on the quality of services provided to Muslim travelers, which, in turn, depends on the quality of human resources available in the tourism industry.

A key debate in the literature surrounding human resource management in the context of halal tourism is whether a specific set of skills or knowledge related to Islamic practices and culture is necessary. Some argue that specialized training and knowledge are required to cater to Muslim travelers' specific needs, such as halal food preparation, prayer facilities, and appropriate dress codes. Others, however, argue that the fundamental principles of good customer service and hospitality are universal and should be the main focus of human resource management in the halal tourism industry.

Another issue related to human resource management in halal tourism is the availability of qualified staff, particularly in Muslim-minority countries. In countries where Muslims are a minority, it may be challenging to find staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to cater to Muslim travelers' needs. This can be particularly difficult in areas such as food preparation, where there may be a lack of understanding of halal certification and the specific requirements of halal food production.

Moreover, language skills can also pose a challenge for the tourism industry in catering to Muslim travelers. As the majority of Muslim travelers are non-native English speakers, staff proficient in other languages, such as Arabic or Urdu, may be necessary to communicate effectively with these tourists.

Addressing these challenges in human resource management in the halal tourism industry requires a proactive approach to recruitment, training, and staff development. Employers need to invest in staff training to ensure employees possess the necessary skills and knowledge to provide high-quality services to Muslim travelers. Additionally, recruitment efforts should target individuals with the required language and cultural skills. Finally, promoting diversity and inclusivity in the tourism industry will help attract and retain qualified staff from diverse backgrounds.

Economic challenges in developing halal tourism are also significant. Firstly, the high cost of halal certification for businesses and service providers is a substantial barrier to entry, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Secondly, the lack of investment in infrastructure and technology needed to cater to Muslim tourists' specific needs, such as halal food and prayer facilities, may reduce the attractiveness of halal tourism destinations. Thirdly, halal tourism development requires considerable investment in research and development, product design, and marketing, which may not be feasible for some destinations.

Marketing is a significant challenge in developing halal tourism, as it requires targeting a specific niche market with unique needs and preferences. The promotion and marketing of

halal tourism must focus on ensuring that the target audience is aware of the provided facilities and services, and that the destination can meet their requirements.

One of the main challenges in marketing halal tourism is the lack of standardization and regulation of halal tourism products and services. This leads to difficulties in promoting and marketing halal tourism products and services, as it is challenging to determine whether a particular product or service is halal or not. This challenge could potentially lead to a loss of trust and confidence in halal tourism products and services, negatively impacting the industry.

Another challenge in marketing halal tourism is the competition between halal tourism destinations. With the increasing demand for halal tourism, many destinations are entering the market, creating fierce competition. Destinations must differentiate themselves and create a unique selling proposition to attract halal tourists.

Additionally, the lack of marketing expertise and funding for promoting halal tourism is a significant challenge. Many countries have not yet developed the necessary marketing strategies and campaigns to effectively promote their halal tourism products and services. Furthermore, due to limited resources and funding, many countries are unable to compete with other destinations in terms of marketing efforts.

These factors might indeed provide an insightful explanation of the challenges in developing halal tourism. The research focuses on how the politicization of Islam by the state has influenced the development of Halal Tourism. Many Muslim-majority countries have recognized the potential of Halal Tourism and have actively promoted it as a means of economic development. However, the state's politicization of Islam can significantly impact the development of Halal Tourism. In many Muslim-majority countries, the state plays a crucial role in regulating and promoting Halal Tourism. For example, in Malaysia, the government has established a Halal Tourism Unit to oversee the development and promotion of Halal Tourism (Arshad et al., 2019). Similarly, in Indonesia, the government has created a Halal Tourism Development Acceleration Team to support the growth of this sector (Santoso et al., 2022). These government initiatives reflect the increasing politicization of Islam in these countries, where the promotion of Halal Tourism is seen as a way to showcase their Islamic identity and strengthen their position in the global Muslim community.

Furthermore, in many Muslim-majority countries, the government has used Islam as a political tool to gain legitimacy and support from the population. As a result, they have promoted the development of Halal Tourism as a way of attracting Muslim tourists and promoting themselves as Islamic states. In some cases, the state has used Halal Tourism as a way to promote a particular political agenda. For example, in Malaysia, the government has promoted Halal Tourism as a means of promoting a conservative Islamic identity and countering the influence of Western culture. This politicization of Islam can create tensions within the tourism industry and may limit the potential growth of Halal Tourism.

Furthermore, the state's role in regulating Halal Tourism can also affect its development. In some cases, the state may impose strict regulations on Halal Tourism to maintain a certain

level of religious authenticity. This can create challenges for businesses in the tourism industry, particularly those that are not based in Muslim-majority countries (El-Gohary, 2016). However, there are also examples of states that have successfully promoted Halal Tourism without politicizing Islam or imposing overly restrictive regulations. For example, in Turkey, the government has promoted Halal Tourism to attract Muslim tourists without promoting a specific political agenda (Elaziz & Kurt, 2017). This approach has allowed for the development of a thriving Halal Tourism industry in Turkey.

The politicization of Islam can also have negative impacts on the development of Halal Tourism. Halal tourism can be used as an agenda for political Islam because it provides a platform for promoting Islamic values and practices in the tourism industry. As halal tourism is focused on providing services and facilities that comply with Islamic principles, it can be used as a means to promote a particular version of Islam that political Islamists favor. For example, in some countries, the strict interpretation of Islamic laws can limit the development of certain types of tourism activities, such as entertainment and nightlife, which may not be considered Halal. This can limit the diversity of tourism products and experiences available to Muslim travelers, potentially hindering the Halal Tourism sector.

In countries where political Islam is dominant, halal tourism can be used to promote Islamic values and practices to reinforce the Islamic identity of society. This can lead to an increase in the use of Islamic dress codes, segregation of genders, and the promotion of Islamic teachings in public spaces. It can also lead to the adoption of Shariah laws in the tourism industry, which can impact the behavior and practices of tourists who visit these countries. Furthermore, halal tourism can be used to support the development of the local Islamic economy and to promote the interests of Islamic business owners, which can further reinforce the Islamic identity of the society. This can also lead to the marginalization of non-Muslims and the exclusion of other cultural and religious groups from the tourism industry.

Overall, the relationship between the state and the politicization of Islam can have a significant impact on the development of Halal Tourism. States that are able to promote Halal Tourism without politicizing Islam or imposing overly restrictive regulations are likely to experience the most success in this area. In conclusion, the state and politicization of Islam have played a significant role in the development of Halal Tourism. While government initiatives have helped to promote this sector and increase its economic and social benefits, the strict interpretation of Islamic laws in some countries may limit its growth potential. As the global Muslim population continues to grow, the development of Halal Tourism is likely to remain an important area of focus for governments and tourism stakeholders around the world.

In order to foster the growth of Halal Tourism, it is essential for governments and industry stakeholders to recognize the potential pitfalls of politicizing Islam and implement strategies to promote inclusivity and diversity in the sector. This may involve creating clear and consistent guidelines for halal tourism providers, promoting cultural exchange and understanding, and ensuring that the needs of all tourists, regardless of their religious beliefs, are taken into consideration. By addressing these challenges and embracing the opportunities



presented by the growing demand for halal tourism, the industry has the potential to thrive and contribute significantly to the global tourism landscape.

## **Methodology**

The research aims to examine how the politicization of Islam may hinder the development of halal tourism. In achieving the goal, the research compares the trajectories of halal tourism development in Indonesia and Malaysia, both predominantly Muslim countries and popular halal tourism destinations. Despite sharing many similarities, including the initiation of policies and activities to boost their economies and create jobs through halal tourism, the two countries exhibit differences in the reception of the concept. Specifically, halal tourism faces resistance in certain regions of Indonesia, while such opposition is absent in Malaysia. By comparing these divergent paths, the research seeks to shed light on the ways in which the politicization of Islam can impede the development of halal tourism.

This research employs a qualitative comparative case study design, focusing on Indonesia and Malaysia. This approach enables a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between the politicization of Islam and the development of halal tourism in both countries. Primary data is gathered through semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders in Indonesia and Malaysia. In Indonesia, we will interview informants from the Ministry of Tourism, as well as tourism stakeholders in Jakarta, Lombok, and West Sumatera. In Malaysia, interview is implemented with policymakers from the Ministry of Tourism, particularly those involved in Islamic tourism, as well as representatives from tourism business associations and academics.

The semi-structured interview format allows for flexibility in exploring the perceptions and experiences of the interviewees, while also maintaining a focus on key themes and topics. Interviews conducted either in-person and via online platforms. In addition to the primary data, the research utilizes secondary data sources to enrich our understanding of the research topic. These sources include research articles, books, policy documents, and reports related to halal tourism and the politicization of Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia.

The data collected from the interviews are transcribed and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This method involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data. The process of coding and categorizing the interview transcripts identifies key themes and sub-themes related to the politicization of Islam and its impact on the development of halal tourism in both countries.

The analysis is conducted in an iterative manner, allowing for constant comparison and refinement of emerging themes. To ensure the trustworthiness of our findings, the research employs strategies such as triangulation of data sources and member checking, where possible. This qualitative comparative case study seeks to provide valuable insights into the ways in which the politicization of Islam can impede the development of halal tourism in Indonesia and Malaysia. By examining the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders in

both countries, the research aims to contribute to the broader understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the halal tourism sector, and inform future policy and practice.

## **Analysis**

### **Halal Tourism in Indonesia and Malaysia**

The tourism sector is the most important sector in the growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Therefore, it can be said that tourism has a significant role in contributing to economic growth in many countries. The expansion of the tourism sector, which became halal tourism, turned out to be the most popular in the market. Hence, it is estimated that the development of the sharia tourism market segment will have the potential to continue growing in the future (Keliat & Sentanu, 2022). Judging from the high interest in halal tourism in Indonesia and Malaysia, there is data to show that tourism revenues in Indonesia averaged US\$2334.90 million from 2010 until 2022, reaching an all-time high of US\$4722.71 million in the third quarter of 2019 and a record low of US\$76.94 million in the third quarter of 2021 (trading economics, 2023). In contrast, tourism revenues in Malaysia averaged RM45242.76 million from 1998 until 2021, reaching an all-time high of RM86143.50 million in 2019 and a record low of RM238.73 million in 2021 (Trading Economics, 2023).

Based on the 2017 Global Muslim Travel Index, the Muslim tourist travel market is declared a segment of the global travel industry that has very fast growth (Slamet et al., 2022). With the rapid growth in the tourism industry, it is also estimated that the Muslim population will be in the figure of 26% of the total population in the world by 2020. Looking at Indonesia and Malaysia as pioneer countries for Muslim tourist destinations and as the most visited countries, based on the 2022 Global Muslim Travel Index data, it is a fact that 2019 saw the highest record in global Muslim tourist arrivals, with 160 million visiting Indonesia.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the number of Muslim tourist visits has decreased, but it is estimated that the number of tourists visiting Indonesia will reach 140 million in 2023 and return to 160 million in 2024. It is estimated that after the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of global Muslim tourists will continue to grow rapidly and reach 230 million in 2026 with expenditures of around US\$225 billion.

The Malaysian government has also taken aggressive steps by targeting around 900 million Muslim tourists to be able to visit Malaysia after the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the results of an interview with the Minister of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri, the halal tourism industry had contributed to the economic sector as much as RM16.72 billion in the era before the COVID-19 pandemic hit all corners of the world, with 5.3 million donations from the arrival of foreign tourists.

Malaysia is expected to become a country that can meet the needs of Muslim tourists and there is no need to doubt its halal status, as the Malaysian government has taken a bold and proactive step by targeting around 900 million Muslim tourists visiting Malaysia.

Indonesia and Malaysia have successfully entered the GMTI (Global Muslim Travel Index) ranking, which has named them Muslim-friendly tourism destinations in the world.

Malaysia is known as the world's best halal tourism destination, based on the 2015 Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) Rating. Being a Muslim-majority country, it is recognized as a Muslim-friendly country that is comparable to Middle Eastern countries famous for their Muslim facilities. Additionally, Malaysia consistently instills Islamic culture as a norm for the state.

Following the 9/11 incident, Malaysia has witnessed a surge in tourism visits as it has become a popular destination for Muslim tourists (Samori et al., 2016). Due to the strict regulations for Muslim tourists visiting Western countries, many of them have shifted their focus to Asian countries where the majority of the population is Muslim. Malaysia has shown a remarkable growth rate in its Muslim tourism market since 2001, which has been consistent over time. The government's proactive approach towards promoting tourism has contributed to maintaining the number of tourist visits and has attracted Muslim tourists, particularly from the Middle East. The number of tourists from the Middle East has created a profitable market niche for Malaysia. In light of this, Malaysia has been able to capitalize on the surge in tourism visits and maintain its position as a popular destination for Muslim tourists.

Malaysia is the most popular travel destination for Middle Eastern countries and other countries such as Turkey, owing to adequate travel facilities, prayer facilities, and halal food. The local government sustains socioeconomic status and cultural heritage to reflect that Malaysia is the world's most popular Muslim tourist destination (Samori et al., 2016).

The Malaysian government has developed strategies to satisfy the primary tourist market from the Middle East. For instance, Middle Eastern tourists can easily find typical Middle Eastern food while in Malaysia. There is no need to worry about language limitations, as the government encourages all tourism sectors and hotels to provide staff who can speak Arabic.

Halal tourism in Indonesia is a developing industry that has been gaining attention in recent years. Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, has the potential to be a leader in the halal tourism industry. However, there have been challenges and controversies surrounding the development of halal tourism in the country.

There is a growing market for halal tourism, with an increasing number of Muslim travelers seeking destinations that cater to their religious and cultural needs. This has led to a push for the development of halal tourism in Indonesia, with efforts to provide halal-certified food options, prayer facilities, and other amenities that cater to Muslim travelers. The Indonesian government has recognized the potential of halal tourism and has set a target to attract 5 million halal tourists by 2019.

Muslim travelers see Indonesia as an attractive destination due to its large Muslim population and the availability of halal tourism facilities and services. Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim-majority country, with a population of over 270 million people, the vast majority of whom are Muslims. As a result, Indonesia is viewed as a natural destination for

Muslim travelers seeking halal-certified food, prayer facilities, and other services that cater to their religious needs.

In addition to the availability of halal tourism facilities, Indonesia is a home to numerous cultural and natural attractions that are of interest to Muslim travelers. These include historic mosques and Islamic landmarks, beautiful beaches, and stunning natural landscapes. Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, has a vibrant Muslim culture and is home to many mosques, halal restaurants, and other Islamic attractions.

In Indonesia, Jakarta is a popular tourist destination that attracts both domestic and international visitors, including those from the Middle East, ASEAN, Asia, and Europe. As reported in an interview on the Jakarta Moslem Friendly Tourism Exhibition (JMFTE) in 2022, Muslim-friendly tourism is a key focus for Indonesia and is expected to be promoted every year through events such as the JMFTE. As the capital city, Jakarta serves as a gateway for foreign tourists to Indonesia, which is one of the largest Muslim countries in the world and a leading destination for Muslim-friendly tourism.

To further promote the development of Muslim-friendly tourism, the Indonesian government is implementing various projects to attract Muslim visitors to the country. One of the main efforts is to develop halal tourism destinations across different regions in Indonesia, including DKI Jakarta, West Sumatra, Aceh, West Nusa Tenggara, West Java, Central Java, East Java, Yogyakarta, Riau, and South Sulawesi. For instance, West Sumatra has received recognition as the best halal tourism destination since 2016, while Aceh and NTB have been designated as Muslim-friendly tourist destinations due to their strong Islamic religious background. In fact, NTB is the first province in Indonesia to establish a Halal Tourism Regulation, as reported by Adinugraha et al. (2021). These efforts aim to expand the market niche of halal tourism in Indonesia and cater to the specific needs and preferences of Muslim tourists.

The discussion highlights the emergence of the global market conditions in the tourism industry, particularly in the halal tourism segment, which has become a robust trade arena, presenting numerous opportunities for companies that can take advantage of the halal-certified product market. Countries in the Asian region, such as Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, South Korea, and Japan, are aware of the benefits of the development of halal products and have shown interest in the halal industrial market. However, despite the intention to build a halal industrial market in Muslim minority countries, finding a restaurant with halal certification is still challenging in these countries, making it difficult for Muslim tourists to find places to eat that guarantee the food is in accordance with Islamic teachings. Therefore, ensuring that Muslim tourists feel protected and safe is a crucial consideration for both non-Muslim and Muslim countries.

Halal certification is one of the most critical factors in halal tourism resources, as it is the main key to attracting tourists to visit. Authentic Halal certification is usually provided by a government-controlled agency or an Islamic organization that can test and certify that the product offered is legal for consumption by Muslims. The halal logo on products being sold can increase their selling power, as it provides a guarantee to Muslims and fosters a positive

relationship between Muslim tourists and the local state that cares about the needs of Muslim tourists.

The most authoritative institution in providing Halal certification in Indonesia is the Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Institute of the Indonesian Ulema Council (LPPOM MUI), which was established in 1989 to assist the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) in the Islamic sphere and has become the main institution in Halal certification services in Indonesia. This institution regulates everything related to halal certification and has the authority to grant Halal certification to products and services. Additionally, this institution provides guidelines and consulting services for companies and organizations that will provide Muslim-friendly services, further promoting halal tourism in Indonesia.

In addition to Indonesia, Malaysia is also a leading country in halal certification for products and services. The Malaysian Islamic Department (JAKIM) is the highest authority in Malaysia to provide halal certification for products and services, including tourism products and services. The halal certification standard used in Malaysia is the MS 1500:2004, which is based on Islamic teachings and guidelines. JAKIM plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality of halal certification in Malaysia, which is an important factor in attracting Muslim tourists. With the growing demand for halal tourism, it is essential for countries to establish credible and authoritative institutions like JAKIM and LPPOM MUI in Indonesia to provide halal certification for products and services. This can not only attract Muslim tourists but also promote trust and confidence among the local Muslim communities and the broader halal industry.

The concept of halal tourism, which was initially a concern for Muslims, has now gained global attention, particularly in the business and industrial sectors. Indonesia and Malaysia, both Muslim-majority countries, have recognized this tourism industry as an opportunity to increase the number of tourists. Jakarta, a highly sought-after tourist destination, attracts not only domestic tourists but also visitors from the Middle East, ASEAN, Asia, and Europe. Muslim-friendly tourism is one of Indonesia's mainstays and is expected to occur yearly, as highlighted in the 2022 Jakarta Moslem Friendly Tourism Exhibition (JMFTE) interview. Jakarta is promoting Muslim-friendly tourism through the Jakarta Moslem Friendly Tourism Exhibition 2022, positioning itself as a market and a leading destination for Muslim-friendly tourism. Being the capital city of Indonesia, Jakarta serves as the gateway for foreign tourists to enter Indonesia.

Malaysia has positioned itself as a top Islamic tourist destination by offering products and services that align with Islamic values (Samori et al., 2016). In 2010, the country established Halal certification standards for its product supply, including luxury and roadside restaurants. Furthermore, the Malaysian government continues to develop its facilities to provide an exceptional tourist experience. Besides promoting halal certification, the government is constructing Muslim-friendly hotels and prayer facilities in all shopping centers.

Indonesia has the potential to follow in Malaysia's footsteps in promoting Halal tourism and becoming a Muslim-friendly destination. The Chairman of the Indonesian Halal Tourism

Association (PPHI), Riyanto Sofyan, suggests that DKI Jakarta, as the capital city of Indonesia, can be maximized as a gateway for foreign tourists to enter Indonesia. Therefore, it is necessary to promote Jakarta as a Muslim-friendly tourist destination. It should be noted that the concept of Muslim-friendly tourism, formerly known as Halal tourism, provides additional services and facilities for Muslim tourists. However, it is essential to clarify that halal, sharia, or Muslim-friendly tourism is not religious tourism. It is a travel concept that aims to cater to the needs of Muslim tourists, including halal food, prayer facilities, and other cultural and religious considerations. Therefore, the promotion of Jakarta as a Muslim-friendly destination is crucial in attracting Muslim tourists and enhancing Indonesia's tourism industry.

Despite the potential for halal tourism in Indonesia, the concept is facing challenges that are not related to government regulations, unlike in Malaysia. The main challenge in Indonesia is the rejection of the halal tourism concept, which may be driven by the complex state-society relations in the country. In contrast, Malaysia has not faced similar issues with the concept of halal tourism. The next section of this research examines the difference in state-society relations between Indonesia and Malaysia, which has led to different paths in the development of halal tourism.

### **Differences in Institutional and State-Society Aspects**

The emergence of halal tourism has brought attention to the rise of political Islam, which positions itself as an awareness that Muslims must maintain teachings that are in accordance with Islamic values. This trend has gained global attention due to the economic benefits it provides. In Indonesia, there are Sharia Regional Regulations based on Islamic law, which some consider a threat to the diversity and values of Pancasila. The post-reform era has seen the passing of regional regulations with religious overtones at both the provincial and district/city levels.

Religion is a social institution that influences individuals' attitudes, values, and behavior. Previous studies viewed Halal Tourism as a novelty, but El-Gohary (2016) views it as an old concept rooted in Islamic Sharia. While Western countries generally separate religious beliefs from political and legal systems, this cannot be universally applied to countries where the majority of the population is Muslim and where Islamic law is a way of life. Muslims who believe in the teachings of God or Sharia are affected by political Islam.

Halal tourism has a profound impact on the tourism industry, particularly in countries where Islam is the majority religion. This trend has led to the promotion of Sharia Regional Regulations and the rise of political Islam. While some view this as a threat to diversity and values, others view it as a way to maintain Islamic values and teachings. Regardless, the impact of religion on society cannot be overlooked, and its influence on attitudes and behavior must be taken into account.

When it comes to state-society aspects, the approaches to Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia differ significantly. Malaysia tends to take a more conservative approach towards Islam. Its Islamic authorities have imposed restrictions on certain aspects of Islamic practices and beliefs, including the banning of Shia Islam and the promotion of a specific interpretation of Sunni Islam. Moreover, Malaysia's approach to religious freedom is more restrictive, with laws that prohibit the propagation of non-Islamic religions to Muslims.

On the other hand, Indonesia, while being a majority Muslim country, has a secular constitution and does not have Islam as its official religion. The Indonesian government has established the Ministry of Religious Affairs to oversee religious affairs, including the management of hajj pilgrimage and religious education. Indonesia has a unitary system of government, and each province has its own religious council to regulate religious affairs at the local level.

Indonesia has a more diverse and pluralistic approach to Islam compared to Malaysia. The country has a long history of syncretism, which is the blending of Islamic, Hindu, and animist beliefs and practices. The government in Indonesia also promotes a moderate form of Islam known as "Islam Nusantara," which emphasizes tolerance, diversity, and national unity. Additionally, Indonesia has a more liberal approach to religious freedom, with laws that guarantee the right to freedom of religion and prohibit discrimination based on religion.

In contrast to Indonesia's more diverse and pluralistic approach to Islam, Malaysia has a more conservative approach, with restrictions imposed on certain Islamic practices and beliefs. Nevertheless, both countries have undergone significant changes in the role of Islam within politics and society in recent decades. A prime illustration of this evolution is the emergence of Malay nationalism, which was inherently linked to Islam. The Malay nationalist movement emerged as a direct response to the call for liberation from colonial powers, becoming a visible presence in the early 20th century. This drive for liberation was steered by influential forces in mainstream media and literature. Notably, these platforms propagated political ideologies intertwined with Islamic consciousness among the Malay population, further solidifying the connection between the faith and the nationalist sentiment. During the early 1900s, a surge of educated Malay elites began establishing organizations centered on literature, education, and welfare. Their mission was not only to inspire transformative changes within Malayan society but also to cement the role of Islam in these transformations (Jamil & Abdullah, 2022).

In Indonesia, the democratization process that began in 1998 has given rise to political Islam, which was heavily suppressed under the authoritarian regime of President Suharto. The increasing democratization of the country has allowed Islamic organizations and leaders to express their views and mobilize support, while the role of Islamic civil society organizations has become more prominent in shaping public discourse.

Decentralization of power to regional governments has also allowed local Islamic leaders and organizations to gain greater influence over public policy and decision-making. In some regions, Islamic political parties have been able to gain control of local governments and promote Islamic values.

On the other hand, the increasing influence of conservative Islamic groups, such as Salafis and Wahhabis, has also contributed to the rise of political Islam in Indonesia. These groups promote a strict interpretation of Islamic law and reject pluralism and secularism, and have gained a foothold in Indonesia through the spread of Islamic education and media influence.

While Malaysia and Indonesia have different approaches to Islam, both countries have experienced changes in the role of Islam in politics and society. The rise of political Islam in Indonesia has been influenced by factors such as democratization, the role of Islamic civil society organizations, decentralization of power, and the influence of conservative Islamic groups.

### **The Politicization of Islam in Indonesia**

Since democratization, the political Islam has also dominated the Indonesian politics. Such domination is increasingly evident at the sub national level. In some regions, Islamic political parties have been able to gain control of local governments, allowing them to implement policies that promote Islamic values. This has been particularly evident in regions with a significant Muslim population, where Islamic political parties have been able to mobilize support and win elections. Example of the domination of political Islam at the sub-national level in Indonesia is the province of Aceh. Aceh has a long history of Islamic influence and was granted special autonomy in 2001, allowing it to implement sharia law in the region. The local government has established a religious police force to enforce Islamic law, including dress codes and the prohibition of alcohol and gambling. The provincial government has also implemented policies that promote Islamic values, such as requiring Muslim civil servants to attend Friday prayers and providing financial assistance for Islamic education. As a result many scholars argue that Indonesian democracy has been in decline (Metera, 2022)

The politicization is happening in many aspect of life dubbed as what scholars have termed as conservative turn. The concept of the 'conservative turn,' as it has been studied by scholars, refers to the increasing permeation of religious influence in various aspects of contemporary life. It's a phenomenon prominently seen in Indonesia where Islam's influence has significantly grown in social, political, and cultural spheres (Saefullah, 2022). For the central government, the issue of regional regulations might hinder economic growth and not aligning with central government regulations. This has prompted President Jokowi to seek their abolishment. However, this policy is limited due to the fact that many community groups use sharia regional regulations during general elections, especially in their campaigns for the presidency. Despite efforts to reduce them, local sharia regulations in Indonesia have actually increased during President Joko Widodo's second term, and it is predicted that more will be adopted in the future. In fact, over 70% of regions in Indonesia have issued regional regulations with religious nuances, including Islamic sharia and the Bible.

The increase in sharia regulations has raised concerns among researchers at the LIPI Research Center, who view their creation as potentially discriminatory and elitist in nature.



They warn that intolerant groups may use these regulations to disrupt minorities or consolidate networks of intolerant groups. Furthermore, the use of sharia regulations in politics can be seen as a sign of political corruption since politicians may use their power to control religion. The politicization of religion in Indonesia has also had an impact on how halal tourism is viewed, often sparking political debate rather than being discussed as an economic opportunity.

The politicization of religion in Indonesia, as seen in the rise of political Islam and the proliferation of sharia regulations, has affected the development of halal tourism in the country. In contrast, Malaysia has successfully integrated Islam into its social contract, and the government and existing associations work together to support the promotion of halal tourism. The difference in approach is reflected in the number of associations involved in the development of the halal tourism model in Indonesia, making it more political and hindering its progress. In Muslim minority countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Thailand, halal tourism is seen as a profitable opportunity for the economy, whereas in Indonesia, despite being a Muslim-majority country, the country still deals with rejection due to the politicization of religion. This highlights how the politicization of religion can impact economic development and create barriers to progress.

In Indonesia, the rejection of halal tourism has been observed in various tourist destinations, including Bali, Danau Toba in North Sumatra, Tana Toraja in South Sulawesi, and Labuan Bajo in West Nusa Tenggara. Interestingly, the rejection of halal tourism is more pronounced in areas where Muslims are a minority, indicating that identity politics may play a role in the opposition to the concept of halal tourism (Makhasi & Rahimadhi, 2020).

For instance, the discourse on halal tourism by Vice President candidate Sandiaga Uno sparked a rejection of the concept in Bali in 2019. Statements made by Uno were met with disapproval by the Governor of Bali, who warned against politicizing the concept of haram and halal in Bali for political gain. The Head of the Bali Tourism Office also voiced concerns that the application of halal tourism to Bali's tourist attractions could compromise the original identity of Bali tourism, which is known for its cultural tourism appeal. The Governor of Bali suggested that the development of halal tourism could be focused on other areas that may not have been explored, to avoid diluting Bali's identity.

Similarly, in the Lake Toba region of North Sumatra Province, there has been hesitancy to adopt the concept of halal tourism due to concerns that it may erode local identity and culture. This is due in part to the area's culinary dishes that are made from processed pork, creating a misunderstanding of the concept of halal tourism. However, the local government's proposal to build halal tourism in the Lake Toba region is not aimed at eliminating the region's original identity but instead hopes to coexist with local wisdom without compromising either.

Overall, the opposition to halal tourism in Indonesia may be attributed to concerns about cultural identity and a fear of eroding local traditions. However, the politicization of the issue and the involvement of various associations compared to government agencies in the development of the halal tourism model have also hindered its progress. Unlike in Malaysia, where the government and existing associations work together to promote halal

tourism, halal tourism in Indonesia has become a tool of political contestation rather than an attempt to create a new tourism model that can benefit the country's economy.

The emergence of halal tourism in Indonesia has been met with significant opposition in various regions, which suggests a potential misunderstanding of the concept. The primary term used in Indonesia for this type of tourism is "halal tourism," while Malaysia has opted for "Muslim-friendly tourism." According to our interview with Roslan Othman, Minister Counselor for Tourism at the Malaysian Embassy in Jakarta, using the term "Muslim-friendly" may be more appropriate for countries with predominantly Muslim populations since the entire country can be deemed halal. Moreover, "Muslim-friendly" appears to be a more flexible and accommodating term for Muslim tourists' needs, whereas "halal" is more rigid due to the strict restrictions imposed by Islamic sharia. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that various tourist destinations in Indonesia have already started offering halal-certified food options and places of worship, which cater to the needs of Muslim tourists.

In Indonesia, the politicization of halal tourism has caused opposition in some areas. However, in DKI Jakarta, the capital city, there is a process to de-politicize halal tourism. KH Masduki Baidlowi, the Head of Information and Communication Division of the MUI, stated at a Halal Tourism Indonesia Focus Group Discussion (FGD) that halal tourism is more about attracting foreign visitors and offering new tourism concepts. While some still associate halal tourism with Islamization, the growing number of Muslim communities worldwide creates a large market niche for halal tourism, which can benefit Indonesia. It is important to understand that halal tourism is not the same as religious tourism but rather an extended service and facility for Muslim travelers. Socialization, exhibitions, and promotions are necessary to equalize the perception of Muslim-friendly tourism, particularly in Jakarta.

The Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Sandiaga Uno, emphasized that halal tourism is not about legalizing tourist attractions but providing additional services that meet the needs and experiences of Muslim tourists. The government aims to focus on Length of Stay and Spending rather than quantity. Halal tourism with additional services provided by business actors is expected to meet the halal category. These services include halal food as a Need to Have, availability of toilets for Muslims and Muslim women as Good to Have, and availability of recreational facilities that are Muslim and family-friendly as Nice to Have. By focusing on these additional services, the government hopes to provide a better experience for Muslim tourists visiting Indonesia.

## **Conclusions**

It is clear that Malaysia and Indonesia have been promoting their Islamic identity through various means including Halal tourism. However, their path in projecting their Islamic identity abroad differ. Malaysia has been actively promoting itself as a leading Halal tourism destination and has invested in the development of Halal tourism infrastructure. The government has also established various initiatives to promote Islamic tourism, such as the Islamic Tourism Centre and the Malaysia Halal Council. Malaysia has been successful in

attracting Muslim tourists from around the world, including from the Middle East and Asia, by offering Halal food, prayer facilities, and Muslim-friendly accommodation options.

On the other hand, Indonesia has taken a more subtle approach to promoting its Islamic identity abroad. Although Indonesia has a large Muslim population, it also has a diverse population with a range of religious beliefs. Therefore, Indonesia's approach to promoting its Islamic identity has focused more on cultural and historical aspects than religion. The government has invested in promoting cultural tourism, such as the Borobudur and Prambanan temples, as well as traditional arts and crafts. Another difference between Malaysia and Indonesia is their level of political Islamization. While Malaysia has experienced a rise in political Islamization in recent years, with the growing influence of conservative Islamic groups, Indonesia has maintained a more moderate approach to Islamization. This may reflect in their approach to projecting their Islamic identity abroad.

## **Acknowledgement**

The authors express their gratitude to the Universitas Indonesia for its assistance and contribution to completing this research. This research was funded by PUTI (Publikasi Terindeks Internasional) Q1 Research Grant from the Universitas Indonesia with Contract Number: NKB-1159/UN2.RST/HKP/05.00/2022.

## **About The Authors**

Budiman Mahmud Musthofa is a faculty member in the Program Study of Tourism Business Management, Vocational Education Program, Universitas Indonesia. Currently, he serves as Head of Department of Applied Social Humanities. His research interests are tourism, community development, social welfare, and tourism anthropology and sociology. He has previously involved in Enjoy Jakarta's Islamic-friendly Tourism Exhibition in 2022 and some tourism village development in Indonesia.

Diaz Pranita is a faculty member in the Program Study of Tourism Business Management, Vocational Education Program and currently lead Vocational Corporation (V-Corp) of Universitas Indonesia, business unit holding of the faculty. Her main research topics are special interest tourism development, creative business development and community empowerment, while she is also practitioner in event business. She has previously involved in Enjoy Jakarta's Islamic-friendly Tourism Exhibition in 2022 and consultant member for urban tourism development for Jakarta Province, involved in some tourism village development in Indonesia, and experience coordinator consultant for U20 Mayors Summit.

Mohamad Sattar Bin Rasul is a professor in Faculty of Education of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. He obtained his Doctor of Philosophy in Industrial Engineering & System, at Universiti Putra Malaysia. His research area includes TVET Policy and Curriculum,

Quality Assurance, Qualification and Skills Certification System, Career Development, Engineering and STEM Education. He became Project Leader for two Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS), Knowledge Transfer Program (KTP) Grant, CMLV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) Grant and University-Industrial Grant, University-Community Grant and APEC Grant. He has won the Community Involvement/Engagement Award in 2015 and 2019. Until now, he has published 224 articles in indexed journals, 65 proceedings, and 10 academic books.

Banu Muhammad Haidlir is a lecturer at the Department of Economics, Faculty of Economics and Business Universitas Indonesia (FEB UI). He obtained his doctoral degree from the Department of Social Welfare, Faculty of Political and Social Science, University of Indonesia. Previously He gained a Master of Economics (ME) and a Bachelor of Economics (BE) at the Department of Economics in the same university. He was the Director of Islamic Economics and Business Center (PEBS FEB UI) between 2013 and 2018. He specializes in social welfare, Islamic finance, halal industry and halal tourism.

## References

- Adinugraha, H. H., Nasution, I. F. A., Faisal, F., Daulay, M., Harahap, I., Wildan, T., ..., & Purwanto, A. (2021). Halal tourism in Indonesia: An Indonesian Council of Ulama National Sharia Board Fatwa Perspective. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 8(3), 665–673. <https://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2021.vol8.no3.0665>
- Akpur, U. (2020). Critical, reflective, creative thinking and their reflections on academic achievement. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2020.100683>
- Aminah, S., & Bhakti, B. A. S. (2022). Multiculturalism in Japan halal tourism: Localizing the concept of halal. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 21(3), 273–289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2022.2106788>
- Arshad, N. C., & Irijanto, T. T. (2022). The creative industries effects on economic performance in the time of pandemic. *International Journal of Ethics and Systems*, 39(3), 557–575. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOES-10-2021-0199>
- Battour, M., Hakimian, F., Ismail, M., & Boğan, E. (2018). The perception of non-Muslim tourists towards halal tourism: Evidence from Turkey and Malaysia. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 9(4), 823–840. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-07-2017-0072>
- Burnette, J. L., Pollack, J. M., Forsyth, R. B., Hoyt, C. L., Babij, A. D., Thomas, F. N., & Coy, A. E. (2019). A growth mindset intervention: Enhancing students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy and career development. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 44(5), 878–908. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1042258719864293>
- Carboni, M., Perelli, C., & Sistu, G. (2014). Is Islamic tourism a viable option for Tunisian tourism? Insights from Djerba. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 11, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2014.02.002>

- Çardak, Ç. S. (2018). Creative and critical reflective thinking (C&CRT) skill during connectivist learning process. *Revista del Congrés Internacional de Docència Universitària i Innovació (CIDUI)*, (4)
- El-Gohary, H. (2016). Halal tourism, is it really Halal? *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 19, 124–130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2015.12.013>
- Elaziz, M. F., & Kurt, A. (2017). Religiosity, consumerism and halal tourism: A study of seaside tourism organizations in Turkey. *Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal*, 65(1), 115–128.
- Jamil, A. B. M., & Abdullah, A. H. B. (2022). Decolonization of Feminism in the Malayan Nationalist Movement: A Case Study of Ibu Zain and Shamsiah Fakeh. *Muslim Politics Review*, 1(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v1i2.62>
- Keliat, C., & Sentanu, I. G. E. P. S. (2022). Sustainable halal tourism in the post pandemic era: Opportunity and challenges. *Journal of Research on Business and Tourism*, 2(1), 69. <https://doi.org/10.37535/104002120226>
- Kuru, A. T. (2022). Muslim Politics Between Sharia and Democracy. *Muslim Politics Review*, 1(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v1i1.50>
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice, and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 45(1), 79–122. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1994.1027>
- Makhasi, G. Y. M., & Rahimadhi, M. T. Y. (2020). Ramai-ramai menolak wisata halal: Kontestasi politik identitas dalam perkembangan wisata halal di Indonesia. *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif*, 14(2), 373. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jsr.v14i2.1767>
- McGrath, R. G., & MacMillan, I. C. (2000). *The Entrepreneurial Mindset: Strategies for Continuously Creating Opportunity in an Age of Uncertainty*. Harvard Business Press.
- Metera, G. D. A. (2022). How Illiberal is Indonesia's Democracy? A Comparative Perspective on Indonesia's State Enforcement of Religion. *Muslim Politics Review*, 1(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v1i2.60>
- Mohsin, A., Ramli, N., & Alkhulayfi, B. A. (2016). Halal tourism: Emerging opportunities. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 19(2016), 137–143. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2015.12.010>
- Oktadiana, H., Pearce, P. L., & Chon, K. (2016). Muslim travellers' needs: What don't we know? *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 20, 124–130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2016.08.004>
- Pisani, E., & Buehler, M. (2017). Why do Indonesian politicians promote shari'a laws? An analytic framework for Muslim-majority democracies. *Third World Quarterly*, 38(3), 734–752. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2016.1206453>
- Rahim, L. Z. (2022). The Gordian Knot of Ethno-Religious Nationalism: Unsettled National Questions and Contested Visions. *Muslim Politics Review*, 1(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v1i1.53>

- Rasul, T. (2019). The trends, opportunities and challenges of halal tourism: A systematic literature review. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 44(4), 434–450. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2019.1599532>
- Saefullah, H. (2022). “More Than Just Devotion”: The Conservative Turn Among Subcultural Muslim Youths in the Indonesian Underground Music Scene. *Muslim Politics Review*, 1(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v1i2.58>
- Santoso, L., Triyanta, A., & Thontowi, J. (2022). Halal tourism regulations in Indonesia: Trends and dynamics in the digital era. *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan*, 22(1), Article 1.
- Samori, Z., Salleh, N. Z. M., & Khalid, M. M. (2016). Current trends on Halal tourism: Cases on selected Asian countries. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 19, 131–136. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2015.12.011>
- Siburian, J., Corebima, A. D., Ibrohim, & Saptasari, M. (2019). The correlation between critical and creative thinking skills on cognitive learning results. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 19(81), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2019.81.6>
- Slamet, Abdullah, I., & Laila, N. Q. (2022). The contestation of the meaning of halal tourism. *Heliyon*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09098>
- Sofyan, R., Ahmad, H., Rahtomo, W., Hidayati, N., Sari, C. A., Nursali, Y., ..., Quraissy, M. (2020). *Laporan Perkembangan Pariwisata Ramah Muslim Daerah*. Jakarta: Komite Nasional Ekonomi Dan Keuangan Syariah (KNEKS).
- Trading Economics. (2023). *Malaysia Tourism Revenues – 2023 Data – 2024 Forecast – 1998-2022 Historical – Chart*. Trading Economics. <https://tradingeconomics.com/malaysia/tourism-revenues>
- Vargas-Sánchez, A., & Moral-Moral, M. (2018). Halal tourism: State of the art. *Tourism Review*, 74(3), 385–399. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-01-2018-0015>
- Yousaf, S., & Xiucheng, F. (2018). Halal culinary and tourism marketing strategies on government websites: A preliminary analysis. *Tourism Management*, 68, 423–443. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.04.006>

# Harmonizing Halal in ASEAN: Analysis of Halal Food Guidelines under the ASEAN Way Approach

Eva Johan<sup>1</sup> and Maria Jose Plana-Casado<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Law Group, Wageningen School of Social Sciences, Wageningen University & Research, Wageningen, the Netherlands, 6706 KN

eva.johan@wur.nl; maria-jose.planacasado@wur.nl

**How to Cite:** Johan, E., & Plana-Casado, M. J. (2023). Harmonizing halal in ASEAN: Analysis of halal food guidelines under the ASEAN way approach. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 11(1), 43–67. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.9682>

## Abstract

The research examined how ASEAN is moving towards legislative harmonization in the key economic sector of halal foods. The research investigated how ASEAN has promoted economic integration by building regional consensus regarding controversial issues, such as the definition of halal food, and discuss the role of other international instruments in building regional consensus – the “ASEAN” way. Qualitative methodology was used by integrating a historical, doctrinal, and comparative approach. The first analysis was on the process leading to adopting ASEAN halal food guidelines, which constitute the most concrete output of regional efforts to bring domestic standards closer. The following procedures were to compare and contrast these instruments substantively to identify the areas where new consensus has been found and those where disagreements persist. Finally, the research examined the potential influence of the guidelines adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and MABIMS in drafting ASEAN instruments. The research concludes that despite of lengthy and difficult road to gaining consensus through the ASEAN way mechanism, member states have successfully agreed on some elements of halal standards. However, the guidelines require member states’ legislation to achieve full harmonization in addition to ASEAN soft law. Moreover, international initiatives have impacted ASEAN’s halal standards in important ways. Some issues regarding harmonization remain, such as mutual recognition and labelling, and require further investigation.

**Keywords:** ASEAN, codex alimentarius, economic integration, halal, legal harmonization

## Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is an intergovernmental organization with a legal personality (ASEAN, 2008). The organization has a mission to, among others, create a “highly competitive and economically integrated” (ASEAN, 2008) “single market” (Pelkmans, 2016) of goods, services, and investment within the region. Since adopting its current Charter in 2008, the organization has taken many steps to advance toward this goal, including creating the ASEAN Economic Community (ASEAN, 2003). To this aim, Aminuddin and Purnomo (2017) emphasizes the importance of connectivity between economic actors as alternative to political diplomacy to strengthen the ASEAN’s work and to develop common understanding and collaboration in achieving regional single market.

However, the ASEAN single market is far from becoming a reality. One of the key reasons for this is ASEAN’s extremely limited decision-making powers: its current charter does not give ASEAN supranational legislative powers to adopt secondary legislation to harmonize domestic product standards. Rather, any “ASEAN decision” (regardless of its nature) must be adopted using consultation (first step) and consensus (second step) procedures (ASEAN, 2008).

The importance of consensus in the ASEAN way is such that, there has been “no single legal instrument signed without consensus, even in the economic pillar” (Fukunaga, 2021). Additionally, the Charter (or any other ASEAN legal instrument) does not include a “proper set of rules or a mechanism for [the] authoritative drafting, adoption, interpretation, and implementation” (Desierto & Cohen, 2020) of regional decisions. This approach to regional decision-making is known as the “ASEAN way,” which is said to originate “from the antilegal domestic decision-making culture of many ASEAN members” (Kahler, 2000). The ASEAN way refers to a model for regional integration that emphasizes informality and intensive consultation to identify common interests and lead to consensus in making collective decisions and prioritizes noninterference with its members’ internal affairs. According to Koesrianti (2016), the ASEAN way operates in a way that not to lose everyone’s face, and consent among members, and does not bother with the internal affair of each other. This reality accommodates the fact that ASEAN members consider harmonization politically tricky and heavy-handed (Severino, 2007; Yoshimatsu, 2006). Still, the ASEAN way is said to have consistently influenced regional developments, as it helped create a forum for the discussion of strategic issues for the region by relying on trust and familiarity among its members (Davidson, 2008; Leviter, 2010). This article tests whether such a claim can be extended to the regulation of halal foods.

Promoting legislative harmonization of halal food rules within the region has been repeatedly identified as a key goal of ASEAN (ASEAN, 2015). Bringing halal food legislation closer would facilitate regional cooperation and consequently move the region forward regarding economic integration. Indeed, the economic relevance of the halal food market within ASEAN is paramount: the ASEAN halal food market constitutes almost a fourth of the global halal market, which was valued at US\$ 4.7 trillion in 2021 and is projected to grow to US\$ 6 trillion by 2024 (SESRIC, 2021).



The definition of halal food has historically controversial, and the lack of agreement at the international level has resulted in significant differences within countries' legislation governing halal food products. These differences are such that national standards have been considered non-tariff barriers to halal food trade among ASEAN partners and at the international level (Asian Trade Center, 2019; Johan & Schebesta, 2022; Yan et al., 2017) and an obstacle in the process of economic integration (ASEAN, 2009). At least four types of trade barriers have been identified: regulation around halal stunning and slaughtering rules, halal certification, halal labelling regime, and mutual recognition mechanisms (ASEAN, 2021).

These barriers have created tension among ASEAN member states. For instance, in 2013, the Thai government publicly complained about the fact that frozen chicken products could not be exported to Brunei Darussalam because of differences in the technical regulations set for those products (Teanravisitsagool, 2013). Similarly, industry actors has repeatedly raised the same issue; differences in members' national halal food certification rules are the main obstacles to marketing their products across the region (Asian Trade Center, 2019; Narjoko, 2015). The ASEAN halal guidelines have developed in order to harmonize halal standard in the region. The guidelines are an essential element in building an integrated market for halal food in ASEAN. In 2019, ASEAN achieved a consensus on halal food standards. The ASEAN halal guidelines are part of a larger plan of action, that aims for halal food cooperation by 2025.

This article investigates the harmonization of halal food by ASEAN, by first, looking at the initial regional regulatory initiatives regarding halal to recognize the ASEAN body in charge of halal decision-making. We then outline the decision-making process under the ASEAN way framework and identify what standards were agreed upon in the 2019 halal guidelines, including whether these comply with relevant international standards or global halal standard initiatives to accommodate the need for the global halal market.

### **Analytical Framework**

The institutional framework governing halal food harmonization efforts in ASEAN is characterized by the fact that ASEAN bodies are composed of staff, which are representatives of its member states. This reality has led some scholars to consider ASEAN as "a regional tool to maximize sovereignty and national interests" (Vandoren, 2005). Furthermore, members' unwillingness to transfer sovereignty, even on a partial basis, to a supranational organization can be considered proof of ASEAN's low-level ambition (Vandoren, 2005). The ASEAN path towards greater integration relies strongly on member states' acceptance and implementation of its decisions.

Soft law instruments have been widely used in ASEAN legal framework to carry out what has been described as "ASEAN's soft law approach based on horizontal integration" (Hsieh & Mercurio, 2019). Guzman and Meyer remark that different definitions of soft law exists. According to the mainstream definition, "soft law consists of law-like promises or statements that fall short of hard law, is more widely used, but some writers define soft law

differently. Rather than focusing on the doctrinal question of whether a rule is binding on states, they focus on the extent to which the obligations imposed are clear or whether the various aspects of an agreement are otherwise likely to constrain state behavior" (Guzman & Meyer, 2010). Although soft law mechanisms are considered dynamic and are accepted especially in International Law (Schwarcz, 2020), in the case of ASEAN, they are often regarded as a key factor stalling its success (Mahaseth & Subramaniam, 2021). Proponents of the approach argue that it can be "gradually realized through the promotion of public awareness, social-economic development, and domestic legislation" (Xue, 2009) of member states. Later, such network effects can push the "adoption and compliance" of a soft law, which in turn can be "strategically exploited to stimulate legal harmonization" (Druzin, 2017).

ASEAN regional cooperation is based on fundamental principles that constitute "the ASEAN way". The latter might be seen as unclear because the approach enshrines informality rather than formal institutions, consensus rather than majority voting, and non-intervention rather than coercion. Despite its 'incompleteness', the ASEAN way has contributed to managing the risk of conflict in the region. However, more than this approach is needed, because the real challenge for economic integration is on the implementation of policies and agreements that have been made under the ASEAN way principle (Permatasari, 2020). The urgency to have a 'more rules-based system' in ASEAN arises particularly in economic cooperation to foster market integration. Economic activities in the region are subject to the international trade system, which is rules-based under the global legal framework. In this regard, ASEAN needs a regulatory harmonization system that can ensure legal certainty and guarantee legal rights. In regard to harmonizing regulations, ASEAN has developed some regulatory regimes, for instance, for medical device products (ASEAN, 2015b), and cosmetic products (ASEAN, 2003b). Such harmonized regulatory regimes are a first step to reducing technical trade barriers and standardizing regional product requirements. Regulatory harmonization akin to these three regimes could be an opportunity for achieving ASEAN halal food harmonization.

## Methodology

This research employs a qualitative methodology to analyze harmonization initiatives of halal food in ASEAN and how the decision-making process for halal food under the ASEAN institutional framework is achieved. Content-based comparative analyses are used to analyze policy documents and authoritative texts related to halal standards. Alongside, doctrinal analysis is applied to legal documents. Data is collected from primary sources, the ASEAN halal guidelines, member states regulations and secondary sources.

This study is designed in three steps: First, we investigate a chronological overview of harmonization halal food initiatives in ASEAN by tracing document policy inside and outside ASEAN institutions. The result is to capture and update information on how far halal food harmonization has worked under the ASEAN institutions. Second, we look into the institutional framework on how the consensus regarding halal food is achieved, the bodies

involved, and how the ASEAN way mechanism has been implemented for halal food. It describes the process leading to the adoption of the 2019 ASEAN guidelines for halal food, which is a milestone for halal food regulation at the regional level. In the third step, we analyze and compare the adoption of the ASEAN 1999 and 2019 regional halal food guidelines to bring domestic standards closer to facilitating the intra-ASEAN trade of such goods. We analyze ASEAN guidelines in terms of substance, comparing the latest version of the document to its predecessor. In particular, we identify the areas in which a new consensus has been found and where consensus remains elusive, including discussing the role that similar instruments adopted in other international fora.

To understand the critical changes and consensus achieved under ASEAN institutional framework within member states, this study creates two datasets based on two comparative analyses. First, a comparative analysis of the 1999 and 2019 ASEAN halal guidelines. Second, a comparative analysis of some critical subjects in halal standards from four ASEAN member states: Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore.

The current research design could be expanded and strengthened but for reasons of practical feasibility were excluded from the scope of the present research. Specifically, we believe that future research should consider supplementing our data with interview data. The Covid-19 pandemic limited our possibilities for doing so but interview with representatives of halal working groups. Another challenge, which is likely to persist, is the access to reliable data from the ASEAN website due to limited access and an outdated file depository.

## Analysis

### *Historical Overview of Halal Food Harmonization Initiatives*

The term halal indicates that a product is permissible (or allowed), as opposed to haram, which means forbidden (or not allowed), according to Islamic Law (Tieman & Hassan, 2015). Over the last few decades, private and public rules defining what constitutes halal foods have evolved. Within ASEAN, many governments have adopted domestic legislation regulating elements ranging from primary production to certifying foods marketed as halal (Abdallah et al., 2021).

The harmonization of the legal requirements governing the halal market has been on the agenda for at least 20 years but remains a challenge (SESRIC, 2021). Through the use of a historical perspective, we are eager to examine how the ASEAN way has been utilized to synchronize ASEAN member better states' legislation governing the halal food market and then, through the institutional framework, identify the role that member states and bodies of the regional organization have played in the adoption process.

The path leading to the adoption of the ASEAN 2019 guidelines (ASEAN, 2019) started more than two decades ago: ASEAN member states placed the harmonization of halal

standards on the international agenda as early as the late seventies (Table 1 for an illustrated summary of the key milestones of the process).

Table 1 ASEAN's Initiatives to Harmonize Halal Food Standards

Year	Level	Initiatives
1979	FAO-Codex Committee for Coordination Asia.	Proposed specific labelling with regard to Islamic religion requirements.
1993	FAO- Codex Committee for Food Labelling.	Agreed to study the petition made in 1979.
1995	ASEAN	Establishment of the ASEAN Ad-Hoc working group on halal food.
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FAO-Codex Committee</li> <li>• ASEAN</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issued Codex Alimentarius Guideline for the use of the Term Halal.</li> <li>• Ad-hoc working group on halal food (WGHF) finalized the draft and recommended the ASEAN halal guideline.</li> </ul>
1999	ASEAN	SOM-AMAF meeting adopted the first ASEAN halal guidelines.
2000	ASEAN	ASEAN established ASEAN working group on halal food (AWGHF).
2015	ASEAN	ASEAN adopted the AEC Blueprint 2025.
2017	ASEAN	AMAF Meeting adopted the PoA ASEAN Cooperation on halal food 1017-2020.
2019	ASEAN	AMAF Meeting adopted the new ASEAN Guidelines on halal food.
2020	ASEAN	AMAF Meeting adopted the PoA ASEAN Cooperation on halal food 2021-2025.

Source: Authors from FAO and ASEAN documents

Specifically, in 1979, Malaysia proposed to the members of the international Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), established under a joint food standards programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), the adoption of international guidelines regarding the labeling of halal meat products (FAO, 1979). However, it was not until 1993 that the Codex Alimentarius Commission moved forward with the Malayan initiative (FAO, 1993), which led to the agreement, in 1997, of the first Codex Alimentarius General Guidelines for the use of the Term Halal (FAO, 1997b). The Codex Guidelines provide a definition of the term “halal”, identify lawful sources for the preparation of halal food and drink, and establish basic requirements for the lawful slaughtering of animals. The brevity of the document (in terms of the length of the document and its limited provisions) illustrates the difficulty of reaching an agreement about what constitutes halal food at the international level. The Codex rule of 1997 has not been replaced or amended by any other Codex initiative. The Codex Alimentarius Commission is explicitly recognized under the Sanitary- and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement of the World Trade

Organization (WTO), and compliance with international standards grants a presumption of legality under WTO law. Therefore, the Codex Alimentarius Commission has become one of the main normative references for halal food regulation in international economic law (WTO, 1994a; WTO, 1994b).

In 1995, building on the momentum generated by the activities at the Codex Alimentarius Commission, ASEAN started its own path to promote the regional harmonization of halal food requirements. It first created the ASEAN Ad Hoc Working Group on Halal Food Guidelines, whose mission was to negotiate the drafting of regional guidelines that would serve as a practical guide for the food industry and would provide basic criteria for the accreditation of halal food processing establishments (ASEAN, 1999; FAO, 1997b). The Ad Hoc Working Group finalized the drafting of the guidelines in 1997. It was no coincidence that this timeline aligned with the adoption of the Codex instrument: most of the participants of the ASEAN working group were, in fact, also members of the Codex committee drafting the international guidelines (FAO, 1997b).

Two years after the publication of the initial draft, the first ASEAN guidelines for halal foods were adopted. They are formally referred to as the ASEAN's "1999 General Guidelines on Preparation and Handling of Halal Food" (hereinafter referred to as the 1999 Guidelines) (ASEAN, 1999). The adoption of this instrument did not end ASEAN's efforts to bring its members' legislation on halal food closer. In fact, it led to the institutionalization of ASEAN members' cooperation in halal food matters, with the establishment of the ASEAN Working Group on Halal Food (AWGHF) in 2000.

This new working group had a broader mandate than its predecessor: in addition to working on bringing ASEAN member states' halal food laws closer by negotiating a second (more ambitious) version of the guidelines, it was to help create channels to exchange information and to promote regional capacity building regarding halal food regulation (ASEAN, 2005) and to launch the process to draft an ASEAN scheme for the accreditation of halal food establishments.

The next significant effort towards harmonization came in 2015, with the adoption of ASEAN's 2025 Blueprint, which identified "further enhanc[ing] cooperation in production and promotion of halal food and products" (ASEAN, 2015a) as one of the key targets for the regional organization for the next decade. In accordance with the Blueprint, ASEAN's 2017-2020 Plan of Action on ASEAN Cooperation on Halal Food (ASEAN, 2017) was adopted. The 2017 PoA included a "strategic thrust" to identify actions favoring regional standard-setting for halal foods. In addition, the 2017 POA did not limit its scope to legislative harmonisation issues. It also covered topics such as halal food production, food security, and food safety in a Halal context, and among other actions, delineated several programs designed to facilitate small producers and businesses of halal food to meet global standards (ASEAN, 2017). Yet again, it renovated the working group's mandate to update the 1999 ASEAN guidelines to negotiate the regional accreditation scheme for halal establishments already proposed in 2000. In addition, it proposed launching the negotiation of a similar instrument governing halal food certification. In fact, the 2017 PoA was ambitious to the point that, for the first time, it

indicated that mutual recognition agreements within ASEAN could be the way forward to facilitate the trade of halal foods. However, at the time of writing this article, only the efforts to update the 1999 guidelines have been successful—negotiations of accreditation and certification schemes have yet to be launched.

In 2019 – less than two years after the adoption of the first PoA in 2017, and two decades after the adoption of the 1999 ASEAN Guidelines – the revamped ASEAN General Guidelines on Halal Food were adopted (ASEAN, 2019). The 2019 guidelines constitute the most recent output of regional efforts to bring domestic standards closer. This version will likely remain in force for some time, as the 2020 PoA on halal cooperation has excluded guideline renegotiation from the working group’s mandate (ASEAN, 2020).

### **Institutional Framework of Halal Food**

As our chronological overview illustrates, regional harmonization is being promoted using the “ASEAN way,” a diplomatic approach that uses informal discussions to facilitate consensus-based decisions, allowing member states to determine areas of agreement and isolate contentious topics (Leviter, 2010). Within this framework, both the regional organization and its members have a role to play: ASEAN bodies serve as forums for discussion, but the power to make the decisions remains in the hands of its member states. Specifically, we have identified that several ASEAN bodies are involved in the governance regional halal food policy (see Figure 2). Initial political leadership comes from the ASEAN Summit, which is ASEAN’s “supreme policy-making body,” comprised of the heads of state or government of ASEAN member states (ASEAN, 2008). This body sets the organization’s priorities for the halal food market in its ASEAN Economic Community Blueprints. The more recent Blueprint was adopted in 2015 and is known as the “2025 Blueprint.” This Blueprint indicates that strategic measures to promote deeper economic integration within the region should include the enhancement of regional cooperation regarding halal food and drink (ASEAN, 2015a).

ASEAN’s Economic Community Council (AEC) is in charge of leading and coordinating all ASEAN initiatives toward greater economic integration and reporting to the ASEAN Summit (ASEAN, 2008). The AEC is also comprised of representatives of ASEAN member states. Under the AEC, specific “Sectoral Ministerial Bodies” are in charge of designing and leading implementation activities. The Sectoral Ministerial Bodies implement the decisions adopted by the Summit within their respective field, and are in charge of strengthening cooperation within ASEAN members. They report to a specific Community Council (ASEAN, 2008). In the case of halal foods, the relevant ministerial body is the annual ASEAN Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF). The AMAF divides its activities into individual policy actions, which are spearheaded by the “Special Senior Officials Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers of Agriculture and Forestry” (SOM-AMAF), which is composed of senior officials of ASEAN member states. SOM-AMAF creates and monitors the activities of the halal food working group. It was this body, therefore, that greenlighted the draft of the

2019 Halal Guidelines and sent them for adoption by the AMAF (AFSN, 2003). Finally, it must be noted that national governments are also present at the working-group level via their own ASEAN-based “national focal point,” which is responsible for promoting coordination and communication about national-level implementation.

According to Pasierbiak, integration into the ASEAN common market is more complex than European integration due to the many divergences between member countries, across their economies, politics, religions, and languages. The ASEAN way is an accepted strategy practiced in negotiations between member states. The approach considers the domestic interest as essential than the ASEAN, slowing the ASEAN’s common market. The existing barriers show it (Pasierbiak, 2018). Therefore, any accomplishment achieved by ASEAN is a steppingstone to another step of the market integration goal. As such, consensus on halal food standards can lead to harmonizing regional halal policy.

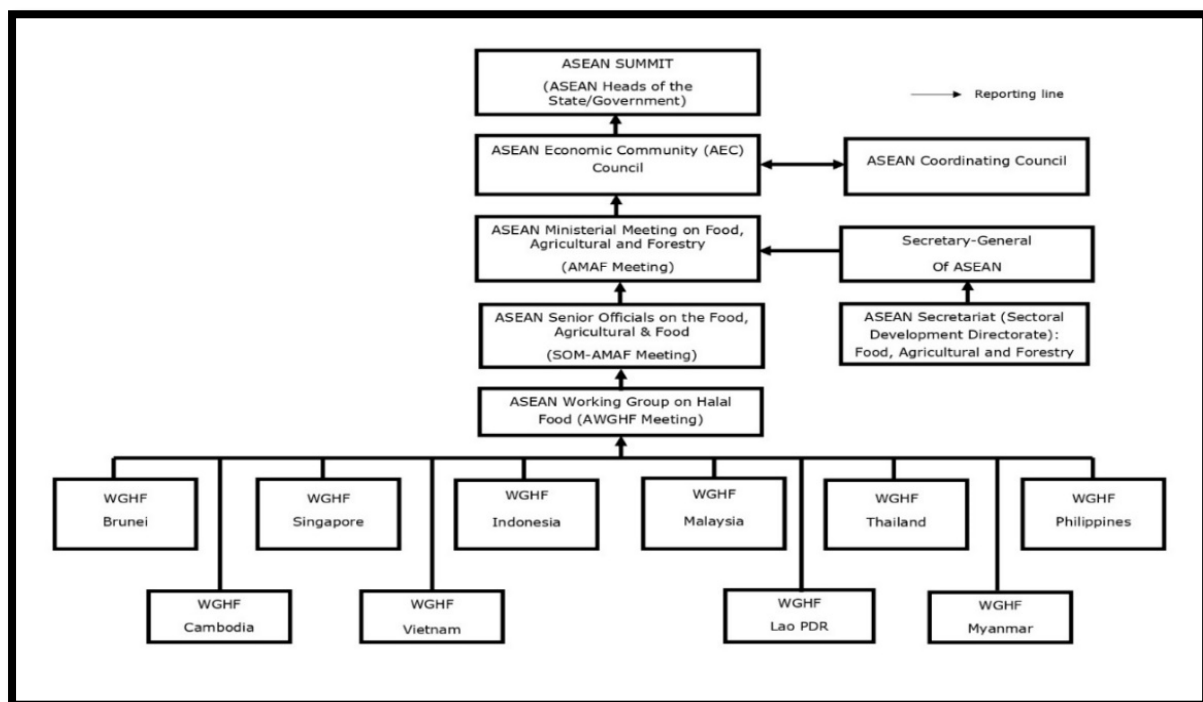


Figure 1 Institutional framework for halal food in ASEAN. Source: Author’s modification from ASEAN Secretariat

## ASEAN’s New Consensus on Halal Food Guidelines

### *Material Scope*

ASEAN’s 1999 and 2019 General Guidelines establish the basic requirements that food products should meet in order to be marketed as halal in intra-ASEAN trade. Although the wording of these ASEAN instruments causes them to resemble secondary legislation

(ASEAN, 1999), the Guidelines are not legal instruments generating legal rights and/or obligations for businesses, public authorities or third parties (Davinia, Aziz, & Dehousse, 2016). The 1999 Guidelines explicitly indicated that they were formally adopted to provide the food industry and Halal food accreditation bodies with guidance on what foods could be marketed as 'halal' for intra-ASEAN trade. By contrast, the 2019 version of the guidelines does not include such a specific statement, avoiding the identification of any specific addressee (public bodies, businesses, or third parties). The guidelines cannot force its member states to adopt (or revise) domestic legislation governing market requirements (ASEAN, 1999). Still, they do represent a high level of consensus in that specific matter and aim to nudge ASEAN member states into revising their domestic standards to reflect the consensus reached the regional level and crystalized in the guidelines, to in turn facilitate the development of the regional halal food market.

In light of the potential role of the guidelines as agents for legislative harmonization, the next sections of this paper explore the guidelines in substantive terms to identify the areas in which ASEAN members have been able to build new consensus regarding what characterizes halal foods and where consensus remains elusive.

The ASEAN Guidelines for Halal Food define key concepts and identify the characteristics that must be met by a food product to be lawfully labeled as "halal" within ASEAN. This focus on food labeling was made abundantly clear in the first version of the guidelines: the 1999 text explicitly indicated that it governed "the use of the term 'halal' by the country's Islamic Authority on the label of products" and even designed ASEAN's halal food logo to be used on the labels of such foods - an element that was dropped in the newest version of the guidelines (ASEAN, 1999).

The key difference between the two versions is that the 2019 Guidelines are much more detailed. This increased level of detail is clear when looking at the table of contents and length of both documents. The 1999 Guidelines (which had nine sections and two annexes) provided a definition of shariah law ) and "halal" (ASEAN, 1999), a general description of what was to be considered "najs" (ASEAN, 1999) (unlawful, as opposed to halal, which means lawful), the main categories of sources for lawful food and drink (ASEAN, 1999), and the basic requirements for lawful slaughtering (ASEAN, 1999) and manufacturing of lawful products. By contrast, the 2019 guidelines (a document comprised of 12 sections and four annexes, and being almost double the length of the 1999 document) go into much further detail when it comes to providing working definitions for key concepts, detailing the basic requirements for the "receiving, preparation, processing, sorting, determination, packaging, labeling, marking, controlling, handling, transportation, distribution, storage, and service of halal" (ASEAN, 2019). For example, while the 1999 guidelines only defined the terms "shariah law," "halal," and "najs," the 2019 guidelines also provide working definitions for other concepts relevant to the categorization of certain animal sources of food as lawful or unlawful (touching upon, among others, the categorization of amphibious animals, aquatic animals, and genetically modified foods) as well as working definitions relevant to the use of the document itself (defining competent authority, food additives, food chains, food safety, etc). The summary of a comparative study on ASEAN halal guidelines 2019 and 1999 can be seen in Table 2.



Table 2 Comparative study on ASEAN Halal Guidelines

Provision	Comparison (2019 to 1999)
The 2019 Guidelines is an adoption and modification of the OIC/SMIIC 2011 Halal Food Guidelines.	
Scope (Art.1)	‘who’ and ‘which stage.’
Definition (Art.3)	detailed on any terms, expand (e.g., Amphibious animals, safe food, food not containing human parts)
Stunning (Art.4.3.5, Annex B)	not recommend unless necessary, unclear, only allow electrical stunning
Machinery, Utensils, Production Lines (Art.7)*	very detailed
Identification and Traceability (Art.10)*	Clearer
Packaging and Labelling (Art.11)*	strict rules, certification COO
Legal Requirements (Art.12)*	comply with national regulation
Najs (Art.3.11, Annex A)	definition provision, precise explanation
Sources of Food and Drinks (Art.4.1-3)*	complete, complex explanation: source of food, drinks, and rules of slaughtering
The general requirement for Slaughtering (Art.4.3.1-6)	goes stricter and very specific in technical
Slaughtering procedure (Art.4.3.6, Annex C)	pre-, during, and post-
Product and Service (Art.5)*	halal status based on products
Product processing (Art.6)	relatively similar, added safety
Storage, Display, Service (Art.8)	likely the same, added transport aspect
Hygiene, Sanitation and Food Safety (Art.9, Annex D)	stricter, Annex method ritual cleansing

Source: Authors, with 2019 Halal Guidelines from ASEAN Secretariat

Note: (\*): point that is not written in the 1999 Guidelines

### Consensus Building Regarding the Halal Status of Certain Sources

The concept of “najs” literally means “unclean” and is key to identifying unlawful foods and food sources under Shariah law. In the 1999 guidelines, najs was defined in Article 4 of the document as follows:

According to Shariah Law, najs are:

- things that are themselves filthy and cannot be cleaned or cleansed such as pork, blood, and carrion;
- lawful foods that are contaminated by filth (\*); and
- lawful food that come into contact with filth (\*).

(\*) The term filth is to be interpreted according to Shariah Law.

This definition (using the loose concept of “filth” as the key to identifying najis, with pork, blood, and carrion examples of potential filth sources) left room for varied interpretations regarding what was lawful or not. Just as loosely, the 1999 document provided a simple categorization of lawful sources of food and drink (merely breaking sources into animal, plant, and drinks) (ASEAN, 1999). This choice reflected several differences among ASEAN member states, as much as among Islamic schools of thought, regarding what constitutes lawful food sources. We can find these differences in the implementation of a halal standard. For example, Malaysia’s halal standard is mainly based on Shafie Madhab; meanwhile, Indonesia’s halal standard follows Shafie but also considers other madhabs of Hanafi, Maliki, and Hanbali (Azam, Moha, & Abdullah, 2021). This issue has historically been of paramount importance, to the point that the 1997 Codex Alimentarius’ guidelines on halal food to this day still include a brief foreword stating that the Codex Alimentarius Commission accepted “that there may be minor differences in opinion in the interpretation of lawful and unlawful animals and in the slaughter act, according to the different Islamic Schools of Thought;” and that, “as such, these general guidelines are subjected to the interpretation of the appropriate authorities of the importing countries” (FAO, 1997a).

In the 2019 guidelines, the definition of najis provides a much more precise explanation of the concept. In particular, this indicates that any food products coming from dogs and pigs and their descendants, any liquid or object discharged from the orifices of human beings or animals (such as urine, blood, vomitus, and excrement), halal foods that are contaminated or come into direct contact with things that are non-halal, animals that are not slaughtered according to Shariah Law, food and drink considered, containing or mixed with khamr are to be considered najis (ASEAN, 2019).

Another important consensus related to najis was the decision regarding ritual cleansing. The cleansing method has different rules in which the countries follow the school of thought. The 1999 Guidelines do not specify how ritual cleansing is practiced to clean najis. It happens because, in the Guidelines, the definition of unclean material is interpreted as filth, which member states can interpret differently depending on the madhab they follow. In the 2019 version, the unclean materials have agreed upon the terminology of najis, followed by a ritual cleansing method in accordance with Shariah law. ASEAN member states consent to adopt the Shafie madhab cleansing requirements (ASEAN, 2019). It is questionable to adopt it with Codex requirements. The religious method requires water mixed with soil to get purity of materials according to religious point of view. Therefore, the cleansing method needs to be done by people who know and understand the practice of halal ritual cleansing, so they will not be misled to exercise and contradict the Codex.

The ASEAN member states reached a consent in identification and traceability mechanism for halal food, which it does not arrange in the 1999 Guidelines. The 2019 Guidelines set the rules that halal food shall be easily identified and traced/tracked throughout the production process. The Guidelines require the producer to be responsible for providing “suitable means” to identify halal food’s status. The producer must control and record this “unique identification” of the halal product to guarantee the traceability of halalness (ASEAN, 2019).

In addition, the categorization of food and drink sources as lawful/unlawful is much more detailed, extending to the halal status of processed foods. In a nutshell, the ASEAN Guidelines in both 1999 and 2019 require that the product and its ingredients/components are prepared, processed, or manufactured using equipment and facilities “that are free from contamination with non-halal materials” and are at all times kept separate from non-halal products. They both indicate that, in order to be considered halal, a product must come from a lawful source (as described in the previous section) and comply with additional requirements described in the Guidelines themselves, among others, to the handling, processing, and manufacturing of the food product. While the 1999 Guidelines did not go into any additional detail, the 2019 version into further specifications for the more varied elements. For example, it indicates that oil or other materials in contact with machines and utensils shall be food grade and not made of non-halal materials, while the 1999 version did not include any specification for food contact materials at all.

The 2019 Guidelines illustrate the additional consensus of ASEAN member states on the status of certain food sources. Several pages of the 2019 version of the guidelines are dedicated to exploring the sources of lawful food and drink. They indicate that the source of halal food of animal origin is divided into halal and non-halal animals. It then describes which animals are considered non-halal, including the exception of aquatic animal substances derived from non-halal animals. Additionally, it indicates that all types of blood and its products are non-halal, including any liquid and objects discharged from the orifices of human beings and animals, such as urine, excrement, vomit, and pus. Regarding the lawful sources of drinks, it dictates that all kinds of water and non-alcoholic beverages are halal (ASEAN, 2019).

Most importantly, the 2019 Guidelines reveal that some consensus was built regarding the halal status of genetically modified foods (GMF). Whereas the 1999 Guidelines did not mention genetical modification, the 2019 version provides a working definition of what constitutes a GMF (ASEAN, 2019) and clarifies that GMF is considered halal when made using “genetic materials” (animals or plants) that are themselves considered halal based on the rules set in Article 4 about the sources of halal food and drinks (ASEAN, 2019). This new provision reflects that, by the time of adopting the new ASEAN guidelines, some members had similar views on GMF. Indeed, the national halal standards of Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, and Singapore provide virtually the same definition for GMF (Deuraseh & Brunei Darussalam, 2020; Department of Standards Malaysia, 2009; MUI, 2013).

The differences between the two versions of the ASEAN guidelines also show how consensus was built regarding the rules on slaughtering and stunning animals to be used to prepare halal foods. In the 1999 version, the agreement was limited: in brief, manual slaughtering was set as a general rule, provided a relatively detailed description of the process for mechanical slaughtering for poultry (using mechanical knives), and included basic rules for electrical and mechanical stunning. The 2019 sections on the rules of slaughtering and stunning are far more detailed, even including the description of stunning mechanisms, slaughtering premises conditions, and certification of the slaughterer. For example, regarding lawful animal stunning, the 1999 Guidelines ruled that equipment used for stunning was to be “under the control of a Muslim supervisor or trained Muslim slaughterman or halal

Certification Authority.” For electrical stunning, “the strength of current used to be controlled by the certification authority” (ASEAN, 2019). The 2019 version goes into detail to the point that it also includes explicit parameters for electrical stunning for different types of animals by detailing the ampere that should be used and the duration (ASEAN, 2019).

### *Areas Where Lack of Consensus Remains*

A comparison between both versions of the Guidelines is also useful for identifying areas of regulation of halal foods that remain contentious among ASEAN member states.

One of the controversial issues is the regulation of the use of alcohol in “halal” products which is said to originate “from the antilegal domestic decision-making culture of many ASEAN members” (Kahler, 2000). It frames a model for regional integration that emphasizes informality and intensive consultation to identify common interests and lead to consensus in making collectives. Indeed, ASEAN members follow different fatwa (Ruzulan et al., 2020) on “*khamr*,” (Pauzi et al., 2019), a concept referring to substances able to intoxicate the mind (Deuraseh, 2003), such as most alcoholic products. Most members allow “(non-*khamr*) ethanol/alcohol in food and beverages” (Mansur et al., 2022) within certain limits, with the notable exception of Brunei Darussalam (Deuraseh, 2003). The general rule is that alcohol is allowed in food and beverages if it is present naturally or produced unintentionally, as long as the final presentation of alcohol in the food or drinks is not intoxicating and remains below 1% of alcoholic volume, and as long as the sources for its creation are themselves halal. Still, some differences in alcohol regulation exist among ASEAN countries. For example, in Singapore (MUIS, 2020) and Malaysia (JAKIM, 2011) alcohol can be used in flavor and color additives at less than 0.5% volume as a stabilizer if it is not derived from the winemaking process. In Indonesia, alcohol can be used at less than 1% per volume in food and beverages (MUI, 2020). The lack of consensus has made it so that ASEAN Guidelines do not include an identification of the percentage of the alcoholic volume that is intoxicating. In fact, the guidelines avoid defining the concept of *khamr* altogether. This is not a minor issue, as products that contain *khamr* ingredients are automatically considered unlawful. Still, by indicating that products considered *khamr* are unlawful instead of saying that any product containing alcohol is unlawful, the ASEAN guidelines do not automatically classify alcohol as *najis*.

One might still consider it unclear whether there is an emergent consensus regarding stunning. The 1999 guidelines permit two methods of stunning, electrical and mechanical. The 2019 version only set rules and parameters for electrical stunning. The 2019 version does not recommend animal stunning unless necessary (ASEAN, 2019), and indicates that electrical stunning should be an option only for large animals under specific procedures and mechanisms by considering animal’s type and weight (ASEAN, 2019). The 2019 version does not clearly state whether mechanical stunning is forbidden or simply unrecommended under these guidelines. However, none of the provisions related to stunning prohibits mechanical stunning. Mechanical practice is considered riskier in terms of fulfilling halal requirements.

Improper mechanical stunning can cause the animal not to recover fully or risk death, which means it breaks Shariah rules. Halal slaughtering requires animals to remain alive at the slaughtering moment rather than carrion (*najis*/unlawful) (Riaz et al., 2021). Annex B of the 2019 guidelines indicates that the guidelines implement a ‘reversible stunning’ approach that claims to promote harmlessness to animals, which the guidelines accordingly consider compatible with the Islamic ethic (Chao, 2022)). There is uncertainty and as consequence, a lack of consensus, about whether the 2019 guidelines restrict mechanical stunning or allow it for specific techniques used.

The issue in which the lack of consensus is clearest is that of the potential adoption of a regional halal labeling scheme (and its corresponding certification and accreditation scheme agreed upon at the regional level). The promotion of common halal labeling was the main objective of the 1999 Guidelines, which specifically indicated that they were “to serve as a basic requirement for accreditation of food processing establishments for intra-ASEAN trade in halal food” (ASEAN, 1999) and to guide the countries’ Islamic Authority on the use of the term “halal” on the label of products for intra-ASEAN trade (ASEAN, 1999). Accordingly, the 1999 Guidelines included the design of a regional “ASEAN Halal logo” to be used in the label of the foods (or the premises of food establishments) (ASEAN, 1999), the certification of which was to be carried out by third-party certification bodies accredited for such task based on an accreditation scheme established at the member state level but based on a regional standard. It was within the mandate of the halal food working group to draft regional guidelines designing these certification and accreditation rules (FAO, 2004). The common ASEAN halal logo was never implemented, and there is no mention of this in the 2019 version of the guidelines. So far, it has been reported that the working group has failed to find room for consensus in this regard (International Trade Centre, 2015).

Legal implementation and enforcement of the guidelines in national law is essential. The 1999 version did not consider how to place the ASEAN halal guidelines in the domestic legal system. Experience has shown that ASEAN member states proved reluctant to adopt and implement the 1999 ASEAN halal guidelines. However, the 2019 Guidelines guarantees that the application of the Guidelines will not conflict with domestic halal regulations by emphasizing that halal products shall also comply with relevant requirements or rules at the national level (ASEAN, 2019). Therefore, this provision can only force ASEAN members to reach a consensus to adopt and implement the 2019 Guidelines as a reference for domestic halal guidelines if members are willing to do so. Predictably, referencing the ASEAN halal guideline will therefore be more advantageous for ASEAN member states with less developed halal standards than for members with established halal standards and frameworks.

## **International Influences on the ASEAN Halal Food Guidelines**

### ***The Drafting***

The regulatory choices in the ASEAN Guidelines cannot be fully understood without examining the role that international instruments developed outside of ASEAN have played

in forging a new consensus about what constitutes halal food at the regional level and whether an effective implementation of the basic requirements set in the 2019 Guidelines is possible. Therefore, we next examine how similar initiatives adopted in other international fora have influenced the drafting of the ASEAN guidelines and identify international instruments that are normative references for the correct implementation of the ASEAN guidelines.

There are a multitude of halal standards used in international trade (Abdallah et al., 2021). Therefore, ASEAN did not start from scratch when drafting its guidelines: the two versions of the Guidelines are based on existing guidelines negotiated in different international fora, with modifications.

The first ASEAN guidelines were “based on and in line with” the Unofficial Meetings of Religious Ministers in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (MABIMS-IDB, 2017). Guidelines for Preparation of Food and Drink for Muslims and the Codex General Guidelines for Use of the Term “Halal” (ASEAN, 1999). The role of Codex Standards is unsurprising, as the 1999 version of the Guidelines was drafted in parallel to the drafting of the 1997 Codex Standard on halal foods by a group of participants that had (mostly) also been part of the working group drafting the Codex Standard (FAO, 1997b). MABIMS’ influence in ASEAN regulation was also predictable, given that MABIMS guidelines or reports are often used to reference halal harmonization in ASEAN (ASEAN, 1999; MABIMS-IDB, 2017).

The Codex Alimentarius standard on halal is limited to issues of the term halal. This leaves out halalness throughout the entire food chain and excludes some halal requirements under Sharia law, for instance, regarding *zabihah*/slaughtering, stunning, traceability, and packaging materials. A relatively strong consensus is that a uniform global halal standard will be nearly impossible to achieve. In the context of the Codex Alimentarius, Egypt made efforts to push for harmonized guidance on halal products; to date, this initiative is stranded (FAO, 2019). Therefore, regional harmonization of a halal standard that references international Islamic organizations might be an alternative in this respect.

The updated Guidelines of 2019 identify a different source for the drafting of the revised basic requirements for halal food: they are a modified adoption of the (OIC/SMIIC) 1:2001 standard of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation/Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC, 2017). In fact, the 2019 ASEAN guidelines can be considered a regional adaptation of the OIC standard, where definitions and rules are amended, improved, or further explained to obtain a more detailed rule that matches ASEAN member states’ positions. For example, the ASEAN version replaces all mentions of “Islamic rules” in the SMIIC rule with “Shariah Law” and replaces references to the “adult Muslim” with “a practicing Muslim who is mentally sound (*aqil*) and of age (*baligh*)”. It also makes several modifications concerning the substantive elements of the rules: for instance, it amends specific slaughtering requirements and provides a more detailed identification of lawful sources for halal food and drink (ASEAN, 2019).

The fact that both guidelines build on consensus already reached in international fora for Muslim countries reflects the fact that such organizations (where membership is based on shared religious belief instead of geography) create opportunities for ASEAN members to

discuss controversial issues by providing a different forum that is isolated from controversies that may arise in regional discussions.

Work such as the SMIIC is a valuable way of defining halal standards that are demonstrably backed by a large part of the Islamic Community. SMIIC standard develops toward existing standards by considering all schools of thought (Azam et al., 2021).

### *The Application: International Law as Normative Reference*

The 1999 ASEAN guidelines explicitly state that they are to be “used together with” national and international instruments governing the food market (ASEAN, 1999). This generic statement is reaffirmed in a more concrete manner further in the document, which provides that all foods shall be prepared, processed, packaged, transported, and stored in such a manner that they comply with the hygiene and sanitary requirements of each Member Country and Codex General Principles on Food Hygiene and other relevant Codex Standards (ASEAN, 1999). This statement might suggest that the instruments adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission were to be considered normative references for the ASEAN guidelines. In practice, controversy arose in the region regarding whether Codex rules were to be considered to complement ASEAN requirements, as the 1999 Guidelines did not identify Codex rules individually (by name or number), but simply indicated that foods should comply with ‘relevant’ Codex Standards (ASEAN, 1999).

As a soft law instrument, the halal food guidelines are not enforceable by ASEAN. Rather they confirmed its members’ consensus on certain issues. As such, the guidelines should apply together with the individual legislation and existing national halal requirements. The products produced in ASEAN should comply with domestic and regional harmonization standards.

The adoption of Codex rules is significant. In the words of the FAO, “[a]lthough Codex rules lack legal force, it has been an integral part of international trade framework to prevent and assist trade dispute” (FAO, 2016). Codex is used as a reference by the WTO court to determine standards for specific foods. Codex can “scientifically justify norms” (FAO, 2016) of technical assessment in the SPS and TBT Agreement.

In order to clarify the situation, the 2019 version of the ASEAN Guidelines includes a specific section on applicable other legal norms, which states the following:

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this guideline.

The latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

- CXS 1-1985, General standard for the labeling of prepacked foods;
- CXC 1-1969, General Principles of Food Hygiene; and
- CXC 58-2005, Code of hygienic practice for meat.

Additionally, the 2019 Guidelines explicitly identify that Codex rules are to be applied together with the ASEAN Guidelines regarding three different issues: First, regarding the safety assessment of GMF, the updated guidelines indicate that “the assessment of safety of the GMO should be done in accordance with relevant CODEX guidelines or equivalence” (ASEAN, 2019). In specific, the reference is pointing to Codex Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from Recombinant-DNA Plants (CXG 45-2003), Codex Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Produced Using Recombinant-DNA Microorganisms (CXG 46-2003), and Codex Guideline for the Conduct of Food Safety Assessment of Foods Derived from Recombinant-DNA Animals (CXG 68-2008) (ASEAN, 2019), the Guidelines hold that halal food shall comply with the hygiene and sanitary requirements of “Codex CAC/RCP 1 and other relevant Codex Code of Practices”. The references include but are not limited to the General Principles of Food Hygiene (CXC 1-1969) and Code of Hygienic Practice for Meat (CXC 58-2006), as mentioned above. Third, the 2019 Guidelines indicate that CAC/RCP 1 is also relevant to determining “the principles and specifies basic requirements for the design and implementation of a food traceability system for halal food” (ASEAN, 2019). The 2019 Guidelines adopted three international standards to ensure product design and traceability during the halal production process. They are General Standard for the Labelling of Prepacked Food (CXS 1-1985), the Standard for Requirements for any organization in the food chain of Food Safety management systems (ISO 22000), and General principles and basic requirements for system design and implementation for Traceability in the feed and food chain (ISO 2205) (ASEAN, 2019). The 1999 Guidelines did not provide a specific reference to the Codex rules on traceability.

In regards to hygiene and sanitary requirements, for example, the animal slaughter must comply with standard CXC 58-2005, and the condition of the slaughtering premises must satisfy minimum requirements of international standard CXC 1-1969. In addition, packaging, labeling, and transportation must comply with relevant codex standards, including General Guidelines on Claims (CXG 1-1979) and CXS 1-1985. For example, labeling information must be on the container for pre-packaged or accompanying halal food documents for non-retail containers (ASEAN, 2019) at the distribution and transportation stage. In contrast, the 1999 Guidelines did not cover packaging materials and design standards.

By listing relevant Codex standards, ASEAN clarifies that those details that are not included in the regional guidelines are to be considered regulated in accordance with Codex law. This is a choice that not only nudges member states into making sure that their domestic standards are aligned with Codex but also conveys to the international community that the ASEAN regional requirements meet international standards.

## **Conclusions**

This paper examines how ASEAN has been working towards an economically integrated halal food market, “the ASEAN Way.” The process described in this paper illustrates how ASEAN’s decision-making works in matters of timeline, parties involved, and the nature of the output. We find that the ASEAN way decision-making is characterized by



(i) a lengthy and intensive consultation process carried out at the regional level but controlled by member states, (ii) which results in the adoption (by consensus) of soft-law instruments defining regional requirements for halal foods, (iii) without an enforcement mechanism.

The analysis also shows that initiatives at the international level, which are negotiated outside of ASEAN, have been key to achieving ASEAN milestones: ASEAN did not commit resources to work on their Guidelines until the Codex Alimentarius Commission launched the negotiation of its Codex rule for halal foods. The two versions of the ASEAN guidelines are based on and complemented by Codex rules and similar documents negotiated and adopted in other international fora (specifically, MABIMS and the OIC).

We conclude that the evolution of the ASEAN guidelines shows how the ASEAN Way can facilitate consensus-building regarding controversial areas of halal food regulation. However, this progress partially depends on international developments in other fora close to ASEAN.

Substantively, the most relevant developments between the two versions of the Guidelines include the advances made regarding the categorization of different sources of food and drink, the technical requirements applying to the lawful stunning and slaughter of animals, and the clarifications regarding the presence of *khamr* in food and drink. The later examples also show that regional guidelines build on similarities in interpretation of Islamic Law, even in areas where full agreement is not yet possible.

Additionally, a key success of the negotiation process is clarifying the role that international instruments (particularly Codex standards) play in implementing the Guidelines. The clarification of the role of Codex law is not a minor accomplishment, as the use of Codex references as international trade standards is key to penetrating the global halal food market; hence, the Guidelines are a vehicle for ASEAN-made halal products to enter the global halal food market.

Notwithstanding these successes, our analysis shows that fundamental differences regarding halal food regulation remain, particularly regarding the design of a regional halal labeling and a certification and accreditation scheme. In this context, the current ASEAN PoA for halal foods recommends exploring the potential of bilateral mutual recognition agreements as a hard-law tool to facilitate regional trade. Considering this, it may be argued that ASEAN may have hit the end of the road regarding promoting legislative harmonization in the halal food market using soft-law tools. This is an important avenue for future research.

Conceptually, harmonizing halal standards promotes greater unity and cooperation among ASEAN member states. It helps establish a common understanding and approach towards halal certification, which in turn can facilitate trade and investment within the region. Practically, harmonizing halal standards can also have significant economic benefits. With the halal market growing rapidly worldwide, ASEAN members adopting harmonized halal standards can tap into this lucrative market more effectively. Additionally, harmonized halal standards can help to reduce costs and enhance efficiency for businesses operating in the region.

Studying harmonizing halal in the ASEAN framework under ASEAN Way is a worthwhile endeavour with conceptually and practically significant benefits. It is an important step towards greater unity and cooperation in the ASEAN region and can help to unlock new economic opportunities for member states.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers, the ASEAN Secretary Coordinator of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF), and the members of Wageningen University's LAW Group for their input and recommendations. This research was funded by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Republic of Indonesia.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Eva JOHAN is PhD Candidate at the Law Group of Wageningen University in the Netherlands and a lecturer at the Law Faculty of Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (Untirta), Banten, Indonesia. Her research interest includes International Law, International Economic Law, WTO Law, and ASEAN Law. Scopus ID: 57574545000 and ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7668-5390>

María José PLANA-CASADO is an assistant professor of Law at the Law Group of Wageningen University in the Netherlands and a board member of the Bioethics & Law Observatory of the University of Barcelona. Her main research interest is in comparative food law, the regulation of digital technologies, and sustainable public procurement.

## References

- Abdallah, A., Rahem, M. A., & Pasqualone, A. (2021). The multiplicity of halal standards: A case study of application to slaughterhouses. *Journal of Ethnic Foods*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42779-021-00084-6>
- AFSN. (2003). *ASEAN Food Safety Network: ASEAN Halal Food*. [http://www.afsn.net/ASEAN HALAL/index.php](http://www.afsn.net/ASEAN%20HALAL/index.php)
- Aminuddin, M. F., & Purnomo, J. (2017). Redefining ASEAN way: Assessing normative foundation on inter-governmental relationship in Southeast Asia. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 5(1), 23. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v5i1.962>
- ASEAN. (1999). *ASEAN General Guidelines on the Preparation and Handling of Halal Food*. <https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/Community/AEC/AMAF/>

[UpdateApr2014/ASEAN%20GENERAL%20GUIDELINES%20ON%20HALAL%20FOOD\\_.pdf](#)

- ASEAN. (2003a). 2003 Declaration of ASEAN Concord II. [https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Transnational\\_2003Declaration.pdf](https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Transnational_2003Declaration.pdf)
- ASEAN. (2003b). ASEAN 2003 Agreement on the ASEAN harmonized cosmetic regulatory scheme. <https://www.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/20707.pdf>
- ASEAN. (2005). ASEAN 2005 ANNUAL-REPORT-2004-2005. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ANNUAL-REPORT-2004-2005.pdf>
- ASEAN. (2008). *The Asean charter*. Association of Southeast Asian Nations. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/images/archive/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf>
- ASEAN. (2009). ASEAN trade in Good Agreement (ATIGA). <https://asean.org/asean2020/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ASEAN-Trade-in-Goods-Agreement.pdf>
- ASEAN. (2015a). ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025.
- ASEAN. (2015b). ASEAN MEDICAL DEVICE DIRECTIVE. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/22.-September-2015-ASEAN-Medical-Device-Directive.pdf>
- ASEAN. (2017). ASEAN 2017 PoA-ASEAN-Halal-Cooperation-2020. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/2.-PoA-ASEAN-Halal-Cooperation-2020.pdf>
- ASEAN. (2019). ASEAN General Guidelines on Halal Food.
- ASEAN. (2020). ASEAN 2020 PoA-Halal-food-2021-2025. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/FAFD-6.-PoA-Halal-food-2021-2025.pdf>
- ASEAN. (2021). ASEAN Matrix of Actual Cases as of 26 April 2021.
- Asian Trade Center. (2019, June 27). Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) in ASEAN and their elimination from a business perspective. <https://eccil.org/euro-lao-business/non-tariff-barriers-ntbs-in-asean-and-their-elimination-from-business-perspective/>
- Azam, S. E., Moha, &, & Abdullah, A. (2021). Halal standards globally: A comparative study of unities and diversities among the most popular halal standards globally. *Halalsphere*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31436/hs.v1i1.20>
- Chao, E. C. (2022). Islam and veterinary science: Rethinking animal suffering through Islamic animal ethics and the evolving definition of halal slaughter. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2022.785585>
- Davidson, P. J. (2008). The role of International Law in the Governance of International Economic Relations in ASEAN' (2008) 12 Singapore Year Book of International Law 213 MLA 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Davidson, Paul J. In *Singapore Year Book of International Law* (Vol. 12). <http://www.commonlii.org/sg/journals/SGYrBkIntLaw/2004/10.pdf>
- Davinia, M., Aziz, A., & Dehousse, R. (2016). ASEAN Integration Through Law Plenary 2, ASEAN Governance, Management and External Legal Relations. [https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SD\\_Executive-Summary-Aziz-and-Dehousse-format ted.pdf](https://cil.nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SD_Executive-Summary-Aziz-and-Dehousse-format ted.pdf)

- Department of Standards Malaysia. (2009). *Malaysian Standard Haal Food-Production, Preparation, Handling and Storage*. <https://law.resource.org/pub/my/ibr/ms.1500.2009.pdf>
- Desierto, D., & Cohen, D. (2020). *ASEAN Law and Regional Integration: Governance and the Rule of Law in Southeast Asia's Single Market* (1<sup>st</sup> Ed.). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315267401>
- Deuraseh, N. (2003). Is imbibing Al-Khamr (intoxicating drink) for medical purposes permissible by Islamic Law? *Arab Law Quarterly*, 18(4), 355–364. <https://doi.org/10.1163/0268055032342749>
- Deuraseh, N., & Brunei Darussalam, N. (2020). Review of halal food standard PBD24: 2007 in Negara Brunei Darussalam towards quality and safety food. *KnE Social Sciences*, 123-140. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v4i9.7321>
- Druzin, B. H. (2017). Why does soft law have any power anyway? *Asian Journal of International Law*, 7(17), 361–378. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S2044251316000229>
- FAO. (1979). *The 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Asia*. [https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fwww.fao.org/knowledge/fao-who-codex-meetings%252FCX-727-02%252Fal79\\_15e.pdf](https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fwww.fao.org/knowledge/fao-who-codex-meetings%252FCX-727-02%252Fal79_15e.pdf)
- FAO. (1993). *The 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Codex Coordinating Committee for Asia*. [https://www.fao.org/input/download/report/415/al93\\_15e.pdf](https://www.fao.org/input/download/report/415/al93_15e.pdf)
- FAO. (1997a). *General Guidelines for Use of the Term “Halal”* (CAC/GL 24-1997). <https://www.fao.org/3/y2770e/y2770e08.htm>
- FAO. (1997b). *Report of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Codex Committee on Food Labelling*. <https://www.fao.org/3/W1715E/W1715E00.htm#TOC>
- FAO. (2004). *Strategic Plan of Action on ASEAN Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry Background*. <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/asean197571.pdf>
- FAO. (2016). *Understanding Codex*. <https://www.fao.org/3/i5667e/i5667e.pdf>
- FAO. (2019). *Information on the Arab Food Safety Initiative for Trade Facilitation (Safe) and Results Achieved under the FAO-led Components*. The 10<sup>th</sup> Session on joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program, FAO/WHO coordinating committee for the Near East.
- Fukunaga, Y. (2021). Use of legal instruments in the ASEAN economic community building. *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies*, 10(1), 65–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24761028.2021.1905199>
- Guzman, A. T., & Meyer, T. L. (2010). International soft law. *Journal of Legal Analysis*, 2(1), 171-225. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jla/2.1.171>
- Hsieh, P. L., & Mercurio, B. (2019). ASEAN law in the new regional economic order: An introductory roadmap to the ASEAN economic community. In P. L. Hsieh & B. Mercurio (Eds.), *ASEAN Law in the New Regional Economic Order: Global Trends and*

- Shifting Paradigms* (pp. 3–21). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108563208.002>
- International Trade Centre. (2015). *Trade Impact for Good: From niche to mainstream Halal Goes Global*. <http://www.intracen.org>
- JAKIM. (2011). *Alkohol Dalam Makanan, Minuman, Pewangi Dan Ubat-Ubat*. <http://e-smaf.islam.gov.my/e-smaf/index.php/main/mainv1/fatwa/pr/10281>
- Johan, E., & Schebesta, H. (2022). Religious regulation meets international trade law: Halal measures, a trade obstacle? Evidence from the SPS and TBT committees. *Journal of International Economic Law*, 25(1), 61–73. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jiel/jgac003>
- Kahler, M. (2000). Legalization as Strategy: The Asia-Pacific case. *International Organization*, 54(3), 549–571.
- Koesrianti, K. (2016). Rule-based dispute settlement mechanism for ASEAN economic community: Does ASEAN have it? *Hasanuddin Law Review*, 1(2), 182. <https://doi.org/10.20956/halrev.v1n2.303>
- Leviter, L. (2010). ASEAN failure or member failure? *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics*, 43(1). <https://nyujilp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/43.1-Leviter.pdf>
- MABIMS-IDB. (2017). *MABIMS-Harmonisation of Halal Standards May17*. <https://www.isdb.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2022-04/MABIMS-Harmonisation%20of%20Halal%20Standards%20May17.pdf>
- Mahaseth, H., & Subramaniam, K. (2021). Binding or non-binding: Analysing the nature of the ASEAN agreements. *International and Comparative Law Review*, 21(1), 100–123. <https://doi.org/10.2478/iclr-2021-0004>
- Mansur, A. R., Oh, J., Lee, H. S., & Oh, S. Y. (2022). Determination of ethanol in foods and beverages by magnetic stirring-assisted aqueous extraction coupled with GC-FID: A validated method for halal verification. *Food Chemistry*, 366. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodchem.2021.130526>
- MUI. (2013). *Fatwa MUI Number 35 Year 2013 about Genetically Modified Products*. <https://halalmui.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Fatwa-Reference-1.pdf>
- MUI. (2020). *Fatwa MUI Summary*. <https://halalmui.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Fatwa-Reference-1.pdf>
- MUIS. (2020). *Natural Ethanol in Halal Food Flavouring*. <https://www.muis.gov.sg/officeofthemufti/Fatwa/English-Ethanol>
- Narjoko, D. (2015). *AEC Blueprint Implementation Performance and Challenges: Non-Tariff Measures and Non-Tariff Barriers*. ERIA Discussion Paper Series. <https://www.eria.org/ERIA-DP-2015-36.pdf>
- Pasierbiak, P. M. (2018). Causes, Origins and Possible Effects of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 6(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v6i1.3897>

- Pauzi, N., Man, S., Nawawi, M. S. A. M., & Abu-Hussin, M. F. (2019). Ethanol standard in halal dietary product among Southeast Asian halal governing bodies. *Trends in Food Science and Technology*, 86, 375–380. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2019.02.042>
- Pelkmans, J. (2016). *The ASEAN Economic Community: A conceptual approach*.
- Permatasari, Y. (2020). Building indonesia through ASEAN economic community. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 8(1), 81–93. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v8i1.6040>
- Riaz, M. N., Irshad, F., Riaz, N. M., & Regenstein, J. M. (2021). Pros and cons of different stunning methods from a Halal perspective: A review. *Translational Animal Science*, 5(4). <https://doi.org/10.1093/tas/txab154>
- Ruzulan, Z., Ab Rahman, S., Saidon, R., & Fathullah Harun, H. M. (2020). Exploring the determinant factors of food related fatwa issuances based on 'Urf. *Environment-Behaviour Proceedings Journal*, 5(SI1), 233–238. <https://doi.org/10.21834/ebpj.v5isi1.2325>
- Schwarcz, S. L. (2020). Soft law as governing law. *Minnesota Law Review*, 104(5). <https://scholarship.law.umn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4313&context=mlr>
- SESRIC. (2021). *Halal Industry in OIC Member Countries Challenges and Prospects*. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Statistical Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC). [www.sesric.org](http://www.sesric.org)
- Severino, R. C. (2007). ASEAN beyond forty: Towards political and economic integration. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 29(3), 406–423. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csa.2008.0005>
- SMIIC. (2017). *Statute for the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC)*. <https://www.smiic.org/mysql/upload/files/201706/594389f66d48b-1497598454.pdf>
- Teanravisitsagool, P. (2013). *Issues and Challenges on ASEAN 2015*.
- Tieman, M., & Hassan, F. H. (2015). Convergence of food systems: Kosher, Christian and Halal. *British Food Journal*, 117(9), 2313–2327. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-02-2015-0058>
- Vandoren, P. (2005). Regional economic integration in South East Asia. *Asia Europe Journal*, 3(4), 517–535. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-005-0030-6>
- WTO. (1994a). WTO 1994 SPS Agreement. a. [https://www.wto.org/english/docs\\_e/legal\\_e/15-sps.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/15-sps.pdf)
- WTO. (1994b). WTO 1994 TBT Agreement. b. [https://www.wto.org/english/docs\\_e/legal\\_e/17-tbt.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/17-tbt.pdf)
- Xue, H. (2009). *The Role of the ILC's Work in Promoting Peace and Security – Definition and Evaluation* (pp. 183–187). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-03380-3\\_17](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-03380-3_17)
- Yan, L., Santiago Fernández De Córdoba, I., & Cadot, O. (2017). *Non-Tariff Measures in ASEAN*. [https://www.eria.org/uploads/media/RPR\\_FY2015\\_No.1.pdf](https://www.eria.org/uploads/media/RPR_FY2015_No.1.pdf)

Yoshimatsu, H. (2006). Collective action problems and regional integration in ASEAN.  
*Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 28(1), 115–140. <https://doi.org/10.1355/cs28-1f>



# Agenda Setting within ASEAN: Thickening, Broadening, and Breaking Pressures

Ryan Ashley

University Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) School of Public Affairs,  
University of Texas at Austin, Texas, United States 78705

rashley@utexas.edu

**How to Cite:** Ashley, R. (2023). Agenda setting within ASEAN: Thickening, broadening, and breaking pressures. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 11(1), 69–86. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.9035>

## Abstract

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a clear example of an “organized anarchy” within agenda setting literature; meaning that ASEAN has problematic preferences due to its multiple conflicting goals, relies on unclear methods to accomplish those goals, and experiences fluid participation of its members and leaders. This leaves the organization a case study in the path dependency of norms, as ASEAN typically defaults to its founding principles of non-interference, economic inter-connectivity, and regional “centrality” during crises. The research question was on the examples of variation when ASEAN broadens the scope of its mission. The research aimed to answer by framing ASEAN as a subsystem of Southeast Asian regionalism and conducting a comparative historical analysis of three case study periods: the creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the failure to reach a joint communique in 2012 over tensions in the South China Sea, and the ongoing crisis of human rights and governance in Myanmar. The case studies demonstrate that the most effective broadening forces for ASEAN are exogenous. The conclusion argues that this is a problematic *status quo* for a regional organization that seeks to promote its centrality to counter interference from outside powers.

**Keywords:** thickening, broadening, breaking, path dependency, norms

## Introduction

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was found in 1967 in Bangkok by the foreign ministers of Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Each of these post-colonial<sup>1</sup> and developing states attempted to head off the forces of the 20<sup>th</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This phrase arguably excludes Thailand, the only Southeast Asian state not colonized by western powers.

*Journal of ASEAN Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2023), pp.69–86

ISSN 2338-1361 print / ISSN 2338-1353 electronic

Received: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022/ Revised: 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023/ Accepted: 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023



century's global ideological conflicts, civil strife, and Southeast Asia's political rivalries. Considerably, they hoped to create a more stable and cooperative bloc that embraced a regional identity. To do so, ASEAN sought to rise above the forays of the mid-Cold War period by structuring itself as the institution "central" to the affairs of Southeast Asia, desiring all outside powers go through its auspices to interact with the region. ASEAN also gave itself a requirement for absolute consensus of all member states before adopting any new initiative, ensuring that even the smallest Southeast Asian countries would have their voice represented.

Nevertheless, since almost the day of its creation, ASEAN's consensus driven and low-key decision-making process and culture, frequently known as the "ASEAN Way," has sparked debate. The organization's supporters praise ASEAN's role as an inclusive, consistent, and stabilizing force in a region once known for none of these qualities. Meanwhile, its detractors point to ASEAN's seemingly lackluster responses to several economic, human rights, and security crises in Southeast Asia, often ironically resulting in further interventions in the region by outside powers. Regardless of these feuding perspectives, ASEAN's norms have acquired a nearly axiomatic status within the organization and the politics of the region. For example, *The Economist* described the October 2021 ASEAN Summit, held in Brunei, as holding a "decidedly sacramental quality," with religious adherents bowing to the "creed" of the "ASEAN Way" ("South-East Asia's regional club", 2021).

The research will provide a new perspective to understand the decision-making process known as the ASEAN Way by viewing it through a new theoretical framework, policy agenda setting literature. The research is organized into six main sections: a literature review covering previous analysis of ASEAN within organizational theory, a section covering methodology and the theoretical logic underpinning this research, three separate case studies highlighting key moments of crisis in ASEAN's history, and a conclusion discussing the larger implications of the theory of the research.

## Literature Review

Previous scholarship on ASEAN's decision-making emphasizes the group's unique organizational culture and style of consensus building. For example, Atena Feraru charts the evolution of the "ASEAN Way" as a reflection of the evolution of informal procedures and the formal rules of the ASEAN Charter, both of which worked to promote the organization's seemingly contradictory goals of enhancing regional cooperation and consolidating national sovereignty (Feraru, 2016). Alice Ba also describes the importance of institutionalization of regional norms within ASEAN's auspices (Ba, 1997). However, as made clear by David Jones and Michael Smith, this complex series of norms and practices does not lead to meaningful security cooperation within the bloc, as ASEAN's internal processes remain decidedly intergovernmental and bureaucratic, rather than integrationist (Jones and Smith, 2007). The seeming inability of ASEAN to accomplish these goals leads scholars to apply varying policy and choice theories to the bloc, in an attempt to understand what restrictions may limit its

effectiveness. Yi-hung Chiou's application of rational choice theory to ASEAN's decision making, for example, shows that each member state's varying interests and decision-making priorities negatively impacts the effectiveness of ASEAN resolutions (Chiou, 2010).

Building on these insights, the application of another decision-making theory, policy agenda setting, provides a unique and applicable logic to understand ASEAN. Considering the relevance of three core concepts within agenda setting: the idea of an "organized anarchy," the existence of policy "subsystems," and the concepts of "thickening" and "broadening." First, an "organized anarchy," as defined by Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972), is any organization that: has problematic preferences due to its multiple conflicting goals, relies on unclear methods to accomplish those goals, and experiences fluid participation of its members and leaders. Understood in this framework, the "ASEAN Way" acts as a default setting for the organization's actions, providing a baseline of norms for the organization to act under during uncertain times. This, in turn, suggests that ASEAN is best understood as what agenda setting literature terms a "subsystem" of the larger force of Southeast Asian regionalism. Subsystems are those institutions that act as reflections of the beliefs, values, and policies of a larger system (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991), making ASEAN an institutionalized reflection of Southeast Asia's practiced norms.

Indeed, ASEAN purposefully lacks a crisis-ready decisive organizational and leadership structure. Alternately, ASEAN often responds to crises through yet another concept elucidated by agenda setting literature: by "thickening" or "broadening." According to Baumgartner and Jones (2005), thickening refers to the reinforcing of current norms in response to a crisis, while broadening describes the opposite outcome of an organization expanding the scope of its mission outside of its founding principles. In the case of ASEAN, the default response to crises is typically to thicken, i.e., promoting additional cooperation derived from its founding principles of non-interference, consultative consensus, and regional centrality. As such, ASEAN is sometimes criticized, typically by outside great powers, as a "talking shop," struggling to cope with a myriad of conflicting and overlapping priorities and jurisdictions. However, despite this criticism, ASEAN's norms have been crucial in transforming the region into an area largely (albeit not entirely) defined by peace, growth, and opportunity. Yet, all norms have a breaking point. In the face of several economic and security crises ASEAN has evolved and changed, occasionally even broadening. This research, then, will provide a unique and novel framework to understand ASEAN's decision-making by asking: why does ASEAN "broaden" its scope of responsibilities in the face of some crises, while "thicken" in response to others?

## Methodology

The research conduct a comparative historical analysis of three case study periods of variation in ASEAN's history: the creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the failed attempt to agree to a joint communique surrounding a maritime code of conduct for the South China Sea, and the ongoing breakdown of human rights and governance in Myanmar. In each,

ASEAN faced pressures from two primary directions: exogenous pressures to “broaden” the scope of its mission to include regional stability, and endogenous forces promoting a “thickening” of current priorities. All the while, some other exogenous forces sought to break the subsystem entirely. The case studies will demonstrate that, short of “exogenous broadeners” overcoming “endogenous thickeners,” often using the threat of potential breaking as leverage, ASEAN typically thickens (i.e., reenforces its norms) or does not change its norms at all in response to regional crises. This theory of broadening and thickening is based on a framework of the same name found in Baumgartner and Jones (2005), which is typically applied to American public policy. The expansion of this framework to ASEAN can provide novel insights into the actions of international organizations and small states facing crises. A summary of the influences of all potential actors in this framework is found in Table 1.

Table 1 Influence of Potential Actors

	<b>Thickeners</b>	<b>Broadeners</b>	<b>Breakers</b>
<b>Endogenous</b>	Primary	Complementary	Negligible
<b>Exogenous</b>	Complementary	Primary	Disruptive

### Theoretical Logic

Within this model, exogenous broadening is defined as any pressure coming from states or other external actors and its member states intended to push ASEAN towards expanding into new policy spheres to address crises, namely regional security. To paraphrase Baumgartner and Jones, such pressures are typically manifested in calls of “why doesn’t the government [ASEAN] do something?” in response to a crisis (Baumgartner and Jones, 2005). Endogenous thickening is defined as any pressure coming from within the organization or its member states for ASEAN to contrarily address crises by reinforcing its norms (i.e., expanding on its existing institutions and initiatives) oriented towards regional consensus and economic inter-connectivity. To again paraphrase Baumgartner and Jones, “government [ASEAN] gets thicker when it increases its activities within a previously occupied arena” (Baumgartner and Jones, 2005). Simply put, most exogenous forces want ASEAN to broaden their scope, increasing their range of attention to security. In contrast, endogenous forces want ASEAN to thicken, increasing their capacity for building consensus and thus making the organization more central to its region.

While endogenous thickeners and exogenous broadeners are the primary actors of this research, four additional actors must be contextualized: endogenous broadeners, exogenous thickeners, and “breakers” from either direction. As for the first two, while such actors exist in ASEAN’s international politics, the research paper treats such forces as essentially complimentary of the comparatively more impactful trends of exogenous thickening and endogenous broadening. Exogenous calls for thickening are typically uncontroversial, perhaps the best example of which being Chinese, Japanese, and (initially) Indian support for

the ASEAN-initiated Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade pact (Petri and Plummer, 2020). As such, while not within the scope of the research, RCEP is another example of the efficacy of the research framework. On the other hand, endogenous broadening pressures, such as somewhat frequent calls for a stronger regional security architecture by more China-skeptic member states, should be treated as a necessary but insufficient variable of ASEAN broadening. The research argues that such calls are only heeded when supported by successful and relatively larger exogenous pressures.

Similarly, while exogenous breaking forces are separate from endogenous thickening forces, their shared anti-broadening priorities can sometimes overlap. In times of strong broadening forces, this leads the former to act in complementary fashion with the latter. Defined as any state or organization outside of ASEAN or its member states that wishes to break down the organization as a subsystem, exogenous breakers are those actors who seek to keep the ASEAN from effectively acting in any policy sphere. A full breakdown of potential alignments between each actor can be found in Table 2. While some endogenous forces seek to break ASEAN, these are more commonly exogenous, typically in the form of countries who seek individual (i.e., bilateral) relations with the nations of Southeast Asia, rather than being forced to negotiate with the bloc as a whole. Importantly, the simple threat of an exogenous force to turn itself into a “breaker,” or the stressing of the potential threat of third-party breaker, can act as a measure strengthening that exogenous (typically broadening) pressure. Table 2 provides more information on the cross-alignment of all potential actors.

Table 2 Cross-Alignment of Potential Actors

	Exogenous Broadeners	Exogenous Thickeners	Exogenous Breakers
Endogenous Thickeners	Unaligned <i>regardless of</i> thickening	Aligned and complementary	Unaligned <i>except</i> against broadeners
Endogenous Broadeners	Aligned and complementary	Negligible overlap	Unaligned entirely

Viewed through a model of strong or weak endogenous-thickening and exogenous-broadening pressures, ASEAN exhibits three measurable behaviors over four sets of conditions. First, in times of weak endogenous thickening and weak exogenous broadening pressure, ASEAN does not meaningfully thicken or broaden, and thus continues acting within its previous norms. Second, in times of strong endogenous thickening and weak exogenous broadening pressures, ASEAN chooses to thicken. That is to say, ASEAN reinforces its previous norms by strengthening existing institutions without expanding those to a new sphere. Third, in times of weak endogenous thickening and strong exogenous broadening pressures, ASEAN will “broaden” itself by expanding its remit into new policy areas. Lastly, in times of strong endogenous thickening and strong exogenous broadening pressures, ASEAN will default to its previous norms, with both forces negating eachothers’ impact. A depiction of each of these outcomes can be found in Table 3.

Table 3 Endogenous Thickening Forces vs. Exogenous Broadening Forces

	<b>Weak Endogenous Thickening</b>	<b>Strong Endogenous Thickening</b>
<b>Weak Exogenous Broadening</b>	Continuation of previous norms	Thickening (Reinforcing of Norms, for example: RCEP)
<b>Strong Exogenous Broadening</b>	Broadening (Organizational Expansion, for example: ARF)	Continuation of previous norms

Each case study was selected to represent the greatest diversity across different combinations of these forces at work. Yet, seeing as the scope of the paper is to ask why ASEAN broadens when it does, each features strong exogenous broadening pressures. Breaking forces are also factored in; in order to determine whether the presence of a strong breaking force could serve as an alternative explanation for variation, one of the case studies includes such an actor playing in a primary role. For the first case study, the research argues that during the creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum, the organization faced strong exogenous broadening forces that were met by comparatively weak endogenous thickening forces. For the second, the failure of ASEAN to reach a consensus on a Code of Conduct for the South China Sea in 2012 was an example of strong exogenous broadening forces from the United States and Japan meeting strong endogenous thickening forces (albeit backstopped by China's breaking forces). For the third, the ongoing breakdown of human rights and governance in Myanmar has led to ASEAN facing near-constant calls for broadening by powerful exogenous forces and some member states, yet those calls jostle with strong endogenous thickening pressures from within ASEAN.

The analytical conditions and outcomes of each case study are summarized in Table 4. As it demonstrates, the only constant independent variable during times of unsuccessful broadening despite strong exogenous broadening forces is a strong endogenous thickening force. Meanwhile, broadening has been unsuccessful despite the presence or absence of strong exogenous breaking forces.

Table 4 Case Study Overview

	<b>Thickening Forces</b>	<b>Broadening Forces</b>	<b>Breaking Forces</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Creation of ARF</b>	Weak & Mostly Endogenous	Strong & Mostly Exogenous	Weak & Exogenous	Successful Broadening
<b>SCS Code of Conduct</b>	Strong & Mostly Endogenous	Strong & Mostly Exogenous	Strong & Exogenous	Unsuccessful Broadening
<b>Myanmar Governance</b>	Strong & Mostly Endogenous	Strong & Mostly Exogenous	Weak & Exogenous	Unsuccessful Broadening

Case Study I: Creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (1994)

	<b>Thickening Forces</b>	<b>Broadening Forces</b>	<b>Breaking Forces</b>
<b>Exogenous</b>	Negligible	Strong (United States, Japan, Australia)	Weak (China)
<b>Endogenous</b>	Weak	Complementary	Negligible

Outcome: Weak Thickening + Strong Broadening + Weak Breaking = Broadening

The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is a regional security institution bringing together twenty-seven countries on a near-yearly basis. It comprises the ten member states of ASEAN (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam), ten official ASEAN “dialogue partners” (Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia, and the United States), one ASEAN “observer” state (Papua New Guinea), and the additional invitees of Bangladesh, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Timor-Leste (ASEAN Secretariat, 2019). Functionally, the ARF focuses on five work streams, namely: 1) Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime, 2) Information and Communications Technology, 3) Disaster Relief, 4) Maritime Security, and 5) Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ASEAN Secretariat, 2019). The breadth, depth, and inclusivity of the ARF grants ASEAN a uniquely strong convening power on security across South and East Asia. Yet, the ARF does not owe its origins to an internal ASEAN initiative. Considerably, the creation of ARF is the story of exogenous forces pressuring ASEAN to broaden into a new policy sphere somewhat unwillingly.

At the end of the Cold War, Southeast Asia was coming off a long stretch of successful initial thickening. Beginning with the first ASEAN Summit Meeting in Bali, Indonesia in 1976, the organization clearly prioritized economic growth and regional stability, best exemplified by the “Treaty of Amity and Cooperation” ratified by all member states (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015). To the extent that the organization discussed security concerns, ASEAN took a decidedly neutral and non-aligned stance, most notably through the creation of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). This declaration, signed in 1971 by the original five ASEAN members, declared Southeast Asia should be “free from any form or manner of interference by outside powers,” and called on ASEAN members to “broaden the areas of cooperation” between themselves (International Center for Not-For-Profit-Law, 2019). These norms-enforcing initiatives and actions gave ASEAN its initial institutional heft, and helped forge the nascent “ASEAN Way.”

Yet after the fall of the Soviet Union, ASEAN faced a new world order. This shift was largely positive, as the Cold War brought decades of inter and intrastate conflict to Southeast Asia. Whether in the decades-long wars in Indochina, the internal convulsions and genocides of Indonesia, or other crises, the region suffered a disproportionate burden of the era’s ideological and proxy conflicts.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, with the Cold War over, ASEAN’s energies shifted away from inward-focused thickening, largely in the form of accepting new members. From 1991-1999, ASEAN accepted Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Vietnam as observer, then full members. Vietnam’s accession application was particularly striking, as much of ASEAN’s origin story lies in regional opposition to Vietnamese expansion into Laos and Cambodia.

Yet, this endogenous shift away from thickening should not be understood as a shift towards broadening. Instead, ASEAN’s growth is better understood in the context of ARF as representing a period of relatively weak endogenous thickening forces. While ASEAN’s current members were interested in the bloc’s expansion in the 1990s, placing more

<sup>2</sup>For more on Southeast Asia’s experiences of Cold War conflicts, see: Amitav Acharya, *The Making of Southeast Asia: International Relations of a Region*, Cornell University Press: New York, 2012.

conservative thickening forces on the back-burner, there was still far from a consensus in support of broadening, particularly into security. Indeed, the expansion of ASEAN can be apprehended as an act of thickening, as it represented growing the number of states in the region who agreed to abide by the organization's previous rules and norms. Nevertheless, because of these changing dynamics, endogenous thickening forces within ASEAN around this time are best described as relatively weak.

Indeed, despite ASEAN's desire for autonomy and predilection against outside interference, some of the region's largest outside actors hoped for the bloc to broaden into security. Most notably, the United States, Japan, and Australia each pushed ASEAN towards broadening, the former motivated by a desire to draw down U.S. military forces in the region as the Cold War ended. Facing the prospect of their most important ally withdrawing from their backyard, Japan and Australia began advocating for ASEAN to create robust security institutions in Southeast Asia in order to maintain a stable balance of power. At times, both Tokyo and Canberra made it clear that, if ASEAN did not act, outside powers may do so themselves, representing an implicit threat to act as a breaking force (Ba, 1997).

Yet, Japan and Australia consistently offered ASEAN the more appealing alternative of broadening, which was each country's true preference. As a result, neither should be understood as an exogenous breaking force. These actions are best understood as broadening forces attempting to use the tactic of breaking threats. This choice came from a sense of urgency, as each of these exogenous broadening actors was increasingly concerned by the security prospects of a rising China. Beijing's claims in the South China Sea were beginning to cause friction in the region, and the prospect of the sea turning into a "Chinese lake" following American military withdrawal motivated Japan and Australia to push ASEAN towards more meaningful security ownership of its territorial waters.

True breaking forces, albeit minor, were also at play in the formation of the ARF. While China was inclined against any external Southeast Asian security architecture, Beijing did not yet pose a credible breaking threat to ASEAN in the early 1990s. Most states in ASEAN perceived China in this period as economically focused and peaceful, yet still held resentment towards Beijing for its sponsoring of various inter and intra-state conflicts in the region throughout the Cold War (Ba, 1997). The early 1990s also witnessed a period of Chinese military expansion and modernization, featuring the construction of new military facilities on disputed South China Sea territories and acquisition of advanced military hardware from the former Soviet Union (Ba, 1997).

In particular, Vietnam was wary of Chinese security aims in Southeast Asia. Hanoi's suspicions deepened when, following Vietnam's signing of the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 1992, Beijing authorized the use of military force to stop "encroachments" on its territorial waters and lands, including disputed territories with Vietnam (Ba, 1997). China's skepticism towards the ARF was also centered in Taiwan, as Beijing feared that the regional institution could be used to force an undesired diplomatic solution to China's most sensitive overseas issue.

Put into action, the overwhelming nature of American, Australia, and Japanese exogenous broadening forces overcame ASEAN's relatively weak endogenous thickening forces. Despite its reluctance to expand into security, leaders from across the region began to openly state "their desire to see the United States maintain a presence in Asia," perceiving the same security risks as Japan and Australia (Tasker, 1992). These calls even came from historically non-aligned states like Indonesia, demonstrating the depth of ASEAN's desire to not lose the era's lone superpower as a security partner (Tasker 1992). Endogenous forces opposed to expansion into security did win certain concessions, including demands that the United States not attempt to open any military bases inside the region (Ba, 1997). Nevertheless, the exogenous demand for broadening, which included an implicit threat of potential breaking, won the day. While the ARF did not meet every exogenous demand, it was considered robust enough for the regional powers to back down from their breaking threats. ARF, then, formally came into existence following its inaugural 1994 meeting in Bangkok, attended by representatives from each ASEAN member and the ten official "dialogue partners" (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009).

To be sure, ASEAN's broadening into security via the ARF was relatively halting and incomplete. To this day the ARF provides a valuable regional meeting ground and security dialogue, perhaps the only of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region. Nevertheless, the ARF is, like ASEAN itself, frequently denigrated by outsiders as a "talking shop," incapable of sufficiently addressing Southeast Asia's myriad security challenges. Nevertheless, from an ASEAN institutional perspective, such criticisms belie the considerable leap taken by the organization to expand into security in the first place.

#### Case Study II: Failure to reach Joint Communiqué at ASEAN Summit (2012)

	<b>Thickening Forces</b>	<b>Broadening Forces</b>	<b>Breaking Forces</b>
<b>Exogenous</b>	Negligible	Strong (United States, Japan, Australia)	Strong (China)
<b>Endogenous</b>	Strong (Cambodia)	Complementary (Philippines, Vietnam)	Negligible

Outcome: Strong Thickening + Strong Broadening + Strong Breaking = Continuity of Norms  
(No Action)

Perhaps no Southeast Asian security topic garners more attention from outside powers than the balance of power in the South China Sea. A critical waterway positioned in the heart of the region, the South China Sea serves as a crossroads for roughly one third of all global trade by volume, and a majority of such trade for the advanced economies of Northeast Asia (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2016). As such, historically, outside powers that depend on access to trade via the South China Sea, including Imperial Japan in



the Second World War and the United States during the Cold War, exerted their influence over the waterway in order to maintain critical supply lanes.<sup>3</sup>

The American-backed security order around the South China Sea that began with the end of the Second World War persisted through the end of the Cold War. This maritime Pax Americana ensured that trade routes remained open, and the contested claims of various states, including China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines kept from boiling over. Nevertheless, this stasis did not last forever. Amidst growing Chinese military capabilities and a dearth of U.S. strategic attention due to wars in the Middle East and Central Asia, small disputes from 2011-2012 soon spiraled to form a tense security dilemma.

At the heart of these disputes is China's so-called "nine dash line," an expansive territorial claim by Beijing to own the majority of the South China Sea. As it gained more international confidence in the early 2010s, Beijing refused to budge from these maximalist claims, and rejected any interventions by Southeast Asian claimants as interfering in Chinese "internal" matters (Hayton, 2014). At an ARF meeting in Hanoi, Vietnam in 2010, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi summed up China's attitude regarding ASEAN's concerns in the South China Sea by stating "China is a big country and you are small countries, and that is a fact" (Mitchell, 2016).

In 2011, China stepped up its provocative military actions in the South China Sea, hoping to act as a breaking force against ASEAN's preferred security order. In February 2011, a Chinese frigate fired three shots at Philippine fishing vessels near the disputed Scarborough Shoal (Francisco, 2012). This was followed up in May when three Chinese patrol vessels clashed with a Vietnamese survey ship near the similarly disputed Paracel Islands (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022). Most notably in 2012, China gained effective control of the Scarborough Shoal from the Philippines following a fishing ban in the area and the deployment of controversial Chinese law enforcement vessels to the area (Petty, 2017).

Throughout this period of provocations, Beijing focused its energies on breaking potentially adversarial subsystems like ASEAN, hoping to strike deals with other claimants on a bilateral basis. For example, China reached an agreement with Vietnam in October 2011 to create principles to settle maritime disputes near the Paracel Islands, a deal that was not negotiated via ASEAN. This strategy, sometimes referred to as "salami slicing," was favored by Beijing due to its denial of other claimant states' ability to collectively negotiate (Haddick, 2012). Divided one-by-one, each individual Southeast Asian country fared little chance against China.

Unsurprisingly, the regional powers of the Asia-Pacific region opposed to China, namely the United States, Japan, and Australia, pushed ASEAN to take a strong stance against these actions. Fearing potential Chinese hegemony in the South China Sea, each power encouraged the claimant states of Southeast Asia to "internationalize" the dispute (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022). Ideally, to these exogenous broadeners, ASEAN would serve as a vehicle to pool each Southeast Asian claimant's grievances towards China. This would force

<sup>3</sup> For a more in-depth history of the South China Sea, see the opening chapters to: Bill Hayton, *The South China Sea: The Struggle For Power in Asia*, Yale University Press: New Haven, 2014.

Beijing to reach a lasting and multilateral settlement to the dispute. With the 2012 ASEAN summit in Cambodia approaching, each of these three actors sought to demonstrate their commitment to help ASEAN broaden to address the security challenge of the South China Sea. However, unlike in the case of the ARF, these exogenous broadeners never threatened to potentially break the subsystem were it to fail to act. Rather, they sought to promote the voices of potential endogenous broadeners, and lend them diplomatic support at the upcoming summit.

Nevertheless, for the claimant states of Southeast Asia themselves, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines, the issue was far more complicated than just a security dilemma. For one, China was (and is) a major trade and investment partner with all of the claimant states. Additionally, no Southeast Asian country held the ability to project meaningful naval power across the entire South China Sea. Rather, maritime states like the Philippines and Vietnam struggled to maintain parity with their Chinese adversaries to control disputed territories like the Scarborough Shoal and Paracel Islands. As a result, these countries agreed with the exogenous broadeners on internationalizing the dispute, calling upon the remaining six member states of ASEAN to ratify a previously-discussed “Code of Conduct” for the South China Sea (Thayer, 2012). Such a document would create maritime “rules of the road,” intended to minimize the chance of any individual incident spiraling into a larger conflict.

However, ASEAN was far from reaching a consensus on broadening the organization into sponsoring a security code of conduct. Specifically, 2012’s ASEAN host-state, Cambodia, acted as a strong thickening agent, complementing China’s exogenous breaking force. Encouraged by China, Cambodia used its ability to spoil the bloc’s consensus by refusing to sign onto a draft joint communique calling for ASEAN to act on the Philippines claims in the Scarborough Shoal and Vietnam’s desire to address delineated exclusive economic zones (EEZs) in disputed waters. Controversially, it is widely believed that Cambodian negotiators even shared drafts of these agreements with Chinese representatives, breaking the trust of its regional partners (Bower, 2012).

In doing so, Cambodia did not seek to break the ASEAN subsystem. Phnom Penh is a long-standing beneficiary of ASEAN’s largesse and economic support. Cambodia, itself, has survived as a state thanks partially to ASEAN’s blessing of a United Nations security and governance conservatorship in the early 1990s that reshaped the country.<sup>4</sup> Yet, Cambodia’s leader, Hun Sen, resented the power this gave external actors in Cambodian politics. Thus, Cambodia likely aligned with China to stay on good terms with its largest economic benefactor, while simultaneously keeping ASEAN from expanding further into unwelcome security topics. Put simply, Cambodia preferred ASEAN to stay within its current policy spheres, and was willing to work with a pro-breaking China in order to achieve this goal.

Thus, in an unprecedented setback for the organization, the 2012 ASEAN summit ended without any agreement on a joint communique (Bower, 2012). Critics outside of the region

<sup>4</sup> For more information on UNTAC, see a contemporaneous report: Trevor Findlay, “Cambodia: The Legacy and Lessons of UNTAC,” *SIPRI*, Research Report No. 9, 1995, <https://www.sipri.org/publications/1995/cambodia-legacy-and-lessons-untac>.

cited the failure as another example of the bloc's inability to effectively organize itself as a subsystem (Bower, 2012). Internally, those member states determined to oppose Chinese claims in the South China Sea were forced to seek other methods of resolution. For example, without any formal ASEAN mechanism, the Philippines went on to seek international arbitration with China under the United Nations' 1982 Convention of the Law of the Sea, known as UNCLOS, in January 2013 (Permanent Court of Arbitration, 2013).

Nevertheless, while ASEAN's norm of consensus led to its inability to reach a settlement in 2012, its norms did succeed in keeping China from breaking apart the subsystem. While the failure to publish a joint communique was arguably embarrassing for ASEAN, the fact that the organization persisted past this failure speaks to the strength of ASEAN's norms as a tool of convening and consensus building. Despite clear Chinese interference in the matter, Cambodia's unwillingness to sign onto any joint communique represented a clear lack of consensus within the bloc. While the outcome was disappointing to almost all members, and most exogenous actors, the fact that ASEAN persisted beyond this failure without breaking or resorting to intra-regional conflict speaks to the strength of the organization's norms, if not its ability to play effectively within the great power politics of the region.

#### Case Study III: Myanmar Human Rights & Governance (2010 – Today)

	<b>Thickening Forces</b>	<b>Broadening Forces</b>	<b>Breaking Forces</b>
<b>Exogenous</b>	Weak (Japan)	Strong (United States, European Union, Australia)	Weak (China)
<b>Endogenous</b>	Strong (Thailand, Cambodia)	Complementary (Indonesia)	Negligible

Outcome: Strong Thickening + Strong Broadening + Weak Breaking = Continuity of Norms  
(No Action)

Of all the regional security crises facing ASEAN, perhaps none elicits more criticism of the organization and its norms than the ongoing crises in Myanmar. Sometimes even referred to by media both within and outside the region as “ASEAN's Shame,” Myanmar's three-pronged crises of the genocide of Rohingya Muslims, military coup against a semi-democratic government, and the post-coup intercommunal violence and near-state collapse present a daunting challenge to ASEAN.<sup>5</sup> It is also one of the few topics in ASEAN on which internal divides between member states on thickening and broadening are clear and apparent for external actors to see.

Several outside powers clearly want ASEAN to broaden in response to conditions in Myanmar. Specifically, the United States, European Union, and Australia all varyingly advocate for the organization to suspend Myanmar's membership, speak out against military violence, and provide some level of recognition for the in-exile “National Unity Government” (NUG) made up of former opposition figures (“Myanmar shadow government”, 2021). These

<sup>5</sup> Examples include: Nile Bowie, “Myanmar's Crisis Becomes ASEAN's Shame,” *Asia Times*, 11 June 2021; Richard Heydarian, “Southeast Asia's moment of shame,” *Al Jazeera*, 20 June 2015.

moves would represent a broadening outside of ASEAN's norm of "non-interference" in member state affairs, as it would set conditions for minimum acceptable security conditions within member states. To be sure, few outside powers expect ASEAN to take concrete action, like military intervention, to stop the ongoing violence. Nevertheless, these powerful exogenous actors represent a strong force advocating for the broadening of ASEAN into a new set of internal-facing security norms.

However not all exogenous actors are advocating for broadening. Similarly to its role in previous case studies, China acts as a weak breaking force on ASEAN in response to the Myanmar crisis. Beijing has a complicated relationship with Myanmar's armed forces (frequently referred to as the "Tatmadaw"), but clearly prefers bilateral engagement with the government of the day over any hypothetical multinational or ASEAN-led mediation process (Myers, 2021). China covets access to trade routes that bypass the South China Sea (and, thus, minimize ASEAN's relevance), a benefit that a stable Myanmar could theoretically provide via the overland transport of goods from Southwestern China to the Indian Ocean (Myers, 2021). As a result, both China's strategic interests in Myanmar and practice of softly backing the Tatmadaw regime are evidence of Beijing's desire to break ASEAN as a subsystem on this issue.

Perhaps more surprising is the exogenous role of Japan. Tokyo has a long history of cooperation with Myanmar's successive military governments, dating back to Imperial Japanese backing for the nascent Burmese Army that soon developed into the modern Tatmadaw. As a result, Japan historically favors a more low-key approach in dealing with Myanmar, promoting an ideal methodology of improving the country's human rights through "positive" engagement. As a result, Japan is best described as an exogenous thickening force on ASEAN in response to the crises in Myanmar (Ashley & Silverberg, 2022).

The member states of ASEAN themselves are also split between thickeners and broadeners on Myanmar. For the former, the mainland Southeast Asian states of Thailand and Cambodia both variously promote engagement with and accommodation of the Tatmadaw ("West condemns Myanmar coup", 2021). It is perhaps unsurprising that each of these states host a government that is either highly authoritarian (Cambodia) or has a history of military coups itself (Thailand). Indeed, some commentators point to the "Thai Model" as an ideal outcome in the minds of Tatmadaw leaders; Thailand being a largely stable and economically prosperous country in which the military exercises political control through recurrent coups against undesired governments (Kurlantzick, 2021). For his part, Hun Sen, the authoritarian head of Cambodia, stunned observers after becoming the first regional leader to visit Myanmar since the 2021 coup in January 2022, providing a certain level of diplomatic legitimacy to the Tatmadaw government (Thul, 2022).

On the other hand, Indonesia serves as Southeast Asia's most outspoken broadener on the Myanmar crisis. Immediately following the 2021 coup, President Joko Widodo stated that the situation in Myanmar was "unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue" ("ASEAN leaders demand", 2021), a stance much stronger than most other member states. At subsequent ASEAN summits to discuss the crisis, Indonesia advocated for the toughest line

against the Tatmadaw, seeking to punish the coup regime by limiting its access to the organization and denying its leaders legitimacy (“ASEAN leaders demand”, 2021). Joined to a lesser extent by Singapore and Malaysia, this bloc of endogenous broadeners sought to expand past ASEAN’s typical norms to improve the security situation of the region.

When this complicated mixture of forces clashed within ASEAN, the result was largely inconclusive. The most significant outcome of ASEAN’s post-coup summits, the so-called “5-Point Consensus,” is widely considered a failure. This initiative, agreed to by ASEAN and the Tatmadaw’s leader Min Aung Hlaing in April 2021, called for an immediate end to violence in Myanmar, dialogue among all parties, the appointment of an ASEAN special envoy, humanitarian assistance by ASEAN, and the special envoy’s visit to Myanmar to meet with all parties (“Factbox: ASEAN’s five-point”, 2022). Days after its acceptance at a 2021 ASEAN meeting in Jakarta, the Tatmadaw government recanted its support, stating that the agreement would be “considered” after “the situation returns to stability” (“Myanmar: ASEAN’s failed”, 2022).

As such, the result of the meeting of this confluence of thickening, broadening, and breaking forces was the failure of any force to overcome the rest. Rather, ASEAN largely defaulted to its previous norms, and has so-far let the failure of the 5-Point Consensus go without any meaningful consequences. As a result, the organization is once again receiving criticism from across the world for failing to act on a regional security crisis. In contrast, its boosters argue that ASEAN’s most important attribute is its status as an inclusive collection of heterogenous states, and that allowing the organization to be redefined by such outside pressure would represent a failure of its core ideology.<sup>6</sup>

More important for ASEAN’s prospects, though, is the reaction within Myanmar itself. Rather than continuing to appeal to the organization, anti-coup protesters are largely ignoring ASEAN in their messaging, instead appealing to international norms like the United Nations’ “Responsibility to Protect” (often shortened to R2P) clause. This states that the international community must collectively intervene in other state’s affairs when that state is “manifestly failing” to protect innocent people (Strangio, 2021). Protest signs across Myanmar often feature appeals to the international community to fulfill their obligations under “R2P.”

This sidestepping of ASEAN as Southeast Asia’s regional subsystem is not only limited to Myanmar’s domestic politics. A United Nations General Assembly Resolution denouncing the coup on June 18, 2021 also split ASEAN into two diplomatic factions. Five member states, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines supported the resolution, and called for an arms embargo against the Tatmadaw. However, four other members which are Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Brunei abstained. Somewhat ironically, Myanmar voted in support of the resolution, a result of the country’s U.N. Ambassador’s defection to the NUG following the coup (Peters, 2021). In summary, the Myanmar crisis cannot be understood as either a thickening or broadening event for ASEAN, as the organizations norms have been neither reaffirmed or expanded in response. Rather, ASEAN once again fell back on its pre-existing norms.

<sup>6</sup> An example of this argument can be found in: Moez Hayat, “Give ASEAN Diplomacy a Chance in Myanmar,” *The Diplomat*, 19 July 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/07/give-asean-diplomacy-a-chance-in-myanmar/>.

## Conclusions

ASEAN is best understood as a subsystem of a larger sense of Southeast Asian regionalism. That subsystem faces endogenous and exogenous pressures, and friction between these creates turning points for the bloc. Put simply, ASEAN is an organized anarchy as defined by Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972). As such, ASEAN is a case study in the path dependency of norms. That is to say, the organization defines itself by its norms and ideals, and typically acts on them when faced with conflicting endogenous and exogenous forces. Considering that ASEAN's norms are highly communitarian and consensus-based, the organization rarely broadens (as opposed to thickens) outside of them without exogenous pressure. Such broadening pressures sometimes depend on an implicit threat that unless ASEAN broadens, the subsystem may be broken.

This is a problematic conclusion for those who value ASEAN's norms and ideals. While two of the three case studies in this paper highlight the arguable shortcomings of the "ASEAN Way," this often-maligned system has ensured that Southeast Asia has remained relatively peaceful and prosperous since the end of the Cold War. Yet, all norms have their limits, and all organizations must inevitably adjust to the realities of a changing world. As such, this research's observation that ASEAN only successfully broadens when exogenous, rather than endogenous, forces are sufficient serves as a cautionary tale. The pattern observed in this research, ASEAN's protection of its norms through thickening, often itself results in the subsequent creation of future policy frictions. These frictions, then, often result in even larger punctuations of change when prompted by exogenous thickeners. While ASEAN has not expanded into new policy realms at the pace that exogenous actors like the United States and Japan would like it to, this conclusion implies that ASEAN would be well served to reach its own consensus on when such a move would be proper.

The research lacks a case study where endogenous thickening and exogenous broadening forces are weak, but exogenous breaking forces are strong. However, such a scenario, in which exogenous forces seek to break ASEAN into an organization that aligns with their wishes, is the exact nightmare scenario ASEAN was formed to prevent. The South China Sea crisis, which draws intense attention from powerful outside actors, appears to be the most likely scenario that could bring such an outcome. Were the security situation in the South China Sea to degrade to the point of military intervention by the United States and China, it seems unlikely either state would hesitate from breaking ASEAN as a subsystem to achieve their security aims.

Thus, ASEAN must prepare for the day where, unless endogenous forces prove sufficient to broaden, exogenous forces will seek to break apart its subsystem. Indeed, such endogenous forces can only exist in diverse international organizations like ASEAN thanks to agreed-to norms. Otherwise, without such norms, there would be no such "endogenous" forces to speak of at all. In both case studies where ASEAN failed to broaden in response to a security crisis, actors within Southeast Asia chose to expand their grievance to the international community (Philippines to UNCLOS, Myanmar's protesters with R2P) rather than accept that ASEAN failed to reach a consensus. While these actions did not threaten to

break ASEAN as a subsystem at the time, such internal frustrations could morph into a particularly undesirable force: a group of endogenous breakers dissatisfied with ASEAN's effectiveness as a subsystem. Thus, ASEAN must ask itself when it should make its own choice to broaden, lest it risk being broken.

## Acknowledgement

The author thank Professors Bryan Jones and Apichai Shipper for their mentoring, advice, and guidance throughout the writing of this article.

## About The Authors

Ryan Ashley is a PhD Candidate at the University of Texas' Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs focusing on Japanese security relations with Southeast Asia. He is also an active-duty officer in the United States Air Force. The views expressed here are those of the author's and do not represent those of the U.S. Air Force, the Department of Defense, or any part of the U.S. government.

## References

- "The Founding of ASEAN," <https://asean.org/about-asean/the-founding-ofasean/#:~:text=History%20%2D%20ASEAN&text=The%20Association%20of%20Southeast%20Asian,%2C%20Philippines%2C%20Singapore%20and%20Thailand.>
- 1971 Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality Declaration. (1971, November 27) *International Center for Not-For-Profit Law*. [https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Transnational\\_zone.pdf](https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Transnational_zone.pdf)
- ASEAN leaders demand immediate end to 'unacceptable' killings in Myanmar, following emergency summit. (2021, April 24). *ABC News*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-04-25/asean-myanmar-summit-min-aung-hlaing/100093328>
- Ashley, R., & Silverberg, E. (2022). Japan's human rights diplomacy: A convergence of geopolitical and geoeconomic interests. *Asia Policy*, 17(2), 138-144.
- Ba, A. (1997). The ASEAN regional forum: Maintaining the regional idea in Southeast Asia. *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, 52(4), 635-656. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070209705200408>
- Baumgartner, F. R., & Jones, B. D. (2005). *The Politics of Attention: How Government Prioritizes Problems*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.
- Bower, E. Z. (2012). China reveals its hand on ASEAN in Phnom Penh. *CSIS*. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/china-reveals-its-hand-asean-phnom-penh>.

- Chiou, Y. (2010). Unraveling the logic of ASEAN's decision-making: Theoretical analysis and case examination. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 2(3), 371-393. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1943-0787.2010.01199.x>
- Cohen, M., March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (1972). A garbage can model of organization choice. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17(1), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392088>
- Factbox: ASEAN's five-point peace agreement on the crisis in Myanmar. (2022, February 17). *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/aseans-five-point-peace-agreement-crisis-myanmar-2022-02-17/>
- Feraru, A. S. (2016). ASEAN decision-making process: Before and after the ASEAN Charter. *Asian Development Policy Review*, 4(1), 26-41. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.107/2016.4.1/107.1.26.41>
- Francisco, R. (2012, April 13). Beijing-Manila standoff deadlocked even as ships leave. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-philippines-china/beijing-manila-standoff-deadlocked-even-as-ships-leave-idUKBRE83C12S20120413>
- Haddick, R. (2012, August 03). Salami slicing in the South China Sea. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/08/03/salami-slicing-in-the-south-china-sea/>
- Hayton, B. (2014). *The South China Sea: The Struggle For Power in Asia*. Yale University Press: New Haven.
- Hook, G. D. (2009). Japan and the ASEAN Regional Forum: Bilateralism, multilateralism or supplementalism? *Japanstudien*, 10(1), 159-188. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09386491.1999.11826848>
- Jones, D., & Michael L. R. Smith. (2007). Making Process, Not Progress: ASEAN and the Evolving East Asian Regional Order. *International Security*, 32(1), 148-184. <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2007.32.1.148>
- Kurlantzick, J. (2021, March 22). Myanmar's Junta Tries to Follow the Thailand Model for Legitimizing its Rule – But it is Unlikely to Succeed. *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/myanmars-junta-tries-follow-thailand-model-legitimizing-its-rule-unlikely-succeed>
- Mitchell, T. (2016, July 13). China struggles to win friends over South China Sea. *Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com/content/a9a60f5e-48c6-11e6-8d68-72e9211e86ab>
- Myanmar shadow government sets up office in South Korea. (2021, September 18). *Nikkei Asia*. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Myanmar-Crisis/Myanmar-shadow-government-sets-up-office-in-South-Korea>
- Myanmar: ASEAN's failed '5-Point Consensus' a year on. (2022, April 22). *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/22/myanmar-aseans-failed-5-point-consensus-year#:~:text=Gen,to%20meet%20with%20all%20parties>
- Myers, L. (2021, September 10). China is hedging its bets in Myanmar. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/10/china-myanmar-coup-national-league-for-democracy/>



- Permanent Court of Arbitration, "The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of Philippines v. The People's Republic of China)," Case Number: 2013-19, 22 January 2013, <https://pca-cpa.org/en/cases/7/>
- Peters, C. (2021, June 20). The UN condemned Myanmar's coup. Will that matter? *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/2021/6/20/22542370/myanmar-coup-united-nations-un>
- Petri, P. A., & Plummer, M. (2020, November 16). RCEP: A new trade agreement that will shape global economics and politics. *Brookings*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/11/16/rcep-a-new-trade-agreement-that-will-shape-global-economics-and-politics/>
- Petty, M. (2017, April 10). At strategic shoal, China asserts power through control, and concessions. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-china-philippines-exclu/exclusive-at-strategic-shoal-china-asserts-power-through-control-and-concessions-idUSKBN17B124>
- South-East Asia's regional club faces its greatest tests yet. (2021, October 30). *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/asia/2021/10/30/south-east-asias-regional-club-faces-its-greatest-tests-yet>
- Strangio, S. (2021, March 23). Should R2P Be Invoked in the Case of Myanmar? *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/should-r2p-be-invoked-in-the-case-of-myanmar/>
- Thayer, C. A. (2012, August 19). ASEAN's Code of Conduct in the South China Sea: A Litmus Test for Community-Building? *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. <https://apjif.org/2012/10/34/Carlyle-A.-Thayer/3813/article.html>
- Thul, P. C. (2022, January 07). Cambodia PM meeting Myanmar junta chief as visit sparks protests. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/cambodia-pm-visit-myanmar-pressing-peace-plan-2022-01-06/>
- Timeline: China's Maritime Disputes. *Council on Foreign Relations*, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/chinas-maritime-disputes>
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2016). Review of Maritime Transport: 2016. [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/rmt2016\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/rmt2016_en.pdf)
- West condemns Myanmar coup but Thailand, Cambodia shrug. (2021, February 1). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2060651/west-condemns-myanmar-coup-but-thailand-cambodia-shrug>

# Impact of Pluri-Lateral Free Trade Agreements on Innovation: Example of ASEAN

Robert Smith<sup>1\*</sup>, Nucharee Nuchkoom Smith<sup>2</sup>, and Mark Perry<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,3</sup>School of Law, University of New England, Armidale, NSW, Australia 2351

<sup>2</sup>Department of Law, Faculty of Social Sciences, Kasetsart University, Sakon Nakhon, Thailand 47000

robert@aeconsultants.asia; pulom88@hotmail.com; mperry21@une.edu.au

**How to Cite:** Smith, R., Smith, N. N., & Perry, M. (2023). Impact of pluri-lateral free trade agreements on innovation: Example of ASEAN. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 11(1), 87–110.  
<https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.7975>

## Abstract

Innovation has been identified as a critical indicator for an economy to succeed in the fourth industrial revolution. Historically, some members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have been better known for violation of intellectual rights rather than their protection. However, this is changing as their economies develop and they have been better integrated into the global economy. Integration has been facilitated by their membership of the World Trade Organization and bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) between individual states and their trading parties. ASEAN has entered into plurilateral FTAs with some of its trade partners. A key element of these plurilateral FTAs is that most dedicate a Chapter on the protection of intellectual property rights. These clauses have two essential elements. Firstly, they set out the obligations of the parties to protect intellectual property rights and their commitment to seek membership of intellectual property treaties. Secondly, the parties undertake to assist the lesser developed members with improving their processes and procedures so that they can accede to appropriate treaties. The research analysed the impact of these multilateral FTAs on the protection of patents and marks by the individual ASEAN members.

**Keywords:** innovation; plurilateral free trade agreements; intellectual property rights; patents; trade-marks

## Introduction

Schwab (2018) has identified four attributes for an economy to succeed in the fourth industrial revolution: resiliency, agility, innovation, and a human-centric approach. Similarly, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Integration Monitoring Directorate

identifies: innovation and technology; human capital; regulatory frameworks; infrastructure connectivity; and inclusive, sustainable growth (Tijaja, 2019). A common feature of both responses is the need for an innovation pillar. A belief shared by developed and developing nations alike is that innovation is supported by intellectual property protection. It encourages individuals and companies to seek new solutions in products and services, and also, by sharing the details of the innovation through patent disclosures, allows others to learn from the disclosed 'art' (WIPO, 2017) or as conceptualised by Newton – 'Standing on the Shoulders of Giants' (Lingard & Perry, 2016; Popova, 2016). ASEAN is an association of the ten Southeast Asian nations, namely: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Of the ten members, Singapore is a developed economy; Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar are least developed countries; with the remainder developing countries (United Nations, 2020). As shown in Table 1, the development indicators are quite diverse, as is the wide disparity in the level of development.

All ten ASEAN members are members of the World Trade Organization and hence parties to the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement). Under TRIPS (art. 1(1)), members can meet their obligations under TRIPS without acceding to any other Intellectual Property treaties. Nevertheless, as discussed later in this research, ASEAN member states are contracting parties to several World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) treaties.

Most of the ASEAN economies rely on manufactured exports such as motor vehicles and electronics, which are assembled in-country for external manufacturers. Intellectual property remains with the external manufacturers. It must be protected by the country where the vehicles are assembled. In 1995 the seven ASEAN members signed the *ASEAN Framework Agreement on Intellectual Property Cooperation*. All members of ASEAN except Malaysia have ratified the Agreement. The Agreement has still not entered into force as all members must ratify it for this to occur (art. 8(5)). Its objectives were to strengthen cooperation 'through an open and outward-looking attitude with a view to contributing to the promotion and growth of regional and global trade liberalisation' (art. 1(1)); explore intra-ASEAN cooperation (art. 1(3)); explore the possibility of setting up an ASEAN patent system (art. 1(4)) and trade-mark system (art. 1(5));<sup>1</sup> and consultations on creating ASEAN standards and practices (art. 1(6)).

The ASEAN Working Group on Intellectual Property Cooperation (AWGIPC) was established in 1996 under the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Intellectual Property Cooperation, although it had not entered into force. (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). Malaysia joined the AWGIPC, although it had not signed the Framework Agreement. The 2016-2025 Action Plan had four strategic goals, namely: A more robust ASEAN IP System is developed by strengthening IP offices and building IP infrastructure; regional IP platforms and infrastructure are developed to contribute to enhancing ASEAN; an expanded and inclusive ASEAN IP Ecosystem is developed; and regional mechanisms to promote asset creation and

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that in some jurisdictions, including Australia, the term Trade Mark is used rather than Trademark.

commercialisation, particularly geographical indications and traditional knowledge, are enhanced (ASEAN IPR Action Plan 2016-2025, 2016).

Table 1 Selected 2018 World Development Indicators

	Brunei Darussalam	Cambodia	Indonesia	Lao PDR	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
Population (million)	0,43	16,0	267,1	7,11	32,4	52,7	108,6	5,64	71,3	94,9
Poverty headcount at national poverty levels (% of the population)	-	-	998	-	5,6	-	16,7	-	9,9	6,8
Poverty headcount ratio at USD 2.15 per day (% of the population)	-	-	5,4	-	0,0	-	63,0	-	0,0	1,2
Gross national income (GNI) per capita (Atlas Method) (current USD thousands)	29,0	1,42	3,8	2,47	16,7	1,25	3,64	88,5	6,45	9,36
Primary school completion rate (%)	100	85	100	98	99	95	100	100	994	100
Primary school enrolment (% of gross)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	198	100
Secondary school enrolment (% of gross)	994	-	889	667	882	668.4	884	100	100	-
Mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 persons	130	121	120	51,5	131	116	124	147	176	148
High technology exports (% of manufactured exports)	0	-1,4	-8,2	38	53,2	-3,6	61,3	51,6	23,7	40,8
Net official development assistance received (current USD millions)	-	783	962	589	-34,5	1,712	547	-	-419	1,645

Source: (World Bank, 2021) Values >100 are due to the calculation method. If there is no data, they are indicated by '-'. The actual date of collection of individual data sets varies.

The Action Plan encouraged Member states to seek accession to the Madrid Protocol, Hague Agreement and Patent Cooperation Treaty (Initiative 5). Each member state should also '[e]ndeavour to accede to other WIPO-administered international treaties (Initiative 6). The AWGIPC was explicitly tasked with evaluating 'protection mechanisms of GIs [Geographic Indications] and assisting in protecting GIs in ASEAN and foreign market' (Initiative 18). AWGIPC was also tasked to promote a protection mechanism for Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Traditional Cultural Expressions (GRTKTCE) (Initiative 19).

ASEAN has ten Dialogue Partners: Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Russia and the United States (Merced, 2017).

The initial focus of the relationship with the Dialogue Partners was on technical and economic assistance. The focus then broadened to include the promotion of two-way trade and investments.

The relationship between innovation and intellectual property, particularly in frameworks for economies, has long been discussed (Landes & Posner, 2003). Currently, the most recognised measure of innovation for nations is the annual Global Innovation Index (GII), which is based on a detailed analysis of seven pillars: institutions, human capital & research, infrastructure, market sophistication, business sophistication, knowledge and technology outputs, and creatives output (Cornell University, INSEAD & WIPO, 2020). The GII is reported as a ranking based on the overall score of the economy.

The GIIs for the ten ASEAN countries from 2011 to 2020 are shown in Table 2. Singapore is by far the best performing of the ASEAN members. The lowest-performing countries are the three least developed countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar. The Philippines has shown the most significant improvement over the ten years, with Thailand and Vietnam showing significant improvement. Malaysia has been consistent, whilst Indonesia has improved but is still relatively poorly placed.

Table 2 Global Innovation Indices of ASEAN Members 2011-2020

Country	Global Innovation Index									
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Brunei Darussalam	75	53	74	88	-	-	71	67	71	71
Cambodia	111	129	110	106	91	95	101	98	98	110
Indonesia	99	100	85	87	97	88	87	85	85	85
Lao PDR	-	138	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	113
Malaysia	31	32	32	33	32	35	37	35	35	33
Myanmar	-	-	-	140	138	-	-	-	-	129
Philippines	91	95	90	100	83	74	73	73	54	50
Singapore	3	3	8	7	7	6	7	5	8	8
Thailand	48	57	57	48	55	52	51	44	43	44
Vietnam	51	76	76	71	52	59	47	45	42	42

Source: (WIPO, 2021)

The research looks at the role of plurilateral free-trade agreements in assisting the ASEAN member states in developing their intellectual property frameworks.

## **Analytical Framework**

This research is based on the documentary research concept. It analyses the impact of the ASEAN's membership in plurilateral free trade agreements on the development of the intellectual property regime of the member countries concerning the protection of patents and marks. There are complications when translating laws from one language to another. Many of our language constructs are tied to our culture and understanding.

## **Methodology**

The research adopts the doctrinal legal research method. The authors accessed the official repositories of the intellectual property treaty websites, including the World Intellectual Property Organization, to access official documents, parties to the various treaties, and any reservations. A similar task was undertaken with the ASEAN repository for ASEAN Free Trade Agreements. A legal analysis assessed the impact of plurilateral free-trade agreements on IP legislation of the ASEAN member states.

## **Analysis**

### **Intellectual Property Treaty Membership of ASEAN Member States**

ASEAN member states have obligations under treaties to which they are party and to agreements to which ASEAN is a party. In the latter case, individual member states accede to the agreements following the completion of their internal approval processes. The agreements usually have a threshold number of accessions before the agreement can enter into force. The other potential state parties can accede to the agreement at any time after it enters into force and is then bound to the terms of the agreement.

ASEAN member states are contracting parties to World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) treaties as well as the *International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants* and the *World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights*, which is a requirement of being a member of the World Trade Organization (Table 3).

With the more recent emphasis on the protection of intellectual property rights, the partners negotiating free trade agreements tend to include a chapter on intellectual property rights. In this case, the focus is on plurilateral-lateral free trade agreements between ASEAN and its dialogue partners.

Table 3 ASEAN Member State Membership of International Patent and Mark Treaties  
(as of 14 February 2021)

	Brunei Darussalam	Cambodia	Indonesia	Lao PDR	Malaysia	Myanmar	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
<i>World Intellectual Property Convention</i>										
Year of accession/ ratification	1994	1995	1979	1994	1988	2001	1980	1990	1989	1975
<i>Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property</i>										
Year of accession	2012	1998	1950*	1998	1988	-	1980	1994	2008	1949
<i>Patent Law Treaty (2000)</i>										
Year of accession	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Washington Treaty on Intellectual Property in Respect of Integrated Circuits (1989)</i>										
Year of accession	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Budapest Treaty on the International Recognition of the Deposit of Microorganisms for the Purposes of Patent Procedure</i>										
Year of accession	2012	-	-	-	-	-	1981	1994	-	-
<i>Hague Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Industrial Designs</i>										
Year of accession	2013	2016	-	-	-	-	-	2005	-	2019
Geneva Act (1999)	2013	2016	-	-	-	-	-	2005	-	2019
<i>Lisbon Agreement for the Protection of Appellations of Origin and their International Registration</i>										
Year of accession	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	P
Geneva Act (2015)	-	2018	-	2020	-	-	-	-	-	2019
<i>Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT)</i>										
Year of accession	2012	2016	1997	2006	2006	-	2001	1994	2009	1992
<i>Trademark Law Treaty (TLT) (1994)</i>										
Year of accession/ ratification	-	-	1997	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Nice Agreement</i>										
Year of accession/ ratification	-	-	-	-	2007	-	-	1999	-	-
<i>Singapore Treaty</i>										
Year of accession/ ratification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2007	-	-
<i>Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks</i>										
Year of accession/ ratification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1973
Madrid Protocol [18]	2016	2015	2017	2015	2019	-	2012	2000	2017	2006
<i>Locarno Agreement Establishing an International Classification for Industrial Designs</i>										
Year of accession	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2019	-	-
<i>Strasbourg Agreement Concerning the International Patent Classification</i>										
Year of accession	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (also known as ITPGRFA, International Seed Treaty or Plant Treaty)</i>										
Contracting party	-	P	P	P	P	P	P	-	-	-
Signature only	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	P	-
<i>UPOV Convention</i>										
Year of accession	-	-	-	-	-	-	2018	2004	-	2006
<i>Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights</i>										
Year of accession	1995	2004	1995	2013	1995	1995	1995	1995	1995	2007

Source: WIPO and authors. \*Indonesia acceded to Paris Agreement as the Dutch East Indies.

## Patent and Trade-mark Clauses in Plurilateral FTAs to which ASEAN is a Party

ASEAN has entered into FTAs with six of its ten dialogue parties: Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea and New Zealand. All sixteen countries were party to negotiations for the *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership*, which entered into force on 1 January 2022 with 12 original parties: Australia, New Zealand, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Japan, Laos, the Republic of Korea<sup>2</sup>, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2021). India was not in a position to sign the RCEP Agreement. However, the parties left it open for India to accede to the Agreement at a later date (Ministers' Declaration, 2020). Hong Kong was not a party to the RCEP negotiations. There is diversity among ASEAN members, including their legal systems. As FTA obligations require ASEAN members to refine their laws, the significant trading FTA partnerships are informative of the changes required.

### *ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA*

The objectives of the intellectual property chapter of the *ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA* (AANZFTA) are:

Each Party confirms its commitment to reducing impediments to trade and investment by promoting deeper economic integration through effective and adequate creation, utilisation, protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights, taking into account the different levels of economic development and capacity and differences in national legal systems and the need to maintain an appropriate balance between the rights of intellectual property owners and the legitimate interests of users in subject matter protected by intellectual property rights. (ch 13, art. 1).

Each of the parties affirmed its rights and obligations to each other under the *TRIPS Agreement* (AANZFTA, ch. 13, art. (3)). The parties must maintain a trade-mark classification system consistent with the Nice Agreement and that the trade-mark system may be used to protect geographical indications (AANZFTA, ch. 13, art. 7). Provided parties meet their international obligations; they may 'establish appropriate measures to protect genetic resources, traditional knowledge and folklore' (ch. 13, art. 8).

The parties acknowledged significant capacity differences in the area of intellectual property (art. 9(1)). If requested, a party can assist it in implementing Chapter 13 of the Agreement (art. 9(2)). They also to agreed promote dialogue (art. 9(3)), cooperation (art. 9(4)), education and awareness regarding intellectual property protection and enforcement (art. 9(5)). They also agreed to cooperate on border measures to eliminate intellectual property violations (art. 9(6)). If parties intend to accede to specified patent and mark protection treaties, they can seek the cooperation of other parties in their path to accession and implementation (art. 9(7)). They can also seek support in their efforts to develop an inclusive system of trade-mark registration (art. 9(8)), subject, of course, to the availability of resources

<sup>2</sup> For the Republic of Korea it will enter into force on 1 February 2022.



(art. 9(9)). The specified treaties were *Patent Cooperation Treaty*, *Strasbourg Agreement*, *Budapest Treaty*, *Madrid Protocol*, *Patent Law Treaty*, *UPOV Convention*, and *Singapore Treaty*. Finally, the parties agreed to establish a Committee on Intellectual Property to ‘monitor the implementation and administration’ of the Intellectual Property Chapter. The Committee will meet annually, or as required, with its program developed by the parties (art. 12(2)).

### *ASEAN-China Framework Agreement*

The *ASEAN-China Framework Agreement* includes an agreement on intellectual property (art. 7(2)). In December 2009, the parties signed a *Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the Field of Intellectual Property*. The parties reaffirmed ‘their commitment under treaties to which they acceded and under their respective national laws and regulations’ (art. 1).

They agreed to establish a periodic Heads of Intellectual Property Offices Meeting to facilitate this. The meetings would:

- a. Share information on the latest developments and exchange views on international intellectual property issues (art. 2(1))
- b. Coordinate on intellectual property rights protection (art. 2(2))
- c. Exchange information and experiences concerning the examination of patents (art. 2(3));
- d. Cooperate in the development of IP automation and database (art. 2(4)); and
- e. ‘[e]xchange of views on major issues related to the international intellectual property systems that are under deliberation at the World Intellectual Property Organisation and other international fora’ (art 2(5)).

They also agreed to recognise the contribution made by genetic resources, traditional knowledge and folklore for scientific, cultural and economic development and to improve the ‘legal system for the protection of genetic resources, traditional knowledge and folklore’ (art. 3).

### *ASEAN-Hong Kong, China FTA*

The *ASEAN-Hong Kong, China FTA* (AHKFTA) affirmed the rights and obligations of the parties to abide by their *TRIPS* obligations (ch. 10, art. 1). They also agreed ‘to promote and strengthen co-operation in . . . intellectual property rights to enhance their economic and trade relations’ (ch. 10, art. 2).

### *ASEAN-India Regional Trade and Investment Area*

Intellectual property rights were not included in the framework agreement for the *Regional Trade and Investment Area*.

### *ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership*

Japan and ASEAN signed a framework agreement for the *ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership* in 2003. Japan committed to mutual cooperation and to support ASEAN members in capacity development in the field of intellectual property rights (art. 5(1)(3)). Japan would also promote accession to the related international agreement as was mentioned briefly as a field of economic cooperation in Article 53 of the *AJCEP Agreement* signed in 2006 [28]. The parties entered into an agreement in 2019 for Japan to provide technical assistance through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for specific programs determined by the parties (*TCA-ASEAN*).

### *ASEAN-Korea Framework Agreement*

The *ASEAN-Korean Framework Agreement (AKFTA)* includes a commitment to ‘explore and cooperate’ in the realm of intellectual property (art. 3.1(1)(j)).

### *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement*

The *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement* has a very extensive chapter on Intellectual Property (ch. 11). Parties may formulate or amend their laws and ‘adopt measures necessary to protect public health and nutrition and to promote the public interest in sectors of vital importance to its socio-economic and technological development’ (art. 11.4(1)). They may also adopt appropriate measures ‘to prevent the abuse of intellectual property rights by right holders or the resort to practices which unreasonably restrain trade or adversely affect the international transfer of technology’ (art. 11.4(2)). The legislation of a party may provide more extensive protections than required by Chapter 11 but must not contravene it (art. 11.5)). The regime for the exhaustion of intellectual property rights is up to each party (art. 11.6).

Parties must ratify or accede to the following patent and mark protection treaties (art. 11.9(1)), namely: *Paris Convention*, *PCT* and *Madrid Protocol*. They are also to endeavour to ratify or accede to the *Budapest Treaty*. As in the *AANZFTA*, if a party intends to ratify or accede to the *UPOV Convention*, the *Geneva Act (1999)* and the *Singapore Treaty*, they may seek support from the other parties (*RCEP*, art. 11.9(3)). Each party must maintain a trade-mark classification system consistent with the *Nice Agreement* and follow updated versions (*RCEP*, art. 11.21). Each party is to grant owners of registered trade-marks exclusive rights (art. 11.23).

Each party is to protect geographical indications through a trade-mark system, a sui generis system, or other means provided the requirements of the *TRIPS Agreement* [3] are met (*RCEP*, art. 11.29).

The agreement deals extensively available with the patentable subject matter whether products or processes, in all fields of technology. They must be ‘new, involve an inventive

step, and are capable of industrial application' regardless of the place of invention, the field of technology, and whether imported or locally produced (art. 11.36(1)). Importantly:

1. A Party may exclude from patentability inventions, the prevention within its territory of the commercial exploitation of which is necessary to protect *ordre public* or morality, including to protect human, animal or plant life or health, or to avoid serious prejudice to the environment . . .
2. A Party may also exclude from patentability:
  - (a) Diagnostic, therapeutic, and surgical methods for the treatment of humans or animals; and
  - (b) Plants and animals other than micro-organisms, and essentially biological processes for the production of plants or animals other than non-biological and microbiological processes. However, each Party shall provide for the protection of plant varieties either by patents or by an effective sui generis system or by any combination thereof. (art. 11.36(2)-(3)).

In addition, each party is to provide that a person may undertake an act for experimental purpose on a patented invention without infringing an owner's patent (art 11.40). Each party must 'provide for protection of independently created industrial designs that are new or original' (art. 11.49). A party, subject to its international obligation, may protect genetic resources, traditional knowledge and folklore (art. 11.53(1)). Undisclosed information is to be provided protection (art. 11.56), as is the commercial use of a country name where this may mislead a consumer about the place of origin of a product (art. 11.57).

Enforcement provisions must include civil remedies (s. J(2)), border provisions (s. J(3)) and criminal remedies (s. J(4)). The parties also agreed to cooperate and consult (s. K). Finally, the parties were able to provide a list of requests for technical assistance. Four countries responded (Annex 11B). Cambodia requested assistance in setting up a trade-mark registration system, including new plant varieties and capacity building concerning sound marks and trade-marks. Lao PDR also requested support in establishing an electronic trade-mark system. Myanmar's request was for support in the operation of collective management organisations, establishing an electronic trade-mark registering system, and developing a system to protect geographic indications and enforcement. Finally, Vietnam requested support for capacity building concerning sound marks and information technology.

### **Patent and Trade-mark legislation in the ASEAN Member States**

Each of the ASEAN member states has an extensive patent and trade-mark legislation portfolio, as shown in Tables 4 and 5. Much of the legislation has been promulgated following ASEAN members' accession to bilateral and plurilateral free trade agreements.

Table 4 ASEAN Member State - Patent Legislation (as of 14 February 2021)

Country	Legislation
<b>Brunei Darussalam</b>	<i>Emergency (Industrial Designs) Order, 1999</i> <i>Emergency (Layout Designs) Order, 1999</i> <i>Patents Order, 2011</i> <i>Patents Rules, 2012</i> <i>Industrial Design (International Registration) Rules, 2014</i> <i>Plant Varieties Protection Order, 2015</i>
<b>Cambodia</b>	<i>Law on Patents, Utility Models and Industrial Designs, 2003</i> <i>Law on Amendments to the Law on Patents, Utility Models and Industrial Designs, 2017</i> <i>Law on Seed Management and Plant Breeder's Rights, 2008</i>
<b>Indonesia</b>	<i>Law on Patents</i> <i>Law Regarding Industrial Designs</i> <i>Law Regarding Layout Designs of Integrated Circuits</i> <i>Law on Plant Variety Protection</i> <i>Law Regarding Trade Secret</i>
<b>Lao PDR</b>	<i>Law on Intellectual Property (amended), 2017</i>
<b>Malaysia</b>	<i>Patents Act 1983 (as amended)</i> <i>Industrial Designs Act 1996 (as amended)</i> <i>Layout-Designs of Integrated Circuits Act 2000</i> <i>Protection of New Plant Varieties Act 2004</i>
<b>Myanmar</b>	<i>Patents Law 2019</i> <i>Industrial Designs Law 2019</i> <i>The Seed Law 2019</i> <i>Law Amending the Seed Law 2015</i> <i>Seed Law Regulations 2016</i> <i>Myanmar Traditional Medicine Council Law 2019</i> <i>New Plant Variety Protection Law 2019</i> <i>Animal Health and Breeding Development Law 2020</i>
<b>Philippines</b>	<i>Intellectual Property Code (2015 Edition)</i> <i>Philippine Plant Variety Protection Act 2002</i> <i>Patents Act as amended to 2019</i>
<b>Singapore</b>	<i>Registered Designs Act as amended to 2019</i> <i>Plant Varieties Protection Act as amended to 2019</i> <i>Patent Act (1979) as amended by the Patent Act (No. 2) (1992) and the Patent Act (No. 3) (1999)</i> <i>Ministerial Regulation on the Application for Patent Protection to Implement the Patent Treaty Cooperation (2009)</i>
<b>Thailand</b>	<i>Protection of Layout-Designs of Integrated Circuits Act (2000)</i> <i>Plant Varieties Protection Act (1999)</i> <i>Protection and Promotion of Traditional Thai Medicinal Intelligence Act, (1999)</i> <i>Trade Secrets Act B.E. 2545 (2002)</i> <i>Law on Intellectual Property 2005</i> <i>Law amending the Law on Intellectual Property 2009</i> <i>Law amending the Law on Insurance Business and the Law on Intellectual Property 2019</i>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<i>Law on Biodiversity 2008</i> <i>Seed Ordinance 2004</i>

Table 5 ASEAN Member State - Mark Legislation (as of 14 February 2021)

Country	Legislation
<b>Brunei Darussalam</b>	<i>Trade Marks Act (rev ed 2000)</i> <i>Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act</i>
<b>Cambodia</b>	<i>Law Concerning Marks, Trade Names and Acts of Unfair Competition, 2002</i> <i>Law on Geographical Indications, 2014</i>
<b>Indonesia</b>	<i>Law on Trademarks and Geographical Indications</i>
<b>Lao PDR</b>	<i>Law on Intellectual Property (Amended), 2017</i>
<b>Malaysia</b>	<i>Trade Marks Act 2019</i> <i>Geographical Indications Act 2000</i> <i>Geographical Indications (Amendment) Act 2002</i>
<b>Myanmar</b>	<i>Trademarks Law 2019</i> <i>Animal Health and Breeding Development Law</i>
<b>Philippines</b>	<i>Intellectual Property Code (2015 Edition)</i>
<b>Singapore</b>	<i>Trade Marks Act as amended to 2019</i> <i>Geographical Indications Act as amended to 2019]</i>
<b>Thailand</b>	<i>Trademark Act (1991) (as amended up to Trademark Act (No. 3) (2016)</i> <i>Protection of Geographical Indications Act (2003)</i> <i>Ministerial Regulation of Geographical Indications (2003)</i>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<i>Law on Intellectual Property 2005</i> <i>Law amending the Law on Intellectual Property 2009</i> <i>Law amending the Law on Insurance Business and the Law on Intellectual Property 2019</i>

## Reviews of Intellectual Property Rights Practices of ASEAN Member States

### *World Trade Organization Trade Policy Reviews*

The discussion on technology and digitalization in ASEAN started off as early as the 1990s when the shift of the traditional economy from resource-based to manufacturing emerged. Over the years, Southeast Asia countries have derived their industry and technological advancement as part of their main force for ASEAN economic integration despite the obvious challenges for member countries to expand their development potential (Wai, 1995). In more recent years, these topics cannot be separated from globalization and advancement of information technology, industry 4.0, digitalization of finance, and

The World Trade Organization (WTO) undertakes trade policy reviews of its member, with the frequency of the review varying according to its share of world trade (WTO, 2021).

**Brunei Darussalam** - the latest review was reported in 2015 (WTO, 2015). During the period under review, the government converted the Patent Registry Office into the Brunei Intellectual Property Office (BIPO), para. 3.117). Brunei's increased participation in international IP treaties is according to ASEAN commitments for simplified and harmonised IP protection and registration in the ASEAN Economic Community. The applicant may choose a local approach where local search and examination is outsourced to examiners from

Danish, Austrian, and Hungarian patent offices or a foreign approach that relies on search and examination reports issued by prescribed foreign patent offices, namely: Australia; Canada; European Patent Office; Japan; Republic of Korea; New Zealand; United Kingdom; and United States (para. 3.122). Undisclosed information (confidential information or trade secrets) is not protected by legislation; however, provisions exist under common law (para. 3.129).

**Cambodia** - the review on Cambodia was issued in 2018 (WTO, 2018a). It reported that: 'Cambodia attaches great importance to IPR protection to attract foreign investment and foster domestic growth' (para. 3.121). The Government drafted a National IP Strategy focused on improving capacity and capability in intellectual property services in agriculture, culture, education and training, industry and commerce, and tourism. In the period under review, Cambodia entered into three multinational treaties (para. 3.122). Bilateral agreements on intellectual property protection and cooperation with the United States, Thailand, the European Patent Office, and Singapore; and with cooperation only with China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Lao PDR. Technical assistance was also being provided by WIPO (para. 3.123). From 2012 to the time of the report, 326 patent applications had been lodged, 44 registrations of utility models and 392 applications to register industrial designs (para. 3.130). In the same period, 33,038 trade-mark registration applications were lodged, and 25,351 marks were registered (para. 3.131).

**Indonesia** – the Secretariat noted that Indonesia remained a net importer of intellectual property right intensive goods (WTO, 2020a, para. 3.203). They reported that, during the review period, Indonesia enacted a new Patent Act to optimise the state's IP services and align IP protections with Indonesian interests whilst abiding by international principles (para. 3.209). During the review period, most of the patents were 'overwhelming filed by, and granted to non-residents' (para. 3.214). During the review period, new marks and geographical indications legislation entered into force (para. 3.219).

**Lao PDR** - according to the Secretariat, the Lao IP system is an integral part of the strategy for socio-economic development (WTO, 2020b, para. 3.126). During the review period, the omnibus Law on Intellectual Property (2011) was amended to further align with international standards (para. 3.127). As of the end of March 2019, 646 patent applications had been filed (para. 3.134), whilst by early April 2019, there had been 46,452 filings for trade-marks (para. 3.135). Three applications for Geographical Indications had been registered by June 2019 (para. 3.139). There are capacity constraints on registering plant varieties hindering Lao PDR's intent to join the *UPOV* (para. 3.140).

**Malaysia** – the main Malaysian initiative during the review period was the launch of its IP Monetisation Roadmap 2015-2020, which has the aim of changing the IP mindset so that IP is viewed as an asset 'with financial value and returns' (WTO, 2018b, para. 3.168). The roadmap has three pillars: the transformation of IP into financial assets, mobilisation of IP assets, and establishment of an IP Marketplace to become a trading hub for IP. Residents 'in general made more applications for utility models' (para. 3.179).

**Myanmar** - during the review period culminating in its 2020 review, Myanmar reformed its legislation (WTO, 2020c, para. 3.115). The laws were to enter into force in 2021 (para. 3.117). Geographical indications may be protected under the Trademark Law (para. 3.179). Everything is now in a state of flux as there was a brutal military coup d'état on 1 February 2021 (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

**Philippines** - the 2018 Review reported that the Philippines amended its Intellectual Property Code at the beginning of the review period (WTO, 2018c, 3.129). From January to September 2017, there were 21,834 trade-mark applications, 852 industrial design applications, 1,948 patent applications and 753 utility model applications (table 3.11).

**Singapore** - during the review period, Singapore adopted an IP Master Plan, intending to become an IP hub in Asia (WTO, 2016, para. 3.87), amended its Patents Act, Plant Varieties Protection Act, and enacted a new geographical indications (GI) law (para. 3.89). The amended Patent Act strengthened the patentability requirements. It ensures that they fully comply with the criteria of novelty, inventiveness, and industrial applicability (para 3.90). The Geographical Indications Act entered into force when the EU-Singapore FTA [89] was ratified in November 2019 (para. 3.92).

**Thailand** - the Trade Performance Review of 2020 reported that Thailand adopted a number of reforms to its IP systems during the period under review, particularly in science, technology, and innovation (WTO, 2021, para. 3.221). Considerable efforts were made to streamline its patent and trade-marks examination process (para. 3.222). There is increasing attention 'to the more complex areas of its policy framework and institutional development, ICT adoption, and complex skills training for its workforce, which are vital for its growing creativity and innovation capital' (para. 3.224).

There was a surge in applications for utility models, with those by Thai residents being for food and cosmetics (para. 3.232). Thai residents lodged the most patent applications in optics, being 13.7% of global applications in the 2015-2017 period (para. 3.239). Over the review period, there was a steady growth in patent protection applications, 'especially in human necessities, transportation, and chemistry and metallurgy'. The average examination period for a patent application is 6-8 years (para. 3.240). Trade-mark applications take around 16-18 months, provided there is no opposition or appeal (para. 3.244). As of March 2020, Thailand had 137 registered GIs (para. 3.249).

**Vietnam** - the latest Trade Policy Review for Vietnam was reported in November 2013 and is, therefore, outdated (WTO, 2013a). What was noted was the highly complex nature of the enforcement system, which is regulated by a combination of legal and administration texts (para. 3.190).

### *USTR Special Section 301 Report*

Congress requires the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to conduct an annual review of intellectual property protection and enforcement status in the United States trading

partners (USTR, 2020, p. 4). In 2020 Indonesia remained on the Priority Watch List, whilst Thailand and Vietnam remained on the Watch List (p. 10).

**Indonesia** – was considered to have inadequate and ineffective intellectual property protection and enforcement (p. 48). The Report questioned the adequacy of Indonesia's 2016 Patent Law, geographical indications legislation, and lack of data secrecy provisions and enforcement. The main areas of improvement were in the areas of enforcement against pirated and counterfeit goods.

**Thailand** – was considered to have made progress in addressing concerns raised under the bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement between the United States and Thailand (TIFA) [90] (USTR, 2020, p. 65). It considered that Thailand needed to streamline the patent registration process, address the backlog in pending pharmaceutical patent applications, lengthy civil IP enforcement proceedings, unfair commercial use of data and inadequate secrecy provisions. The remainder of the issues related to copyright, piracy, and enforcement. Thailand had been on the Priority Watch List for over ten years (Lighthizer, 2017). It shows that Thailand had serious property infringement problems like other developing countries under pressure to abide by international IP treaties and, on the other hand, the rules of the United States.

**Vietnam** – made progress during the review period by issuing a national IP strategy and continued public awareness and training activities (p. 66). Administrative enforcement processes failed to deter widespread counterfeiting and piracy, and the United States was cooperating with Vietnam concerning criminal enforcement of IP violations. Unauthorised disclosure of test data used to obtain marketing approval of pharmaceutical products needed 'clarification'. The report also noted that Vietnam had committed to improving its IP regime through free trade agreements and international treaties.

## Discussion and Conclusion

All ASEAN members are parties to the *TRIPS Treaty*. and have acceded to several additional IP treaties. Even Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, recognised as least developed countries by the United Nations Committee for Development Policy (2021), had until 1 July 2021 to meet their obligations (WTO, 2013b) have entered into IP treaties. Several factors have driven these developments.

Ideology is clearly not a reason. ASEAN includes three democratic constitutional monarchies (Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand), one absolute monarchy (Brunei Darussalam), two presidential democracies (Indonesia and the Philippines), one parliamentary democracy (Singapore), two communist states (Lao PDR and Vietnam) and at the time of writing Myanmar in a state of turmoil following a brutal military coup d'état. This lack of ideology is further exemplified by the fact that four members of ASEAN (Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam) were signatories to the *Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)*. When first mooted, it was driven by the United States, particularly in



extending the protection of intellectual property rights. The *TPP* morphed into the *Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)* [92] following the United States' withdrawal from the *TPP*. Some of the more contentious intellectual property rights clauses from the *TPP* were set aside for later discussion by the parties to the *CPTPP* (Annex II). The other 11 signatories to the *TPP* signed the *CPTPP*. At the time of writing, ASEAN members Singapore and Vietnam had ratified their membership, with the *CPTPP* entering into force on 30 December 2018 (DFAT, 2021b).

One of the key drivers is the desire for all three of the least developed and all six developing countries to improve their intellectual property regimes so that innovation becomes a driving force in their economies. Robust IP frameworks are considered a feature of developing better innovation within a jurisdiction and having better outcomes. Some ASEAN countries have a long way to go to reach an independent innovation-driven economy, whereas others, such as Singapore, provide a model for development. Singapore has one of the highest scores in the GII globally, with a ranking in the top ten.

One of the critical foundations for its success is the long-term cooperation between ASEAN and some of its key dialogue partners, particularly Australia and New Zealand. Australia became ASEAN's first dialogue partner in 1974 and was elevated to a strategic level in 2014 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021b). New Zealand became a dialogue partner in 1975, elevated to a strategic level in 2015 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021c). Over the years, both countries have collaborated and cooperated with ASEAN and its members culminating with the entering into force of the *ASEAN-Australia New-Zealand Free Trade Area* in 2010. The approaches of Australia and New Zealand are quite different from the approach of the United States with its investigations and publication of its Special 301 Reports. Australia and New Zealand much prefer the 'collaborative' (carrot) approach as opposed to the 'blame' (stick) of the United States. This cooperation between ASEAN and its dialogue parties allows the parties, on the one hand, to seek assistance and, on the other, provide assistance to enhance the capacity of ASEAN member states in intellectual property protection regimes within their jurisdictions.

## **Acknowledgement**

This research is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship to the first author.

## **About The Authors**

Dr Robert Smith graduated with a BSc in 1969 and has undertaken postgraduate studies in Education, Engineering and Law. He holds a PhD in engineering and is currently a PhD candidate in law at the University of New England, Australia and an international development consultant working in Southeast and South Asia.

Dr Nucharee Nuchkoom Smith is an Assistant Professor in International Law at the Chalermphrakiat Sakon Nakhon Province Campus, Kasetsart University, Thailand. She has completed post-graduate studies in political science and law with a PhD from Western Sydney University, Australia focusing on the Thailand, Australia Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA). She was previously a legal officer in the House of Representatives, Thailand.

Professor Perry has been Professor, Faculty of Law, University of New England, Armidale, Australia since 2012. He is an academic leader, legal professional and computer scientist with strong governance, management, coordination, and negotiation skills. Determined and passionate professor and manager, with 30+ years' experience in law, biotech, computer science, knowledge engineering, innovation, and intellectual property.

## References

- Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA Agreement) (entered into force 1 January 2010). UNTS No I-47529.
- Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Partnership among Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Japan (AJCEP), 2008, opened for signature March 2008. <http://agreement.asean.org/>
- Agreement on Technical Cooperation between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and The Government of Japan, 13 May 2019, Tokyo, Japan. [https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/TCA\\_ASEAN.pdf](https://asean.org/storage/2012/05/TCA_ASEAN.pdf)
- Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement). <https://wipolex.wipo.int/en/text/190812>
- Animal Health and Breeding Development Law (Law No. 13 of 26 August 2020). (Myanmar).
- ASEAN-Hong Kong, China Free Trade Agreement AHKFTA) (entered into force 11 June 2019). <http://agreement.asean.org/>
- ASEAN Framework Agreement on Intellectual Property Cooperation Bangkok, Thailand, 15 December 1995. Governments of Brunei Darussalam, the Republic of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Republic of Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. [https://asean.org/?static\\_post=asean-framework-agreement-on-intellectual-property-cooperation-bangkok-thailand-15-december-1995](https://asean.org/?static_post=asean-framework-agreement-on-intellectual-property-cooperation-bangkok-thailand-15-december-1995).
- ASEAN Secretariat. (2021a). *ASEAN Intellectual Property Portal*. <https://www.aseanip.org/About>.
- ASEAN Secretariat. (2021b). *Overview of ASEAN-Australia Dialogue Relations* (ASEAN Secretariat Information Paper). [https://asean.org/storage/Overview-of-ASEAN-Australia-DR\\_as-of-14-Jan-2021.pdf](https://asean.org/storage/Overview-of-ASEAN-Australia-DR_as-of-14-Jan-2021.pdf).

- ASEAN Secretariat. (2021c). *Overview of ASEAN-New Zealand Dialogue Relations* (ASEAN Secretariat's Information Paper). [https://asean.org/storage/Overview-ASEAN-New-Zealand-DR\\_as-of-14-Jan-2021.pdf](https://asean.org/storage/Overview-ASEAN-New-Zealand-DR_as-of-14-Jan-2021.pdf).
- Budapest Treaty on the International Recognition of the Deposit of Microorganisms for the Purposes of Patent Procedure (as amended on 26 September 26, 1980). WIPO Lex No. TRT/BUDAPEST/001.
- Complementary Act of Stockholm (1967) (as amended on 28 September 1979). WIPO Lex No. TRT/PARIS/001.
- Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) (entered into force 30 December 2018) [2018] ATS 23. <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/trade/free-trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements-in-force/comprehensive-and-progressive-agreement-for-trans-pacific-partnership-cptpp/comprehensive-and-progressive-agreement-for-trans-pacific-partnership-text-and-resources/>
- Cornell University, INSEAD and WIPO (2020). *Global Innovation Index 2020: Who Will Finance Innovation?* 13th ed. Cornell University, INSEAD and WIPO.
- Convention Establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization (as amended on 28 September 1979). WIPO Lex No. TRT/CONVENTION/001.
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (2021a). *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/cptpp/comprehensive-and-progressive-agreement-for-trans-pacific-partnership>.
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (2021b). *Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/cptpp/comprehensive-and-progressive-agreement-for-trans-pacific-partnership>.
- Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act (cap 94, as amended up to S 163/81). (Brunei Darussalam).
- Emergency (Industrial Designs) Order, 1999. (Brunei Darussalam).
- Emergency (Layout Designs) Order, 1999. (Brunei Darussalam).
- EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (EUSFTA) (entered into force 21 November 2019). <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=961>.
- Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Among the Governments of the Member Countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Republic of Korea, Kuala Lumpur (entered into force 1 July 2006). <http://agreement.asean.org/>
- Framework for Comprehensive Economic Partnership between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and Japan (AJCEP), Bali, Indonesia, (entered into force 8 October 2003). <http://agreement.asean.org/>

Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Co-operation Between the Association of South-East Asian Nations and the People's Republic of China (entered into force 1 July 2003). <http://agreement.asean.org/>

Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Between the Republic of India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN-India RTIA) (entered into force 1 July 2004.) <http://agreement.asean.org/>

Geneva Act (1999). WIPO Lex No. TRT/HAGUE/006.

Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications (as adopted on 20 May 2015). WIPO Lex No. TRT/LISBON/009.

Geographical Indications (Amendment) Act 2002. (Malaysia).

Geographical Indications Act 2000 (Act 602). (Malaysia).

Geographical Indications Act 2014 (Singapore, 2014 rev ed., as amended by the Intellectual Property (Dispute Resolution) Act 2019). (Singapore).

Hague Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Industrial Designs 1960 (entered into force 1 August 1984) (Hague Act). WIPO Lex No. TRT/HAGUE/003.

Human Rights Watch. (2021). *Myanmar: Military Coup Kills Fragile Democracy*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/01/myanmar-military-coup-kills-fragile-democracy>.

Industrial Design (International Registration) Rules, 2014. (Brunei Darussalam).

Industrial Designs Act 1996 (Act 552, as amended up to Act A1449). (Malaysia).

Industrial Designs Law (Law No. 2/2019). (Myanmar)

Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines (Republic Act No. 8293) (2015 Edition). (Philippines).

International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (amended as at 19 March 1991). 150 UNTS 67.

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) (entered into force 29 June 2004). 2400 UNTS 303.

Landes, W. M., & Posner, R. A. (2003). *The Economic Structure of Intellectual Property Law*. [VitalSource Bookshelf version] Retrieved from vbk://9780674039919

Layout-Designs of Integrated Circuits Act 2000 (Act 601). (Malaysia).

Law Amending the Seed Law (Law No. 5) 2005. (Myanmar).

Law Concerning Marks, Trade Names and Acts of Unfair Competition (NS/RKM/0202/006) 2002. (Cambodia).

Law No. 20/2008/QH12 on Biodiversity. (Vietnam).

Law No. 36/2009/QH12 Amending and Supplementing a Number of Articles of the Law on Intellectual Property. (Vietnam).

- Law No. 42/2019/QH14 amending the Law on Insurance Business and the Law on Intellectual Property. (Vietnam).
- Law No. 50/2005/QH11 on Intellectual Property. (Vietnam).
- Law on Amendments to the Law on Patents, Utility Models and Industrial Designs 2017. (Cambodia).
- Law on Geographical Indications Act 2000 (2015) (Cambodia)
- Law on Intellectual Property (Amended) (No. 38/NA) 2017. (Lao PDR).
- Law on Patents, Utility Models and Industrial Designs (NS/RKM/0103/005) 2003. (Cambodia).
- Law on Seed Management and Plant Breeder's Rights 2008. (Cambodia).
- Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 13 of 2016, on Patents. (Indonesia).
- Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20 of 2016 on Trade-marks and Geographical Indications. (Indonesia).
- Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 29 of 2000 on Plant Variety Protection. (Indonesia).
- Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 30 of 2000 Regarding Trade Secret. (Indonesia).
- Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 31 of 2000 Regarding Industrial Designs. (Indonesia).
- Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 32 of 2000, Regarding Layout Designs of Integrated Circuits. (Indonesia).
- Lighthizer, R. (2017). *USTR Lighthizer Announces Results of Special 301 Out-of-Cycle Review of Thailand* (Press Release). Executive Office of the President of the United States. <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2017/december/ustr-lighthizer-announces-results>.
- Lisbon Agreement for the Protection of Appellations of Origin and their International Registration (as amended on 28 September 28, 1979). WIPO Lex No. TRT/Lisbon/001.
- Locarno Agreement Establishing an International Classification for Industrial Designs (as amended on 28 September 1979). WIPO Lex No. TRT/LOCARNO/001.
- Lingard, K. & Perry, M. (2016). Innovation cartography and patentomics: Past, present and future. In M. Perry (Eds.), *Global Governance of Intellectual Property in the 21st Century: Reflecting Policy Through Change* (pp. 225-242). [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31177-7\\_13](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31177-7_13)
- Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks (as amended on 28 September 1979). WIPO Lex No. TRT/MADRID-GP/001.
- Memorandum of Understanding Between the Member States of the the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Cooperation in the Field of Intellectual Property (entered into force 21 December 2009). <http://agreement.asean.org/>

Merced, L. D. C. (2017). 'Partners' for change: Understanding the external relations of ASEAN. *CIRSS Commentaries*, 4(20). Foreign Service Institute.

Ministerial Regulation of Geographical Indications B.E. 2547 (2003). (Thailand).

Ministerial Regulation on the Application for Patent Protection to Implement the Patent Treaty Cooperation B.E. 2552 (2009). (Thailand).

Ministers' Declaration on India's Participation in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) (2020). (Press statement 11 November 2020). <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/not-yet-in-force/rcep/news/ministers-declaration-indias-participation-regional-comprehensive-economic-partnership-rcep>.

Myanmar Traditional Medicine Council Law (Law No. 1/2019). (Myanmar).

New Plant Variety Protection Law (Law No. 29/2019). (Myanmar).

Nice Agreement Concerning the International Classification of Goods and Services for the Purposes of the Registration of Marks (as amended on 28 September 1979). WIPO Lex No. TRT/NICE/001.

Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR). (2020). *2020 Special 301 Report*. Executive Office of the President of the United States. [https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/2020\\_Special\\_301\\_Report.pdf](https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/2020_Special_301_Report.pdf).

Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property (as amended on 28 September 1979). WIPO Lex No. TRT/PARIS/001.

Patent Act B.E. 2522 (1979) as amended by the Patent Act (No. 2) B.E. 2535 (1992) and the Patent Act (No. 3) B.E. 2542 (1999). (Thailand).

Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) (as modified on 3 October 2001). WIPO Lex No. TRT/PCT/001.

Patent Law Treaty (PLT) (entered into force 28 April 2005) (PLT). WIPO Lex No. TRT/PLT/001.

Patents Act (Singapore, cap 221, 1994 rev ed as amended up to the Intellectual Property (Dispute Resolution) Act 2019). (Singapore).

Patents Act 1983 (Act 291, as amended up to Act A1264). (Malaysia).

Patents Law (Law No. 7/2019). (Myanmar).

Patents Order, 2011. (Brunei Darussalam).

Patents Rules, 2012. (Brunei Darussalam).

Philippine Plant Variety Protection Act of 2002. (Philippines).

Plant Varieties Protection Act (Singapore, cap 232A, 2004 rev ed, as amended up to the Intellectual Property (Dispute Resolution) Act 2019). (Singapore).

Plant Varieties Protection Act B.E. 2542 (1999). (Thailand).

Plant Varieties Protection Order, 2015. (Brunei Darussalam).



- Popova, M. (2016, February 16). Standing on the shoulders of giants: The story behind Newton's famous metaphor for how knowledge progresses. *The Marginalian*. <https://www.themarginalian.org/2016/02/16/newton-standing-on-the-shoulders-of-giants/>
- Protection and Promotion of Traditional Thai Medicinal Intelligence Act, B.E. 2542 (1999). (Thailand).
- Protection of Geographical Indications Act B.E. 2546 (2003). (Thailand).
- Protection of Layout-Designs of Integrated Circuits Act B.E. 2543 (2000). (Thailand).
- Protection of New Plant Varieties Act 2004 (Act 634). (Malaysia).
- Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks (as amended to 12 November 2007). WIPO Lex. TRT/MADRIDP-GP/001.
- Registered Designs Act (Singapore, cap 266, 2000 rev ed, as amended up to the Intellectual Property (Dispute Resolution) Act 2019). (Singapore).
- Schwab, K. (2018). *The Global Competitiveness Report 2018*. World Economic Forum. <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2018/05FullReport/TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2018.pdf>.
- Seed Law Regulations 2016. (Myanmar).
- Seed Ordinance No. 15/2004/PL-UBTVQH11. (Vietnam).
- Singapore Treaty on the Law of Trademarks (entered into force 16 March 2009). WIPO Lex No. TRT/SINGAPORE/001.
- Strasbourg Agreement Concerning the International Patent Classification (as amended on 28 September 1979). WIPO Lex No. TRT/STRASBOURG/001.
- The ASEAN Intellectual Property Rights Action Plan 2016-2025: Meeting the Challenges of 'One Vision, One Identity, One Community' through Intellectual Property. (2016). *Action Plan: ASEAN Working Group on Intellectual Property Cooperation (AWGIPC)*. [https://www.aseanip.org/Portals/0/ASEAN%20IPR%20ACTION%20PLAN%202016-2025%20\(for%20public%20use\).pdf?ver=2017-12-05-095916-273](https://www.aseanip.org/Portals/0/ASEAN%20IPR%20ACTION%20PLAN%202016-2025%20(for%20public%20use).pdf?ver=2017-12-05-095916-273).
- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, signed 15 November 2020 (RCEP) (not yet in force). <https://rcepsec.org/>.
- The Seed Law (Law No. 1/2011). (Myanmar).
- Tijaja, J. (2019, 14 January). *Assessment of ASEAN Readiness for the Fourth Industrial Revolution* [Paper presentation]. Special Session on the Fourth Industrial Revolution in ASEAN, Bangkok, Thailand. <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1y3Cxb6pP2kpSFTR-3crmY9uWletQhe7r>
- Trade and Investment Framework Agreement between the United States and Thailand, signed and entered into force 23 October 2002.

Trade Marks Act (cap 98, 2000 rev ed). (Brunei Darussalam).

Trade Marks Act (Singapore, cap 332, 1998 rev ed, as amended up to the Intellectual Property (Dispute Resolution) Act 2019). (Singapore).

Trade Marks Act 2019 (Act 815). (Malaysia).

Trademark Act B.E. 2534 (1991) (as amended up to Trademark Act (No. 3) B.E. 2559 (2016). (Thailand).

Trademarks Law (Law No. 3/2019). (Myanmar).

Trademark Law Treaty (TLT) (1994). WIPO Lex No. TRT/TLT/001.

Trade Secrets Act B.E. 2545 (2002). (Thailand).

Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Governments of: Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, United States of America and Vietnam (TPP), signed 4 February 2016, <https://www.tpp.mfat.govt.nz/>

United Nations. (2020). *World Economic Situation Prospects: Statistical Annex*. United Nations. [https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/WESP2020\\_Annex.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/WESP2020_Annex.pdf).

United Nations Committee for Development Policy. (2021). *List of Least Developed Countries*. [https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/ldc\\_list.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/ldc_list.pdf).

Uruguay Round Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) 1869 UNTS 299.

Washington Treaty on Intellectual Property in Respect of Integrated Circuits (1989). WIPO Lex No. TRT/WASHINGTON/001.

WIPO (2017). *Innovation and Intellectual Property* <[https://www.wipo.int/ip-outreach/en/ipday/2017/innovation\\_and\\_intellectual\\_property.html](https://www.wipo.int/ip-outreach/en/ipday/2017/innovation_and_intellectual_property.html)>

WIPO (2021a). *Member States*. <https://www.wipo.int/members/en/#22>.

World Intellectual Property Organization. (2021). *Global Innovation Index*. WIPO. <https://www.wipo.int/publications/en/series/index.jsp?id=129>.

World Bank. (2021). *Global Development Indicators by Country (to end of 2018)*. <https://data.worldbank.org/>

WTO. *Trade Policy Reviews*. [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/tpr\\_e/tpr\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tpr_e.htm).

WTO (2013a). Trade Policy Review: Report by the Secretariat Viet Nam: Revision (4 November 2013) (WT/TPR/S/287/Rev.1).

WTO (2013b). Extension of the Transition Period under Article 66.1 for Least Developed Country Members. Decision of the Council for TRIPS of 11 June 013 (IP/C/40).

WTO (2015). Trade Policy Review: Report by the Secretariat Brunei Darussalam: Revision (7 April 2015) (WT/TPR/S/309/Rev.1).



- WTO (2016). Trade Policy Review: Report by the Secretariat Singapore: Revision (9 November 2016) WT/TPR/S/343/Rev.1.
- WTO (2018a). Trade Policy Review: Report by the Secretariat Cambodia: Revision 2 (27 March 2018) (WT/TPR/S/364/Rev.2).
- WTO (2018b). Trade Policy Review: Report by the Secretariat Malaysia: Revision (25 May 2018) (WT/TPR/S/366/Rev.1).
- WTO (2018c). Trade Policy Review: Report by the Secretariat Philippines: Revision (19 June 2018) (WT/TPR/S/368/Rev.1).
- WTO (2020a). Trade Policy Review: Report by the Secretariat Lao People's Democratic Republic: Revision (2 June 2020) (WT/TPR/S/394/Rev.1).
- WTO (2020b). Trade Policy Review: Report by the Secretariat: Indonesia (4 November 2020) (WT/TPR/S/401).
- WTO (2020c). Trade Policy Review: Report by the Secretariat: Myanmar (21 December 2020) (WT/TPR/S/405).
- WTO (2021). Trade Policy Review: Report by the Secretariat Thailand: Revision (18 January 2021) (WT/TPR/S/400/Rev.1.).

# A “Matter of Life and Death”? Patterns of Securitisation and Desecuritisation of Food Resilience in Indonesia

I Gusti Bagus Dharma Agastia<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Graduate School of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan 616-8001

<sup>1</sup>International Relations Study Program, Faculty of Humanities,  
President University, Bekasi, Indonesia 17550

gr0606pv@ed.ritsumei.ac.jp

**How to Cite:** Agastia, I. G. B. D. (2023). A “matter of life and death”? Patterns of securitisation and desecuritisation of food resilience in Indonesia. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 11(1), 111–141.  
<https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.9143>

## Abstract

Food self-sufficiency had been a perennial quest for Indonesian administrations. The research explored two questions. First, how have political leaders securitised the self-sufficiency narrative? Second, is the securitisation of food justified? This research examined the “self-sufficiency” narrative across Indonesian governments and charts the patterns in its securitisation and de-securitisation through the lens of just securitisation theory. The research made two arguments. First, the securitisation of food in Indonesia has not always been for the benefit of the nation, but instead, the political elite. The second argument is the securitisation of food in Indonesia is not always justified, and therefore, necessitates further review of policies related to food security. The findings show that the securitisation of food in general to be unjustified. Therefore, the de-securitising food security and returning it to the realm of normal politics should be the immediate goal for Indonesian administrations, in addition to formulating alternative policies not grounded in the self-sufficiency narrative.

**Keywords:** desecuritisation, food security, food self-sufficiency, Indonesia, securitisation

## Introduction

Food self-sufficiency has been a perennial quest for Indonesian administrations. The notion of food self-sufficiency is closely linked to the idea of independence, of not having to rely on global markets, to fulfil the fundamental need of the nation. This nationalist-protectionist ideal, however, contradicts the interdependent logic of market-driven

globalisation, where self-sufficiency is not always a feasible goal, especially if it does not serve the interests of providing equitable access to food (MacRae & Reuter, 2020). Yet, despite this contradiction, food self-sufficiency continues to be a top priority for Indonesian governments, with some pressing the issue stronger than others, sometimes to the point of representing the issue as a “matter of life or death” to the nation (Neilson & Wright, 2017). From the Suharto to Widodo administrations, Indonesian political leaders have often promoted large-scale agricultural projects aimed at achieving self-sufficiency. Most of these projects have failed, yet these policies continue to remain on the political agenda. From this condition, two questions arise. First, how do Indonesian political leaders frame self-sufficiency in security rhetoric? Second, who benefits from the use of security rhetoric in self-sufficiency?

The research examines how Indonesian governments have securitised the self-sufficiency narrative through the lens of just securitisation theory. The inclusion of normative analysis provided by just securitisation theory allows analysts not just to scrutinise security policies in retrospect, but also inform policymaking by identifying previous transgressions and mitigate future harm. This contribution is arguably important in complementing the corpus of research applying a generally critical lens to the nexus of food and environmental security (Brisman & South, 2017; Sommerville, Essex, & Le Billon, 2014). Moreover, to the best of the author’s knowledge, studies applying securitisation theory in Indonesia specifically have mostly approached securitisation through the classical lens, focusing on securitising moves and speech acts (Isnurhadi, 2018; Kurniawan, 2017; Scarpello, 2018; Taufika, 2020). While these studies are highly informative of the securitisation process, they usually stop short of critical examination of whether securitisation should have been initiated. Thus, this research’s contribution is twofold. First, it seeks to expand the scope of inquiry and present a more critical approach to analysing security issues in Indonesia. To the best of the author’s knowledge, securitisation theory, and just securitisation in particular, has yet to be applied in investigating food security in Indonesia. Second, the research enriches the discussion of just securitisation theory by showing the application of normative analysis in the context of a developing state and in a longitudinal setting.

The research makes two interrelated arguments. First, the self-sufficiency narrative in Indonesia is inherently political. Thus, the securitisation of food does not always serve the benefit of the nation; instead, it mostly serves to benefit political actors who present the issue of food in security language. Following the first argument, the second argument is the securitisation of food in Indonesia is not always morally justifiable, and therefore, necessitates further review of policies related to food security.

To demonstrate the argument, the research proceeds in four sections. The first section elaborates and discusses just securitisation theory, which is used as an analytical framework in this paper. The second section then clears some conceptual ground in the Indonesian food security discourse, specifically concerning the use of the terms “food self-sufficiency”, “food sovereignty”, “food security”, and “food resilience”. Narratives and policies related to food self-sufficiency during the Sukarno, Suharto, Yudhoyono, and Widodo administrations are explored afterwards. These periods were chosen due to the adoption of emblematic narratives and policies which continue to characterise subsequent administrations’ approach to food

security. The third section analyses the narratives and policies of these administrations using just securitisation theory. The conclusion outlines prospects for further research on just securitisation theory in general and more responsible approaches for food security in Indonesia.

### Analytical Framework: Just Securitisation Theory

The notion of threat, or the “security-ness” of an issue is not always considered in the objective sense. Though objective threats do exist, other issues only become security threats based on intersubjective agreement. The process of designating an issue as a “threat” is done through a speech act, which the second feature of securitisation theory. In a speech act, ‘by uttering “security”, a state-representative moves to a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it’ (Wæver, 1995). This is further specified as a ‘securitising move’, where a securitising actor attempts to convince an audience that something poses a threat to a referent object. Securitisation is said to have occurred when the audience accepts the speech act, and thus achieving intersubjective agreement. This allows the securitising actor to enact emergency measures to address the threat, even if those measures contravene liberal democratic principles (Buzan, Wæver, & Wilde, 1998).

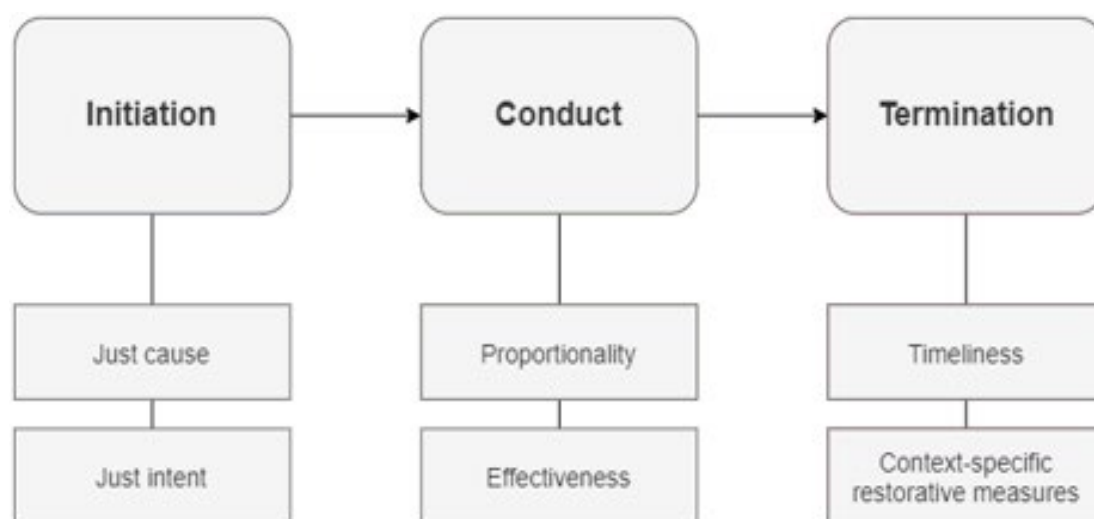


Figure 1 Flow of just securitisation theory (Floyd, 2019)

Source: Author’s own illustration.

Numerous proposals to refine securitisation theory have been proposed. These proposals have attempted to highlight and address important shortcomings of the original securitisation framework proposed by the Copenhagen School (hereafter “classical securitisation”) (Balzacq, 2005; Côté, 2016; Kaunert & Ezeokafor, 2022; Vuori, 2008; Williams, 2003). Among critics of classical securitisation, Floyd’s revision is notable. Floyd’s (2010) critique of classical securitisation centres on “the securitisation theorist’s inability to say

something meaningful about the moral value of different securitisations” and “his inability to theorise why actors securitise.” In addressing the shortcomings of securitisation theory, two important contributions are made: the examination of intent behind securitisation, which has been largely ignored by the classical securitisation; and the normative test, which allows for analysis of whether securitisation is morally defensible (Floyd, 2011). These contributions serve as the basis for just securitisation theory (Floyd, 2019).

Just securitisation theory attempts to establish the justness of a securitisation and de-securitisation in its initiation, conduct, and termination as shown in Figure 1 (Floyd, 2019).

### **Initiating Securitisation**

The initiation of securitisation refers to the act of moving a previously-politicised issue into the a “securitised state of affairs”. Floyd’s formulation of a securitised state of affairs differs from the audience-dependent interpretation of classical securitisation. A sanctioning audience is not necessarily required for a speech act to constitute securitisation. Securitisation occurs when a securitising agent identifies an existential threat to the referent object (securitising move) and then engage in response to the threat (security practice). A securitising move can be generally divided into two moves—a promise to protect or a warning to retaliate—which is directed to the referent object. The security practice can be understood as the policies which the securitising actor enacts in response to the threat they have identified which may take form of the creation of new agencies or the extension of responsibilities to existing agencies (Floyd, 2016).

The initiation of a securitisation requires both just cause and intent. Just cause requires the presence of an objective existential threat to a morally justifiable referent object. An existential threat is understood as threatening the survival and essential properties of a referent object (Floyd, 2019). A threat need not come from an external agent to be existential; agent-lacking and agent-caused threats, such as natural disasters and climate change, may also pose an existential threat to societies. The objectiveness of a threat is based on whether available evidence reliably shows the threat to be real, rather than being perceived (Floyd, 2019). The justness of the referent object is based on whether the referent object provides instrumental value to human life (Floyd, 2011). In this formulation, state and non-state political orders would only be just referent objects if they “satisfy a minimum level of basic human needs of people part of or contained in that order” (Floyd, 2019).

Just intent requires a securitisation to be sincere, which is analysed by comparing what securitising actors say and what they do. An insincere securitisation may be identified by a disconnect between rhetoric and policy practice (Floyd, 2019). Moreover, insincerity may be identified if the main beneficiary of the securitisation is the securitising actor, rather than the referent object (also known as “agent-benefitting” securitisation). A referent object-benefitting securitisation is identified by whether 1) the securitising actor “seriously intends to secure the referent object identified” and 2) the securitising actor “acts to alleviate the insecurity he himself identified”. A discrepancy between the identified threat and the actions taken,

especially when the action serves to benefit the securitising agent, would be an indicator of an agent-benefitting securitisation (Floyd, 2010).

### **Conducting Securitisation**

The conduct of securitisation centres on proportionality and effectiveness. A securitisation is considered proportionate if it seeks to address the causes of the objective existential threat without overstepping. It is considered effective if it limits the amount of harm done compared to if securitisation was not conducted. Moreover, in conducting securitisation, the securitising actor must “respect a limited number of relevant human rights” (Floyd, 2019). To illustrate an example of just conduct, the securitisation of terrorism should result in security measures aimed specifically at mitigating the potential harm of terrorism without resorting to the infringement of civil liberties, e.g., mass surveillance or the subsequent enactment of harsh immigration policies.

### **Terminating Securitisation or Desecuritisation**

De-securitisation is presented as the theoretical opposite of securitisation. Where securitisation is the process of elevating a security issue above the realm of normal politics, de-securitisation is the process of returning the issue into the realm of normal politics (Roe, 2004). The Copenhagen School contends de-securitisation as being a positive process and desirable long-term goal, as “security should be seen as a negative, as a failure to deal with issues as normal politics” (Buzan et al., 1998).

Just securitisation theory similarly views de-securitisation as a process. It defines de-securitisation as a process leading to a de-securitised condition. The de-securitised state of affairs is distinguished by either the return of the previously-securitised issue into ‘normal’ politics (re-politicisation) or its de-politicisation (Floyd, 2010; Floyd, 2019). Re-politicisation is aligned with the Copenhagen School’s definition and desired goal of de-securitisation. In the latter, the issue is discarded from normal politics, meaning the issue is not even discussed by political actors, though it may still be discussed outside of the realm of politics by civil society (Floyd, 2010). This does not necessarily render de-securitisation as politicisation to be just.

Under just securitisation theory, the securitising agent, usually political leaders, generally holds both the power and responsibility to terminate an unjust securitisation. In an ideal situation, this would mean the onus to de-securitise, regardless of whether securitisation was initiated justly or unjustly, would be on the initial securitising agent. In the case where the initial securitising agent no longer occupies the same political position due to succession or other reasons, the onus shifts to the succeeding agent due to their power to undo their predecessor’s securitisation (Floyd, 2019).

Should de-securitisation be attempted, the timeliness and presence of context-specific restorative measures serve as indicators of justness. A securitisation initiated and conducted justly should end the moment the objective existential threat has been neutralised.

Continuation of securitisation in the absence of a just cause renders the securitisation unjust. Moreover, if securitisation was initiated unjustly, it ought to be terminated as soon as possible (Floyd, 2019). The actions taken to terminate securitisation also matter. Securitising agents ought to declare the end of specific securitising actions and terminate the use of security language. This should then be followed by context-specific restorative measures to prevent re-securitisation, and ideally, keep the issue within the realm of normal politics (Floyd, 2019).

## Methodology

The research employs a combination of discourse analysis of verbal and written statements, government policy documents, and other publicly available publications related to food policy in Indonesia. In particular, annual State of the Nation speeches, government regulations and policy documents, and statements to the public are scrutinised. Discourse analysis identifies the structure of narratives of food security in Indonesia, which determines patterns and extent of securitisation. This method primarily reveals major securitising agents, securitising practices, and securitising and de-securitising moves, while in a secondary manner, it also allows to probe the intents of securitising agents.

In conducting the normative analysis, the following limitations are observed. Due to the nature of food security, it is difficult to precisely establish whether threats are agent-caused or agent-lacking. This is mainly due to the multifaceted character of threats to food security. However, it is possible to reasonably determine whether threats are objective or perceived based on existing evidence. In analysing initiation, the referent object remains consistent across all administrations, namely the Indonesian nation-state. Thus, the analysis of just initiation will focus on evaluating threats perceived by and intent of securitising agents. It should be noted that intent cannot be precisely established, only probed, especially from public statements. In analysing conduct, space limitations preclude an exhaustive analysis of the implications of every policy made to address food security and possible counterfactuals. As such, only major policies related to food security, and more specifically rice self-sufficiency, are examined due to its central importance in the Indonesian food security discourse.

### Rhetoric and Practice of Food Security in Indonesia

Indonesia's concepts of food security might draw from these international influences, but it is moulded to suit nationalist purposes (Neilson & Wright, 2017). In the Indonesian context, the revised Law no. 18/2012 on Food (*Undang-Undang Pangan*; hereafter, Food Law) serves as the authoritative basis for understanding food security. The Food Law distinguishes between food sovereignty (*kedaulatan pangan*), food self-sufficiency (*kemandirian pangan*), food resilience (*ketahanan pangan*), and food security (*keamanan pangan*). Indonesia's notion of food sovereignty closely follows the ideals of La Via Campesina as "the peoples', Countries' or State Unions' right to define their agricultural and food policy, without any dumping vis-à-vis third countries" ("Food sovereignty", 2003). Food self-sufficiency, according to Law no.

18/2012 (hereafter “Food Law”) Art. 1(3), is understood as the “capacity of the state and nation to produce food domestically to guarantee an adequate level of food to for the needs of the individual”. Food resilience and security are particularly distinct, with the former being “the condition of having food needs fulfilled from the state to the individual level” and the latter being “the conditions and efforts required to prevent biological, chemical, and other forms of contamination of food.” To have resilience would not just require adequate production or supply of food, but also guaranteed equitable access to safe and nutritious food, whereas food security is narrowly concerned with practical efforts to prevent hindrances to achieving resilience. In practice, *ketahanan pangan* is often more concerned on food availability (*ketersediaan*) than access. In political rhetoric, *ketahanan* is often conflated with the other terms, and used with the intention of reinforcing the role and function of the state in food policy (Neilson & Wright, 2017).<sup>1</sup>

### Food Security during the Soekarno Administration

Indonesia’s quest for food self-sufficiency is a constant amidst the variables of Indonesian administrations. Soekarno’s 1952 oration serves as an important starting point for understanding Indonesia’s fixation on self-sufficiency (Soekarno, 1952). The oration, titled *Soal Hidup dan Mati* (“A Matter of Life and Death”), was delivered at the laying of the first stone of the current-day Bogor Agricultural Institute. The threat of food shortages was set on the backdrop of population growth, which, if not met with proportionate production growth, would be catastrophic:

Every year, without exception, without pause, without mercy, this issue of rice will come in a crescendo – greater, more intense, more terrifying – as long as our fast population growth is not balanced by increasing our food supply! (Soekarno, 1952, translated by author)

In line with his revolutionary nature, self-sufficiency was framed as an urgent necessity, especially where dependency was concerned. For Soekarno, achieving food self-sufficiency was part and parcel of Indonesia’s independence. Indonesia should not have to rely on others, especially in the form of foreign aid, to fulfil such a basic need (Weinstein, 2007). Said Soekarno:

Why should we talk about “liberal politics” (*politik bebas*) when we are not independent in rice, when we always have to ask for help from our neighbours? If World War III breaks out, either tomorrow or the day after, and transport between Indonesia, Thailand, and Burma becomes disrupted, where will we get our rice? (Soekarno, 1952, author’s translation)

Soekarno’s rhetoric influenced the policies his administration took to increase production (Table 1). Self-sufficiency, Soekarno believed, was a matter of ensuring a balance

<sup>1</sup>Due to the conflation of these terms in Indonesian food security discourse, these terms are also used interchangeably throughout this paper for consistency.



between domestic supply and demand, but supply should ideally come almost exclusively from domestic production. However, these policies largely failed due to limited skills, resources, and political delays, compounded by rising inflation and economic downturn, resulting in several famines occurring throughout the 1950s to 1960s. To be sure, Indonesia was by no means short of foreign aid; however, Soekarno never applied for international food aid. Instead, aid was provided in the form of program aid and scholarships for Indonesian students to study in donor countries, with the hopes of those students returning to build the country (van der Eng, 2014).

Table 1 Summary of rice self-sufficiency policies developed and implemented under Soekarno.  
(Adapted from Mears, 1984 and Rieffel, 1969)

Name / Period of implementation	Expectations	Practice
<b>Kasimo Welfare Plan / 1952 - 1956</b>	Aimed for rice self-sufficiency by 1956.	Increased rice production by 6 per cent, but this was disproportionate to 20 per cent population growth which led to more than 800,000 tonnes of rice imports.
<b>Five Year Development Plan [Garis-Garis Besar Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun] / 1956 - 1960</b>	Raise availability of rice through irrigation rehabilitation and use of <i>metro</i> corn variety.	Though rice availability did increase in 1959-1960, this was due to imports. Corn production also increased marginally.
<b>Balai Pendidikan Masyarakat Desa (BPMD)</b>	Establish focal point of development activities at the village level. There would be one per district.	As of 1968, only 12 per cent goal reached due to difficulties in acquiring land and equipment.
<b>Padi Sentra / 1961 - 1964</b>	Establish 500 paddy centres which would provide fertiliser, seeds, and production credit to farmers.	Farmers did not repay credit. Negative production incentive.  Centres were not equipped with adequate expertise.
<b>Three Year Rice Production Plan / 1959 - early 1960s</b>	Achieve self-sufficiency by importing fertiliser and organising farmers. A national command and village-level executive teams would be established.	"Too diffused" and suffered from lack of expertise.

### Food Security in the Suharto Administration

In contrast to Soekarno's fiery rhetoric positioning self-sufficiency as a "matter of life and death", Suharto's food policy goals had two objectives. First, it was to mitigate food shortages caused by his predecessor's mismanagement, while also accelerating economic development. In creating the first of seven Five Year Development Plans (*Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun*/Repelita), the food shortages of his predecessor were still fresh in

the mind of Suharto and the technocrats in his administration (Thee, 2002). The focus, therefore, was increasing crop yields by introducing technological and administrative fixes. The agricultural sector, specifically rice production, was identified as a priority sector to be developed in the first Repelita. The designation of agriculture as a priority was framed in terms of fulfilling dietary needs and lessening dependence on food imports (Kansil, 1970). Additionally, food production became viewed through a developmental lens. The Suharto administration viewed a stable supply of food, ideally rice, as the basis for industrialisation (Soeharto, 1985b).

Second, the administration sought to use rice production to seek legitimacy. Suharto viewed rice production to serve the larger goal of achieving 'national resilience' (*ketahanan nasional*). The idea of national resilience was central to the administration, affecting the rhetoric of policy (Anwar, 1996). The use of dire rhetoric was particularly evident in his annual State of the Nation address in 1969:

Let us wager everything on the success of development! Prosperity is our goal; development is our responsibility and honour. *If there is any grave danger threatening us, that danger is the failure of our Five-Year Development Plan.* The failure of development does not just result in a loss of confidence in government, but also the destruction of the results of economic progress that we have struggled to achieve to this day. A worsening economy surely results in the return of the PKI [Communist Party of Indonesia] and the destruction of Pancasila." (Soeharto, 1985a; author's translation, emphasis added).

Food security policies hinged on a pilot program known as Mass Guidance (*Bimbingan Massal*/BIMAS) in 1963, which began as a small-scale project designed to provide hands-on training for students at the Bogor Agricultural Institute. The central premise of the program was to have university students guide farmers in using new varieties of rice, fertilisers, and pesticides to improve crop yields. and became the precursor for Suharto's food policies, which centred on "green revolution" technologies, i.e., using new high-yield seed varieties, improved irrigation, and increases use of fertilisers and pesticides (Mears, 1984). These technologies were promoted by foreign companies, and financed by the administration through loans and oil revenue (Patel, 2013). The pilot project eventually became elevated to the level of national policy (Elson, 2001). BIMAS had several variants, with the most controversial being the Gotong Royong variant, which relied on foreign companies to supply high-yield seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides. Military elites would often act as intermediaries, which enabled rent-seeking behaviour (Crouch, 1988).

Despite several episodes of political instability and rice shortfalls which happened during the first Repelita, Suharto continued to focus on managing rice production in the second and third Repelita, with self-sufficiency being the goal (Elson, 2001). The main instrument was the Logistical Affairs Agency (*Badan Urusan Logistik*, /BULOG). The BULOG became the sole state agency (primarily run by the military) that had the power to oversee supply and distribution of rice and had a monopoly on rice imports. This authority allowed the Suharto administration to create national buffer stocks. The agency also had a monopoly

on state imports. Farmers were 'unionised' under a single state-approved national union. Intensification and extensification of farmland continued under the new BIMAS programme (Mears, 1984). Rice self-sufficiency was achieved in 1984 as the sum of these policies. The following year, Suharto was invited to speak at the Food and Agriculture Organisation, where, in a theatrical gesture, he pledged 100,000 tonnes of unhusked rice as aid to Ethiopia, which had been beset by famine (Elson, 2001).

Self-sufficiency, however, was short-lived. Suharto's developmental fervour in Java led to the loss of arable farmland due to land conversions and rapid industrialisation. In addition, rice production experienced a slowdown due to technological and infrastructural limits (Thee, 2002). Coupled with an increase in population, droughts, and rising food prices, by 1995, Indonesia faced looming food shortages. With his political legitimacy on the line, the Suharto administration hastily passed the *Pengembangan Lahan Gambut* (Peatland Development Project, PLG) project under Presidential Decision (Keppres) no. 82/1995. The project was expected to increase production of rice by 5.1 million tonnes annually by converting 5.8 million hectares of peatland to farmland in Central Kalimantan. Suharto insisted the first harvest be ready by 1997, two years after the project began, just in time for the 1997 elections (McCarthy, 2013). PLG, however, failed due to poor planning and corruption. Surveys have shown that peatlands were not suitable for wet rice cultivation, yet the administration insisted on converting the land for rice paddies. The project was designed not by technocrats, but by corporate groups and bureaucrats with close connections to Suharto. Due to this poor design and corruption, the plan failed and was cancelled in July 1999 by Habibie (McCarthy, 2013).

### **Food Security in the Yudhoyono Administration**

The Yudhoyono administration set out their priorities under the Long-Term National Development Plan for 2005-2025 (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Panjang Nasional Tahun 2005-2025*; hereafter "RPJPN"). The RPJPN had identified several challenges to food production, namely droughts and floods due to climate change and the low quality of Indonesian agricultural products compared to the global market. To address these challenges, the RPJPN expects to increase domestic production, stabilise prices, and improve household to food. A system for food resilience would be "directed to preserve food resilience and sovereignty by developing domestic production", which will be "supported by food resilience institutions capable of guaranteeing household food needs..." (Government of Indonesia, 2005). The Middle-Term National Development Plan of 2004-2009 (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional/RPJMN*) pledged to "revitalise agriculture" (*revitalisasi pertanian*) to achieve rice self-sufficiency. The following problems for food security were identified: water availability related to irrigation problems, decline in farmland, lack of access to credit and agricultural technology, lack of diversification due to dependence on rice as a staple food, and problems of food distribution. The administration also identified rice imports as a solution for maintaining supply and accessibility but emphasised its potentially disruptive effects on prices and farmer welfare.

In 2006, under Presidential Regulation no. 83/2006, the Food Resilience Board (*Dewan Ketahanan Pangan*; DKP) was established to advise the president on food security policy. The DKP issued a General Policy on Food Security, which defines the administration's priorities and perception of food resilience.<sup>2</sup> The DKP understood food security to be fulfilled when 1) food is adequately and equally available for all citizens and 2) all citizens have adequate physical and economic access to nutritious foodstuffs. The DKP then proposed a 14-point comprehensive food security policy based on increasing food production, farmer welfare, developing national and regional food reserves, agrarian and land reform, food diversification, and developing efficient distribution networks (Dewan Ketahanan Pangan, 2006). The policy was manifested in the Food Self-sufficient Villages Program in 2006, which aimed to establish food reserves at the village level, thus improving access and resilience during times of shortage (Salim, 2010). Yet despite these plans, in practice, the DKP was primarily concerned with maintaining national food reserves while progress in other policy areas stagnated (Neilson & Arifin, 2012).

During Yudhoyono's first term, rice production steadily increased from 54.5 million tonnes to 64 million tonnes in 2009. This was followed by marginal increases in other foodstuffs as recorded in the Middle-Term National Development Plan 2010-2014, such as corn (from 12 million tonnes to 17 million tonnes), sugar (2.2 million tonnes to 2.9 million tonnes), and soybeans (0.8 million tonnes to 0.9 million tonnes). The increase in production coincided with a decrease in rice imports (Figure 2), with the notable exception of 2007, when the administration imported 1.4 million tonnes.

Despite the global rise in food prices which was immediately followed by the 2008 financial crisis, Indonesia managed to avoid the brunt of the crisis. Thus, in his second term, Yudhoyono set out to improve food production and resilience as one of his eleven priority agendas. These priorities were further elaborated in the Middle-Term National Development Plan of 2010-2014 to comprise of land reform, infrastructure, research and development, investment and subsidies, nutrition, and climate change adaptation measures.

Yudhoyono was worried about the effects of the 2008 financial crisis and sought to proactively seek an "opportunity amidst the crisis". According to then-presidential spokesperson, Dino Patti Djalal, Yudhoyono corresponded with the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, and other heads of state along with the president of the World Bank, conveying his concerns of the effects of the food price hike on lower-income countries. The correspondence also served to highlight Indonesia's increased domestic production, not just in rice, but soybean, corn, and palm oil. This would provide the basis for Yudhoyono's belief that Indonesia could achieve food self-sufficiency, which would in turn, contribute to alleviating the global food crisis (Djalal, 2008).

<sup>2</sup>This document was released prior to the revisions to the 1996 Food Law, hence the conflation of the terms "food security" and "resilience".

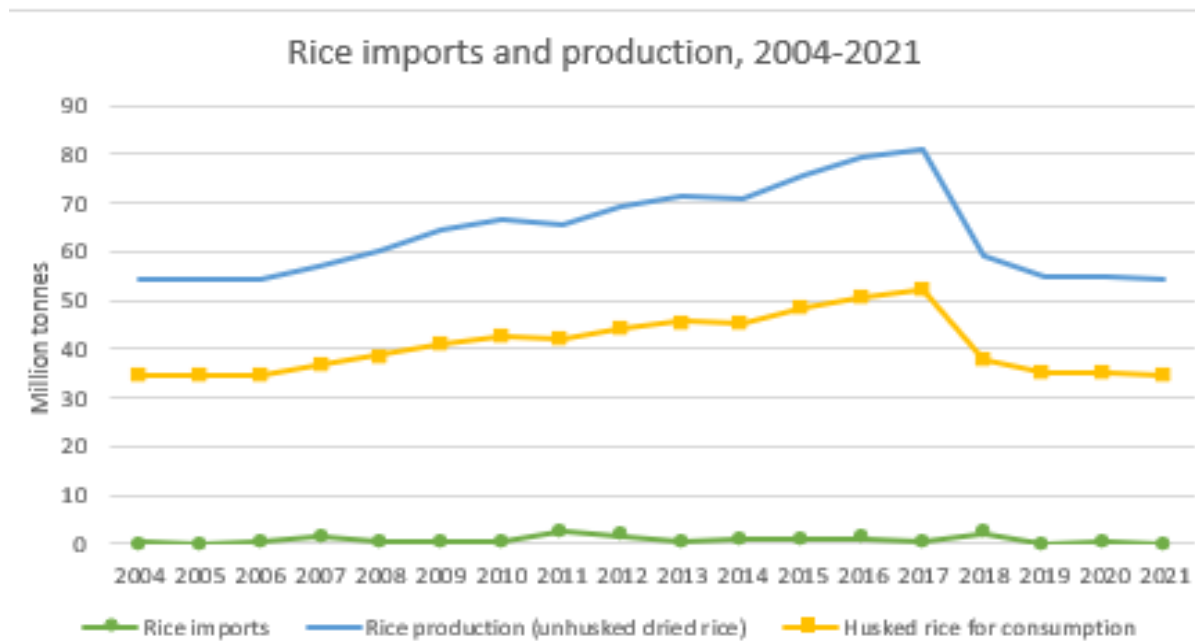


Figure 2 Rice imports and production, 2004-2021.

Source: The National Statistics Agency, Impor Beras Menurut Negara Asal Utama, 2000-2021 [Rice Imports based on Origin Country, 2000-2021]

(<https://www.bps.go.id/statictable/2014/09/08/1043/imp-or-beras-menurut-negara-asal-utama-2000-2021.html>); Produksi Tanaman Pangan, 1993-2015

(<https://www.bps.go.id/indikator/53/23/1/produksi.html>) and Luas Panen, Produksi, dan Produktivitas Padi Menurut Provinsi, 2018-2021 (<https://www.bps.go.id/indikator/53/1498/1/luas-panen-produksi-dan-produktivitas-padi-menurut-provinsi.html>). The conversion rate from unhusked dried rice to milled rice is 64 per cent based on the National Statistics Agency, Survei Konversi Gabah ke Beras 2018 [Survey of Conversion of Unhusked Rice to Husked Rice].

Prior to the Yudhoyono administration, the role of BULOG was significantly weakened in part due to conditions of accepting the IMF structural package. During the Megawati administration (2001-2004), based on Presidential Regulation no. 7/2003, the BULOG was restructured as a state-owned enterprise with the duty to secure, manage, and distribute national staple food reserves (*cadangan pangan pemerintah*) and in special cases, stabilise the prices of staple food commodities (Saragih, 2016). The Yudhoyono administration did not make significant alterations to the duties of the BULOG, which was criticised as undermining the agency's function in providing national reserves ("Mewaspadai krisis pangan", 2011). The administration focused instead on enacting protectionist regulations aimed at protecting farmers' welfare through the imposition of import quotas. These included Horticulture Law (Law no. 13/2010), the Farmer Protection and Empowerment Law (Law no. 19/2013), the Trade Law (Law no. 7/2014), and a revision of the 1996 Food Law (Law no. 18/2012) (Howes & Davies, 2014).

The revised Food Law of 2012 would allow for the creation of a new agency, which would answer directly to the president, to create policies relevant to food security. The agency would also be empowered to coordinate relevant ministries in production, distribution, and stocking of staple food commodities (Art. 126-129). The proposed agency, however, was not established in time and would only later be established in the second Widodo administration in 2021. Additional revisions specify conditions governing imports and exports. Article 36(2) stipulates imports would only be permissible if domestic production and reserves cannot fulfil domestic demands, especially for staple foods; whereas Article 34 stipulates exports of staple food commodities would only be permissible if national reserves and demand have been fulfilled.

It was also during the second term that Yudhoyono set higher ambitions for Indonesia's agricultural output. In April 2008, Yudhoyono called for a joint meeting with representatives from various ministries, state-owned enterprises, KADIN, and key figures in the energy and agricultural industries. A follow-up meeting was conducted two weeks after, and thus the *Komite Aksi Peningkatan Produktivitas Pangan, Energi, dan Mineral* was established, to be headed by Yudhoyono himself. It had the full support of the KADIN. From this meeting, KADIN would organise two "Feed Indonesia, Feed the World" conferences held in 2010 and 2012 respectively. In the first conference, KADIN identified 15 priority commodities, four of which are classified as "strategic", i.e., rice, sugar, soybean, and corn, and presented a roadmap of the necessary procedures that would need to be taken to support Yudhoyono's aspirations (Maulia, 2010).

These ambitions would entail ramping up production significantly, which would be achieved through extensification of farmland. The administration opted to build upon a previously defunct project known as the Merauke Integrated Rice Estate (MIRE) to increase rice production in eastern Indonesia. The administration rebranded MIRE as the MIFEE after a series of deliberations with numerous stakeholders. MIFEE would span 1.2 million hectares of land, but in practice, land concessions reached around 2.1 million hectares. Though the project was designed to bolster food security, in reality, food crops only accounted for 2.8 per cent of the estate with the remainder being planned for cash crops such as sugar cane, lumber, and oil palm (Ito, Rachman, & Savitri, 2014). As a result, it has been criticised as a land grab serving corporate interests instead of improving food security (Ginting & Pye, 2013; McDonnell, 2020). Ironically, this has led to increased food insecurity for the indigenous people in Papua, who have long relied on sago as their staple food (Hadiprayitno, 2017; Neilson, 2013).

### **Food Security in the Widodo Administration**

As part of his 2014 campaign, Widodo pledged to improve *ketahanan pangan* during his first period in office. The pledge was contained in his 2014 campaign manifesto, *Nawacita*, under the promise of establishing economic independence. This would later be used as his policy platform for both administrations. In the manifesto, Widodo viewed economic self-sufficiency as essential for upholding sovereignty. As he claimed, "Political sovereignty will

lose meaning if not accompanied with economic self-sufficiency, which is a precondition for autonomy in national policymaking” (Widodo & Kalla, 2014). To achieve self-sufficiency, Widodo pledged to “foster food sovereignty (*kedaulatan pangan*) based on people’s agribusiness (*agribisnis kerakyatan*)” which would entail eradication of rent-seeking “import mafia”, increasing exports, building agricultural capacity and supporting infrastructure, increasing investment in villages, and enacting agrarian and land reform (Widodo & Kalla, 2014). Widodo also cited Soekarno’s “*soal hidup dan mati*” oration in the preamble of the Food Security and Vulnerability Atlas of Indonesia in 2015, further affirming the nationalist orientation of his food policies (Dewan Ketahanan Pangan et al., 2015). A similar nationalist theme could also be seen in the Agriculture Ministry’s Strategic Plan (*Rencana Strategis*) for 2015-2019. The ministry had identified several challenges for food resilience, i.e., increasing population and climate change, global economic competition, food price hikes, and distribution issues related to lack of infrastructure, illegal stockpiling, and natural disasters. The Strategic Plan lays out several responses to those challenges, namely increasing domestic production of rice, soybean, corn, and beef, and improving access and distribution safety. Agriculture Minister Regulation no. 14/2015 stipulates the goals of self-sufficiency in rice, corn, and soybeans must be reached within three years.

However, the most striking indicator of the Widodo administration’s move towards securitising food can be seen in the inclusion of food resilience into the discourse of national security. The 2015 Defence White Paper does not provide a definition of food resilience; however, it does specify “challenges” – climate change and decreasing food supply – to food resilience in its Strategic Outlook section.<sup>3</sup> The document notes the “indirect” effects of climate change on “non-fulfilment [of] human life basic needs”, which will “cause disruption [of] resilience... leading to insecurity”. Interestingly, the document emphasises the effects of population increase, inflation, water crises, and dependency (presumably on imports) on food supply (Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015).

These outlooks, outlined in national strategic documents, have led to the policies implemented by the administration being mostly focused on increasing productivity through state intervention (Hamilton-Hart, 2019). Joko Widodo viewed the matter as an issue of infrastructure. The administration designated several dam construction projects as ‘nationally strategic’ infrastructure projects and increased funding for villages and rural areas to prepare 9 million hectares of agricultural land and improve local irrigation infrastructure (Salim & Negara, 2018). The Widodo administration also distributed, per 2019, a total of 11 million land certificates to small and middle landowners to ensure the legal status of their land, which in the administration’s view, was as an implementation of land reform (“Presiden Jokowi serahkan”, 2020). The Agriculture Ministry increased fertiliser subsidies, which reached IDR 34.4 trillion in 2019 (“Berhitung uang subsidi pupuk”, 2021).

In addition to infrastructure fixes, the Widodo administration also expanded the remit of state agencies to handle food security. Presidential Regulation no. 48/2016 marginally expanded the authority of the BULOG to manage the prices of rice, corn, soybean, sugar, beef,

<sup>3</sup>In the official English translation of the Defence White Paper, “food resilience” is used.

and poultry. The administration also passed Presidential Regulation no. 66/2021, which established the National Food Agency (*Badan Pangan Nasional/BPN*). The new agency, which replaces the DKP, is a non-ministerial agency that answers directly to the President. The BPN implements food security policies developed by the Agriculture Ministry for specific foodstuffs, namely rice, corn, soybeans, sugar, shallots, poultry, eggs, beef, and chili. The BPN's remit also allows it to regulate food prices, which was traditionally the domain of the BULOG.

However, the most notable was the close cooperation between the Agriculture Ministry and the Indonesian military (TNI). Since 2015, the Agriculture Ministry and military have signed numerous memoranda of cooperation to achieve the Widodo administration's target of self-sufficiency. Based on Agriculture Minister Regulation no. 14/2015, the military and university students are expected provide guidance and assistance for farmers to reach self-sufficiency goals. Tens of thousands of *Babinsa* (*Bintara Pembina Desa*; non-commissioned officers at the village level) are expected to act as "motivators, facilitators, innovators, and dynamisators [sic]" under the program *TNI Manunggal Masuk Desa* (Solih, 2017). The Agriculture Ministry justified its reliance on military assistance due to their lack of manpower and the tight deadline imposed by the administration; while then-TNI Commander, Gatot Nurmantyo, justified the cooperation on the basis of military operations other than war (Kresna, 2017; "TNI lanjutkan garap", 2017). The results of the cooperation on agricultural output, however, remains questionable. The National Audit Agency (*Badan Pemeriksa Keuangan, BPK*) found the cooperation, dubbed *Program Cetak Sawah Kementerian Pertanian-Tentara Nasional Indonesia*, was riddled with financial mismanagement, resulting in substantial losses ("Program cetak sawah", 2020).

Whether these policies had a positive impact on rice production remains debatable. The National Statistics Agency recorded a decline in production of dried unhusked rice in the same year, from 59.2 million tonnes to 54.6 million tonnes. Since 2018, average production of dried unhusked rice has hovered at around 54 million tonnes. The decline in rice production in 2018 led to the government importing 2.25 million tonnes of rice; however, since 2019, Indonesia only imported an average of 444,000 tonnes (Figure 1). The decline in rice production may likely be attributed to a decline in arable land and unfavourable climate conditions. The Agriculture Ministry has also recorded a steady decline in per capita rice consumption (Figure 3 and Figure 4), which may be attributed to rising real prices resulting in less consumption or a change in dietary preferences attributed to higher household income (Kementerian Pertanian, 2021). In spite of production decline, Joko Widodo received an award from the International Rice Research Institute for achieving rice self-sufficiency, marked by zero imports of rice for consumption – distinct from rice imports for industrial purposes – for three consecutive years from 2019 ("Jokowi highlights zero rice", 2022).



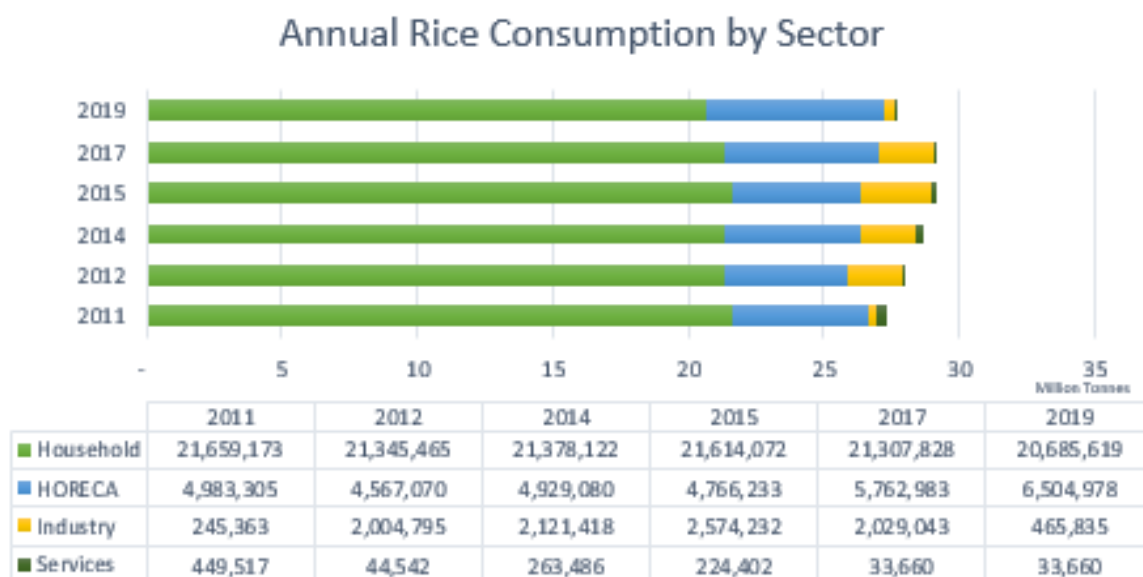


Figure 3 Annual rice consumption by sector. (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021).

Note: Data for 2013, 2016, and 2018 are not reported. HORECA stands for “hotel, restaurants, and cafes”. Industrial consumption refers to the use of rice for industrial purposes, e.g., manufacturing additives, livestock feed, etc.

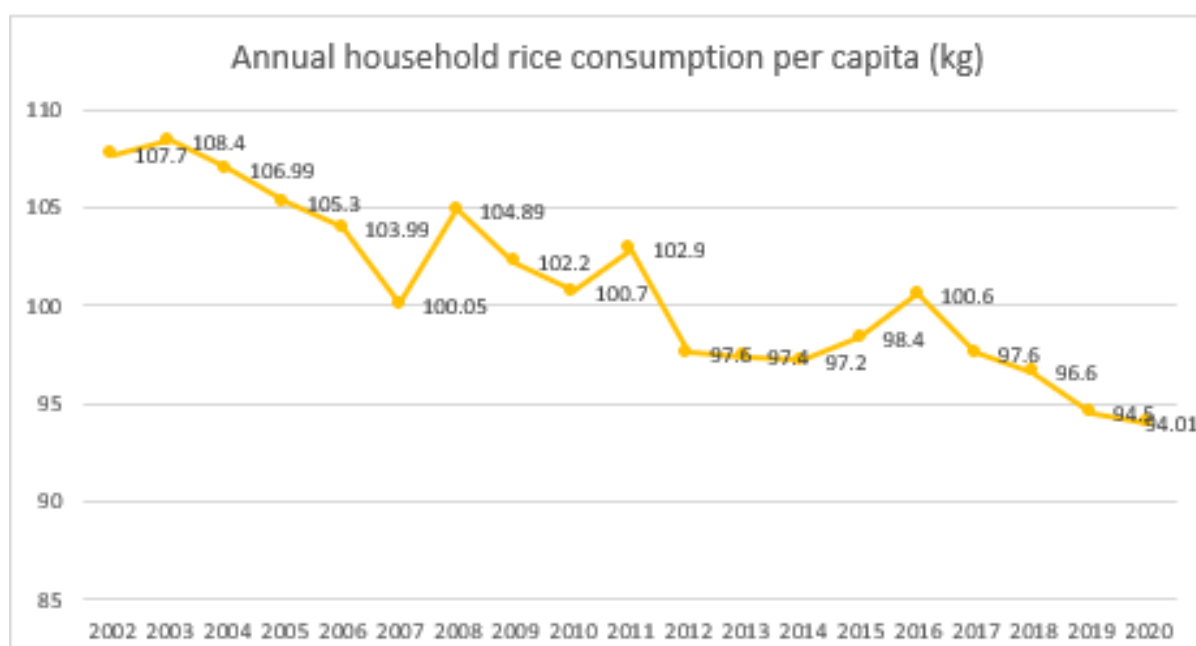


Figure 4 Annual per capita rice consumption for households, 2002-2020. (Kementerian Pertanian, 2021).

Having achieved rice self-sufficiency, it would seem there would be no reason to further intensify measures related to food production. The next step would be to focus on improving

access and bolstering farmers' welfare. However, in the second term, the Widodo administration became concerned of a looming food crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and later, the Russian invasion of Ukraine. On 28 April 2020, Jokowi met with the Agriculture Ministry and ordered extensification of existing farmland to anticipate the upcoming food crisis. In coordination with the SOE Ministry, the Agriculture Ministry expects to open new farmland on peatland in Central Kalimantan ("Kejar target 'sejuta' hektare", 2020a). Leading a limited meeting on the food estate in September 2020, Widodo requested his ministers to prioritise national food reserves in anticipation for a potential food crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, global warming, and an overall desire to decrease food imports ("Rapat terbatas mengenai lanjutan", 2020). Joko Widodo again cautioned his Cabinet and regional leaders of a looming food crisis in a national working meeting in 2021 (Kementerian Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia, 2021).

Concerns of a food crisis were further accentuated as the Russo-Ukraine War broke out. The war resulted in a global food price hike due to Russian blockades of Ukrainian wheat exports, which was particularly felt in Indonesia. Widodo visited Moscow in hopes of ensuring a resumption in the flow of wheat. The meeting resulted in an agreement from Putin to lift the blockade and ensure a resumption in the flow of goods out of the Black Sea (Maulia, 2022). In addition, Indonesia also added food security to its G20 presidency agenda, further reflecting the Widodo administration's belief of an existential threat to Indonesia's food security.

The administration's response to the potential food crisis was to establish food estates in Sumatera, East Nusa Tenggara, Central Kalimantan, and Papua for an expected total of over 770,000 hectares of new farmland to be opened; with 148,000 hectares allotted for rice and the 622,000 hectares for non-irrigated crops such as cassava and corn. More than half of the food estate will be concentrated in Central Kalimantan (McDonald & Meylinah, 2021; "Indonesia starts developing", 2020). Though the food estate project was expected to be part of the first term agenda, it experienced delays and could only proceed in 2017 due to difficulties in finding a suitable location. The Widodo administration designated the food estate as a "strategic national project", making it a priority for the administration. After a series of deliberations, it was decided the food estate would be built on former PLG lands in Central Kalimantan. The location was recommended by the mayor of Central Kalimantan and endorsed by a feasibility study conducted by the Environment and Forestry Ministry (Anam, 2020).

The food estate project was designed as a joint inter-ministerial project. Though initially led by the Agriculture Ministry, Joko Widodo decided to appoint Defence Minister, Prabowo Subianto, as the project lead. Joko Widodo rationalised the appointment as a means to "quickly anticipate [a possible food crisis] by establishing strategic food reserves", noting that "defence isn't only about weapons systems, it's also about resilience in the food sector". The Defence Ministry is expected to coordinate at least six ministries: Public Works and Housing, SOE, Spatial Planning, Environment and Forestry, Agriculture, and National Development Planning (Fachriansyah, 2020).

The new food estate project has generated considerable controversy, particularly from conservationist groups. Critics have pointed out the potentially detrimental financial, social, and environmental impacts of the project due to widespread deforestation, displacement of indigenous communities, and questionable profitability (“Stop food estate di kawasan”, 2020). There have also been allegations of widespread mismanagement within the Defence Ministry as the primary interlocutor of the program. Environment and Forestry Ministerial Regulation no. 24/2020, also colloquially known as the Food Estate Law despite not being a product of legislature, allows for a streamlined conversion of production forest areas to food estate areas. The new regulation would permit an area to be converted to a food estate based on an expedited environmental assessment in lieu of a more exhaustive assessment. This new provision has allegedly been exploited by the Defence Ministry. The management of the food estate was entrusted to a private company, PT Agro Industri Nasional (Agrinas). The company is owned by a non-profit foundation, Development of Potential Defence Resources Foundation, where Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto serves as the head of advisory board. Key leadership positions within the foundation are held by members of Prabowo’s political party, Gerindra. The Defence Ministry, however, has denied its links to PT Agrinas (“Rainforests fall for Indonesia's food”, 2021).

## **Analysis**

Having elaborated the food security policies of Indonesian governments, this section proceeds to examine whether the issue of food security has been securitised and whether the securitisation of food can be considered morally defensible based on the framework of just securitisation. Summaries of the results of the analysis may be found in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively.

### **Has Food been Securitised?**

#### *The Sukarno administration*

Sukarno had identified the objective threat of famine to the nation, caused by an inability to produce enough rice to meet the demands of an increasing population. Left unaddressed, this inability would eventually “eliminate” the nation. Note that in his 1952 speech, Sukarno used the term “*bahaya kemusnahan*”, which the closest translation would be “the threat of extinction”, further accentuating the urgency of the matter. Compounding on these threats was Indonesia’s dependence on the global market, which, as a recently independent country beset by economic turmoil, would only exacerbate the threat to the nation. To save the nation, Sukarno had placed his hopes on policies aiming at agricultural intensification, extensification, and providing professional education. From the use of security language, it is clear the issue of food had been securitised. The conduct of security measures in the form of production-oriented policies further indicate securitisation has occurred.

### *The Suharto administration*

Suharto saw food as a means to assert and sustain political legitimacy, which depended on his administration's ability to maintain the prices of foodstuffs, rice especially, at an accessible level. Food was no longer a "matter of life or death" requiring extraordinary measures to protect, yet due to its perceived central role in advancing economic development, the administration continued to present the issue in security language. Further enabling this was the fact that the issue of food had not yet been fully de-securitised largely in part due to the abrupt transfer of power from the Sukarno to Suharto administrations. The absence of proper de-securitisation resulted in a condition perhaps best described as a state of "latent" securitisation, where the issue remains securitised, though extraordinary measures are not taken. A latently-securitised issue may be re-securitised, given favorable conditions (Taufika, 2020).

Suharto left food policy to technocrats in his administration, which focused on introducing "green revolution" technologies, economic incentives, market controls, and transmigration (Falcon, 2014). However, the administration's focus on achieving national resilience as a bulwark against a Communist resurgence essentially enabled the administration to frame any issue in security terms, food notwithstanding. Additionally, the Suharto era bureaucracy was not purely civilian; active military personnel were permitted to occupy civilian posts. These structural conditions eased the involvement of military personnel in implementing food policies, as evidenced in the involvement of the military elite in the BIMAS Gotong Royong program. However, when the administration perceived threats to domestic stability and the nation due to the loss of food self-sufficiency, it quickly responded with a measure to ensure food resilience was maintained. Following the collapse of the administration in 1998, food security became latently securitised again due to the absence of a proper de-securitisation, even by the transitional administrations.

### *The Yudhoyono administration*

The Yudhoyono administration did not initially securitise food during the first term. Food security remained on the political agenda, but there were no significant moves to securitise the issue. There are two possible explanations for this. First, there were positive developments in agricultural output, while imports were generally within acceptable levels. Coupled with relatively stable economic growth, the administration may have not seen the need to securitise food. Second, the administration was occupied with other pressing security issues, such as counterterrorism and reconciliation with the *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* separatist movement (Jones, 2015). As a result, Yudhoyono had maintained the politicisation of food resilience, while not engaging in neither de-securitisation nor securitisation.

A trend towards securitisation became more apparent in the second term, after the administration had perceived threats to food resilience. The revision of the Food Law, in addition to the passing of laws related to horticulture and farmers' protection was motivated by protectionist tendencies in agriculture, were a reaction to the increased budgetary strains

on food imports, which in turn were perceived to be devastating to local farmers. The administration also passed Presidential Instruction no. 5/2011, which allows for narrow involvement of police and military personnel in securing food reserves during extreme climate conditions (droughts, floods, etc.). The administration started to ramp up perceived threats of a looming food crisis, which would be exacerbated by population increase. In defending the MIFEE, the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs has noted MIFEE was a necessary policy to “anticipate a food crisis” (Neilson & Wright, 2017). The practice of allowing the involvement of military and law enforcement may suggest a form of extraordinary action, however, military personnel may be deployed for a wide range of military operations other than war based on the 2004 Armed Forces Law (Haripin, 2020). Regardless, the involvement of the armed forces would constitute as a security practice hinting towards securitisation as it expands the remit of an agency which initially was not equipped to deal with food security. Like previous administrations, the Yudhoyono administration did not openly and completely de-securitise the issue, thus rendering it latent.

### *The Widodo administration*

Securitisation of food in the Widodo administration is more obvious compared to the previous administration. The incorporation of food resilience into national security discourse represents a break from the Yudhoyono administration’s reluctance to engage in overt security language. In addition, the administration had also positioned food self-sufficiency as a goal of his administration through the referencing Soekarno’s “*soal hidup atau mati*” speech. In his second term, the threats to the nation became more evident. A notable aspect was the unified adoption of the narrative across ministries, which was less evident during the Yudhoyono regime. This has been attributed to Joko Widodo’s big-tent coalition, which weakened political opposition, thus centralising power within the executive circle (Mietzner, 2016). Positioning food resilience as not just a national development priority, but also a matter of national security, allowed the Widodo administration to establish new agencies and expanding the remit of existing agencies dedicated to responding the identified threats.

### *Is Securitisation Morally Defensible?*

Having identified instances of securitisation, the second part of the analysis calls for a normative testing of securitisation, and in some cases, de-securitisation, to determine whether securitisation is morally defensible. The analysis proceeds by examining initiation, conduct, and termination of securitisation in each administration. In addition, as the Widodo administration is currently ongoing, analysis on conduct of securitisation remains preliminary.

Table 2 Summary of the state of securitisation/de-securitisation of food security across administrations.

	Sukarno	Suharto (early)	Suharto (late)	Yudhoyono (first term)	Yudhoyono (second term)	Widodo
<b>Securitising moves</b>	Identified objective threats of famine in existential terms	Identified objective threats of famine as an issue of regime survival	Loss of self-sufficiency posed a threat to legitimacy and stability	Nonapparent	Perceived threats of food shortage	Identified objective threats of climate change and its effects in existential terms
<b>Security practice</b>	Production-oriented policies	Production-oriented policies, price controls, and improving access.	Failed execution of large-scale food estate	Creation of new agency with additional remit in food security	Import restrictions, increasing operational remit of military, and food estates	Production-oriented policies, import restrictions, and food estate
<b>State of securitisation</b>	Securitised	Securitised	Securitised	"Latent" securitisation	Securitised	Securitised
<b>State of de-securitisation</b>	Not de-securitised	Not de-securitised	Not de-securitised	Not de-securitised	Not de-securitised	Unknown

Source: Author's own illustration.

### *The Sukarno administration*

The initiation of securitisation by the Sukarno administration may have been based on just cause and intent. The widespread food shortages in the 1950s and 1960s, caused by a combination of population growth, droughts, and logistical problems posed an existential and objective threat to the nation (van der Eng, 2012). As far as intent is concerned, the available evidence points towards just intent, as the administration enacted policies aimed at intensifying rice production.

In conducting securitisation, the principle of proportionality has been observed as the policies were mainly targeted to increase production. In the case of an agent-lacking threat, the available evidence does not suggest the presence of an ulterior or agent-benefitting motive underlying these policies. The effectiveness of conduct, however, may be questioned. First, the evidence suggests the administration lacked the necessary technological and logistical capacity to ensure the success of these policies. Second, the explicit rejection of foreign food aid raises doubts on the administration's sincerity in security practice. By rejecting international food aid, the administration did not act in a way to mitigate further harm to the referent object. This practice further raises questions of the sincerity of the securitising agent.

Until the end of the Sukarno administration in 1966, there were no publicly available statements announcing the termination of food securitisation. As a result, the issue may be considered to still be in a securitised state.

### *The Suharto administration*

During the first decade of his rule, Suharto re-initiated securitisation of food. The justness of initiation, however, may be questioned. The threat of food shortages, which persisted throughout the late 1960s, served as a just cause for securitisation. The following conduct, represented in the acceptance and use of foreign aid and 'green revolution' technologies to increase rice production, may also be considered proportionate and effective in addressing the identified threats. This was marked by an overall improvement in living standards and an increase in agricultural output (Booth, 2000; Thee, 2012). Within this particular time bracket, the agent's intent may be considered just as the agent's actions are consistent with the threats identified by the agent. However, when one looks at the socio-political context, the sincerity of intent may be questioned. By portraying food policies as a bulwark against a potential Communist resurgence, the primary beneficiary of these policies would be the political elites as opposed to the nation.

The justness of securitisation seems to further falter after the achievement of rice self-sufficiency in 1984. Following the principle of timeliness in de-securitisation, security rhetoric and practice related to food should have been ceased. Suharto's 1985 State of the Nation Address, however, suggests continuation of previous policies to sustain self-sufficiency, although the administration had ceased the use of security discourse in the issue of food. This suggests an incomplete de-securitisation, rendering the issue latent.

The loss of self-sufficiency, coupled with warnings of food shortages in 1995, served as enablers for the re-securitisation of food, as indicated in the initiation of the PLG program. However, the initiation of securitisation in this instance would be considered unjust in intent, as it was conducted to benefit the securitising agent. In its conduct, the PLG was also disproportionate and ineffective, as it resulted in long-term ecological and socio-economic harm, particularly to the indigenous population of Kalimantan (McCarthy, 2013).

It may be argued the Suharto administration held the responsibility to de-securitise food, at least up to the point where self-sufficiency was achieved. By then, the threats of famines had generally been abated. However, until the abrupt end of the Suharto administration in 1998, there were no evident attempts to reverse the securitisation of food, rendering the issue latent. The latent state of food security remained throughout the transitional administrations of Habibie, Abdurrahman Wahid, and Megawati.

### *The Yudhoyono administration*

As the first administration that marked the beginning Indonesia's period of democratic consolidation, it had the opportunity to de-securitise food security. The creation of a new agency with remit in food security, in addition to the absence of reforms on previous policies which could be potentially used to securitise food in the future, however, suggests the issue remained in a latent state.

The initiation of securitisation in the second Yudhoyono administration shows mixed results. In terms of just cause, although there were threats to food security as a result of the 2007-2008 financial crises, existing food security measures were considered relatively adequate to bear the brunt of the crisis. It was more likely Yudhoyono was more concerned of his domestic image, as his relaxation of rice imports and general incompetence in managing agricultural policy was met with widespread dissatisfaction and political opposition (Hill, 2015). This led to a need to strengthen his international image through the MIFEE project. In this sense, the parameters for justness of intent and cause are unfulfilled, which results in an unjust initiation of securitisation.

As security practice, the administration's proposed MIFEE project fails to meet the criteria of just conduct in both effectiveness and proportionality. The MIFEE project had questionable benefits in terms of increasing food security; instead, it may have worsened food security, especially in already food-insecure regions. In terms of production, the proportion of allocated land for growing food crops paled in comparison to the land allotted for cash crops. Furthermore, the introduction of monoculture plots of land undermined local food production in Papua, which contradicts the goal of improving access and diversification (Ito et al., 2014).

### *The Widodo administration*

As far as threats are concerned, the Widodo administration has identified several objective threats, with climate change and its effects being prominent, to food security as laid out in the Defence White Paper. Other threats included global food price hikes due to pandemic-induced global supply chain issues. At a glance, these threats may be considered both objective and existential, thus fulfilling the requirements for just cause. However, it also raises the question of whether it is just to securitise against future objective threats as opposed to imminent threats. Just securitisation theory seemingly rejects securitising future threats, as 'it is unlikely to be the only and last thing that could deliver the desired result in a relevant situation' (Floyd, 2019). Viewed in this light, the justness of cause becomes questionable, especially in justifying the administration's chosen security practice of establishing a large-scale food estate.

The case for just intent and conduct requires further scrutiny. The emphasis on self-sufficiency as a goal in itself is problematic, as it would entail costly measures with questionable long-term benefits. Moreover, the main beneficiary of self-sufficiency remains unclear: is it for the benefit of the state or citizens? (Lassa & Shrestha, 2014) However, as the previous sections have shown, the self-sufficiency narrative has been entrenched since the Sukarno administration (Neilson, 2018). Thus, although alternatives may have been considered, the persistence of the self-sufficiency narrative, in addition to its public appeal, nudges the administration to pursue food estates as a security practice in response to the identified threat of food shortages. The evidence so far reveals the food estate policy might not have been carried out with sincere intent, as the main beneficiaries of the projects have



mostly been political elites instead of the referent object. In sum, food securitisation may not have been initiated and conducted justly.

Table 3. Summary of the normative analysis of securitisation/de-securitisation of food security across administrations.

	Sukarno	Suharto (early)	Suharto (late)	Yudhoyono (first term)	Yudhoyono (second term)	Widodo
<b>Initiation</b>	Based on just cause and intent	Based on just cause, but questionable intent	Not based on just cause nor intent	No initiation	Not based on just cause or intent	Just cause and intent questionable
<b>Conduct</b>	Generally proportionate, though narrowly effective, although implementation was marred by technical and logistical limitations.	Proportionate and effective in addressing the identified threats	Disproportionate and ineffective	Questionable	Disproportionate and ineffective	Preliminary evidence shows disproportionate and ineffective
<b>Termination</b>	No explicit termination	Not terminated	No explicit termination	No termination, despite having moral responsibility	No explicit termination	No explicit termination

Source: Author's own illustration.

## Conclusions

The research had set out to identify and analyse the securitisation of food across four administrations in Indonesia. It has made three central findings. First, the discourse surrounding food in Indonesia is generally based on the dream of achieving food self-sufficiency as a pre-requisite for food sovereignty as laid out by Sukarno. The narrative of self-sufficiency has since then been co-opted by subsequent administrations to legitimise practices which have mostly focused on increasing production and protecting domestic farmers, as opposed to ensuring equitable access. These practices have commonly taken the form of farmland expansion, particularly in areas beyond the main island of Java. Second, practices enacted by the administration are not always morally defensible, as they have not always been initiated with sincere intent and conducted in a manner to benefit the referent object while limiting harm to thereof. Instead, this paper has shown that the securitisation of food presents a lucrative opportunity for the political elite to benefit themselves under the pretence of

addressing a “matter of life or death” for the nation. This has been particularly evident when large-scale projects are presented and implemented as an antidote for food insecurity. What often follows is mismanagement, which results in potentially more harm than expected. Third, the research has also shown discourses of food security have generally remained in a latently securitised state due to incomplete de-securitisation, despite the change in administrations. This condition has enabled subsequent administrations to re-securitise food security in discourses of self-sufficiency, even in the absence of just cause or intent.

The findings reveal that food security in Indonesia has long been the product of security discourses due to the persistent self-sufficiency narrative. The continued securitisation of food, coupled with its lack of de-securitisation, enables political leaders to justify policies that have questionable benefit to the nation. Continued securitisation of food security, therefore, would be considered unjustified. As just securitisation theory prescribes, de-securitisation becomes a moral imperative. However, doing so would require a fundamental ideational shift from self-sufficiency to an alternative paradigm of food security which promotes equitable access rather than a narrow focus on self-sufficiency.

The research has attempted to empirically test the normative framework of just securitisation theory; however, it is not without limitations. Admittedly, this preliminary attempt has only sought to apply just securitisation theory instead of developing a potential competing formulation. Limited access to primary source material, which would have greatly enriched the analysis of intent, also posed a challenge in conducting a comprehensive analysis. Additionally, this analysis has mostly focused on food production policies. Future research may opt for a more comprehensive analysis on the justness of distribution and access policies, especially in the face of future existential threats. Limitations notwithstanding, the research has shown just securitisation theory to be useful in longitudinal analysis of security policies spanning across administrations within a single country. Further research may consider comparative applications of just securitisation theory to enrich its empirical applicability.

## **Acknowledgment**

The author would like to thank the anonymous peer reviewers for their comments. The author also thanks Jun Honna for their constructive feedback and support on an earlier draft of this article. The research is financially supported by the MEXT Embassy-recommended Scholarship 2021 and Ritsumeikan University.

## **About The Authors**

I Gusti Bagus Dharma Agastia is a PhD student at the Graduate School of International Relations, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan. He is also an adjunct lecturer at the International Relations Study Programme, President University, West Java, Indonesia.

## References

- Anam, K. (2020, August 10). Recycled food estate project. *Tempo*. <https://magz.tempo.co/read/cover-story/36947/recycled-food-estate-project>
- Anwar, D. F. (1996). Indonesia's Strategic Culture: Ketahanan Nasional, Wawasan Nusantara, and Hankamrata. *Australia-Asia Papers no. 75*. Centre for the Study of Australia-Asia Relations.
- Badan Pusat Statistik. (2021). *Konsumsi Bahan Pokok 2019*. Badan Pusat Statistik.
- Balzacq, T. (2005). The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context. *European Journal of International Relations*, 11(2), 171–201. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066105052960>
- Berhitung uang subsidi pupuk yang dipertanyakan Jokowi. (2021, January 11). *CNN Indonesia*. <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/ekonomi/20210111133114-532-592148/berhitung-uang-subsidi-pupuk-yang-dipertanyakan-jokowi>
- Booth, A. (2000). Poverty and inequality in the Soeharto Era: An assessment. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 36(1), 73–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074910012331337793>
- Brisman, A., & South, N. (2017). Food, crime, justice and security: (Food) Security for whom? In I. Werkheiser & Z. Piso (Eds.), *Food Justice in US and Global Contexts: Bringing Theory and Practice Together* (pp. 185–200). Springer International Publishing.
- Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & Wilde, J. de. (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Lynne Rienner.
- Côté, A. (2016). Agents without agency: Assessing the role of the audience in securitization theory. *Security Dialogue*, 47(6), 541–558. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010616672150>
- Crouch, H. (1988). *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*. Cornell University Press.
- Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia. (2015). *Defence White Paper 2015*. Defence Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia.
- Dewan Ketahanan Pangan. (2006). *Kebijakan Umum Ketahanan Pangan 2006-2009* (Jakarta). Dewan Ketahanan Pangan.
- Dewan Ketahanan Pangan, Ministry of Agriculture, & World Food Programme. (2015). *Food Security and Vulnerability Atlas of Indonesia 2015*. Dewan Ketahanan Pangan, Kementerian Pertanian and World Food Programme.
- Djalal, D. P. (2008, January 1). Mengubah krisis menjadi peluang. <https://web.archive.org/web/20100425050914/http://www.dinopattidjalal.com/id/article/17/mengubah-krisis-menjadi-peluang-%5B2%5D.html>
- Elson, R. E. (2001). *Soeharto: A Political Biography*. Cambridge University Press.

- Falcon, W. P. (2014). Food Security for the Poorest Billion: Policy Lessons from Indonesia. In R. L. Naylor (Eds.), *The Evolving Sphere of Food Security* (pp. 31–63). Oxford University Press.
- Floyd, R. (2010). *Security and the Environment: Securitisation Theory and US Environmental Security Policy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Floyd, R. (2011). Can securitization theory be used in normative analysis? Towards a just securitization theory. *Security Dialogue*, 42(4–5), 427–439. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611418712>
- Floyd, R. (2016). Extraordinary or ordinary emergency measures: What, and who, defines the ‘success’ of securitization? *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 29(2), 677–694. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2015.1077651>
- Floyd, R. (2019). *The Morality of Security: A Theory of Just Securitization*. Cambridge University Press.
- Food sovereignty. (2003). *La Via Campesina*. <https://viacampesina.org/en/food-sovereignty/>
- Ginting, L., & Pye, O. (2013). Resisting Agribusiness Development: The Merauke Integrated and Energy Estate in West Papua, Indonesia. *ASEAS - Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 6(1), 160–182. <https://doi.org/10.14764/10.ASEAS-6.1-9>
- Government of Indonesia. (2005). *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Panjang Nasional Tahun 2005-2025*.
- Hadiprayitno, I. I. (2017). Who owns the right to food? Interlegality and competing interests in agricultural modernisation in Papua, Indonesia. *Third World Quarterly*, 38(1), 97–116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1120155>
- Hamilton-Hart, N. (2019). Indonesia’s Quest for Food Self-sufficiency: A New Agricultural Political Economy? *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 49(5), 734–758. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1617890>
- Haripin, M. (2020). *Civil-military Relations in Indonesia: The Politics of Military Operations Other than War* (1<sup>st</sup> Ed.). Routledge.
- Hill, H. (2015). The Indonesian economy during the Yudhoyono decade. In E. Aspinall, M. Mietzner, & D. Tomsa (Eds.), *The Yudhoyono Presidency: Indonesia’s Decade of Stability and Stagnation* (pp. 281–302). ISEAS.
- Howes, S., & Davies, R. (2014). Survey of recent developments. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 50(2), 157–183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2014.938403>
- Indonesia starts developing controversial food estate project. (2020, September 23). *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-indonesia-food-estate-idINKCN26E0W5>
- Isnurhadi, M. R. (2018). Sekuritisasi Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated Fishing (IUUF) di Perairan Indonesia di Era Pemerintahan Joko Widodo. *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional*, 10(2), 118. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jhi.v10i2.7300>

- Ito, T., Rachman, N. F., & Savitri, L. A. (2014). Power to make land dispossession acceptable: A policy discourse analysis of the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE), Papua, Indonesia. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(1), 29–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2013.873029>
- Jokowi highlights zero rice imports in 3 consecutive years. (2022, August 16). *Tempo.co*. <https://en.tempo.co/read/1623345/jokowi-highlights-zero-rice-imports-in-3-consecutive-years>
- Jones, S. (2015). Yudhoyono's legacy on internal security: Achievements and missed opportunities. In E. Aspinall, M. Mietzner, & D. Tomsa (Eds.), *The Yudhoyono Presidency: Indonesia's Decade of Stability and Stagnation* (pp. 136–154). ISEAS Publishing.
- Kansil, C. S. T. (1970). *Inti Pengetahuan Repelita* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Erlangga.
- Kaunert, C., & Ezeokafor, E. (2022). *Securitization Outside the West: West African Security Reconceptualised*. Routledge.
- Kejar target 'sejuta' hektare sawah. (2020, May 5). *Koran Tempo*. <https://koran.tempo.co/read/laporan-utama/452458/kejar-target-sejuta-hektare-sawah?>
- Kementerian Pertanian. (2021). *Buletin Konsumsi Pangan*. Pusat Data dan Sistem Informasi Pertanian, Sekretariat Jenderal Kementerian Pertanian.
- Kementerian Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia. (2021, January 11). *Sambutan Presiden pada Peresmian Pembukaan Rapat Kerja Nasional Pembangunan Pertanian Tahun 2021*. [https://setneg.go.id/baca/index/sambutan\\_presiden\\_pada\\_peresmian\\_pembukaan\\_rapat\\_kerja\\_nasional\\_pembangunan\\_pertanian\\_tahun\\_2021](https://setneg.go.id/baca/index/sambutan_presiden_pada_peresmian_pembukaan_rapat_kerja_nasional_pembangunan_pertanian_tahun_2021)
- Kresna, M. (2017, July 24). Agung Hendriadi: 'Kita Manfaatkan Babinsa untuk Membantu Pertanian'. *Tirto*. <https://tirto.id/kita-manfaatkan-babinsa-untuk-membantu-pertanian-ctiW>
- Kurniawan, Y. (2017). *The Politics of Securitization in Democratic Indonesia*. Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Lassa, J., & Shrestha, M. (2014, November 20). Food sovereignty discourse in Southeast Asia: Helpful or disruptive? *RSiS*. <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/nts/co14231-food-sovereignty-discourse-in-southeast-asia-helpful-or-disruptive/#.WKp7wdJ96Hs>
- MacRae, G., & Reuter, T. (2020). Lumbung Nation. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 48(142), 338–358. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2020.1830535>
- Maulia, E. (2010, January 30). Indonesia pledges to 'feed the world'. *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/01/30/indonesia-pledges-feed-world-039.html>
- Maulia, E. (2022, June 30). Jokowi says Putin agrees to sea route for Ukraine wheat exports. *Nikkei Asia*. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Ukraine-war/Jokowi-says-Putin-agrees-to-sea-route-for-Ukraine-wheat-exports>

- McCarthy, J. (2013). Tenure and transformation in Central Kalimantan: After the 'Million Hectare' project. In A. Lucas & C. Warren (Eds.), *Land for the People: The State and Agrarian Conflict in Indonesia* (pp. 183–214). Ohio University Press.
- McDonald, G., & Meylinah, S. (2021). *Indonesia: If at First You Don't Succeed – An Overview of Indonesia's Food Estate Project*.
- McDonnell, J. E. (2020). The Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE): An ecologically induced genocide of the Malind Anim. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 23(2), 257–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2020.1799593>
- Mears, L. A. (1984). Rice and food self-sufficiency in Indonesia. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 20(2), 122–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918412331334642>
- Mewaspada krisis pangan global. (2011, January 24). *Tempo*. <https://majalah.tempo.co/read/opini/135722/mewaspada-krisis-pangan-global>
- Mietzner, M. (2016). Coercing loyalty: Coalitional presidentialism and party politics in Jokowi's Indonesia. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 38(2), 209–232. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1355/cs38-2b>
- Neilson, J. (2018). Feeding the bangsa: Food sovereignty and the state in Indonesia. In A. A. Patunru, M. E. Pangestu, & C. Basri (Eds.), *Indonesia in the New World: Globalisation, nationalism, and sovereignty* (pp. 73–89). ISEAS.
- Neilson, J. (2013, October 25). A matter of life or death for the Indonesian nation? *Inside Indonesia*. <https://www.insideindonesia.org/a-matter-of-life-or-death-for-the-indonesian-nation>
- Neilson, J., & Arifin, B. (2012). Food security and the de-agrarianization of the Indonesian economy. In C. Rosin, P. Stock, & H. Campbell (Eds.), *Food Systems Failure: The Global Food Crisis and the Future of Agriculture* (pp. 147–164). Routledge.
- Neilson, J., & Wright, J. (2017). The state and food security discourses of Indonesia: Feeding the bangsa. *Geographical Research*, 55(2), 131–143. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-5871.12210>
- Patel, R. (2013). The Long Green Revolution. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(1), 1–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2012.719224>
- Presiden Jokowi serahkan 1 juta sertifikat tanah untuk rakyat. (2020, November 9). *Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia*. <https://setkab.go.id/presiden-targetkan-seluruh-tanah-di-indonesia-bersertifikat-pada-2025/>
- Program cetak sawah tak realistis. (2020, May 9). *Majalah Tempo*. <https://majalah.tempo.co/read/nasional/160399/ringkasan-berita-program-cetak-sawah-yang-berujung-kerugian-negara>
- Rainforests fall for Indonesia's food estate programme. (2021, October 13). *The Gecko Project*. <https://thegeckoproject.org/articles/politically-connected-firm-seeks-to-profit-as-indonesian-government-cuts-down-orangutan-habitat/>

- Rapat terbatas mengenai lanjutan pembahasan food estate. (2020, September 23). *Biro Pers, Media, dan Informasi Sekretariat Presiden*. <https://www.presidentri.go.id/transkrip/rap-at-terbatas-mengenai-lanjutan-pembahasan-food-estate/>
- Roe, P. (2004). Securitization and minority rights: Conditions of desecuritization. *Security Dialogue*, 35(3), 279–294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010604047527>
- Salim, W., & Negara, S. D. (2018). Infrastructure development under the Jokowi administration. *Southeast Asian Economies*, 35(3), 386–401. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1355/ae35-3e>
- Salim, Z. (2010). *Food Security Policies in Maritime Southeast Asia: The case of Indonesia* (No. 1; Series on Trade and the Food Security). International Institute for Sustainable Development.
- Saragih, J. P. (2016). Kelembagaan urusan pangan dari masa ke masa dan kebijakan ketahanan pangan. *Jurnal Ekonomi & Studi Pembangunan*, 17(2), 57–80. <https://doi.org/10.18196/jesp.17.2.3983>
- Scarpello, F. (2018). Beyond Copenhagen: The political economy of securitising “Outside Influences” in Bali. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 48(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2017.1362583>
- Soeharto. (1985a). Pidato Kenegaraan 1969, disampaikan oleh Presiden Republik Indonesia, Jendral Soeharto. In *Amanat Kenegaraan: Kumpulan Pidato Kenegaraan di depan Sidang Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, 1967-1971* (Vol. 1, pp. 131–164). Inti Idayu Press.
- Soeharto. (1985b). Pidato Kenegaraan 1970, disampaikan oleh Presiden Republik Indonesia, Jendral Soeharto. In *Amanat Kenegaraan: Kumpulan Pidato Kenegaraan di depan Sidang Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, 1967-1971* (Vol. 1, pp. 165–216). Inti Idayu Press.
- Soekarno. (1952). *Soal hidup atau mati: Pidato Presiden Soekarno pada waktu hendak meletakkan batu-pertama dari pada gedung Fakultas Pertanian di Bogor pada tanggal 27 April 1952*. Kementerian Penerangan RI.
- Solih. (2017, April 20). Peran Babinsa dalam swasembada pangan. *Puspen TNI*. <https://tni.mil.id/view-112024-peran-babinsa-dalam-swasembada-pangan.html>
- Sommerville, M., Essex, J., & Le Billon, P. (2014). The ‘Global Food Crisis’ and the geopolitics of food security. *Geopolitics*, 19(2), 239–265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2013.811641>
- Stop food estate di kawasan hutan; Batalkan peraturan Menteri LHK P.24 tentang penyediaan kawasan hutan untuk pembangunan food estate. (2020, November 15). *WALHI*. <https://www.walhi.or.id/stop-food-estate-di-kawasan-hutan-batalkan-peraturan-menteri-lhk-p-24-tentang-penyediaan-kawasan-hutan-untuk-pembangunan-food-estate>
- Taufika, R. (2020). Latent Securitisation of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in Indonesia. *Global: Jurnal Politik Internasional*, 22(1), 26. <https://doi.org/10.7454/global.v22i1.488>



- Fachriansyah, R. (2020, July 14). Prabowo to oversee development of food estate program, Jokowi says. *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/07/14/prabowo-to-oversee-development-of-food-estate-program-jokowi-says.html>
- Thee, K. W. (2002). The Soeharto era and after: Stability, development, and crisis, 1966-2000. In H. Dick, V. J. H. Houben, T. Lindblad, & K. W. Thee (Eds.), *The Emergence of a National Economy: An Economic History of Indonesia, 1800-2000* (pp. 194-243). Allen & Unwin and University of Hawai'i Press.
- Thee, K. W. (2012). Indonesia's economic development during and after the Soeharto Era: Achievements and failings. In K. W. Thee (Eds.), *Indonesia's Economy since Independence* (pp. 69-89). ISEAS Publishing.
- TNI lanjutkan garap proyek pangan. (2017, June 17). *Koran Tempo*. <https://koran.tempo.co/read/nasional/418126/tni-lanjutkan-garap-proyek-pangan?>
- van der Eng, P. (2012). All lies? Famines in Sukarno's Indonesia [Unpublished paper]. Crawford School of Public Policy.
- van der Eng, P. (2014). *International Food Aid to Indonesia, 1950s-1970s* (Working Paper No. 2014 /19 in Trade and Development).
- Vuori, J. A. (2008). Illocutionary logic and strands of securitization: Applying the theory of securitization to the study of non-democratic political orders. *European Journal of International Relations*, 14(1), 65-99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066107087767>
- Wæver, O. (1995). Securitization and desecuritization. In R. D. Lipschutz, *On Security* (pp. 46-86). Columbia University Press.
- Weinstein, F. B. (2007). *Indonesian Foreign Policy and the Dilemma of Dependence: From Sukarno to Suharto* (Reprint). Jakarta: Equinox.
- Widodo, J., & Kalla, J. (2014). *Visi, Misi, dan Program Aksi: Jalan Perubahan untuk Indonesia yang Berdaulat, Mandiri, dan Berkepribadian* [Vision, Mission, and Action Programs: The Path of Change towards a Sovereign and Independent Indonesia with Character].
- Williams, M. C. (2003). Words, images, enemies: Securitization and international politics. *International Studies Quarterly*, 47(4), 511-531. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.0020-8833.2003.00277>.



# Indonesia's Strategic Narrative on the New Dynamics of Great Power Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific

Budi Riyanto<sup>1\*</sup>, Darmansjah Djumala<sup>2</sup>, and Youzhi Tan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Communication, Faculty of Communication, LSPR Institute of Communication and Business, Jakarta, Indonesia 10220

<sup>2</sup>International Relations Department, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia 45363

<sup>3</sup>Department of International Political Economy, School of International Relations, University of International Business and Economics (UIBE), Beijing, China 100029

<sup>1</sup>budi.r@lspr.edu; <sup>2</sup>ddjumala@hotmail.com; <sup>3</sup>tanyouzhi@hotmail.com

**How to Cite:** Riyanto, B., Djumala, D., Tan, Y. (2023). Indonesia's strategic narrative on the new dynamics of great power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 11(1), 143–166. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.9406>

## Abstract

Given the rising political tensions between the two great powers, the United States (U.S.) and the People's Republic of China (PRC), a geopolitical shift to the Indo-Pacific region is critical moment in the 21st century. Ideological, economic, military and technological aspects of this new struggle appear to be sharpening. In the current geopolitical change in the Indo-Pacific, two concerns that have not received much attention are addressed in the research, namely the importance of strategic narrative competition in the global information era and the part played by Indonesia in terms of its strategic narratives as a nation in the center of Indo-Pacific geopolitics. By focusing on the interaction of each actor in projecting a story about the order in the new world system, encouraging actors to adapt to their identities and roles in the story, and enacting policies that are in line with their interests, strategic narrative studies have the potential to explore geopolitical issues more thoroughly. Indonesia positions itself actively in a strategic narrative construction that can compete, and create a strategic role that can be played in accordance with its interests rather than playing a passive role and only becoming a victim in the face of the strategic narrative contestation among the great powers. The strategic narrative of Indonesia as it relates to identity, policy, and system is specifically examined in the research. It also examines the role that Indonesia plays in the formulation and projection of the narratives, as well as how the narratives are received in the context of the emerging Indo-Pacific's geopolitical struggle. As a middle power, Indonesia offers a shared strategic narrative that promotes a goal of greater cooperation, hence reducing great power rivalry.

**Keywords:** foreign policy, Global Maritime Fulcrum, Indonesia, Indo-Pacific, strategic narrative

## Introduction

The research elaborates on Indonesia's strategic narrative in the context of a new geopolitical shift to the Indo-Pacific, which is being brought on by escalating political tensions mainly between the two great powers, the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Clearly, the ideological, military, economic, and technological components of this new struggle are starting to sharpen (Rudd, 2022). There are many different viewpoints on the Indo-Pacific region's strategic importance. Australia was the first nation to embrace this viewpoint in its 2013 Defence White Paper and has consistently shown strategic interest in the region ever since (Australian Department of Defence, 2013; Medcalf, 2018). Now more and more official documents of several countries have extensively acknowledged the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region and adopt what so-called Indo-Pacific strategy ("Reinventing the Indo-Pacific", 2023). This includes Japan in 2016, followed by New Zealand, India, ASEAN, and the US, and recently the Republic of Korea. Since France adopted the Indo-Pacific strategy in 2019, additional nations including Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the European Union (EU) have all joined in, making the Indo-Pacific a geopolitical phrase that is being debated outside of the countries that make up the area itself.

The central subject of current strategic narrative is the fight for geopolitical power, with China using the Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) to revive the Silk Road and build massive infrastructure projects to link Eurasia and the Pacific (Brands & Gaddis, 2021). In response, the U.S., along with Japan, Australia, and India, implemented the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) concept through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (The Quad). Additionally, most recently, the U.S. has stepped up its efforts to advance its interests in the Indo-Pacific by forging AUKUS, a new alliance with Australia and the UK, to boost military-industrial collaboration and provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines (The White House, 2021b).

The US narrative in its 2022 National Security Strategy, which claims that China is the major adversary with the capacity and ambition to overthrow the current order, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, also highlights the conflict's escalating nature (The White House, 2022a). The National Security Strategy of Japan, released in December 2022, shows a substantial shift in the narrative as Japan emphasizes nearly tripling its defense and boosting its counterstrike capabilities (MoFA of Japan, 2022). China, on the other side, established a narrative that exacerbated deeper disputes, particularly in reaction to Taiwan. At China's 20th Party Congress, Xi Jinping emphasized that China's unification is critical to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (MoFA of PRC, 2022).

Indonesia cannot avoid the impact of the increasingly escalating competition, although mitigating the direction of the conflict is possible by taking a role in the strategic narrative from a unique perspective. In this instance, Indonesia positions itself actively in a strategic narrative that can compete and create a strategic role that can be played in accordance with its interests rather than playing a passive role and only becoming a victim in the face of the strategic narrative contestation among the great powers. The research focuses on Indonesia's strategic narrative within the framework of the free-active foreign policy, the Global Maritime

Fulcrum (GMF), and its proficiency in playing hedging strategies, which is again relevant in enhancing its strategic role in dealing with the dynamics of new geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific. It is obvious that the free and active foreign policy, which was developed as a direct response during the Cold War, has once again found its place in this new environment of competition. The adoption of ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) in 2019 and the document's ongoing strategic importance highlight Indonesia's activities and aspirations in the region (Ministry of Communications and Informatics of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023).

In this strategic conception of the importance of Indo-Pacific, the research seeks to discuss two captivating underexplored issues that hold immense relevance in today's dynamic global landscape. Firstly, it is to explain the importance of strategic narrative competition, a phenomenon that is becoming more well-known in the digital age. Understanding the forces that shape international relations requires a thorough understanding of how states construct and use their narratives in this intensely competitive environment. Secondly, the vital importance of Indonesia as a significant player in the dynamic Indo-Pacific geopolitics will be revealed in the second analysis of Indonesia's strategic narrative. In one of the most crucial geographic regions in the globe, the strategic narrative of Indonesia has the capacity to significantly modify perceptions, influence choices, change alliances, and shape the course of international affairs.

This narrative that Indonesia plays in the Indo-Pacific differs from the narrative of structural realism perspective that the conflict between the ruling power and the rising power has the potential to occur. Especially when referring to the historical pattern since the time of Sparta and Athens in ancient Greece. Allison (2015) states that the condition he calls the Thucydides' Trap has occurred at least 16 times in recorded history, and 12 of them ended by war (Allison, 2015). In this view, the new power will seek to revise the old-world order, while the new power will maintain the system that it created. The same applies to the competition between the US and China in the struggle for supremacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Allison & Blackwill, 2013; Friedberg, 2011).

To actively mainstream the global order in line with Indonesia's interests and aspirations, and participate in the contested geopolitical narrative, it is crucial to examine the strategic narrative that Indonesia used to deal with competition in the Indo-Pacific. It is critical for a variety of reasons, including identifying the following: the main motives and priorities of Indonesia's foreign policy; the process of policy formulation and implementation; the engagement and presentation of Indonesia's prestige, influence, and diplomatic initiatives in global affairs; the management of perception and communication in dealing with the international community; and the consistency and coherence of Indonesia's foreign policy in assessing the reliability and credibility of Indonesia as a global player.

The study of strategic narratives is a useful approach for examining the function of stories generated by Indonesia to characterize their foreign policy aims and actions in international relations. On the world stage, these narratives are utilized to portray Indonesia's unique identity, interests, values, priorities, and ambitions (Wicaksana & Karim, 2022). Highlighting the significance of strategic narrative as an approach does not imply that

material interests and capabilities in the Indo-Pacific as neglectable. However, none of the material pursuits undertaken by regional players are contradict the narratives established in this research. Thus, strategic narrative gives more nuance to the contest of power in the region.

The research questions are: 1) How significant is Indonesia's role under the Indo-Pacific geopolitical rivalry? 2) How Indonesia's strategic narrative on Indo-Pacific is formulated, projected, and perceived? 3) What is Indonesia's strategic narrative in each level of analysis: system narrative, policy narratives, and identity narrative?

## Literature Review

Many experts are engaged in a lively debate on geopolitical rivalry between major powers. This competition has various facets, including economics, politics, military, and technology, but one of the most essential aspects of the Indo-Pacific contestation is the contestation of strategic narratives (Byrne, 2020). The phrase Indo-Pacific refers to a state reaction to dynamic trends in both international politics and economics, as well as the building of political players in a region as a theatrical unit for strategic purposes (Brewster & Farnham, 2020). Through their book, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order*, Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle (2014) pioneered the concept of strategic narratives in the study of international relations. The concept of strategic narrative is defined as "...a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present and future of international politics to shape the behavior of domestic and international actors". As a result, strategic narrative becomes an essential part to study of international relations, where the states establish and maintain its influence both domestically to acquire legitimacy and support from the people, and also fights for national goals and ambitions when interacting with other countries (Miskimmon et al., 2014).

The Indo-Pacific concept is part of the contestation of many nations' interests, particularly in dealing with China's actions, which is seen as increasingly assertive following the election of Xi Jinping in 2012. The Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) idea which originated in Japan and was later included into Donald Trump's grand US strategy to safeguard US interests in the area. Thus, the Indo-Pacific concept appears to be associated with competition resulting from China's aspirations as regional and global power. In the context of Indo-Pacific, the study of strategic narratives mainly assumes that the regional block as a contested concept or "a mental map" that guide countries to advance their strategic interests (Medcalf, 2020). Each narratives have potential and strategic implication to the regional dynamic. While most of the study strategic narratives are dominated by the great power competition, the research aims to highlight the importance of middle power in the constructing regional conception (Barthwal-Datta & Chacko, 2020).

Indonesia has its own vision of its place in the strategically important Indo-Pacific region. Since Marty Natalegawa's address at the Centre for Strategic and International Strategies (CSIS) in Washington DC in May 2013, the phrase "Indo-Pacific" has been used in Indonesian foreign policy discourse. The term also part of the president Jokowi's Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) strategy. In his vision the Indo Pacific is described as a "a new

regional concentric circle". Recently the Indo-Pacific concept has also become common in government documents until the adoption of the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) at the regional level (Scott, 2019).

Indonesia's growing importance in the new geopolitical order in the Indo-Pacific is very reflected in some studies with several concerns. Firstly, geographically Indonesia is a maritime power located in a strategic area because it is the only country that directly borders the Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean (Shekhar, 2018), and also, the role of the South China Sea which is very strategic for China to instil its influence as a global power, as well as the role of the Caribbean Sea for the United States in the early 20th century (Kaplan, 2015).

Secondly, the role of leadership in ASEAN is very important where Indonesia has issued an initiative to produce a joint attitude among ASEAN countries and maintain its centrality through the AOIP (Anwar, 2020). Thirdly, Indonesia uses free and active foreign policy to carry out a hedging strategy, by trying to take advantage of the competition between the two parties (Mubah, 2020). Southeast Asia countries including Indonesia is no stranger to implementing hedging strategies through neutralism and non-alignment in the face of past great power competition. The aim of this strategy is to avoid being too close and too dependent on a single external force (Shambaugh, 2020).

However, none of previous research explore Indonesia's strategic narrative in the new geopolitical order in the Indo-Pacific. The research, for those reasons will focus on the role of strategic narrative under the doctrine of free-active politics in a new context. The research aims to analyse the significance of Indonesia's global political position in expanding its influence, managing expectations, and changing the discursive context in which Indonesia presents its interests. Focusing on Indonesia's critical role in constructing a shared strategic narrative in a region at the epicentre of Indo-Pacific tectonic rivalry will provide an opportunity to delve deeper into geopolitical issues by reaching the realm of interaction of Indonesia in projecting a story about the order in the new world system, encouraging it to adjust to their identities and roles in the story, and implementing policies that are in accordance with its interests (Miskimmon et al., 2014).

## **Theoretical Framework**

The significance of strategic narratives conception in foreign policy, diplomacy, and international relations is a direct response to the rise of modern information technology and hence the information society. In addition to retaining the function of rivalry in material power, political players in global politics employ communication as an essential field to play. Lawrence Friedman introduced the notion of strategic narrative in international relations in 2006 particularly in the situations of war, and it has subsequently been extensively used in research on larger topics (Miskimmon et al., 2017). Strategic narratives—a term that is now used more broadly—are essential tools that governments and other actors may employ to increase their power, control expectations, and modify the discursive environment in which they operate (Miskimmon et al., 2014).

In relations to regional order in the Indo-Pacific, nations construct strategic narratives about regional order in an effort to influence how others see them and the standards that are put on their behaviour. Regional order narratives provide normative representations that are particular to a certain geographic area and outline the ideal behaviours and responsibilities that states should embrace. They describe how states should interact with one another, the predicted power relations, and the social repercussions of these interactions (Barthwal-Datta & Chacko, 2020).

In developing and analysing strategic narratives in international relations, Miskimmon et. al. (2014) divides the analysis into three levels: 1) System Narrative, 2) Identity Narrative, and 3) Policy Narrative (Figure 1). Each section plays an important role in analysing foreign policy and understanding interactions in international relations. System Narrative refers to the level of analysis where international political actors conceptualize their understanding of the international system. Meanwhile, in the Identity Narrative type, the analysis is carried out by looking at the values, characteristics, and goals of a country in responding to certain issues. Then the last one relates to Policy Narrative, or also known as Issue Narrative to describe how a policy is taken and adjusted to achieve the desired goal (Miskimmon et al., 2014).

Moreover, this level of strategic narratives is closely linked to the formulation, projection, and reception of strategic narrative, providing a comprehensive framework for analysing state's behaviour and aspiration (Figure 1). At the formation stage, political actors base their narratives in a coherent and consistent manner on national historical and cultural experiences. While at the projection stage, strategic narratives are communicated to a wide audience through communicative activities or actions such as speeches by state leaders, announcements in the mass media, cultural diplomacy and other activities and forms of communication (such as historical interpretation, analogies, metaphors, symbols, etc.) and images that aim to promote national identity and aspirations. The reception stage is an important part because the effectiveness of strategic narratives in influencing is closely related to the interpretation and response of other actors in international relations (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2018).

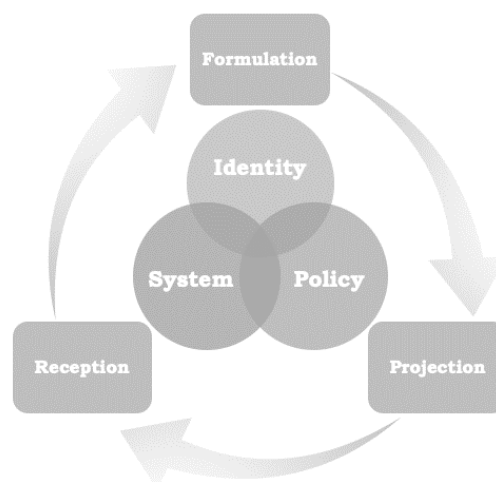


Figure 1 Level of Analysis and Cycle of Strategic Narrative

Source: Modified from Miskimmon et. al. (2018)

At the identity level, Indonesia's strategic narrative focuses on its national identity and how it perceives itself in the international community. This comprises elements that shape political discourse, such as historical experiences, cultural legacies, national beliefs, or even myths in shaping political discourse (Schmitt, 2018). In this article, this level represented by Free-Active Foreign Policy, and Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) as an identity narrative. The policy level involves specific policy goals, strategies, and actions that Indonesia adopts to pursue its national interests. In this case, Indonesia's policy narrative will focus on the adoption of AOIP in 2019 with significant initiative of Indonesia, and its continuous strategic importance in shaping regional order. Indonesia aims to maintain a stable and peaceful regional environment with ASEAN at the centre of regional order, enhance regional cooperation in inclusive manner, and contribute to the development of a rules-based international order.

The system level refers to the broader regional and global context in which Indonesia operates. It considers the existing international norms, power dynamics, and regional institutions. At this level, Indonesia seeks to project its influence and promote its policy preferences within the existing global system as middle power. It reflects how Indonesia aims to position itself strategically in the international arena and address various global, regional, and domestic challenges mainly but not limited to maritime issues.

These three levels of Indonesia's strategic narrative are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The identity level informs the values and principles that guide Indonesia's policy formulation. The system level influences the way Indonesia navigates regional and global dynamics and seeks recognition for its contributions. The policy level reflects how Indonesia's identity and understanding of the global system are translated into concrete policy actions. It must be cohesive in order to have an influence on creating regional order (Van Noort, 2017).

Furthermore, the projection, formulation, and reception of Indonesia's strategic narrative are closely tied to these levels. Formulation refers to the process of developing policies and strategies based on the country's identity and understanding of the system. Projection involves the communication of Indonesia's identity, policy goals, and aspirations to external audiences. Reception relates to how other countries and international actors perceive and acknowledge Indonesia's role, contributions, and policy positions. It involves adoption, accommodation or opposition to the narratives (Wilkins & Kim, 2020). It is important to see these narratives as a cyclical process where reception by international community can be considered as an input for the formulation.

## **Research Method**

The method that will be used in this research is descriptive qualitative with data collection mainly using document studies. Descriptive study defined as an "attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programme, or provides information about... attitudes towards an issue" (Kumar, 2018). The document study was conducted by compiling official statements from the Presidential Speech, and the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs in response to the Indo-Pacific issue and a number of incidents related to rising tensions between the US and China. This stage is useful for exploring strategic narratives in the formation and projection stages. The research will also explore perspectives from internal parties at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, international relations experts from think-tanks, journalists and/or experts who are concerned about foreign policy and Indo-Pacific issues, as well as from external parties namely from major embassies both from related parties namely the US, China and also Australia to deepen perspectives, especially at the reception stage in Indonesia's strategic narrative. The collected data will then be categorized into three levels of strategic narrative analysis, namely: system narrative to obtain Indonesia's conception of the ideal system and international relations order, then identity narrative conception of the ideal role of Indonesia in the narrative system, and policy narratives by exploring strategic steps has been done to achieve these goals and ideals.

## **Analysis**

### **Identity Narrative: Free-Active Foreign Policy, and Global Maritime Fulcrum**

#### *Free-Active Foreign Policy*

To explore the narrative of Indonesian identity in a more systematic way, the research divides the discussion into two main parts, namely: Free-Active foreign policy, and the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF). Free-active politics is placed in the identity narrative because it emphasizes more as a doctrine, principle, strict standard or worldview than as a more implementable thing such as policy, strategy, or ideology in carrying out foreign policy (Shekhar, 2018).

Historically, free-active politics has served as a strategic narrative for independence and sovereignty, which serves to escape the memory of colonial times and international subordination. The genesis of this strategic narrative - which in turn provided an ideal platform for "free and active foreign policy principle" can be found in the Preamble of the Indonesian Constitution 1945 which says that "independence is the right of all nations and thus colonialism in the world must be abolished". The free-active foreign policy also derived from the preamble that says "participate in maintaining the world order based on freedom, eternal peace and social justice". During the cold war, free-active politics was also a form of Indonesia's strategic perception to the then world order in the midst of the bipolarity of international relations at that time, as well as a response for polarization and political vulnerability in the country.

The principles of Free-Active foreign policy were adopted since 1948 where the Vice-President Hatta president stated his vision a session of the Working Group of the Central National Committee of Indonesia (KNPI), the forerunner of the Indonesian Parliament, which later published under the title *Mendayung Antara Dua Karang* or - roughly translated into - rowing between two rocks. In his statement he argues that "...we must remain the subject



who reserves the right to decide our own destiny and fight for our own goal, which is independence for the whole of Indonesia.” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, n.d.). The Hatta’s vision was a doctrine on how Indonesia has to strategically position itself amidst the ideological rivalry at the time. The essence of principle of Free-Active doctrine emphasizes: 1) Free: being independent in making decision based on national interest and not being dictated by foreign power 2) Active: to participate and contribute to international endeavour in maintaining world peace and security. In sum, free-active doctrine is political stance which does not take side of any political block or group, that is non-block. However, free-active is not neutrality. Rather, it is maintaining independence and strategic autonomy in making decision to serve the national interest (Bao, 2023; Sukma, 1995).

In practice, the free-active policy tries to accommodate every foreign policy of each era, as long as it does not abandon its main principle of not entering into alliances and defense pacts with any party. Including the tendency of President Soekarno’s policies that tend to lean towards the radicalization and anti-neo-colonialism sentiment, or the era of President Soeharto’s leadership which was pro-west and overemphasized on economic development (Sukma, 1995). As an identity narrative, free-active foreign policy has succeeded in positioning it in the central role of global leadership of countries in Asia and Africa during the Cold-War era with the notable initiative in Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

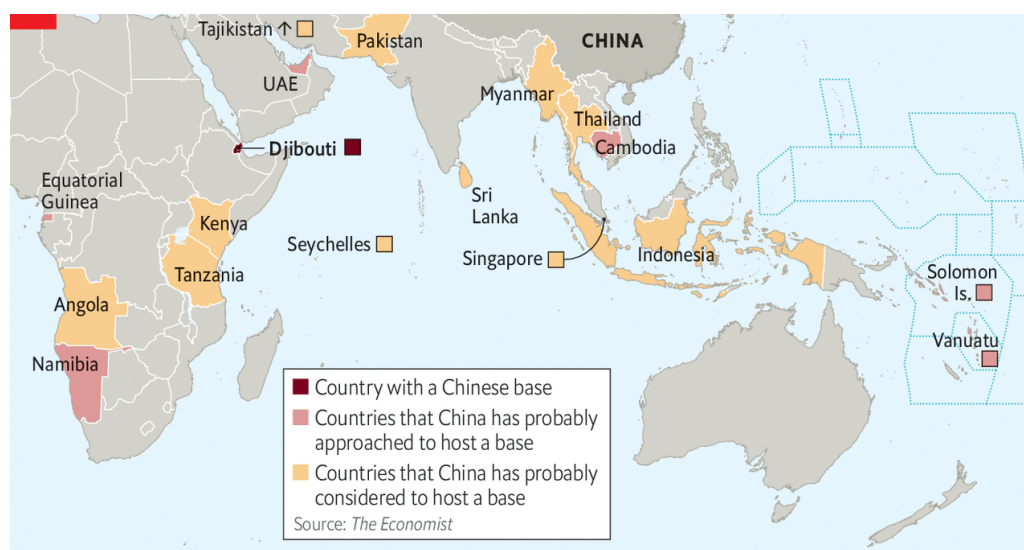


Figure 2 Projection of China’s Military Base

Source: “Reinventing the Indo-Pacific”, 2023

In the context of the current great power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific, the narrative has again found its relevance. Indonesia tries to create the new non-aligned perspective especially among ASEAN member countries and another middle power in the region. The rising tensions between the United States and China certainly involves a tug of war for influence between the two (Bao, 2023). In this context, Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi, for

example, felt the need to emphasize her position in the rivalry- It was triggered by the circulation of the annual report from the Department of Defense entitled the Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020 which stated that Indonesia was one which is considered a military logistics base by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) (Figure 2). Marsudi in her press conference stated that "I want to emphasize that, in accordance with the lines and principles of Indonesian foreign policy, Indonesian territory cannot and will not be used as a military facility base for any country." (Sutrisno, 2020).

The accusations from the United States in the report are certainly unfounded, considering that Indonesia is a founder and has leadership roots in the Non-Align Movement. This also confirms the view of Kurt Campbell, coordinator of Indo-Pacific affairs at the National Security Council (NSC) that Indonesia is "the countries most important to the United States but least understood." (Bland, 2021).

### *Global Maritime Fulcrum*

Another identity narrative that is also important to Indonesia's view on the Indo-Pacific is President Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) doctrine regarding the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) which emphasizes Indonesia as an important power in both the Indian and Pacific Oceans (Agastia & Perwita, 2015). This doctrine became an important policy basis in Jokowi's first period (2014-2019) with several important pillars in it, namely culture, resources, infrastructure, diplomacy, and defense. In his inauguration speech as President on October 20, 2014, Jokowi said "We have far too long turned our back on the seas, the oceans, the straits, and the bays. It's time to restore everything so that "jalesveva jayamahe" (in the sea we will triumph)." (Widodo, 2014). The narrative emphasizes Indonesia's aspirations as an Indo-Pacific power which is geographically an archipelagic country that stretches between two oceans (Medcalf, 2014).

His vision of the GMF was conveyed to world leaders for the first time at the 9<sup>th</sup> East Asian Summit meeting, November 2014. As a narrative identity, Jokowi's doctrine is strong enough to become the basis for focusing on national policies, and at the same time, becoming a neutral point that brings together the interests of the great powers in the world. The GMF dimension construed in three folds: 1) Sovereignty dimension over its territorial waters and its natural resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ); 2) The security dimension related its strategic location at the centre of maritime dynamics and contestation of the great power in the region; 3) Related to economic dimension due its natural resources potentials, and strategic location as major international trade route (Djumala, 2015).

The focus on maritime infrastructure, for example, is the right step to implement a hedging strategy against China through the BRI program. Qiu Xinli, spokesperson of the Embassy of the Republic of China in Jakarta states in his article on the Jakarta Post: "It is evident that bilateral cooperation within the BRI and GMF creates no "trap", but only unlimited opportunities" (Xinli, 2019).

At the same time, the United States also sees it as an opportunity to project its Indo-Pacific vision. US Secretary of Defense James Mattis during his visit to Indonesia in 2018 called the doctrine a point of maritime security cooperation, calling it the "maritime fulcrum of the Indo-Pacific area" (Chan, 2018). From the two statements and the agendas of the two countries, in viewing the GMF, it can be seen that Indonesia's maritime narrative is not only useful for emphasizing its geographical position, but also allows Indonesia's hedging strategy, where China places more emphasis on maritime connectivity and economy, while the US emphasizes on maritime security cooperation.

The significant role of GMF as strategic narrative also, make Jakarta able to manage the Indian Ocean. Indonesia hosted the first Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Summit in 2017, and with its initiative the organization produce significant achievements by producing the "Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action". In 2018, Indonesia also hosted the 5<sup>th</sup> Our Ocean Conference, and the Indonesia-Africa Maritime Dialogue.

Although it has strategic value in the view of the two great powers, both the United States and China, and other middle and small powers in the region, however as an identity narrative, the doctrine did not become much of a foothold in the second period of Jokowi Presidency. In his inauguration speech, President Jokowi did not mention the word maritime. Likewise, in her foreign policy priority speech, Marsudi focused on the policies she called "4+1", namely trade and investment, citizen protection, sovereignty, regional and global leadership, and diplomatic infrastructure (Laksamana, 2019).

Apart from Jokowi's lack of enthusiasm for GMF, the doctrine does have a number of shortcomings in its implementation, especially in the context of competition in the Indo-Pacific. As a doctrine that has a geopolitical dimension, GMF in practice places more emphasis on geoeconomics aspects such as the interest in infrastructure financing and investment in the maritime sectors (Salim & Sundaryani, 2017). Thus, the GMF narrative is more about promoting cooperation rather than conflict and rivalry, as President Jokowi put it in his speech the 13<sup>th</sup> EAS Summit, November 2018: "We need to maintain peaceful and security in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. It is not about struggling for natural resources, regional disputes, and maritime supremacy." (Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018).

### **Policy Narrative: ASEAN Centrality, Inclusivity and Cooperation**

Indonesia's emphasis in the policy narrative in the Indo-Pacific is primarily centred on the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP), in contrast to the identity narrative, which emphasizes domestic assets. Several reasons why the AOIP is part of Indonesia's policy narrative for the Indo-Pacific, among others, first, Indonesia is the initiator of the AOIP, where the big ideas and initial drafts were mostly adopted from proposals made by Indonesian diplomats. Second, Indonesia does not have a specific national strategy or document of cross-sectoral agreement among relevant ministries that discusses the Indo-Pacific. Third, Indonesia's Indo-Pacific concept from the beginning was intended to respond to challenges at the regional level, and put more emphasis on the narrative of inclusiveness and regional cooperation through ASEAN centrality.

Before being officially adopted as an AOIP document by the leaders at the 34th ASEAN Summit in 2019, Indonesia had introduced the need for guidelines and a common perspective for ASEAN to take its stand in the region. Indonesia's perspective on the Indo-Pacific known as "The Indo-Pacific Cooperation Concept" was introduced at the 13<sup>th</sup> EAS meeting in Singapore. In his speech at the Plenary Session at the Suntec Convention Centre, Singapore on November 15<sup>th</sup> 2018, President Jokowi used the term Indo-Pacific to refer to the Pacific and Indian Oceans as a "single geostrategic theatre" (Scott, 2019; Tham, 2018).

According President Jokowi, at the meeting, Indonesia and ASEAN countries built the Indo-Pacific concept that emphasized ASEAN Centrality, and hoped that consultations would continue at a joint forum between ASEAN and its partner countries in the EAS. In his view, this concept will benefit all parties by offering several main principles such as "cooperation, – instead of rivalry, inclusiveness, transparency and openness as well as respect for international law." (Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018). He also emphasizes some area of cooperation namely maritime cooperation including maritime security, infrastructure connectivity for economic development, and pushing the agenda of sustainable development.

By ASEAN centrality means that President Jokowi tries to bring the existing mechanism in the regional architecture where ASEAN in its core can build strategic trust and cooperation between its member and the dialogue partners in the region. In the 15<sup>th</sup> EAS Summit 2020, President Jokowi said "As a dialogue forum at the level of state leaders, EAS must continue to be used to build strategic trust to strengthen cooperation. EAS's capital is very large. A total of 5 EAS members currently sits on the UN Security Council, 8 EAS members are members of the G20. EAS also represents more than 54 percent of the world's population and 58 percent of world GDP." (Ministry of State Secretariat, 2020). The ASEAN Centrality emphasized by Indonesia to claim strategic goals: to maintain ASEAN members' unified action against the great power, and to strengthen ASEAN's leadership in the region through mechanisms built into the existing regional architecture, with ASEAN in the centre (Indraswari, 2022).

### **System Narrative: Maintaining Order as a Middle Power**

The conception of Indonesia in the narrative of the system that it wants to build in the Indo-Pacific is very different from the Indo-Pacific strategy imagined by the Quad countries. In the world geopolitical shift where Indonesia is in its tectonic vortex, Indonesia perceives its role as a middle power capable of directing the course of international relations according to its interests. In this case, Indonesia has also participated in constructing the Indo-Pacific which in Rory Medcalf's (2020) terms is a "mental map" that becomes a reference in relations between countries in the region (Medcalf, 2020).

Indonesia's role as a middle power in navigating and constructing the Indo-Pacific system has already emerged in the view of the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) government at the end of his term. among the surrounding Indo-Pacific powers. Indonesia is also the largest archipelagic country which is the most strategic sea route connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Seeing the potential for conflict in the Indo-Pacific, Indonesia offers the Indo-

Pacific Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, a concept that is considered visible if you look at the successful implementation of the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) at the ASEAN level, and the Bali Principles on the Principles for Mutually Beneficial Relations agreed at the East Asia Summit in 2011 (Jemadu & Lantang, 2021; Natalegawa, 2013; Tham, 2018).

In this view, Indonesia carries out its role as a middle power which specifically emphasizes positioning as a "regional leader" in ASEAN as well as a "bridge-builder" in mitigating conflicts in the region (Agastia, 2020). In his statement Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa stated "Indo-Pacific requires, therefore, modalities to build mutual trust and confidence. To substitute an all too often vicious cycle of tensions with a virtuous cycle of trust and confidence-building." (Natalegawa, 2013).

Indonesia's role in carrying out its role as a middle power is also stated in the visions and missions of President Jokowi for the first period. The document states "We will enhance the global role through middle-power diplomacy that places Indonesia as a regional power with selective global engagement, giving priority to issues directly related to the interests of the nation and Indonesian people." (Widodo, 2014). Although it is widely perceived that it emphasizes a domestic-oriented and nationalistic foreign policy (Connelly, 2014), the role of middle power strategically remains to be carried out actively in relations international including its foreign policy priority in the UN and the ASEAN (Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015).

The role of middle power carried out by the Indonesian government is very effective in responses to the competitive narrative between China's BRI and QUAD Countries' FOIP. Using the non-align values of the independent foreign policy and the GMF as its identity narrative, Indonesia plays its middle power to gain benefit from the rivalry by emphasizing cooperation in sectors that focus on its own agenda and interest (Pratiwi et al., 2021).

The narrative emphasized by Indonesia about the importance of multilateralism, as well as a rule-based world order is also a rational thing to emphasize. The ASEAN-led mechanism is the anchor of efforts to maintain a stable, safe and prosperous region. Therefore, Indonesia has never been separated from ASEAN as the centre of its foreign policy concentric circle. Indonesia's role will be much more impactful to promote its interests by maintaining the regional architecture that has been built, such as ARF (1994), EAS (2005), and ADMM Plus (2010). Despite the fact that the structures inside the organization created on the basis of the ASEAN framework lack coercive authority, they are nonetheless capable of fostering constructive consultation and debate in order to reduce rivalry and conflict (de Castro, 2022).

### **Narratives Formulation and Projection**

In formulating the Indo-Pacific narrative, Indonesia's view is very dynamic because it is a direct response to the development of the narrative of the great powers, rather than developing it from the outset based on internal needs. The formulation of Indonesia's narrative on the Indo-Pacific is divided into two major stages, namely during the SBY

administration, when Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marty Natalegawa offered the big concept of the Indo-Pacific Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (2013), and during the Jokowi administration through the Indo-Pacific Cooperation Concept (Scott, 2019).

The initiative of Natalegawa in 2013 for example, was a response to the Indo-Pacific concept to the escalation that occurred in East Asia and the South China Sea which, according to him, led to a “trust deficit” (Natalegawa, 2013). Some developments that have attracted attention include the development of the Indo-Pacific concept which was brought up by Shinzo Abe before the Indian Parliament in 2007 after the establishment of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Rossiter, 2018). Indonesia’s concerns about the Indo-Pacific are more nuanced as a result of China’s alleged aggression in the South China Sea since 2010, ASEAN leaders’ inability to issue a common communiqué in 2012, and the US’s strategic rebalance in Asia in 2011.

In subsequent developments, the Indo-Pacific concept is not included in the terms commonly used in the Indonesian narrative, especially after the 2014 leadership succession. President Jokowi tries to rediscover the uniqueness of Indonesia's foreign policy through the narrative of Indonesia's rise as a world maritime power, a more bilateral approach, and orientation. policy towards domestic interests, or in Rizal Sukma’s term as his foreign policy advisor as a post-ASEAN foreign policy (Rosyidin & Pattipeilohy, 2020; Sukma, 2009).

The use of the term Indo-Pacific in the Indonesian narrative began to be re-projected in international forums by the Jokowi government after the escalation of the great power conflict in security terminology in the region as a reaction to China’s aggressiveness in early 2017 to 2018. Nevertheless, the contestation of the Indo-Pacific concept began when Japan revived the Indo-Pacific concept in Shinzo Abe’s security policy with the term Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) in August 2016 (Rossiter, 2018). Like a tit for tat, Australia, which is also a member of QUAD, also issued a similar statement in November of the same year in the Foreign Policy White Paper. In December, the United States released a National Security Strategy document that identified China as a threat to its interests. The escalation of the great power conflict was also reflected in a statement by US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in October 2017, and officially by President Donald Trump himself in November 2017 during his visit to Asia. More aggressively in mid-2018, the US even changed the US Pacific Command to the Indo-Pacific Command (Weatherbee, 2019).

Efforts to draw Indonesia into the vortex of conflict in the Indo Pacific were also seen in the bilateral meeting of the Minister of Defense with the United States Jim Mattis during a visit to Jakarta in January 2018, and also in the bilateral meeting of Retno Marsudi with the Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi in February. With the premise of Indonesia’s free and active politics, Indonesia aims to strike a balance between the two extremes of world political polarization and presents its own conception that emphasizes inclusivity and collaboration, with ASEAN serving as the anchor (Suryadinata, 2018).

The projection of the Indo-Pacific concept began to be voiced by Marsudi on January 11, 2018 during her speech before the UNGA while campaigning for Indonesia's position for the UNSC seat. “...together with ASEAN, Indonesia will continue to contribute in advancing strong positive cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, instead of a cooperation based on suspicion or

worse, perception of threat.” Marsudi gave a more conceptual presentation of Indonesia's version of the Indo-Pacific view at a meeting of Ministers at the East Asian Summit (EAS) in Singapore in August 2018 (Weatherbee, 2019).

### **Narrative Reception**

The success of Indonesia in pushing the Indo-Pacific idea at the ASEAN level is a crucial step toward developing a unified and coherent narrative among Southeast Asian countries to challenge the interests of major regional players. However, ASEAN nations' acceptance of the AOIP must be viewed as a collective strategic narrative full of compromises among ASEAN countries, and it must, of course, be reacted to by other countries having an interest in these countries, both collectively and individually.

The process of adopting the AOIP itself is quite short for an organization whose decisions are reached by “consultation and consensus”. When dealing with large countries, many concessions must be made among the ten ASEAN countries, which have distinct interests, objectives, and levels of closeness with the great powers. As the result, the concise document covers just broad concepts and accomplishments that can be agreed upon by all parties. However, more work must be expended in describing and developing measurable and specific recommendations. The ASEAN 2023 Chairmanship of Indonesia aims to mainstream this issue by creating the ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum, and implementing AOIP in more tangible projects and priority agenda (ASEAN Secretariat, 2023).

Singapore's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan told parliament, for example, to confirm this. He emphasized the importance of ASEAN Centrality for independence in foreign policy making, but he was realistic enough to say that the AOIP is a “living document” that will continue to be refined and updated. Furthermore, he also mentioned “The Outlook will not stop strategic forces from pulling individual ASEAN Member States in different directions.” (Balakrishnan, 2022).

One of the most visible differences in policy direction in responding to AOIP among ASEAN countries is between Indonesia and Vietnam. Indonesia is more constructive by emphasizing its Indo-Pacific narrative on ASEAN Centrality, while Vietnam has a more realistic view of balance of power by continuing to try to be involved, though not fully involved, in other Indo-Pacific forums outside ASEAN. Differences in seeing China's perceived threat and aggressiveness in the South China Sea are the main factors in Vietnam's attitude to pursuing its own security interests and economic agenda rather than promoting agendas and agreements in the AOIP (Hoang, 2021a).

Despite the different conceptions among ASEAN countries themselves regarding the implementation of the agreement in the AOIP, its acceptance among the Quad countries is generally quite positive. This can be seen from the joint statement which shows support for the importance of ASEAN's centrality. In a joint statement released after the Quad countries meeting in March 2021, for example, it was stated “We commit to work together and with a range of partners. We reaffirm our strong support for ASEAN's unity and centrality and for ASEAN's Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, and we underscore our dedication towards working

with ASEAN and its member states—the heart of the Indo-Pacific region—in practical and inclusive ways.” (The White House, 2021a)

However, the statement of the importance of ASEAN centrality by the Quad leaders still needs concrete and substantive work steps. The shift in US leadership from Donald Trump to Joe Biden brings new hope for approaches to regional organizations such as ASEAN. In the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States document released in February 2022 it is stated that “The United States also welcomes a strong and independent ASEAN that leads in Southeast Asia. We endorse ASEAN centrality and support ASEAN in its efforts to deliver sustainable solutions to the region's most pressing challenges.” (The White House, 2022b).

This new approach is also accompanied by investment commitments in priority areas such as strengthening health resilience, maritime-related cooperation, connectivity and improving people-to-people relations. The commitment to ASEAN centrality is also demonstrated by emphasizing the importance of the U.S.-ASEAN Summit, East Asian Summit and ASEAN Regional Forum, and essentially increasing the "diplomatic presence" in the Southeast Asian region (The White House, 2022b). In general, the Biden administration's commitment to ASEAN Centrality can be in several dimensions such as open support for the AOIP, commitment to collective ASEAN meetings, and visits by US officials to ASEAN-related forums such as EAS, ARF, and ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus) including a visit to Indonesia (The White House, 2022a).

However, the US approach is still too focused on security issues and has not yet addressed economic needs, which are currently still dominated by China with its BRI. The commitment through economic cooperation that many parties have been waiting for at the U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit, namely, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) was launched, although not in too much detail (Li, 2022).

A positive reception was also shown by Australia. Through Will Nankervis, Australian Ambassador to ASEAN on 20 September 2021, said in his official statement “Australia is a strong supporter of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. We are committed to the principles in the Outlook, including ASEAN centrality, openness, transparency, inclusivity, good governance, a rules-based framework and respect for sovereignty and international law.” Regarding the AUKUS collaboration, Australia also stated “This new agreement does not change Australia’s commitment to ASEAN nor our ongoing support for the ASEAN-led regional architecture.” (Nankervis, 2021).

The closeness of the vision on the Indo-Pacific can be seen in India's commitments both bilaterally to Indonesia and commitment to ASEAN centrality. India and Indonesia are intensively committed to finding a common thread between India's Act East Policy and Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR), with the Indonesian Ocean Policy and Indonesia's Global Maritime Fulcrum Vision, while emphasizing the importance of the ASEAN centrality and unity. Moreover, the Indonesian leadership also made an important step in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) with the adoption of the Jakarta Concord and Plan of Action at the IORA Summit, March 2017 (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2018). Regarding AOIP, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the 18th India-ASEAN Summit, October 2021 that the AOIP and India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) share



relevant fundamental principles in promoting peace and cooperation.” (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2018).

In contrast to the Indo-Pacific conception adopted by Japan, which from the beginning initiated the formation of the FOIP to counter perceptions of China's aggressiveness, ASEAN and the strategic narrative in the conception introduced by Indonesia emphasized the inclusiveness of the Indo-Pacific, where China and other major powers were involved in the formation of a region that safe, stable and prosperous. Therefore, ASEAN's reception of the concept is more considered than the other way around (Choong, 2020). Japan in its official statement supports the adoption of AOIP and supports cooperation and synergy in priority areas (MoFA, 2021).

Different from the fairly good reception among the Quad countries, China has difficulty accepting the strategic narrative of the Indonesian and ASEAN conceptions of the Indo-Pacific. Both Chinese leaders and scholars are reluctant to speak openly about the AOIP concept, this is certainly confusing for ASEAN even though from the beginning it was assured that the Indo-Pacific view it adopted was different from the conception adopted by the Quad countries. The Indo-Pacific view that is inclusive and emphasizes cooperation is not enough to convince China because the term is more widely perceived by the US and its allies to exclude it (Chongkittavorn, 2019; Ho, 2019). It is only recently that positive signals from China have emerged, although not straight forward and explicit, namely with efforts to upgrade relations between ASEAN and China in the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in the 24th ASEAN-China summit in October 2021 (Hoang, 2021b). The official statement regarding China's attitude toward AOIP was more explicitly contained in the joint statement issued by ASEAN and China at the Special Summit commemorating the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations on 22 November 2021 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021), and confirmed in the PRC's Position Paper on Supporting ASEAN Centrality in the Evolving Regional Architecture on August 4, 2022 (MoFA of PRC, 2022a). More specifically, China's commitment to the GMF and AOIP discussed in a joint declaration by Indonesia and China during the KTT G20 summit on November 16, 2022 in Bali (MoFA of PRC, 2022b).

## Conclusions

Strategic narrative plays an important role in international relations especially in the Indo-Pacific era. As an ideational construction in geopolitics and geo-economics, where there is no objective reality, the focus of the strategic narrative study helps to clarify the contestation of power, interests, as well as a picture of the ideal relationship and order in relations between countries in the region. Indonesia, which by definition is in the middle between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, has interests and aspirations in facing the challenge of great power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific which is reflected in its strategic narrative.

In the competition in constructing the Indo-Pacific, Indonesia presents a narrative of identity as a country that holds Free-Active principles in positioning itself in the competition of great powers, also affirms its geopolitics as GMF. At the policy narrative level, Indonesia

emphasizes the importance of AOIP where ASEAN centrality, and the ASEAN-led mechanism are the policy anchors, and hold the principles of inclusiveness and cooperation to create a stable, safe, and prosperous region. This is in accordance with the EAS agreement where ASEAN member countries have a dialogue with their strategic partners. Then at the level of the narrative system, Indonesia positions itself as a middle power capable of being a bridge for dialogue between countries as well as a leader at the ASEAN regional level. Indonesia also plays the role of middle power for hedging strategies, encouraging rule-based orders, and multilateralism.

Although the formulation seemed less effective at the beginning of Jokowi's leadership, the development of the Indo-Pacific encouraged Indonesia to take a role in developing its own conception in the region. A number of forums have begun to be used as an arena to project Indonesia's views on the Indo-Pacific, especially the EAS since 2018. This move so far reflects the good reception, especially among QUAD countries, but has experienced little resistance from China, which has been antipathy to the Indo-Pacific concept since the beginning. To sum up, Indonesia as middle power plays its role to provide common strategic narrative that potential as an organizing principle that lessen rivalry, and an agenda setter for cooperative behaviours. The kind of narrative that great power fails to provide.

Understanding these narratives allows policymakers and analysts to develop more effective plans and responses to Indonesia's actions and behaviour. It enables a more informed approach to dealing with Indonesia on various topics by providing a broader overview of the country's historical, cultural, and political background. Being fully aware of these narratives, rather than relying on simplistic assumptions, raises the prospect of more constructive and fruitful collaboration, helping to build trust, and foster long-term partnerships.

## **Acknowledgment**

We would like to convey our appreciation and gratitude to Research Center of the LSPR Institute of Communication and Business for their generous financing and assistance for this research endeavor.

## **About The Authors**

Budi Riyanto is a lecturer of International Relations studies at the Department of Communication, Faculty of Communication, LSPR Institute of Communication and Business, Jakarta. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. program in International Relations at the University of International Business and Economics (UIBE) in Beijing and has been awarded the ASEAN-China Young Leaders Scholarship (ACYLS) 2022. His research interest among others is in the communication aspect of International Relations, including public diplomacy and strategic narratives.

Dr. Darmansjah Djumala is a doctoral program lecturer in International Relations at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at Padjadjaran University (Unpad), Bandung. He is currently a member of the Expert Council for Foreign Relations Strategy at the Pancasila Ideology Development Agency (BPIP). He served as Indonesia's Ambassador to Austria, Slovenia, and the United Nations in Vienna, having previously served as Indonesia's Ambassador to Poland. His research interest is related to Indonesian diplomacy and foreign policy, and international organizations.

Youzhi Tan, Ph.D. is a Professor of International Relations at the University of International Business and Economics (UIBE), Beijing. He currently serves as Vice Dean of the Institute of National Security and Governance, UIBE. He received his Ph.D. from Peking University in 2008. He is particularly interested in cyberspace governance, public diplomacy, non-traditional security, and international political economy.

## References

- Agastia, I. G. B. D. (2020). Understanding Indonesia's role in the 'ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific': A role theory approach. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*, 7(3), 293–305. <https://doi.org/10.1002/APP5.308>
- Allison, G. (2015, September 24). The Thucydides trap: Are U. S. and China headed for war? *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/>
- Allison, G., & Blackwill, R. (2013, March 5). Interview: Lee Kuan Yew on the future of U.S.-China relations. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/03/interview-lee-kuan-yew-on-the-future-of-us-china-relations/273657/>
- Anwar, D. F. (2020). Indonesia and the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific. *International Affairs*, 96(1), 111–129. <https://doi.org/10.1093/IA/IIZ223>
- ASEAN Secretariat. (2021, November 21). *Joint Statement of the ASEAN-China Special Summit to Commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations: Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Peace, Security and Sustainable Development*. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Joint-Statement-30th-Anniversary-of-ASEAN-China-Dialogue-Relations-Final.pdf>
- ASEAN Secretariat. (2023, May 11). *Chairman's Statement of the 42<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN Summit Labuan Bajo, Indonesia, 10-11 MAY 2023*. <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/FINAL-Chairmans-Statement-42nd-ASEAN-Summit-1.pdf>
- Australian Department of Defence. (2013). *Defence White Paper 2013*.
- Agastia, I. G. B. D., & Perwita, A. A. B. (2015). Jokowi's Maritime Axis: Change and continuity of Indonesia's role in Indo-Pacific. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 3(1), 32–41. <https://doi.org/10.21512/JAS.V3I1.751>

- Balakrishnan, V. (2022, May 9). Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan's Written Reply to Parliamentary Question on Singapore's Abstention on the UN General Assembly Vote to Suspend Russia's Membership in the HRC. <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/Newsroom/Press-Statements-Transcripts-and-Photos/2022/05/20220509HRCPO>
- Bao, G. (2023). China-US strategic competition and Indonesia's status anxiety. *East Asian Affairs*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.1142/S2737557922500115>
- Barthwal-Datta, M., & Chacko, P. (2020). The politics of strategic narratives of regional order in the Indo-Pacific: Free, open, prosperous, inclusive? *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 74(3), 244–263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2020.1744517>
- Bland, B. (2021, December 12). In U.S.-China competition, Indonesia is key. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/12/opinion/indonesia-us-jokowi-biden.html?smid=tw-nytopinion&smtyp=cur>
- Brands, H., & Gaddis, J. L. (2021). A New Cold War: America, China, and the echoes of history. *Foreign Affairs*, November-December, 10–20. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-10-19/new-cold-war>
- Brewster, D., & Farnham, C. (2020). The Indo-Pacific: From concept to contest. *Security Challenges*, 16(3), 2–4. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26924331>
- Byrne, C. (2020). Securing the “Rules-Based Order” in the Indo-Pacific: The significance of strategic narrative. *Security Challenges*, 16(3), 10–15. <https://doi.org/10.2307/26924333>
- Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia. (2015, January 8). *Bantah Tarik Diri dari Internasional, Menlu: Indonesia Terus Mainkan Peran Middle Power*. <https://setkab.go.id/bantah-tarik-dari-dari-internasional-menlu-indonesia-terus-mainkan-peran-middle-power/>
- Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia. (2018, November 15). *Indo-Pacific Cooperation Concept Focuses on Cooperation, Not Rivalry: President Jokowi*. <https://setkab.go.id/en/indo-pacific-cooperation-concept-focuses-on-cooperation-not-rivalry-president-jokowi/>
- Chan, F. (2018, January 23). US to work with Indonesia on maritime security, counter-terrorism. *The Straits Times*. <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/us-to-work-with-indonesia-on-maritime-security-counter-terrorism>
- Chongkittavorn, K. (2019, September 24). Appraising China's stance on the AOIP. *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1756964/appraising-chinas-stance-on-the-aoip>
- Choong, W. (2020). Japan's Indo-Pacific strategy in Southeast Asia: Floundering, not foundering. *ISEAS Yousuf Ishak Institute*, (40). [https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2020\\_40.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ISEAS_Perspective_2020_40.pdf)
- Connelly, A. L. (2014). *Indonesian Foreign Policy under President Jokowi*. Lowy Institute for International Policy.

- de Castro, R. C. (2022). ASEAN in search of a common strategy in the Indo-Pacific. In B. J. Cannon & K. Hakata (Eds.), *Indo-Pacific Strategies* (pp. 139–156). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003206934-8>
- Djumala, D. (2015, February 9). Diplomacy for maritime fulcrum. *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/02/09/diplomacy-maritime-fulcrum.html>
- Friedberg, A. L. (2011). *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*. New York: WW Norton & Company.
- Ho, B. T. E. (2019). *How China Sees the Indo-Pacific: What Next After AOIP?* RSIS Commentaries, No. 254). Singapore: Nanyang Technological University. <https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/handle/10356/136686>
- Hoang, T. H. (2021a). ASEAN Navigates between Indo-Pacific Polemics and Potentials. *Perspective, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, 49(2021). <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2021-49-asean-navigates-between-indo-pacific-polemics-and-potentials-by-hoang-thi-ha/>
- Hoang, T. H. (2021b). The ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: What's in a Name? *Perspective, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, 157(2021). [https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2021\\_157.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ISEAS_Perspective_2021_157.pdf)
- Ministry of Communications and Informatics of the Republic of Indonesia. (2023, May 23). *Indonesia Underscores ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) Importance - ASEAN Indonesia 2023*. <https://asean2023.id/en/news/indonesia-underscores-asean-outlook-on-indo-pacific-aoip-importance>
- Indraswari, R. (2022). ASEAN centrality: Comparative case study of Indonesia leadership. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 10(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.21512/JAS.V10I1.7906>
- Jemadu, A., & Lantang, F. (2021). Contested interpretations of Indonesia's international leadership in the foreign policy of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Joko Widodo. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 9(2), 199–217. <https://doi.org/10.21512/JAS.V9I2.7478>
- Kaplan, R. D. (2015). *Asia's cauldron: The South China Sea and the end of a stable Pacific*. Random House Trade Paperbacks.
- Kumar, R. (2018). *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Laksamana, E. (2019, November 8). Indonesia as “Global Maritime Fulcrum”: A post-mortem analysis. *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*. <https://amti.csis.org/indonesia-as-global-maritime-fulcrum-a-post-mortem-analysis/>
- Li, X. (2022, May 14). Is the Biden administration serious about ‘ASEAN Centrality’? *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/05/is-the-biden-administration-serious-about-asean-centrality/>

- Medcalf, R. (2014, October 21). Jokowi's Maritime Inaugural Address. *The Interpreter*. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/jokowi-s-maritime-inaugural-address>
- Medcalf, R. (2018). Australia's foreign Policy White Paper: Navigating uncertainty in the Indo-Pacific. *Security Challenges*, 14(1), 33–39.
- Medcalf, R. (2020). *Contest for the Indo-Pacific: Why China won't Map the Future*. Black Inc.
- Ministry of External Affairs of India. (2018, May 30). *Shared Vision of India-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*. [https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29933/Shared\\_Vision\\_of\\_IndiaIndonesia\\_Maritime\\_Cooperation\\_in\\_the\\_IndoPacific](https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29933/Shared_Vision_of_IndiaIndonesia_Maritime_Cooperation_in_the_IndoPacific)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. (n.d.). *Indonesia's Foreign Policy*. [https://kemlu.go.id/washington/en/pages/kebijakan\\_luar\\_negeri\\_ri/716/etc-menu](https://kemlu.go.id/washington/en/pages/kebijakan_luar_negeri_ri/716/etc-menu)
- Ministry of State Secretariat. (2020, November 14). *Presiden: KTT Asia Timur Harus Tingkatkan Ketahanan Kesehatan dan Stabilitas Kawasan*. [https://setneg.go.id/baca/index/presiden\\_ktt\\_asia\\_timur\\_harus\\_tingkatkan\\_ketahanan\\_kesehatan\\_dan\\_stabilitas\\_kawasan](https://setneg.go.id/baca/index/presiden_ktt_asia_timur_harus_tingkatkan_ketahanan_kesehatan_dan_stabilitas_kawasan)
- Miskimmon, A., O'Loughlin, B., & Roselle, L. (2018). Strategic narrative: 21<sup>st</sup> century diplomatic statecraft. *Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior*, 113.
- Miskimmon, A., O'Loughlin, B., & Roselle, L. (2014). *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order*. Routledge.
- Miskimmon, A., O'Loughlin, B., & Roselle, L. (2017). *Forging the World: Strategic Narratives and International Relations*. University of Michigan Press.
- MoFA of Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). (2022, December 16). *National Security Strategy of Japan*.
- MoFA of Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan). (2021). *Progress Report on Japan's Cooperation for the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100253488.pdf>
- MoFA of PRC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China). (2022a, August 4). *Position Paper of the People's Republic of China on Supporting ASEAN Centrality in the Evolving Regional Architecture*. [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/wjdt\\_665385/2649\\_665393/202208/t20220804\\_10734029.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/202208/t20220804_10734029.html)
- MoFA of PRC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China). (2022, October 25). *Full text of the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China*. [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt\\_665385/zyjh\\_665391/202210/t20221025\\_10791908.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/202210/t20221025_10791908.html)
- MoFA of PRC (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China). (2022b, November 16). *Joint Statement between The People's Republic of China and The Republic of Indonesia*. [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx\\_662805/202211/t20221117\\_10976784.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202211/t20221117_10976784.html)



- Mubah, A. S. (2020). Indonesia's double hedging strategy toward the United States-China competition: Shaping regional order in the Indo-Pacific? *Issues & Studies*, 55(4). <https://doi.org/10.1142/S1013251119400071>
- Nankervis, W. (2021, September 20). Australia's steadfast commitment to ASEAN centrality. *Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/news/news/australias-steadfast-commitment-asean-centrality>
- Natalegawa, M. (2013, May 20). An Indonesian perspective on the Indo-Pacific. *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/05/20/an-indonesian-perspective-indo-pacific.html>
- Pratiwi, F. I., Puspitasari, I., Hikmawati, I., & Bagus, H. (2021). Global Maritime Fulcrum: Indonesia's middle power strategy between Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) and Free-Open Indo Pacific (FOIP). *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies*, 15(3), 30–54. <https://doi.org/10.51870/CEJISS.A150302>
- Reinventing the Indo-Pacific. (2023, January 4). *The Economist*. <https://www.economist.com/asia/2023/01/04/reinventing-the-indo-pacific>
- Rossiter, A. (2018). The "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" Strategy and Japan's Emerging Security Posture. *Rising Powers Quarterly*, 3(2), 113–131.
- Rosyidin, M., & Pattipeilohy, S. C. H. (2020). Regionalism under challenge: Ideas and Joko Widodo's foreign policy towards ASEAN, 2014-2019. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 8(2), 147–172. <https://doi.org/10.21512/JAS.V8I2.6596>
- Rudd, K. (2022). *The Avoidable War: The Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between the US and Xi Jinping's China*. PublicAffairs. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=hGYIEAAQBAJ>
- Salim, T., & Sundaryani, F. (2017, January 16). Abe offers RI Indo-Pacific strategy. *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/01/16/abe-offers-ri-indo-pacific-strategy.html>
- Schmitt, O. (2018). When are strategic narratives effective? The shaping of political discourse through the interaction between political myths and strategic narratives. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 39(4), 487–511. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2018.1448925>
- Scott, D. (2019). Indonesia grapples with the Indo-Pacific: Outreach, strategic discourse, and diplomacy. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 38(2), 194–217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103419860669>
- Shambaugh, D. (2020). *Where great powers meet: America and China in Southeast Asia*. Oxford University Press.
- Shekhar, V. (2018). *Indonesia's foreign policy and grand strategy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Rise of an Indo-Pacific power*. Routledge.
- Sukma, R. (1995). The evolution of Indonesia's foreign policy: An Indonesian view. *Asian Survey*, 35(3), 304–315. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645547>

- Sukma, R. (2009, June 30). *Indonesia needs a post-ASEAN foreign policy*. The Jakarta Post. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/06/30/indonesia-needs-a-postasean-foreign-policy.html>
- Suryadinata, L. (2018). Indonesia and its Stance on the “Indo-Pacific.” *Perspective*, 66(2018). [https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2018\\_66@50.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2018_66@50.pdf)
- Sutrisno, B. (2020, September 4). ‘Indonesia won’t be military base for any country’, Retno says, dismissing Pentagon report. *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/09/04/indonesia-wont-be-military-base-for-any-country-retno-says-dismissing-pentagon-report.html>
- Tham, J. (2018, May 16). What’s in Indonesia’s Indo-Pacific cooperation concept? *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/05/whats-in-indonesias-indo-pacific-cooperation-concept/>
- The White House. (2021a, March 12). *Quad Leaders’ Joint Statement: “The Spirit of the Quad.”* <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/12/quad-leaders-joint-statement-the-spirit-of-the-quad/>
- The White House. (2021b, September 15). *Remarks by President Biden, Prime Minister Morrison of Australia, and Prime Minister Johnson of the United Kingdom Announcing the Creation of AUKUS.* <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/09/15/remarks-by-president-biden-prime-minister-morrison-of-australia-and-prime-minister-johnson-of-the-united-kingdom-announcing-the-creation-of-aucus/>
- The White House. (2022a). *National Security Strategy*.
- The White House. (2022b, February 11). *FACT SHEET: Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States.* <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/11/fact-sheet-indo-pacific-strategy-of-the-united-states/>
- Van Noort, C. (2017). Study of strategic narratives: The case of BRICS. *Politics and Governance*, 5(3), 121–129. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v5i3.961>
- Weatherbee, D. E. (2019). Indonesia, ASEAN, and the Indo-Pacific cooperation concept. *ISEAS Perspective*, 47(2019).
- Wicaksana, I. G. W., & Karim, M. F. (2022). Approaches to Indonesia’s foreign policy: Area studies, FPA theory, and global IR. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 10(2), 161–180. <https://doi.org/10.21512/JAS.V10I2.9059>
- Widodo, J. (2014, October 20). *FULL TEXT: Jokowi’s Inauguration Speech.* <https://www.rappler.com/world/72529-text-jokowi-inauguration-speech/>
- Wilkins, T., & Kim, J. (2020). Adoption, accommodation or opposition? - regional powers respond to American-led Indo-Pacific strategy. *The Pacific Review*, 35(3), 415–445. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2020.1825516>
- Xinli, Q. (2019, July 23). Why BRI-GMF cooperation benefits China and Indonesia. *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2019/08/23/why-bri-gmf-cooperation-benefits-china-and-indonesia.html>



# The Characteristics of Indonesian Digital Diplomacy

Albert Triwibowo<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Politics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences,  
Universität Rostock, Rostock, Germany 18051

<sup>1</sup>Department of International Relations, Faculty Social and Political Sciences,  
Parahyangan Catholic University, Bandung, Indonesia 40141

albert.triwibowo@unpar.ac.id

**How to Cite:** Triwibowo, A. (2023). The characteristics of Indonesian digital diplomacy. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 11(1), 167–196. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.85253>

## Abstract

Digital diplomacy has gained momentum in recent years, especially when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in 2020. The popularity of digital diplomacy lied in its characteristics where it offered more access to information, dialogic communication as well as transparency in diplomacy as had been implemented by many developed countries. However, recent studies have not focused yet on digital diplomacy implementation by non-developed countries. The research aimed to address the gap, by offering an analysis of the characteristics of and how Indonesia has implemented digital diplomacy. As every country had developed their respective path towards digitalisation and every Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) has its own evolution of digital diplomacy, each of which has its own characteristics in implementing digital diplomacy. The research focused on the characteristics of a country which has implemented digital diplomacy. Thus, the research tried to examine the characteristics of Indonesia's digital diplomacy. The research argued that Indonesia's digital diplomacy initiatives are based on a limited understanding of digital diplomacy, are sporadically pursued, and are based on an *ad hoc* basis. The domestic public's interest in international issues further encourages the implementation of digital instruments. The research covered three main issues, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, the issue of palm oil, and the Rohingya crisis to establish the characteristics of Indonesian digital diplomacy. The qualitative research used primary sources in the form of interviews with Indonesian diplomats and key researchers. Furthermore, secondary sources related to Indonesia's digital diplomacy are also used to support the research.

**Keywords:** characteristics, digital diplomacy, Indonesia

## Introduction

“Our inability to keep up with technological leaps could leave us left behind. Likewise with diplomacy. If you cannot adapt to the rapid transformation, diplomacy will no longer be relevant. That is why now is the time for us to juxtapose diplomacy with digitalisation.”

(Kementerian Luar Negeri RI, 2019).<sup>1</sup>

- Indonesian Foreign Minister, Retno Marsudi.

Digital diplomacy has gained momentum in recent years, especially when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in 2020. Every Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) start to utilise digital tools to practice diplomacy. During the pandemic, digital diplomacy has been utilised mainly to combat disinformation, provide consular assistance, and manage a country's national image (Bjola & Manor, 2020). The popularity of digital diplomacy lies in its characteristics where it offers more access to information, dialogic communication as well as transparency in diplomacy (Manor, 2016; Rashica, 2018). These characteristics are based on observations of digital diplomacy practices by developed countries, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States, and there are various examples of their work by the three countries. The United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office strives to support Britain's image (Pamment, 2016) and their work ranges from blogs to social media used by British diplomats to interact and explain complicated issues regarding British foreign policy digitally (Pamment, 2016; Fletcher, 2017). The Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has its 'Global Dialogue' initiative to listen to people's opinions through an online discussion where people can contribute to foreign policymaking (Paris, 2013). The US used Twitter during the negotiation process for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (Duncombe, 2017).

While the practice of digital diplomacy has intensified, there is still limited research and studies about digital diplomacy by non-major economies. Research about digital diplomacy is mainly focused on the practices of developed countries or the development of digitalisation in diplomacy (Paris, 2013; Bjola & Jiang, 2015; Pamment, 2016; Manor, 2016; Fletcher, 2017; Duncombe, 2017; Manor, 2019). Recent studies have not focused on the execution of digital diplomacy by non-developed countries. The research aims to address the gap by offering an analysis of the characteristics of and how Indonesia has implemented digital diplomacy.

Thus far, research topics about Indonesian digital diplomacy have mostly been critical, questioning the challenges and focus of the country's digital diplomacy. One of the main criticisms is that Indonesia's digital diplomacy is still not digital enough. Numerous discussions and analyses have underlined that Indonesia's digital initiatives are only utilised as a tool for information dissemination which only serves as an online form of any paper-based documents. Indonesia's digital diplomacy initiatives are carried out without a clear objective or strategy. Moreover, digital infrastructure issues and bureaucracy hamper the

<sup>1</sup>The original statement is, “Ketidakmampuan kita dalam mengikuti lompatan teknologi akan membuat kita tertinggal. Begitu juga dengan diplomasi. Bila tidak dapat menyesuaikan dengan transformasi yang cepat, diplomasi tidak akan relevan lagi. Itulah sebabnya sekarang ini saatnya kita menyandingkan diplomasi dengan digital.”

country's digital transformation journey. Some scholars and researchers argue that Indonesia is carrying out its digital diplomacy like a headless chicken (personal communications; Madu, 2018; Andika, Pamungkas, & Badaruddin, 2019; Hartati, 2018). The focus of digital instruments in Indonesian diplomacy is another area that has drawn open discussions with some arguing that the country should use it to focus on public diplomacy while others believe that it should serve broader diplomatic interests (Madu, Sugiarto, & Amiri, 2017; Pohan et al., 2017; Dwikardana et al., 2017).

Achieving success in digital diplomacy does not happen overnight and Indonesia's digital diplomacy is still developing. In addition, there is no grand digital diplomacy strategy that can apply to all countries. Instead, digital diplomacy is built on knowledge and experiences which then contributes to the unique characteristics of digital diplomacy of every MoFA, including Indonesia's. Therefore, the evolution of digital diplomacy varies from state to state (Rashica, 2018; Manor, 2016; Manor, 2019). The opening statement from Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi suggests the urgency for Indonesian diplomacy to adapt to the latest technological advancements. She further elaborates on the function of technological innovation to support foreign policy agendas, namely citizen protection, promoting peaceful messages, strengthening economic cooperation, and as a tool to promote development. Technological innovation, such as social media, has been utilized by many MoFAs to fulfil various foreign policy objectives, such as analysing public opinion, combating disinformation or as a tool for information dissemination to reach a wider audience. The inability to adapt to current technological progress will leave any MoFA behind and make it difficult to take advantage of new opportunities, for example, an innovation-oriented economy or to simply face new situations in the future (Margiansyah, 2020; Bjola and Manor, 2020). This indicates that the Indonesian MoFA is trying to adapt and find the best understanding of digital diplomacy within the country's diplomacy.

Every country has developed its own path towards digitalisation and every MoFA has its own evolution of digital diplomacy. Each MoFA, in the end, will have their own characteristics in implementing digital diplomacy (Manor, 2019), including the Indonesian MoFA. This article will offer fresh insight into the understanding of digital diplomacy, specifically digital diplomacy from the perspective of non-major powers and their characteristics which are seldom discussed. This article seeks to answer the question: What are the characteristics of Indonesia's digital diplomacy? The research argues that Indonesia's digital diplomacy initiatives are based on a limited understanding of digital diplomacy, are sporadically pursued, and are based on an *ad hoc* basis. The domestic public's interest in international issues further encourages the use of digital instruments. Initial digital initiatives were based on diplomats' aspirations or were conducted as a response to a domestic concern.

## Methodology

The research uses three case studies to assess the characteristics of Indonesian digital diplomacy. The selection of three case studies is based on the focus of Indonesia's digital diplomacy as mentioned by Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, namely concerning citizen

protection, promoting peaceful messages, strengthening economic cooperation, and as a tool to promote development. The first case study takes on citizen protection, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Digital instruments helped the Indonesian MoFA to fulfil its objectives during the pandemic in 2020 when it strongly focused on citizen protection matters. The second case study is on palm oil as it is one of Indonesia's key economic commodities and was a focal point for the country's first digital diplomacy activities. This helps to draw important lessons from the very beginning of Indonesia's digital diplomacy journey and to better analyse its characteristics. Lastly, the case of the Rohingya crisis will also be used to analyse Indonesia's interest in projecting a peaceful message as well as promoting development in a regional context. This research helps to comprehend the characteristics of Indonesia's digital initiatives concerning the country's core foreign policy principle of *bebas aktif* (independent and active). Multiple case studies are covered to build a general explanation that fits with the main topic and provides in-depth insights into Indonesian digital diplomacy (Meriam & Tidsel, 2016). Moreover, the research focuses mainly on the use of Twitter because it is the only social media network that is connected to the Indonesian MoFA's website. All Indonesian overseas Missions have their own Twitter account that is connected directly to the Indonesian MoFA's official website. Other social media channels, such as YouTube, Facebook and blogs are also assessed to complement the analysis since they are deemed important by Indonesian diplomats (personal communication).

This qualitative research uses primary data from interviews with key Indonesian diplomats and officers in the Indonesian MoFA as well as with researchers and academicians. The interviews were with Indonesian diplomats who are directly involved in the conduct of Indonesian digital diplomacy, such as the Directorate General of Information and Public Diplomacy and the Directorate of Information and Media. Meanwhile, researchers and academicians who specialise in Indonesian digital diplomacy were also interviewed to enrich the analysis. In total, 17 interviews were conducted for this research. Secondary data is also used to complement the analysis and triangulate the data being presented. The research additionally uses the interpretative approach and thus, Indonesia's digital diplomacy characteristics will be analysed based on the author's interpretation of interviews, collected documents and information (Stake, 1995). The research seeks to present the characteristics of Indonesian digital diplomacy; it is not intended to show or analyse its effectiveness.

To discuss and explain the arguments, the research has been divided into six parts. After the introduction and research method, the third part discusses the analytical framework which gives a glance at digital diplomacy, namely its definition and the main characteristics. The fourth and fifth parts will be the analysis of Indonesian digital diplomacy using the three case studies encompassing citizen protection during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, palm oil and the Rohingya crisis. An analysis of the characteristics of Indonesian digital diplomacy has also been provided. A conclusion will be drawn to summarize the discussion about the characteristics of Indonesia's digital diplomacy and is presented in the final part of the research.

## Analytical Framework

Digital diplomacy emphasises the utilisation of information and communication technologies (ICT), in particular the internet and social media, to support diplomatic practices including public communication, negotiations, and consular services. This phenomenon distinguishes the practice of digital diplomacy apart from traditional diplomacy as well as offers new aspects to understanding the use of ICT in diplomacy. Characteristics refer to the core elements of a particular thing which, for this research, is the conduct of digital diplomacy (Manor, 2016; Rashica, 2018).

The first characteristic of digital diplomacy is the nature of the practice which is the element of newness in how diplomacy is performed. There are multiple definitions of digital diplomacy and scholars also use various terms such as e-diplomacy, cyber diplomacy, 'twiplomacy,' and diplomacy 2.0 to explain the concept. These terms have been used interchangeably by several scholars to capture the recent phenomenon of communications technologies in diplomacy (Adesina, 2017; Hocking & Melissen, 2015; Hanson, 2015). One of the early scholars who captured the phenomenon was Hanson; other scholars include Bjola and Holmes. Hanson referred to the adoption of ICT in diplomacy as 'e-diplomacy,' and defined it as "the use of the internet and new ICT to help carry out diplomatic objectives" (Hanson, 2015). According to Bjola and Jiang (2015), digital diplomacy is "the use of social media for diplomatic purposes, could change practices of how diplomats engage in information management, public diplomacy, strategy planning, international negotiations or even crisis management." Similarly, Holmes (2015) describes digital diplomacy as "a strategy of managing change through digital tools and virtual collaboration." Taking this understanding into consideration, digital instruments, such as social media or the internet, serve one of the most important aspects of diplomacy: a medium of communication. Digital tools help with information dissemination and managing changes in international affairs.

A distinctive aspect of digital diplomacy is the role of digital instruments to unlock the possibility of two-way communication and to create more transparent communication in diplomacy. Social media is a significant communication tool for exercising transparency and makes communication with diplomatic actors possible as it removes the barriers that had previously made it unfeasible to do. In general, digital instruments are considered active, interactive, reflective, and multidimensional tools. Further, it enhances communication between MoFAs, diplomats, Foreign Ministers, multinational corporations and the public as it offers proximity between audiences (Rashica, 2018). Two-way communication enables MoFAs to inform the public about a specific issue while also serving as a knowledge management tool so that national interests can be achieved (Rashica, 2018). Online discussions offer diplomats the chance to listen and readjust their agenda, reduce misinformation, and enhance mutual understanding (Bjola & Jiang, 2015). According to Holmes (2015), the essence of digital diplomacy is to help diplomats evaluate a situation.

The next characteristic of digital diplomacy is related to timing, tempo, consistency, commitment and content. Timing and tempo refer to the period needed to apply digital initiatives, hence, digital experiments are required to find the exact type of digital diplomacy

that works the best (Rashica, 2018). Consistency and commitment are crucial to digital diplomacy since engagement and interactive communication are built from long-term relationships (Bjola & Jiang, 2015; Manor, 2019). Moreover, digital diplomacy also needs to reflect actual reality because digital initiatives can be effective if the content is relevant and offer context to the audience (Rashica, 2018).

Another characteristic of digital diplomacy is that it reflects the interaction between the domestic and foreign agendas. Domestic interests will influence the diplomatic channels being utilised for pursuing foreign policy as it interacts with international changes. The MoFA or diplomats will adjust the foreign policy to not neglect domestic demands (Doeser, 2010). As suggested by Bjola and Manor, “the rise of social media makes governments and MFAs more likely to digitally engage with their citizens as a way of shaping their online views hence potentially securing their support for certain foreign policies” (Bjola & Manor, 2018). As such, digital diplomacy could be influenced by the domestic agenda while, at the same time, MoFAs project certain values and beliefs to a foreign audience based on the pursued national interests (Manor, 2019).

## **Analysis**

Before elaborating on the characteristics of Indonesian digital diplomacy, it is important to understand the background of the three case studies highlighted in this research. The selected case studies demonstrate the focus of Indonesia’s foreign policy concerning the use of digital instruments. This section provides a brief background to introduce the three case studies and will be followed by a discussion section as well as an analysis of Indonesia’s digital diplomacy characteristics based on what has been conducted.

### **Indonesia’s Digital Diplomacy: Three Case Studies**

#### ***The COVID-19 Pandemic***

Executing digital diplomacy for citizen protection started before the pandemic. The importance of digital instruments for citizen protection was first mentioned in the Annual Press Statement in 2017. The press statement underlined the establishment of a digital command centre to support Indonesia’s digital diplomacy and in particular, mentioned the use of technology (mobile applications) in the protection of Indonesian citizens (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2017). During the Regional Conference on Digital Diplomacy (RCDD) in 2019, Minister Marsudi made an assertive statement saying, “Digital diplomacy is a tool for the protection of our citizens. I believe that when it is used effectively, the internet can be an excellent tool for protecting our citizens and national interests abroad” (Sinaga, 2019). The protection using mobile applications is provided by giving an update about local situations where the Indonesian Missions are located as well as an emergency button through

the Safe Travel mobile application. The Indonesian MoFA also uses SMS Blast to inform citizens about the emergency contact of the closest Indonesian Mission in the user's area.

In 2020, the Indonesian MoFA issued their 4+1 priorities in the Annual Press Statement which notably underscored the issue of protection in Indonesian diplomacy alongside additional priorities of strengthening economic diplomacy, sovereignty and national diplomacy, and Indonesia's role in the region and globally. Another objective of the 4+1 programme was to strengthen the country's diplomatic infrastructure (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2020c). The MoFA and many Indonesian diplomats find digital instruments' focus on citizens as important and the implementation is considered a success (personal communication; Dharossa & Rezasyah, 2020). Some of the Indonesian government's programs on citizen protection include the Safe Travel app, SMS Blast (Andika, et al., 2019), and *Portal Peduli WNI*. To popularise digital diplomacy, the Indonesian MoFA promoted the hashtag #NegaraMelindungi which means 'the state protects' on various social media platforms. The use of the hashtag aimed to symbolise the presence of the state in a crisis for Indonesian citizens (Madu, 2018).

The COVID-19 virus grabbed the world's attention when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a pandemic on 11 March 2020 even though attention on the virus had begun several months before. On 31 December 2019, China reported new cases of pneumonia in Wuhan to the WHO then on 7 January 2020, the virus was identified as a novel coronavirus. After the health crisis was listed as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020, the situation grew substantially tense as the number of COVID-related deaths rose and many countries began the repatriation process.

### *Palm Oil*

Palm oil is an important commodity for the Indonesian economy and diplomacy is a significant tool to support its marketability. Indonesia's diplomacy encompasses economic activities to promote Indonesian products around the world. With the emphasis on economic diplomacy in 2020, as stipulated in the Annual Press Statement (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2020c), promoting palm oil has become more prominent in the work of the Indonesian MoFA. Besides the use of traditional diplomatic practices, such as lobbying or trade agreements, the MoFA also turns to digital diplomacy to promote Indonesian palm oil and to counter negative campaigns or narratives against the commodity. As such, digital diplomacy initiatives undertaken by Indonesian Missions and diplomats are essential in supporting palm oil attractiveness. Moreover, its implementation aims to bridge the domestic public's response in Indonesia and foreign audiences regarding the industry.

Diplomatic efforts to support the palm oil industry can be traced back to the anti-palm oil campaign in the early 2000s. One of the initial negative campaigns on record by the Government of Indonesia (GOI) was the Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth campaigns. Both organisations' campaigns took issue with the cultivation, import, and commercial use of palm oil. The campaign had ranged from opposing the shipments of palm oil to developed

countries to lobbying European officials and executives to ban the import of palm oil as biofuel. The campaign also demanded palm oil advertisements be banned on television. In 2008, the European Union (EU) expressed its concerns over deforestation resulting from the palm oil industry and started limiting biofuel products derived from palm oil to the region (Pusat Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Multilateral Badan Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Kementerian Luar Negeri RI, 2019). In 2017, the European Parliament passed a resolution to abolish and prohibit the use of biofuels made from palm oil because it is perceived to be the main factor of deforestation in Indonesia (Elfadina, 2021). In 2019, the EU Commission issued a document entitled the 'Delegated Act for Renewable Energy Directive (RED) II' which listed palm oil as a high-risk commodity, mainly because it is a primary material for biofuels with is linked to deforestation (Pusat Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Multilateral Badan Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Kementerian Luar Negeri RI, 2019). The EU also cited the impacts of palm oil on the degradation of animal habitats, corruption, child labour, and human rights violations ("Perkembangan mutakhir industri", 2021; Sidik, 2021).

For Indonesia, the narrative in Europe about the country's palm oil industry was viewed as an unfair trade practice. First, the narrative and the Delegated Act for RED II were perceived to solely target palm oil while similar standards were rarely applied to other vegetable oils. Second, the standard being used did not reflect the real situation of the palm oil industry. The palm oil industry is better in terms of land use efficiency, productivity rate and price. This made other vegetable oils difficult to compete with palm oil (personal communication with a high-ranking officer in the Indonesian MoFA, Indonesian diplomats, and a representative from the Indonesian Palm Oil Entrepreneurs Association/GAPKI; Pusat Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Multilateral Badan Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Kementerian Luar Negeri RI, 2019). As a result, Indonesia's stance to fight the unfair practice of palm oil has mostly been directed at European countries and the EU.

In 2011, the GOI supported the decision of GAPKI to leave its membership in the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) (Barus, 2011). RSPO is known as a not-for-profit multistakeholder initiative that set the standards for sustainable palm oil (RSPO, 2023). For the GOI, the narrative by RSPO is perceived to be unfair towards Indonesia's palm oil. In one interview, former Indonesian Minister of Industry M.S. Hidayat stated, "In fact, I support the decision (to leave RSPO), my friends have been treated unfairly by RSPO all this time" (Barus, 2011). Then the GOI launched Indonesia Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO) in 2011 to set the national standard for good governance and sustainability of the palm oil industry (Pusat Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Multilateral Badan Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Kementerian Luar Negeri RI, 2019). Through the platform, Indonesia has consistently tried to counter negative campaigns concerning the palm oil industry and instead built its narrative to promote Indonesian palm oil products. As one of the researchers in a research organisation recalled,

"In my opinion, there is an evolution of narrative built by the government. When Indonesia gradually became the biggest producer of palm oil, many started to criticise the socio-economic and ecological impact. These criticisms, which the government



opposes, are considered based more on the foreign narrative. As a result, the government started to promote its narrative around 2013” (personal communication).

Digital diplomacy is deemed necessary to promote palm oil and this view emerged during a period when a greater awareness of strategic digital communication happened. For example, the existence of social media and blogs to counter negative campaigns against palm oil. Research conducted by the Policy Analysis and Development Agency of Indonesian MoFA in 2019 found that many negative campaigns were on social media, including campaigns by Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth. The outcome led to a suggestion for the MoFA to place their attention on using social media to promote Indonesian palm oil (Pusat Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Multilateral Badan Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Kementerian Luar Negeri RI, 2019). This recommendation underscored the possibility of digital diplomacy playing integral role to counter negative narratives and instead, promoting Indonesia’s narrative to the public. In addition, digital diplomacy was viewed as an instrument to reach foreign and domestic audiences. A high-ranking officer in the Policy Analysis and Development Agency stipulated,

“... specifically for palm oil, we also have to provide information to the domestic public so that they can understand. The domestic public needs to understand what the issue really is. If the public understands the issue, we can find a better solution nationally. That's why the issue of palm oil is internal and external” (personal communication).

### *The Rohingya Crisis*

The Rohingya crisis is viewed as a religious as well as a politically- and economically-driven conflict (Mohajan, 2018). The Rohingyas live in the Rakhine state of Myanmar and are predominantly Muslim. Most Burmese people find the minority group to be economically developed and successful. As a minority community in Myanmar which is surrounded by Muslim countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia, the Burmese people feared the Rohingyas lack loyalty to the country. This fear has led to their discrimination and persecution by the Government of Myanmar, creating a long-lasting series of violent clashes (Wolf, 2017). These clashes have forced many Rohingyas to flee Myanmar and sparked a refugee crisis in neighbouring countries in 2015. Since the 1970s, around 1.6 million Rohingyas have sought refuge in neighbouring countries with many arriving in Bangladesh (Sengupta, 2021), while others find themselves stranded in Malaysia, India or Indonesia. The situation in Rakhine state began deteriorating in 2012 following the formation of a Rohingya insurgent group The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) (Sengupta, 2021). In 2015, Indonesia welcomed Rohingya refugees found stranded in Indonesian waters near Aceh after receiving immense pressure from the local and international communities (“Apa kata media Asia Tenggara”, 2015; Pasuhuk, 2015; Moy & Kusuma, 2016).

Indonesia’s digital diplomacy approach to the Rohingya refugees has been distinct compared to the COVID-19 and palm oil topics. On one hand, Indonesia is not a party with direct involvement in the case and the main cause of the crisis did not derive from Indonesia.

On the other hand, Indonesia finds interest in the issue and some aspects are linked to the topic. First, Indonesia's *bebas aktif* principle has instilled a sense of responsibility for the country to be involved. Indonesia's support of the idea of world peace fosters an obligatory sense of responsibility to actively partake in peacebuilding (Sundari, Prayuda, & Sary, 2021). Second, the crisis involves Southeast Asia, a region that is central to Indonesia's foreign policy and is deemed vital for the country (Pujayanti, 2017). Lastly, as the country with the world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia is a proponent of building and promoting a narrative where democracy and Islam can mutually co-exist (Sukma, 2011). The international community and local community have pressed the GOI to take up involvement in the crisis on the grounds of Muslim brotherhood ("Thousands of Indonesians join", 2017). Taking into consideration the three factors, Indonesia hones in on digital diplomacy to maximise and fulfil its national interests.

### Characteristics of Indonesia's Digital Diplomacy

The first characteristic is the Indonesian MoFA's understanding of digital diplomacy. In 2018, the MoFA sought to define digital diplomacy. Through Foreign Minister Decree Number 42 in 2018 (Keputusan Menteri Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia Nomor 42/B/RO/I/2018/01) they defined digital diplomacy as,

'Digital diplomacy is diplomacy carried out by using the internet to achieve the expected goals. Digital diplomacy offers a new way of communicating in support of diplomacy activities, both aimed at stakeholders, other countries, and the public. Digital diplomacy is aimed at collecting and analysing important information to support foreign policy; communicating foreign policy positions; and protect the interests of the state and citizens.'<sup>2</sup>

As the research is written in the middle of 2022, the practices of digital diplomacy by Indonesia's MoFA, its Missions and diplomats have shown that the understanding is still limited to information dissemination. Digital instruments, such as Twitter, are merely viewed as a tool that can reach a wider audience to provide information about Indonesia's foreign policy, economic opportunities or other important updates like COVID-19 regulations. It is not yet realized as a medium for two-way communication to absorb and influence digital public opinion. This perception is affected by the claim that digital instruments are only diplomatic tools and as a result, digital diplomacy is a tool to complement traditional diplomacy. Many Indonesian diplomats share that opinion and further argue that digital diplomacy will never be on par with traditional diplomacy (personal communications). One

<sup>2</sup> The original definition is "*Diplomasi Digital adalah diplomasi yang dilakukan dengan menggunakan internet untuk mencapai tujuan yang diharapkan. Diplomasi digital menawarkan cara baru dalam berkomunikasi dalam mendukung aktifitas diplomasi, baik yang ditujukan kepada pemangku kepentingan, negara lain, serta publik. Diplomasi digital ditujukan dalam rangka mengumpulkan dan menganalisis informasi-informasi penting untuk mendukung kebijakan luar negeri; mengkomunikasikan posisi kebijakan luar negeri; serta melindungi kepentingan negara dan warga negara.*"

of the reasons is the assumption that digital channels do not provide sufficient informal sessions for a discussion. The transparency aspect driven by the way social media functions has hindered the possibility of informal discussions thus causing many Indonesian diplomats to be cautious before tweeting a post. Therefore, they only tweet a post deemed safe and cordial or anything that is not sensitive and trouble-free and in addition, has already been approved by the headquarters.

Despite the significance of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indonesian MoFA's digital activities focus mainly on information dissemination. As stated by an Indonesian diplomat, social media use is mainly to inform Indonesian citizens about recent COVID-19 protocols and regulations in the area of Indonesian Missions. An Indonesian diplomat in Germany commented,

"The event (pandemic) is timely and it is related to our citizens. For the protection of our citizens, it makes it easier for us to use digital diplomacy. During the pandemic, having digital platforms has been really helpful for issuing announcements that we can share with our friends and citizens here. We can also inform citizens about COVID-related protocols and others..." (personal communication).



Figure 1 Indonesian MoFA Updates on COVID-19 Situation

Source: MoFA Indonesia, 2020d.

The headquarters in Jakarta has actively posted tweets about the current situation of the pandemic from all around the world by updating the information about Indonesian citizens being infected worldwide (Figure 1). This is a form of one-way communication and does not generate any conversation between the public and the MoFA. Even when the headquarters actively used the hashtags #NegaraMelindungi and received a reply or repost by the

domestic, the Indonesian MoFA seldom responded. When a conversation is needed, Indonesian diplomats and Missions tend to reply through the direct messaging feature and contact the person directly. This reaffirms the notion that the objective of social media is to manage the information dissemination process and help to make sense of the overall situation (personal communication). Nevertheless, this aspect makes digital diplomacy on citizen protection different from any other initial technology-driven application used before. Social media makes it possible to expand the audience reach compared to the Safe Travel application which only targeted Indonesian citizens going abroad. The use of Twitter or Facebook is simply easier and more effective to widen audience outreach, especially with the use of hashtags. The momentum and responsiveness can be seen through many hashtags being used and the dedicated tweets on citizen protection. Hashtags are useful in reaching a new audience who show an interest in a particular issue (Manor, 2019). After the situation is well-perceived, the follow-up action is usually a direct traditional communication. This is mainly because Indonesia's digital training emphasized on remaining cautious when performing digital diplomacy and avoiding online debates (personal communication). And thus, when a tweet about the repatriation of Indonesian citizens from Wuhan gained online popularity among Indonesians – receiving 879 retweets and 1,377 likes (as of September 2021; MoFA Indonesia, 2020c) – the Indonesian MoFA did not offer a single reply or comment.

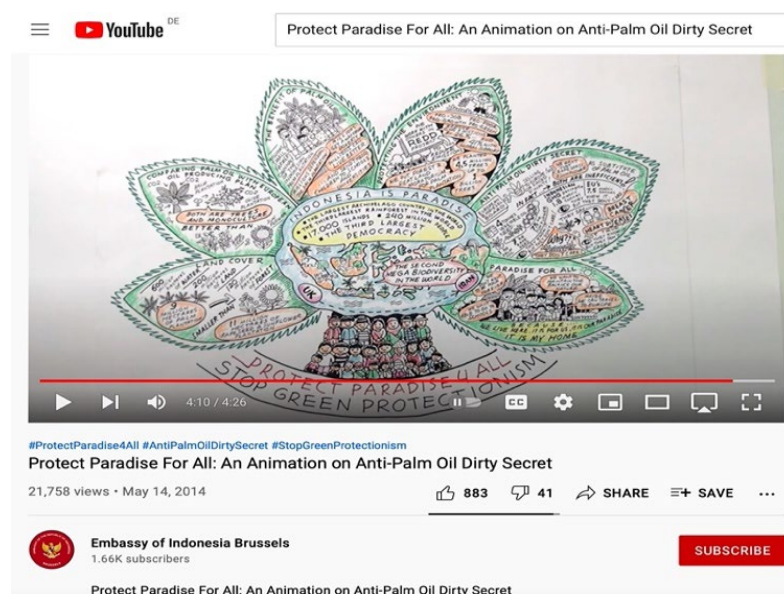


Figure 2 YouTube Video by the Indonesian Embassy in Brussels

Source: Embassy of Indonesia Brussels, 2014.

Most of the tweets about palm oil are intended to counter any negative narrative and thus, Indonesian diplomats typically share positive and more factual data about Indonesian palm oil. One of the examples is the video 'Protect Paradise for All: An Animation on Anti-Palm Oil Dirty Secret' by the Indonesian Embassy in Brussels which was posted on YouTube

and promoted on Twitter and Facebook. The video offered insights into land use in Indonesia, the benefits of palm oil, Indonesia's efforts to protect the environment, and the negative palm oil campaigns (Figure 2) (Embassy of Indonesia Brussels, 2014). Such videos were intended to distribute true and recent facts about the sector whilst their circulation on social media was intended to reinforce Indonesia's narrative and to reach a wider audience (personal communication). Once again, the digital initiative was another act of information dissemination on social media. There was no two-way communication achieved to discuss palm oil in Europe on social media such as Twitter, Facebook or YouTube. A comment box on YouTube was even closed by the embassy (as of August 2022) and one of the reasons was so it would not spark an online debate which can result in a backlash for Indonesian diplomacy (personal communication).

Digital activities on social media on the Rohingya crisis were more difficult to find as most were only posted for informative reasons and to show Indonesia's actions to solve the crisis; most of the messages were a repost of messages from Jakarta. This was due to the sensitive nature of the topic in the Southeast Asian region as well as in Indonesia. Thus, the Indonesian MoFA and its Mission in Yangon only tweeted safe and cordial messages. A high-ranking officer in the MoFA stated,

"We often did not exercise digital diplomacy on the issue of the Rohingyas because we are very careful about Myanmar. It is quite difficult for us to draft a good wording digitally, especially when we need to appease the domestic audience while displaying a firm position internationally" (personal communication).

The number of published posts also did not result in any two-way communication. All three case studies have shown that the Indonesian MoFA and its Missions perform digital diplomacy mostly for information dissemination and knowledge management. Indonesia's digital diplomacy or the use of digital instruments does not comprise two-way communication even though the implementation is to promote transparency.

When assessing the timing, tempo, consistency, commitment and content components, Indonesia applies digital diplomacy predominantly based on a specific moment or situation that requires extra attention. As a consequence, even though the timing of the digital initiative is correct, the Indonesian MoFA and its Missions oftentimes execute it sporadically and on an *ad hoc* basis. Over time, no consistency or relationship transpires with the online audience because the topic of digital initiatives constantly changes. What can be gathered is that one digital initiative about Indonesian diplomacy or foreign policy is published only at specific times. There is no follow-up discussion or continuation from the first initiative and ultimately acts as a one-shot digital activity. As such, digital diplomacy initiatives emerge when deemed necessary because the situation requires digital communication or dissemination of information. In many cases, a digital activity starts from diplomats' personal initiative since they have an awareness of the situation on the ground. To date, there is no general digital diplomacy strategy developed by the headquarters in Jakarta. There is only a general regulation about digital media management via Regulation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Number 10 in 2018. Therefore, the execution of digital initiatives is left to each of the

Indonesian Missions and its diplomats while reflecting the reality and making it relevant to the audience as it is based on the current situation.

The characteristic of sporadic and *ad hoc* performance of digital diplomacy can be seen in the example of the Indonesian digital initiative on palm oil. In 2019, the MoFA created another promotional video which centred on the economic welfare and environmental sustainability of palm oil (MoFA Indonesia, 2019). In 2021, another digital counter-narrative came from the Indonesian Mission in Bern and Geneva to build a positive message around palm oil through a blog called 'Indonesia in Swiss' (Palm Oil in Indonesia, 2021; Laucereno, 2021; personal communication). It featured information about palm oil in Indonesia and controversies on the issue, from general information about Indonesian palm oil, and economic news, to the issue of orangutans. At the time, the blog was regularly updated by the Indonesian Mission to support the economic agreement of the Indonesia-European Free Trade Association Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (I-EFTA CEPA) (personal communication). These two digital initiatives were different than the one in 2014 which had been promoted by the Indonesian Embassy in Brussels. Those three digital initiatives were not connected and were run independently and initiated based on different situations. The blog in 2021 was created to support the referendum in Switzerland concerning the Indonesia-Switzerland economic agreement under the I-EFTA CEPA (Drajat, 2021). Meanwhile, the video promotion in 2019 was created as a response to questions surrounding palm oil governance in Indonesia. The video was different than the first video which was made by the Indonesian Mission in Brussels and there was no cross-promotion between the two Missions involved.



Figure 3. Tweet by Arif Havas O.

Source: Oegroseno, 2021.

Another notable factor is the Indonesian diplomats or Missions which actively engage in digital discussions surrounding palm oil. Their role is an integral aspect in determining what conversation topics about Indonesia are discussed online. Diplomats' engagement hence enables a wider circulation of messages among a larger audience to take place (personal communication). One example is Ambassador Arif Havas who is an Indonesian diplomat known for his active social media engagement on matters of foreign policy issues ranging from palm oil and the South China Sea. He also previously served as Indonesian Ambassador to Belgium, Luxembourg, and the EU. As of April 2022, he has more than two thousand followers on Twitter and is considered a pioneer and exemplary figure in digital diplomacy among Indonesian diplomats (personal communication). He often discusses the topic of palm oil on Twitter from a critical point of view (Figure 3). In his view, the use of Twitter is part of a larger effort to level the playing field and provide fair facts about palm oil. Ambassador Havas has used social media as an online medium since he was appointed the Ambassador of Indonesia to Belgium in 2010 (personal communication). Since then, he has actively initiated digital activities independently or on behalf of the Indonesian Mission in Brussels. Evidence of his contribution was the video "Protect Paradise for All: An Animation on Anti-Palm Oil Dirty Secret" which was developed and promoted during his tenure as Indonesian Ambassador to Belgium, Luxemburg and the EU. Another example was the 'Indonesia in Swiss' blog which was a joint initiative from the Indonesian Mission in Bern and Geneva.

Citizen protection matters present a different situation because the success of the repatriation process served as momentum for Indonesia's digital diplomacy to inform citizens back home and abroad about the MoFA's policies. The popularity of the social media post indicated success. Even though citizen protection was an existing key national interest for the Indonesian MoFA, the repatriation process demonstrated the Ministry's ability to manage information during a crisis through the use of digital instruments. A high-ranking officer in the MoFA stated,

"... for Indonesia, at this time, the translation of digital diplomacy for citizen protection is indeed the most effective, perfect, and appropriate, ... it is utilised for the interest of all people, so that it is easier to define. Before, it was often assumed that Indonesian Missions overseas are full of secrecy or perhaps considered not close enough to the community, now it is not. Now it is open to the public, where people can come freely, easily, asking for help is simple, and make complaints via Facebook are immediately answered" (personal communication).

The wake of the COVID-19 pandemic intensified the use of the hashtag #NegaraMelindungi. In 2020, the MoFA used the hashtag 258 times on Twitter to give updates related to citizen protection, repatriation, and information regarding COVID-19 measures at overseas Indonesian Missions.<sup>3</sup> In essence, diplomacy can benefit from digital diplomacy particularly to inform updates to Indonesian citizens when a face-to-face meeting is impossible. However, the intensity of updates through social media happened because of the

<sup>3</sup> Compiled by the author based on hashtag #NegaraMelindungi on Twitter @Kemlu\_RI in 2020.



pandemic. No prior citizen-protection-related agenda received that much online attention compared to what took place during the pandemic. The repatriation process of Indonesian citizens from Wuhan was even covered in many posts through various Indonesian MoFA social media channels. It remains to be seen if other citizen protection issues will be covered as intensely in the future.

The sporadic and *ad hoc* performance of digital diplomacy concerning the Rohingya crisis is strongly linked to the domestic situation in Indonesia hence illustrating the interlinking of domestic and foreign agendas. The strategy of handling the Rohingya crisis suggests that the MoFA adopts a cautious approach in how it implements its digital diplomacy. It also reveals how digital diplomacy is affected by incremental and exogenous shocks though it can also be argued that it is influenced by the domestic situation. The domestic pressure forced the GOI to maintain an active digital presence to appease the public at home while at the same time informing the international audience of the country's position concerning the crisis without endangering its national interests.



Figure 4. Indonesian MoFA Tweet on Crisis in Rakhine

Source: MoFA Indonesia, 2017a.

Further assessments on the power of domestic pressure on digital diplomacy include an incident from 2017. At the time, the situation in Rakhine state deteriorated on 25 August 2017 encompassing massive violence, the death of hundreds of Rohingyas, thousands of refugees fleeing, coordinated attacks by Rohingya militants, and a military operation called 'clearance operations' by Myanmar's armed forces to face the Rohingya militant (Wolf, 2017). These events resulted in the GOI condemning the conflict in Rakhine state (Islam, 2017) and they also posted an online statement on 30 August informing Indonesia's stance on the situation. The statement was released in Bahasa Indonesia and outlined the country's seven positions, which were: condemns the attacks of armed groups on 25 August 2017; regrets the loss of life and injuries; expect the Government of Myanmar to take steps to restore security and provide



humanitarian protection; urge all parties to immediately stop the violence in Rakhine State; the cooperation of all stakeholders for peace, security, stability and inclusive development in Rakhine State; conducive conditions in Myanmar, including in Rakhine State, support the maintenance of stability in ASEAN; the Indonesian government will continue to cooperate with Myanmar in the process of reconciliation, democratization and inclusive development (Figure 4).

As a further response to de-escalate the situation, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi discussed the issue in Myanmar on 3 September 2017 (Virantika, 2017) which also appeared in the Ministry's Twitter account on 4 September (MoFA Indonesia, 2017b). Meanwhile, in Jakarta, many Muslims gathered for an anti-Myanmar protest and to offer support to Rohingya Muslims on 4 September 2017. A day prior, a petrol bomb exploded at the Embassy of Myanmar in Jakarta. The demonstration at the Myanmar Embassy was covered by the Indonesian media and international press (Nurfuadah, 2017; "Thousands of Indonesians join", 2017). The protest lasted several weeks when supporters from *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (The Prosperous Justice Party/PKS) and Islamic organisations gathered to show Muslim solidarity and condemn the situation in Myanmar. Prabowo Subianto and Sandiaga Uno – prominent candidates for the presidential election in 2019 – attended the event (Fahlevi, 2017). Many local and national Islamic organisations became more vocal and pressured the GOI to be more active internationally to solve the problem (Fauzia, 2017; Smith & Williams, 2021).

To address the Rohingya crisis, Indonesia chose to focus on humanitarian diplomacy. Through humanitarian diplomacy, the GOI was able to fulfil its interest, such as adhering to the ASEAN Way of non-intervention, keeping the region stable, establishing a compelling international position, and responding to domestic public pressure. The GOI's decision to adopt a humanitarian stance during that time was ultimately to share information with the public about the government's actions via the Indonesian MoFA and also the Indonesian Mission in Yangon. They also needed to please the domestic public and avoid stirring further controversies at home. Thus, the MoFA and Indonesian Mission in Yangon were very careful not to initiate any backlash on the government (personal communication). Although asserting a firm position to the international audience was required, extra attention to the domestic situation was equally necessary because of several factors such as Indonesia's history of civil-military relations, the international intervention in East Timor, and the history of ethno-nationalist conflicts (Smith and Williams, 2021). Such emphasis was evident based on a tweet by the MoFA in Bahasa Indonesia (Figure 5) (MoFA Indonesia, 2017) to make it easier to grasp for Indonesians.

The Indonesian Mission in Yangon additionally backed humanitarian diplomacy initiatives where most of the tweets by @KbriYangon about Indonesia's humanitarian assistance in Myanmar were published in Bahasa (for example, see Figure 6) (Indonesia in Yangon, 2017). Following the violent clashes in August and September, the GOI offered its assistance by building a hospital and supporting resettlement measures as well as repatriation of the Rohingya people – all of which were shared on social media by the Indonesian Mission in Yangon.



Figure 5. Tweet by the Indonesian MoFA about the Rohingyas

Source: MoFA Indonesia, 2017c.



Figure 6. Retweet by @KbriYangon from @Kemlu\_RI

Source: Indonesia Embassy Yangon, 2017.



Figure 7. Tweet by the Embassy of Indonesia in Brussels

Source: Indonesian Embassy Brussels, 2019.

Furthermore, the interaction between domestic and foreign agendas has also appeared for the palm oil and citizen protection subjects in which the majority of the posts by the Indonesian MoFA and Missions were in Bahasa Indonesia. Even though not all tweets were

issued in Bahasa, there was a significant number of tweets, Instagram and Facebook posts in the language. Another example of how a domestic situation impacts palm oil sustainability was in the digital diplomacy campaigns in response to a conflict between an orangutan and villagers at a palm oil plantation in Indonesia. The orangutan was shot and became blind as a result of the conflict. The incident sparked anger in Indonesia and caused a demonstration demanding jail time for the perpetrators. There was also an online petition urging the government to thoroughly investigate the case and take firm action against the perpetrators and regulate the use of air rifles in the community (Wismabrata, 2019; Arifah, 2019). The incident was then reported by the New York Times (Beech, 2019). To calm the situation, the Indonesian Embassy in Brussels issued a statement and disseminated it digitally including on their official website (Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Brussels, 2019) and Twitter account (Figure 7) (Indonesia Embassy Brussels, 2019). This type of information sharing once again showcased a reaction to a certain situation concerning palm oil. Essentially, the key aspect of relations-building in digital diplomacy was not demonstrated in any of the digital initiatives assessed.

Several researchers in Indonesia underscored the significance of the domestic audience in supporting Indonesian palm oil. Initial criticisms about deforestation and other strategic issues of palm oil were mostly from national and local NGOs in Indonesia thus illustrating the importance of considering the domestic level when tackling palm oil issues (personal communication with a researcher and NGO activist in Indonesia). The GOI thus needed to address the issue for the domestic audience. This highlighted the need to include domestic and foreign audiences as part of digital diplomacy within the context of palm oil. In addition, Indonesian Missions underlined the importance of the domestic audience for accountability reasons and they uphold this by providing a glimpse of their diplomatic work to the public, particularly how diplomats strive to fulfil national interests. This is in keeping with the accountability aspect meant for the domestic audience as well as to provide knowledge to the Indonesian people. A diplomat in Brussels shared,

“it is to show how far we carry out this mission, we report this to the public virtually via social media. So, people know the work we have conducted at the Mission and that we do the tasks that are given to us. Well, that's part of public accountability” (personal communication).

The convergence of domestic and international agendas additionally affected citizen protection activities, particularly the repatriation process of Indonesian citizens from Wuhan. After growing calls for repatriation by Indonesians at home and the overall attention to the situation, Indonesia intensified its digital activities to satisfy the calls. Several parties in Indonesia also pressured the government to repatriate Indonesian citizens in Wuhan, for example, members of the House of Representatives (DPR) and families of Indonesian citizens in Wuhan (Prabowo, 2020), and Islamic non-governmental organisations (Rizky, 2020). News about the situation in Wuhan and repatriation further piqued public interest as countries like the United States and Japan successfully repatriated their citizens (“Wabah pneumonia”, 2020). Moreover, the GOI also emphasised its commitment to repatriate Indonesian citizens

reflecting the importance of citizen protection matters as a key national interest (Adhiyuda, 2020). As a result, on 30 January 2020, the GOI decided to repatriate Indonesian citizens from Wuhan (Pramudyani, 2020) in which 243 citizens were successfully repatriated and landed in Indonesia on 2 February 2020 (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2020a). All of the processes were documented and shared online via the Indonesian MoFA's social media channels.

The implementation of digital diplomacy in that situation focused on providing updates on the repatriation and not communicating with the public. If follow-up communication did happen, it was continued in a more traditional way (personal communications). First, when domestic audiences demanded information on the repatriation of Indonesian citizens in Wuhan, the MoFA issued a statement across the online media. The MoFA issued a traditional press release on its website (Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2020b) and used Twitter to disseminate information. On 31 January 2020, the MoFA released a statement regarding its plan to repatriate Indonesian citizens in Wuhan followed by a series of tweets (Figure 8) about the repatriation process. It tweeted pictures of Indonesian citizens at the airport, embarking on the plane and arriving safely in Indonesia. The series of tweets indicated that the MoFA turned to digital diplomacy to inform domestic audiences about the on-the-ground situation as the repatriation process became national headlines. The tweets also received significant attention indicated by the number of retweets and likes with the process of repatriation from Wuhan becoming one of the most popular tweets of the MoFA.



Figure 8. Series of tweets from Indonesian MoFA regarding the repatriation process from Wuhan, China

Source: Indonesian MoFA Twitter account, @Kemlu\_RI (From left to right, MoFA Indonesia, 2020a; MoFA Indonesia, 2020b; MoFA Indonesia, 2020c).

### *Digital Diplomacy and the Bebas-Aktif Principle*

An important aspect of Indonesian foreign policy is the principle of *bebas-aktif*. It is known as one of the most important principles of Indonesia's foreign policy besides anticolonialism (Sukma, 1995). In its simplest meaning, *bebas* means independent, while *aktif* means active. Independent is understood as Indonesia's willingness to pursue its foreign policy that is not determined by others. The active principle is related to Indonesia's willingness to participate in international affairs namely in the efforts to contribute toward world peace (Hatta, 1953; Anwar, 2003; Wirajuda, 2014). The principle of *bebas aktif* is considered the main principle of Indonesia's foreign policy as it is always followed by every ruling president. According to Anwar (2003), it is even considered "the right doctrine for Indonesia to follow for all time." The use of the *bebas aktif* principle extends beyond the period in which the principle was created. Concerning digital diplomacy, it is interesting to see whether digital diplomacy is compatible with and adds value to the *bebas aktif* principle.

Based on what has been done by Indonesian MoFA and its Missions, digital diplomacy is compatible and adds value to the *bebas aktif* principle (personal communication). As previously mentioned, many Indonesian diplomats believe that digital diplomacy complements traditional diplomacy and will not be on par with traditional diplomacy in the near future. This reasserts the view that digital diplomacy merely serves as a tool of information dissemination when it is deemed necessary. Moreover, the intention to avoid sparking online debates adds the possibility for the Indonesian MoFA, its Missions, and its diplomats to stay independent at any time.

Indonesia's digital activities in response to the Rohingya crisis have shown its benefits and how it adds value to the *bebas aktif* principle. Indonesia has taken up a form of humanitarian diplomacy over the crisis, even when some scholars criticize the country for not being vocal as other Parties regarding the issue. In the past, scholars labelled it as the 'quiet diplomacy' of Islamic humanitarianism (Permata, Hijrah, & Sinulingga, 2019; Smith and Williams, 2021). As such, its foreign policy places greater emphasis on the humanitarian side of the conflict by providing humanitarian assistance rather than addressing the political nature of the conflict or confronting the Myanmar Government. The digital activity about the issue reflects the prudent behaviour of Indonesian foreign policy. To maintain stability in the region, the Indonesian MoFA and its Yangon-based Mission used neutral wording when extending its support and humanitarian assistance, often choosing words such as Rakhine State rather than Rohingya or Muslim Rohingya (personal communications, Smith and Williams, 2021). By digital instruments, the Indonesian MoFA and its Mission have tried, at least, to widen the information dissemination reach of Indonesia's position on the Rohingya issue. Even though there are limited digital posts on the subject, the Indonesian MoFA has been able to show Indonesia's support for the Rohingya people while avoiding sparking criticism, especially from Myanmar authorities. This showcases the advantage of digital diplomacy for Indonesia as it avoided having to choose a side and opted to resolve the conflict through humanitarian action. The examples in Pictures 4, 5 and 6 show the effort.

However, Indonesia should try to further maximize the potential of digital diplomacy. What has been done by the Indonesian MoFA, its Missions and diplomats is still far from the true intention of digital diplomacy which is to create a more transparent diplomacy with two-way communication, especially on social media. A more open and lively online discussion between Indonesian diplomats and the public should be encouraged to create more long-term engagement. Active digital diplomacy doesn't necessarily mean jeopardizing the *bebas-aktif* principle and engaging in online discussions about Indonesian foreign policy will open opportunities for the Indonesian MoFA to receive different opinions, prepare for various outcomes, and analyse public opinion. Nevertheless, a grand overarching digital diplomacy strategy that accommodates tailor-based digital activities and streamlines multiple digital initiatives on the same topic – such as economic activities, issues in the Southeast Asian region or other current issues – needs to be developed. Another important evaluation is that Indonesia's social media posts must be presented in a minimum of two languages, specifically Bahasa Indonesia and English, to expand the audience reach. A formal and official English translation of each post from an official account would be more reliable for the public and will create more engagement.

## Conclusions

Digital instruments have increasingly become an important aspect of diplomacy to facilitate various diplomatic interests. Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi stipulated how digital instruments can be utilised for citizen protection reasons, to promote peaceful messages, to strengthen economic cooperation, and as a tool to promote development. Digital innovation, especially social media, will open many opportunities for MoFA to fulfil its foreign policy objectives. This paper sought to answer the question: What are the characteristics of a specific country's digital diplomacy? Taking Indonesia as its research subject and selecting three case studies to assess the Indonesian MoFA, Missions, and diplomats' social media activities, this paper establishes that Indonesian digital diplomacy has three main characteristics.

First and foremost, the Indonesian MoFA's understanding of digital diplomacy remains limited to information dissemination, mostly as a tool to share information online. The MoFA and Missions very rarely engage in or promote two-way online communication in their online posts including on substantial topics like palm oil or the Rohingyas. These actions reaffirm the opinion that digital diplomacy would never be on par with traditional diplomacy. Even though Indonesia's development of digital diplomacy initiatives is still developing, the restricted point of view on the subject must be revised swiftly if the MoFA aspires to take advantage of the numerous opportunities offered by digital diplomacy. Second, Indonesian digital diplomacy is marked by its sporadic and *ad hoc* digital initiatives meaning that digital diplomacy is only conducted when it is deemed necessary. As a result, many digital initiatives were not streamlined nor mutually supported among related Missions even when the content covered the same topic. Digital initiatives on palm oil exemplify this trait where the blog initiative in 2021 did not mention a video made in 2014 concerning the same subject. This



finding reflects the country's missing grand strategy on digital initiatives, thus, many initiatives were conducted independently, were initiated by diplomats or Missions and were not well coordinated. To improve Indonesian digital diplomacy in the short term, the Indonesian MoFA can coordinate digital initiatives which have commonalities. Third, Indonesian digital diplomacy is strongly affected by domestic and foreign agendas. Digital diplomacy initiatives are oftentimes conducted as a response to facing domestic pressure and, essentially, to appease the domestic public. It is also intended to inform the international audience about Indonesia's foreign policy. That is why many online social media posts were published in Bahasa. The importance of domestic and international audiences makes it crucial that online content feature Bahasa Indonesia and English languages as it can bolster the Indonesian MoFA's credibility and widen the outreach of its digital measures.

Furthermore, digital diplomacy complements and adds value to Indonesia's foreign policy principle of *bebas aktif*. The use of digital diplomacy to share information about what has been conducted by Indonesia to solve global or regional issues has enhanced the profile of Indonesian diplomacy. In essence, digital diplomacy fulfils its advantage of expanding the audience reach. A topic which requires further assessment is an in-depth look at whether the three main characteristics drawn from this paper also appear in another country's digital diplomacy practices; additionally, determining whether digital diplomacy has effectively assisted a country's ability to navigate past certain situations.

## Acknowledgment

The author is very grateful for the comments from the reviewers and advice from the 14<sup>th</sup> International Indonesia Forum Conference on the panel of The Power of the Digital Age for Indonesia as well as the assistance of doctoral supervisor Prof. Dr. Jörn Dosch. The research is also supported by the DAAD Scholarship Program.

## About The Authors

Albert Triwibowo is a doctoral candidate at Department of Politics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, University of Rostock; an Assistant Professor at the Department of International Relations, Parahyangan Catholic University, and a DAAD Scholarship holder. His doctoral research critically examines Indonesian digital diplomacy.

## References

Adesina, O. S. (2017). Foreign policy in an era of digital diplomacy. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 3, 1-13.

- Apa kata media Asia Tenggara tentang krisis pengungsi? (2015, May 18). *DW Indonesia*. <https://www.dw.com/id/apa-kata-media-asia-tenggara-tentang-krisis-pengungsi/a-18456959>
- Andika, M. T, Pamungkas, B., & Badaruddin, M. (2019). Has Indonesia's diplomacy really gone digital? *Proceedings of the 1st International Symposium on Indonesian Politics*, 5, <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.25-6-2019.2288007>
- Anwar, D. F. (2003). Key aspects of Indonesia's foreign policy. In Anwar D. F. and Crouch H. (Eds.), *Indonesia: Foreign Policy and Domestic Politics*. Singapore: ISEAS Trends in Southeast Asia Series 9, 1-10.
- Arifah, I. N. (2019, July 31). Tembaki orangutan dengan 74 peluru, dua remaja Aceh hanya wajib adzan di masjid. *ABC News*. <https://www.abc.net.au/indonesian/2019-07-31/vonis-ringan-pelaku-penembakan-orang-utan-hope/11368362>
- Barus, H. (2001, October 11). Gabungan pengusaha sawit Indonesia keluar dari RSPO. *Investor.id*. <https://investor.id/archive/gabungan-pengusaha-sawit-indonesia-keluar-dari-rspo>
- Beech, H. (2019, June 29). One casualty of the palm oil industry: An orangutan mother, shot 74 times. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/29/world/asia/orangutan-indonesia-palm-oil.html>
- Bjola, C. & Jiang, L. (2015). Social media and public diplomacy: A comparative analysis of the digital diplomatic strategies of the EU, US and Japan in China. In Bjola, C. & Holmes, M. (Eds.), *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (pp. 71-88). London and New York: Routledge.
- Bjola, C. & Manor, I. (2018). Revisiting Putnam's two-level game theory in the digital age: domestic digital diplomacy and the Iran nuclear deal. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 31(1), 3-32.
- Bjola, C. & Manor, I. (2020, March 31). Digital diplomacy in the time of the Coronavirus Pandemic. *CPD Blog*. <https://www.uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/digital-diplomacy-time-coronavirus-pandemic>
- Dharossa, T. & Rezasyah, T. (2020) Upaya perlindungan WNI oleh pemerintah Indonesia melalui pendekatan diplomasi digital (2014-2019). *Padjadjaran Journal of International Relations*, 2(1), 105-118. <https://doi.org/10.24198/padjir.v2i1.26055>
- Doeser, F. (2010). International constraints, domestic politics and foreign policy change in small states: The Fall of the Danish 'Footnote Policy'. *SGIR 7<sup>th</sup> Pan-European IR Conference*, Stockholm 9-11 September, 1-19.
- Drajat, B. P. (2021, March 5). Awaiting Switzerland's decision on Indonesian palm oil. *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2021/03/05/awaiting-switzerlands-decision-on-indonesian-palm-oil.html>
- Duncombe, C. (2017). Twitter and transformative diplomacy: Social media and Iran-US relations. *International Affairs*, 93(3), 545-562. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix048>



- Dwikardana, S., Djelantik, S., Triwibowo, A., Valerisha, A., & Martha, J. (2017). *Transformasi Strategi Diplomasi di Era Digital: Identifikasi Postur Diplomasi Digital di Indonesia*. Laporan Penelitian Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat Universitas Katolik Parahyangan. Bandung: UNPAR.
- Elfadina, E. A. (2021, March 29). Flashback, begini awal mula sawit Indonesia didiskriminasi Uni Eropa. *Warta Ekonomi*. <https://www.wartaekonomi.co.id/read334361/flashback-begini-awal-mula-sawit-indonesia-didiskriminasi-uni-eropa>
- Embassy of Indonesia Brussels. (2014, May 14). Protect Paradise for All: An Animation on Anti-Palm Oil Dirty Secret. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQ5\\_ITx1JoU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQ5_ITx1JoU).
- Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Brussels. (2019, July 7). Embassy's Comments on International New York Times Article on the orangutan "Hope", "A mother shot 74 times" 5 July 2019. <https://kemlu.go.id/brussels/en/news/1261/embassy-comments-on-international-new-york-times-article-on-the-orangutan-hope-a-mother-shot-74-times-5-july-2019>
- Fauzia, A. (2017). Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia: Modernization, Islamization, and social justice. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 10(2), 223-236. <https://doi.org/10.14764/10.ASEAS-2017.2-6>
- Fahlevi, F. (2017, September 16). Prabowo dan Sandiaga akan orasi pada aksi bela Rohingya 169. *Tribunnews.com*. <https://www.tribunnews.com/metropolitan/2017/09/16/prabowo-dan-sandiaga-akan-orasi-pada-aksi-bela-rohingya-169>
- Fletcher, T. (2017) *The Naked Diplomat*. London: William Collins.
- Hanson, F. (2015). Baked in and Wired: eDiplomacy@State. *Foreign Policy Paper Series* (30), 1-41.
- Hartati, A.Y. (2018) Tantangan *Digital Diplomacy* Indonesia. *Proceeding 1<sup>st</sup> Senas POLHI*. Retrieved May 15, 2023, <https://publikasiilmiah.unwahas.ac.id/index.php/SENASPOLHI/article/view/2439>.
- Hatta, M. (1953). Indonesia's Foreign Policy. *Foreign Affairs*, 31(3), 441-452.
- Hocking, B. & Melissen, J. (2015). *Diplomacy in the Digital Age*. Clingendael Report. The Hague: Clingendael. [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Digital\\_Diplomacy\\_in\\_the\\_Digital%20Age\\_Clingendael\\_July2015.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Digital_Diplomacy_in_the_Digital%20Age_Clingendael_July2015.pdf)
- Holmes, M. (2015). Digital Diplomacy and International Change Management. In Bjola, C. & Holmes, M. (Eds.), *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice* (pp. 13-32). London and New York: Routledge.
- Indonesia Embassy Brussels (@indonesiainbxl). (2019, July 6). In response to the @nytimes's A mother shot 74 times, Indonesian Government condemns this violence again Hope. These cruel acts serve to smear palm oil and our efforts to promote palm oil sustainability. Read the Embassy's comment below and check out the videos for full

- story [Twitter Moment]. <https://twitter.com/indonesiainbxi/status/1147467479523872768>
- Indonesia Embassy Yangon (@KbriYangon). (2017, November 19). 3. Pembahasan mengenai program2 bantuan kemanusiaan, repatriasi & resettlement, dan pembangunan ekonomi menjadi fokus #MenluRetno & Menteri Sosial Myanmar [Twitter Moment]. Retrieved from <https://twitter.com/KbriYangon/status/932439341103644672>
- Islam, P. A. (2017, August 29). Indonesia Kecam Penyerangan yang Kembali Terjadi di Myanmar. *Okezone*. <https://news.okezone.com/read/2017/08/29/18/1765194/indonesia-kecam-penyerangan-yang-kembali-terjadi-di-myanmar>
- Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia. (2017). Pernyataan Pers Tahunan Menteri Luar Negeri Tahun 2017. Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia [online]. <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/id/read/757/pidato/pernyataan-pers-tahunan-menteri-luar-negeri-ri-tahun-2017>
- Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia. (2018). Keputusan Menteri Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia Nomor 42/B/RO/I/2018/01.
- Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia. (2019). Indonesia Gaungkan Diplomasi Digital di Kawasan. Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia [online]. Retrieved April 20, 2022, from <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/id/read/584/berita/indonesia-gaungkan-diplomasi-digital-di-kawasan>
- Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia. (2020a). Pemerintah RI Berhasil Pulangkan 243 Orang Dari Wuhan, Tiongkok. Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia [online]. Retrieved April 20, 2022, from <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/id/read/1011/berita/pemerintah-ri-berhasil-pulangkan-243-orang-dari-wuhan-tiongkok>
- Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia. (2020b). Pernyataan Pers Menteri Luar Negeri perihal rencana pemulangan WNI dari Wuhan, RRT. Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia [online]. Retrieved April 20, 2022, from <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/id/read/1007/berita/pernyataan-pers-menteri-luar-negeri-perihal-rencana-pemulangan-wni-dari-wuhan-rrt>
- Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia. (2020c). Pernyataan Pers Tahunan Menteri Luar Negeri Tahun 2020. Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia [online]. Retrieved April 20, 2022, from <https://kemlu.go.id/istanbul/id/news/4074/pernyataan-pers-tahunan-menlu-pptm-2020>
- Laucereno, S. F. (2021, January 19). Kampanye Anti-Sawit RI di Swiss Bisa Ganggu Bisnis Kedua Negara. *Detik Finance*. <https://finance.detik.com/berita-ekonomi-bisnis/d-5340414/kampanye-anti-sawit-ri-di-swiss-bisa-ganggu-bisnis-kedua-negara>
- Madu, L. (2018). Indonesia's Digital Diplomacy: Problems and Challenges. *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional*, 7 (1), 11-18.
- Madu, L., Sugiarto, T., & Amiri, A. M. (2017). Indonesia's Public Diplomacy in the Internet Era: Bringing the State Back In. *Dialogo Journal*, 4(1), 37-42.

- Manor, I. (2016). *Are We There Yet: Have MFAs Realized the Potential of Digital Diplomacy?* Leiden: Koninklijke Brill. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004319790\\_001](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004319790_001).
- Manor, I. (2019). *The Digitalization of Public Diplomacy*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Margiansyah, D. (2020). Revisiting Indonesia's Economic Diplomacy in the Age of Disruption: Towards Digital Economy and Innovation Diplomacy. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 8(1), 15-39, <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v8i1.6433>.
- Meriam, S. B. & Tidsel, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative Research. A Guide to Design and Implementation* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- MoFA Indonesia. (2019, July 10). A Story of Indonesian Palm Oil: Economic Welfare and Environmental Sustainability [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WeDkSkiuG80>
- MoFA Indonesia. (@Kemlu\_RI). (2017a, August 30). 7 sikap Indonesia ID atas penyerangan di Rakhine State, Myanmar. [Twitter Moment]. Retrieved from [https://mobile.twitter.com/kemlu\\_ri/status/902719477640347648?lang=ar](https://mobile.twitter.com/kemlu_ri/status/902719477640347648?lang=ar).
- MoFA Indonesia (@Kemlu\_RI). (2017b, September 4). #MenluRetno lakukan pertemuan dengan Daw Aung Suu Kyi bahas bantuan kemanusiaan untuk #RakhineState". [Twitter Moment]. Retrieved from [https://twitter.com/kemlu\\_ri/status/904671022359519232](https://twitter.com/kemlu_ri/status/904671022359519232).
- MoFA Indonesia (@Kemlu\_RI). (2017c, September 22). Hasil diplomasi, bantuan kemanusiaan RI ID untuk #Rohingya #RakhineState telah sampai di Myanmar <http://kemlu.go.id/id/berita/Pages/Hasil-Diplomasi,-Bantuan-Kemanusiaan-RI-Telah-Sampai-di-Myanmar.aspx> [Twitter Moment]. [https://twitter.com/kemlu\\_ri/status/911069264613740544](https://twitter.com/kemlu_ri/status/911069264613740544)
- MoFA Indonesia (@Kemlu\_RI). (2020a, January 31). Pernyataan Pers Menteri Luar Negeri mengenai Rencana Evakuasi WNI dari Wuhan, dapat disimak melalui link: <https://kem.lu/gm> [Twitter Moment]. [https://twitter.com/Kemlu\\_RI/status/1223172544175329285](https://twitter.com/Kemlu_RI/status/1223172544175329285).
- MoFA Indonesia (@Kemlu\_RI). (2020b, February 2). #NegaraMelindungi sertai proses pemulangan WNI dari Wuhan, RRT. Dini hari tadi (2/2) para WNI diterbangkan melalui Bandara Tianhe ke Indonesia. #IniDiplomasi [Twitter Moment]. [https://twitter.com/Kemlu\\_RI/status/1223784025145233409](https://twitter.com/Kemlu_RI/status/1223784025145233409).
- MoFA Indonesia (@Kemlu\_RI). (2020c, February 2). #SahabatKemlu, saudara kita yg berada di Wuhan telah berhasil dipulangkan ke tanah air. Langkah kesehatan akan terus diterapkan untuk menjamin kesehatan semua pihak. #NegaraMelindungi #IniDiplomasi [Twitter Moment]. [https://twitter.com/kemlu\\_ri/status/1223843117599576065?lang=en](https://twitter.com/kemlu_ri/status/1223843117599576065?lang=en).
- MoFA Indonesia (@Kemlu\_RI). (2020d, June 8). Berikut Perkembangan COVID-19 di Dunia & Pelindungan WNI per 08/06 pk1 08.00 WIB. Tambahan WNI terkonfirmasi #COVID19 di SA&KW, sembuh di KW, meninggal di SA. Total WNI terkonfirmasi COVID-19 di luar

- negeri adlh 1015: 604 sembuh, 58 meninggal & 353 dlm perawatan. [Twitter Moment]. [https://twitter.com/Kemlu\\_RI/status/1269800789297426433](https://twitter.com/Kemlu_RI/status/1269800789297426433).
- Mohajan, H. (2018). History of Rakhine State and the Origin of the Rohingya Muslims," *MPRA Paper* (88186), 1-28. [https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/88186/1/MPRA\\_paper\\_88186.pdf](https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/88186/1/MPRA_paper_88186.pdf).
- Moy, L. Y., & Kusuma, A. J. (2016). Latar belakang Indonesia menerima pengungsi Rohingya pada tahun 2015 (analisa konstruktivis). *Global Insight Journal*, 1(1), 60-75. <https://doi.org/10.52447/gij.v1i1.755>
- Nurfuadah, R. N. (2017, September 4) Bela Rohingya, unjuk rasa Muslim Indonesia di depan Kedubes Myanmar disoroti media asing. *Okezone* <https://news.okezone.com/read/2017/09/04/18/1768842/bela-rohingya-unjuk-rasa-muslim-indonesia-di-depan-kedubes-myanmar-disoroti-media-asing>
- Oegrosono, A. H. (@havasogrosono). (2021, August 19). Mathematically speaking, EU demands on palm oil is less than 5 million tonnes. And sustainable palm oil supply is well over 5 mio tonnes. So why not just buy all of them? Well that would make @FarmEurope @FEDIOL\_EU @Avril\_Group angry. So, its never about sustainability [Twitter Moment]. <https://twitter.com/havasogrosono/status/1428382598221467649>.
- Paris, R. (2013). The Digital Diplomacy Revolution: Why is Canada Lagging Behind? *Policy Paper Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute*, 1-10.
- Palm Oil in Indonesia. (2021). Palm Oil in Indonesia. *Indonesia in Swiss*. [www.indonesiainswiss.com](http://www.indonesiainswiss.com)
- Pamment, J. (2016). *British Public Diplomacy & Soft Power Diplomatic Influence & Digital Disruption*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pasuhuk, H. (2015, May 20). Malaysia dan Indonesia setuju tampung pengungsi Rohingya. *DW Indonesia*. <https://www.dw.com/id/malaysia-dan-indonesia-setuju-tampung-pengungsi-rohingya/a-18462889>
- Perkembangan mutakhir industri minyak sawit di Indonesia. (2021). *GAPKI*. <https://gapki.id/news/3971/perkembangan-mutakhir-industri-minyak-sawit-indonesia>
- Permata, I. M., Hijrah, N. & Sinulingga, A. A. (2019). Humanitarian Diplomacy: Indonesia's Response Toward Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis. *Journal of Diplomacy and International Studies*, 1-12.
- Pohan, S., Pohan, H., & Savitri, I. N. (2017). Digital diplomacy-maximizing social media in Indonesia's economic and cultural diplomacy. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR)*, 81, 372-390. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icosop-16.2017.52>

- Prabowo, D. (2020, January 30). Pemerintah berupaya pulangkan WNI dari Wuhan. *Kompas.com*. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2020/01/30/06342831/pemerintah-berupaya-pulangkan-wni-dari-wuhan?page=all>
- Pramudyani, Y. D. (2020, January 30). Pemerintah putusan pulangkan WNI dari Hubei. *Antara News*. <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/1272715/pemerintah-putusan-pulangkan-wni-dari-hubei>
- Pujayanti, A. (2017). Indonesia dan tragedi kemanusiaan Rohingya. *Majalah Info Singkat Hubungan Internasional*, IX(17), 5-8.
- Pusat Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Multilateral Badan Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Kementerian Luar Negeri RI. (2019). *Peran Diplomasi dalam Mendukung Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan: Tinjauan terhadap Pengelolaan Industri Minyak Nabati*. Badan Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia.
- Rashica, V. (2018). The benefits and risks of digital diplomacy. *SEEU Review*, 13(1), 75-89. <https://doi.org/10.2478/seeur-2018-0008>
- Rizky, F. (2020, January 27). Virus Korona mewabah, Muhammadiyah minta pemerintah pulangkan WNI dari Wuhan. *Okezone*. <https://nasional.okezone.com/read/2020/01/27/337/2158854/virus-korona-mewabah-muhammadiyah-minta-pemerintah-pulangkan-wni-dari-wuhan>
- RSPO. (2023). Who We Are. RSPO. <https://rspo.org/who-we-are/>
- Sengupta, I. (2021). An Agenda for a Dignified and Sustainable Rohingya Refugee Response in Bangladesh. *Act For Peace Report*, 1-73. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/AfP-report-An-Agenda-for-a-Dignified-and-Sustainable-Rohingya-Refugee-Response-in-Bangladesh.pdf>
- Sidik, R. M. (2021, September 22). CPO Indonesia ditolak Uni Eropa, Kenapa?" *Monitoring Pangan 2018-Indonesia for Global Justice*. [https://igj.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CPO-Indonesia-ditolak-Uni-Eropa\\_Palm-Oil-Issues.pdf](https://igj.or.id/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/CPO-Indonesia-ditolak-Uni-Eropa_Palm-Oil-Issues.pdf)
- Sinaga, Y. A. (2019, September 10). Menlu: Diplomasi digital alat untuk perlindungan warga. *Antara News*. <https://www.antaranews.com/berita/1054096/menlu-diplomasi-digital-alat-untuk-perlindungan-warga>
- Smith, C. Q. & Williams S. G. (2021). Why Indonesia adopted 'Quiet Diplomacy' over R2P in the Rohingya crisis: The roles of Islamic humanitarianism, civil-military relations, and ASEAN. *Global Responsibility to Protect*, 13(2-3), 158-185. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1875-984X-13020004>
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. California: Sage.
- Sukma, R. (1995). The evolution of Indonesia's foreign policy: An Indonesian view. *Asian Survey*, 35(3), 304-315. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645547>

- Sukma, R. (2011). Soft Power and Public Diplomacy: The Case of Indonesia. In Lee, S. J. and Melissen, J. (Eds.), *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power in East Asia* (pp. 304-315). Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sundari, R., Prayuda, R., & Sary, D. V. (2021). Upaya diplomasi pemerintah Indonesia dalam mediasi konflik kemanusiaan di Myanmar. *Jurnal Niara*, 14(1), 177-187. <https://doi.org/10.31849/niara.v14i1.6011>
- Thousands of Indonesians join anti-Myanmar rally in Jakarta. (2017). *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-indonesia-idUSKCN1BH0T6>
- Virantika, D. (2017, September 4). Bahas konflik di Rakhine, Menlu Retno telah tiba di Myanmar. *Okezone*. <https://news.okezone.com/read/2017/09/04/18/1768740/bahas-konflik-di-rakhine-menlu-retno-telah-tiba-di-myanmar>
- Wabah pneumonia, pemerintah harus cepat pulangkan WNI di Wuhan. (2020). *Koran Sindo*. <https://international.sindonews.com/berita/1511554/40/wabah-pneumonia-pemerintah-harus-cepat-pulangkan-wni-di-wuhan?showpage=all>
- Wirajuda, M. H. (2014). The impact of democratisation on Indonesia's foreign policy: Regional cooperation, promotion of political values, and conflict management. [Doctoral Thesis, London School of Economics, United Kingdom].
- Wismabrata, M. H. (2019, March 16) Fakta orangutan Hope ditembak 74 peluru senapan angin, 7 berhasil dikeluarkan hingga protes dari aktivis. *Kompas.com*. <https://regional.kompas.com/read/2019/03/16/13421721/fakta-orangutan-hope-ditembak-74-peluru-senapan-angin-7-berhasil-dikeluarkan?page=all>
- Wolf, S. O. (2017). Genocide, exodus and exploitation for jihad: The urgent need to address the Rohingya crisis. South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF). Working Paper No. 6, 1-42.



# Family Business Dynamics in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Study of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand

Nugroho Sukamdani

Department Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business,  
Sahid University Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia 12870

[nb.sukamdani@gmail.com](mailto:nb.sukamdani@gmail.com)

**How to Cite:** Sukamdani, N. (2023). Family business dynamics in Southeast Asia: A comparative study of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 11(1), 197–218. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.9518>

## Abstract

The research discussed the literature on family business in four Southeast Asian countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. The four countries were selected as case studies to contextualize the southeast Asian family business context. In addition, the research perceived that the four countries have similar sociocultural characteristics, potentially providing similar attributes to how family businesses establish and grow. Drawing from literature collected from the Scopus database through the keywords “family business,” “Indonesia,” “Malaysia,” “Thailand,” and “Singapore,” the research provided the dynamics of knowledge production through systemic literature review. A narrative literature review was implemented to provide a high level of abstraction to the literature on family business differences and similarities. The findings show that the theme of succession was widely discussed in the literature. Succession in all four countries still prioritizes members of the family as successors. However, literature in Indonesia provides a more in-depth understanding of the way succession works. The research enriches the present discussion and provides insights for researchers on the research gap in family business issues. At a practical level, the research provides insight for professionals who work in the sector to gain insight into how family businesses work to maintain their entrepreneurial spirit.

**Keywords:** South East Asian, family business, comparative analysis

## Introduction

Family businesses are the main contributor to economic growth, especially in Asian countries (Fang et al., 2021). According to Ho and Chalam (2017), more than 75% of businesses

*Journal of ASEAN Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2023), pp.197–218

ISSN 2338-1361 print / ISSN 2338-1353 electronic

Received: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023/ Revised: 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023/ Accepted: 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023

in Southeast Asia are family businesses. Only in China and Singapore, less than half of businesses are family businesses. In Malaysia, family businesses control almost 75% of the country's economic assets, while in Indonesia, family businesses are growing more than the global average. Family companies in Indonesia reach 40% of market capitalization and contribute more than 80% of the gross domestic product. Although family business is dominant in Asia, a lack of understanding remains regarding the characteristics and behavior of Asian family firms (Bodolica et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2020).

Furthermore, family businesses in Asian countries have different characteristics from their Western counterparts regarding how they develop the business, which is closely related to the existing sociocultural context. Similarly, family businesses in Asian countries have a different sociocultural context from Western family businesses (Barkema et al., 2015). For example, in Asian countries, the government's control over society is more robust than in Western countries (Dinh and Calabrò, 2019). It is expected that political connections among the leader of family businesses in Asian countries are more vital, even though they are closely connected to the political leader. However, family businesses in Western countries are controlled mainly by market orientation, which does not require strong political connections to grow and secure their businesses (Franks et al., 2012). In addition, most of the literature on family businesses in Asia is focused on China, Taiwan, Japan, and India. Therefore, understanding family business in the Southeast Asian context is crucial to provide a sociocultural understanding of family business in general and shed light on future research directions toward the theoretical framework of family business in Southeast Asia.

This research employs systematic literature and bibliometric analysis to compare the literature on family businesses in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. A systematic literature review was implemented to develop a high level of abstraction on the findings. This research enriches the discussion about family business literature in Southeast Asia. In addition, this paper provides an in-depth comparison of family business literature among the countries studied. Moreover, this work focuses on how each country's cultural values influence succession processes in family businesses.

### **Analytical Framework**

Although the term "family business" has been discussed in various academic and non-academic literature, there is no agreed definition (Astrachan et al., 2002). Even differentiating family and non-family businesses is challenging. On the one hand, scholars define family business from a historical lens (Lansberg et al., 1988). On the other hand, researchers also view the establishment of a family business as part of the family's efforts to reach prosperity and wealth (Barbera, Stamm, & DeWitt, 2018). The family is involved in establishing the business and how it reaches its objective (Ward, 2016); therefore, family moral and spiritual values are mostly represented in the corporate culture of the family business.

From this point of view, scholars mostly view family businesses through three lenses. The first view is family business ownership (Lansberg et al., 1988). This perspective refers to



the founder of the business, representing how deep the founder's involvement is in the family business. Founder involvement portrays the moral and spiritual values permeating the organization. The second lens is organizational values (Barbera et al., 2018). These values are mostly related to the principles in which the family believes, guiding the way organizations solve various business challenges. That is, corporate governance is influenced by how corporate values reflect founders' values. Organizational values help the owner choose their successor, who is a family or non-family member who can absorb the founder's values. The third lens is the succession process (Barbera et al., 2018). Various scholars have discussed succession, which primarily works in two models, choosing successors from a family or non-family member who has a good involvement within the corporation.

Business sustainability is closely related to an organization's self-concept and beliefs (Fletcher, Melin, & Gimeno, 2012). The organization's self-concept is evolving, reflecting the founders' historical perspective and the organization itself. The member patronage of the family business's historical experiences is mostly internalized within the way the family business works. In other words, the founder's entrepreneurial spirit, which is reflected in the organization's values, helps the business maintain its sustainability.

Moreover, the sociopolitical environment influences family business values (Dinh & Calabrò, 2019). In Asia, a family business has a strong connection with political leaders as the government has more control over various aspects of social life than in Western society. However, in European countries, market opportunity governs how family businesses emerge and reach their objective.

The historical aspects of Asian family businesses can explain why they are owned mainly by ethnic Chinese. In Indonesia, the new order under Suharto's regime provided privileges for the Chinese ethnicity to drive the country's economy and prosperity (Redding, 1986). During the post-New-Order era, the sociopolitical situation changed, resulting in the growth of more non-Chinese-owned family businesses, allowing them to reach their economic potential. This transition also occurred in Malaysia, where most family businesses are owned by ethnic Chinese.

For a variety of reasons, the Chinese ethnicity was spread from their homeland to various parts of the world as immigrants. Their motivation as immigrants who want to reach prosperity and wealth in the destination country provides the foundation of their entrepreneurial spirit. As a diaspora, Chinese immigrants must work hard to reach and maintain their prosperity. Although they are disconnected from their homeland, they retain their cultural life and social connections (Hertzman, 2020). Those cultural ties are why the literature emphasizes how succession in Chinese family businesses is related to Confucianism.

On the other side, local culture also plays a significant role in shaping the corporate culture of family businesses. For instance, the concept of "bapakism," a cultural phenomenon prevalent in Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, emphasizes paternalistic leadership and hierarchical relationships within organizations (Rademakers, 1998). Bapakism refers to the practice where the "bapak," or father figure, is responsible for providing guidance, protection, and support to subordinates, who in turn show loyalty, respect, and deference to

their leader. This cultural element influences the dynamics and decision-making processes in family businesses, fostering a sense of unity and familial loyalty while potentially limiting the scope for individual autonomy and innovation.

Family business serves a crucial role in the economic growth of many Asian countries (Fang et al., 2021). This type of business provides many jobs and contributes significantly to the GDP of many Asian countries. However, there is a lack of understanding of how family business works and how the entrepreneurial spirit is inherited in the next generation of family businesses. Learning from the literature, we conducted a narrative literature review to understand family business in southeast Asia, particularly in four countries—Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

## Methodology

The research employs a systematic literature review to explore patterns in the study of family businesses in Southeast Asia. A systematic literature review allows us to synthesize prior research and integrate the findings to gain a new understanding of family businesses, particularly from cultural, succession, and governance perspectives (Perry & Hammond, 2002).

This research selects the Scopus database for literature collection due to its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals, ensuring the quality and relevance of the sourced articles. The time frame of 2000-2020 was selected to provide a comprehensive overview of the research conducted on family businesses in Southeast Asia over the past two decades.

The inclusion criteria for selecting articles were as follows:

1. Articles focusing on family businesses in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.
2. Articles published between 2000 and 2020.
3. Articles available in English.

The research uses the keywords "family business" in combination with each of the four countries analyzed in this paper: "Indonesia," "Malaysia," "Singapore," and "Thailand." We identified 198 papers published between 2000 and 2020 that focused on family businesses in these four countries. The distribution of publications was as follows: 70 on family businesses in Indonesia, 68 on family businesses in Malaysia, 35 on family businesses in Thailand, and 25 on family businesses in Singapore.

We then conducted a preliminary step to clean the data and assess the relevancy of the title and abstract. Following this, we performed a literature analysis to identify the theoretical lenses and insights from the literature discussions in each country. Any discrepancies in the findings were discussed and resolved through deliberation.

## Discussions

This section compares research on family businesses in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. These four countries arguably provide interesting insights into how each country's different cultural and institutional settings constrain family businesses. The four countries also offer stark differences in how the state in Southeast Asia operates. While Indonesia has become more mature in terms of democracy, Thailand has experienced the rise and fall of its democracy. Malaysia and Singapore also provide interesting and different cultural settings. Both countries have had relatively strong governments with slightly authoritarian tendencies since the birth of their nations. While Malaysia has more affirmative action toward its disadvantaged Malay population in light of the domination of the Chinese minority, Singapore business has been primarily dominated by the ethnic Chinese who form a majority in the island country.

Based on the quantitative research done in Indonesia, various topics are discussed in the study of Indonesian family business. Research on family business in Indonesia also engages various theoretical viewpoints. The first theoretical lens is how family businesses compete in a free-market economy. Zainal et al. (2018) found that with a sustainable competitive advantage, understanding the customer and market is the key to a successful long-term business. To better understand the customers and market, the company must have an internal focus on strategic assets and an external focus on the market.

The second issue discussed is a financial concern. Putri and Viverita (2019) conduct research from a theoretical financial leverage view. The research found that the debt a firm acquires increases the risk faced by the firm because of the risk of default. The first generation of the family business usually takes on the debt as they are considered more business-oriented to achieve and maintain high profitability. In contrast, the next generation is more family-oriented. Leaders of the more family-oriented generation would likely have a lower appetite for financial risk. That is, family firms are more risk-averse after the succession. Meanwhile, Augendra and Bernard (2019) find that entrepreneurs prefer investing in lands and houses to improve their quality of life instead of investing in the business. This scenario creates the condition where there is a fund shortage for the business, which ends up with the SMEs taking loans from microfinance institutions.

From a supply-chain theoretical lens, Hendayani and Febrianta (2020) conducts a study on the halal supply chain. It is found that there is no significant effect of technology on the efficiency of the halal supply chain. However, technology has a positive influence and relationship with the effectiveness of the halal supply chain. Through a narrow theoretical lens, Rizky et al. (2019) find that small technology, such as the digitalization of the data and online data sharing, would shorten the process compared to its standard time.

Other studies have been conducted to provide better insight into family business owners in Indonesia. For instance, Fendiani and Tandiono (2018) find that family businesses in Indonesia face an agency problem. The agency problem arises because of a misalignment between majority and minority shareholders. The research also found that managerial

ownership creates better harmonization between managers and owners. Hence, companies with high managerial ownership tend to have a lower degree of accounting conservatism.

Pendrian et al. (2018) discuss Indonesian family business from a parenting role perspective. The findings show that firms with a corporate center that applies a strategic planning approach will positively influence the entrepreneurial orientation and strategic initiatives in business units. From a family resilience view, Sunarti et al. (2021) report PLS findings demonstrating that while physical, economic, social, and psychological resilience harm well-being, family factors have a favorable impact on the subjective well-being of families. Although the family's resilience increased in the six months following the accident, the family was unsatisfied with this progress. However, dissatisfaction with family fulfillment remained despite increased family resilience and elevated prospects for a brighter future.

Studies have also been conducted through a company performance theoretical lens. Tanjung (2020) discovered that governance compliance can affect firm performance. In comparison, Joni et al. (2020) found a positive association between a politically connected board and market performance, specifically, the relationship between the supervisory board. Kussudyarsana et al. (2020) studied Indonesian family business from a transaction cost theory view. The authors suggested that businesses adopt formal governance when there is ambiguity, as it is found that uncertainty influences the application of formal governance in Indonesian family businesses.

From a business management theoretical lens, quantitative and qualitative studies have been conducted. From a quantitative approach, Ambarriani and Purwanugraha (2012) state that for businesses to survive and grow, they must be more concerned about how their management processes support their financing activities, not merely focused on improving performance. From a qualitative approach, Barral (2019) executes research regarding agro-industries related to palm oil, finding that it is possible to link agro-industries, family farming, and farming family business in a complementary way. The research finds that value is mainly derived from the agricultural frontiers where large plantations of palm oil cultivation are established (Barral, 2019).

One of the most highlighted topics is succession. Istiatin and Luhgiato (2017) announced three keys to achieving third-generation success in leading a family business: the successor characteristics, transformation, and family harmony. Meanwhile, Tirdasari and Dhewanto (2020) report that the right time for business succession is when the predecessor is within the ages of 41–50 and the successor is within ages 19–25. Regarding gender, it has been reported that Chinese family businesses still maintain a Confucian culture (Anggadwita et al., 2020). That is, males are prioritized as the successor of the business under specific criteria, including a strong will, intention, determination, and sufficient ability to control the business (Anggadwita et al., 2020). Rosen et al. (2019) add that a well-thought-out succession plan and careful attention to the professional development of family members and other personnel are two ways the CEO ensures the firm's continuity. Moreover, it is critical to pinpoint the fundamental principles that will make a future leader successful. To create a successful

succession management program, attention must also be paid to business culture (Rosen et al., 2019).

From a business strategy theoretical lens, Yuldinawati and Oktadanio (2016) also support the findings of Rosen et al. (2019). Yuldinawati and Oktadanio explained that family businesses can succeed if they are in charge of the company and if staff members are driven to grow the business. To develop business knowledge, mobilization can be done. Knowledge mobilization improves a company's dynamic capability (Koentjoro and Gunawan, 2020). Meanwhile, Rademakers (1998) states that when creating business strategies for external stakeholders such as suppliers, distributors, retailers, and customers, Chinese family businesses embrace paternalistic values.

Regarding a cultural value perspective, Pekerti (2008) finds that overseas Chinese Indonesians have been facing discrimination that hinders their professional career while they see work and career as a way to support their family. In comparison, Hertzman (2020) finds that there is a filial duty serving as a part of the culture of Chinese Indonesians. Hertzman found that parents send their children overseas to study, and once they are done with their studies, the children are called back home to continue the family business.

Through the theoretical lens of transgenerational entrepreneurship, Tan et al. (2019) find that the mentality of the incumbents is crucial to the longevity of family businesses. The most challenging task is changing the entrepreneurial roles of the first generation into mentoring roles for their heirs. Tan et al. maintain that this theory can serve as a comprehensive manual for current managers of Chinese-Indonesian family-owned SMEs as they work to carry the torch to the next generation. In that they experience less traumatic shock than incumbents, successors also appear to be cautious but less concerned with "contingency" plans. In terms of fostering peace and trust inside the family, giving ownership to important non-family individuals or even family members could be used to improve their relationship with the company. To avoid any potential conflicts between the offspring, Chinese-Indonesian incumbents have designated specific segments of the business or subsidiaries to a successor and his or her siblings. The incumbent typically assigns the successor to handle all of the company's divisions or subsidiaries while concentrating on his or her own.

Leadership theoretical lenses have been discussed by Jiing et al. (2008) and Efferin and Hartono (2015). Jiing et al. state that paternalism is a key element of Chinese capitalism, which includes authoritarianism, benevolence, and moral leadership. Efferin and Hartono (2015) discuss that the ability to develop a stable organizational culture within the business and the owner's leadership traits depend on cultural congruence between the owner and the workforce. An owner is regarded to be in a stronger position than other organizational members to affect organizational culture because of his or her ownership and structural position. A leader, however, is a result of a more general societal culture. As the leader may only embrace and change the societal values that are already there in the organization, he or she is not the creator of organizational culture but merely its manager.

From a corporate social responsibility (CSR) view, Sharma et al. (2012) found that the Sampoerna tobacco company used partnerships to strengthen small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Sampoerna case. Moreover, Sampoerna concentrates and continues to focus efforts on supporting local entrepreneurship and has built up a network of connections that gives it a distinct competitive advantage. The benefits of the project include increased brand recognition for Sampoerna and a large number of entrepreneurs ready to work with the company. Giving back to the community as part of CSR suggests a good return and considerably increases shareholder pride, energizing them and enhancing the corporate brand.

The reverse logistics theoretical lens has also been qualitatively examined. Maheswari et al. (2020) find that many electrical device manufacturers have used reverse logistics (RL) as a strategic path toward improving performance and brand recognition in recent years, demonstrating how significant the process has become. To ensure that their RL actions do not jeopardize other interests such as the planet, people, and company reputation, the performance measurement must reference the quadruple bottom line (QBL) concept. As a result, measurement in this research combines the balanced scorecard and QBL principles and is based on the perspectives of the government.

## **Singapore**

Although relatively scarce, Singaporean family businesses have become an emerging field of study, particularly regarding cultural and social aspects. For example, using sustainability reporting as a theoretical lens, Loh, Thomas, and Wang (2017) state that companies with sustainability reporting will be more valuable on the market than those without it. Companies with higher-quality (more comprehensive) sustainability reporting will have a greater market value than those with less comprehensive sustainability reporting (lower quality of sustainability reporting). However, most of the studies engage with cultural and social issues.

Lerner and Malach-Pines (2011) conducted a study from a gender viewpoint. They find that despite having significantly different total investments required for their businesses, male and female family business owners were more similar than different in the financial investments they made (i.e., female business owners were similar to their male counterparts in both their own and their family investments). In addition to the gender study, it has been reported that family-owned businesses in Singapore had the most employees and expected employees, while those in Australia and Brazil had the fewest employees and expected employees. Family-owned enterprises in Singapore had the largest number of employees. In addition, the United States was predicted to have the highest level of competition, and Singapore to have the lowest.

Through a qualitative approach, one of the most discussed topics is cultural values. Tong (2014) stated that the centripetal authority structure that distinguishes Chinese businesses is a major theme. The founder and the main members of the family are at the center

of decision-making procedures. The low amount of delegation of authority and responsibility is a result of the informal organizational structure of Chinese firms and the significance of *guanxi* ties in business dealings. Chung (2005) finds that family businesses can diversify business risk and build a mechanism to enforce business ties across borders by spreading wealth across borders. It is also found that émigrés of China build their way up through hard work, frugality, and strong personal networks.

Chung (2005) also discusses the Shaw studio as a family business case. The Shaw studio maintained the archetypal characteristics of a traditional Chinese family business and was run by family patriarchs, though incorporating the Western industrial model into their operations. However, the Shaw patriarchs' longevity and the ease with which power was transferred among the four brothers was a key factor in preventing a succession crisis (and the company's collapse). In a different paper, Chung (2005) discusses that the differences in the investments that the family members select, as well as their geographical distribution and diversification, may lead to conflicts in a family business. Chung also explained that traditional Chinese families tend to be patriarchal and are said to have moral obligations to ancestors and descendants. Therefore, the extended household serves as the economic unit rather than the individual. This arrangement gives Chinese family businesses a chance to revitalize themselves (Chung, 2005). Kopnina (2014) states that Singapore is likewise affected by the struggle involving the Chinese family enterprise. Singapore's SME sector is torn between aspirations of success, which are frequently equated with growth and expansion and lauded in official discourse and rankings, and the realization of their comparative advantage of being self-sufficient, adaptable, flexible, and founded on centuries-old principles of trust and reciprocity. In that family involvement in the company is viewed as a source of both pride and shame, an expression of a lived culture, and an outmoded style of business organization, hiring practices and succession in Singapore's SMEs reflect this duality.

Through a business management theoretical lens, Fock (1998) reports that the causes of conflict in a family business include the leadership style, lack of professionalism, lack of effective succession process, and Chinese cultural values. Meanwhile, Kiong (2005) finds that the intimate ties between the family and the business in Chinese society are the root of many disputes that occur within the businesses. This situation is caused in part by the informality of Chinese family businesses. In addition, many old traditions and ways of conducting business in Asian countries have been put to the test by changes in their political and economic surroundings. More demands are made of formal ties as a result of the requirement to conduct business with multinational corporations and the environment's growing globalization. In this newly globalized climate, Chinese businesses that are unwilling to adapt will confront more competition and issues. Numerous Chinese companies are going through adjustments. The younger Chinese entrepreneur generation is particularly affected by these transformations. However, rather than being revolutionary, changes have typically been slow and incremental in many Chinese family businesses.

Tong (2014) maintains that Chinese businesses have been forced to adopt more "rational" management practices to stay competitive in Singapore's changing economic environment, which is also characterized by increased competition from global corporations.

As Chinese businesses expand, they adopt the “Western” industries’ organizational structures. However, the fundamental structure of ownership and control—a centralized organization with control granted to a small core of family members—remains essentially the same. Meanwhile, Tsang (2002) argued that the concentration of strategic information gained from globalization within the family, especially the head of the family, is the result of the centralization of authority and control. The benefits of this management approach include quick decision-making and preventing competitors from learning strategic information. However, the approach is dependent on a brittle organizational memory. The sudden death of important family members can severely harm the knowledge foundation of a Chinese family business. The globalization of a Chinese family business is hampered by the propensity for family members to be appointed to senior management roles in overseas operations. Some of these persons could lack the knowledge or cultural sensitivity needed to lead employees from other cultural backgrounds. Additionally, local staff members of an overseas organization may get demotivated because they are aware that no matter how well they perform, they will never be promoted. Promotions in the organization had a significant motivational impact on other Chinese managers.

Tan and Fock (2001), through a succession theoretical lens, explain that the Chinese family businesses in the study were able to expand because they transitioned from one generation to the next in leadership. They also chose an entrepreneurial leader who incorporated cutting-edge management techniques while maintaining the values that made the family business thrive.

### **Malaysia**

In general, family business performance has been studied quantitatively in Malaysia. Most studies examine how factors in the family business, externally and internally, may affect or be affected by the performance of a family business. Untoro et al. (2017) mentioned in their research that the company’s performance could affect who will be chosen to be the next successor, which of course, will affect the position of family members in the company. Once a successor cannot manage the company unfortunately and adequately decrease the company’s performance, BOD will likely choose non-family members to take over the charge. Yet, it will not affect the composition of the BOD. These results are in line with research by Bocatto et al. (2010), which found no correlation between a large percentage of family board members and the designation of a family successor. The authors also found that corporate governance and the ownership structure may help the company in formulating CEO succession.

The family ownership structure is proven to be cost-minimizing and positively affects performance (Al-Haj and Zainuddin, 2016). This demonstrates that one of the factors boosting the performance of family businesses is ownership. Theoretically, it has also been shown that businesses run by families perform better than those run by professionals (Monsen, Chiu, & Cooley, 1968; Daily & Dollinger, 1992). Previous research also demonstrated that when experts run the firms, the agency expenses are much greater (Ang et al., 2000).



The findings of the previous research demonstrate a contradiction with the results of research conducted by Ghazali (2014). Otherwise, the percentage of government ownership and independent directors on the board have a favorable and statistically positive impact on the sample companies' market performance. Independent directors are a powerful instrument for reducing the danger of conflicts of interest (Ghazali, 2014). Conflict is a common occurrence in an organization that involves various interests and stakeholders. Additionally, Kiong (2005) discusses conflict using a qualitative approach. The intimate ties between the family and the firm, according to Kiong, are a major source of disputes in Chinese businesses (Cohn, 1990). This conflict is caused, in part, by management issues brought on by Chinese family businesses' lack of formality and documentation. Chinese family businesses have a paternalistic culture that results in a highly centralized organization with top-down communication. This structure leads to a dependency on current leaders and makes the next successor unable to enjoy their authority and legitimacy because of the attachment created with previous leaders. As supported by Ghee et al. (2015), first-generation family businesses tend to have more centralized decision-making processes than second- or third-generation family businesses, which can lead to conflict when the next successor assumes leadership. Consequently, it was discovered that for managing business operations, decentralized decision-making was favored over centralized decision-making. Therefore, conflict resolution and management among family members need to be formalized and implemented (Tang and Hussin, 2020).

Inseparable from the discussion of succession, the attributes in succession can also affect a company's performance level. Ghee et al. (2015) analyzed how the issue and attribute of succession and its process can shape the family business performance. Each of the major factors significantly impacted the levels of performance in the family business. Management strategies have a substantial impact on family business performance. Secondly, most successors reported having complete control over decision-making and task delegation procedures. Third, successor training was discovered to significantly impact corporate performance. Both family ties and work and family values produced significant values. Succession concerns involving entrepreneur skills, knowledge levels, member conflicts, trust levels, etc., do hamper the growth and development of family businesses. The association between the primary factors and family company performance is completely mediated by succession experience. Lastly, succession concerns mediate the link between essential factors and business performance to some extent.

Gender issues have also surfaced regarding how ASEAN nations still adhere to their ancestors' values. According to Kuratko (1993), corporations want their sons to take over the business regarding succession. Some family businesses in the United States still view the choice of a daughter as rather undesirable, according to de Vries (1996). Males are also favored over females in Chinese family businesses since the male successor will carry the family name. Additionally, male managers typically have wider networks and are more supportive, competitive, tough, and capable of facing competition.

On the other hand, female successors are more loving and supportive at work, and they are more likely to emphasize the company's main goals rather than the financial performance

as a crucial factor in the survival of the business (Butner & Moore, 1997). Even so, the relationship between female successors and fathers (as founders) tends to be better than that of their sons. Son successors tend to have a higher potential for conflict with their fathers (Al-Haj and Zainuddin, 2016; Dumas, 1989; Hollander and Bukowitz, 1990). The daughters voluntarily took on the position of guardians for their father and the company.

In the other article, Zain et al. (2012) wanted to examine the business profile of women-owned SMEs and identify the challenges and problems they faced. Competitiveness, staffing issues, and financial difficulties were the three key issues facing women-owned firms. They have battled and competed with other new and existing competitors in the market on pricing, product, and other factors. The final issues are the lack of financial capital to operate a firm, issues with financial management, and the difficulty of obtaining a loan from a bank, a private company, or the government.

The education of a director harms business performance. This discovery runs counter to earlier literature. It was discovered to be significant, but in the opposite direction, in terms of successor age. It demonstrates that younger successors outperform older ones. Younger managers may be more motivated and keen to impress their family members, which raises the level of corporate performance. It was alleged that younger managers tended to be more aggressive than elder proprietors (Carlsson & Karlsson, 1970). More senior executives also tend to be more risk-averse than younger executives (Carlsson and Karlsson, 1970).

According to a common belief, Chinese business is based on a three-generation model: the first generation works extremely hard, leads a fruitful life, invests the majority of its income, and establishes a successful company. With proper training and business acumen, the second generation significantly grows the company, raising risk and profitability. The third generation loses interest in running the company and disperses the family since they take the wealth's tendency for granted. The founder (first generation) and the second generation of a Chinese family firm must overcome the following three-generational challenges for a succession process to be successful: generation gap, communication gap, and credibility gap (Tang and Hussin, 2020).

People who express ownership toward a company or their job are more likely to have higher psychological ownership levels and to feel more responsible for the organization (Pierce et al., 2003). Hence, the connection between psychological ownership toward extra-role behavior and it is shown a positive result. Psychological ownership improves employee attachment, and as a result, they will develop a protective and caring attitude toward the business. Work engagement, affective commitment and extra-role behaviors (Bernhard and O'Driscoll, 2011; Sieger et al., 2011), and family chief executive officers' stewardship behaviors have all been positively impacted by psychological ownership in family enterprises (Henssen et al., 2014; Ikävalko et al., 2006).

Family bonds are deeply ingrained in family businesses, making them special (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). This causes both positive and negative family relationship issues that impact relationships at work and vice versa. Continued work and family tension may be lessened with equitable participation in WL roles (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Interestingly, in a family

business, well-rounded people are actively involved in both leadership and family member positions, which have different goals for work performance. Significant family business members believe that when family-related criteria are satisfied, their job satisfaction increases. Therefore, the most crucial element determining job satisfaction in family enterprises is one that is tied to the family. When designing career development and advancement programs, managing and allocating human resources and related capitals, and enhancing organizational capabilities, family business management should coordinate the three WLF components. The management of human resources, which includes members who have their own family lives and will make them more significant for human resource allocation and planning, is an important factor that the business must take into account.

The sustainability of a business is not only influenced by the company's ability to handle the succession process. Firms are innovating, especially for young families (Cheong et al., 2015), which is a long-term investment to train the agility of young managers for when they later become successors. In addition, internationalism can help companies open and broaden new opportunities to develop their business. Once again, this internationalism also has a positive relationship with innovation where innovation is influenced by knowledge, trust, and commitment (Chong et al., 2019). Ismail et al. (2019) also discuss the success of transgenerational enterprises. The authors found seven dimensions: a sense of belonging, family welfare priorities, construction of generational change, contextual embeddedness, attitude, informal decision-making, and a friendly working environment.

The reflection of values in strategy formulation does not only occur in the Chinese, who are known to hold strong values from their ancestors. Muslims in Malaysia are also proven to apply religious values in their company's CSR strategy (Yusof et al., 2014). The phenomenon of Chinese migration to various countries in ASEAN also shows an interesting phenomenon from a family business point of view. Diasporic groups that migrate to a country holding the same values turn out to reinforce their communal boundaries to enable them to survive and even thrive in foreign economies (Gómez-Mejía, 2007).

## Thailand

Research in Thailand turned out to be more varied with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Yet, Chou et al. (2016) found similarities in research in Malaysia that Buddhism as the majority religion in Thailand is also reflected in the CSR strategy of the sample companies. The main focus of CSR participation is *kamma*, one of the fundamental Buddhist ideals. For CSR activities aimed at internal stakeholders, managers' interest in their workers' well-being may act as an institutional cornerstone. The company has implemented CSR efforts as a result of the owner's sincere concern for the welfare of external stakeholders (such as customers, the community, and external organizations) motivated by Buddhist ideals. It was also found that in Thailand the Chinese family business tends to implement their values in every aspect of their business, most of all in operations. Those values are *guanxi*, *renqi*, and Confucian (Luechapattanaorn, 2021).

Quantitative research explores the factors of how a family business can survive. Family members of an FGB should maintain and control innovation and modernization to survive during critical points (Yabushita & Suehiro, 2014). Moreover, innovation is a significant component during strategy formulation, which has to be reflected in every part of the business, even the employee (Srisathan et al., 2022). Working hours (assisting in their family business) have a good link with entrepreneurship, and family businesses with entrepreneurially minded members are more likely to survive (Kilenthong & Rueanthip, 2018). Political connections or positions that family members have are essential determinants of family profitability and the ability to outperform competitors (Imai, 2006). While not avoiding the topic of succession, Thailand looks at it from a different angle. Due to uncertainty and the time between the founder and the successor in the post-succession era, the founder is more appreciated. This is caused by the uncertainty of the time and the intervention of the heir on the scene changes the underlying meaning of the succession of the founder.

Change will undoubtedly happen to a family business, whether it is during succession or expansion of a business. Rodsutti and Makayathorn (2005) conducted research regarding the change and the agent of change in a family business. Agents of change (whether internal change movers or external consultants) specifically need to spend more time on the organizational diagnosis process because of their very significant role in dealing with change within a company. Additionally, the ownership structure of a family business, which is said to positively influence performance in research in Malaysia, also frequently causes many issues in corporate administration, detracting from operation and decision-making. Consequently, change agents must comprehend every facet of the firm to handle changes in family businesses efficiently. Not only business challenges must be examined to understand family enterprises but also other aspects of the family.

Additionally, the research identifies three additional factors that are crucial to Thai family business diagnostics: communication, politics, and national culture. These three factors represent another aspect that can influence change management. Change agents can therefore determine the degree of political and ownership power in the family by analyzing the family structure within a family business. Moreover, when the family structure is identified, change agents will also be aware of the generation of the leader and the extent of their power disparity with other family members. The following issue will also include suggestions for managing change in a Thai family business as well as other ideas.

## **Conclusions**

From the systemic literature review, the research finds that family business in Southeast Asia has dealt with different challenges due to various cultural and institutional setting. Family business in all four countries faces relatively similar challenges. Furthermore, most of these four countries' studies primarily focus on Chinese family businesses. These are expected given that most family businesses in Southeast Asia are dominated by ethnic Chinese. The first dominant issue that was brought up is the tension between the first and second generations are the major issue, especially in family succession. The preferences of gender, the

deeper family involvement in the business, and different values have made succession relatively difficult.

In the case of Indonesia, the first generation is more of a risk taker while the second generation is more risk averse. The first generation of the family business usually takes the debt as the first generation is considered more business-oriented to achieve and maintain high profitability. In contrast, the next generation is more family-oriented. This has led to different business performances between the old and new generations. In the case of Malaysia, the main issue is the paternalistic culture in Malaysian Chinese family businesses that results in a highly centralized organization with top-down communication. This leads to dependency on their current leaders and makes the next successor unable to enjoy their authority and legitimacy because of the attachment created with previous leaders. In the case of Singapore, the Chinese family business conflict in succession usually occurs due to the informal organizational structure of Chinese firms and the significance of *guanxi* ties in business dealings. In the case of Thailand, the discussion revolves around how Buddhist ideals inspire the implementation of CSR activities.

The research has identified several key issues that significantly impact family businesses in Southeast Asia. Prioritizing these issues is crucial for understanding their relative importance and determining the most effective strategies for addressing them.

First is succession planning and generational tensions. The foremost issue facing family businesses in Southeast Asia is the tension between the first and second generations during the succession process. Effective succession planning is vital for ensuring the long-term stability and success of family businesses. The consequences of not addressing this issue include potential conflicts, reduced business performance, and a lack of continuity in leadership. This issue is of paramount importance due to its direct influence on the survival and growth of the family business.

Second is cultural and institutional factors. The impact of cultural and institutional factors, such as paternalistic culture and informal organizational structures, varies across the four countries. These factors play a critical role in shaping the governance, decision-making, and communication within family businesses. Addressing cultural and institutional challenges is essential for fostering a more adaptable, resilient, and innovative business environment that can better navigate the complexities of the global market.

Third is balancing family and business orientations. The differing attitudes towards risk and business objectives between generations highlight the need for striking a balance between family and business orientations. Family businesses must prioritize this issue to ensure that the firm remains competitive and financially viable while maintaining the core values and close-knit relationships that define their identity.

Fourth is corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical practices. The discussion around CSR activities in Thailand, as inspired by Buddhist ideals, sheds light on the importance of incorporating ethical practices and social responsibility into family business

operations. By prioritizing CSR, family businesses can enhance their reputation, contribute positively to their communities, and foster a more sustainable business model.

Future research could be directed to understanding how discussions on family business in Southeast Asia relate to a broader discussion on the family business at the global level. It would be interesting to see the differences and similarities between issues faced by family businesses in Southeast Asia and other global south countries such as Brazil, India, and South Africa.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the editor and reviewers whose insightful feedback and constructive criticisms have significantly enhanced the quality of this article.

## About The Authors

Dr. Nugroho B. Sukamdani, MBA, BET, is a distinguished academic and current Chairman of the Yayasan Universitas Sahid. He has carved a unique path in the academic world, specializing in Management Studies with a distinct emphasis on family businesses. His research primarily explores the pivotal role of management strategies, leadership, and succession planning in the continuity and prosperity of family enterprises.

## References

- Ambarriani, A. S., & Purwanugraha, H. A. (2012). Management practice, firm size and performance of individual family firm: Evidence from Indonesian's batik industry. *International Journal of Economic Policy in Emerging Economies*, 5(4), 296-307. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEPEE.2012.052305>
- Ang, J. S., Cole, R. A., & Lin, J. W. (2000). Agency Costs and Ownership Structure. *The Journal of Finance*, 55(1), 81-106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-1082.00201>
- Anggadwita, G., Profityo, W. B., Alamanda, D. T., & Permatasari, A. (2019). Cultural values and their implications to family business succession: A case study of small Chinese-owned family businesses in Bandung, Indonesia. *Journal of Family Business Management*, 10(4), 281-292. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-03-2019-0017>
- Astrachan, J. H., Klein, S. B., & Smyrniotis, K. X. (2002). The F-PEC scale of family influence: A proposal for solving the family business definition problem. *Family business review*, 15(1), 45-58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6248.2002.00045.x>

- Augendra, B., Bernard, T., & Ani, W. (2019). Why micro and small family enterprises do not borrow from microcredit institutions? A case study in East Java, Indonesia. *Studies in Business & Economics*, 14(3). <https://doi.org/10.2478/sbe-2019-0040>
- Barbera, F., Stamm, I., & DeWitt, R.-L. (2018). The development of an entrepreneurial legacy: Exploring the role of anticipated futures in transgenerational entrepreneurship. *Family Business Review*, 31(3), 352-378. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894486518780795>
- Barkema, H. G., Chen, X.-P., George, G., Luo, Y., & Tsui, A. S. (2015). West meets East: New concepts and theories. *Academy of Management Journal*, 58(2), 460-479. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2015.4021>
- Barral, S. (2018). In between agro-industries and family business farms: Ephemeral smallholder family plantations in Indonesia. In P.-M. Bosc, J.-M. Sourisseau, P. Bonnal, P. Gasselin, É. Valette, & J.-F. Bélières (Eds.), *Diversity of Family Farming Around the World* (pp. 137-148). Springer.
- Bernhard, F., & O'Driscoll, M. P. (2011). Psychological Ownership in Small Family-Owned Businesses: Leadership Style and Nonfamily-Employees' Work Attitudes and Behaviors. *Group & Organization Management*, 36(3), 345-384. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601111402684>
- Bocatto, E., Gispert, C., & Rialp, J. (2010). Family-Owned Business Succession: The Influence of Pre-performance in the Nomination of Family and Nonfamily Members: Evidence from Spanish Firms. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 48(4), 497-523. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-627X.2010.00306.x>
- Bodolica, V., Dupuis, D., & Spraggon, M. (2020). At the intersection of corporate governance and performance in family business settings: Extant knowledge and future research. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 29(1), 143-166. <https://doi.org/10.1111/beer.12254>
- Buttner, E. H., & Moore, D. P. (1997). Women's organizational exodus to entrepreneurship: Self-reported motivations and correlates with success. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 35, 34-46.
- Carlsson, G., & Karlsson, K. (1970). Age, Cohorts and the Generation of Generations. *American Sociological Review*, 35(4), 710-718. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2093946>
- Cheong, K.-C., Lee, P.-P., & Lee, K.-H. (2015). The internationalisation of family firms: Case histories of two Chinese overseas family firms. *Business History*, 57(6), 841-861. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00076791.2014.982106>
- Chong, P., Ong, T., Abdullah, A., & Choo, W. (2019). Internationalisation and innovation on balanced scorecard (BSC) among Malaysian small and medium enterprises (SMEs). *Management Science Letters*, 9(10), 1617-1632.
- Chou, S. Y., Chang, T., & Han, B. (2016). A Buddhist application of corporate social responsibility: Qualitative evidence from a case study of a small Thai family business. *Small Enterprise Research*, 23(2), 116-134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13215906.2016.1221359>

- Cohn, M. (1990). *Passing the torch: Transfer strategies for your family business*. Liberty Hall Press.
- Chung, P.-Y. (2005). Changes and continuities. Evolution of a Chinese family business (1876–2004). *Asia Europe Journal*, 3(2), 259–268. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-005-0145-9>
- Daily, C. M., & Dollinger, M. J. (1992). An Empirical Examination of Ownership Structure in Family and Professionally Managed Firms. *Family Business Review*, 5(2), 117–136. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6248.1992.00117.x>
- Dinh, T. Q., & Calabrò, A. (2019). Asian family firms through corporate governance and institutions: A systematic review of the literature and agenda for future research. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 21(1), 50–75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12176>
- Dumas, C. (1989). Understanding of Father-Daughter and Father-Son Dyads in Family-Owned Businesses. *Family Business Review*, 2(1), 31–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6248.1989.00031.x>
- Efferin, S., & Hartono, M. S. (2015). Management control and leadership styles in family business: An Indonesian case study. *Journal of Accounting & Organizational Change*, 11(1), 130–159. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JAOC-08-2012-0074>
- Fang, H. C., Singh, K., Kim, T., Marler, L., & Chrisman, J. J. (2021). Family business research in Asia: review and future directions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 39, 1215–1256. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-021-09760-2>
- Fendiani, A., & Tandiono, R. (2016). Family business and managerial ownership: the effect on the degree of accounting conservatism practised in Indonesian-listed firms. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 24, 109–118.
- Fletcher, D., Melin, L., & Gimeno, A. (2012). Culture and values in family business – A review and suggestions for future research. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 3(3), 127–131. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2012.06.001>
- Fock, S.-T. (1998). The impact of family conflicts on the development of the Chinese entrepreneurially managed family business: The Yeo Hiap Seng Case in Singapore. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 15(2), 88–102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.1998.10593285>
- Franks, J., Mayer, C., Volpin, P., & Wagner, H. F. (2012). The life cycle of family ownership: International evidence. *The Review of Financial Studies*, 25(6), 1675–1712. <https://doi.org/10.1093/rfs%2Ffhr135>
- Gómez-Mejía, L. R., Haynes, K. T., Núñez-Nickel, M., Jacobson, K. J. L., & Moyano-Fuentes, J. (2007). Socioemotional Wealth and Business Risks in Family-controlled Firms: Evidence from Spanish Olive Oil Mills. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 52(1), 106–137. <https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.52.1.106>
- Greenhaus, J. H., Collins, K. M., & Shaw, J. D. (2003). The relation between work–family balance and quality of life. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 63(3), 510–531. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791\(02\)00042-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791(02)00042-8)



- Hendayani, R., & Febrianta, M. Y. (2020). Technology as a driver to achieve the performance of family businesses supply chain. *Journal of Family Business Management*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-10-2019-0070>
- Henssen, B., Voordeckers, W., Lambrechts, F., & Koiranen, M. (2014). The CEO autonomy-stewardship behavior relationship in family firms: The mediating role of psychological ownership. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 5(3), 312-322. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2014.01.012>
- Hertzman, E. (2020). What does it mean to be 'called home' from overseas? The case of Hakka Chinese Indonesian youth from West Kalimantan. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(16), 3526-3542. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1592415>
- Ho, S., & Chalam, S. (2017, January 10). A new wave. *Brunswick*. <https://www.brunswickgroup.com/a-new-wave-i2813/>
- Hollander, B. S., & Bukowitz, W. R. (1990). Women, Family Culture, and Family Business. *Family Business Review*, 3(2), 139-151. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6248.1990.00139.x>
- Ikävalko, M., Pihkala, T., & Jussila, I. (2006). *Psychological ownership and family businesses—Identifying the common ground through discriminant analysis*.
- Ismail, H. N., Mohd Puzi, M. A., Banki, M. B., & Yusoff, N. (2019). Inherent factors of family business and transgenerational influencing tourism business in Malaysian islands. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 17(5), 624-641. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766825.2018.1549058>
- Istiatin, & Luhgianto. (2017). Success key to creating third-generation achievement: A case study in family business in Indonesia. *International Journal of Civil Engineering and Technology*, 8(11), 803-810.
- Joni, J., Ahmed, K., & Hamilton, J. (2020). Politically connected boards, family business groups and firm performance: Evidence from Indonesia. *Journal of Accounting & Organizational Change*, 16(1), 93-121. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JAOC-09-2019-0091>
- Kets de Vries, M. F. (1996). *Family business: Human dilemmas in the family firm: text and cases*. International Thomson Business Press.
- Kilenthong, W. T., & Rueanthip, K. (2018). Entrepreneurship and family businesses in Thailand. *Asian-Pacific Economic Literature*, 32(1), 77-93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apel.12215>
- Kiong, T. C. (2005). Feuds and legacies: Conflict and inheritance in Chinese family businesses. *International Sociology*, 20(1), 45-70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580905049909>
- Koentjoro, S., & Gunawan, S. (2020). Managing knowledge, dynamic capabilities, innovative performance, and creating sustainable competitive advantage in family companies: A case study of a family company in Indonesia. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 6(3), 90. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/joitmc6030090>

- Kopnina, H. (2014). Family matters? Recruitment methods and cultural boundaries in Singapore Chinese small and medium enterprises. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 11(4), 483-499. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13602380500135752>
- Kuratko, D. F. (1993). Family business succession in Korean and U.S. firms. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 31(2), 132.
- Kussudyarsana, K., Soepatini, S., Maimun, M. H., & Vemuri, R. (2020). Examining formal and relational governance in family small medium enterprises: Evidence from Indonesia. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-10-2018-0108>
- Lansberg, I., Perrow, E. L., & Rogolsky, S. (1988). Family business as an emerging field. *Family Business Review*, 1(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6248.1988.00001.x>
- Lerner, M., & Malach-Pines, A. (2011). Gender and culture in family business: A ten-nation study. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 11(2), 113-131. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595811399190>
- Loh, L., Thomas, T., & Wang, Y. (2017). Sustainability reporting and firm value: Evidence from Singapore-listed companies. *Sustainability*, 9(11), 2112. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su9112112>
- Luechapattananorn, T., & Wongsurawat, W. (2021). Cultural factors in Chinese family business performance in Thailand. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship*, 25(2), 1-15.
- Maheswari, H., Yudoko, G., Adhiutama, A., & Agustina, H. (2020). Sustainable reverse logistics scorecards for the performance measurement of informal e-waste businesses. *Heliyon*, 6(9). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2020.e04834>
- Monsen, C. (1968). Cooley, The Effect of Separation of Ownership and Control in the Performance of the Large Firm, 82Q. *J. ECON*, 435(10.2307), 1879516.
- Pekerti, A. A. (2008). The interdependent family-centric career: Career perspective of the overseas Chinese in Indonesia. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 56(4), 362-377. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2008.tb00101.x>
- Pendrian, O., Karnen, K. A., Rachmawati, R., & Kusumastuti, R. D. (2018). Entrepreneurial orientation and strategic initiatives in family business groups: The role of corporate centres and family influence. *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 26, 167-184.
- Perry, A., & Hammond, N. (2002). Systematic reviews: The experiences of a PhD student. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, 2(1), 32-35. <https://doi.org/10.2304/plat.2002.2.1.32>
- Pierce, J. L., Kostova, T., & Dirks, K. T. (2003). The State of Psychological Ownership: Integrating and Extending a Century of Research. *Review of General Psychology*, 7(1), 84-107. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.7.1.84>
- Putri, A. C., & Viverita, V. (2019). Risk preference of founder and descendant of Indonesian family firms. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 20(2), 414-425. <https://doi.org/10.17512/pjms.2019.20.2.35>

- Rademakers, M. F. (1998). Market organisation in Indonesia: Javanese and Chinese family business in the jamu industry. *Organization Studies*, 19(6), 1005-1027. <https://doi.org/10.1177/017084069801900605>
- Redding, S. G. (1986). Developing managers without 'management development': the overseas Chinese solution. *Management Education and Development*, 17(3), 271-281. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1177/135050768601700313>
- Rodsutti, M. C., & Makayathorn, P. (2005). Organizational diagnostic factors in family business: Case studies in Thailand. *Development and Learning in Organizations: An International Journal*, 19(2), 16-18. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14777280510580690>
- Rosen, V., Luddin, M. R., & Supriyati, Y. (2019). Succession management success at PT Bakrie Brothers Tbk. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, 38(5), 18-26. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.21947>
- Sharma, R. S., Ratri, M. I., & Krishnamachari, A. (2012). Exploiting relational capital in family businesses through Corporate Social Responsibility. *2012 IEEE International Conference on Management of Innovation & Technology (ICMIT)*, 761-765. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICMIT.2012.6225902>
- Sieger, P., Zellweger, T., Nason, R. S., & Clinton, E. (2011). Portfolio entrepreneurship in family firms: A resource-based perspective. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 5(4), 327-351. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sej.120>
- Srisathan, W. A., Ketkaew, C., Jitjak, W., Ngiwphrom, S., & Naruetharadhol, P. (2022). Open innovation as a strategy for collaboration-based business model innovation: The moderating effect among multigenerational entrepreneurs. *PLOS ONE*, 17(6), e0265025. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0265025>
- Sunarti, E., Gunawan, E., Widiyantoro, S., Marliyani, G. I., & Ida, R. (2021). Critical point on housing construction, resilience and family subjective welfare after disaster: Notes from the Lombok, Indonesia, earthquake sequence of July-August 2018. *Geomatics, Natural Hazards and Risk*, 12(1), 922-938. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19475705.2021.1910576>
- Tan, J. D., Supratikno, H., Pramono, R., Purba, J. T., & Bernarto, I. (2019). Nurturing transgenerational entrepreneurship in ethnic Chinese family SMEs: Exploring Indonesia. *Journal of Asia Business Studies*, 13(2), 294-325. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JABS-04-2018-0132>
- Tan, W. L., & Fock, S. T. (2001). Coping with growth transitions: The case of Chinese family businesses in Singapore. *Family Business Review*, 14(2), 123-139. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6248.2001.00123.x>
- Tang, J. K. K., & Hussin, W. S. (2020). Next-generation leadership development: A management succession perspective. *Journal of Family Business Management*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print). <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-04-2019-0024>

- Tanjung, M. (2020). A cross-firm analysis of corporate governance compliance and performance in Indonesia. *Managerial Auditing Journal*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/MAJ-06-2019-2328>
- Tirdasari, N. L., & Dhewanto, W. (2020). When is the right time for succession? Multiple cases of family businesses in Indonesia. *Journal of Family Business Management*, 10(4), 349-359. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-10-2019-0064>
- Tong, C. K. (2014). Centripetal authority, differentiated networks: The social organisation of Chinese firms in Singapore. In C-K. Tong (Eds.), *Chinese Business: Rethinking Guanxi and Trust in Chinese Business Networks* (pp. 21-40). <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4451-85-7>
- Tsang, E. W. (2002). Learning from overseas venturing experience: The case of Chinese family businesses. *Journal of Business venturing*, 17(1), 21-40. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(00\)00052-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(00)00052-5)
- Untoro, W., Permatasari, W., Trinugroho, I., & Setiawan, D. (2017). Past performance, family business and CEO succession: the case of Indonesia. *International Journal of Trade and Global Markets*, 10(2-3), 236-250. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1504/IJTGM.2017.086071>
- Ward, J. (2016). *Keeping the Family Business Healthy: How to Plan for Continuing Growth, Profitability, and Family Leadership*. Springer.
- Yabushita, N. W., & Suehiro, A. (2014). Family business groups in Thailand: Coping with management critical points. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 31(4), 997-1018. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-014-9388-6>
- Yang, B., Nahm, A. Y., & Song, Z. (2022). Succession in family business and environmental investment: The moderating role of external environment. *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja*, 35(1), 5997-6015. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2022.2043763>
- Yusof, M., Mohd Nor, L., & Edward Hoopes, J. (2014). Virtuous CSR: An Islamic family business in Malaysia. *Journal of Family Business Management*, 4(2), 133-148. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-07-2013-0016>
- Yuldinawati, L., & Yodi, M. (2016). Small family business development from three dimension of family business model. *International Journal of Economics and Management*, 10(S1), 197-210.
- Zain, M., & Kassim, N. M. (2012). Strategies of family businesses in a newly globalized developing economy. *Journal of Family Business Management*, 2(2), 147-165. <https://doi.org/10.1108/20436231211261880>
- Zainal, H., Parinsi, K., Hasan, M., Said, F., & Akib, H. (2018). The influence of strategic assets and market orientation to the performance of family business in Makassar City, Indonesia. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, 17(6). 1-9.

# Going Back with Glee: A Case Study of Indonesian Migrant Workers Engaging in Circular Migration

Erna Setijaningrum<sup>1</sup>, Asiyah Kassim<sup>2</sup>, Rochyati Triana<sup>3</sup>, and Reza Dzulfikri<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,3,4</sup>Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,  
Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia 60115

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam,  
Malaysia 40450

<sup>1</sup>erna.setijaningrum@fisip.unair.ac.id; <sup>2</sup>asiyah@uitm.edu.my;

<sup>3</sup>Rochyati\_Wahyuni@fisip.unair.ac.id; <sup>4</sup>mrezadzul@gmail.com

**How to Cite:** Setijaningrum, E., Kassim, A., Triana, R., & Dzulfikri, R. (2023). Going back with glee: A case study of Indonesian migrant workers engaging in circular migration. *Journal of ASEAN Studies*, 11(1), 219–243. <https://doi.org/10.21512/jas.v11i1.8610>

## Abstract

Driven by a wide range of social and cultural forces, circular migration has become a prominent phenomenon in the contemporary world, and it is especially common among Indonesian migrant workers. The research delved into what pushes Indonesian migrant workers to going back to host countries for employment after returning to their home country. A case study approach was employed by which a total of 24 semi-structured interviews were conducted with Indonesian migrant workers from Blitar, Malang, Ponorogo, and Tulungagung in East Java, Indonesia. The research reveals that non-monetary incentives such as supportive and amicable workplace environments, including the possibility of career advancements and adequate accommodations, as well as productive and family-oriented communities, act as important motivators for Indonesian migrant workers to go back to host countries. Furthermore, the research adds to the widening topography of migration studies by which it provides a broader picture in painting the “human” rationality behind circular migration in Global South.

**Keywords:** case study, circular migration, Indonesia, migrant workers, migration

## Introduction

Migration-facilitated notion has been widely explored from many different angles, with particular attention paid to issues such as how lower incomes and education levels are associated with higher migration rates (Majid et al., 2020; Meng et al., 2020; Shamsuddin,

*Journal of ASEAN Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2023), pp.219–243

ISSN 2338-1361 print / ISSN 2338-1353 electronic

Received: 10<sup>th</sup> June 2022/ Revised: 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022/ Accepted: 5<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Katsaiti, & El Anshashy, 2022). With both low aspects of incomes and education levels translating as the overriding factor for rural populations to engage in migration and seek employments abroad (Stark, Micevska, & Mycielski, 2009), the profession of migrant workers has morphed into a tenet of ensuring a better future for many of them. Whether to the host and home countries or for the migrant workers themselves, the positive implications of these migration activities are substantial, including the amelioration of social and economic conditions (Sayono, Utami, & Ayundasari, 2018), the alleviation of poverty (Harkins & Lindgren, 2018), and the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and abilities by means of qualifying work trainings and acquiring adequate certifications. Although there are many benefits of working abroad, such as higher pay and wider job opportunities, there are also considerable drawbacks, including health-related issues, social discrimination, exploitation and abuse. The health and safety concerns, for instance, are just one of the many repercussions of working abroad (Mucci et al., 2019), mainly due to heavy workloads, long working hours, and limited resting hours that migrant workers are subjected to on the job (Moyce & Schenker, 2018). Moreover, migrant workers are susceptible to workplace bullying (Cheo, 2017) and even racial discrimination (Stevens, Hussein, & Manthorpe, 2011) due to, for example, visible social markers such as skin color and ethnicity that induced discriminatory behaviors by employers or colleagues. Importantly, the exploitation and abuse experienced by migrant worker (Sherry, 2004; Jureidini, 2010; Sonmez et al., 2011; Brennan, 2014) further lay out the pervasiveness of labor rights violations that continues to occur in many parts of the world where migration takes place.

Notwithstanding the struggles that plague this trend, a number of driving forces continue to contribute to this phenomenon of “circular migration,” or migrant workers returning back to the previous countries in which they were employed. In addition to the hopes of earning higher wages in the country of destination (Witte & Guedes Auditor, 2021), factors such as employment standing and age have a significant impact on the decisions of a former migrant worker to relocate to the country from which they perceived to have obtained better jobs (Thomas, 2019). Similarly, the earnings that migrant workers remit to their relatives in their home countries is typically used to pay off the debts that have been incurred by either (or both) the migrant workers and their families (Bylander, 2020; Guérin & Venkatasubramanian, 2020; Hoang, 2020; Lainez, 2020); and this is very likely to drive migrant workers to re-migrate as both migrant workers and their families are (in many cases) solely dependent on remittances as a means of financial support (Chowdhury & Chakraborty, 2021; Mas’udah, 2020). In a more specific case, the phenomenon of debt-induced and debt-financed labor migration has become more visible and widespread, leading to the emergence of one of the most exploitative migration industries in the world. As a result, migrant workers’ meagre earnings often become a failed investment in long-term income-generating activities, limiting their families’ potential for social mobility because of the debt that accompanied and exacerbated migrant workers’ own poverty (Hoang, 2020).

Circular migration is an occurrence for which there is extensive empirical and theoretical knowledge in its scholarships, and many have further speculated that it may just be more widespread than outward migration (Constant et al., 2013). Circular migration can be defined as the systematic and regular movement of migrants between their home countries

and host countries as they look for work (Constant, 2020; Constant et al., 2013). It is a strategy to maximize the benefits from both worlds. Circular migration has been touted as a “win-win-win” situation, in which resources are efficiently allocated. It is a win for host countries by alleviating labor shortages, it guarantees remittances for development in the home countries, and improve the lives of the migrants. GFMD (2007) characterize circular migration as “the fluid movement of people between countries, including temporary or permanent movement of which, when it occurs voluntarily and is linked to labor needs of countries of origin and destination, can be beneficial to all involved”. Through this study, we place a significant emphasis on the issue of why migrant workers continue to engage in circular migration, as well as the question of what incentives push them to return to host countries after returning to their home country. The research explores the underlying reasons behind the trends of Indonesian migrant workers returning to their host countries after coming back to Indonesia. Despite the fact that various research has been conducted on the subject of why migrant workers continue to migrate despite the risks and dwindling returns, there is surprisingly little addressing the phenomenon in the Indonesian context. Putting that in mind, we seek to fill this gap.

## **Literature Review**

The phenomenon of migration has been in existence for centuries and, among others, is driven mostly by economic and social-political factors, natural disasters, conflicts, urbanization, as well as population issues (Urbański, 2022). To better understand the phenomenon, it is important to look into relevant theories. Zanabazar, Kho, and Jigjiddorj (2021) elaborate that there are various pull and push factors that influence migration around the globe. The pull factors to migration involve various aspects that attract people to certain destinations. Migration-classified pull factors can be categorized into economic, social, and political. Economic factors that pull migrants include indices such as hope for better employment, better shelter, more income and food, and higher living standards. Similarly, various social and political factors contribute to the pulling of migrants to other countries. Social factors such as religious tolerance and better career and educational opportunities in some countries contribute to the pull of migrants. The push factors on the other hand are the factors influencing migration based on the conditions that force individuals to leave their homes. Similar with pull factors, the push factors influencing migration can also be categorized into economic, social, and political factors. The economic factors influencing migration include lack of employment. Ibrahim et al. (2021) claim that few jobs and overpopulation of many developing countries including Indonesia contribute to push migration. Low living standards are another factor that drives migration. The other economic factors contributing to migration include natural disasters such as floods that devastate the means of income. The pull and push migration factor theory are inevitable to underpin the study.

Most occurrences of international labor migration take place when the rate of population growth outpaces the rate at which there is an increase in work opportunities.



Therefore, migrating abroad can be a viable option for (especially rural) populations from less-developed regions to support their families financially. Because of the significant wage differential between and across nations, a section of the working-age population migrates or relocates overseas, particularly to Asian countries, owing to the disparity between domestic and foreign incomes (Jain & Oommen, 2016; Piper & Roces, 2004; Shah, 2013). In example, it is often stated that the availability and offering of a broader and wider range of work possibilities that are in low or no demand among local employees also act as reasons for migrating abroad (Boustani et al., 2010). Further, in addition to securing employment, another motivation for labour migration abroad is the accumulation of financial capital (or cushion) that can be invested in the establishment of a business in the country of origin upon the migrant workers' return home (Piracha & Vadean, 2010). According to Martyn (2018), because migrant workers earn more earnings outside of their home country than they do in their home country, they are able to save money for investments in their home country's economy as well as for day-to-day necessities in their home country. In this, Wickramasekara (2008) asserts that former migrant workers possess a greater propensity to stimulate economic growth in their home countries, leading to the creation of new employment opportunities; nevertheless, the ideal conditions are not always reached in practice. In many real-world situations, former Indonesian migrant workers who are expected to produce at least one job for themselves are frequently compelled to migrate again when their businesses run out of funds and unable to develop. Therefore, those who are shut out of the economy typically seek employment prospects in other countries when they are unable to find work in their home country.

Moreover, while it is normative that migrant workers would return home upon completion of their employment contract in the destination nation; also, this is not always the situation today. Uhlenhorff and Zimmermann (2014) found that some former migrant workers who had returned to their home countries in search of employment subsequently re-migrated again. As the study found, there are a number of dominant causes for this phenomenon, including the fact that the income earned while working abroad is insufficient to meet daily necessities; the difficulty of finding a job in the country of origin and the fact that even if you do, the income earned is lower than abroad; and the existence of social networks that facilitate re-migration. As per Triandafyllidou and Marchetti (2013), money and employment status are factors that act as motivations for frequent migration. Supported by Konstantinou (2019), the decision to return overseas is highly influenced by five factors: age, employment status, remittances, length of education, and type of provider. As Zewdu (2018) also observes, the primary motivations for migrant workers' migration are income, profits, length of employment, investment, and location of the host country. In this, it is becoming increasingly common for migrant workers to opt to remain in their countries of employment for a lengthy period of time. In the event that they do return home, it will most likely be for the sole purpose of completing paperwork-related administrative tasks or making a short visit with family. Indeed, migration is a strategy adopted by many populations in an effort to better their economic conditions due to the immense economic benefits it can afford. Indeed, there are a variety of fundamental variables that encourages and pushes migrant workers to return to work abroad. In this, the objective of our study is to delve deeper into the factors that push



migrant workers to re-migrate and engage in frequent international mobility in the particular context of Indonesia.

## Methodology

A typical perspective of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Maxwell, 2008; Neuman & Robson, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2016) is that it is most beneficial at the “case” (e.g., a program, a policy, a project; see, for example, Yin, 2006; Stake, 2010) level, where themes and linkages can be identified using a variety of interpretative techniques (Oun & Bach, 2014). Case study focuses on the subject of what can be learned precisely about a case (Stake, 2005), and it is most effective “when research aims to produce a firsthand understanding of a case” (Yin, 2006). Theoretically, much of case study rests on the belief that social phenomena, human challenges, and the characters of instances are context-dependent (Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Stake, 2005). The research uses a case study methodology to inquire into the push factors that act as incentives for Indonesian migrant workers to going back to employment overseas after returning to Indonesia.

Using an interview protocol consisting of five open-ended questions (see Appendix 1), the research draws on a collection of 24 semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with self-identified Indonesian migrant workers (14 male and 10 female participants) in East Java. The Province of East Java, one of the most major departure ports in Indonesia, is responsible for transporting the biggest number of migrant workers to countries outside of Indonesia. According to the Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (BP2MI or Badan Perlindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia), East Java is one of the provinces in Indonesia with the highest number of migrant workers in 2021, with a total of approximately 360 thousand workers leaving the country between 2015 and 2021. During the same time frame, more than 185 thousand migrant workers from East Java chose to return to Indonesia; nonetheless, it is possible for these migrant workers to going back to their countries of destination and so engaging in circular migration. In this, the Province of East Java was selected because it sets out as a setting at which the population of migrant workers are reputed as much prevalent than in any other regions in Indonesia.

The recruitment was done through the use of purposive sampling (non-probabilistic identification of participants) and convenience or snowballing sampling techniques (Parker, Scott, & Geddes, 2019), with important community actors, such as the district village apparatus, as well as personal contacts and familial ties between participants, played a significant connecting role in the initial recruitment process. It is important to note, however, that the district village apparatus only supplied information of a list on their villages’ migrant workers for the purpose of our initial recruitment procedure. Therefore, with the entire participant recruitment being autonomously conducted by us, we were able to minimize potential selection biases (such as village heads’ vested interests with informal, non-registered recruiters or agents) as participants were recruited on the basis of their interests in participating in the study. That is, without any interference from the village officials, we were able to derive our study’s findings strictly from the answers given by informants. Furthermore, the informants were aware that the information obtained from them would be

used solely for research purposes prior to providing their consents to participate in the research. It is assumed that the informants have established at least some level of trust towards us as the researcher, thereby reducing the likelihood that they would conceal or withhold real stories from us.

Our interviews were performed through WhatsApp given our informants' unwillingness to speak over the phone, their hectic work schedules, and the time difference between Indonesia and the countries where they are currently employed. That being the case, the personal information of the informants is kept confidential through which each of them was given a pseudonym and other identifying characteristics were fictionalized. With a total of 24 informants (Table 1), 70% of them had returned to work overseas once, while 30% had returned to work abroad twice or more. The informants were locals of the East Java cities of Blitar, Malang, Ponorogo, and Tulungagung, and they are currently employed in Greece, Hong Kong, Malaysia, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Taiwan. The ages of the informants ranged from 24 to 65, 13% had completed junior high school and 87% had completed senior high school, 75% had been married, 21% had been single, and 4% had been divorced, and their monthly income ranged from Rp 7 million (\$463.20) to Rp 35 million (\$2,316.02). Indeed, it is worth noting that our informants' earnings are far higher than the average wage of migrant workers, which was at least Rp 3,7 million in 2017 numbers. Irrespective of the overarching assumptions that inform our sample's representation, we consider it is important to acknowledge the sociodemographic factors that contribute to explaining this, such as the fact that our informants are returning migrant workers with an extensive experience who have returned to their countries of destination multiple times.

Secondary data collection, including non-participant observation and documentation of relevant literature sources, as well as information from relevant village offices, were incorporated to corroborate the findings from the interviews. In accordance with the suggestions made by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018), data are processed by selecting, simplifying, and separating data that encompasses the full textual section in the form of interview transcripts with resource individuals, relevant documents, and other empirical materials. Following this process, the research conducts data presentation steps, during which we condensed and refined the collected data in order to arrive at a conclusion. This stage entails evaluating data from the beginning of data collection to data presentation, as well as identifying patterns and providing explanations. The act of drawing a conclusion is evidence that study was carried out, and within this study, data triangulation approach was used to ensure the validity of its data by checking data from a variety of sources and at a variety of times in order to assess the reliability of the data in this method.

Table 1 Participants' Sociodemographic Characteristics

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Education Level	Marital Status	Monthly Income (IDR; Million)	Occupation	Country of Destination
1	Sukar	Male	40	Senior High School	Married	10	Factory Worker	Taiwan
2	Rohmah	Female	35	Senior High School	Married	9	Migrant Domestic Worker	Taiwan
3	Marzuki	Male	35	Senior High School	Married	10	Factory Worker	Taiwan
4	Heri	Male	37	Senior High School	Married	8	Gardener	Taiwan
5	Basuki	Male	65	Senior High School	Married	10	Gardener	Malaysia
6	Ismail	Male	40	Senior High School	Married	10	Contractor Worker	Malaysia
7	Diah	Female	40	Senior High School	Married	12	Migrant Domestic Worker	Greece
8	Nisa	Female	30	Senior High School	Married	10	Migrant Domestic Worker	Taiwan
9	Anam	Male	35	Senior High School	Married	10	Factory Workers	Taiwan
10	Ghoni	Male	45	Senior High School	Married	12	Gardener	New Zealand
11	Amelia	Female	45	Senior High School	Married	9	Migrant Domestic Worker	Saudi Arabia
12	Indra	Male	32	Senior High School	Not Married Yet	12	Janitor	New Zealand
13	Endar	Male	35	Senior High School	Married	10	Factory Worker	Taiwan
14	Anton	Male	30	Senior High School	Not Married Yet	5	Miner	Malaysia
15	Isna	Female	40	Junior High School	Married	8	Migrant Domestic Worker	Hong Kong
16	Nana	Female	37	Senior High School	Married	8	Migrant Domestic Worker	Hong Kong
17	Rudi	Male	29	Junior High School	Married	35	Manufacturing Worker	South Korea
18	Luluk	Female	41	Senior High School	Married	7	Migrant Domestic Worker	Hong Kong
19	Fahrul	Male	47	Senior High School	Married	7	Plantation Worker	Malaysia
20	Lusy	Female	30	Senior High School	Not Married Yet	10	Babysitter	Taiwan
21	Rika	Female	24	Senior High School	Not Married Yet	7	Migrant Domestic Worker	Hong Kong
22	Melati	Female	44	Junior High School	Married	8	Migrant Domestic Worker	Hong Kong
23	Budi	Male	39	Senior High School	Not Married Yet	7,2	Construction Worker	Malaysia
24	Dani	Male	51	Senior High School	Divorced	12	Factory Worker	Taiwan

Source: Authors' own processed data

## Analysis

One of the countries that is responsible for sending a large number of migrant workers to other countries is Indonesia. According to the World Bank Group (2017) report entitled “Migrating to Opportunity”, Indonesia was ranked second as the country with the largest number of migrant workers in Southeast Asia, with an estimated 18% (or over 1.2 out of a total of 6.5 million workers) and around Rp 125.2 trillion in remittances in 2015. As per the data collected by Indonesian Migrant Workers Protection Agency (BP2MI or Badan Perlindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia) for the period 2015-2021, there are a total of approximately 1.5 million Indonesian migrant workers, with 75% of these migrant workers exited the country through unofficial or illegal methods, while only 25% of them exited the country through official or legal means. However, the figures offered do not even begin to account for the full magnitude of Indonesian migrant workers currently employed abroad. The research findings is presented by focusing on the motivating rationalities influencing Indonesian migrant workers’ decisions to going back to their countries of employment and thereby engaging in circular migration.

“I Feel at Home Here”: Work Environment, Career Development, and Accommodation.

There are also two distinct types of working environments that migrant workers may encounter when working in a foreign country: unpleasant and pleasant. Regarding the lack of comfort (and/or unpleasantness) of working environments, Sterud et al. (2018) conclude that migrant workers in many host countries are more likely to be exposed to dangerous working circumstances and to develop health problems, especially those relating to their mental health. Indeed, many migrant workers are more likely to have been involved in some sort of mishaps or suffered an injury while working in a foreign country, and this is particularly true for migrant workers who are employed in the fields of agriculture, industry, and construction (Fitzgerald et al., 2013; Hargreaves et al., 2019; Moyce & Schenker, 2018). Moreover, the lack of access to adequate medical care and other crucial public services that migrant workers can secure in their country of destination can further contribute to an uncomfortable working environment (Caxaj & Cohen, 2019). Similarly, many migrant workers face a variety of challenges in the workplace, such as racial discrimination, harassment, and threats (Akay & Ahmadi, 2022), workplace intimidation (Weine et al., 2013), unsupportive human resources and a lack of control over the environment (Harvey et al., 2020), and poor relationships with co-workers (Lowe et al., 2020); for which these issues are exacerbated by barriers of cultural and linguistic differences (Lukšyte, Spitzmueller, & Rivera-Minaya, 2014). On the other hand, migrant workers can also be offered the opportunities to have the experiences of working in a setting that is both comfortable and supportive (Janta et al., 2011), which for Ravasi, Salamin, and Davoine (2015), one of the requirements necessitates them in having a reliable employer for the migrant workers. The research finds that migrant workers who return to their countries of employment are supported by a positive and encouraging work environment characterized by a number of variables, such as a strong sense of kinship between co-workers and employers, promising career developments, and having adequate accommodations.

A strong kinship between co-workers and employers. Reports from several interview sources indicate that there is a rather strong sense of kinship present in respondents' respective locations of employment. This holds true not only between co-workers but also with employers, through which the interview results with several migrant workers provide credence to this claim. For example, according to Rohmah, a migrant domestic worker in a Taiwanese family, shared that "my work atmosphere is quite comfortable, because my employer treats me like I am a family, and I have been invited out with my employer's family on multiple occasions." Even Marzuki, another migrant worker in Taiwan, attributes his decision to stay and re-migrate back to Taiwan to the warmth and acceptance he found at his workplace, noting, "We have a sense that we are far away from home, which contributes to our heightened sense of unity." Two other migrant workers in Taiwan, Ahmad and Anam, indicated that their "pleasant" and "very good in comparison to Indonesia" work environment drives them to return to Taiwan instead of remaining in Indonesia. Due to his employer's kindness and personal connections with him, Ahmad underlined the feeling of being at home ("I feel at home here") since "I am considered a member of the family here" and "I do not feel as though I am in a foreign country, but at home." Anam felt similarly, linking to Ahmad's example with his co-workers that he also fostered a sense of belonging and made him "especially at ease working in Taiwan." Amelia, a Saudi Arabian migrant worker, could also identify to the feeling of belonging to a family, as she described her experiences as follows:

The place where I work is wonderful, and my employer genuinely cares about me, since I am frequently given the option to take time off each year. The fact that the employer's family considers me a member of their family is a major factor in my decision to continue working here. (Amelia, Saudi Arabia)

In addition to the strong sense of kinship amongst migrant workers themselves, informants see decent and compassionate supervisors or employers as a significant element that pushes them to return to work abroad. Excerpts below are a few examples that offer presentations on the generosity of their employers:

The workplace is pretty accommodating. The employer is courteous, not impolite and bossy. There are occasionally employers that enjoy giving orders and exercising control. But my employer is really kind, as they do not ask me to work while I am on vacation. They recognize that I am on vacation, so they allow me to relax or meet up with friends. (Luluk, Hong Kong)

My work atmosphere is excellent, my employer is very attentive, my pay is never late, and I am permitted time off. The job here meets all of my needs. (Nana, Hong Kong)

The workplace has friendly and enjoyable environment. And thank God, I have never had a negative or unpleasant experience while working. Also, my employer is kind. Consequently, I feel content and comfortable working there. (Melati, Hong Kong)

As seen by those excerpts, several informants experienced a sense of comfort at their place of employment as a direct result of the strong sense of kinships that existed between their employers as well as among the co-workers themselves. Moreover, and especially in the case of migrant domestic workers, where their employers treat them as if they were members of the family, it is also consistent with prior research (Farashah & Blomquist, 2019; MacKenzie & Forde, 2009), which suggests that the familial-like bond between migrant workers and their employers can have a significant impact on their level of motivation. Indeed, every migrant worker expects the expectation that their prospective employer will be kind, given their belief that it is critical to develop positive relationships with the employer's family. In this, pleasant and mutually beneficial interactions between migrant workers and their employers can foster a strong sense of obligation on the part of migrant workers towards their employers. In addition to having a healthy relationship with the employers, the presence of a work environment that encourages migrant workers to feel as though they have close friends who live nearby also adds to the development of a strong sense of proximity to their homes (Tabuga, 2018; Timonen & Doyle, 2010; Wanninayake, 2016).

A promising career development and opportunities for self-growth. The extensive career developments and employment opportunities offered to migrant workers contribute to the creation of a working environment that is more accommodating to their needs. Several sources claim that it is easier to locate employment opportunities and advance one's career outside of rather than within Indonesia. According to Sukar, a migrant worker in Taiwan, "Not only do I get to interact with a great number of people, but my company also fosters my professional development." In point of fact, for many of the informants, having a job profession does not only translate as, as Ismail in Malaysia exactly put it, "already being in a profitable position," but being "given a lot of responsibility by my supervisor made me feel important because in Indonesia, I am only a seller of bamboo pottery" contributes more significantly to a sense of self-improvement, self-esteem, and self-growth. Basuki, another migrant worker in Malaysia, mentioned that his relatively pleasant work environment as a gardener in his employer's home was not only a significant factor in his decision to stay and return, but that his employer's request that he to help take care of the plantation the employer owns has made him feel useful and important, and he believes that his current position is sufficient to realise his potential. Nisa in Taiwan also remarked, "The working climate in Taiwan is undeniably superior to that in Indonesia, especially in terms of standards and finances." She added that, despite her inability to find job in Indonesia, she was delighted to have been offered a position as a migrant domestic worker in Taiwan, for which she would receive a monthly salary.

Thus far, we have been able to deduce the following: A large number of migrant workers leave their home countries in search of better employment opportunities and higher earnings. These workers often prosper in their new environments, increasing the likelihood of returning to work abroad in the future. Furthermore, many sources also revealed that they had worked at the same location for an extended period of time and that their employers had placed a high level of trust in them, which prompted informants to compare their experiences working in Indonesia and abroad, with the latter implying a higher quality of work and environment. According to earlier research (Forde & MacKenzie, 2009; Lan, 2001; Wanninayake, 2016),

migrant workers' access to career developments is strongly influenced by the companies or employers for which they work. If a more open-minded and inclusive attitudes prevails at the workplace, migrant workers will have a better chance of advancing in their (Rajendran et al., 2020). Employers' trust in their migrant workers serves as not only a kind of psychological capital but also as a source of inspiration and hope, empowering them to face and triumph over the hardships of their new home and workplace. That is, migrant workers are likely to remain with their existing employers if they are given opportunities to take charge of their careers and improve personally and professionally (Le, Jiang, & Nielsen, 2018). It is inevitable, however, that migrant workers will choose to work abroad and engage in circular migration due to the inaccessibility of labour market and the difficulty of finding work in rural areas of Indonesia (Martyn, 2018), as well as the possibility of salaries abroad that are higher than in Indonesia (Zid et al., 2020).

Adequate accommodations that fulfil basic living needs. Having a sense of familial-like relationships and promising career developments are important, but so is providing adequate accommodations for migrant workers to do their jobs. Such comfort can be accomplished in a variety of ways, for example, such as reassuring migrant workers that the company or employer cares about them by meeting basic necessities like providing them with a safe place to live and nutritious food to eat. Rohmah in Taiwan, for example, went on to remark, "If all goes well, my employer will provide for both my physical and spiritual needs." Ghoni, who is currently located in New Zealand, commented, "When compared to Indonesia, the facilities at work here in New Zealand are, of course, superior." Luluk in Hong Kong has described her work environment as "incredibly nice" because she is provided meals three times per day and the cost of these meals are not deducted from her salary. A large number of sources also receives paid vacation time during which they can relax and refuel. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, many also reported receiving lodging, registration, and transportation to clinics in order to obtain the COVID-19 vaccine. In fact, hospitable conditions are among the incentives that encourage informants to remain and work in migrant workers' host countries (Dewen, Fang, & Guoqing, 2010; Koh, 2020; Loganathan et al., 2019). Basuki, who resides to work in Malaysia, noted similarly, "Here, the employer's family has placed their trust in me, and as a result, I have been provided with a separate room with a variety of suitable and better facilities.

Indeed, many informants reported feeling comfortable and secure, with their rights being respected and appreciated, and their incomes and general quality of life being greatly enhanced compared to their experiences in Indonesia. Furthermore, the fact that both the company and the employer offer genuine compassion and care for migrant workers and fulfil their responsibilities to provide them with the essential working conditions they need to perform their jobs, such as the right to food and shelter and the ability to receive vaccinations, demonstrates how the availability of adequate accommodations at the place of employment encourages informants' sense of comfort to remain.

#### *"... Like a Family": A Welcoming Community*

While there are many elements at play, Blumenstock, Chi, and Tan (2019) argue that a solid social network is a major motivator for migrant workers to remain in their host country. Kiranantika (2021) lists that trust, social engagement, and reciprocity are the three pillars of survival strategies in countries that host migrant workers. Informants in this study were found to congregate in local groups and communities; these connections are important to informants as they offer a space where they are able to trust one another and lean on one another for emotional support while they are far from home and their families for work. Informants further reported that being a part of these groups enabled them to feel safe since it allows them an opportunity to unwind and socialize with others who understood them and their experiences as minorities, as well as provides opportunities for networking and mutual support.

Networking to foster relationships and connections. According to the responses of the majority of the informants, the opportunity to make new connections is a major draw to participating in online communities and a key factor in their decision to do so. Rudi, a migrant worker in South Korea, spoke about his experiences in this subject as follows.

I am a member of a variety of communities, including soccer communities, religious communities, regional communities, and many others. There are other communities, but owing to time and energy constraints, I only follow these. Joining a community is one way, in my opinion, to meet new people who come from all over the world and come from a variety of different backgrounds. (Rudi, South Korea)

The presence of these communities has a number of positive effects on the network, including the production of new knowledge that might not have been acquired had informants focused just on seeking employment. Sukar in Taiwan has talked about how he wants to become more involved in the local community because of the positive effects it has on his life and provides him with opportunities he would not otherwise have, such as unique experiences that would be hard to come by in the profession. He explained that the people in his circle are from all walks of life and work in places all over the world, so he can learn about new things from them, such as how to do certain occupations or what it is like to live in places he has not seen before. In the same vein, Anam in Taiwan shared his insights gained through being an active member of his local community.

I am a member of a group of professionals who assist migrant workers with their concerns. For instance, if there is an issue with the factory where I work, this community will guide and direct me on how to address it and the process that must be followed. Herein I get new information particularly regarding better understanding of the employment agreements (contracts). (Anam, Taiwan)

The benefits of engaging with local communities, such as receiving new knowledge from a vast network, are sufficient to make informants feel secure and drive them to return to work abroad; hence, it is one of the most essential considerations for many informants to remain in host countries. According to Garip and Asad (2016), migrant networks facilitate



migration because they provide access to migrant social capital. The term “migrant social capital” refers to the knowledge and support migrants provide one another to minimize migration's expenses and maximize its benefits. In fact, as Dolfin and Genicot (2010) highlight, the size of a person's network has a direct correlation with the likelihood that they will migrate and engage in yet another instance of circular migration.

A sense of togetherness for mutual support. The creation of a strong and deep sense of support and mutual solidarity is another advantage of informants being members of certain communities. Because of this, our informants feel as if they have a safe place to call home and are aware of whom to contact if they encounter any issues when working abroad. Melati, who works in Hong Kong, said that “people in the Indonesian migrant worker community that I follow are like family” because they look out for one another and plan get-togethers, which brings her joy and makes her feel at peace. She went on to explain that if one of the members of the community is having a difficult time or has a problem, the rest of the community will rally around them and do anything they can to help, no matter how small. Indra, a New Zealand-based worker, reiterated this sentiment, stating that the Indonesian migrant worker community he has come to know and respect in New Zealand is more concerned with supporting its own members in times of need. In his word, “If someone is in need of assistance, they are able to post their request straight on social media groups, where their other friends can then respond and offer their help.” One more perk was revealed by Rudi in South Korea, who elaborated on the benefits of his community by saying, “We discuss with one another what it is like to live in a foreign country, and based on our various life experiences, the members of the group are able to assist one another and offer one appropriate help.” Comparing his personal perspective to that of Rudi, Anam in Taiwan made the following attempts at communication:

The worker community that I am a part of here provides assistance to Indonesian migrant workers who are employed in this manufacturing facility. When there is an issue with the plant, the community will step in, particularly in things connected to the contracts that are being negotiated. In the event that there is a violation of the contract, the community will work together to find a solution to the issue. (Anam, Taiwan)

Sukar in Taiwan agrees, stating that another advantage of belonging to a community is having friends who are like siblings because migrant workers work so far away, so “they do not feel alone, and we can back each other up” in times of hardship. Due to the community's closeness and mutual support, informants can retain a higher level of living while working abroad. Having close friends and family is a big motivator for informants to return to their host countries. Hombrados-Mendieta et al. (2019) also noted that among migrant workers, family and native friend networks, as well as community integration, have significant influencers on immigrants' ability to attain life contentment. Similar points are offered by Munshi (2014), who also contends that such ties might provide social and emotional support.

A community as a means of relaxation. Almost all informants also noted the demanding schedule, tough time management, and complex responsibilities associated with their work

abroad. As a result, one way they believe that they can relieve stress on the weekends and holidays is by being active in a community. Although the informants did email us with some documentations while traveling or celebrating holidays with their community, we decided against including it in this study to protect the informants' identities. Some informants have shared their thoughts on the topic in the following ways:

Following communities abroad is pretty helpful to prevent us from being stressed out by the demands of work. For instance, if we spend our vacation time to do anything other than rest in the dormitory, we occasionally go for a stroll with our community buddies. (Rudi, South Korea)

On occasion, while we are on vacation, our community friends visit tourist spots with us, however not usually on holidays or weekends because we also need to spend more money. But it was quite useful in enhancing my own enjoyment after a long day of work. (Luluk, Hong Kong)

It is simple; in this neighbourhood, we frequently come together to relax by going to simple restaurants or dining at our residences. It is a good way to alleviate weariness as a result of my co-workers' [friends of the community] presence. (Anam, Taiwan)

In short, the interviews infer that informants consider they have a place to recuperate from exhaustion in a country with a different work culture than Indonesia. As a result, when informants choose to return to their host countries, they are less likely to be concerned about the taxing demands of their work because they have a very supportive community.

Strengthening religious fervour (faiths) through communities. Because of the nature of their jobs, some informants must learn to adapt to the traditions and customs of countries other than their own. As a result, those who were once in the majority in Indonesia will now be in the minority at their places of employment, especially when it comes to religious practices. In this, by participating in local communities, those who must work away from their families can gain a sense of belonging and renewed drive to complete their tasks, where they feel like they have a second family among other members of the community who share their Indonesian heritage and religious beliefs. Occasionally, these communities conduct events with the express intention of reminding migrant workers of customs that are ubiquitous in Indonesia but are less so in other parts of the world. One example is described by Luluk, a Hong Kong-based worker, who related her community's experience of arranging a monthly Islamic congregational prayer (known as a *yasinan*).

Even though we live in a region where the vast majority of people do not practice Islam, we are able to maintain our identity as Muslims with the help of this program. That is to say, we are able to continue to worship in accordance with the tenets of our religion and the traditions that we followed while we were in Indonesia. (Luluk, Hong Kong)

Melati went on to say that through her Muslim Indonesian migrant community, she is able to draw closer to God and cure her familial longings in accordance with her religious

beliefs. She explained, "Every week, we gather to pray together. It is comforting to live here, even though it is distant from home, because it feels near and has a family-like atmosphere. In addition to making a living, one of the reasons for returning to work here is that I am quite comfortable with the community." Sukar shared his thoughts with the people in his humanitarian communities, stating that his faith not only supports him spiritually but also provides him with the steadiness he needs to maintain his beliefs and see them through, even if others do not. He sought to illustrate by saying, "During the month of Ramadan, we also share iftar and sahoor with others." Ghoni in New Zealand felt particularly linked to this subject since he lived and worked in a country where the majority of people did not share his religion and values.

I am a member of the Indonesian migrant worker community in New Zealand. The purpose of this community is to provide migrant workers with a sense of belonging so that they feel comfortable working here. In addition, our community frequently engages in charitable endeavours, such as the distribution of meals to the needy. In remembrance of Indonesian traditions throughout the last month of Ramadan, we prepared an iftar and sahur menu featuring Indonesian foods such as ketupat, chicken opor, and many others. (Ghoni, New Zealand)

Indra, who is also in New Zealand, has an almost same experience.

My neighbourhood frequently hosts charitable events such as food drives and fundraisers for the homeless. In addition to this, people regularly assemble to worship or do kajian (Islamic discussions). (Indra, New Zealand)

As can be seen from the findings of the interviews, Indonesian migrant workers abroad are able to fulfill their religious commitments despite being a religious minority in their place of employment. They are able to feel less isolated and more accepted as individuals when they are with this community of people who have similar experiences and perspectives. As a result, informants are more likely to go back to work abroad, even if it means moving away from their families and the country of their origin or becoming a minority in the country where they are employed.

## Conclusions

As reported by The World Bank (2017), Indonesia is one of the largest contributors of migrant workers in Southeast Asia, with some of its migrant workers migrating abroad on multiple occasions for a variety of different, multifaceted reasons. This research seeks to identify what push factors encourage Indonesian migrant workers to return to their country of designation after returning to Indonesia, and so engaging in circular migration.

Previous research has demonstrated that migrant workers are frequently subjected to exploitation and abuse (Digidiki & Bhabha, 2018; Gallagher, 2015; Miller et al., 2015), lending credence to the assumption that they will not re-migrate as migrant workers. However, as

Ollus (2016) argues, migrant workers are positioned in “forced flexibility” where “they have limited options other than to agree to working on poor and exploitative terms”. As Acharya (2020) also highlights, migrant workers are rendered with no bargaining power due to the “chronic underemployment at their place of origin, persistent precariousness, and informality of migrant workers in the unorganized sectors”. Even further, as many migrant workers often fund their (debt-financed) migration by taking out loans at exorbitant interest rates, selling off valuable land for quick cash, mortgaging productive assets, and spending down limited reserves (Moniruzzaman & Walton-Roberts, 2018), it is hardly surprising that migration-related activities is overburdened with debt and tragically, can take the whole migration episode to service the debt itself. That is, many migrant workers consider that irrespective of the negative aspects of migration and the risks they must face, many continue to migrate and even re-migrate due to both internal and external factors beyond their control.

This research, however, points out a different line of story. While also acknowledging that migrant workers are (often unavoidably and unfortunately) subjected to the negative features of migration and are strongly compelled to re-migrate as workers in their pursuit of economic factors (“money”), as Sorauren (2000) notes, “There are (and must be) more reasons to work than just to earn money. And these other reasons can be promoted to motivate people to work hard as well as to mitigate the conflict of interests”. Relative to the research findings, supportive and amicable workplace environments (including the possibility of career advancements and adequate accommodations) as well as productive and family-oriented communities are two non-monetary incentives in enticing Indonesian migrant workers to going back to countries of destination after returning to Indonesia. By contrast to previous studies that concluded economic factors to be the primary driving force for migrant workers returning to work overseas (Borras et al., 2022; Spitzer & Piper, 2014; Sricharoen, 2020; Zid et al., 2020), our study sheds light on the “human” side of the reasons migrant workers return to employment overseas.

From exploring the perspectives and experiences of Indonesian migrant workers, our study looks at the incentives that influenced their decisions to going back to host countries for employment after returning to home countries. While many previous research has shown that migrant workers are frequently exploited and subjected to cases of abuse, and that many migrants continue to re-migrate despite the terrible conditions they are subjected to in their quest for better jobs, income, and means of subsistence; our study offers a different side of the story by elucidating that migrant workers are driven to return to work abroad for not only “monetary” reasons but also for “human” (non-monetary) reasons. While it is irrational within our argument to assert that migrant workers will return to employment overseas solely for these non-monetary incentives, especially considering their personal circumstances back in Indonesia such as (for example) debt-financed migration or their workplace-related situations in host countries (including abuses and exploitations), it is still considered that these “human”, non-monetary incentives to be fundamental relative to the key causes that push migrant workers to going back to countries of destination. That is, by prescribing the normative changes of migrant workers re-migrating with pleasure, or in other words, “going back with glee”, and positioning their rights and welfares as well-protected and well-accommodated, as opposed to being in instances of exploitation, abuse, and debt-facilitated

migration, the research contributes as a key point of departure for future studies to explore the non-monetary incentives for migrant workers to re-migrate and engage in circular migration.

## Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the Directorate of Research and Community Service, Deputy for Research and Development Strengthening, Ministry of Research and Technology/National Research and Innovation Agency for their financial support towards this research.

## About The Authors

Dr. Erna Setijaningrum is a senior lecturer in the Department of Public Administration at Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia. Currently (2020-present), she is also the Coordinator for the Master of Public Policy program at the same university. Her research interests include marginalized groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, people with mental health problems, and migrant workers. She is also experienced with research projects surrounding human resources development and public services.

Dr. Asiyah Kassim is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Administrative Science & Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam. Her current research focusses on the challenges of implementing collaborative approaches to policy, governance, and action for sustainable development. Her area of expertise among others includes community development, sociology of risk and disaster, environmental governance, environmental diplomacy, urban governance, social work and disability, environmental and so forth.

Dr. Rochyati Triana is a senior lecturer in the Department of Public Administration at Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia. Her research expertise includes human development issues and rural/urban development planning.

Muhammad Reza Dzulfikri earned his Master's degree in public policy from Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia. His research interests focus in public service innovation and public policy implementation.

## References

Acharya, A. K. (2021). Caste-based migration and exposure to abuse and exploitation: Dadan labour migration in India. *Contemporary Social Science*, 16(3), 371-383. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2020.1855467>

- Akay, P. A., & Ahmadi, N. (2022). The Work Environment of Immigrant Employees in Sweden – a Systematic Review. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 1–34.
- Anwar, R. P. (2015). Return migration and local development in Indonesia. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 5(2), 224–257.
- Blumenstock, J. E., Chi, G., & Tan, X. (2019). Migration and the value of social networks. [G2LM | LIC Working Paper No. 60]. Institute of Labor Economics.
- Borras, S. M., Franco, J. C., Ra, D., Kramer, T., Kamoon, M., Phyu, P., ..., Ye, J. (2022). Rurally rooted cross-border migrant workers from Myanmar, Covid-19, and agrarian movements. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 39(1), 315–338. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-021-10262-6>
- Boustan, L. P., Fishback, P. V., & Kantor, S. (2010). The effect of internal migration on local labor markets: American cities during the Great Depression. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 28(4), 719–746. <https://doi.org/10.1086/653488>
- Brennan, D. (2014). Trafficking, scandal, and abuse of migrant workers in Argentina and the United States. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 653(1), 107–123. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716213519239>
- Bylander, M. (2020). Destination debts: Local and translocal loans in the migrant experience. *Geoforum*, 137, 194–202. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.06.015>
- Caxaj, C. S., & Cohen, A. (2019). “I will not leave my body here”: Migrant farmworkers’ health and safety amidst a climate of coercion. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(15). <https://doi.org/10.3390%2Fijerph16152643>
- Cheo, R. (2017). Migrant workers and workplace bullying in urban China. *Social Indicators Research*, 132, 87–115. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-015-1214-0>
- Chowdhury, M. B., & Chakraborty, M. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on the migrant workers and remittances flow to Bangladesh. *South Asian Survey*, 28(1), 38–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971523121995365>
- Constant, A. F. (2020). Time-space dynamics of return and circular migration. *Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics*, 1–40. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57365-6\\_107-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57365-6_107-1)
- Constant, A. F., Nottmeyer, O., & Zimmermann, K. F. (2013). The economics of circular migration. In *International Handbook on the Economics of Migration* (pp. 55–74). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.
- Dewen, W., Fang, C., & Guoqing, Z. (2010). Factors Influencing Migrant Workers’ Employment and Earnings – The Role of Education and Training. *Social Sciences in China*, 31(3), 123–145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02529203.2010.503078>
- Digidiki, V., & Bhabha, J. (2018). Sexual abuse and exploitation of unaccompanied migrant children in Greece: Identifying risk factors and gaps in services during the European

- migration crisis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 92, 114-121. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2018.02.040>
- Dolfín, S., & Genicot, G. (2010). What do networks do? The role of networks on migration and “coyote” use. *Review of Development Economics*, 14(2), 343–359. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9361.2010.00557.x>
- Farashah, A. D., & Blomquist, T. (2019). Exploring employer attitude towards migrant workers: Evidence from managers across Europe. *Evidence-Based HRM: A Global Forum for Empirical Scholarship*.
- Fitzgerald, S., Chen, X., Qu, H., & Sheff, M. G. (2013). Occupational injury among migrant workers in China: a systematic review. *Injury Prevention*, 19(5), 348–354. <https://doi.org/10.1136/injuryprev-2012-040578>
- Forde, C., & MacKenzie, R. (2009). Employers’ use of low-skilled migrant workers: Assessing the implications for human resource management. *International Journal of Manpower*, 30, 437-452. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/01437720910977643>
- Gallagher, A. T. (2015). Migrant smuggling.
- Garip, F., & Asad, A. L. (2016). Network effects in Mexico-US migration: Disentangling the underlying social mechanisms. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 60(10), 1168–1193. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764216643131>
- Guérin, I., & Venkatasubramanian, G. (2020). The socio-economy of debt. Revisiting debt bondage in times of financialization. *Geoforum*, 137, 174-184. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.05.020>
- Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). (2007). *Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)*. Retrieved from <https://www.iom.int/global-forum-migration-and-development-gfmd>.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences.
- Hargreaves, S., Rustage, K., Nellums, L. B., McAlpine, A., Pocock, N., Devakumar, D., ..., Himmels, J. W. (2019). Occupational health outcomes among international migrant workers: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet Global Health*, 7(7), e872–e882. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(19\)30204-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(19)30204-9)
- Harkins, B., & Lindgren, D. (2018). Labour migration in the ASEAN region: Assessing the social and economic outcomes for migrant workers. *Last Visited*, 12(1).
- Harvey, C., Thompson, S., Otis, E., & Willis, E. (2020). Nurses’ views on workload, care rationing and work environments. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 28(4), 912–918. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.13019>
- Hoang, L. A. (2020). Debt and (un)freedoms: The case of transnational labour migration from Vietnam. *Geoforum*, 116, 33–41. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.08.001>
- Hombrados-Mendieta, I., Millán-Franco, M., Gómez-Jacinto, L., Gonzalez-Castro, F., Martos-Méndez, M. J., & García-Cid, A. (2019). Positive influences of social support on sense

- of community, life satisfaction and the health of immigrants in Spain. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02555>
- Ibrahim, S. S., Ozdeser, H., Cavusoglu, B., & Shagali, A. A. (2021). Rural migration and relative deprivation in agro-pastoral communities under the threat of cattle rustling in Nigeria. *SAGE Open*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020988856>
- Jain, P. C., & Oommen, G. Z. (2016). *South Asian Migration to Gulf Countries: History, Policies, Development* (1<sup>st</sup> Ed.). London: Routledge.
- Janta, H., Ladkin, A., Brown, L., & Lugosi, P. (2011). Employment experiences of Polish migrant workers in the UK hospitality sector. *Tourism Management*, 32(5), 1006–1019. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.08.013>
- Jureidini, R. (2010). Trafficking and contract migrant workers in the Middle East. *International Migration*, 48(4), 142–163. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2010.00614.x>
- Kiranantika, A. (2021). Social Networks: The Survival Strategy Of Indonesian Migrant Workers In Hong Kong. *Komunitas: International Journal of Indonesian Society and Culture*, 13(1), 100–107. <https://doi.org/10.15294/komunitas.v13i1.27021>
- Koh, D. (2020). Migrant workers and COVID-19. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 77(9), 634–636. <https://doi.org/10.1136/oemed-2020-106626>
- Lainez, N. (2020). Debt, trafficking and safe migration: The brokered mobility of Vietnamese sex workers to Singapore. *Geoforum*, 137, 164–173. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.01.021>
- Lan, P.-C. (2001). Among women: Migrant domestics and their Taiwanese employers across generations. *Berkeley Collection of Working and Occasional Papers*, 37.
- Le, H., Jiang, Z., & Nielsen, I. (2018). Cognitive cultural intelligence and life satisfaction of migrant workers: The roles of career engagement and social injustice. *Social Indicators Research*, 139(1), 237–257. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11205-016-1393-3>
- Loganathan, T., Rui, D., Ng, C.-W., & Pocock, N. S. (2019). Breaking down the barriers: Understanding migrant workers' access to healthcare in Malaysia. *PloS One*, 14(7). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0218669>
- Lowe, M. A., Prapanjaroensin, A., Bakitas, M. A., Hites, L., Loan, L. A., Raju, D., & Patrician, P. A. (2020). An exploratory study of the influence of perceived organizational support, coworker social support, the nursing practice environment, and nurse demographics on burnout in palliative care nurses. *Journal of Hospice & Palliative Nursing*, 22(6), 465–472. <https://doi.org/10.1097/njh.0000000000000686>
- Luksyte, A., Spitzmueller, C., & Rivera-Minaya, C. Y. (2014). Factors relating to wellbeing of foreign-born Hispanic workers. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 29(6), 685–704. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1108/JMP-10-2012-0322>



- MacKenzie, R., & Forde, C. (2009). The rhetoric of the 'good worker' versus the realities of employers' use and the experiences of migrant workers. *Work, Employment and Society*, 23(1), 142–159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017008099783>
- Majid, Z., Welch, C., Davies, J., & Jackson, T. (2020). Global frailty: the role of ethnicity, migration and socioeconomic factors. *Maturitas*, 139, 33–41. <https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.maturitas.2020.05.010>
- Martyn, H. L. (2018). Voices of Indonesian migrant workers at home and abroad. *Asian Social Science*, 14(8), 119–131. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v14n8p119>
- Mas'udah, S. (2020). Remittances and lifestyle changes among Indonesian overseas migrant workers' families in their hometowns. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 21(2), 649–665. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-019-00676-x>
- Maxwell, J. A. (2008). *Designing a qualitative study* (Vol. 2, pp. 214-253). The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods.
- Meng, L. I., Christopher, G. A. N., Wanglin, M. A., & Jiang, W. (2020). Impact of cash crop cultivation on household income and migration decisions: Evidence from low-income regions in China. *Journal of Integrative Agriculture*, 19(10), 2571–2581. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2095-3119\(20\)63161-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2095-3119(20)63161-6)
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2018). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. California: SAGE Publications.
- Moniruzzaman, M., & Walton-Roberts, M. (2018). Migration, debt and resource backwash: how sustainable is Bangladesh-Gulf circular migration? *Migration and Development*, 7(1), 85-103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21632324.2017.1358799>
- Moyce, S. C., & Schenker, M. (2018). Migrant workers and their occupational health and safety. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 39, 351–365. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040617-013714>
- Mucci, N., Traversini, V., Giorgi, G., Tommasi, E., De Sio, S., & Arcangeli, G. (2019). Migrant workers and psychological health: A systematic review. *Sustainability*, 12(1), 120. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12010120>
- Munshi, K. (2014). Community networks and migration. In Y. Bramoullé, A. Galleoti, & B. Rogers (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Economics of Networks* (pp. 1-22). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199948277.001.0001>
- Neuman, W. L., & Robson, K. (2014). *Basics of Social Research*. Pearson Canada Toronto.
- Ollus, N. (2016). Forced flexibility and exploitation: experiences of migrant workers in the cleaning industry. *Nordic journal of working life studies*, 6(1), 25-45. <https://doi.org/10.19154/njwls.v6i1.4908>
- Oun, M. A., & Bach, C. (2014). Qualitative research method summary. *Qualitative Research*, 1(5), 252-258.
- Parker, C., Scott, S., & Geddes, A. (2019). *Snowball Sampling*. SAGE Research Methods Foundations.

- Piper, N., & Roces, M. (2004). *Wife or Worker?: Asian Women and Migration*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Piracha, M., & Vadean, F. (2010). Return migration and occupational choice: Evidence from Albania. *World Development*, 38(8), 1141–1155. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2009.12.015>
- Rajendran, D., Ng, E. S., Sears, G., & Ayub, N. (2020). Determinants of migrant career success: A study of recent skilled migrants in Australia. *International Migration*, 58(2), 30–51. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/imig.12586>
- Ravasi, C., Salamin, X., & Davoine, E. (2015). Cross-cultural adjustment of skilled migrants in a multicultural and multilingual environment: an explorative study of foreign employees and their spouses in the Swiss context. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26(10), 1335–1359. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1080/09585192.2014.985328>
- Sayono, J., Utami, I. W. P., & Ayundasari, L. (2018). Migrant workers and socio-economic changes. *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan dan Politik*, 31(2), 176–189. <https://doi.org/10.20473/mkp.V31I22018.176-189>
- Shah, N. M. (2013). Labour migration from Asian to GCC countries: Trends, patterns and policies. *Middle East Law and Governance*, 5(1–2), 36–70. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/18763375-00501002>
- Shamsuddin, M., Katsaiti, M. S., & El Anshasy, A. A. (2022). Income rank and income concerns: What correlates with international migration intentions? *Economic Analysis and Policy*, 75, 490–505. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eap.2022.06.004>
- Sherry, V. N. (2004, July 13). Bad dreams: Exploitation and abuse of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia. *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2004/07/13/bad-dreams/exploitation-and-abuse-migrant-workers-saudi-arabia>
- Sonmez, S., Apostolopoulos, Y., Tran, D., & Rentrop, S. (2011). Human rights and health disparities for migrant workers in the UAE. *Health & Hum. Rts.*, 13, 17.
- Sorauren, I. F. (2000). Non-monetary incentives: Do people work only for money? *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 925–944. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3857840>
- Spitzer, D. L., & Piper, N. (2014). Retrenched and returned: Filipino migrant workers during times of crisis. *Sociology*, 48(5), 1007–1023. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038514540579>
- Sricharoen, T. (2020). Migration and Remittances: Evidence from Cambodia, Myanmar and Lao Migrant Workers. Global Academy of Training and Research (GATR) Enterprise.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative case studies.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). Qualitative research: Studying how things work.
- Stark, O., Micevska, M., & Mycielski, J. (2009). Relative poverty as a determinant of migration: Evidence from Poland. *Economics Letters*, 103(3), 119–122.

- Sterud, T., Tynes, T., Mehlum, I. S., Veiersted, K. B., Bergbom, B., Airila, A., ..., Flyvholm, M. A. (2018). A systematic review of working conditions and occupational health among immigrants in Europe and Canada. *BMC Public Health*, 18(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5703-3>
- Stevens, M., Hussein, S., & Manthorpe, J. (2012). Experiences of racism and discrimination among migrant care workers in England: findings from a mixed-methods research project. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 35(2), 259–280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.574714>
- Tabuga, A. D. (2018). A probe into the Filipino migration culture: What is there to learn for policy intervention? [Discussion Paper Series No. 2018-02]. Research Information Department, Philippine Institute for Development Studies.
- Thomas, M. J. (2019). Employment, education, and family: Revealing the motives behind internal migration in Great Britain. *Population, Space and Place*, 25(4). <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2233>
- Timonen, V., & Doyle, M. (2010). Migrant care workers' relationships with care recipients, colleagues and employers. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 17(1), 25–41. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506809350859>
- Triandafyllidou, A., & Marchetti, S. (2013). Migrant domestic and care workers in Europe: New patterns of circulation?. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 11(4), 339–346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2013.822750>
- Uhlendorff, A., & Zimmermann, K. F. (2014). Unemployment dynamics among migrants and natives. *Economica*, 81(322), 348–367. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ecca.12077>
- Urbański, M. (2022). Comparing push and pull factors affecting migration. *Economies*, 10(1), 21. <https://dx.doi.org/10.3390/economies10010021>
- Wanninayake, S. (2016). Sri Lankan women migrant workers and role of family and kinship networks. *Journal of Advances in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 14–23.
- Weine, S., Golobof, A., Bahromov, M., Kashuba, A., Kalandarov, T., Jonbekov, J., & Loue, S. (2013). Female migrant sex workers in Moscow: gender and power factors and HIV risk. *Women & Health*, 53(1), 56–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080%2F03630242.2012.739271>
- Wickramasekara, P. (2008). Globalisation, international labour migration and the rights of migrant workers. *Third World Quarterly*, 29(7), 1247–1264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590802386278>
- Witte, N., & Guedes Auditor, J. (2021). Affluent lives beyond the border? Individual wage change through migration. In M. Erlinghagen, A. Ette, N. F. Schneider, & N. Witte (Eds.), *The Global Lives of German Migrants* (pp. 121–138). Springer, Cham.
- World Bank Group. (2017). *Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/eap/publication/migrating-to-opportunity-overcoming-barriers-to-labor-mobility-in-southeast-asia>.

- Yin, R. K. (2006). Mixed methods research: Are the methods genuinely integrated or merely parallel. *Research in the Schools*, 13(1), 41-47.
- Zanabazar, A., Kho, N. S., & Jigjiddorj, S. (2021). The push and pull factors affecting the migration of Mongolians to the Republic of South Korea. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 90, 1023.
- Zewdu, G. A. (2018). Ethiopian female domestic labour migration to the Middle East: Patterns, trends, and drivers. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, 11(1), 6-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17528631.2017.1342976>

## **Appendix 1.**

1. How many times have you returned to your countries of destination, and for what reason?
2. You returned to [insert example] for the following reason: [insert example]. How is your work environment as a [insert occupation] (for example, workloads, relationships with employers, relationships with co-workers)?
3. Why did you decide to work as a migrant worker abroad?
4. How are the accommodations at your place of employment as a [insert occupation]?
5. What other reasons led you to return to work as a migrant worker abroad?

# JOURNAL OF ASEAN STUDIES

[WWW.IR.BINUS.AC.ID/JAS](http://WWW.IR.BINUS.AC.ID/JAS)

ISSN 2338-1361 (print) / 2338-1353 (online)

Volume 11 Number 1 August 2023



**JAS**

**JOURNAL OF ASEAN STUDIES**

Volume 11 Number 1 August 2023