

INDONESIA'S LEADERSHIP ROLE IN ASEAN: HISTORY AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Indonesia is perceived as a natural de facto leader of the International Organization of ASEAN since its establishment in 1967. Myriad factors have contributed towards this highly regarded position in ASEAN, including its persistence towards measures of regionalism, hence positioning ASEAN at the central core of Indonesia's foreign policies throughout the years. As one of the founding members of ASEAN, key past foreign policies have reflected an intention to shape the organization in a manner most ideal for Indonesia. Thus it is crucial to further understand in what nature and to what extent has Indonesia led ASEAN in the past, and what are Indonesia's prospects in leading ASEAN with the change of presidency that the state faces now. Based on those questions, the paper explores Indonesia's leadership role in ASEAN with focus upon Indonesia's historical role in conflict management correlated with ASEAN member states, and its capacity in architecting contemporary ASEAN institutions. It argues Indonesia's active ad hoc diplomacy in settling various security issues related to the territorial disputes over the Preah Vihear Temple between Cambodia and Thailand, and tensions in the South China Sea. It further argues Indonesia's vital role in establishing key institutions and norms including the ASEAN Political and Security Community and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights. Finally the paper focuses on Indonesia's ostensible rise, and its prospects in continuing its ASEAN leadership role under the newly elected Joko Widodo, pertinent towards the G20 and policy to reassure neighboring states of its non-belligerent rise.

Keywords: Indonesia; ASEAN; Regionalism; Leadership; Institutionalism; Southeast Asia