

Neorealist Asean in 2020: Indonesian Perspective

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Abstract.

This paper, that would be presented in International Academic Conference on Research in Social Sciences (IACRSS), Oxford, UK, 8-10 November 2019, has a preliminary analysis that ASEAN would strengthen up defense cooperation starting in the year of 2020, because ASEAN had discussed about “non-interference” policy security dilemma, despite of potential conflict in South China SEA, and political power binding in United Nations, regarding issues of Terrorism and Global Warming.

This paper is using the concept of Indonesian National Defense System (*Sistem Pertahanan Negara Republik Indonesia/ Sishanneg*) because all the analysis is coming from Indonesian perspective; how Indonesian think about ASEAN defense system, what kind of profit would Indonesian get after the unity of the defense, and what Indonesia could contribute in that kind of defense.

The second theory used in this paper is Neorealism, because each country must have their own analysis and capacity, yet including national budget, to protect their citizens. This is why the unity of defense is different with economic cooperation, because it is needed a real focus and real purpose to unify the defense, but it just took only bargaining process in economic cooperation while each country does not need to have common grounds with other country.

This paper has purpose to be seen as academic recommendation for Indonesian Ministry of Defense and Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to analyze again about ASEAN opportunity to be united in deeper way, than just economical approach, but also defense.

Keywords: defense, international politics, security dilemma, Sishanneg, United Nations

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1. Introduction

ASEAN politic is part of world politics, because ASEAN consists of 10 developing South-East countries that now have politic power among other Asian countries. In 2018, ASEAN had developed defense cooperation named “Our Eyes” to connect 10 countries in term of defense development issues, as well as strengthen trust among nations to face regional issues, terrorism, global warming, trafficking, Rohingya, immigrants, and other issues related to ASEAN community.

ASEAN is well-known for its active participation in High Level Conference, Task Meeting, and Council Roundtable Discussion, yet Workshop cooperated with universities and nongovernmental organization. ASEAN workshops are always full of young people, because one of ASEAN mission is about education dream for ASEAN young people.

ASEAN had been created firstly not for political reason, because Indonesian position itself is non-bloc countries, with “free and active” foreign policy consistency. This is why some realism analysts would say that ASEAN is just part of political tools for Indonesia to have political bidding in the world of diplomacy. This analysis could not be 100% true or false, but yes, geographically Indonesian is always part of ASEAN and ASEAN vision and mission is really important for Indonesia to seize foreign policy based on ASEAN people’s need.

In spite of this ideal view, ASEAN had nothing to do with Indonesian most critical moments, 1965, 1971, 1998, 2008, and 2016. In 1965, there was no record that Indonesia uses its ASEAN power to control the situation and no report at that time that General Soeharto took attention on ASEAN policy. In 1971 there was Malari riot and there was nothing to do with ASEAN economic cooperation and in 1998 there was no ASEAN political action to congratulate Indonesia that had passed democracy moment. Each government of ASEAN just gave appreciation under its own state, not as ASEAN members.

In 2008, Indonesia once again had survived from world crisis, but it was not because Indonesia is part of ASEAN member countries, but it was because Indonesia had a huge consumption with

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more than 200 million residents at that time. In 2016 there was dramatic moment for Jakarta people for Ahok case, that developed into racial and religion issues, but there is no ASEAN action to prevent such conflict, yes we believe this is also part of “non-interference” policy among ASEAN member countries.

Now in 2020, it seems that ASEAN member countries did different approach of cooperation. ASEAN official representatives had held meeting and created “Our Eyes” on defense cooperation purposes. We all know that ASEAN is not European Union with solid and united defense cooperation, including NATO vision and mission, but ASEAN here is started to realize that defense alone is quite different with defense together and we now live in moment of passive peace.

There are still conflicts, including philosophical conflict such as poverty and corruption, and also regional conflicts such as South China Sea conflict and North Korea nuclear threat. We cannot do analysis about ASEAN role in world peace, unless we can explain that ASEAN did do cooperation to prevent regional conflict, that never happened before, so that we can assume, at least for now, that while we are talking about ASEAN member countries, we could also talk about each position of the member, how member react to the issue, and how they prevent it.

It is true that ASEAN had not been created to be united in defense, but what we need to know deeper is how can ASEAN survive without defense and if ASEAN is becoming weak, how we can guarantee that Indonesia is still member of ASEAN. Even for United Nations, Indonesia had walk out because United Nations at that time had mocked Indonesian integrity and honor. We must think the same for ASEAN.

If ASEAN becoming weak, there is no reason a country member still sticks on ASEAN policy -- however we know that many violations of human rights did happen by each member— that’s why ASEAN needs a stronger defense policy. If the main reason is geography or economy, Indonesia could still be good friend with Australia and China, so that the first hard thing to do is to know the main benefit to be still country member of ASEAN, then we can do mind-mapping what we can do next with “Our Eyes” ASEAN policy in this year and afterwards.

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Some analysts said that ASEAN could not be longer named ASEAN, because it had concept of *Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN/MEA* (ASEAN Economic Community/AEC) in 2015, but for our analysis showed that even before there was no concept of MEA, there was already concept of economy, so that in this case there is no need of urgent to change ASEAN name, our analysis will still use ASEAN for ASEAN.

Moreover, we are no longer living in MDG⁴ context, in which MEA is referred to, but we are living in SDG context, so that in consistency, we can call ASEAN as ASEAN in SDG time. The effect of this calling is connected with all regulations and policies under that calling and this is the legal thing to know.

2. Method

Each country has its own national defense system to protect the nation and develop their capabilities to be the best country in the region⁵. No matter the country is geographically small, or big, the first interest is to do self-defense. The first doctrine of general defense; is that no country in this world do nothing for its defense (*Sishanneg*, 2008). A country must develop their defense capabilities, either in conflict time, or in peace time.

In the context of military situation, countries maintain their military strength. Many of them conduct military transformation, but not addressed to reduce effective military capability; many of them carried out military down-sizing, but not reduced the essential strength; and what happened is that some countries go towards military build-up; defence budget is still at a higher level (*Sishanneg*, 2008).

⁴ Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), post-2015 development agenda: We underlined the importance of accelerating the progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and formulating post-2015 development agenda. In this regard, we welcomed the vision to end extreme poverty in the context of sustainable development and promote issues such as disaster risk reduction and universal health coverage, within the framework of renewed global partnership. In this regard, we supported ASEAN's decision to develop an ASEAN Community Post2015 Vision (BBC, 2013, "ASEAN, Japan issue joint statement after summit 14 December", p.3).

⁵ Defense definition is the act of protecting something or someone from attack and all the systems, people, materials etc that a country uses to protect itself from attack (*Sishanneg*, 2008).

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In Indonesia, the concept of national defense system is regulated under Law No.3 Year 2002 about General Provision of State Defense, Article 1 Point 2:

“The State Defense System is a universal defense that involves all citizens, regions and other national resources, and is prepared in advance by the government and held totally, integrated, directed and sustained to uphold the sovereignty of the State, territorial integrity and salvation of all nations of all threat”.

In this regulation, it is stated clear that the first importance of Indonesia is Indonesia itself, so that if there are some hard choices to choose between ASEAN interest and Indonesia interest, Indonesia must choose Indonesia interest above other choice. The first question remarked is that how about the question of humanity, whether there is a question or issue about humanity that needed Indonesian action, but there is no interest for Indonesia. This is why we must learn about Neorealism theory in international relations.

Olsen in Francoise (2010, p.17-18) stated that Neorealism is one of the concepts in international relations theory which states that a country's intervention on internal conflict in another country aims to defend its national interest in the conflicting country. In the concept of neorealism, the state's intervention can be carried out in various ways: not only through military occupation (the Concept of Realism) but also through the use of its position in international organizations such as the United Nations (Olsen 347).

Neorealism claims that to defend its national interest, a country initially claimed to defend internal conflicts of other countries based on democracy and human rights contained in its instruments (national law) (*loc.cit.*). The relation between Neorealism and defense is that the Neorealism is the reasoning of the defense itself.

The most seen country using Neorealism in European Union is France. For African countries, France is representing the nation of peace, but in fact, France just do business, and no matter the changing of government in African countries, France can still be friend with any government. In one part this is the example of success Neorealism, but in the other hand, France is not heading Human Rights as number one base for foreign policy.

Indonesia, with its free and active policy, had no courage to do Neorealism, because

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Indonesian people is always thinking about other's feeling and like former President Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono had ever said, "Million friends, zero enemy". However, that idea is impossible to be implemented in political life. Based on Neorealism though, "zero enemy" means that there is no position for stand for and just follow the flow.

This paper will show that Neorealism is important for national defense, so that we cannot be tricked by other country, we can stand our position clearly, and we can identify the identity of the nation itself, as the nation of Neorealism among other ASEAN countries and how this nation identity could be linked with ASEAN identity too, to be the most Neorealist international organization, among other regional organizations.

3. Analysis

2015 is the year of many changes for ASEAN. Ready or not, the change itself had already happened naturally by the change of world politic; Trump won, the new UN SecGen, Rohingya issue becoming hot again, very cold weather in Europe, and crisis is Syria. In 3 (three) years, ASEAN did change its posture of defense. Before 2015, ASEAN was just collaboration for economy and culture, but now in 2019, ASEAN has a clear defense policy among members⁶, although at same parts we need serious developments, but at least ASEAN member countries can start to trust each other in military and civil-military cooperation coordination⁷.

⁶ In realizing the Blueprint for establishing ASEAN Political-Security Community, the Association has increased cooperation activities, establishing the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) besides other arrangements such as the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC), Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ), Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) to preserve security in the region, especially when it is faced with non-traditional security threats (Asia News Monitor, 2010, p.1).

⁷ In parallel with cooperation through defence channels, military-to-military cooperative activities have been conducted at various levels. ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces, Chiefs of Armies, Navies and Air Forces meet at annual or regular meetings such as ASEAN Chiefs of Defence Forces Informal Meeting - ACDFIM (since 2001), ASEAN Chiefs of Army Multilateral Meeting - ACAMM (since 2000), ASEAN Navy Interaction - ANI (since 2001), and ASEAN Air Force Chiefs Conference - AACC (since 2004). There is also ASEAN Military Intelligent Informal Meeting - AMIIM. All in all, the growth and expanding of military-to-military interaction and cooperation have

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This idea is originated coming from the year of 2010, but it slowly can be implemented and this is also a great progress, because ASEAN member countries are having different aspect of economy, for example Indonesia and Singapore. Indonesia, with more than 250 million people, has different consumption comparing to Singapore⁸; that leads Singapore is more advanced technologically with Indonesia and diplomatically Singapore is brave enough to open up with Israeli business.

Those differences, in fact, cannot use anymore economy as the one and only foundation that makes ASEAN member countries united. Despite of the sense of needy of each other, based on defense concept, it is the defense issue as the new foundation that can make ASEAN more united than before. Based on *Sishanneg*, Indonesia is really supporting that idea, by hosting several ASEAN defense meetings, by becoming neutral party for Rohingya, by giving diplomatic representative of ASEAN for Afganisthan, and by open up sharing information with other ASEAN members for international issue, such as Terrorism.

In this context, Indonesia has doing great, to be the pioneer of peace, to be the most active nation in ASEAN for sending troops in UN Peacekeeping force missions, and to be the sustainable friend for ASEAN. Even though in Neorealism, we learn that we cannot be too sincere in politic, but Indonesia is always sincere for ASEAN member countries, for example the relation with the Malaysia. Indonesian official governments many times disagree with Malaysia, but in the stand for ASEAN unity, Indonesia is always together Malaysia to combat ASEAN threats, for example Wahabbi ideology.

Based on Indonesian national defense system, ASEAN member countries are bestfriend for defense cooperation because many factors. First is the strategic location. While we are talking about Korean nuclear threat, ASEAN member countries must do cooperation in solid way, before

contributed to building mutual confidence and understanding, cementing the solidarity among ASEAN defence forces (loc.cit., p.2).

⁸ While the ASEAN members share a geographical connection, in other respects they are diverse: Indonesia is the world's fourth-most-populous nation, while tiny Brunei is the size of the city of Omaha. In IP terms, Singapore is a self-proclaimed IP Hub, with established laws, expertise and offices of WIPO, Icann and INTA, and its larger neighbour Malaysia is the highest-ranking middle-income country on the GIPC's IP Index. At the other extreme, Myanmar is still struggling to introduce basic IP laws as it opens up its economy (Nurton, 2016, p.1).

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open cooperation with China and Japan. Based on Neorealism theory, this is the action of preparation and ASEAN is a tool to do preventive diplomacy.

Second reason is that Indonesia always see ASEAN economic community as defense tool, never as just pure economic and Indonesia could assume that other ASEAN member countries also treat Indonesia as the complementary nation to make that regional organization more united. Without Indonesia, there would be ASEAN. Indonesia is the founder, the most populated, and the most active for peace initiative among other ASEAN member countries. It is why this paper is trying to combine the mind mapping of *Sishanneg* and Neorealism. Indonesia is always having big role for ASEAN, alone, or with other member countries.

Third reason is plans in the future of ASEAN. In the context of “Our Eyes” ASEAN policy; it means that “non-interference” policy is no longer valid and ASEAN need plans to activate that new policy. Plan A is about the consistency of the new policy to react of whatever conflict happens inside ASEAN member countries. ASEAN is not like NATO, we do not have any united troops to do military intervention, but we have united diplomacy with the changing leadership. This year the leader is Viet Nam, so that in Plan A is Indonesia must conduct good cooperation with Viet Nam, as never before.

Plan B is that we are doing one of Asian people’s bad character, that Hofstede had ever said: Lazy to change. In this case, there is no change in ASEAN, even though there is a change of policy, ASEAN would be the same ASEAN. If this happens, Indonesia can think again about the importance of being ASEAN member. In the term of Neorealism, if a country cannot take any profit from international organization, the country can leave it. Moreover, in this millennial generation, that everything happens so fast, Indonesia can registry to other profitable international organization and if there is no international organization accept Indonesia, just create one.

Plan C is about in the middle of Plan A and B, so that the process of change of ASEAN is so slow, let’s say 10 years. Based on Indonesian national defense system, Indonesia could take a leap to make the dream of ASEAN faster than planned, by taking many roles under regulation of new policy, and as long as the efforts are compatible with Indonesian defense policy. Although the

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best plan is Plan A, but this plan C is where the real combination of *Sishanneg* and Neorealism can happen.

In 40 years birthday in 2008, ASEAN was considered to be the second most successful regional organization after European Union (Koh, 2008, p.8), so that this year in 2020 next year, we could hope and we could act together how to make ASEAN the most respected organization on the planet. In Indonesian perspective, ASEAN could be better, even without military united like NATO, because ASEAN always take part in peace process, not as war winner.

By saying this, it does not mean that ASEAN is a “soft” organization, but it means that the main power of ASEAN is to conduct Neorealism in any kind of policy. This world could be crisis again, World War could happen again, United Nations could be ended, global warming could happen in ASEAN, so that in this uncertainty world, ASEAN might become the most consistent organization in the world.

In previous analysis this paper seemed only discuss about defense, but based on Neorealism, economy is also essential part that coming before deciding defense policy, for example a country that is good friend in economy, is certainly good friend in defense cooperation, because they already had MoU before. In the context of ASEAN in 2020, ASEAN must release the new data of potential economy, intra-members⁹ economy relation, or with other countries, so that we can analyze and figure out about each country’s potency and resilience of economy.

Why we talk about those plans for future of ASEAN? Again, defense is about prevention. If some economy crisis happen, ASEAN can survive, more hope is ASEAN can contribute more, than IMF ever did, to give financial aid, education contribution, and economy analysis. In the best preparation for organization is 100% preparation to forecast the worst. Indonesia does never want to leave ASEAN, nor to think the end of ASEAN, but Indonesia sticks to our national purpose and

⁹ Intra-ASEAN trade is 25 per cent of ASEAN's total trade of US\$1.6 trillion (BBC, 2009, “*ASEAN head addresses business summit in Thailand on economic plan*”, p.3).

by preparing ASEAN for any situation can happen in this 2020, the year of uncertainty, we are also demanded to prepare ourselves.

4. Conclusion

Sishanneg and Neorealism in this paper is the main idea to be combined, as a way to prepare ASEAN member countries, especially Indonesia, to face everything happen in 2020. In October 2019 we have new cabinet and presidential administration and we do hope that ASEAN One Eyes could be one of defense diplomacy method, as well as if we also remember that Indonesia is UNSC President until 2022. This is a huge history for Indonesia to be agent of peace and change conflicts into peace.

Those two main ideas are not fixed ideas, because it is just idea from human, who is always changing also, but by combining those ideas, we could pull up the most realistic thing to do for the future of ASEAN defense unity.

There is no such thing as over exposure in ASEAN defense unity, because Asian people is recognized of their character of being honest, humble, and sincere. We are not Europeans, who just concern about politic and politic. ASEAN people character is united with sense of Asian people, than politic, so that even though we face the turbulence of politic, ASEAN member countries are easy to be united again and history does not record any betrayal among ASEAN member countries.

Despite of all this strength, Indonesia with *Sishanneg*, is ready to be anything in ASEAN this year. Indonesia is ready to be the leader of peace, representing ASEAN, for Afganisthan, to be the economic donor for ASEAN smaller countries, to be the central secretariat for ASEAN defense

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unit¹⁰ in Jakarta, or any other needs for conducting ASEAN policies, as long as compatible with *Sishanneg*.

For conclusion, let us think about the definition of ASEAN itself and how it improves in this millennial time. Some analysts said that ASEAN is economic cooperation, regional organization of some Asian countries, geo-politic of superpower and many things, but this paper named ASEAN as “neorealist ASEAN” with these new proposed definition; “the regional organization that maintain regional stability in South-East Asian countries and take part in international defense strategy to conduct eternal peace and security”.

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¹⁰ The Ministers also endorsed the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Utilisation of Military Assets for HADR under the Framework of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER). This SOP will be a contribution to the existing SOP for Regional Standby Arrangements and Coordination of Joint Disaster Relief and Emergency Response Operations (SASOP) (Asia News Monitor, 2015, p.1).

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