

Article

# Indonesian Maritime Diplomacy: Realizing the Global Maritime Fulcrum Through IORA

Ulil Amri, M Syaprin Zahidi

Department of International Relations, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, – Indonesia

Corresponding email: ulil316@webmail.um.ac.id

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## Abstract

*This article discusses why the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is significant for Indonesia and how Indonesia plays a strategic role in IORA to realize national interests and advance its vision as the World Maritime Axis? In answering these questions, we build arguments based on Christian Le Miere's theory of maritime diplomacy and Helen Milner's theory of international cooperation. The argument in this article consists of two things. First, IORA is very significant for Indonesia because the organization has a common vision with Indonesia's national interest. Second, in order to achieve this goal, the Indonesian government utilizes cooperative and persuasive maritime diplomacy as a means of enhancing international cooperation. This is demonstrated by Indonesia's involvement in encouraging negotiations and facilitating cooperation in the IORA forum. This is also reinforced by Indonesia's election as chair of IORA for the period 2015 to 2017 as a manifestation of Indonesia's existence as a maritime country in the international arena.*

*Keywords: Diplomacy, Maritime, Indonesia, Leadership, Cooperation.*

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has been actively involved in IORA, serving as the chair in 2015 to 2017. During this period, the country hosted the first IORA Summit in 2017 in Jakarta and facilitated the creation of Jakarta Concord. This agreement aimed at strengthening the commitment of IORA member countries to uphold the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as the fundamental norm in maintaining stability and peace in the Indian Ocean region. Indonesia played host to the leader's summit of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), which was also commemorating its 20th anniversary. Indonesia took this opportunity to introduce several initiatives, one of which included the implementation of the IORA Concord (Dinarto, 2017). The extensive engagement of Indonesia's government in IORA demonstrates that the organization looks likely important for this country, why?

Historically, Indonesia has dominated the maritime domain during the Majapahit and Srivijaya empires (Wardhana, 2016). As the biggest archipelagic state, Indonesia has an extensive maritime line from Sumatra to Merauke. Indonesia is also located on a world trade route flanked by two oceans and two continents. The Country has four straits that become world shipping lanes, namely, the Malacca Strait, Sunda Strait, Makassar Strait,

and Lombok Strait. The historical legacy and geostrategic position, fostering Indonesia to re-emphasize their maritime potential leads, hence it leads the government to strongly re-actualize the vision of Global Maritime Fulcrum (Wardhana, 2016).

Previous research explains that Indonesia's participation in the IORA forum is a form of implementation of maritime diplomacy carried out by Indonesia (Madu, 2018). Indonesia's activeness in regional forums such as IORA is due to the continuity between the pillars of the Global Maritime Fulcrum and the strategic priority issues of IORA (Nisa, 2020). This maritime diplomacy will gradually target starting from the Southeast Asia region and continue to expand to the international level (Rijal, 2019). As stated by Prasetya and Estriani (2018), there are similarities between IORA projection with Indonesia's maritime and economic policies.

The incorporation of Indonesia's World Maritime Fulcrum into the government's agenda is shown by President Regulation number 34 of 2022 as a fundamental law for Indonesia in reinforcing its position as a sovereign archipelagic state, strong, independent, and contributing to regional peace and stability (Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2022; Madu, 2018)). How did the country achieve this national goal and why did IORA become significant for Indonesia's foreign policy agenda?

## **MARITIME DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

The questions raised in this paper are answered with two theoretical frameworks, namely the theory of Maritime Diplomacy by Christian Le Miere and the theory of International Cooperation by Helen Milner. As Miere (2014) stated that maritime diplomacy is divided into three, namely, cooperative maritime diplomacy, persuasive maritime diplomacy and coercive maritime diplomacy (Mièrè, 2014). First, cooperative diplomacy is classified as soft power. For instance, disaster response assistance activities, such as humanitarian assistance from India, in the tsunami incident in Palu and Donggala. Second, persuasive maritime diplomacy refers to the efforts by states to enhance both national and international recognition of a country's maritime power. Third, coercive maritime diplomacy, also known as gunboat diplomacy, is diplomacy carried out by using naval power, to change the attitude or decision of a country through threats, sanctions or discontinuation of cooperation. Historically, it was carried out by countries in the post-cold war for establishing new power or hegemony. For instance, in 1911 Germany sent the SMS Panther warship to Agadir in order to threaten Agadir's allies. Furthermore, the black ship voyage carried out by Commodore Matthew Perry to the Japanese port area in 1853 is also aimed to demonstrate the capabilities of the United States navy (Le Mièrè, 2014). Maritime diplomacy in this research is used to explain Indonesia's strategy in IORA as a means for achieving its vision as the World Maritime Axis.

While in the second analysis, we utilize international cooperation theory by Helen Milner. Milner defines international cooperation as an interaction carried out by countries in an effort to achieve common goals or interests (Milner, 1992). IORA itself is a regional-scale organization in the Indian Ocean region aimed to enhance economy, maritime security and safety, education, and culture for members (Arum & Suryadipira, 2021).

These sectors are of common interest to IORA member countries. Milner also explained that the benefits obtained from cooperation are not always equal in size but the cooperation is mutually beneficial. The cooperation carried out by Indonesia in the IORA forum is cooperation for advancing the common interests of the Indian Ocean region countries, particularly those related to the maritime sector.

## **INDONESIA'S MARITIME DIPLOMACY, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND THE VISION OF WORLD MARITIME FULCRUM**

How did the country achieve this national goal? Indonesia uses maritime diplomacy as a means to realize its vision as the Global Maritime Fulcrum and an integral part of its foreign policy strategy and agenda (Zahidi, 2019; Hadiningrat, 2020). The vision of the Global Maritime Fulcrum is an Indonesia's projection that was presented by President Jokowi at the East Asia Summit on November 13, 2014 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar (Humas Sekretaris Kabinet Republik Indonesia, 2014). There are five pillars in its efforts to achieve the vision of a world maritime axis, namely, rebuilding Indonesia's maritime culture, protecting maritime resources and creating seafood sovereignty by placing fishermen as the main pillar, prioritizing infrastructure development and maritime connectivity, increasing cooperation in the maritime sector and efforts to deal with conflict, and building maritime power as a responsibility to maintain shipping safety and maritime security.

Maritime diplomacy conducted by Indonesia itself plays a vital role due to the continuity between maritime security and Indonesia's interests in the maritime sector. In addition, efforts to maximize diplomacy must also be accompanied by an increase in defense politics (Fathun, 2019). Indonesia relies more on maritime diplomacy aimed at revitalizing national identity as an archipelagic country and achieving the vision of the world maritime axis in the IORA. The implementation of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy is realized in the form of strategic partnerships (Montratama, 2017). In addition, strategic partnerships built through maritime diplomacy are also an effort to prevent the emergence of both traditional and non-traditional threats, such as piracy, human trafficking and illegal fishing, and maritime boundary violations. Indonesia pursues maritime diplomacy cooperatively and persuasively.

The strategic partnership pursued through cooperative and persuasive maritime diplomacy has established cooperation between Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. The three countries formulated a collective agenda, including joint training to improve shipping safety, sea patrols, information exchange, and other productive activities in the maritime sector. Furthermore, evidence of maritime diplomacy is also demonstrated in Indonesia's role in pushing for the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DoC) and the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (CoC) (Rijal, 2019).

Presidential Regulation No. 16/2017 reflects the legal foundation used by the Indonesian government to optimize maritime resources potential and projection. It also serves as a foundation for improving defense capabilities and carrying out Indonesia's foreign policy agenda as the World Maritime Axis. The five main visions in the World

Maritime Axis Vision program initiated by Indonesia include, (1) The World Maritime Axis Vision aims to rebuild Indonesia's maritime identity as an archipelagic country and realize that Indonesia's oceans are an important part of the wealth that can have an impact on prosperity, by means of good and healthy marine management, and thus, in the future it will be the key to determining the future of the Indonesian state; (2) Maintaining and managing the ocean as a resource is accompanied by the development of a fisheries industry with a sustainable and sovereign concept, so that the seafood sector can be developed much better; (3) The Global Maritime Fulcrum will prioritize maritime connectivity and infrastructure development, with a program from the development of logistics networks between seaports, then the development of maritime power accompanied by strengthening the marine tourism industry, and the construction of sea tolls along the Java coastline aimed at facilitating the distribution of goods and services; (4) Global Maritime Fulcrum also aims to intensify the role of maritime diplomacy, by encouraging maritime cooperation so that maritime issues can be addressed together and reduce and mediate potential territorial conflicts. Intensive maritime diplomacy, issues of sovereignty violations will be prevented; and (5) Strengthening maritime security is the same as strengthening defense capabilities. Strengthening maritime power is aimed not only at maintaining sovereignty, but also at securing marine resources and ensuring a conducive maritime security area. Indonesia engagement with IORA as a forum to gather new regional forces and also build strategic partnership in overcoming common maritime issues that can be detrimental to coastal countries.

## INDONESIA'S NATIONAL INTEREST IN IORA

Why did IORA become significant for Indonesia's foreign policy agenda? The manifestation of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy is influenced by geographical position and its status as a middle power (Montratama, 2017). The middle power countries use international organizations to articulate their interests and influence. Indonesia's position as chair of IORA is very beneficial for the country in advancing its national interests and the vision as the World Maritime Axis. However, it is based on the similarity between the five pillars of the Indonesian government's World Maritime Axis and the six priorities carried out by IORA. IORA has strategic value that is considered capable of providing positive impact and support in realizing Indonesia as the World Maritime Axis as shown in tables 1, 2 and 3 as follows.

Table 1. Pillars of World Maritime Vision

Maritime Culture	Rebuilding Indonesia's maritime culture through redefining Indonesia's national identity as a maritime nation.
Maritime Economy	Manage and simultaneously preserve the nation's maritime resources.
Maritime Connectivity	Support academic and scientific cooperation, then encourage cooperation in the tourism and cultural sectors.
Maritime Diplomacy	Optimizing soft power in dealing with regional threats and enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the maritime field.
Maritime Security	Preparing hard power to strengthen Indonesia's maritime defense forces in an effort to secure Indonesian territory.

Source: KOMINFO, 2016.

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Table 2. Cooperation Priorities in IORA

Politics and Security	Support a region free from terrorism, piracy and unconventional threats.
Economy	Increased regional business trade and investment.
Fisheries Management	Promote sustainable and responsible fisheries management and development.
Disaster Mitigation and Management	Improve resilience and response to disaster risk management.
Science and Technology	Strengthen academic, science and technology cooperation.
Tourism and Cultural Exchange	Increase tourism and cultural exchange among IORA member countries.

Source: IORA Charter, 2018.

Table 3. The Similarity between Indonesia and IORA Vision

Security	Support a region free from terrorism, piracy and unconventional threats and strengthen maritime security.
Economy	Increased Indian Ocean regional business trade and investment. And promoting the tourism sector. And sustainable fisheries management.
Social and Culture	Support academic and scientific cooperation, and encourage information, academic and cultural exchange.

Source: Author's data analysis.

Table 3 indicates that there are similarities between the vision of the World Maritime Axis and regional cooperation prioritized by IORA. Indonesia's opportunity in achieving the vision of the world maritime axis in the IORA forum is its interest in the IORA Blue Economy program. The Blue Economy program is closely related to the marine and fisheries-based economy. With Indonesia's geographical location surrounded by sea areas, it places opportunities for this country to optimize the maritime industry. This optimization is certainly inseparable from the national interest to increase profits in the trade sector that passes through Indonesia's geographical area (Wardhana, 2016) and Indonesia's maritime investment and marine tourism (Nisa, 2020). A strong partnership relationship will make it easier for Indonesia to achieve the vision of a World Maritime Axis as its national interest. Maritime diplomacy conducted by Indonesia is more inclined to persuade other countries in an effort to develop its maritime potential. It provides potential effects for the Indonesian economy and has a positive impact for the country's image internationally.

## CONCLUSION

President Joko Widodo's 2014-2019 government program outlined through Indonesia's World Maritime Fulcrum vision contains similarities between IORA's vision. The projection of maritime diplomacy produces several important points as Indonesia's actualization through IORA, including: first, re-actualizing Indonesia's identity as a

strong maritime nation. Second, maintaining and managing the ocean as a resource and developing a sustainable fishing industry. Third, maritime infrastructure development. Fourth, strengthening cooperation in the maritime sector and fifth, strengthening the country's maritime security.

In implementing maritime diplomacy, Indonesia tends to use cooperative and persuasive maritime diplomacy. Cooperative indicates that Indonesia is more inclined to soft power matters, which prioritizes cooperation, negotiations and information exchange in dealing with maritime problems such as cooperating to strengthen sea surveillance to avoid illegal fishing activities, human trafficking and other matters related to maritime security. While persuasive, showing Indonesia as a country that has the capability of maritime power. Through this diplomacy, the Indonesia's government shows the existence of Indonesia's strength in maintaining maritime security and fostering its national interest.

Through both forms of diplomacy, Indonesia benefits from IORA, namely, first, restoring the confidence of the Indonesian identity as the World Maritime Axis. Secondly, it fosters international confidence that Indonesia should be taken into account as an archipelagic country that is heading towards real implementation as the World Maritime Axis. However, Indonesia's challenges and obstacles in realizing its world maritime vision amidst complex international security dynamics still need to be studied further.

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