

P-ISSN: 2986-3686

E-ISSN: 2798-4427

JGSS

Journal of Global Strategic Studies

Vol. 3 No. 2 December 2023

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Approaches in the Indonesian Maritime Identity Construction:
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As the largest archipelagic country in Southeast Asia, Indonesia is by nature surrounded by the seas and strategically situated between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Given this geographical circumstance, the Indonesian government claims that the country can be identified as a maritime nation. This article elaborates maritime identity construction in Indonesia by looking into constructed historical narratives of the country's past maritime glory, and the policies taken by the Indonesian presidents in the maritime sector. The former signified the bottom-up approach in maritime identity construction, while the latter represented the top-down approach, underlining the role of state in maritime identity construction. The article concludes that Indonesia's maritime identity has evolved through different presidential eras, with President Joko Widodo's Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) vision marking an important milestone. The GMF not only influenced government priorities in national maritime sector but also shaped Indonesian government's perception of an increased global role in maritime affairs.

Introduction

The year 2014 marked an important milestone for Indonesia when President Joko Widodo coined his vision of making Indonesia a global maritime fulcrum. His maritime vision marked a reorientation of Indonesian maritime outlook and a commitment to strengthen Indonesia's maritime identity that arises from the country's archipelagic nature. The vision requires Indonesia to focus more on maritime security, maritime economy, and maritime culture if it wants to play more significant roles as an emerging global maritime power. The importance of the maritime sector in Indonesia is inextricably linked to its geographical condition as an archipelago and its strategic location in the middle of two strategic oceans, the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Historically, the Indonesian archipelago had been a vibrant place for trading, allowing foreign merchants from the Middle East, India, China, and Europe to do commercial activities, notably the spice trade.

In this particular context, one may question, what is actually the maritime identity of Indonesia and how it was constructed. Following the popularity of the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) idea, we might hear much about maritime identity (*identitas maritim*), but there are questions worth examining: whether we have an appropriate understanding on what maritime identity is and how it is constructed as part of Indonesia's national identity. The author examined the dynamics of the Indonesian maritime identity construction from the country's independence to the introduction of the Global Maritime Fulcrum vision by president Joko Widodo.

The geography of a country plays an important role in shaping its national identity. Geography of a region explains people's attachments to the places in which they live, and to understand a country's place in the world. Indonesia is situated strategically at the crossroad of international trade routes between the Pacific and Indian Oceans and between the Asian and Australian continents.¹ The vast area of water surrounding and connecting the Indonesian islands makes the sea an important element for the Indonesian people to support their livelihood. Since the announcement of Juanda Declaration 1957, the Indonesian government considered the seas an integral part of the country's territory.

One of the arguments that the author proposed in this research is that maritime identity construction has taken place through bottom-up and top-down approaches. The bottom-up maritime identity construction mostly took place during the pre-modern period where activities of the ancient maritime communities in the pre-modern Southeast Asian archipelago formed a collective maritime identity characterised by sea mobility and sea trade. Meanwhile, top-down maritime identity construction took place since Indonesia became an independent state in 1945 and is observable through the role of the state as the agent of maritime identity construction. Maritime identity also influenced the Indonesian government's tendency to prioritise on the issue of protection of territorial unity and integrity.

¹ The total Indonesian national territory covers about 7,810,000 sq.km with land to water area ratio 2:5. Indonesia's maritime territory is about 5,800,000 sq.km. See <https://kkp.go.id/djprl/artikel/21045-konservasi-perairan-sebagai-upaya-menjaga-potensi-kelautan-dan-perikanan-indonesia>. Regarding the number of islands, the Indonesian Coordinating Ministry of Maritime Affairs recorded that Indonesia has listed 17,504 islands under its sovereignty. As per August 2017, the names and locations of 16,056 islands in the archipelago are registered with the UN. See "16,000 Indonesian islands registered at UN", *The Jakarta Post*, 21 August 2017, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/08/21/16000-indonesian-islands-registered-at-un.html>.

National identity and maritime identity construction

The use of constructivist perspective helps us to understand how identity is constructed. Constructivism focuses on the ideational factors that shape state identity and policy. It explores how identity is constructed, what norms and practices accompany their reproduction, and how they construct each other (Hopf 1998: 192). Constructivism emerged among the perspectives in international relations in order to address the shortcoming of material theories such as realism or neorealism (Reus-Smit 2005). It assumes that the world politics is “socially constructed”, which involves two basic claims: that the fundamental structures of international politics are social rather than strictly material, and that these structures shape actors’ identities and interests, rather than just their behaviour (Wendt 1995: 71-72; Adler 1997: 324).

The concept of national identity is attached to that of ‘a nation’ (Anderson 2006: 6). Nations are to be understood as mental constructs, as “imagined political communities” that are represented in the minds and memories of the nationalised subjects as sovereign and limited political units. People who define themselves as members of a nation have, in their minds, the image of their communion (Anderson 2006: 1-7). Guibernau (2007: 11) regards a nation as a “community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future, while claiming the right to self-determination”. A nation is the imagination of a community in terms of shared cultural, political, and socio-economic elements, such as history, language, religion, ethnicity, territory, and attainment of recognition (Elgenius 2011: 7).

National identity can be defined as “a collective sentiment based upon the belief of belonging to the same nation and sharing most of the attributes that make it distinct from other nation” (Guibernau 2007: 11). National identities have been formed in different kinds of historical and cultural circumstances. When state actors interpret the international situation and define state interests, they see it through their country’s individual historical and cultural perspective. As a result, actors do not perceive the world in the same way (Onuf 1989; Adler 1997). Constructivism disputes the idea that any state could have a single eternal identity across time and space, and assumes instead that state identities are variable; they likely depend on historical, cultural, political, and social contexts (Hopf 1998: 175). The construction of national identity can be understood through the bottom-up and top-down approach. The bottom-up approach emphasises agency at the individual level, as well as the collective agency of actors at the grassroots level. It emphasises ordinary people’s role in constructing national identity through a

daily conversation about belonging and self-categorisation (Billig 1995). The top-down approach treats the state actor as the leading agent in cultivating and constructing national identity (Todd et al. 2008: 4). This can be done by various means, for example by campaigns, education, state institutions, and the media.

The term “maritime identity” is subject to multiple interpretations arising from many different perspectives, hence understanding of the term cannot be limited to a single definition. Maritime identity is a heterogeneous field that encompasses a wide range of aspects. Fusaro (2010: 280) defined maritime identity as an identity held by those societies who treat the sea not only as a physical element but also part of social construction. In this case, maritime identity arises out of a sense of belongingness to the sea as a feature of the environment a society lives in, and which it further develops into maritime culture in the forms of values or symbols, tools, stories, habits, and rituals.

Similar to other dimensions of national identity, the construction of maritime identity takes place within an identification process. The adaptability of the maritime societies to the functions and values of an existence based around exploitation of the sea created an identification process. During this process, maritime societies internalised certain attitudes, behaviours, and values towards the sea and treated them as important components in their lives. For maritime identity shared by societies to become part of national identity, it requires the role of the state to create, identify itself with, and sustain it through political action. Construction of maritime identity at the national level can take place in the form of symbolism of places or objects, naval demonstrations, and festivals, maritime instruments like ships and ports, arts and literature, or seafaring activities (Lambert 2018: 332).

To understand Indonesia’s maritime identity, it is important to take into account the historical analysis of the past maritime communities who have lived in the archipelago since the pre-modern era. Historical analysis also useful to investigate the history of colonialism in the archipelago, and the history of Indonesian nation-building and national development, and how these impacted to maritime identity construction or deconstruction. The independence of Indonesia in 1945 marked the pivotal role of the state in reconstructing maritime identity narrative. The newly formed government under Sukarno constructed the definition of Indonesian territory referring to the unity and integration of the land and the seas. The government effort resulted in the emergence of the archipelagic state principle as the primary concept in the Indonesian maritime construction.

Indonesian maritime identity construction: The bottom-up approach

To understand the importance of the sea to Indonesia, one cannot disregard the historical perspectives of Indonesia's identification as an archipelagic state. It is widely known that many Indonesians are familiar with the song "*Nenek moyangku orang pelaut*", representing a popular awareness on the history of the ancient seamen and maritime communities living in the archipelago. We also often hear the historical narrative of maritime identity in the past being used by authorities to remind us about the bravery and the skills of our forefathers in sailing the seas. This kind of historical narrative reconstruction has been used by the Indonesian government to create an awareness on the importance of the sea for the country and a collective identification among the population of being a maritime nation.

Indonesian maritime history can be traced to the Austronesians' migration into the islands of the Southeast Asian archipelago, estimated to have begun around 4000 BC (Pelras 1996: 39). Some of the groups of the ancient maritime communities settled in the islands that make up present-day Indonesia and became the ancestor of the Indonesian people (Bellwood 2007). In the pre-modern times, maritime identity construction in the ancient Indonesian archipelago initially took place at a "collective identity" level and had not yet developed to a "national identity" level. The construction of collective maritime identity during the pre-modern period had taken place at the communal level by groups of maritime communities. Maritime identity grew in the collective setting as part of the group's adaptation to the sea environment, manifested in maritime skills and knowledge, and maritime cultural products such as boats or fishing tools (Sather 2006: 254; Oktaviana 2012). The popularity of the ancient Indonesian archipelago as a venue for spice trade had influenced further construction of maritime identity among maritime communities. In this case, maritime identity was manifested in the popularity of sea trade and the development of trade networks (Hoogervorst 2012: 250). Sea trade had gradually developed into an economic and social institution, involving monetary, transport and tax systems, as well as socio-cultural interaction among various communities (Evers 1988: 91; Steensgaard 1991: 4).

One notable aspect of maritime identity construction during the pre-modern period was the manifestation of maritime identity in the form of an expansion of the spheres of influence of the local polities, such as kingdoms or sultanates, beyond their territorial bases. The success of Sriwijaya and Majapahit maritime kingdoms in using their naval power for expanding their spheres of influence still largely lives in the minds

of the Indonesians today (Pradhani 2017: 189; Cribb 2000: 76; Andaya 2000: 96). The ability of these kingdoms to develop thalassocracies has been a source of inspiration for contemporary Indonesian leaders in rebuilding a maritime vision for the country.

Looking back on the maritime history of maritime communities in the pre-modern Indonesian archipelago, it can be argued that maritime identity construction during the pre-modern era took place using a bottom-up approach from the communal to the polity level. In this case, identity construction was not initiated or imposed by political authorities to the population. Instead, identity construction emerged from habits, daily activities, and inter-communal interactions that gradually formed into collective maritime identity. Following the rise of maritime kingdoms like Sriwijaya, Majapahit, Samudra Pasai and others, construction of maritime identity was gradually institutionalised by the kingdoms' authorities, marking the top-down approach of maritime identity construction, for example through the implementation of rules, for instance with regard to the development of naval power, protection of sea routes, sea trade rules, and territorial expansion.

However, the history of the European colonisation in Southeast Asia, especially during the Dutch occupation over the territories of the Dutch East Indies, impacted to a deconstruction of maritime identity in the Indonesian archipelago in the past. There had been the difference of sea trade characteristics before and during colonisation, and a shift from sea-based to land-based orientation of the locals as a result of the VOC's enforced plantation policy. The period of Dutch colonisation lessened the maritime outlook of the local maritime communities. The VOC imposed a cultivation system that focused on the intensification of plantation and agriculture commodities production (Breman 2015: 11; Reid 1993: 22). The VOC also implemented strict measures of controlling the sea routes which hindered the freedom of the seamen and merchants to sail (Parthesius 2010: 165, 167). These policies marginalised the sea-based economy during the colonial period and limited the locals from accessing the seas.

Indonesian maritime identity construction: The top-down approach

Since the Indonesian independence in 1945, the maritime aspect had become part of national identity, institutionalised in the government's institutions and regulatory system. It is also important to note that during the years of the national awakening movement, maritime identity reconstruction has taken place as part of the nation-state building process. Popular awareness among the Indonesians or the "*pribumi*" to freedom

and territorial unity gained momentum along the rise of the nationalist movement in the 1920s, particularly with the emergence of the youth movement culminating in the “Youth Pledge” or “*Sumpah Pemuda*” in 1929. At this stage, the urgency of realising territorial unity and integrity could not be separated from the context of the nation-state building process. “*Sumpah Pemuda*” represented an identification of the Indonesian people with the identities of the future Indonesian state. There are three elements of state’s identities that were mentioned in the Youth Pledge: the nation (people), the homeland (territory), and the language. The youth’s reference to “one homeland” represented the people’s aspiration to be liberated from colonial oppression, in a new state governed by the Indonesians that had to be established along the ex-colonial boundaries (Suryadinata 1988; Aspinnall and Berger 2001). This implied the youth’s claim that a physical territory was a prerequisite for the existence of the new Indonesian state. In referring to the physical territory of the state, an Indonesian phrase, “*tanah-air*” (land-water), has been used to reflect a unity between the land and the water as the constituting elements of state’s territory. The word “*tanah-air*” became a symbol of nationhood associated with the physical existence of Indonesia as a new country.

After 1945, the Indonesian government under Sukarno began to legally define Indonesia’s geographical existence in terms of the unity of the lands and the seas. Construction of maritime identity during Sukarno’s era was closely linked to the territorial integration effort and a revival of ‘maritime greatness’ awareness among the Indonesian population. From security perspective, Sukarno attempted to fill in the gap due to the existence of pockets of open seas² separating the islands of the archipelago where the Indonesian government could not exercise its sovereignty.³

A key milestone of maritime identity construction during Sukarno’s era was the Declaration made by Prime Minister Juanda in 1957. The Declaration gave the foundation for Indonesia’s new territorial configuration came to be known as the “archipelagic state concept” which treated “all waters surrounding, between and connecting the islands constituting the Indonesian state, regardless of their extension or breadth, are integral parts of the territory of the Indonesian state” (Juanda Declaration 1957).

² The existence of the pockets of open seas was the impact of the Dutch rule *Territorial Zee en Maritieme Kringe Ordonantie 1939* (TZMKO), that established a three-mile *territorial sea* around each island of the archipelago, so the islands were separated by the high seas.

³ Sukarno viewed that the open seas between the islands posed several security concerns. He saw the danger of foreign warships passing freely through the seas within the archipelago, which made Indonesia susceptible to external security threats Djajal (1996). Moreover, the fragmentation of Indonesian territory due to the country’s maritime nature also rendered Indonesia prone to the threats of separatism (Doeppers 1972: 189).

Sukarno undertook further political actions to incorporate maritime identity into the institutions of the state. In this way, maritime identity was codified into national regulations through the issuance of “Perpu No. 4/1960 on Indonesian Waters”, providing a legal basis for the new Indonesian territorial structure. He also created the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Compartments, and the national shipping company PELNI (*Pelayaran Nasional Indonesia*), to provide inter-island transport and reduce Dutch-operated companies in Indonesia.

Indonesia since mid-1960s began its participation on the Law of the Sea (LOS) Conference which culminated in the adoption of the UNCLOS in 1982. Indonesia’s diplomatic activism during the LOS negotiation can be seen as part of the process of state identity formation. Domestically, the announcement of Juanda Declaration and its subsequent formalisation into Perpu No. 4/1960 marked an internal identity formation process. Externally, Indonesia’s identity formation took place along the LOS negotiation. This process resulted in the international acknowledgment of Indonesia’s identity as an archipelagic state endowed with sovereign rights and obligations set out by the Convention. For Indonesia, UNCLOS has important meaning. It ensures maritime governance underpinned by a rule-based regime instead of power competition. It also serves as key legal reference for Indonesia in exercising maritime claims and settling maritime disputes with other countries.

When Suharto assumed the presidential term, he demonstrated the same awareness as Sukarno with regard to the significance of Indonesia’s archipelagic nature. Suharto shared Prime Minister Juanda’s perspective on the unity and integrity of the land and water elements of the Indonesian archipelago. He further solidified maritime identity by incorporating the archipelagic principle into national development doctrine, known as *Wawasan Nusantara* or archipelagic outlook. However, Indonesia’s archipelagic outlook was focused toward land-based rather than sea-based orientation. The New Order’s land-based orientation can be explained by two reasons: one, Suharto’s focus on the agrarian economy, and two, the predominant role of the Indonesian Army in national defence.

The focus of the New Order on the agrarian economy started when Suharto introduced a rice self-sufficiency program aimed to address food shortages and poverty in 1972. Agricultural production became a development necessity for Suharto to bring Indonesia out of its food shortage problem and alleviate poverty. Later in 1974, rice policy became closely tied to the government’s Five-year Development Plan (*Rencana*

Pembangunan Lima Tahun–Repelita) document. Suharto undertook extensive measures to increase rice production and distribution (Mears 1984: 127-129; Vatikiotis 1998: 35).⁴

The New Order's land-based orientation can also be seen in the predominant role of the army in national defence. The long history of the army dominance in Indonesia stemmed from the Indonesian government's threat perception since Sukarno's era. The inward-looking characteristic of *Wawasan Nusantara* also contributed to the execution of territorial command system focusing on countering threats from the inside rather than from the outside. The tasks to exercise control over the population and detect any potential internal threats was assigned to the Indonesian Army, and hence it became the most important and the largest branch of the Indonesian military, especially compared to the navy or the air force. The inward-looking orientation of *Wawasan Nusantara* and the dominance of the army inadvertently contributed to the lack of comprehensive maritime outlook, particularly during the New Order regime.

Although Suharto's development paradigm gravitated towards a land-based orientation, the incorporation of the Indonesian maritime identity into *Wawasan Nusantara* emphasised the role of the elite in the identity construction process. At this stage, Indonesian maritime identity construction that had begun in Sukarno's era was further reinforced through a top-down approach. *Wawasan Nusantara* is an articulation of the Indonesian government's principle of archipelagic state.⁵ By incorporating *Wawasan Nusantara* into the regulatory framework, the geographical setting came to be considered with other development aspects, such as demography, natural resources, ideology, politics, economics, social and cultural aspects, and defence and security (Buntoro 2016: 477).

In its development, *Wawasan Nusantara* was used to reinforce Suharto's inward-looking perspective in order to maintain domestic stability. The aim of the incorporation of *Wawasan Nusantara* into the government's development strategy was to reinforce the idea of national unity and stability to make way for economic development. *Wawasan Nusantara* was characterised by "self-reliance and an inward-looking strategic posture, based on an assumption of the unity between the military and civilians" (Anwar 1996: 3). Based on this characteristic, Suharto's regime was predisposed towards a land-based

⁴ These measures included strengthening the role of the National Rice Stock Authority from one of price stabilisation to include that of supplying rice to the Indonesian armed forces and civil servants, providing financing for maintaining reserve stocks, conducting rice marketing and procurement systems, and giving subsidies on fertilizers and pesticides. See Mears (1984) and Vatikiotis (1998).

⁵ The term "*Wawasan Nusantara*" itself was mentioned initially in 1966 in a seminar held by the Indonesian military. See Danusaputro (1982). The archipelagic concept is deemed as a basis to create national resilience to cope with any challenges, directly or indirectly, from the outside as well as from within the country (Hardjosoedarmo 1979: 144-150).

perspective, while practicing benign neglect of the more outward-focused maritime perspective (Habir et al. 2014: 53).

Following the fall of the New Order regime in 1997, a phase of political transition and domestic reform took place in Indonesia (Suryadinata 1999). In this political context, the Indonesian government policies in maritime affairs showed gradual changes. The Indonesian government slowly demonstrated a return to a sea-based orientation from the previously land-based orientation that had been prevalent during Suharto's era. Construction of Indonesian maritime identity during the period of democratic transition took place as part of political and military reforms that involved institutional and regulation changes. Military reforms opened the way for doctrinal change of the armed forces known as the "new paradigm", marking to the transformation of the military's main function from internal security to external defense. Several implications of this change were the redefinition of the political role of the military (Rabasa and Haseman 2002: 26) and increased government's commitment for strengthening the role of the Indonesian Navy to improve maritime security. Amidst funding constraint, Indonesian government implemented naval modernisation project, such as by strengthening the navy's coastal protection role, acquisition of new patrol vessels (Goldrick and McCaffrie 2013: 83), and advancing national strategic industries. The reform also inspired a shift in the government's threat perception, from one focusing on internal threats to one encompassing non-conventional and transnational threats (Keliat 2009).

During President Yudhoyono's term, the issues of maritime defence and security received more attention than before. The process of maritime identity construction can be seen from President Yudhoyono's key policies aimed at strengthening the regulation framework and institutional capacities on maritime issues. First, Yudhoyono issued Presidential Regulation No. 5/2010 that adopted the strategic concept of Minimum Essential Force (MEF). It set forth a military modernisation agenda, including the Indonesian Navy.⁶ Second, Yudhoyono issued Law No. 32/2014 on Ocean Affairs (*Undang-undang Kelautan*). It restates the principle that Indonesia is an archipelagic maritime state and provides an umbrella guideline on the conduct of ocean affairs at the national level in wide-ranging sectors, such as maritime resources, environment,

⁶ The Minimum Essential Force (MEF) is one of Yudhoyono's strategies to reform the Indonesian defence sector to make the military more professional and more modern. In addition to introducing MEF, Yudhoyono increased the number of promoted naval and air force officers to key military positions and also gave special privileges to army officers that came up through professional combat units, such as those from the Strategic Army Reserve Command. Yudhoyono further professionalised military education by establishing the Indonesian Defence University, and sending more officers to study and train overseas. The military's international engagements, from multilateral exercises to defence diplomacy, also rose under Yudhoyono's tenure. See Laksmana (2015).

education and culture, law enforcement, human resources and global diplomacy. Third, in 2014 Yudhoyono also created the Maritime Security Agency or *Badan Keamanan Laut* (BAKAMLA)⁷ to integrate maritime patrolling under one command. The creation of BAKAMLA aimed to shift the law enforcement paradigm from multi-agency to single-agency as well as create effectiveness and efficiency in law enforcement in Indonesian waters. BAKAMLA's main duty is to coordinate sea patrol activities, especially in border areas (Kurniaty et al., 2021).⁸

These policies represented the top-down approach in maritime identity construction, in which Yudhoyono attempted to strengthen the manifestation of Indonesia's identity as a maritime nation. He established the regulatory and institutional frameworks to further mainstream maritime policy into the national agenda, such as by the issuance of Law No. 32/2014 on Ocean Affairs, and the creation of BAKAMLA. To strengthen maritime defence capability and to create a more professional Indonesian military, Yudhoyono increased the navy's budget and pushed for naval modernisation. Although Yudhoyono's national agenda did not specifically focus on the maritime sector, his policies contributed to the revival of a maritime outlook that had been marginalised under Suharto's regime. The construction of maritime identity during the post-reform era has undergone more concrete steps through structural reform introduced by President Yudhoyono.

President Joko Widodo's speeches in 2014, made the reconstruction of Indonesian maritime identity explicit. In his election victory speech, Joko Widodo envisioned that Indonesia would develop into global maritime fulcrum, a condition Indonesia sought to achieve in the future:

“The spirit of gotong-royong [mutual cooperation] will help the Indonesian people survive challenges, and help Indonesia develop into a global maritime fulcrum and establish its position as a great political civilization in the future” (Rosyidin 2021: 10).

Following the display of maritime symbols, construction of maritime identity was further made by Joko Widodo in his 2014 presidential inauguration speech in front of the parliament:

⁷ The roles and functions of the BAKAMLA is regulated in Presidential Regulation No. 178/2014 on Maritime Security Agency.

⁸ BAKAMLA also performed an important role in deterring foreign vessels attempting to unlawfully enter Indonesian waters (mostly in the Natuna region) or committing illegal fishing activities.

“We must strive hard to make Indonesia a maritime nation once again. The oceans, the seas, the, the straits, the bays, are the future of our civilization. We have been for so many years turned our back against the seas (...). Now it is the time to bring back our glory at seas, Jalesveva Jayamahe, the jargon of our great grandfathers. (...). We must remember what our first President, Bung Karno, once said, to be a big, strong, prosperous and peaceful nation, we must have inside us the spirit of “cakrawati samudera”, the spirit of a brave sailor (...). As the ship captain, I will ask all of us to board the ship of Indonesia and we shall sail together toward a glorious Indonesia. We will spread our sails and face the sea waves with the power that we have”.⁹

In this speech, Joko Widodo used the past glory from Indonesia’s maritime communities to bring about collective identity in order to rebuild Indonesia’s status as a maritime nation. The re-construction of historical narratives is important for President Widodo’s regime to generate a sense of identification and legitimize government policy, particularly maritime policy (Rosyidin 2021). Joko Widodo’s speech helped to promote his maritime agenda to the population and shaped public policies that gave more focus on advancing Indonesia’s maritime sector.

President Widodo’s speeches underpinned the formulation of a national maritime vision known as the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) and was integrated into the government’s policy agenda.¹⁰ Widodo’s GMF vision would be realised through a number of policies, for instance, in the field of law enforcement, foreign policy and maritime diplomacy, maritime industry, fisheries, sea trade, environment protection, and natural resources management. Within the first three-years of his term (2014-2017), Widodo has notably speed-up maritime infrastructure development, such as port, sea-tolls development, and procurement of new transport ships.¹¹ The development of maritime infrastructure facilities helped to address the problem of inequality and

⁹ English translation is made by the author. Full text available in Bahasa Indonesia. See “Ini Pidato Lengkap Jokowi Saat Pelantikan Presiden”, 20 October 2014, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-2723911/ini-pidato-lengkap-jokowi-saat-pelantikan-presiden>

¹⁰ A notable policy document on the Indonesian national development policy is the “Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional” (RPJMN/The national medium-term development plan) year 2015-2019. In this document, the development of the national maritime sector was one of the Indonesian government’s priorities, aimed at increasing people’s welfare through the maritime sector.

¹¹ See “Menhub: Program tol laut terus meningkat dan berkembang”, 26 October 2020, <https://hubla.dephub.go.id/home/post/read/8078/menhub-program-tol-laut-terus-meningkat-dan-berkembang>

development gaps among the regions in Indonesia (Sulistiyanto 2018: 162; Sa'adah et al. 2019: 297).¹²

Following the GMF announcement, a strong-yet controversial-policy was taken by President Widodo to combat illegal fishing. In November 2014, Widodo instructed his Minister for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, Susi Pudjiastuti, to seize and sink any foreign vessels found fishing illegally in Indonesian waters. He said:

“Just sink those [illegal] vessels, don’t just detain them. If we don’t sink them, our maritime resources will be depleted”.¹³

President Widodo’s instruction displayed nationalism sentiment and the will to protect the Indonesian economy, especially in the fisheries sector. The annual cost of IUU fishing for Indonesia is estimated at around USD 3 billion (ASEANnews 2017). Since 2014 until 2019, Minister Susi has sunk around 556 illegal fishing vessels mostly from Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, and Thailand.¹⁴

In the foreign policy domain, the implementation of GMF involved maritime diplomacy programs such as maritime border delimitation, bilateral maritime cooperation, and increased multilateralism. Indonesia stepped up its engagement in maritime cooperation in various forums. Among those engagements are Indonesia’s commitment to ocean sustainability through the Our Ocean Conference forum since 2014,¹⁵ and in marine management of the archipelagic and island states.¹⁶ In addition, Widodo regarded Indonesia’s role in the India Ocean Rim Association (IORA) as an important element elevating Indonesia’s role as the centre of the Indo-Pacific region. With the mainstreaming of the GMF vision, Indonesian foreign policy under Joko Widodo emphasises on the implementation of maritime diplomacy to achieve Indonesian interests in maritime affairs. The mainstreaming of maritime issues in foreign

¹² See also “Intip Kinerja 7 Tahun Tol Laut Jokowi, Apa Hasilnya?”, 22 October 2021, *Kompas.com*, <https://money.kompas.com/read/2021/10/22/104528926/intip-kinerja-7-tahun-tol-laut-jokowi-apa-hasilnya?page=all#page2>

¹³ English translation is made by the author. See the Cabinet Secretariat (*Setkab*) press release “Timbulkan Efek Jera, Presiden Minta Menteri Susi Tenggelamkan Kapal Asing Pencuri Ikan”, 18 November 2014, <https://setkab.go.id/timbulkan-efek-jera-presiden-minta-menteri-susi-tenggelamkan-kapal-asing-pencuri-ikan/>

¹⁴ “Selama Jadi Menteri, Berapa Kapal China Ditenggelamkan Susi?”, 6 January 2020, <https://money.kompas.com/read/2020/01/06/160600226/selama-jadi-menteri-berapa-kapal-china-ditenggelamkan-susi?page=all>.

¹⁵ The Our Ocean Conference started in 2014 as a multilateral forum that fosters cooperation for concerted and integrated actions for protecting the oceans. The forum covers areas of action such as climate change, sustainable fisheries, marine protected areas, marine pollution, sustainable blue economy, and maritime security. See <https://www.ourocean2018.org/?l=home>.

¹⁶ The Archipelagic and Island States Forum (AISF) was established in 2018 by 17 archipelagic and island states. The forum focuses on marine management, climate change mitigation, biodiversity protection, marine conservation, and blue economy. See “Indonesia: SOM delegation agree to establish archipelagic and island states forum”, *Asia News Monitor*, 2 November 2018.

policy also placed the maritime infrastructure project as one of key priorities of Joko Widodo's administration. To implement this project, Widodo pursued a deepening of the Indonesia–China economic relationship, mainly to secure financial resources (Weatherbee 2017: 166-168).

During Joko Widodo's era, the Indonesian government's attention to the issue of territorial sovereignty remained as focused as in previous eras. Aspinall (2015) observed that since Widodo's campaign for president, a new nationalist sentiment was visible in Indonesia, expressed in increasingly aggressive rejection of alleged foreign interference in Indonesia's internal affairs and demands for greater international recognition of Indonesia's power and status. President Widodo showed a firm position in protecting Indonesia's territorial unity and integrity, particularly in responding to the case of Chinese incursions into the Natuna waters. The Chinese repeated infringements into Indonesia's Natuna waters have challenged the Indonesian long-standing norm of protection of territorial unity and integrity. As a response, Joko Widodo took a tougher stance towards China to signal the Indonesian government's resolve in protecting its territorial sovereignty. In Indonesia's view, China's aggressive actions have undermined the rule of law, particularly UNCLOS 1982. Hence, Jakarta has been calling upon Beijing to abide by the UNCLOS provisions and to continue working with ASEAN in seeking a peaceful settlement of the South China Sea dispute.

Covering seven main pillars, Widodo's GMF policy served as an umbrella guideline for the Indonesian government to revisit its maritime policies that have been marginalized for so long. However, the manifestation of GMF has been mostly inward-oriented aimed to achieve national developmental strategy to narrow the economic gap in the archipelago. Hence, infrastructure is one of key symbols in Widodo's construction of maritime identity to bring Indonesia towards a global maritime hub. The narrative of "Sriwijaya and Majapahit glory" was translated by President Widodo into making Indonesia a strong maritime country in terms of economy and regional influence.

During Joko Widodo's second term (2019-2024), however, the narrative of maritime identity was missing from the president's inaugural speech in 2019.¹⁷ This raised doubt of whether the president's commitment to enhance Indonesia's maritime sector remained the same as the first term. Observers criticized that the GMF was already lacking realization, hence was not mentioned in the president's speech.¹⁸ Although

¹⁷ See Joko Widodo's full speech in article "Pidato Lengkap Jokowi 'Visi Indonesia', Sentul, 14 Juli 2019", 15 July 2019, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2019/07/15/06204541/pidato-lengkap-visi-indonesia-jokowi>

¹⁸ "Angin Lalu Poros Maritim di Pidato Jokowi" 15 July 2019 <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20190715182845-32-412333/angin-lalu-poros-maritim-di-pidato-jokowi>.

maritime development and maritime diplomacy programs are still being implemented by relevant ministries and agencies, the absence of maritime identity enunciation in Joko Widodo's political speech gave the impression of shifting government priority away from the praised GMF vision. Moreover, the commitment to maritime policy was hampered by the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. President Jokowi's administration needed to conduct austerity measures to reallocate budgets in various ministries and institutions to accelerate the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia.

Although President Widodo's GMF narrative subsided with other priorities, the introduction of the GMF concept back in 2014 fortified Indonesian government perception of the country's international role as a linkage or hub between Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, by taking into account its strategic crossroad location. President Widodo's maritime vision influenced Indonesia's response to the Indo-Pacific cooperation. Joko Widodo emphasized the Indo-Pacific in a much more maritime setting. He voiced Indonesia's rightful aspirations as a seagoing Indo-Pacific power that plays role as an archipelagic country connecting two oceans (Bandoro 2014). Further, Indonesia advocated the adoption of the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) that emphasized on maintaining the centrality of ASEAN (Auliya and Sulaiman 2019).

Despite the short-lived narrative of the GMF vision, Indonesian government has enacted policies that brought about changes towards improving Indonesia's maritime sector. A palpable influence from the GMF vision can be seen in foreign policy domain where Indonesian government recalibrated the country's geopolitical strategy in order to safeguard its national interest (Radjendra et al. 2022). The GMF vision was manifested in Indonesia's increased leadership role in various maritime cooperation initiatives at both regional and multilateral levels (Anwar 2020), and its adaptation to the Indo-Pacific geostrategic concept.

Conclusion

This research concluded that the Indonesian maritime identity construction has taken place through the bottom-up and top-down approaches. The bottom-up construction of maritime identity has taken place since the pre-modern period of the Southeast Asian archipelago. The agency of maritime identity construction was at the individual and community level of the pre-modern seafarers and the local maritime societies. Maritime identity was formed as a result of people's identification with culture and activities related to the sea environment, rather than a state-imposed identity. Maritime kingdoms, such

as Sriwijaya and Majapahit, had grown into thalassocratic polities with extensive areas of influence across the archipelago.

The history of the ancient maritime communities has been reconstructed by contemporary Indonesian leaders to socialise and internalise maritime awareness among the population. Indonesian presidents, from Sukarno until Joko Widodo, have always referred Indonesian maritime identity to the history of Sriwijaya and Majapahit to inspire the nation, suggesting that the sea has always been a unifying element of the country. Using socialisation instruments, such as political speeches and regulations, the Indonesian government uses its authority to initiate the “identification process” of Indonesia’s maritime character and build the population’s collective identity of being a maritime nation.

After Indonesia became independent, the top-down approach of national identity construction began to emerge. At this time, the Indonesian government’s priority was to ensure that the nation-state building process would provide solid foundations for the newly born state. Maritime identity as national identity was manifested in the idea of territorial unity comprising the land and water elements of the state. The Indonesian government’s role as the main agent of maritime identity construction can be seen through several measures, for instance, internalisation and institutionalisation of maritime identity into state doctrine, state institutions and government programs; and the formulation of the international law of the sea regime (UNCLOS).

The New Order government internalised maritime identity through the *Wawasan Nusantara* doctrine that was used as a strategic and development paradigm. In practice, however, Suharto focused more on land defence than maritime defence which gave the army a dominant role in the Indonesian politics. The post-reform period brought in a wave of optimism that brought maritime identity back to the government’s attention. The elite factor, notably the leadership of President Yudhoyono, was instrumental in carrying out a number of institutional reforms that consolidated Indonesian maritime policy.

The introduction of President Widodo’s Global Maritime Fulcrum vision was one of important milestone in Indonesia’s maritime identity construction. Through the implementation of the GMF, the mobilisation of maritime identity is closely linked to national development and economic aspects. In this context, maritime identity narrative was mobilised by the government to achieve economic growth. Joko Widodo reconstructed historical narrative of the legacy of the archipelagic maritime kingdoms during the pre-modern era and created a future orientation or “vision” of what Indonesia

should become as a maritime nation. In regional context, Indonesian government perceived that the GMF vision has relevance with its Indo-Pacific policy. Joko Widodo accentuated Indonesia's central Indo-Pacific geography by promoting an inclusive character of Indo-Pacific cooperation. Joko Widodo's GMF vision shaped an aspiration for the Indonesian government to expand its role by interpreting the country's strategic location as a linkage or hub between Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean regions.

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