

BOOK REVIEW

Maritime Security and Indonesia: Cooperation, Interests and Strategies, Senia Febrica, London and New York, Routledge, 2017, 222 pp., USD \$129.42, ISBN 978-1-138-68843-8

Indonesia sits astride some of the busiest shipping routes on Earth. Almost half of the world's traded oil and goods navigate through the straits of Malacca, Sunda and Lombok, all of which form part of the Indonesian archipelago. With these “choke points” accounting for such a large share of global trade, the importance of Indonesia to maritime security in the larger region cannot be overemphasised. This is further underscored by the ever-looming prospect of maritime terrorism, and the significant number of incidents in the region of armed robbery at sea. In this context, it becomes vital to understand why Indonesia does what it does – in terms of unilateral measures, as well as participation in collective efforts – to promote maritime security in its littoral waters.

The book *Maritime Security and Indonesia: Cooperation, Interests and Strategies*, authored by Senia Febrica, examines Indonesia's role in the context of regional maritime security efforts. Febrica states that the aim of focussing solely on Indonesia is to spark more studies on the participation of “emerging middle powers” in cooperation agreements. What distinguishes this book from other literature on the subject is that it goes beyond answering the question of “what”, and seeks answers to the questions of “why” and “how”, in analysing Indonesia's maritime security efforts. By doing this, the author is able to provide vital insights into why Indonesia adopts the unilateral measures that it does, and why it chooses to be part of some collective maritime security initiatives, but shuns others. Towards this, the author examines Indonesia's participation in maritime security cooperation agreements from 1988 to 2013. To achieve this end, the author uses the neorealist and neoliberal theoretical frameworks to explain Indonesia's choices, whilst positing the inadequacy of the constructivist arguments in doing the same.

The first chapter of the book lays out the contextual framework for Indonesia's maritime environment. In describing the maritime threats, Febrica makes the point that other than maritime terrorism and armed robbery at sea, Indonesia faces a host of other security challenges such as illegal fishing, smuggling, human trafficking and maritime boundary disputes. The author also emphasises the importance of Indonesia as a major maritime actor in ensuring security, both as a flag state and as a coastal state.

In the next chapter, Febrica examines in intricate detail the domestic political environment in Indonesia that shapes its foreign policy and security choices. She constructs her arguments against the backdrop of Graham Allison's “bureaucratic politics” approach, which argues that policy outcomes result from competing preferences of various governmental actors involved in the policy process. Febrica argues that this model does not adequately explain Indonesia's foreign policy and security choices. She emphasises the dominant role played by Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in supporting Indonesia's participation in various maritime security arrangements, and argues that these choices were not informed by a series of bargain games between different actors, to advance their personal interests.

This chapter also dwells at length on the differences across various periods of Indonesia's political history, viz. the Old Order under Soekarno (1945–1966), the New Order under Soeharto (1966–1998), and the post-authoritarian era from 1998 up to the current Jokowi regime. What is particularly useful is the author's assessment that even the advent of a parliamentary

system has not succeeded in initiating a more informed process of debate and discussion on foreign policy options. This is due to the unchanged core provisions on foreign policy that allow, for instance, the government to decide which agreement must be taken up by the parliament for ratification. Febrica also highlights the fact that issues such as territorial integrity, separatist movements (Aceh) and immediate security incidents (Bali bombings) tend to attract greater legislative attention than cooperative international instruments do.

The next three chapters of the book seek to explain Indonesia's policy choices in the context of the neorealist, neoliberal and constructivist theoretical frameworks. Dwelling first on the neorealist and neoliberal argument regarding the role of a hegemon in encouraging cooperation, Febrica cites instances such as the Suppression of Unlawful Acts (SUA) protocol, the Proliferation and Container Security Initiatives (PSI/CSI) and the Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI), where even the presence of a hegemon (the USA) could not assure participation from Indonesia. The author feels that Indonesia's assessment of gains from joining such collective security initiatives was not sufficiently motivating for the country to become part of these, despite the USA's leadership at these forums.

Subsequently, Febrica seeks to question the common view that posits the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Way as a form of shared identity that encourages cooperation. Referring to the constructivist theory that states with similar identities are more likely to cooperate with each other, the author argues that this was not the case in the context of Indonesia. While the many instances in which Indonesia has chosen to cooperate with fellow ASEAN countries might validate this theory, the author cites a number of instances when Indonesia has chosen otherwise, contrary to the ASEAN Way which emphasises consensus and accommodation. With the use of examples that also highlight Indonesia's cooperative efforts with non-ASEAN countries (USA, Japan, Australia, India, etc.), Febrica emphasises the point that for the archipelagic country, cost-benefit analysis of a proposition has always been the dominant guiding factor in shaping its foreign policy choices.

In the fifth chapter, Febrica introduces an interesting and persuasive argument on the relative importance of the absolute gains model (neoliberal argument) over that of the relative gains model (neorealist argument). In order to substantiate her hypothesis, she embarks on the arduous task of quantifying the relative and absolute gains that Indonesia accrued by virtue of participating, or not participating, in international cooperation initiatives. The author is able to convincingly prove that it is an assessment of absolute gains, as opposed to relative gains, that has governed Indonesia's participation or non-participation in international instruments. She also attributes the pervasiveness of the 'relative gains' model to the fact that existing analysis of Indonesia's actions tends to overplay its concerns of sovereignty, ignoring the many occasions when the country has chosen to cooperate in initiatives that entailed sharing of its facilities, information and resources.

Arguably, the most valuable part of the book is the section on "Findings" in the last chapter. In just over 10 pages, three of which contain a tabulated summary, Febrica summarises the book's arguments under five sub-sections. Each of these sub-sections pertains to an existing international relations theory that could possibly explain Indonesia's choices in international maritime security efforts. These five possible explanatory arguments are (1) bureaucratic politics, (2) hegemonic leadership, (3) shared identity, (4) relative gains and (5) absolute gains. In the three-page tabulated section, the author lists 22 international initiatives and objectively marks them against each of the five possible explanatory factors. The table also lists the outcome of each of these initiatives, by indicating whether Indonesia chose to be part of it or not. Based on this tabulated data, Febrica makes a decisive argument that the only factor that satisfactorily explains the rationale of Indonesia's choices is that pertaining to an analysis of absolute gains.

Another invaluable contribution of this book is the many important questions it raises, and not merely the ones it answers. The author points to potential areas for study leading from this book, which could aid in understanding the choices that nations such as Indonesia make. Febrica highlights the need to analyse the decision-making processes in other countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, using the same five causative factors, to see if the outcomes are the same. Other potential areas of study also pertain to whether Indonesia's choices are similar to those made by other countries classified as middle powers, or whether they are contingent on regional and domestic security imperatives.

The book's title, *Maritime Security and Indonesia: Cooperation, Interests and Strategies*, appears deceptively monolithic, and a potential reader could possibly not be faulted for believing that it would be restricted in its scope to Indonesia's maritime security concerns. But the pages inside weave a complex narrative, blending multiple fields of study that include, inter alia, international relations, political science and strategic studies. It is also somewhat fascinating to realise that the most important takeaways from this book pertain not to the maritime security domain, but to the field of international relations theory. Hence, the book is of immense value not only to a student studying Indonesia, or maritime security, but to a wider audience with interests in political theory and international relations as well. The multi-disciplinary aspect of this book is what makes it unique and academically enriching.

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