Anticipating The Return of Foreign Terrorist Fighters: Indonesia-Australia's Initiative on Sub-Regional Meetings on Counter-Terrorism

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Submitted: 9 November 2021; Revised: 18 March 2022; Accepted: 15 May 2022

Abstrak

Ancaman keamanan akibat terorisme, ekstremisme kekerasan dan Milisi Teroris Asing (MTA) asing telah mendorong para pembuat kebijakan di Indonesia dan Australia untuk memperkuat kerja sama di bidang keamanan. Meskipun kedua negara memiliki hubungan bilateral yang bergejolak sepanjang sejarah, mereka sepakat menginisiasi forum tingkat tinggi yaitu The Sub-Regional Meeting (SRM) on Counter-Terrorism. Dimulai dengan enam peserta pada tahun 2017 (Indonesia, Australia, Selandia Baru, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Filipina), kepemimpinan Indonesia bersama Australia telah menarik Myanmar, Singapura dan Thailand untuk bergabung pada pertemuan di Jakarta tahun 2018 dan 2020 secara virtual. Analisis tentang inisiatif Indonesia-Australia pada SRM menarik untuk melihat sejauhmana kerja sama ini telah memperkuat hubungan bilateral dalam menghadapi ancaman keamanan utama di kawasan, terutama kembalinya MTA. Empat elemen Teori Regional Security Complex Buzan dan Weaver digunakan untuk menganalisis sejauhmana forum ini berhasil mengesampingkan perbedaan kedua negara dan menempatkan Indonesia-Australia sebagai pemimpin dalam mengatasi isu MTA di kawasan Asia Pasific, yang rawan terhadap ancaman terorisme dan ekstremisme kekerasan yang mengancam keseimbangan keamanan regional. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa inisiatif SRM yang dibuat Indonesia-Australia untuk mengatasi isu keamanan regional yaitu kembalinya MTA telah secara terbatas mampu mengatasi elemen Regional Security Complex di subkawasan Asia Pasifik yaitu dengan terbangunnya kepemimpinan yang saling melengkapi dan menguntungkan, meningkatnya saling percaya di kawasan dan mengatasi dilema kebijakan luar negeri, terbangunnya kepercayaan di semua tingkat administrasi pemerintahan serta mendapatkan keuntungan dari upaya sekuritisasi isu MTA.
Kata kunci: Indonesia-Australia, kontraterorisme, Kompleks Keamanan Regional, Milisi Teroris Asing (MTA), subkawasan.

Abstract

Efforts to overcome the increasing security threats of terrorism, violent extremism, and Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) have encouraged policymakers in Indonesia and Australia to strengthen cooperation in the security sector. Despite the Indonesian-Australian "turbulent" history of their bilateral relationship, the two countries have initiated a high-level meeting called the Sub-Regional Meeting (SRM) on Counter-Terrorism. Starting with six participants in 2017 (Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and the Philippines), Indonesia-Australia's co-leadership has attracted Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand to join the 2018 Jakarta meeting and the 2020 virtual meeting. Analyzing Indonesia and Australia's initiative on the SRM can determine to what extent this cooperation has addressed the returning FTFs as one of the most imminent regional security threats in the Asia Pacific. This study adopted Buzan and Weaver's regional security complex elements in explaining to what extent this regional security issue has put aside Indonesian-Australian differences and led them to the co-leadership position in anticipating the return of FTFs to Asia Pacific, prone to terrorist attacks and violent extremist beliefs. The analysis unveiled that Indonesia-Australia's SRM initiative to anticipate the return of FTFs could, to some extent, address the elements of security complexes in the Asia Pacific subregion through the mutual co-leadership, reduce the lack of regional trust and foreign policy dilemmas, build bonded trust across all levels of government administration, and obtain the advantage of the securitization of the return of FTFs.
Keywords: Indonesia-Australia, counter-terrorism, Regional Security Complex, Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs), subregion.

INTRODUCTION

There are no two neighbors as different as Indonesia and Australia. Located in the Asia Pacific and having only a three-hour time difference (some cities may only be two hours apart), these two countries showcase contrasting features of history, political system, language, culture, religion, and society. With its eastern culture, Indonesia is full of Asian characteristics with Asian ancestors, while Australia has Western culture and European ancestors. Experts have argued that the contrasting differences between these two middle powers have become sources of crises and tensions for the past couple of decades (Laksmana, 2015).

ISIS, as a grave concern for the global community, has attracted many followers from all over the world as it promised to build a system of governance based on the caliphate religious utopia, combined a hybrid territorial-based and operational-based strategy, and pursued the ultimate millenarian goal (Cook, 2021). It had attracted at least 41.490 nationals from 80 countries with diverse geographical origins, gender and age aspiring to be citizens of the proto-state caliphate (Vale, 2021). Furthermore, in 2014, ISIS had successfully seized the territory of more than 100,000 km2 of land and the 11 million residents in Syria and Iraq and committed over 5,670 attacks globally (Cook, 2021). ISIS' territorial loss in late 2019 did not stop its followers from spreading its ideology, recruiting followers, and committing attacks in other parts of the world. Although thousands of ISIS followers were detained, and some (especially women and children) were taken to the refugee camps in Northern Syria, many managed to escape. They are returning to their home countries, spreading violent extremist ideology and waging war against legitimate governments, including those in the Asia Pacific.

Therefore, the returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) have become a major source of regional security concern within the Asia Pacific region, and better international collaboration is crucial to address this issue. It had been the backdrop of the International Meeting on Counter-Terrorism (IMCT) in August 2016, focusing on the efforts to counter cross-border movement against terrorism (Anton Muhajir, 2016). More than 200 participants from 24 countries and some international and regional organizations attended this forum. Participants discussed ways to strengthen cooperation in curbing cross-border terrorism, radicalism and de-radicalism as well as terrorism actors, terrorists' information sharing, their flowing of funds and weapon smuggling (Egmont group, 2016).

The result of the 2016 IMCT was an agreement that Indonesia and Australia would conduct another smaller-scale meeting focused on the issue of FTFs. Both agreed to conduct a meeting in 2017 to discuss the threat of returning FTFs in the subregion, especially in countries where radicalism, violent extremism and terrorism pose dominant security threats. A comprehensive collaboration in counter-terrorism efforts such as border control, immigration, prevention, early warning system, intelligence sharing, cyber security, and law enforcement capacity building among countries in the subregion is essential.

Thus, ministries whose tasks are coordinating agencies, ministries, and sectoral bodies in countering terrorism (CT) and preventing violent extremism (PVE) should be involved. Given the cross-sectoral and cross-agential nature of CT and PVE efforts, the 'coordination' ministries are seen as fit to lead the joint efforts. The Indonesian Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs and The Australian Attorney-General Office are the leading sectors for the First Sub-Regional Meeting on Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Cross Border Terrorism held in Manado, Indonesia, in July 2017. The event's venue and timing were in proximity to the siege of the Marawi conflict, and it was seen as the most timely and relevant to forestall its impacts on the neighboring states. Indonesia and Australia invited high-level ministers from Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and the Philippines to join this inaugural meeting in 2017. This meeting highlighted that to respond to security threats facing the region, it is necessary to build coordinated, strategic, and pursued efforts at all levels of government involving various actors, including the governments, private sectors, and civil society organizations (Brandis, 2017).

In 2018, Indonesia and Australia co-hosted the subsequent annual Sub-Regional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism (SRM on CT) in 2018 and 2020. Despite the Indonesian-Australian "turbulent" history of their bilateral relationship, they have initiated a high-level meeting called the Sub-Regional Meeting (SRM) on Counter-Terrorism. Starting with six participants in 2017 (Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and the Philippines), Indonesia-Australia's co-leadership has attracted Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand to join the 2018 Jakarta meeting and the 2020 virtual meeting. This paper seeks to analyze to what extent this initiative has addressed regional security issues put aside Indonesian-Australian differences and led them to the co-leadership position in anticipating the return of FTFs to the Asia Pacific region, vulnerable to terrorist attacks and violent extremist beliefs. This article, therefore, aims to investigate how the SRM on CT has addressed the returning FTFs as a major regional security issue by reflecting on the four elements of the regional security complex in Indonesia-Australia's bilateral relation and open the opportunity for both countries to be major powers on CT and C/PVE issue in the Asia Pacific subregion.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is qualitative, with the data gathered from official documents, statements and records of the meetings and a semi-structured interview with a key policymaker in charge of the Sub-Regional Meetings (SRMs) since their inception in 2017. The interview took place virtually in April 2021. This interview method was selected to allow greater freedom and flexibility regarding the question wording (Kumar, 2014). Subsequently, official data from SRMs' meeting minutes were also employed in this research and were obtained as a part of the author's professional duties as an organizing committee for the 2017 and 2018 SRMs in Manado and Jakarta. These official records were gathered after securing approval from the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs. The data were also obtained from scholarly works such as journal articles, book chapters, relevant online sources, and grey literature.

This paper proceeds in three parts following the introduction. To begin, this paper highlights a brief literature review of the Indonesia-Australia turbulent relationship and the Regional Security Complex theoretical framework as the basis for analysis. Additionally, the paper's analysis discusses the SRMs as the initiative to address the issue of FTFs as regional security. It was analyzed using the four regional security complex elements to determine how this forum strengthens Indonesia-Australia leadership and their bilateral relationship. Lastly, this paper concludes the analysis by emphasizing that an initiative to address FTFs through SRMs has "served" Indonesia-Australia's ambitions to be regional leaders in the Asia Pacific and denotes the importance of future research on other regional security complex areas to see whether or not equal leadership between Indonesia and Australia could also be achieved in other areas of cooperation.

LITERATURE REVIEW
THE TURBULENT HISTORY OF THE INDONESIA-AUSTRALIA BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

Literature on the Indonesia-Australia relationship has discussed various perspectives of the relationship and how it evolves. The history of the relationship between these two countries "has been the subject to a cycle of waning and waxing...common themes and factors used to explain it include the idea that it is 'condemned to crisis', that the relationship lacks 'ballast', that Australians and Indonesians do not know each other well enough, and that interaction and communication need to be deepened across all areas of the relationship" (Troath, 2019, p.127). Furthermore, Troath argued that the relationship between Indonesia and Australia could be analyzed through the theoretical lens of trust in International Relations by looking at the roles of trust between the leaders and societies and the interpersonal trust between leaders (p.127). The article concluded that although the 'bonded trust' can be built based on the interpersonal closeness of the leaders (Soeharto-Keating, Gareth Evans-Ali Alatas, for example), trust has not been embraced widely among other levels of state

administrations, nor in both societies. Over the years, it has led to the state of uncertainty and the inevitable roller-coaster style of the relationship between Indonesia and Australia.

In addition, the ups and downs of the relationship between Indonesia and Australia occurred due to the "perceived lack of regard by the Australian government for Indonesia's national sovereignty and core interests", thus accentuating the striking cultural and political differences between the two countries. Ultimately, thy have become catalysts for various crises in the bilateral relationship (Nabbs-Keller, 2020, p.533). However, the relationship between Indonesia and Australia has proven to be resilient (capable of 'return to business as usual') and is even stronger than before the crisis (Nabbs-Keller, 2020). Some major problems, such as Australia's turn the boat policies, the wiretapping of President Yudhoyono and Australia's public criticism of Indonesia's security approach in Papua, in a way, did not significantly affect Indonesia-Australia's cooperation, which has reached the comprehensive level after those crises.

Indonesia and Australia are facing similar threats from ISIS-affiliated terrorist networks. In Indonesia, thousands of citizens were estimated to go to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS. A total of 1,861 Indonesian men migrated to Syria and Iraq from 2014 to 2019 to fight for ISIS, and more than 600 women and children affiliated with ISIS have lived inside the SDF's refugee camps in Northern Syria (IPAC, 2021). Most male FTFs have died in combat, and some have returned to Indonesia, joined other terrorist organizations in the Middle East, Philippines and Myanmar or even carried out attacks in the Asia Pacific region. Meanwhile, about 230 Australian citizens have traveled to ISIS territory since 2012, approximately 80 Australians were in Syria or Iraq, and at least 66 Australians were in the al-Hol refugee camp in Syria as of 2019 (US Department of State, 2019).

Security cooperation between Indonesia-Australia, albeit in a state of staggering difference as a residue of "The Bandung divide"[1], continues to grow and has demonstrated significant success in the last few decades. One of the most successful security cooperation between the two countries is the counter-terrorism partnership led by Indonesian National Police (POLRI) and Australian Federal Police (AFP) (Connery et al., 2014). The strengthening of cooperation between the two police forces occurred after the Bali bombing that claimed the lives of Indonesian and Australian citizens, and this cooperation was based on a common interest in combating transnational crimes (McKenzie, 2018a). Cooperation in counter-terrorism is seen as the most solid and long-lasting cooperation between the two countries before the Indonesia–Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (DFAT, 2020a).

For Indonesia, strategic cooperation with Australia in counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism has been the foremost and sustainable security cooperation between these two countries since 2002. By and large, Australia's efforts to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation with Indonesia are increasingly crucial and inevitable, not only for improving their bilateral relationship but also to deter the increasing threats of Islamist extremism since the emergence of ISIS. It is partly due to Australia's view that Indonesia, with the largest Muslim population in the world, can be a bulwark for Australian efforts to prevent ISIS propaganda that can impact Australia's national security (Austin, 2017).

Therefore, Indonesia and Australia signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism in 2017 (Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017) dan agreed on the Plan of Action for the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020-2024) in 2020 (DFAT, 2020b). One of the points agreed upon in the Plan of Action for the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020-2024) is the sustainability of the implementation of the Sub-Regional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Security co-chaired by Ministers of Australia and Indonesia (DFAT, 2020b).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX

Regional Security Complex theory can comprehensively capture a pattern of security relations within the subregion because the interplay between national and global security mostly occurs at the regional

level. A regional security complex is "a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another" (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p.44). This definition aims to remove the association of the Regional Security Complex theory with the state-centric level of analysis and the military-political focus. Regional Security Complex theory depicts that a group of states in a region has primary national security concerns closely intertwined that they cannot be extracted or addressed independently of each other. In addition, this theory analyzes the interplay between states in a region with states outside the region, including their relations with the great powers and superpowers at the global level (Pratama, 2015).

In addition to power distribution among actors, there are three sets of dichotomies as the main elements of the Regional Security Complex, i.e., anarchy versus integration (polarity), amity versus enmity (relations among units), and securitization versus de-securitization (processes of threat construction) (Santini, 2017). Power distribution is associated with the regional balance of power, in which powers not linked to each other still take part in the same network of relations, thus can be analyzed in terms of polarity and the emergence of regional powers (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Secondly, although the international system is characterized by anarchy as the ordering principle, thus hindering regional integration, it does not imply that anarchy is the only ordering principle in the region (Santini, 2017).

The third component, the pattern of amity and enmity, is based on Wendt's idea of social structures of anarchy and what kind of roles (enemy, rival, friend) dominate the system or subsystem and to what extent a degree of internalization affects the social construction of friendship and rivalry. This pattern of enmity and amity exists because of "the historical hatreds and friendships, as well as specific issues that trigger conflict or cooperation" and "take part in the formation of an overall constellation of fears, threats, and friendships that define t regional security complex" (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Furthermore, these patterns of amity and enmity

are influenced by various background factors such as history, culture, religion, and geography.

Lastly, the securitization is an essential element of the regional security complex since it is the process of including an issue as an existential threat that requires emergency measures and justified actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure (Buzan, Waever, & Wilde, 1998, p.23-24). The success and failure of securitization depend on whether the audiences believe an issue 'argued by' a security actor represents an existential threat (McKenzie, 2019). The willingness of states to cooperate in a region and reduce the historical enmity between them can be influenced by the success of securitization conducted by the states' securitizing actors. Eventually, the securitization of an issue seen as 'the common' existential threat for all states involved will form a further collaboration and cooperation that can put aside the anarchical order in the regional system.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS
THE RETURNING FTFS AND SUB-REGIONAL MEETING ON FTFS

The regional security complex in the Asia Pacific is visible from the various interstate and intrastate conflict potentials. Besides Indonesia and Australia's conflicting histories, other countries in the region are dealing with domestic and international security threats impacting not only the domestic level but also the regional level. The returning FTFs have gained concern as a major security issue for the Asia Pacific due to the beliefs that these highly radicalized individuals who have managed to return to their countries will likely commit terrorist attacks in the future (Wibisono & Maulana, 2022). The threat of the FTFs returning to the Asia Pacific has been the major driver to casting aside the enmity and overcoming the imbalance of power distribution between Indonesia and Australia.

The first SRM was attended by six countries dealing with the immediate threats of FTFs and affected by the amplifying effects of the Marawi conflict. Except for New Zealand, the first SRM attendees were from countries near Sulu waters, where ISIS-affiliated supporters conducted a campaign to turn Marawi into its Pacific

branch in 2017 (Siege of Marawi). The number of attendees has increased; Singapore, Myanmar and Thailand stepped in on the 2018 and 2020 meetings. These later participants also dealt with security threats from violent extremist groups and terrorism, such as the self-radicalized extremist in Singapore, the Arakhan Army issue in Myanmar and the Southern Thailand jihadi networks. Prior to the 'formalization' of the meeting's name in the Action Plans, this meeting's title was inconsistent annually.

Table 1. Timeline of the Sub-Regional Meetings on Counter-Terrorism (SRM CT)

No	Event Title	Venue	Date	Attendees	Note
1	Sub-Regional Meeting on Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Cross Border Terrorism: Enhancing Domestic and Collective Responses	Manado	29 July 2017	Indonesia, Australia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and New Zealand	
2	Sub-Regional Meeting on Counter-Terrorism: Responding To Evolving Terrorist Strategies and Tactics	Jakarta	6 November 2018	Australia, Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand	Due to Lombok Earthquake on 6 August 2018, the meeting was re-convened in Jakarta on 6 November 2018.
3	Sub-Regional Meeting On Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Security	Virtual	1 December 2020	Indonesia, Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand	

Note. Author's compilation from documents provided by the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, 2021

Although there have been some changes in the title and theme, both Indonesia and Australia maintain the use of "sub-regional" to indicate the scope of the SRMs. Based on the explanation from a senior official of the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, the use of sub-regional is to emphasize that the meetings do not aim to cover the whole Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific region.

> *Furthermore, we call it the subregion because it does not cover the whole of Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific. It is not the whole of Southeast Asia because only those countries affected by this war (against terrorism and violent extremism posed by ISIS) should participate. We are not saying that other countries are not having this impact, but the impact is not as big as the others*[2].

Thus, the analysis of SRMs in addressing the security complexes in the subregion is best viewed from the Regional Security Complex theory to comprehensively capture the interplay of security complex elements in the subregion sphere.

DISTRIBUTION OF POWER IN THE SUB-REGIONAL MEETINGS: COMPLEMENTARITY AND MUTUAL BENEFIT

Power distribution and mutual benefit in co-hosting regional meetings are evident in this context. The power relations dynamics between Australia and Indonesia can be seen in how they decided to co-host the meetings. Their agreement to jointly conduct the meetings is an effort for mutual benefit that Indonesia and Australia would enjoy from their shared leadership in the SRMs.

As fellow middle powers in the Asia Pacific, Indonesia and Australia possess distinct leadership capacities that can complement each other's leadership. Liow (2018), in his analysis, highlights three initiatives carried out by Indonesia prior to SRMs, which he considers not very successful. The three initiatives are ASEAN Security Community in 2003, Bali Democracy Forum in 2008 and The Indo-Pacific Treaty in 2013. Those three ambitious initiatives lacked detail and unclear substance (Liow, 2018). It was due to Indonesia's tendency to neglect the efforts to sustain these previous initiatives in the longer-term programs since it might deal with

economic instability and domestic political challenges. Thus, Indonesian past initiatives also lagged support from other countries in the region. It has challenged Indonesia to be the 'first among equals' at the regional level.

In addition, Indonesia's slow economic recovery after the 1997-1998 financial crisis left this country unable to hold economic leadership in ASEAN (Emmers, 2014). There is a tendency for Indonesia to retain its leadership on a sectoral basis, focusing merely on politics and security sectors, and thus "delegating" regional economic leadership to other economically stronger countries, such as Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand (Emmers, 2014). As Indonesia did not possess the regional economic leadership, a partnership with fellow regional middle powers with capable and strong economic powers like Australia would greatly benefit Indonesia. For Indonesia, regaining a regional power requires a change of strategy by inviting a powerful regional player to balance and improve its power relations with neighboring countries in the Asia Pacific subregion. Indonesia's success in including Australia in the sub-regional security architecture has become the main attraction for neighboring countries to trust Indonesia's capability as a regional leader in the security and political initiatives with clarity of substance, the certainty of resources and sustainability.

Meanwhile, Australia's welcoming hand to co-host the SRMs with Indonesia is motivated by its goal to ensure security and stability in the region against terrorism and violent extremism, as it is the main security threat to Australia. To "minimize the influx" of extremists from the Indonesian FTFs, Australia has implemented a re-engagement strategy with Indonesia focusing on the technical levels. Previous engagement in technical cooperation is "unachievable at a strategic level in the current geopolitical environment globally and the emerging political climate in Indonesia" (Austin, 2017). The previous and ongoing cooperation of the two countries involves intelligence information sharing, law enforcement cooperation (JCLEC and deradicalization of former extremists), and strengthening capabilities through networking, training and education, exchanges

(high officials, analysts, and field operators), seminars, conferences, and joint operations. The frequent leadership changes in Australian domestic politics, the rising populism, and fundamentalism in Indonesian society require high-level commitments on both sides in countering terrorism and violent extremism.

The existence of a new collaborative effort on the comprehensive decision-making level is imperative in achieving comprehensive security cooperation to counter-terrorism and violent extremism. Ministries should lead this high-level policy collaboration with authority to coordinate other agencies' ministries and conduct monitoring of the implementation of the program. Hence, the Indonesian and Australian governments appointed The Coordinating Ministry for Political Legal and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and The Australian Attorney-General Office as the leading agencies for this new collaborative effort. A joint strategic effort will achieve tangible outcomes for the overall cooperation more effectively. Head of Australian Delegation in the 2017 SRM highlighted this forum's purpose in his welcoming remark in 2017.

> We come together today as regional neighbors, as partners, as friends determined to share our experience to work together collaboratively to enhance further our response to the threat of terrorism and, in particular, to develop nations and make decisions to keep our people safe today. Making decisions today because this is not merely a talking meeting, but a working meeting and the doing meeting. It is a meeting that will produce tangible outcomes for which we can all go together united and determined to confront the menace we face[3].

Australia's decision to be a co-host with Indonesia demonstrates its effort to engage in regional architecture on terrorism and violent extremism. Recognizing its limitations in culturally "getting closer to" countries in Southeast Asia with abundant experience of terrorism and violent extremism, Australia turned to Indonesia to assist its engagement with ASEAN countries dealing with terrorism. By doing so, Australia paved the way to be a dominant player in the Asia Pacific subregion. George Brandis underlined it at the 2017 Sub-Regional Meeting welcoming remark.

> Australia, in particular, welcomes and thanks Indonesia for the invitation to be the co-host of this meeting. Australia hopes it will be the first of such meetings and that this forum will become a part of a regional architecture as our nations join in a cooperative and collaborative effort to fight the menace that has emerged in our midst[4].

In short, the distribution of power in such a "sub-regional order" between Indonesia and Australia and other participants illustrates a mutual relationship to address security challenges at the sub-regional level. The void of leadership power in terms of substance, economic strength and program sustainability lagged from Indonesia's leadership quality has been filled by Australia's participation as a co-leader. Meanwhile, Australia's interest in deterring the threats of terrorism and violent extremism more effectively in the region by changing its engagement strategy with Indonesia is evident from its co-leadership with Indonesia in these SRMs. Various Indonesian structural weaknesses against terrorism and violent extremism, as well as its struggle to contain domestic political turmoil, are perceived as immediate security threats to Australia's national security interest. In addition, another benefit for Australia is that it will be able to build a closer and more trusted relationship with neighboring countries in Southeast Asia and garner support to gain regional leadership.

ANARCHY VS INTEGRATION: ADDRESSING LACK OF REGIONAL TRUST AND FOREIGN POLICY DILEMMAS

Anarchy is an inevitable feature of the Indonesia-Australia bilateral relationship. All SRM attendees tend to pursue their national interests while collaborating. Moreover, ASEAN countries were not confident enough with the concept of regional order, frequently echoed by Indonesia (Emmers, 2014). Their relations with external actors (the United States and China) are crucial to guarantee their security, more than their reliance on ASEAN. In dealing with conflicts (an inter-state and intra-state), ASEAN member states tend to use bilateral approaches. Additionally, Sino-US rivalry in Southeast Asia has further pushed the polarity of countries in Southeast Asia. Their memberships in

ASEAN do not justify their dependencies on regional cooperation, thus depicting that anarchy still prevails.

Likewise, Australia is dealing with a foreign policy dilemma. Today, Australia maintains its alliance with the US as "the great and powerful friend" to ensure its security interest (Beeson et al., 2020). At the same time, Australia has high economic dependence on China as it is its largest trading partner. However, the US' hostile foreign policy choices toward China have been followed suit by Australia, thus complicating Australia's engagements with China[5]. Amid this dilemma, Australia cannot simply let its relations with countries in its closest region—Southeast Asia and the Asia Pacific—become strained and deteriorate due to the two great powers' competition (the United States and China) over its strategic interests.

It is where SRMs balance the effects of anarchy and further integration, albeit a sectoral one. SRMs refer to a means for Indonesia and Australia to respond to anarchy affecting the regional constellation in the Asia Pacific. For Indonesia, the initiative to strengthen regional cooperation on one issue (where Indonesia is considered quite successful internationally), i.e., CT and P/CVE, serves as the main prerequisite for the formation of stronger regional security cooperation and will be able to establish member states' confidence to resolve conflicts through regional mechanisms. Therefore, polarization among countries in the region will not be a major obstacle.

Meanwhile, for Australia, leadership in the SRMs exhibits a gesture toward a strategic engagement with its closest neighbors to reduce the tension from the great power rivalry impacting its foreign policy choices. In short, the anarchy vs. integration dichotomy is visible before, during and after the SRMs, although it may not significantly impact Indonesia and Australia's leadership roles in the next SRM.

AMITY VS ENMITY: THE IMPORTANCE OF BONDED TRUST AT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL

Despite supporting Indonesia's independence in 1945, Australia also played a role in separating East Timor from Indonesia (Nabbs-Keller, 2020) and its somewhat obvious sublime support of the Papua conflict

by accepting West Papuan asylum seekers on Australian soil (Day, 2015) and beyond. Additionally, various issues often plagued their relationship, for example, the wiretapping of the Indonesian President Yudhoyono and his spouse in 2013 and the execution of two Australian "Bali Nine" drug smugglers despite extensive Australian efforts to stop the execution (Troath, 2019), the incident where the Australian Navy paid the boat crews carrying migrants bound for Australia to return to Indonesia in 2015 (Missbach & Palmer, 2020; BBC News Indonesia, 2015) and the Australian Defence Force training materials demonstrating supports for Papua's independence and insulting the Indonesian government with the term "Pancagila" to replace "Pancasila" (Stefanie, 2017).

Although Indonesia-Australia has frequently dealt with crises that disrupt their mutual relationship, it is not always the case that their bilateral relationship has been in a state of feud and enmity. They are essential to middle powers in the Asia Pacific, a volatile region characterized by geopolitical competition and the destabilizing impacts of great powers' influences (Beeson et al., 2020). Potentials for interstate conflicts, civil wars, threats of violent extremism and terrorism, transnational crime, and anxiety over China's dominance in the region become the backdrops for the two neighbors' willingness to build trust and pursue common interests.

The inevitability of amity and enmity in the Indonesian–Australian bilateral relationship has also been reflected in the preparation prior to the SRMs. In the SRM preparation, Indonesia and Australia delegations have been engaged in intense discussions to accommodate the interests of both countries.

"And in the preparation meeting, usually we have a very intense discussion, especially on the idea and what should we do. Of course, every country has its interests, right? Moreover, Indonesia and Australia would like to present their interest covertly and overtly. I know we had the discussion, and it was intense... It must be very intense because there was a different interest between Indonesia and Australia, and secondly, we should understand that we have a very different system of law or the legal system."[6]

However, this intense discussion did not necessarily create a hostile atmosphere. The organizing committees, mostly diplomats, realized the history of the turbulent relationship between the two countries. However, it was not talked about openly in the preparation process. In addition, regular meetings through an informal meeting group, i.e., "The Jakarta Group," has overcome the level of animosity. "The Jakarta Group" refers to a group of Jakarta-based diplomatic officials of all SRM attendees[7]. As stated in the joint statements, this group played pivotal roles in preparing the SRMs and monitoring the implementation activities.

Joint statements' wordings and phrasings have been discussed several times, starting from the officer level to the Heads of Delegation (HoD). It is crucial to suppress animosity and encourage harmony among the attendees. Each paragraph in the joint statements must be familiar with Indonesia-Australia's legal and diplomatic system to reduce the barriers to the implementation. It was not easy for both countries' officers due to obvious differences in their legal systems. However, consultation and strategic communication helped overcome the obstacles at the preparatory level.

The emphasis on collaboration to overcome common threats from terrorist networks and security challenges has enhanced active collaboration among participating countries. The SRM joint statements reflected it by emphasizing the importance of a joint response to detect the threats, overcome evolving threats and face the threats of terrorism and violent extremism, especially challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In short, careful preparation, regular consultations, and restraint from discussing bilateral tensions have reduced the level of enmity in the preparatory stage. A friendship emerged during the technical meetings that resonated during the HoDs' interactions. It supports Troath's argument (2019) that bonded trust between Indonesia and Australia needs to be established at all levels of government administration if they wish to have a durable relationship and maintain their leadership on CT and C/PVE at the sub-regional level.

THE SECURITIZATION OF THE RETURN OF FTFS

Terrorism and violent extremism have been perceived as major sources of security threats for Indonesia and Australia for the past two decades. Both countries experienced massive impacts from these threats, and after the First Bali Bombing, they strengthened their counter-terrorism cooperation. This cooperation has become the most successful and strongest feature of security collaborations between the two countries. When the SRM was initiated, i.e., in 2016, ISIS experienced a war defeat and began to lose almost all of its controlled territories (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017). Globally, the number of deaths from terrorism has reduced by 22 percent to 25,673 people since experiencing the highest number of deaths in 2014, when the attacks mostly occurred in five countries, namely Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Nigeria, and Pakistan. Indonesia and Australia were respectively ranked 42 and 65 in the 2017 Global Terrorism Index.

However, the positive trend in global terrorism has been overshadowed by concerns that due to ISIS' defeat, many FTFs would try to return to their countries of origin. The threat concerning the return of FTFs is perceived as a major security issue for these states, thus requiring extraordinary measures. It necessitates the securitization of the issue of the returning FTFs, as also committed by Indonesia and Australia. It is evident from their decision to name the first SRM with the Sub-Regional Meeting on Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Cross Border Terrorism: Enhancing Domestic and Collective Responses. It was noticeable that the FTF issue's securitization has been taken to the sub-regional level through the SRM.

Indonesia took the chance to conduct FTF issue securitization due to various challenges in response to terrorism and violent extremism threats. Those challenges ranged from the difficulties in safeguarding Indonesia's borders with diverse and open geographical terrain, lack of resources to carry out effective surveillance, the rise of fundamentalism and violent extremism, and the existence of home-grown terrorist groups such as Jamaah Anshorut Daulah (JAD) and

Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), and horizontal, separatist, and sectarian conflicts leading to open fighting and violence. Since ISIS's emergence, it is estimated that around 2,000 Indonesian citizens have migrated to ISIS territory, and many Indonesia FTFs would possibly return to Indonesia upon ISIS' defeat (The Habibie Center, 2019). Therefore, the securitization of the return of FTFs is necessary because the large number of FTFs will add to another security challenge for Indonesia, which has previously been plagued with many weaknesses in its security sector management (Mohammed, 2021). Hence, collaborative responses and greater cooperation through a sub-regional forum are beneficial to aid Indonesia in addressing such threats.

On Australia's side, the securitization of FTFs is also visible. Based on Australian Secret Intelligence estimates in 2015, around 90 Australian jihadists went to Syria and Iraq, and up to 30 have returned to Australia (Zammit, 2015). This small number of returning FTFs should not have been framed as an existential threat to Australia. However, Australia's history in the securitization of transnational crime can play a role in why it is necessary to use extraordinary measures for the returning FTFs. McKenzie (2019) argued that the securitization of terrorism in Australia began after 9/11 when its leaders decided to announce that terrorism was an existential threat to Australia's collective identity. Therefore, the returning FTFs to the Asia Pacific subregion, feared being able to enter Australia through neighboring countries' hotspots (such as Marawi in the Philippines and Poso in Indonesia), has encouraged Australia to cooperate more closely with Indonesia and other countries.

One evident example of how the securitization of the threat of the returning FTFs can be seen from the first SRM in Manado 2017. The Indonesian Head of National Police mentioned that the Indonesian FTFs had returned to the region and joined with terrorist groups in Marawi, the Philippines.

> *A total of 35 Indonesian citizens are suspected to be related to FTF activities in the Philippines, of which 14 people are still in the Philippines, six people have returned to Indonesia, six people are believed to have died in the Philippines, and nine people were deported by the Philippine's government. Ten out of 14 Indonesian citizens overstayed in the Philippines and were suspected of joining the FTFs in the Southern Philippines*[8].

Therefore, bearing the similarity to the securitization of transnational crimes, which has been successful in garnering international criminal justice cooperation (McKenzie, 2018b) and police cooperation (McKenzie, 2019), the securitization of returning FTFs in the subregion has been one of the key drivers for a collaborative response and augmented better cooperation through the SRMs.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the initiative to anticipate the returning FTFs to the Asia Pacific had provided Indonesia and Australia a "silver lining" to cast aside their striking differences and turbulent relationship history to gain their respective ambitions as sub-regional powers. This paper has depicted that Indonesia-Australia's initiative to build the SRM on CT in anticipating the returning FTFs has elevated their status as important leaders in counter-terrorism. Having been perceived as crucial middle powers in the Asia Pacific, Indonesia and Australia can be the potential leaders in the region where various security complexes exist, including the imminent threat of the returning FTFs. It signifies that there has been a move toward a more equal and mutual relationship between Indonesia and Australia, albeit only limited to a particular security issue. Future research on whether both countries will also be the champions for addressing the diverse regional security complex issues such as human trafficking, illegal migrations, maritime security and cyber security remains vital. However, it requires stronger commitment from both countries (at leaders and the community levels) before the equal leadership of Indonesia and Australia in other areas of cooperation can be established.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

ENDNOTE

[1] "The Bandung divide" phrase stems from the 1955 Asian-African Conference in which Indonesian defence and security policies and foreign affairs were based on the "active and independent" principle, distancing from any formal security alliances, and remain neutral from the great power competition. Meanwhile, Australian defence and security domestic and foreign policies were loyal to Western-dominated liberal international order. The phrase "The Bandung divide" was introduced by Andrew Phillips & Eric Hiariej (2016).

[2] Interview with Dr. Pribadi Sutiono, The Acting Deputy for Foreign Affairs Coordination, The Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 28 June 2021.

[3] Welcoming Remark, H.E. George Brandis. Minutes of the Sub-Regional Meeting on Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and Cross Border Terrorism (CBT): Enhancing Domestic and Collective Responses. 29 July 2017 – Manado, Indonesia. Official record of the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

[4] Ibid.

[5] A recent security alliance announced on September 15, 2021, named Australia, UK and US (AUKUS) has surely complicated the security situation in the region. The alliance has the first task to assist Australia in developing nuclear-powered submarines. It has become a subject of criticism as it provides the nuclear proliferation technology to Australia as a non-NPT state. It also demonstrates a direct opposition to deter China's influence and can possibly create a new type of arm race in the region. However I will not investigate this contestation for it is not within the scope of discussion on CT cooperation between Indonesia and Australia under the SRMs.

[6] Interview with Dr. Pribadi Sutiono.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Head of Indonesian National Police Remark, General Tito Karnavian, Minutes of the Sub-Regional Meeting on Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and Cross Border Terrorism (CBT): Enhancing Domestic and Collective Responses. 29 July 2017 – Manado, Indonesia. Official record of the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

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