

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Integration of ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) Cooperative Functionalism in the Joko Widodo Era: An Analysis of Indonesia's Strategic Mechanisms and Regional Impact (2014-2024)

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Abstract

This article examines Indonesia's implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) during President Joko Widodo's administration (2014-2024), focusing on the country's "open-ended mechanism" approach to regional integration. Drawing on functionalist integration theory, we analyze how Indonesia leveraged AOIP's framework to create flexible cooperation platforms that accommodate diverse interests

while building functional integration across maritime cooperation, connectivity, sustainable development, and economic domains. Through examination of diplomatic initiatives, sub-regional programs like BIMP-EAGA, and external partnership frameworks, we assess whether Indonesia's strategy generated genuine regional integration or merely episodic cooperation. Our findings reveal a mixed outcome: while AOIP achieved moderate success in institutional development and sector-specific interdependence, particularly in maritime and economic domains, it failed to demonstrate functionalist spillover effects or political convergence among member states. The study concludes that Indonesia's open-ended mechanism represents "integration without supranationalism" a distinctively flexible approach to regionalism that increases interdependence without sovereignty pooling, reflecting both the possibilities and limits of middle power leadership in an era of intensifying great power competition.

Keywords: ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific, Indonesia foreign policy, Joko Widodo, functionalist integration, regional cooperation, middle power diplomacy

I. Introduction

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as one of the most contested geopolitical constructs of the twenty-first century, with multiple great and middle powers advancing competing visions for regional order (Strating, 2025). The concept itself reflects divergent strategic narratives: from Washington and Tokyo's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) emphasizing security alignments and democratic values, to Beijing's rejection of what it perceives as containment frameworks, to



ASEAN's quest for strategic autonomy amid intensifying great power competition (Hanada, 2019). Within this complex landscape, the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), adopted at the 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok in June 2019, represents a distinctive attempt by Southeast Asian nations to articulate their own vision for regional governance one that prioritizes inclusivity, ASEAN centrality, and rules-based multilateralism over exclusive security arrangements.

AOIP's significance extends beyond mere rhetorical positioning; it embodies ASEAN's attempt to maintain its centrality in regional governance structures while responding to fundamental shifts in the geopolitical landscape (Nabbs-Keller, 2020). The framework identifies four priority areas for cooperation: maritime cooperation, connectivity, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and economic cooperation, domains deliberately chosen to emphasize functional collaboration over security competition. As Hanada (2019) notes, AOIP seeks to uphold the rules-based order and regional integrity by promoting "habit of dialogue" and collaborative problem-solving rather than exclusive security arrangements that risk fragmenting the region into competing blocs.

However, the critical challenge facing AOIP lies not in its articulation but in its operationalization. The framework's open-ended and flexible nature, while politically necessary to secure consensus among ASEAN's ten diverse member states and maintain engagement with

external powers holding divergent strategic visions, creates inherent implementation challenges. As Hashim (2024) demonstrates through analysis of sub-regional initiatives like BIMP-EAGA, translating AOIP's broad principles into concrete programs requires not only political will but also institutional mechanisms that can coordinate action across multiple levels of governance and diverse stakeholder groups. The gap between aspiration and implementation becomes particularly acute when examining specific national approaches to AOIP, with member states demonstrating varying degrees of commitment and capacity for advancing the framework's objectives.

Indonesia's role in conceptualizing, championing, and implementing AOIP deserves particular scholarly attention. As the architect of the original Indo-Pacific concept within ASEAN, Indonesia under President Joko Widodo's leadership (2014-2024) pursued what Anwar (2020) characterizes as "middle power diplomacy" aimed at shaping regional order without triggering balancing coalitions or forcing divisive alignments. President Jokowi's administration invested considerable diplomatic capital in building consensus around AOIP, framing it as consistent with Indonesia's constitutional mandate to contribute to world peace while advancing the nation's strategic interests through a maritime-focused foreign policy orientation. This diplomatic approach reflects Indonesia's recognition of both its responsibilities as ASEAN's largest member and its limitations as a developing nation with finite resources for shaping regional outcomes.



Yet despite AOIP's geopolitical significance and Indonesia's central role in its development, systematic scholarly analysis of how Indonesia has translated the framework into concrete policy outcomes remains limited. While existing literature has examined AOIP's rhetorical construction (Anwar, 2020), its strategic rationale (Nabbs-Keller, 2020), and its relationship to broader Indo-Pacific discourses (Strating, 2025), less attention has been devoted to analyzing the specific mechanisms through which Indonesia has pursued AOIP implementation during the Jokowi era, the effectiveness of these mechanisms in advancing integration objectives, and the broader implications for understanding ASEAN-led regional governance in an era of strategic flux.

This article addresses this gap by examining Indonesia's strategy for implementing the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific during President Joko Widodo's administration, with particular focus on what we term the "open-ended mechanism", Indonesia's approach to creating flexible, inclusive platforms for cooperation that accommodate diverse interests while gradually building functional integration across priority sectors. Drawing on functionalist integration theory, we analyze how Indonesia has attempted to leverage AOIP's framework to expand opportunities for cooperation not only among ASEAN member states but also with external partners, promoting a model of competitive cooperation rather than rigid alliance-building. Our central research question asks:

How has Indonesia employed open-ended cooperative mechanisms within AOIP to foster integration in the Indo-Pacific region during the Jokowi era, and what does this reveal about the possibilities and limitations of ASEAN-led regional governance in an era of great power competition?

II. Literature Review

a. Functionalist Integration Theory and Regional Cooperation

Functionalist integration theory, developed by David Mitrany (1966), posits that cooperation in technical, non-political sectors creates interdependence that gradually expands into political domains through a process of "spillover" or "ramification." Unlike realist approaches that emphasize zero-sum competition, functionalism argues that states can achieve common welfare objectives through sector-specific collaboration that transcends traditional sovereignty concerns. The theory's core mechanism operates through two pathways: first, successful cooperation in one functional domain (e.g., maritime security) creates practical pressures and incentives for collaboration in adjacent sectors (e.g., maritime trade, fisheries management); second, the development of specialized transnational networks and institutions gradually builds habits of cooperation that reduce conflict potential (Mitrany, 1966).



This framework proves particularly relevant for analyzing ASEAN's approach to regional integration, which has historically eschewed the supranational institutions of European integration in favor of flexible, consensus-based cooperation across specific functional domains. As Hanada (2019) observes, ASEAN's effectiveness stems not from formal institutional power but from its ability to create "habits of dialogue" that facilitate collaborative problem-solving across diverse issue areas while respecting member states' sovereignty. The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific exemplifies this functionalist logic by identifying four priority cooperation areas, maritime collaboration, connectivity, sustainable development, and economic integration, each representing domains where functional cooperation can advance without requiring political alignment or sovereignty pooling (ASEAN, 2019; Soeya, 2019).

However, functionalist integration faces significant challenges in the contemporary Indo-Pacific context. The theory assumes that technical cooperation can remain insulated from political competition, yet AOIP operates in an environment where infrastructure projects, maritime governance, and economic connectivity are deeply entangled with great power rivalry (Strating, 2025). Moreover, functionalism's spillover mechanism requires sustained commitment and institutional capacity that may exceed what ASEAN's diverse membership can consistently provide. As Hashim (2024)

demonstrates through analysis of sub-regional initiatives like BIMP-EAGA, translating broad functional cooperation frameworks into concrete implementation requires overcoming substantial coordination challenges, resource constraints, and divergent national priorities. This gap between functionalist theory's optimistic logic and implementation realities forms a central problematic for understanding AOIP's potential and limitations.

b. Middle Power Diplomacy and ASEAN Centrality

Indonesia's approach to AOIP must also be understood through the lens of middle power diplomacy, the strategic behavior of states that lack superpower capabilities but possess sufficient resources and diplomatic influence to shape regional outcomes (Anwar, 2020). Middle powers typically pursue multilateral engagement, coalition-building, and institutional entrepreneurship rather than unilateral power projection. Indonesia's championing of AOIP reflects this middle power strategy: rather than aligning with either the United States or China, Indonesia has attempted to construct an inclusive regional framework that preserves ASEAN centrality while accommodating diverse great power interests (Nabbs-Keller, 2020).

This middle power approach faces inherent tensions. As Nabbs-Keller (2020) argues, ASEAN centrality depends on member states' ability to maintain collective cohesion and resist being divided by external powers, yet ASEAN



members have increasingly divergent relationships with China and the United States. Indonesia's leadership in promoting AOIP represents an attempt to resolve this tension by creating an "open-ended mechanism" that allows flexible cooperation without forcing exclusive choices. However, the effectiveness of this approach remains contested, particularly as implementation requires concrete resource commitments that may expose the limits of Indonesia's capacity to lead regional integration efforts (Anwar, 2020).

III. Methods

a. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study approach examining Indonesia's implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific during President Joko Widodo's administration (2014-2024). The research uses process tracing methodology to analyze how Indonesia's diplomatic initiatives and policy mechanisms evolved across bilateral, sub-regional, and multilateral dimensions, allowing systematic examination of causal pathways linking Indonesia's strategic choices to regional cooperation outcomes. This approach is appropriate for investigating complex policy processes where outcomes result from interactions among multiple actors and institutional contexts (Anwar, 2020; Hashim, 2024).

b. Data Sources

Primary data sources include: (1) Official ASEAN documents, particularly the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (2019) and summit communiqués from 2019-2024; (2) Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs policy statements, press releases, and strategic planning documents related to Indo-Pacific cooperation; (3) Bilateral and multilateral agreements involving Indonesia and AOIP partner countries; (4) Parliamentary records and testimonies regarding AOIP implementation.

Secondary sources comprise scholarly literature on ASEAN regionalism, Indo-Pacific geopolitics, functionalist integration theory, and Indonesian foreign policy (Anwar, 2020; Hanada, 2019; Hashim, 2024; Nabbs-Keller, 2020; Soeya, 2019; Strating, 2025). Academic journals, policy reports, and analytical assessments from regional think tanks supplement the analysis. Document selection criteria prioritized: (a) relevance to AOIP implementation mechanisms; (b) official status and authoritative sourcing; (c) temporal coverage of the Jokowi administration; (d) geographic scope encompassing bilateral, sub-regional, and multilateral dimensions.

c. Analytical Procedures

Analysis proceeded through three stages: First, document analysis systematically examined policy statements and official documents to identify Indonesia's stated objectives, strategic rationales, and implementation mechanisms for



AOIP. Documents were coded thematically to identify patterns in Indonesia's diplomatic framing across bilateral, sub-regional, and multilateral contexts.

Second, process tracing reconstructed the sequence of diplomatic initiatives, institutional developments, and policy decisions through which Indonesia operationalized AOIP. This involved mapping temporal sequences, identifying critical junctures, and analyzing causal mechanisms linking Indonesia's actions to cooperation outcomes. Evidence from multiple sources was triangulated to verify causal claims and identify competing explanations.

Third, theoretical analysis assessed whether observed cooperation patterns exhibit functionalist integration dynamics, specifically, evidence of sectoral spillover, institutional deepening, or expanding networks of interdependence.

d. Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations: (1) Limited access to confidential diplomatic correspondence restricts analysis to publicly available documents; (2) The short time period since AOIP's adoption (2019-2024) constrains assessment of long-term integration effects; (3) Language barriers necessitate reliance

on official English translations of Indonesian-language documents, though key documents were verified by Indonesian-speaking researchers; These limitations are addressed through triangulation of multiple data sources and transparent acknowledgment of analytical constraints.

IV. Results and Discussion

a. Indonesia's Strategic Framework for AOIP Implementation

Indonesia's approach to implementing the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific during President Joko Widodo's administration (2014-2024) reflects a carefully calibrated middle power strategy aimed at preserving ASEAN centrality while accommodating diverse great power interests in the region (Anwar, 2020). At the 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok (June 2019), President Jokowi articulated three foundational principles that have guided Indonesia's AOIP diplomacy: (1) engagement rather than rejection of existing Indo-Pacific frameworks, including the U.S.-Japan "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" and multilateral arrangements like the Quad; (2) advancement of the "ASEAN Way" emphasizing dialogue, consensus, and non-interference to ensure regional architecture does not undermine ASEAN's institutional centrality; and (3) multi-level diplomatic engagement across bilateral, sub-regional, and multilateral forums to build overlapping networks of cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).



This strategic framework represents what Nabbs-Keller (2020) characterizes as "hedging through institutional entrepreneurship", Indonesia seeks to shape regional order not through military power or exclusive alliances, but by creating inclusive platforms that reduce pressures for binary alignment choices. Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi emphasized at the 35th ASEAN Summit that AOIP provides a mechanism for "competitive cooperation" where major powers can pursue their interests through collaborative rather than confrontational pathways (Kemlu RI, 2019).

b. Multi-Level Cooperation Mechanisms: Evidence from Implementation

Bilateral Engagement: Strategic Partnerships Without Exclusive Alignment. At the bilateral level, Indonesia has pursued strategic partnerships that advance AOIP objectives while avoiding exclusive alignment. President Jokowi's February 2020 visit to Australia, commemorating 70 years of diplomatic relations, produced the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which explicitly references AOIP principles and establishes cooperation frameworks in maritime security, infrastructure connectivity, and Pacific development assistance (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Australia, 2020). This partnership demonstrates Indonesia's strategy of building bridges between ASEAN and external partners: Australia's engagement with Pacific Island nations complements Indonesia's geographic position as

the only ASEAN state with direct land borders in the Pacific region, creating potential pathways for ASEAN-Pacific integration that bypass great power rivalry dynamics (Hashim, 2024).

Similarly, Indonesia's bilateral engagement with Japan has leveraged Tokyo's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" framework to secure concrete infrastructure investments while maintaining strategic autonomy. At the 2019 ASEAN-Japan Summit, Foreign Minister Tarō Kōno praised ASEAN's AOIP as providing a "common platform" for cooperation, and Japan subsequently committed US\$3 billion to ASEAN connectivity projects explicitly aligned with AOIP priorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2019). This demonstrates how Indonesia's diplomatic framing has enabled external powers to contribute resources to ASEAN-led initiatives without requiring ASEAN members to endorse external powers' competing strategic visions, a key achievement of middle power diplomacy (Anwar, 2020).

c. Sub-Regional Initiatives: Building Functional Integration

At the sub-regional level, Indonesia has championed the revitalization of existing frameworks like the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) as implementation vehicles for AOIP. As Hashim (2024) documents, BIMP-EAGA's 2021-2025 Implementation Blueprint explicitly incorporates AOIP's four priority areas, with specific projects in



maritime cooperation (establishing integrated coastal management systems), connectivity (Trans-Borneo Highway completion), and sustainable development (renewable energy microgrids in remote areas). By 2023, BIMP-EAGA had mobilized US\$8.7 billion in infrastructure investments, demonstrating how sub-regional platforms can translate AOIP's broad principles into concrete outcomes (BIMP-EAGA Secretariat, 2023).

development that include both ASEAN and non-ASEAN MIKTA members, creating cross-regional policy learning networks (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020).

This sub-regional approach addresses a critical implementation challenge: ASEAN's ten members have vastly different capabilities and priorities, making comprehensive region-wide programs difficult to execute. Sub-regional initiatives allow smaller groups of countries with shared interests and geographic proximity to achieve deeper functional integration that can subsequently expand to other ASEAN members, exemplifying functionalist spillover logic (Hashim, 2024).

d. Multilateral Forums: Expanding Cooperative Networks

At the multilateral level, Indonesia has utilized middle power coalitions and existing regional forums to amplify AOIP's reach. Within MIKTA (Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, Australia), a middle power grouping established in 2013, Indonesia has promoted AOIP as a model for inclusive regionalism that avoids great power bloc formation. At the 2020 MIKTA Foreign Ministers Meeting, Indonesia secured endorsement of AOIP principles and established working groups on maritime governance and sustainable



Tab.1. Indonesia's Multi-Level AOIP Implementation Framework

Dimension	Key Mechanisms and Outcomes
Bilateral	Strategic partnerships with Australia (2020), Japan (2019-ongoing), and Pacific Island nations (Fiji, Papua New Guinea) focusing on: maritime security cooperation, infrastructure connectivity (US\$3B+ Japanese commitment), development assistance (Rp 3 trillion for Pacific disaster relief), and avoiding exclusive security alignment while securing concrete resource commitments (Anwar, 2020; DFAT Australia, 2020).
Sub-Regional	BIMP-EAGA revitalization (2021-2025): Implementation Blueprint aligned with AOIP priorities mobilized US\$8.7B in infrastructure investments, Trans-Borneo Highway completion, integrated coastal management, renewable energy microgrids. Demonstrates functional integration through geographically-focused initiatives that achieve deeper cooperation than region-wide programs (Hashim, 2024; BIMP-EAGA Secretariat, 2023).
Multilateral	MIKTA endorsement (2020): Working groups on maritime governance and sustainable development creating cross-regional policy networks. ASEAN-IORA cooperation (Jakarta Declaration 2021): Collaboration frameworks for maritime security, blue economy, disaster risk reduction. Demonstrates building overlapping institutional memberships and expanding Indonesia's influence beyond Southeast Asia (Anwar, 2020; IORA, 2021; Kemlu RI, 2020).

Source: MOFA (2019-2024); Anwar (2020) ; Hashim (2024)

Notes: Compiled from Ministry of Foreign Affairs statements, BIMP-EAGA reports, and scholarly analysis



Indonesia has also advanced AOIP through the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), where it assumed the Vice-Chair position in 2019-2021. President Jokowi's advocacy for enhanced ASEAN IORA cooperation resulted in the 2021 Jakarta Declaration, which commits both organizations to collaborate on maritime security, blue economy development, and disaster risk reduction, all AOIP priority areas (IORA Secretariat, 2021). This demonstrates Indonesia's strategy of building overlapping institutional memberships that create multiple pathways for cooperation, reducing dependence on any single forum while expanding Indonesia's diplomatic influence beyond Southeast Asia (Anwar, 2020).

e. The Open-Ended Mechanism: Flexibility as Integration Strategy

The concept of "open-ended mechanism" that Indonesia has employed in AOIP implementation represents a distinctive approach to regional integration that differs from both traditional ASEAN incrementalism and formal institutional integration models. This mechanism operates through three key characteristics: inclusivity without compulsion, flexibility in participation levels, and functional cooperation without political preconditions (Hanada, 2019).

First, the mechanism's inclusive framework allows participation from any state or actor willing to contribute to AOIP's four priority areas without requiring formal membership commitments or political alignment declarations. This addresses what Strating (2025) identifies as a fundamental challenge in contemporary Indo-

Pacific regionalism: how to construct cooperative frameworks that accommodate both status quo powers (U.S., Japan) and revisionist actors (China) without forcing countries to choose sides. By framing cooperation around functional domains, maritime security, connectivity, sustainable development, economic integration, rather than geopolitical orientation, AOIP creates "neutral" spaces where states with competing strategic visions can nevertheless collaborate on shared interests (Soeya, 2019).

Second, flexible participation acknowledges that ASEAN members and external partners have varying capabilities and priorities. Unlike NATO's collective defense obligations or the EU's *acquis communautaire*, AOIP imposes no mandatory commitments, states can engage deeply in some areas while remaining inactive in others. This "variable geometry" approach has enabled progress despite ASEAN's heterogeneity: Singapore and Indonesia have led maritime security initiatives, Thailand and Vietnam have championed sustainable development programs, and Malaysia has focused on connectivity projects, with no member state required to participate in all areas simultaneously (Nabbs-Keller, 2020).

Third, functional cooperation without political preconditions separates technical collaboration from political disputes. AOIP participants can cooperate on fisheries management, disaster response, or infrastructure development without resolving underlying territorial disputes (South China Sea), regime type differences (democracy vs. authoritarianism), or



alliance commitments. This functionalist logic assumes that successful cooperation in low-politics domains gradually builds trust and interdependence that eventually constrains conflict in high-politics areas, though as Hashim (2024) notes, this spillover mechanism has shown limited evidence in practice, with functional cooperation and political tensions often proceeding on parallel but disconnected tracks.

f. Indonesia's Middle Power Role: Facilitator, Catalyst, and Manager

Indonesia's operationalization of AOIP reflects what Anwar (2020) characterizes as a "trilateral" middle power function: facilitator, catalyst, and manager of regional cooperation. As facilitator, Indonesia has created institutional platforms and diplomatic frameworks that enable dialogue among actors who might otherwise lack channels for engagement. The ASEAN-Australia Special Summit (2023) and the ASEAN-Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting (2024) both resulted from Indonesian diplomatic initiatives aimed at building bridges between Southeast Asia and adjacent regions, facilitating cooperation that transcends traditional geographic boundaries of ASEAN-centered regionalism (Ministry of Foreign Affairs RI, 2024).

As catalyst, Indonesia has mobilized resources and political will for initiatives that individual states might not undertake independently. President Jokowi's advocacy for the ASEAN Connectivity Master Plan 2025

expansion secured US\$30 billion in commitments from development partners (ADB, World Bank, Japan, China) for infrastructure projects explicitly aligned with AOIP priorities, demonstrating Indonesia's capacity to leverage its diplomatic credibility to catalyze concrete resource flows (Asian Development Bank, 2022).

As manager, Indonesia has attempted to coordinate diverse AOIP initiatives to prevent fragmentation and ensure complementarity. The establishment of the ASEAN Secretariat's Indo-Pacific Coordination Unit (2021) resulted from Indonesian advocacy for institutionalized management of AOIP implementation, though this unit remains understaffed and underfunded, reflecting persistent tensions between Indonesia's leadership ambitions and ASEAN's reluctance to strengthen supranational bureaucracy (Jakarta Post, 2023). Indonesia's chairmanship of ASEAN in 2023 prioritized AOIP implementation, producing the Jakarta AOIP Progress Report that documented 47 ongoing projects across the four priority areas, though the report also acknowledged significant implementation gaps and called for enhanced coordination mechanisms (ASEAN Secretariat, 2023).

However, Indonesia's middle power role faces inherent constraints. As Nabbs-Keller (2020) argues, middle power influence depends on other states accepting the middle power's leadership, and Indonesia's capacity to shape regional outcomes remains circumscribed by great power dynamics. The intensification of U.S.-China competition during 2022-2024, manifested in



technology restrictions, Taiwan Strait tensions, and competing infrastructure initiatives, has complicated Indonesia's balancing strategy, as some ASEAN members have moved toward closer alignment with either Washington or Beijing, undermining the consensus foundation that Indonesian leadership requires. Moreover, domestic political transitions (President Prabowo Subianto's inauguration in October 2024) introduce uncertainty about policy continuity, as new administrations may prioritize different foreign policy objectives.

g. Integration Outcomes and Persistent Challenges

On the positive side, AOIP has achieved several concrete successes such as AOIP has successfully established itself as ASEAN's authoritative framework for Indo-Pacific engagement, with all major external partners (U.S., China, Japan, India, Australia, EU) explicitly referencing AOIP in their ASEAN dialogue partnership statements a significant diplomatic achievement given initial skepticism from some powers (Hanada, 2019; Strating, 2025). This institutional recognition creates path dependencies that constrain future policy choices, as external powers seeking ASEAN cooperation must work through AOIP's frameworks rather than imposing alternative architectures.

However, significant challenges constrain AOIP's transformative potential: First, limited spillover from functional to political domains. Despite extensive functional cooperation, political

tensions have intensified rather than diminished. South China Sea disputes have escalated, with increased militarization and more frequent standoffs between claimant states and Chinese forces (BBC News, 2023). Myanmar's military coup (2021) and ASEAN's paralyzed response exposed limits to ASEAN's conflict management capacity, with AOIP's frameworks providing no meaningful mechanisms for addressing intra-regional political crises. The functionalist assumption that technical cooperation builds political trust has shown little empirical support in Southeast Asia's contemporary context (Hashim, 2024).

Second, implementation gaps between frameworks and outcomes. While AOIP has produced numerous agreements, action plans, and frameworks, translation into concrete deliverables remains inconsistent. The 2023 Jakarta Progress Report acknowledged that only 47 of 89 proposed projects had achieved meaningful implementation, with financing gaps, bureaucratic coordination failures, and divergent national priorities cited as primary obstacles (ASEAN Secretariat, 2023).

Third, ASEAN member divergence on external partnerships. Despite AOIP's emphasis on collective ASEAN positioning, member states have pursued increasingly divergent bilateral relationships with major powers. Cambodia and Laos have deepened alignment with China through Belt and Road Initiative projects and diplomatic support on South China Sea issues, while the Philippines and Vietnam have strengthened security ties with the United States,



and Singapore maintains equidistance through dense economic integration with both powers (Reuters, 2024). This fragmentation undermines Indonesia's strategy of using AOIP to preserve ASEAN unity, as member states increasingly view AOIP as diplomatic rhetoric rather than binding framework for external engagement (Nabbs-Keller, 2020; Strating, 2025).



Tab. 2. Opportunities and Challenges for AOIP Implementation

Opportunities	Challenges
AOIP establishes ASEAN's autonomous framework for Indo-Pacific engagement, reducing external agenda-setting (Hanada, 2019; Soeya, 2019)	Growing divergence in member states' external alignments undermines collective positioning (Nabbs-Keller, 2020; Strating, 2025)
Flexibility enables variable participation levels, accommodating ASEAN heterogeneity while enabling progress (Anwar, 2020)	Flexibility creates implementation inconsistency and coordination failures across initiatives (Hashim, 2024)
Four priority areas (maritime, connectivity, SDGs, economics) mobilize substantial external resources: US\$50B+ since 2019 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2023)	Resource dependency on external powers constrains autonomy; financing creates implicit political alignments (ADB, 2023)
Sub-regional platforms (BIMP-EAGA, GMS) enable deeper functional integration than region-wide programs (Hashim, 2024)	Limited spillover from functional to political domains; technical cooperation hasn't reduced political tensions (South China Sea disputes escalating despite cooperation)
Indonesia's middle power leadership provides credible neutral broker role, facilitating dialogue among competing powers (Anwar, 2020)	Indonesia's resource constraints limit capacity to finance initiatives independently; leadership depends on consensus that is increasingly difficult to achieve (Nabbs-Keller, 2020)

Source: Anwar (2020) ; Hanada (2019) ; Hashim (2024) ; Nabbs-Keller (2020) ; Soeya (2019) ; Strating (2025); ASEAN Secretariat (2023) ; ADB (2023)

Notes: Synthesized from academic literature and implementation reports



h. Assessing Integration: Beyond Cooperation to Functional Interdependence?

The central analytical question is whether Indonesia's open-ended mechanism approach to AOIP has generated genuine integration, defined as increasing interdependence, institutional deepening, and spillover effects, or merely expanded cooperation, defined as episodic collaboration without structural transformation. Evidence suggests a mixed outcome that defies simple categorization.

V. Conclusion

This study has examined Indonesia's implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific through the lens of the "open-ended mechanism" during President Joko Widodo's administration (2014-2024). Our analysis reveals that Indonesia's approach to AOIP operationalization represents a sophisticated attempt to advance regional integration through functional cooperation while accommodating the diverse interests and varying capacities of both ASEAN member states and external partners. The open-ended mechanism, characterized by its flexibility, inclusivity, and emphasis on practical cooperation across maritime, connectivity, sustainable development, and economic domains, reflects Indonesia's recognition that sustainable regional order in the Indo-Pacific requires building dense networks of interdependence rather than forcing rigid alignments.

The evidence presented demonstrates that AOIP has achieved mixed results when assessed against functionalist integration theory. On the positive side, the framework has generated moderate institutional development, with AOIP principles embedded across multiple ASEAN documents and dialogue mechanisms, creating path dependencies that constrain future policy divergence. Sector-specific integration has advanced in maritime and economic domains, where joint patrols, information sharing systems, trade agreements like RCEP, and connectivity infrastructure have created operational interdependencies among national agencies and economic actors.

However, AOIP has failed to demonstrate the spillover dynamics that functionalist theory posits as essential to genuine integration. Functional cooperation has not generated pressures for political convergence; indeed, member states have pursued increasingly differentiated external strategies despite shared commitments to AOIP cooperation frameworks. The persistence and even intensification of political tensions, particularly regarding South China Sea disputes, despite expanded technical cooperation in maritime domains, suggests that in highly contested geopolitical environments, states successfully compartmentalize cooperation and competition rather than allowing functional collaboration to transform political relationships.



The study's findings carry important implications for understanding contemporary regionalism and middle power diplomacy. Indonesia's open-ended mechanism represents what we term "integration without supranationalism" a form of regional ordering that increases interdependence and institutionalization without sovereignty pooling or binding political commitments. This approach may constitute a distinctively flexible model of regionalism appropriate for managing diversity in complex geopolitical environments, or it may simply reflect the inherent limitations of middle power leadership when confronted by intensifying great power competition. The Jokowi era established AOIP's frameworks and demonstrated Indonesia's capacity to shape regional discourse, but the ultimate test of this integration strategy will be whether functional cooperation proves sustainable as strategic competition intensifies further.

Looking forward, the Prabowo administration (2024-2029) inherits both opportunities and challenges in advancing AOIP implementation. The institutional foundations and partnership frameworks established during the Jokowi era provide platforms for deepening functional integration, while sub-regional mechanisms offer pathways for variable-geometry cooperation that accommodates ASEAN diversity. However, growing divergence in member states' external alignments, resource dependencies on competing powers, and the intensification of strategic competition in critical domains like technology and critical minerals pose fundamental challenges to ASEAN centrality and Indonesia's mediating role. The success of AOIP will ultimately

depend not only on Indonesia's diplomatic skill in maintaining consensus and mobilizing resources but also on whether the major powers choose to respect ASEAN's autonomy or continue pressuring member states toward exclusive alignments. In this context, Indonesia's open-ended mechanism represents both a pragmatic response to current constraints and an aspirational vision for a more inclusive, stable Indo-Pacific regional order.

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