



**Parahyangan Catholic University**  
**Faculty of Social and Political Sciences**  
**Department of International Relations**

*Accredited "Excellent"*

*SK BAN-PT No. 2579/SK/BAN-PT/AK-ISK/S/IV/2022*

**Indonesian Foreign Policy Elites' Consensus to Sidestep  
ASEAN Haze Cooperation in 2015**

Thesis

By

Vincentia Vahistha Hirrya Jyalita

6091901091

Bandung

2024



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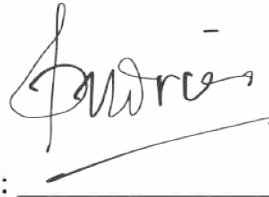
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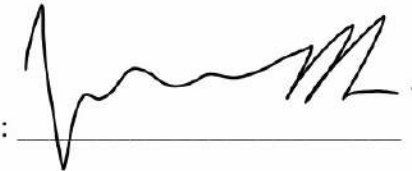
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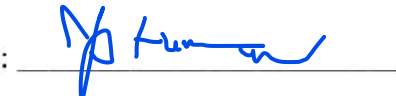
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## Pernyataan

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### **Abstract**

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ASEAN Haze Cooperation in 2015

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Indonesia was expected to cooperate regionally based on the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP) in response to the 2015 Southeast Asian haze that affected the Southeast Asian region. Instead, Indonesia opted to sidestep ASEAN haze cooperation. Using the elite consensus concept by Randall Schweller, the writer finds Indonesia's foreign policy elites formed a consensus to underbalance or underreact to the haze and forest fires threat to protect its national political and economic interests. Furthermore, the haze and forest fires were prolonged and had severe economic and health impacts on Indonesia and the region as a result. The findings support the neoclassical realism theory wherein, states deviate from behaviour expected by international pressures due to unit-level factors, such as the elites' perception and domestic politics. It contributes to neoclassical realism by adding that other than elite dissensus, elite consensus can also lead to underbalancing. It can be inferred from these findings that President Joko Widodo and the other ministers colluded during the foreign policymaking process to ensure that the chosen policy protects their shared interests in developing the palm oil industry with minimal international scrutiny into the country's environmental practices.

Keywords: ASEAN, Indonesia, AATHP, transboundary haze, foreign policy

## Abstrak

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Mengesampingkan Kerjasama Penanganan Kabut Asap ASEAN 2015

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Berdasarkan perjanjian ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP), Indonesia diharapkan bekerjasama secara regional dalam merespons isu Kabut Asap Lintas Batas Asia Tenggara 2015. Sebaliknya, Indonesia memilih mengesampingkan kerjasama tersebut. Menggunakan konsep *elite consensus* oleh Randall Schweller, penulis menemukan bahwa para pembuat kebijakan luar negeri di Indonesia mencapai konsensus untuk melakukan *underbalancing* atau meremehkan ancaman kabut asap dan kebakaran hutan dalam rangka melindungi kepentingan politik dan ekonomi nasional. Sebagai dampaknya, isu kabut asap dan kebakaran hutan berlangsung berkepanjangan dan menimbulkan kerugian ekonomi serta membahayakan kesehatan masyarakat di Indonesia dan kawasan Asia Tenggara. Temuan ini mendukung teori *neoclassical realism* di mana negara akan menyimpang dari perilaku yang diharapkan oleh tekanan internasional karena faktor-faktor di tingkat individu, seperti persepsi elit dan dinamika politik internal. Temuan dalam studi ini menambahkan pemikiran *neoclassical realism*, bahwa selain *elite dissensus*, *elite consensus* dapat berujung pada tindakan *underbalancing*. Dari temuan ini dapat disimpulkan bahwa Presiden Joko Widodo dan para pembuat kebijakan lainnya membentuk kesepakatan berdasarkan kepentingan bersama dalam mengembangkan industri kelapa sawit dan meminimalkan pengawasan internasional terhadap praktik pengelolaan lingkungan di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: ASEAN, Indonesia, AATHP, kabut asap lintas batas, kebijakan luar negeri

## Preface

In Indonesia, forest and peat fires occur almost annually and the resulting haze often blankets the Southeast Asian region. While these fires usually happen during the dry season, it is also related to the rapid degradation and unsustainable management of forests and peatland ecosystems. I have always been intrigued to see how this event ties to political and economic interests, and the efforts made at the local to international level to resolve it. Hopefully, this thesis not only provides insight into Indonesia's foreign policymaking in regard to transboundary haze but also sparks more interest among scholars to analyze environmental issues in Indonesia and the Southeast Asian region through various lenses, especially at a crucial point in time when climate change is worsening globally.

This research would not be possible without the works of Neoclassical Realist scholars which served as a vital reference for the theoretical framework in my thesis, namely, Randall Schweller, Gideon Rose, Norrin Ripsman, Steven Lobell, and Jeffrey Taliaferro. I would also like to thank Adrianus Harsawaskita as the main supervisor for this thesis. He contributed by encouraging and inspiring me with his expertise and knowledge to continuously refine my thesis until it became a piece of work worthy to be proud of.

I would also like to acknowledge numerous important figures in my life who has been a source of inspiration and support throughout the duration of my study at Parahyangan Catholic University (UNPAR). First of all, my dear parents, Lukas Wibowo and Yustina Murdiningrum, who always spare their precious time to entertain my many questions, engage in critical discussions, and whose own works

serve as inspiration to take research seriously. My Pusik Parahyangan and Media Parahyangan friends whom I shared a valuable experience with in youth activism and idealism related to nation-building and democracy issues. I am especially thankful to Miftah as my Pusik mentor who unconditionally trusted me to take on various projects which made me gain more confidence and whose relentless passion and drive, albeit at the expense of himself sometimes, sparked my initial interest in Indonesian politics and revived my enjoyment in the academics. I really wish him the best in life. Also, Media Parahyangan and KSMPMI provided me with a platform to share my voice as a writer and improve my writing in the process. I have learned plenty and made precious and intellectual friends from the deep discussions on environmental issues facilitated by the Sajogyo Institute and their *Sekolah Kaki Gunung* program. My IISMA friends especially Kiara, Laks, and Hilya gave me some of the highlights in my student life and I will never forget the countless meaningful and at times silly conversations and moments we shared, hopefully, we can continue to make better memories together. My University of Edinburgh friends, Siru, Nozomi, and Soyoka made me immediately feel at home in a foreign country and was willing to go along with my various whims in exploring Scotland. The EUEPLS/PEPLS society at the University of Edinburgh where I met many fascinating individuals who shared my idealism on climate change issues. My beloved friends at UNPAR, Hanna, Lea, Gaby, and Adzraa who I could talk to about anything wherever and whenever, and are kind enough to tolerate and entertain my interesting quirks. My lifelong best friends, Chrissy, Kanti, Kevcha, Meinar, Audrey, Yolanda, Aireen, Liana, and Uma who has been by



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Last but not least, I would like to extend my gratitude to UNPAR's Department of International Relations and the wonderful lecturers who made my academic life more vibrant and provided many opportunities which have shaped and prepared me for the many years ahead. I hope UNPAR and the Department of International Relations continue to thrive and contribute to advancing the International Relations study program in Indonesia.

Author

Vincentia Vahistha Hirrya Jyalita

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## Abbreviations

AATHP	<i>ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution</i>
ACC THPC	<i>ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Transboundary Haze Pollution Control</i>
AMME	<i>ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment</i>
AMS	<i>ASEAN Member States</i>
ASCC	<i>ASEAN Socio Cultural Community</i>
ASEAN Haze-Roadmap	<i>ASEAN Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation</i>
ASEAN	<i>Association of Southeast Asia Nations</i>
ASMC	<i>ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre</i>
BMKG	<i>Meteorological, Climatological and Geophysics Agency</i>
BNPB	<i>National Agency for Disaster Management</i>
BRG	<i>Peatland Restoration Agency</i>
FPE	<i>Foreign Policy Executive</i>
IR	<i>International Relations</i>
JER	<i>Joint Emergency Response</i>

Kemenko- Polhukam	<i>Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs</i>
MoE	<i>Ministry of Environment</i>
MoEF	<i>Ministry of Environment and Forestry</i>
MoF	<i>Ministry of Forestry</i>
MoFA	<i>Ministry of Foreign Affairs</i>
NPA	<i>National Plan of Action</i>
Renstra	<i>Strategic Plan</i>
RHAP	<i>Regional Haze Action Plan</i>
RPJMN	<i>National Long Term Development Plan</i>
UNEP	<i>United Nations Environment Programme</i>
WHO	<i>World Health Organization</i>

# Chapter I

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Southeast Asia experienced a major transboundary haze episode in 2015. The transboundary haze mainly originated from the Indonesian provinces of Sumatra and Kalimantan where palm oil companies and smallholder farmers typically use the relatively cheap *slash-and-burn* method to clear peatlands and forests, and the *El Niño* weather phenomenon prolonged dry conditions and increased fire risks.<sup>1</sup> The health and economic impacts were severe not only for Indonesia but also for neighbouring countries like Singapore and Malaysia. The transboundary haze which spread to more than 43 million people and caused respiratory illnesses was deemed unsafe for humans' long-term exposure according to the World Health Organization's (WHO) air quality guidelines.<sup>2</sup> The economic costs were estimated to reach around US\$16.1 billion for Indonesia, and US\$1.34 billion for Singapore, while for Malaysia the numbers were estimated to be similar to the costs of the 1997 haze crisis at around US\$82 million.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Asit K. Biswas and Cecilia Tortajada, "Managing Indonesian Haze: Complexities and Challenges," in *Pollution Across Borders* (WORLD SCIENTIFIC, 2016), 1–18, [https://doi.org/10.1142/9789813203921\\_0001](https://doi.org/10.1142/9789813203921_0001); Bruno Vander Velde, "Q&A on Fires and Haze in Southeast Asia," *CIFOR Forests News*, August 25, 2015, <https://forestsnews.cifor.org/23000/forests-news-update-qa-on-fires-and-haze-in-southeastasia?fnl=en>

<sup>2</sup> Ari Rikin, "Minister: Haze Death Toll Climbing," *Jakarta Globe*, October 28, 2015, <https://jakartaglobe.id/news/haze-death-toll-reaches-19/>; Mely Caballero-Anthony and Goh Tian, "ASEAN's Haze Shroud: Grave Threat to Human Security," *RSIS Commentary* (Singapore: RSIS, NTU, October 5, 2015), <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CO15207.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ann Jeannette Glauber et al., "The Cost of Fire," *Indonesia Sustainable Landscapes Knowledge*

Consequently, Indonesia faced international pressure to comply with the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP) which it ratified in 2014. Malaysia and Singapore were two of the most outspoken countries that urged Indonesia to act quickly.<sup>4</sup> By ratifying the AATHP, all ASEAN Member States (AMS) should recognize transboundary haze as a regional problem that requires cooperation. The Joint Emergency Response (JER) mechanism in the treaty allows the AMS to assist in preventing, mitigating, and controlling the haze.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, regional frameworks like the ASEAN Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation (ASEAN Haze Roadmap) support the treaty's implementation.<sup>6</sup>

Regional cooperation would also mean that Indonesia is acting according to its perceived role as ASEAN's informal leader. Maintaining an active role in foreign affairs has long been vital for Indonesia's strategic interests.<sup>7</sup> Indonesia places ASEAN and regional cooperation as one of the priorities in its foreign policy as mentioned in its National Long Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2005–2025 and

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*Note* (Jakarta: World Bank, February 2016), <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/23840>; Euston Quah and Chia W. Mun, "What the 2015 Haze Cost S'pore," *NEA*, 2015, <https://www.haze.gov.sg/haze-related-commentaries>; Helena Varkkey, "Here's How Much the Haze Costs Us," *Malaysiakini*, October 20, 2019, <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/496612>

<sup>4</sup> "Malaysia PM Urges Indonesia to Tackle Fires as Haze Drifts to Thai Sky," *Jakarta Globe*, May 10, 2015, <https://jakartaglobe.id/context/malaysia-pm-urges-indonesia-tackle-fires-haze-drifts-thai-sky>; "Singapore Minister Condemns Indonesia over Land Fire Haze," *Tempo*, September 25, 2015, <https://en.tempo.co/read/703770/singapore-minister-condemns-indonesia-over-land-fire-haze>

<sup>5</sup> ASEAN, "ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution" (ASEAN, 2002), 9-11, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ASEANAgreementonTransboundaryHazePollution-1.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> "Key Documents," ASEAN, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://asean.org/our-communities/asean-socio-cultural-community/haze-2/key-documents/>

<sup>7</sup> See the "Independent and Active" foreign policy developed by Vice-President and Prime Minister Mohammad Hatta in 1958. Mohammad Hatta, "Indonesia Between the Power Blocs," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1, 1958, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/indonesia/1958-04-01/indonesia-between-power-blocs>



the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MoFA) Strategic Plan (Renstra) 2015–2019.<sup>8</sup> The country has also publicly expressed its intentions to commit to ASEAN and act according to the AATHP. At the 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in 2014, the recently elected President Joko Widodo announced that the Indonesian government was committed to advancing ASEAN cooperation.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Retno Marsudi, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, assured Indonesia remains firm in its regional commitments and efforts to enhance cooperation including through the AATHP.<sup>10</sup> Hence, Indonesia is expected to support regional cooperation in responding to the 2015 Southeast Asian haze.

## 1.2 Problem Identification

### 1.2.1 Problem Description

During the 2015 Southeast Asian haze, Singapore and Malaysia offered several times to assist Indonesia in handling the transboundary haze.<sup>11</sup> However, there was no official response from President Joko Widodo who was away on a trip

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<sup>8</sup> Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah, “RPJP Nasional 2005-2025” (2005), <https://bappeda.ntbprov.go.id/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/naskah-ruu-rpjpn-tahun-2005-2025.pdf>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “RENCANA STRATEGIS 2015-2019” (2015), <https://www.kemlu.go.id/portal/id/read/2033/akip/rencana-strategis>

<sup>9</sup> Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, “Pidato Presiden RI Joko Widodo Pada KTT ke-25 ASEAN di Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, 12 November 2014,” Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, November 13, 2014, <https://setkab.go.id/pidato-presiden-ri-joko-widodo-pada-ktt-ke-25-asean-di-nay-pyi-taw-myanmar-12-november-2014/>

<sup>10</sup> Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, “President Joko Widodo and Singapore’s Deputy Prime Minister Discuss FIR Takeover,” Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, November 24, 2015, <https://setkab.go.id/en/president-joko-widodo-and-singapores-deputy-prime-minister-discuss-fir-takeover/>

<sup>11</sup> Callistasia Wijaya, “Kebakaran hutan: Ditawari Malaysia dan Singapura bantuan, Indonesia sebut nanti ‘dilecehkan,’” *BBC News Indonesia*, September 21, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-49765217>; Hans N. Jong and Ina Parlina, “Government Confused over Singapore Help,” *The Jakarta Post*, September 29, 2015, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/09/29/government-confused-over-singapore-help.html>

to the Middle East.<sup>12</sup> This created confusion among other foreign policy elites who interpreted the situation differently. The MoFA assumed that President Joko Widodo wanted the haze and forest fires issue to be handled domestically.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) vaguely responded that Indonesia would welcome the offers of assistance.<sup>14</sup> A few days later after a meeting with President Joko Widodo who finally returned from his trip, the MoEF backtracked and relayed based on the president's instruction that Indonesia wishes to use its own efforts to deal with the issue for the time being.<sup>15</sup>

Even though there were initial incoherencies from the foreign policy elites' responses to the haze and forest fires issue, they later had a consensus to underestimate the problem as a domestic matter and sidestep ASEAN haze cooperation. While President Joko Widodo did not explicitly state that he refused the offers of assistance, he communicated through other foreign policy elites that Indonesia would take care of the haze and forest fires themselves.<sup>16</sup> Singapore and

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<sup>12</sup> Cabinet Secretariat of The Republic of Indonesia, "Cabinet Secretary: No Agreement on Singapore's Offer to Tackle Haze," Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, September 30, 2015, <https://setkab.go.id/en/cabinet-secretary-no-agreement-on-singapores-offer-to-tackle-haze/>

<sup>13</sup> Wijaya, *Loc. Cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Jong and Parlina, *Loc. Cit.*; Dedy Priatmojo, "Curhat Kepala BNPB Saat Ditawari Bantuan Singapura Soal Asap," *Viva*, June 10, 2015, <https://www.viva.co.id/berita/nasional/683453-curhat-kepala-bnpb-saat-ditawari-bantuan-singapura-soal-asap>; Yudhistira Amran Saleh, "Singapura Mengeluh Soal Asap, Menlu: Kita Sudah All Out Mengatasinya," September 20, 2015, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-3023501/singapura-mengeluh-soal-asap-menlu-kita-sudah-all-out-mengatasinya>

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>16</sup> Fakhri Fakhri, "Jokowi Tolak Bantuan Malaysia Padamkan Karhutla, Ini Penjelasan Menteri LHK," *Okezone*, September 22, 2019, sec. News, <https://nasional.okezone.com/read/2019/09/22/337/2107806/jokowi-tolak-bantuan-malaysia-padamkan-karhutla-ini-penjelasan-menteri-lhk>; Zed Abidien, "Gagal Atasi Kebakaran, Indonesia Terima Bantuan Asing," *Tempo*, October 9, 2015, <https://nasional.tempo.co/read/708120/gagal-atasi-kebakaran-indonesia-terima-bantuan-asing>; Isyana Artharini, "Alasan Indonesia tolak bantuan Singapura," *BBC News Indonesia*, October 6, 2015, [https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita\\_indonesia/2015/10/151006\\_indonesia\\_kabutasap\\_tolaksingapura](https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2015/10/151006_indonesia_kabutasap_tolaksingapura); Wijaya, *Loc. Cit.*

Malaysia as Indonesia's neighbours and fellow ASEAN members had differences with Indonesia's handling of the problem. Singapore expressed its frustration over the Indonesian government's indifferent attitude towards the negative economic and health impacts of the haze and forest fires on its own people and others on a regional level.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, Malaysia urged Indonesia to resolve the problem quicker and persecute the companies involved in causing the forest fires at such a large scale.<sup>18</sup> All in all, it is apparent that the initial confusion among Indonesia's foreign policy elites contributed to an incoherent response, and after they reached a consensus to underreact to the haze and forest fires this led Indonesia to sidestep ASEAN haze cooperation.

### 1.2.2 Problem Limitations

The research is limited to analyzing the linkage between elite consensus and Indonesia's decision to sidestep regional cooperation during the 2015 Southeast Asian haze.<sup>19</sup> This research is also focused on analyzing the perspectives of Indonesian foreign policy elites.<sup>20</sup> The foreign policy elites who are the subjects of this research include President Joko Widodo as the head of government, and other

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<sup>17</sup> Tempo, "Singapore Minister Condemns Indonesia over Land Fire Haze."

<sup>18</sup> "Malaysia PM Urges Indonesia to Tackle Fires as Haze Drifts to Thai Sky," *Jakarta Globe*, May 10, 2015, <https://jakartaglobe.id/context/malaysia-pm-urges-indonesia-tackle-fires-haze-drifts-thai-sky>

<sup>19</sup> Elite consensus is defined as the similarity of the foreign policy elites' preference for a particular policy option. See Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*, 46–69, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006)

<sup>20</sup> Foreign policy elites refer to the primary decision-makers on top of the foreign policymaking hierarchy, and have input over foreign policy choices. See Emilie Marie Hafner-Burton, D. Alex Hughes, and David G. Victor, "The Cognitive Revolution and the Political Psychology of Elite Decision Making," *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 2 (July 3, 2012): 368–86, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1917037>

relevant ministers in forest fire and haze control policy, namely, the MoFA, the MoEF, the Kemenko Polhukam, and the BNPB.

### **1.2.3 Research Question**

Since Indonesia's decision to sidestep regional cooperation in dealing with the 2015 Southeast Asian haze contradicts Indonesia's international commitment towards ASEAN haze cooperation, the writer seeks to answer the main question: **Why Indonesia decides to sidestep ASEAN haze cooperation as a response towards the 2015 Southeast Asia haze?**

## **1.3 Research Objectives and Purposes**

### **1.3.1 Research Objectives**

The research aimed to identify the foreign policy elites involved in Indonesia's foreign policymaking regarding the transboundary haze, understand the extent of their influence in the decision-making process, and their rationale in sidestepping regional cooperation in the form of the AATHP's JER mechanism. Previous studies focused more on analyzing the international and internal motivations influencing Indonesia's decision to sidestep ASEAN haze cooperation. In contrast, this study showed that the unit-level factor of consensus among foreign policy elites influenced Indonesia's decision to sidestep regional cooperation mechanisms in dealing with the 2015 Southeast Asian haze.

### 1.3.2 Research Purposes

The writer hoped that results from this research inform International Relations (IR) on the merits of utilizing the neoclassical realism lens in analyzing Indonesian foreign policy. The findings are also meant to provide directions for IR students interested in conducting future research on the topic. Furthermore, the research highlighted the potential pitfalls in foreign policymaking for Indonesian foreign policy practitioners.

### 1.4 Literature Review

The previous studies discussed the international and internal motivations influencing Indonesia's foreign policy towards the 2015 Southeast Asian haze. In Daniel Heilmann's article titled *After Indonesia's Ratification: The AATHP and Its Effectiveness As a Regional Environmental Governance Tool*, he investigates the international factor motivating Indonesia to sidestep ASEAN haze cooperation in the form of the AATHP's JER mechanism in 2015.<sup>21</sup> Though the AMS acknowledged transboundary haze as a regional problem by ratifying the AATHP, the AATHP's effectiveness is constrained by the AMS' diverging interests and the non-binding approach of the *ASEAN Way* principle.

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<sup>21</sup> Daniel Heilmann, "After Indonesia's Ratification: The ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution and Its Effectiveness as a Regional Environmental Governance Tool," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 34, no. 3 (December 1, 2015): 95–121, <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341503400304>

Another international factor was pointed out in Novita and others' article, *Transboundary Smoke-Haze Disaster Mitigation Efforts*.<sup>22</sup> They argue that the AATHP has weak enforcement at the regional level as it lacks mechanisms for the settlement of disputes and punishments for non-compliance, and measurable objectives. This considerably hinders the efforts of ASEAN haze cooperation since it allows the AMS including Indonesia, to place sovereignty and its national interests first.

The internal motivations behind Indonesia's haze foreign policy were studied in Luerdi Luerdi and Melly Wulandari's article, *Kebijakan Indonesia Menolak Menggunakan Mekanisme AATHP Joint Emergency Response dalam Mengatasi Kebakaran Hutan dan Lahan 2015*, and J. J. Zhang and Victor R. Savage's *Southeast Asia's Transboundary Haze Pollution: Unravelling the Inconvenient Truth*.<sup>23</sup> They found that AATHP's JER mechanism threatens Indonesia's interests in agriculture and forestry-based economic growth, having leverage in handling the haze, and maintaining its international reputation. Another aspect of the internal motivations of Indonesia's foreign policy was covered by Asit Biswas and Cecilia Tortajada in *Managing Indonesian Haze: Complexities and Challenges*.<sup>24</sup> The authors in these articles contend that Indonesia's sidestepping of

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<sup>22</sup> Asti Amelia Novita, Selma Sumaya Awumbila, and Siti Nursharafana binti Nazrey, "Transboundary Smoke-Haze Disaster Mitigation Efforts," *Atlantis Press*, (November 17, 2020): 311–14, <https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.201116.060>

<sup>23</sup> Luerdi Luerdi and Melly Wulandari, "Kebijakan Indonesia Menolak Menggunakan Mekanisme AATHP Joint Emergency Response Dalam Mengatasi Kebakaran Hutan Dan Lahan 2015," *Jurnal Ilmu Politik Dan Komunikasi* 11, no. 2 (2021): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.34010/JIPSL.V11I2.5252>; J.j. Zhang and Victor R. Savage, "Southeast Asia's Transboundary Haze Pollution: Unravelling the Inconvenient Truth," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 60, no. 3 (2019): 355–69, <https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12245>

<sup>24</sup> Biswas and Tortajada, *Loc. Cit.*, 1–18

ASEAN haze cooperation was due to political interests as well as the desire to protect its sovereignty and reputation, and governance constraints.

Nonetheless, there are academic gaps in the interplay between these international and internal factors. Mainstream neoclassical realists like Gideon Rose, Randall Schweller, and Norrin Ripsman and others, argue that international factors are interfered by domestic factors.<sup>25</sup> Schweller claims elite dissensus or disagreements among foreign policy elites as a main domestic factor that leads to suboptimal foreign policies in his “theory of mistakes” framework.<sup>26</sup> These foreign policies are suboptimal insofar as the states do not conduct the ideal policy according to systemic or structural imperatives and it tends to bring dire consequences.

The writer agrees with the mainstream neoclassical realists that unit-level factors affected Indonesia’s decision to sidestep regional cooperation in addressing the 2015 Southeast Asian haze. However, the writer diverges from the mainstream neoclassical realism by taking the opposite view from elite dissensus and argues instead that elite consensus influenced Indonesia’s decision to sidestep ASEAN haze cooperation in 2015. This was arguably part of a deliberate scheme among Indonesia’s foreign policy elites to protect political and economic interests such as

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<sup>25</sup> Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” ed. Michael E. Brown et al., *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): 144–72, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25054068>; Brian Rathbun, “A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism,” *Security Studies* 17, no. 2 (May 22, 2008): 294–321, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410802098917>; Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*, ed. Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell (Oxford University Press, 2016), 124–29, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199899234.003.0001>; Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*, *Op.Cit.*, 46–69

<sup>26</sup> Schweller, *Ibid.*

developing the palm oil industry with minimal international scrutiny into the country's environmental practices.<sup>27</sup>

## 1.5 Theoretical Framework

The writer utilized a modified version of the neoclassical realism framework to explain why Indonesia opted to sidestep ASEAN haze cooperation, despite the international pressures to comply.<sup>28</sup> Gideon Rose in his article *Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy* pointed out that a country formulates foreign policy by assessing its position in the international structure first.<sup>29</sup> He also argued that domestic actors translate these external pressures into foreign policies through their often-imperfect perception and in the existing environment of domestic politics.<sup>30</sup> Neoclassical realists, therefore, seek to explore deeply the domestic factors to explain variations in the behaviour of states who are faced with similar external pressures. This suggests that foreign policymaking involves a mixture of top-down and bottom-up processes.

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<sup>27</sup> Felix Heiduk, "Indonesia in ASEAN: Regional Leadership between Ambition and Ambiguity," *SWP Research Papers* (Zurich: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), April 2016), <https://css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/publications/publication.html>; Helen Nesadurai, "ASEAN Environmental Cooperation, Transnational Private Governance, and the Haze: Overcoming the 'Territorial Trap' of State-Based Governance?," Cambridge University Press, *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 5, no. 1: 125–127, <https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2016.25>; Helena Varkkey, "Regional Cooperation, Patronage and the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution," *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics* 14, no. 1 (March 1, 2014): 65–81, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-013-9217-2>

<sup>28</sup> Gideon Rose referred to the works of scholars influenced by both classical realism and neorealism with the term "neoclassical realism". See Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *Loc.Cit.*, 144–72

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*



Randall Schweller further contributed to neoclassical realism through his book *Unanswered Threats* where he presents a “theory of mistakes”.<sup>31</sup> He explained that when domestic factors are allowed to significantly interfere in foreign policymaking, this leads to suboptimal foreign policies which is when states do not respond ideally compared to the external pressures, and they suffer from the consequences. All in all, neoclassical realism proposes that there are unit-level factors that mediate how states respond to international pressure. Here the independent variable is international pressure, the intervening variables are the neoclassical realist unit-level factors, and the dependent variable is the policy response.

Based on the neoclassical realism framework, international pressure can come from the system or structure that states exist in. More specifically, the writer adapted the works of Barry Buzan and Norrin Ripsman and others, which listed international institutions at the regional level as one of the sources of international pressure.<sup>32</sup> These regional organizations provide venues or the environment where the states interact and communicate with one another based on agreed norms, values, and obligations. One way the regional organizations regulate these interactions is through regulatory regionalism which is where the regional organization progressively transfers and coordinates regional goals and regulations

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<sup>31</sup> Schweller, *Op.Cit.*, 46–69

<sup>32</sup> Barry Buzan, “Beyond Neorealism: Interaction Capacity,” in *The Logic of Anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism* (New York, Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1993), 66–80.; Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, *Op.Cit.*, 62–70

into national actions.<sup>33</sup> Through this conceptualization, ASEAN is one such regional organization and the regional mechanisms under ASEAN are the source of international pressure.

To explain the intervening variable, the writer referred to Schweller's *Unanswered Threats* book.<sup>34</sup> Schweller argued that whether states respond optimally to external pressures depends on the state's willingness or ability which are affected by four intervening variables: elite consensus, elite cohesion, government/regime vulnerability, and social cohesion. For this study, the writer utilized elite consensus as the intervening variable. The degree of consensus is assessed based on the similarity of their beliefs over threat perception, nature and extent of the threat, domestic political risks and costs associated with the policy, and the policy remedies. Reaching a strong consensus to balance against the threat tends to be difficult considering that it requires utilizing valuable resources, and may require states to sacrifice some of their autonomy to allies.

Since Rose mentioned that a state's foreign policy is the outcome of decision-making by political leaders and elites, it is their perceptions that matter.<sup>35</sup> According to Norrin Ripsman and others, the foreign policy elites consist of the Foreign Policy Executive (FPE) as the central decision-maker, and other decision-makers whom the FPE consults with.<sup>36</sup> The FPE is usually the head of government, and other decision-makers are leaders in different relevant ministries. First, the

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<sup>33</sup> Shahar Hameiri and Kanishka Jayasuriya, "Regulatory Regionalism and the Dynamics of Territorial Politics: The Case of the Asia-Pacific Region," *Political Studies* 59, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 20–37, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.2010.00854.x>.

<sup>34</sup> Schweller, *Op.Cit.*, 46–69

<sup>35</sup> Rose, *Loc.Cit.*, 144–72

<sup>36</sup> Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, *Op.Cit.*, 124–29

foreign policy elites form a perception of the threat which Steven Lobell divides into three levels that are global, regional, and domestic.<sup>37</sup> On the nature of the threats, Schweller categorizes them into three: 1) Actual threats that show impact, 2) Potential threats that have yet to turn into danger, and 3) Imagined threats that are perceived as real but lack evidence.<sup>38</sup> The foreign policy elites' perception of the threats is shaped by the leader images that is the individual decision-makers' core values, beliefs, and personalities that influence how they view and sort information.<sup>39</sup> The strategic culture, which refers to the shared ideology and doctrine in society, can also influence their perception.<sup>40</sup>

The extent of the foreign policy elites' abilities to influence decision-making is also constrained by their domestic structures or environment. Ripsman and others name strategic culture, state-society relations, and other domestic variables like domestic institutions as constraints to the foreign policy elites' decision-making influence.<sup>41</sup> The state-society relations can be defined as the degree of support from the elites and society towards the proposed policy. For instance, the presence of political opposition, interest groups, and other actors that challenge the government can increase the domestic political risks and costs of the proposed policy.

Then, domestic institutions refer to the institutional and political structure of the state which determines who is involved in decision-making and their degree

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<sup>37</sup> Steven E. Lobell, "Threat Assessment, the State, and Foreign Policy: A Neoclassical Realist Model," in *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, edited by Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, 46–51 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), [https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO\\_9780511811869](https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO_9780511811869)

<sup>38</sup> Schweller, *Op.Cit.*, 38

<sup>39</sup> Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, *Op.Cit.*, 62–70

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 58–79

of influence. In democracies, for example, there are constraints to the power of the leaders such as internal checks and balances, divisions of power, and public support. So, while the FPE may have significant influence as the central decision-maker, the opinions of other decision-makers can matter in democratic regimes. There are also less formal institutions such as unwritten rules, customary practices, and patterns of interaction. This is why the extent of the foreign policy elites' influence on the decision-making table can vary according to their formal positions or relationship with the FPE.

The dependent variable that is the focus of this study is the policy option of underbalancing or underreaction towards external pressures. Schweller argues that underbalancing typically occurs due to elite dissensus.<sup>42</sup> He defined elite dissensus as the existence of disagreements among foreign policy elites to balance the threat to satisfy a broader range of interests.<sup>43</sup> These disagreements indicate that foreign policy elites lack the willingness to adapt to external pressures, and so the state will opt to underreact. The writer compliments Schweller's concept by adding that underbalancing also occurs due to elite consensus to underreact. Elite consensus refers to when the foreign policy elites deliberately form an agreement to underreact as they are unwilling to adapt to external pressures. Since underbalancing is considered suboptimal foreign policy or an unideal response to external pressures, there are severe consequences that can come from the existing system or structure.<sup>44</sup>

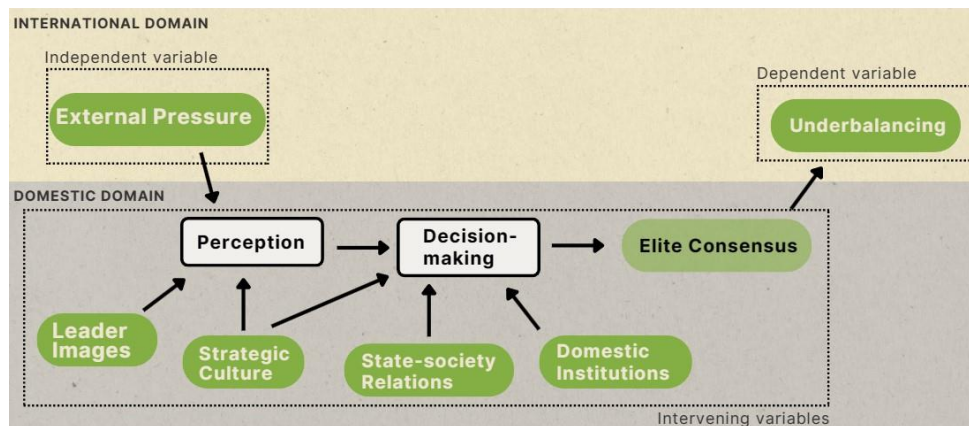
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<sup>42</sup> Schweller, *Op.Cit.*, 16, 47–49

<sup>43</sup> Schweller, *Op.Cit.*, 16, 47–49

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*

Diagram 1.5.1 Neoclassical Realist Framework



Source: Adapted from Rose, Schweller, Ripsman and others, and Lluç Vidal.<sup>45</sup>

## 1.6 Research Method

The writer used a *qualitative* research method which according to Christopher Lamont, entailed collecting and analyzing *non-numeric data* to understand and explain phenomena, behaviours, or events.<sup>46</sup> The method is suitable for the research's objective of understanding and explaining Indonesia's foreign policy choice. The data are collected through digital research of *primary and secondary data*, such as official documents, memoirs, speeches, decision-maker interviews, media reports, policy memorandums, and laws. The writer also conducted interviews with a government official in the MoEF, and an environmental politics researcher to strengthen the findings. To ensure the validity of the data, the writer used the triangulation method where the data collected from

<sup>45</sup> Rose, *Loc.Cit.*, 144–72; Schweller, *Op.Cit.*, 46–69; Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, *Op.Cit.*, 124–29; Lluç López i Vidal, “Beyond the Gaiatsu Model: Japan’s Asia-Pacific Policy and Neoclassical Realism,” *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 9, no. 1 (April 1, 2022): 26–49, <https://doi.org/10.1177/23477970221076641>

<sup>46</sup> Christopher Lamont, *Research Methods in International Relations*, ed. Andrew Malvern, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE, 2022), 94, 98, 101–104

different sources (digital research, interviews, observations) are compared and crosschecked for consistency.<sup>47</sup>

The collected data were sorted through a *thematic coding process* where the meaningful sections were grouped and labelled for closer analysis.<sup>48</sup> Subsequently, the data were analyzed using *narrative analysis* defined by Umar Bakry as a method to explain why and how an event or phenomenon occurred based on the writer's interpretation or evaluation of significant ideas, symbols, practices, and/or place.<sup>49</sup> The output consisted of an analysis showing the linkage between elite consensus and Indonesia's decision to sidestep ASEAN haze cooperation.

## 1.7 Research Structure

There are four chapters within this research. The first chapter discusses the background, problem, purpose, literature review, theoretical framework, research method, and research objective of exploring the linkage between elite consensus and Indonesia's decision to sidestep the AATHP's JER mechanism.

The next chapter features the international framework for ASEAN haze cooperation that Indonesia is expected to comply with. This part highlights the AATHP and the JER mechanism in particular. Furthermore, the writer elaborates on Indonesia's decision to sidestep ASEAN haze cooperation. The writer also

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<sup>47</sup> N. K. Denzin, *Sociological Methods*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1978)

<sup>48</sup> Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey, "Data Preparation and Developing Codes," in *Qualitative Research Methods*, 2nd ed. (London: SAGE, 2020), 218–228

<sup>49</sup> Umar S. Bakry, "Metode-Metode Alternatif Dalam Penelitian Hubungan Internasional," in *Metode Penelitian Hubungan Internasional* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2016), 267–73

identifies Indonesia's foreign policy elites and their respective roles in haze foreign policymaking.

In the third chapter, the writer explains why Indonesia opted to sidestep ASEAN haze cooperation using the Neoclassical Realist framework adapted from Rose, Ripsman and others, and Schweller, elaborates other factors affecting the foreign policy elites' perceptions of haze and ASEAN haze cooperation, and the decision-making process. For the final chapter, the writer concludes the findings, their implications, and suggests interesting directions for future research.