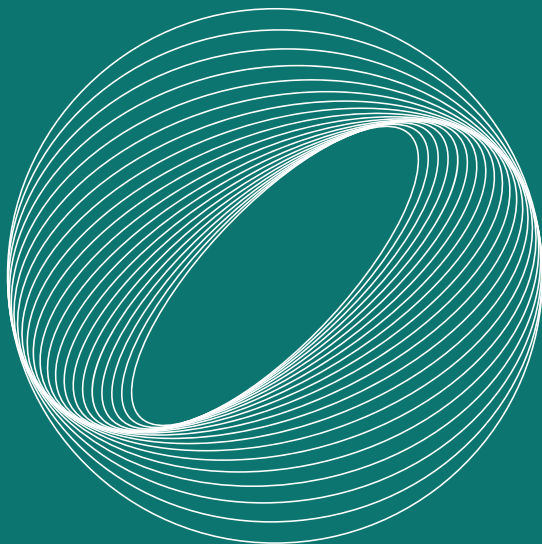




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LOVE OR LOSS? INDONESIA'S ELECTION HOLDS THE FATE OF ITS DEMOCRACY

Every eligible Indonesian citizen will "show their love" for their favorite presidential and vice-presidential candidates on Valentine's Day through the election, or the so-called "*pesta demokrasi*." However, this year's election seems to cast a dark shadow on the future of Indonesian democracy. Ten years ago, the election of Jokowi represented "the height of democracy in Indonesia" (Ewe, 2023). Everything changed in the last several years of his second term when Jokowi established his political dynasty by appointing his family members to important state positions (Ewe, 2023). Gibran, Jokowi's eldest son, will participate in the presidential election as a vice-president candidate alongside Prabowo Subianto, the former son-in-law of the dictator Soeharto (Rachman, 2024).

The primary issue revolves around the controversial nature of Gibran's bid for the vice-presidential role. Just a few days before the deadline for registering candidates, the Constitutional Court, which was led by Jokowi's brother-in-law, Anwar Usman, successfully paved Gibran's way by allowing candidates younger than 40 years old to run for president or vice president (The Economist, 2023). This indicates that a rule that has been in effect for many years has been changed, which is Law Number (No). 7 of 2017 on Elections (BBC, 2023). Even so, that was just one of the many efforts made by Jokowi to build his political dynasty.

Jokowi has transformed politics into a familial matter, potentially undermining democratic principles. Bajpaj and Kureshi (2022) highlight institutional capture as a democratic decline, where Jokowi, aided by ex-Chief Justice Anwar Usman, used this approach to amend the constitution, ultimately reshaping the democratic state structure in October. Moreover, much criticism has been directed at this democratic "incident." For example, the New York Times, wrote, "Critics say that hard-won progress toward democracy in Indonesia has been backsliding under Joko Widodo" (Paddock & Suhartono, 2024). Given these considerations, it would not be an overstatement to assert that civil society plays a crucial role in exercising its right to choose prospective candidates who can uphold democratic principles and ensure the inclusivity of political rights and liberties on February 14, 2024. (Callictus Kamajaya, HI UGM 2021).

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HOW DOES ASEAN'S BLUE ECONOMY FRAMEWORK WORK IN SOUTH CHINA SEA DIPLOMACY?

The South China Sea, marked by prolonged territorial disputes involving China, Taiwan, and five ASEAN Member States, continues to be a source of contention. Analysts predict potential conflicts in 2024, heightened by China's construction of artificial islands and military activities, escalating regional tension (Mathai, 2023). In response, ASEAN has made notable efforts, reaching a significant milestone with the ASEAN-China agreement on guidelines for the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea on July 13, 2023 (Kemlu, 2023). ASEAN's recent progress reflects a shared goal among member states to ease tensions, maintain relations with China, and potentially reduce US intervention. Besides, China has supported economic ties with ASEAN and highlighted priority areas like blue economy cooperation.

Therefore, the momentum lies in expediting diplomatic initiatives by promoting a blue economy, underscoring ASEAN's recent advancement of the ASEAN Blue Economy Framework during Indonesia's 2023 ASEAN Chairmanship (ERIA, 2023). As ASEAN defined the blue economy as an integrated approach to managing the ocean and water sustainably, the blue economy can serve as a tool for economic diplomacy, creating a shared space for states to navigate challenges collaboratively and ensure peace and prosperity for coastal communities (ASEAN, 2023). Ecologically, the blue economy emphasizes responsible resource utilization, balancing sustainability and economic growth to protect marine ecosystems (Xiaodong, 2021). It necessitates balancing sustainability and economic growth to ensure economic development does not deplete natural resources (Xiaodong, 2021). Hence, advocating for blue economic cooperation between China and AMS emerges as a crucial measure to safeguard the South China Sea ecosystem, preventing harmful activities and future developments that could adversely impact the environment. (Fransisca Fleicia Paschaline, HI UGM 2020).

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THE ASEAN'S FIVE-POINT CONSENSUS (5PC) STALLS ONCE MORE

Eighteen days prior to the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) taking place in Luang Prabang, Laos, the recently appointed Laotian special envoy to Myanmar arranged a meeting with the military junta commander on Wednesday (10/01). The agenda included discussions on the prevailing conflict in Myanmar and the accountability of Tatmadaw—the military government—to the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) agreed upon by all ASEAN members, including Myanmar, in 2021 (Peck, 2024). This 5PC called for a halt to violence, dialogue between parties, mediation by ASEAN special envoy, provision of humanitarian aid, and a visit to Myanmar by the special envoy for meeting with all involved parties.

However, the outcome appeared to demonstrate that Naypyidaw made little effort to implement the consensus. Instead, they emphasized that they would not fully comply with ASEAN's agreed-upon declarations (Muhammad, 2024). To date, the junta has refused to engage in dialogue with the pro-democracy resistance movement, labeling the group "terrorist" (Kapoor, 2024).

When addressing human rights concerns in ASEAN, it is always unfortunate to observe how the institution frequently faces impasses due to systemic issue, that is, the prioritization of non-interference principle and state sovereignty in their accepted human rights norms. Nonetheless, even within limitations, there is much more that ASEAN can do. ASEAN must explore alternative avenues for negotiation to convince Myanmar to comply with the agreement. Strategy like broadening the political involvement in the conflict resolution beyond state-centric to a more participatory model that includes civil society movements should be seriously considered. Ultimately, if ASEAN genuinely upholds its commitment to a 'people-centered' community, reassessing its human rights norms should be their subsequent agenda to ensure effective human rights bodies in the long run. (Tsabita Prameswari Jannati Az-Zahra, HI UGM 2020).

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