



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

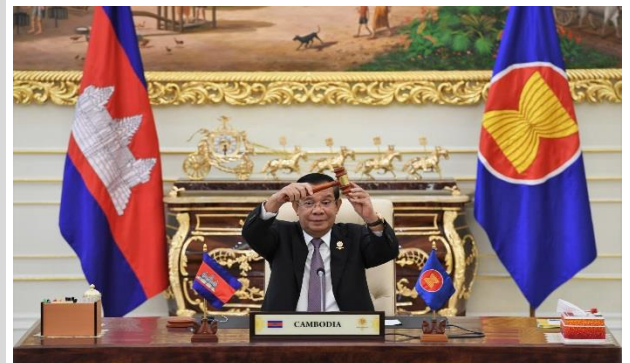


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Cover Image:

Prime Minister of Cambodia Hun Sen hands over the gavel of the ASEAN Chair to the President of the Republic of Indonesia Joko Widodo on November 13, 2022 (Source: ASEAN 2022 official website)

Ganjar Pranowo, the Governor of Central Java province likely to be endorsed as a presidential candidate by the PDI(P), addresses people of Kab. Brebes after flash floods on January 9, 2023 (Source: Ganjar Pranowo official twitter account)

Cambodia assumes Chairmanship of ASEAN 2022 during a virtual Handover Ceremony on October 28, 2021 (Source: ASEAN 2022 official website)

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High Expectations from Indonesia: The ASEAN Chair for 2023

by

Biren Nanda

President Joko Widodo announced the theme of Indonesia's Chairmanship as "ASEAN matters: epicentrum of growth". The key aims of Indonesia's chairmanship of the ASEAN are not falling into great power competition and focusing on the post-COVID economic recovery¹.

Indonesia the new ASEAN Chair is faced with three difficult foreign policy challenges² – the situation in Myanmar³, the territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea⁴ and East Timor's application⁵ to join the ASEAN. Consensus based decision making in ASEAN and the fact that the leaders of the junta are banned from ASEAN summits has effectively precluded progress on Myanmar. The key concern on Myanmar in 2023 will be how to respond to the general elections the junta will hold in the summer of 2023. With Indonesia assuming the chair of ASEAN there is an expectation that there is potential for accelerated progress on resolving issues related to Myanmar's compliance with ASEAN's "Five Point Consensus" However, from the ASEAN perspective nothing is likely to change unless the Indonesia led ASEAN takes a hardline stance⁶ against the junta. Indonesia has had the experience of transitioning from a military dominated state to a democratic state and can contribute positively should Myanmar choose to adopt the same path. To facilitate a resolution of the political crisis in Myanmar and a return to democracy and

¹ January 15, 2023, Indonesia's ASEAN Chairmanship. The National Interest.

<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/what-expect-indonesia-s-asean-chairmanship-206116>

² KOYA JIBIKI. December 29, 2022. Indonesia faces three challenges as ASEAN's next chair. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indonesia-faces-three-challenges-as-ASEAN-s-next-chair>

³ January 12, 2023. Indonesia to Establish Special Office to Handle Myanmar Crisis. Diplomat <https://thediplomat.com/2023/01/indonesia-to-establish-special-office-to-handle-myanmar-crisis/>

⁴ Kavi Chong Kittavorn January 3, 2023. Indonesia's Asean chair faces challenges. Bangkok Post. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/2473877/indonesias-asean-chair-faces-challenges>

⁵ High Expectations from Indonesia's ASEAN Chairmanship. The Strategist.

<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/what-expect-indonesia-s-asean-chairmanship-206116>

⁶ December 30, 2022. Analysts: As 2023 ASEAN chair, Indonesia must dial up pressure on Myanmar junta. Benar News.

<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/indonesiaaseanmyanmar-12302022172037.html>

good governance, Indonesia will set up the office of the ASEAN Special Envoy headed by Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi.

Tensions between ASEAN's main economic partner (China) and its main security partner (the United States) threaten the very foundations of ASEAN's prosperity. They also diminish ASEAN's role at the center of the regional security architecture in Asia. There remains the potential for a resurgence of Chinese territorial assertions in the South China Sea. Rising tensions between China and the United States have exposed divisions between ASEAN countries. Cambodia and Laos have close relations with Beijing, while Myanmar and Thailand lean in the same direction. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore are closer to the United States. These divisions are likely to persist and grow over time. The Declaration on the 'Code of Conduct' was adopted by ASEAN countries and China in 2002, but there has not been any significant progress in negotiations on the 'Code of Conduct' since. With fundamental divergences in claims between China and individual ASEAN countries, an ASEAN-China COC is unlikely to be concluded in 2023.

In November 2022, the ASEAN agreed to grant an 'in principle' approval for East Timor to join ASEAN and granted East Timor 'observer status'⁷. East Timor's application to join ASEAN has divided the grouping. Indonesia is supporting East Timor's application on the grounds that it will promote Indonesia's public security. East Timor wants access to the ASEAN market to help grow its economy. Some ASEAN members have concerns on East Timor related to governance and East Timor's financial condition. China, ever ready to play the spoiler has been trying to entice East Timor to join its BRI.

Economic Growth, energy security and connectivity are key challenges for Indonesia and the ASEAN in the coming year. ASEAN's economic growth was estimated at 5.1% in 2022, higher than the global average of 3.1%. However, with a looming global recession the outlook is less positive for the current year. Energy security is another tough challenge for ASEAN in the coming years. ASEAN will become a net importer of natural gas by 2025 and of coal by 2039. In the area of connectivity ASEAN has decided to focus on soft connectivity including people to people connectivity. Given the intractable nature of foreign policy challenges before ASEAN, perhaps, Indonesia could focus on the internal issues within ASEAN and make them the centerpiece of its achievements during the current year.

⁷ November 11, 2022. ASEAN agrees in principle to admit East Timor as 11th member. Reuters <https://www.reuters.com/world/asean-agrees-principle-admit-east-timor-11th-member-2022-11-11/>

Indonesia's Presidential Elections in 2024

by

Biren Nanda

Indonesia's Presidential elections are likely to be held in April 2024. Polls held in the recent past indicate that the Governor of Central Java province Ganjar Pranowo , Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto, and former Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan are most likely to be endorsed as presidential candidates. President Jokowi does not have his own political party and is therefore unlikely to have a say in choosing his own successor .

Ganjar Prabowo has strong support in Megawati's PDI(P) . If Ganjar is endorsed by the PDI(P) as the party's Presidential nominee, Megawati's daughter Puan Maharani could be a possible Vice Presidential nominee. PDI(P) is the only political party in Indonesia which can nominate a Presidential candidate without seeking support of another political party. The PDI(P) has 128 seats in the national parliament which exceeds the threshold of 115 seats to nominate a Presidential candidate. There are presently 5 PDI (P) politicians who serve in Jokowi's cabinet. PDI(P) has a strong electoral base in Central Java, East Java and the island provinces of Bali, East Nusa Tenggara and Papua.

Prabowo Subianto - at one time the son-in-law of President Suharto - has been accused of human rights violations in the past. Prabowo also has reservations about Indonesia's democratic reforms and believes that the country needs a recentralization of power. He was defeated twice by Jokowi in the presidential elections , but without Jokowi in the elections slated for 2024, Prabowo has become a stronger candidate. Prabowo joined Jokowi's cabinet as Defense Minister in October 2019.

Anies Baswedan is a well-known Islamic intellectual. He has previously studied in the United States as a Fulbright scholar. He won the gubernatorial elections in Jakarta-often regarded as a stepping-stone for Presidential ambitions in - October 2017. In a polarized election in 2017 he used religious narratives to woo voters. He also formed an alliance with the leader of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) – Rizieq Shihab. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has formed a cyber army to support Baswedan in the Presidential elections.

As is the case in other democracies, elections in Indonesia are likely to manifest identity politics, nationalism, religious fervor and misinformation. One topic of political debate is the proposal by the General Elections Commission (KPU) to introduce a closed list system for proportional representation instead of the

open list system currently in place. Proponents of the open list system argue that it allows people to know their candidates better. Under a closed list system candidates campaign less and electoral campaigning is taken over by the party. A closed list system therefore tends to diminish the importance of candidates and strengthens the role of political parties. Eight political parties including Golkar, the Democratic Party and the prosperous Justice Party (PKS) have opposed the closed list system. So far Megawati's PDI(P) is the only party to have supported the introduction of the closed list system.

Analysing Cambodia's ASEAN Chairmanship

by

Anshita Shukla

As Indonesia assumes the mantle of ASEAN chairmanship, an assessment of Cambodia's role as the Chair over the last year provides insights into the challenges that continue to impact ASEAN as great power strategic competition swirls around its nations.

Over the past few years, strained intra-regional relations have undermined the cornerstone of the ASEAN approach – consensus building. Major powers have bypassed centrality of ASEAN institutions and established parallel mini-laterals to address issues of security and stability in the region. The 'ASEAN way' has proved to be ineffective in managing the political and security crisis ushered in by the military coup in Myanmar coup, or the unresolved geopolitical tensions in the South China Sea. Concurrently, the Covid-19 outbreak has wreaked economic and social havoc in the region, threatening political stability and necessitating the tightening of preventive measures and border controls.

At this critical juncture, Cambodia took over as the ASEAN Chair for 2022. The country's past experience at chairmanship, in 2002 and 2012, showcased the pivotal role played by Phnom Penh's close alignment with and heavy economic dependence on China, coupled with tense relations with the United States. Since the group's inception, the first time that an ASEAN Summit concluded without a joint statement was in 2012, under Cambodia's chairmanship⁸. The country has consistently blocked ASEAN statements critical of the territorial assertions of China, akin to a pattern of behaviour also exhibited by Cambodia in other multilateral institutions.

The theme for the 'ASEAN A.C.T.: Addressing Challenges Together' unveiled by Cambodia at the ASEAN summit in 2022, expounded its commitment towards bringing together the countries of ASEAN "based on openness, honesty, good faith, solidarity, and harmony," in effectively addressing the challenges that the region⁹ faces. The following objectives were laid out by Cambodia - implementation of measures under the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF), protection of migrant workers, promotion of digital transformation among micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs),

⁸ ASEAN Concludes, Exposing S. China Sea Rifts, [VOA News](#), July 13, 2012

⁹ ASEAN Chairmanship 2022 – Cambodia, [ASEAN](#), December 31, 2021

and expanding the list of external partners¹⁰. The “highest priority” as characterised by Hun Sen was to engage with Myanmar to restore the 10-member grouping and to adopt the Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea¹¹.

From the onset of its chairmanship, Cambodia committed itself to engaging with Myanmar’s military junta as Hun Sen visited Myanmar in January and invited the junta-appointed defense minister to a regional ASEAN meeting in June. The actions drew sharp criticisms from ASEAN states on grounds of the military junta’s failure to honor the Five-Point Consensus and the unwillingness of ASEAN members to recognize the military government as the legal representative of the country, compelling the chair, especially at the behest of Indonesia¹², to ban the military government representatives from attending the ASEAN Summit. By the end of the year, dissension persisted within the group on the issue as Philippine, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore skipped a meeting between the other members of ASEAN and the Myanmar junta organised in Thailand.

There also appeared to be little or no progress towards a successful conclusion of the Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea (SCS) between ASEAN and China. Despite the claim of the first successful reading of the draft of COC by the then Secretary-General of ASEAN, Philippines President Marcos Jr. remarked “nothing new actually has happened in terms of the Code of Conduct. We all just restated over and over again”¹³. The negotiations have been stalled by a lack of consensus within ASEAN as well as disagreements with China. While the non-claimant states such as Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos are at best lukewarm in their opposition towards China’s presence in the South China Sea, the response of claimant states oscillates. Claimant states face a dilemma as they attempt to uphold their territorial and maritime sovereignty while remaining reluctant to jeopardize their economic relationship with China, Philippines is a case in point. The protracted nature of negotiations has allowed countries to undertake unilateral actions in SCS without fear of retribution, in the absence of a legally binding COC.

Despite claims of coordinated response on other issues, the failure of the group to ‘A.C.T.’ as a cohesive unit on matters of global and regional concern further

¹⁰ Cambodia's Hun Sen outlines ambitious new year as ASEAN chair, [The Star](#), December 16, 2021

¹¹ Key objectives of ASEAN Chair 2022 released, [Khmer Times](#), January 5, 2022

¹² Indonesia Proposes Ban on Myanmar Junta Beyond Asean Summits, [Bloomberg](#), November 11, 2022

¹³ Chinese gameplan in engaging with ASEAN for the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, [The Times of India](#), November 29, 2022

dampened enthusiasm for ASEAN's claims of relevance. The issues challenging the Cambodian leadership have been inherited by Indonesia, the critical distinguishing feature being the position of Jakarta, as a middle power in the grouping and its policy of hedging between the great powers.



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