Ulla Fionna, Siwage Dharma Negara and Deasy Simandjuntak (eds), *Aspirations with Limitations: Indonesia's Foreign Affairs under Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono*, Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2018. viii + 272 pp. ISBN: 9789814786706, price: 17.90 USD (softcover).

The presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is widely seen as an era of concurrent stability and stagnation. On the one hand, Yudhoyono oversaw a period in Indonesian history with no major political or military conflict, yet on the other hand the ten years between 2004 and 2014 were also void of any new impetus for democratic reforms. Various dimensions of this stability versus stagnation dilemma have already been analyzed in the scholarly literature, mostly with a focus on domestic politics. By contrast, this new volume edited by Fionna, Negara, and Simandjuntak, aptly titled *Aspirations with Limitations*, zooms in on Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's foreign policy. Despite the distinctive angle though, the book's basic conclusion is, as the title already suggests, quite similar to most other works on the Yudhoyono era: there were some modest achievements, but much more could have been done had the president been just a bit more assertive in his decision-making.

The volume is divided into eleven chapters, written by a range of experts from Indonesia, Singapore, Australia, the US, and Europe. Thematically, they are structured around economic, diplomatic, and security issues, and there are also two chapters that deal with Indonesia's bilateral relations with Australia and Malaysia. One contribution that stands out from the rest is the first chapter by Indonesia's former Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa (2009–2014), who offers a personal recollection rather than a scholarly assessment. In lucid prose, Natalegawa provides an overview of what he regards as Indonesia's main foreign policy achievements during the Yudhoyono era and in particular his own achievements during the president's second term when he himself served as the country's top diplomat.

What is immediately noteworthy in Natalegawa's account is the strong emphasis on democracy right at the beginning of the chapter. From the 'democratization in Indonesian foreign policy' (p. 15) and the description of Indonesia's democratic transition as an 'important asset to its foreign policy' (p. 16) to a proclaimed commitment to human rights and peaceful reform in fellow ASEAN states, Natalegawa dedicates four pages to declaring Indonesia's democratic credentials a key pillar of its foreign policy. He then moves on to discuss Indonesia's diplomatic achievements in ASEAN and the South China Sea, while not forgetting to mention the country's steadfast commitment to Palestine, a consistent theme in Indonesian foreign policy that has often been used as an attempt to bolster the country's otherwise limited credentials in the Islamic

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world. All in all, as could be expected, the chapter heaps praise on Indonesia as a confident, reliable, and proactive foreign policy actor and a 'constructive power in world affairs' (p. 32).

Compared to this insider account, most of the other chapters provide more nuanced and critical assessments of Yudhoyono's foreign policy. In fact, it is not difficult to detect a pattern throughout the book that more or less reflects the title of the volume, namely that Yudhoyono had grand aspirations but failed to turn these aspirations into tangible outcomes. For example, John Ciorciari, in his broad overview of Indonesia's foreign policy under Yudhoyono, states that 'The Yudhoyono administration's efforts to position Indonesia as a regional leader, Indo-Pacific hub, and global bridge state met with considerable success. [...] However, translating that elevated status into influence on concrete initiatives proved much more difficult' (p. 54).

Similarly, in their chapter about international economic cooperation Wihardja and Negara conclude that 'Much credit should be given to his [Yudhoyono's] astute and competent administration for its efforts in bringing about economic stability, reducing the incidence of poverty, and restoring the country to international prominence as a rising regional and global power [...] however, these achievements lacked a "demonstration effect" (Reid 2012, p. 84) at home. Indonesia's leadership was seen as merely symbolic' (p. 77). Manning and Sukamdi also echo this sentiment, arguing in their chapter on international labor migration that 'undoubtedly there was an improvement in the management and conditions of work of Indonesian migrant workers during the SBY years [...] but implementation of the various reform measures was weak' and 'much more might have been achieved had the government given serious attention to improving labor conditions in a systematic way from the outset' (p. 127).

McRae's evaluation of Indonesia-Australia relations also follows this line of argument, noting on the one hand that 'government-to-government ties arguably reached a historic high point during Yudhoyono's second term' and that 'Yudhoyono himself contributed significantly to the deepening of ties' (p. 205). On the other hand, however, he also points to powerful structural constraints in the bilateral relationship, arguing that neither Yudhoyono nor his various Australian counterparts invested enough in the relationship to 'fundamentally reshape these constraints' (p. 224) between 2004 and 2014. Thus, despite Yudhoyono's personal affinity for Australia, the 'fair dinkum partnership' the Indonesian president foreshadowed for the two countries in a speech to the Australian parliament in 2010 has yet to materialize.

All in all, the book nicely complements previous studies on the Yudhoyono years. It echoes many of the assessments provided in other works, especially

the overall consensus that Yudhoyono did reasonably well, but clearly not well enough to actually leave a legacy that would reflect his frequent rhetoric of an outward-looking democratic Indonesia. The limitations of Yudhoyono's achievements are particularly clear when we consider what followed after he left office. Domestically, his failure to consolidate democracy paved the way for democratic backsliding under his successor, Jokowi. Meanwhile, in regards to foreign policy, Jokowi immediately abandoned Yudhoyono's mantra of 'a million friends and zero enemies', turning instead to a more nationalistic and protectionist foreign policy. Thus, it is clear that Yudhoyono did not leave a lasting legacy. But in view of recent developments under his successor, many observers may soon fondly remember those years when Indonesia had a president who at least paid lip service to being a good global democratic citizen, even if his achievements fell short of his aspirations.

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