Indonesian president Joko “Jokowi” Widodo on March 1 released the long-awaited Presidential Regulation (Peraturan Presiden) No. 16 of 2017 on Indonesian Sea Policy (http://setkab.go.id/presiden-jokowi-teken-perpres-kebijakan-kelautan-indonesia/). This new decree was designed to “facilitate the acceleration” of Jokowi’s Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) doctrine, launched (http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/11/13/jokowi-launches-maritime-doctrine-world.html) at the East Asia Summit in 2014. At that time, the president did not clearly define the GMF, other than saying that as “a maritime country” Indonesia “must assert itself as a force between the two oceans: the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.”

This vision rests on five pillars: rebuild maritime culture, manage marine resources, develop maritime infrastructure and connectivity, advance maritime diplomacy, and boost maritime defense forces. But the doctrine never had a detailed document laying out its implementation. Unsurprisingly, critics argued that the absence of a “unifying blueprint” for the GMF allowed it to be “interpreted in so many different ways by so many different agencies” (http://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australian_outlook/indonesias-global-maritime-axis-askew/). I have also argued (http://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2017/02/27/insight-in-indo-pacific-strategic-flux-where-is-indonesia.html) that the doctrine lacks a foreign policy strategy and an Indo-Pacific vision, as it has focused more on the internal rather than external pillars.

The new Sea Policy (a name that was chosen instead of “maritime” or “ocean” policy because it is rooted in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) was supposed to address these criticisms by codifying the GMF as part of Indonesia’s regulatory hierarchy and integrating—or rather, coordinating—maritime-related policies and programs across different ministries and agencies into a single framework.
The GMF is now defined as the vision for a “sovereign, developed, and strong maritime state capable of positively contributing to the peace and security of the region and the world, according to its national interests.” As policy guidance, this vision is further detailed in two appendices containing a long-term framework (spelled out in a 37-page National Document) and a short-term scheme (detailed in the 198-page Action Plan 2016-2019).

The GMF’s original pillars were expanded into:

1. Marine and human resource development;
2. Naval defense, maritime security, and safety at sea;
3. Ocean governance institutionalization;
4. Maritime economy, infrastructure, and welfare;
5. Environmental protection and ocean space management;
6. Nautical culture; and
7. Maritime diplomacy.

These pillars are further broken down into 76 programs spread across dozens of ministries and agencies in charge of 425 activities designed to achieve 330 targets (see breakdown here (https://twitter.com/EvanLaksmana/status/842274409494724608)). Taken collectively, however, the Sea Policy does not yet appear to have fundamentally changed how the Indonesian government would implement or elevate the GMF.

First, despite the “maritime” labels attached to the hundreds of policy activities, there is no single authoritative agency to corral the ministries or agencies into concerted action.

The document continues to leave the planning, budgeting, and execution of the various programs to the respective ministries and agencies. The key difference is that the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs, led by Jokowi confidant Luhut Pandjaitan, is now tasked with monitoring, coordinating, and evaluating—not directly controlling—how each fits within the Sea Policy framework.

Second, while the Sea Policy codifies and fleshes out the skeleton of the GMF, the focus remains heavily skewed toward domestic policies.

Consider the fact that the Action Plan tasks the Ministries of Transportation, Industry, and Marine Affairs and Fisheries with 181 (out of 425) policy activities (or 42 percent), while the Foreign Ministry only merits 23 activities. Even then, its focus seems to be on “norms-building” and maritime and multilateral diplomacy in general, with only brief mention of challenging issues like the South China Sea.
Militarily, meanwhile, the Action Plan merely rehashes existing programs and projections from the Ministry of Defense and the Indonesian military, especially those pertaining to naval base development, maintenance and repair facilities, command and control, and ship procurement plans. The military plans also include an ideological component through State Defense (bela negara) "character building" programs.

Many of these activities fall under broader Maritime Security and Defense program priorities—the primary goal of which is to reduce violations of the law within Indonesian waters by 2019. As such, they focus more on patrols and joint interagency maritime operations to deal with crimes at sea, particularly illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing.

Seen in this light, it would be wise to temper expectations that the Sea Policy will boost the external elements of Jokowi’s GMF. Indeed, even with a more developed GMF, as far as the changing geopolitical dynamic in the Indo-Pacific region goes, Indonesia will continue to be the “missing middle” rather than a “force” between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Finally, as the Sea Policy is effectively a “bureaucratic umbrella” document, it emphasizes connecting preexisting policies and programs—rather than proposing new ones—across ministries and agencies. It is therefore doubtful that it will have additional budgetary support beyond that already allocated by the respective ministries, although it leaves open the door for various mechanisms—e.g. local government budgets or public-private partnerships—to finance the programs designated under the framework outside of the national budget.

Perhaps more importantly, it is not clear how the hundreds of preexisting programs and activities could solidify or elevate the GMF’s expansive vision. If they were formulated by the different ministries and agencies based on their bureaucratic calculations and interests, why should we expect them to fit neatly into the new Sea Policy framework? This is particularly likely given that the regulation lacks a clear assessment metric of policy success. Ultimately, while the Sea Policy regulation and its accompanying document are a significant development in Jokowi’s GMF, whether and under what conditions the doctrine becomes a geopolitical game-changer remains to be seen.

**About Evan Laksmana**
Evan Laksmana is a researcher at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Jakarta and currently a visiting fellow at The National Bureau of Asian Research in Seattle. He is also a PhD candidate at Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Follow him on Twitter @EvanLaksmana

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