

# Indonesia's Decision to Cancel the Procurement of SU-35 from Russia 2019–2022

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## ABSTRAK

Indonesia terkenal sebagai negara kepulauan dengan banyak pulau dan wilayah yang luas untuk dilindungi. Kemudian, Indonesia harus memiliki alat sistem pertahanan canggih seperti jet tempur dan memutuskan untuk membeli SU-35 dari Rusia dengan menandatangani MoU pada 14 Februari 2018. Kemudian pada tahun 2019, Indonesia memutuskan untuk membatalkan pengadaan SU-35 dari Rusia. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menunjukkan komponen pertahanan Indonesia yang sejalan dengan kebijakan pertahanan Indonesia dan seberapa rasional pengambilan keputusan Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian eksplanatori yang akan mengungkapkan permasalahan yang diangkat melalui sumber data sekunder yang dikumpulkan melalui artikel jurnal, buku, halaman internet yang relevan, laporan dan dokumen yang memiliki kredibilitas yang dapat dipertanggungjawabkan. Teknik analisis data dalam penelitian ini menggunakan analisis isi yaitu menganalisis pembahasan secara mendalam terhadap isi informasi tertulis atau cetak di berbagai media massa. Sejalan dengan model rasional yang menjelaskan bagaimana pengambilan keputusan harus rasional menunjukkan bahwa opsi untuk membeli SU-35 dari Rusia memiliki banyak biaya bagi Indonesia daripada keuntungan terkait perang Rusia-Ukraina yang akan membuat posisi Indonesia salah. perdamaian dunia. Penulis mengajukan empat alasan rasional dalam keputusan Indonesia membatalkan pengadaan SU-35 dari Rusia.

**Kata Kunci:** Kebijakan, Pertahanan, Rasional, Rusia, SU-35

## ABSTRACT

Indonesia's well known as the archipelagic country with a lot of islands and a large territory to protect. Then, Indonesia must have an advanced defense system tool such as the fighter jet and decided to buy SU-35 from Russia by signed the MoU on February 14, 2018. Later, 2019, Indonesia decided to cancel the procurement of SU-35 from Russia. The goal of this study is to show the defense components of Indonesia which is consistent with Indonesia's defense policy and how rational Indonesia's decision making. This study uses a qualitative research method using an explanatory type of research in which it will reveal the problem raised through secondary data sources collected through journal articles, books, relevant internet pages, reports and documents that have credibility that can accounted for. The data analysis technique in this study uses content analysis, which is to analyze in-depth discussions of the content of written or printed information in various mass media. In line with rational model that explains how the decision making must rationally shows that the option to buy SU-35 from Russia has a lot of costs for Indonesia rather than the benefits related to Russia-Ukraine war that will make Indonesia in a wrong position in the world peace. The author proposes four rational reasons in Indonesia's decision to cancel the procurement of SU-35 from Russia.

**Keywords:** Defense, Policy, Rational, Russia, SU-35

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's well known as the archipelagic country with a lot of islands and a large territory. In 2019, Indonesia has 16.671 islands which is already validated by UNGEGN as the country with the sixth most islands in the world (Laut, 2020). Indonesia was also nominated as the fifteenth largest country in the world with a total area of 5.180.053 km<sup>2</sup>; Indonesia's water area is 3.157.483 km<sup>2</sup> and its land area is 1.922.570 km<sup>2</sup> (Statistecs, 2022). In terms of the big and large region, Indonesia must protect their territory and its population. To fulfill these goals, Indonesia must have an advanced defense system tool such as the fighter jet. From the calculation of Mahfud MD as the Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security with

Prabowo Subianto as the Indonesia Minister of Defense, Indonesia needs 200 units of fighter jets. Currently, Indonesia only has 17 units of fighter jets and their already quite old (Chacha, 2022). Due to this demand, Indonesia had two options to make it real. First, make the fighter jet themselves. Second, buy the fighter jet from another country. Since the first option required too much time to produce a single fighter jet with a lot of requests, clearly this choice is irrational (Justive, 2022). Then it is more rational to have chosen the second option since Indonesia has a good bilateral diplomacy with some countries in the world.

The option of Indonesia to buy the fighter jet was already done in the Megawati President era with Russia in procurement of SU-27 and SU-30 in 2003 and continued until 2012 (Lidwina, 2020). Since Indonesia and Russia had a great fighter jet procurement history and bilateral diplomacy and relations between them, Indonesia decided to buy SU-35 from Russia to fulfill their need and goal. Afterwards, General Ryamizard who served as the Indonesian Minister of defense, in September 2015 introduced the decision to buy the SU-35 from Russia as the new and continues model of SU-30 also to deactivate the US F-5. Furthermore, on August 10, 2017, whilst Indonesia visited Russia, Indonesian government considered the country's sovereignty consisting of airspace security signed and MoU which was accompanied through an agreement to buy SU-35 from Russia on February 14, 2018.

Marsekal Fadjar Prasetyo as the Chief of Staff of the Air Force of Indonesia, stated the agreement for signing in the implementation would be effective from August 2018 and the delivery of SU-35 to Indonesia would be introduced in 3 phases with details of the division, the first phase in 2019 as many as two SU-35 aircraft, followed by the second phase as many six SU-35 units in 2020, and the third phase in August 2020 as many as three units (Amalia, 2017). However, the agreement to buy Russian-made fighter jet was cancelled. While Indonesia canceled the procurement of SU-35 from Russian, Indonesia started to look for Dassault Rafale from France and F-15 EX from America. In keeping with background that specify explain earlier, then the research question might be consciousness as 'Why on 2019 Indonesia decided to cancel the procurement of SU-35 from Russia?'.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The observation of international relations is closely related to the foreign policy of a country acts as an actor who will later perform foreign policy practices to be a able to attain national interests (Yani, 2021). According to Starr in 1988 foreign policy is the planning process, implementation process, and strategies used to achieve an interest that will be achieved by a country is defined as foreign policy. In details, foreign policy is also a series of policies of an actor in the political and security aspects which will later be determined by a country to achieve national interests and how to relate to the state and other actors (Starr, 1988).

Indonesia as a republic in carrying out its foreign policy is to use the principle of being free and active based on Pancasila and the 1945 constitution. Situation that require making decisions and movements based on an orientation which will consist of attitudes, perceptions, and values which are embraced or believed through a country state, which includes the example of Indonesia's foreign policy which is based on the orientation of the values of Pancasila and the constitution 1945 that is free and active. In the defense and security components of Indonesia, one in all which is consistent with Indonesia's defense policy,

specifically, to enhance the improvement of the defense system.

Previously, the former Minister of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia, Ryamizard Raycudu said the procurement of the SU-35 would be completed in 2019. However, the contract was cancelled, followed by Fadjar who personally acknowledged the barriers to the procurement were dues to the shadow of United States sanction. Therefore, the procurement of the SU-35 between Indonesia and Russia has relevance or is related to how Indonesia's foreign policy behaves and decides something.

The most widely stated overseas policy evaluation approach is the rational actor model. Based on Graham Allison on the Cuban Missile Crisis during 1962 rational actor model is a model that try to provide an explanation for international activities through recounting the pursuits and calculations of countries or governments is the trademark of the rational actor model (Allison, 1969). This model oscillates between choice and preference to some aim. It also relies on character country-level interaction between countries and authorities conduct as units of evaluation; it assumes the provision of complete data to policymakers for optimized choice making, and that actions taken all through time each regular and coherent.

There 4 principal steps within the rational actor's selection-making method: discover the problem, outline preferred results, examine the results the results of potential policy choices and, make the most rational decision to maximize beneficial consequences. The rational actor theoretical method may be beneficial to expertise the goals and intentions in the back of a foreign policy action. However, critics of this version consider it does not account for instances while whole data might not be to be had, in addition to the incredibly subjective idea of rationality or elements that could inhibit rational decision making.

Furthermore, this model explains how the decision making must make sense be rational. In the case of Indonesia's decision to cancel the procurement of SU-35 from Russia. It shows that option to buy SU-35 from Russia has a lot of costs for Indonesia rather than the benefits, such as Indonesia will be antagonized by countries that oppose Russia and will be considered an ally of Russia due to the SU-35 procurement in the middle of Russia-Ukraine war that will make Indonesia in a wrong position in the world peace. Indonesia will also get strict and disadvantageous sanctions due to CAATSA such as banning financial transactions, stopping financial support, and blockade visas from Russia's competitor country. In brief, CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) is an United States law that imposes sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia that signed on August 2, 2017, in the President Donald Trump Era. This law was rooted in a bill public law 15-44 of an amendment to the underlying Iran sanctions that introduced by Russia continue to involve in the wars in Ukraine and Syria.

Regard to Russia, this bill was designed to countering Russian influence in Europe and Eurasia act. Then, this bill provides sanctions for some activities concerning cyber security, crude oil projects, financial institutions, corruption, human rights abuses, evasion of sanctions, transactions with Russian defense or intelligence sectors, export pipelines, privatization of state-owned assets by government officials, and arms transfers to Syria. For this case, Indonesia related to the sanction of transactions with Russian defense or intelligence sectors in willing to buy SU-35 from Russia.

Moreover, the other option being to cancel the procurement of SU-35 from Russia has more benefits rather than the costs, such as Indonesia will not be antagonized by countries that oppose Russia. Indonesia will not be considered an ally of Russia in the middle of Russia-Ukraine war because Indonesia does not buy the SU-35 from Russia, Indonesia did not get some strict sanctions due to CAATSA because Indonesia obeys to the CAATSA to do not buy weapon from Russia, Indonesia's relations and cooperation with United States and France become more powerful because of the procurement of Dassault Rafale from France and F-15 EX from United States, and Indonesia's does not make a deal and defense security with Russia in the middle of Russia-Ukraine war. From thus data shows how rational Indonesia's decision making for this case.

## **METHOD**

This study will use a qualitative research method using an explanatory type of research in which it will reveal the problems raised through secondary data sources collected through journal articles, books, relevant internet pages, reports and documents that have credibility that can be accounted for. This research was conducted to determine the rationale of Indonesia decision to cancel the procurement of SU-35 from Russia in 2019-2022. In collecting the data for this research, the writer would limit this research only focuses on clarifying several reasons, fact, and data from Indonesia in cancelling this procurement. A few reasons are related to Indonesia's rational decision making, CAATSA from United States and Russia position in the middle of Russia and Ukraine war. The data analysis technique in this study uses content analysis, which is to analyze in-depth discussions of the content of written or printed information in various mass media. The information that will be obtained from the data analysis will be considered by the authors so that they can draw conclusions and provide answers to the problems regarding Indonesia's decision to cancel the procurement of SU-35 from Russia.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **THREATS OF INDONESIA SECURITY**

Indonesia is an archipelagic state with its territory covering land area, inland waters, archipelagic water, and territorial sea, the land beneath it, the airspace above it and incorporates all sources of wealth contained therein. With

the territory owned by Indonesia, there are many threats and responsibilities to defend this country. These threats are divided into; military threats, especially threats using prepared defense forces example aggression (Tandjung, 2002); non-military threats are human being with ideological, political, and socio-cultural; and hybrid threats which integrate traditional, asymmetric, and terrorist (Subianto, 2015).

### **INDONESIA DEFENSE**

The national defense is a universal defense system involves all citizens, territories, and other national resources, and continues to uphold state sovereignty. The state defense in dealing with military threats places the Indonesian National Armed Forces Weapon System Main Tool called the TNI Defense Equipment. The main equipment and its supporters are a weapon system that can conduct the main tasks of the TNI. One of the defense equipment that can protect Indonesian territory by air is a fighter jet. With so many threats and obligation to protect the territory of Indonesian state, Indonesia must strengthen its defense equipment.

### **INDONESIAN POLICY OF PROCUREMENT AIR DEFENSE**

Every year, the government always attempts to prepare the defense equipment procurement system by using issuing a one door policy (Adjie, 2014). The process of procurement of defense equipment starts from the first point, specifically determining the kind of defense equipment from the existence of three dimensions of the TNI, namely the army, navy, and Air force. If all proposals containing lists and recommendations might be covered later to TNI Headquarters. If it is ready, it will be proposed to the Ministry of Defense. If the Ministry of defense has evaluated the inspiration and the specifications are deemed suitable, then the Ministry of Finance will provide loan settlement contracts. In DPR RI, those in charge of procurement of defense equipment are commission I. The complete procedure last for one and a half to three years.

### **BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN INDONESIA AND RUSSIA**

Bilateral relations between Indonesia and Russia have been ongoing for more than 70 years. The years 1945-1950 was the duration when Indonesian state's diplomatic warfare was looking for worldwide reputation for the independence and sovereignty of the nation after its proclamation of independence. On January 25, 1950, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, A. Vyshinsky, submitted in writing to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Moch. Hatta that to set up diplomatic ties with Indonesia and Indonesia welcomed this. In March of 2011 in Moscow, Indonesia and Russia signed an air carrier agreement (Tavares, 2018). After the agreement, the number of tourists from Moscow who are willing to go to Indonesia increased by travel with Rossiya airline.

In 2020, Indonesia exported \$1.24B to Russia. The primary merchandise that Indonesia exported to Russia were palm oil (\$485M), coconut oil (\$68.3M), and huge pressed stainless steel (\$49.3M). During the ongoing bilateral trade relations, Russia exported services to Indonesia worth \$39.6M, with transportation worth \$28.8M, other commercial enterprise offerings worth \$4.8M, and travel \$2.93M. Russia commonly exports air transportation to Indonesia, including SU-27 and SU-30 in 2003.

### INDONESIA'S CONSIDERATION IN BUYING SU-35 FROM RUSSIA

The Sukhoi SU-35 is designed to strike air, ground and naval targets, and infrastructural facilities shielded by air defense systems located at a considerable distance from home airfields (Tass, 2020). This model is an upgraded derivative of the SU-27. It incorporates a multi-function canard and radar giving it a multi-role capability. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Sukhoi re-designated it as the SU-35 to attract export orders. A single two-seat SU-35 trainer was also built in the late 1990s that resembles the SU-30 family (Sudarminto, 2013).

Apart from the SU-35 having very advanced defense and attack features, the SU-35 is the newest model of SU-27 and SU-30 which the maintenance factory used for the three aircraft is the same then the maintenance costs for the SU-35 will be economical. In addition, because of the successful and trusted history of purchasing SU-27 and SU-30 with Russia. Here is the rational actor model to explain the implementation of this theory in Indonesia decision to cancelling the procurement of SU-35 jets from Russia:

Table 1 Rational Actor Model about the Procurement of SU-35

Options	Cost	Benefits
Buy SU-35 from Russia		
-Indonesia are the Ally of Russia and be antagonized by countries that opposed Russia in the middle of Russia-Ukraine War.		
-	Indonesia gets some strict sanctions due to CAATSA United States policy.	
-	Indonesia's image and relations with countries in the world is in danger.	- Indonesia had a great cooperation and continuous diplomatic bilateral with Russia.
-	Save maintenance cost and become the continuous model of SU27 and SU-30.	
-	SU-35 having very advance defense, attack features and the newest model from SU-27 and SU-30.	
Cancel the procurement of SU-35 from Russia (Choose Dassault Rafale from France and F-15 EX from United States) - Russia will be disappointed with Indonesia.		
-	Indonesia's bilateral and cooperation with Russia will be fragile.	

- Indonesia not the Ally of Russia and not be antagonized by countries that opposed Russia in the middle of Russia-Ukraine War.

- Indonesia did not get sanctions due to CAATSA United States policy.

- Indonesia has a powerful relations and cooperation with United States and France

- Indonesia's image and relations with countries in the world are still great.

Furthermore, this model explains how the decision making must make sense and think rationally in the case of Indonesia decision to cancel the procurement of SU-35 from Russia. It shows that the option to buy SU-35 from Russia has a lot of costs for Indonesia rather than the benefits such as Indonesia will be antagonized by countries that oppose Russia and will be considered an ally of Russia due to the SU-35 procurement in the middle of Russia-Ukraine war that will make Indonesia in a wrong position in the world peace, and also Indonesia will get some strict and disadvantage sanctions due to CAATSA. Indonesia made these considerations due to the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) that emerged in the 115th American Congress, January 23, 2017.

CAATSA sanctions are laws that are used as the basis by the United States to be able to impose sanctions or embargoes on a country related to state military equipment purchasing activities related to the Russian State (Andika, 2018). CAATSA targeted Russia because it attacked Ukraine, annexed Crimea, condoned infiltration, and cyber-attacks, intervened in the 2016 United States election and other destructive actions. Meanwhile, United States targeted the Russian economy, thus the country did not interfere anymore in America affairs. America imposed embargo sanctions on all countries that conducted cooperative relations with Russia which have been regulated in CAATSA sanctions.

However, there are several countries that get exemptions from CAATSA sanctions even though they have entered countries threatened with an embargo by United States, namely Indonesia, Vietnam, and India. Then, this bill provided sanctions for some activities concerning cyber security, crude oil projects, financial institutions, corruption, human right abuses, evasion of sanctions, transactions with Russian defense or intelligence sectors, export pipelines, privatization of state-owned assets by government officials, and arms transfers to Syria. In this case Indonesia was related to the sanction of transactions with Russian defense or intelligence sectors, as Indonesia was willing to buy the SU-35 (Eiseke, 2020)

According to Australian Strategic Policy Institute, CAATSA resulted in delays to the Indonesian purchase of Russian Sukhoi SU-35 fighter aircraft. The willingness of the US to impose CAATSA sanctions, or whether any waiver might be obtained, was at the forefront of security diplomacy between Washington and Jakarta back in 2019 (Greenlees, 2019). In March 2020, the Trump

administration pressured Indonesia into dropping deals to buy Russian made Sukhoi SU-35 fighter jets and Chinese naval vessels (Emily, 2017). According to an official familiar with the matter, President Joko Widodo's administration was concerned that the United States would take punitive actions on trade and implement economic sanctions against Indonesia if the deals were completed. Due to this law, being a warning from the United States and President Donald Trump, Indonesia reconsidered buying the SU-35 from Russia.

## **INDONESIA'S DECISION TO CANCEL THE PROCUREMENT OF SU-35 FROM RUSSIA**

1. Indonesia not the Ally of Russia and not be Antagonized by Countries that Opposed Russia in the Middle of Russia-Ukraine War

Russia-Ukraine War is the biggest conflict and war this day. All countries around the world afraid this conflict will harm their country sovereignty, including Indonesia. Indonesia must take careful actions to not be involved in this war to keep the peace of their people and the country's sovereignty. One of these actions was the cancellation of the procurement of SU-35 from Russia. This procurement was already signed in 2017, but Indonesia rethought on the costs that Indonesia would have received if Indonesia still running this deal such as confirmed as the ally of Russia and Indonesia also be the enemy of all nations in the world in the middle of Russia-Ukraine War.

2. The Sanctions from CAATSA

CAATSA was one of the problems and considerations for Indonesia to buy SU-35. The Chief of Staff of the Indonesia Air Force (AU) Marshal TNI Fadjar Prasetyo confirmed the cancellation in 2019. He said, regarding the Sukhoi SU-35, it was with a heavy heart that the purchase had to be canceled and confirmed that the decision was made due to the protracted acquisition process and concerns that Indonesia would be subject to United States sanctions for buying weapons from Moscow. Indonesia will get some strict and disadvantage sanctions due to CAATSA Unites States policy such as banning financial transactions, stopping financial support, and blockading visas from Russia's competitor country. The procurement of the fighter jet is consistent with Indonesia's foreign policy, specifically free and active related, the policy of buying and purchasing the main weapon system equipment. In line with Indonesia's foreign policy, it defined that the procurement of Indonesian weapons should not be regulated by different nations and only focused on accomplishing Indonesia's national interests.

However, the procurement of the SU-35 fighter jet from Russia means that Indonesia can be confronted with United States policy thru the CAATSA. It because of the United States pressure into Indonesia. Since Indonesia has a good history in bilateral and cooperation with United States in term of defense system such as United States granted some of their F-16 fighter jets free with no charge only for Indonesia and also Indonesia already get a lot of

help from Unites States in some different field make Indonesia's heart melted and try to give a good feedback to United States with obey their rule and afraid to oppose since United States as a super power country.

3. Indonesia has a Powerful Relations and Cooperation with United States and France

Indonesia's relations with United States in the defense and security system was a good action back in 2014-2017, since United States granted 24 units of F-16 to Indonesia. This action melted Indonesia's heart and try to make more good relations with United States in the future and obey United States rule called CAATSA. United States was success with their plan to make Indonesia obey to their rule until Indonesia cancel the procurement of SU-35 from Russia as United States enemy. Indonesia in that time has to thing smart to keep the relations with United States in buy weapon from a country. Then Indonesia chose to buy F-15 EX from United States to upgrade their defense system with United States help. This day, Indonesia and United States relations become more powerful.

Furthermore, France accepted Indonesia demand for Dassault Rafale delightfully. Macron as the President was very enthusiastic when he heard this great news. Macron. Indonesia achieved their goal to modernize their defense equipment. Indonesia choose Dassault Rafale because this plane is between the 4th and 5th generation of jet fighter that can say as the middle decision for Indonesia. France also a country that neutral in the international eyes, which do not take serious about the CAATSA from United States. As a result, Indonesia buy 42 units Dassault Rafale from France.

Fadjar said Indonesia would now consider purchasing United States F-15 EX Eagle II fighter jets and French Dassault Rafale fighter aircraft with the F-15 EX Team telling us if Indonesia signed the deal today, Indonesia would receive the first unit around 2027 (Nirmala, 2021). United States has threatened every country those who buy weapons from Russia will be sanctioned. The threat is mandated by the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) of 2017. China and Turkey is already sanctioned under the law for their purchase of Russia's S-400 missile defense system. So that Indonesia learns from China and Turkey and does not buy the SU-35.

4. Indonesia's Image and Relations with Countries in the World Still Running Great

Image and relations among countries in the world are the essential issues in the diplomacy world of every nation. Indonesia as a peaceful country must think about this every time their decide. By cancelling the procurement of SU-35 from Russia as the enemy of the world in this day since the inhuman act of Russia in Russia-Ukraine war, Indonesia takes a good step to come back to the right path in line to make peace for all nations in the world. Indonesia still can make good bilateral or multilateral relations between all

nations in the world with this excellent choice to cancel the SU-35 procurement.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In the middle of the Russia-Ukraine war, Indonesia position will be more threatened if Indonesia buy the SU-35 from Russia. It is true because Indonesia will see as the ally of Russia in destroying Ukraine also the world. Moreover, Indonesia will get a lot of new enemies from the countries that contra with Russia. The sovereignty of Indonesia and his people will suffer because the unfavorable conditions in term of economic and security. Even though bilateral relations between Indonesia and Russia will become fragile, the relations between Indonesia to United States and other countries in the world will be in peace in the middle of Russia-Ukraine war.

Since China and Turkey already get the sanctions from United States on 2017, 2018, and 2019 in term of buy weapon Russia as an action in breaking the CAATSA law from United States. This evidence is a real trigger for Indonesia to cancel the procurement of SU-35 from Russia. The writer found that Indonesia is a country with the rational decision making that think about the cost and benefit for a decision. In this case, Indonesia must cancel the procurement since it will harm Indonesia because United States as the superpower country and with the CAATSA sanctions in the trade and economic field that already happen to China and Turkey.

The fact about Indonesia's relations with United States and France become more powerful is true since the procurement 36 units of F-15 EX from US and 42 units of Dassault Rafale from France in 2022. The United States support this procurement happily since their plan to make Indonesia want to buy their weapon and cancel to buy weapon from Russia was a success. France was delighted in the first time hearing that Indonesia want to buy weapons from France. This research found the reason Indonesia decided to cancel the procurement of SU-35 from Russia is because of Russia as the controversial country in the middle of Russia-Ukraine War also CAATSA from United States. For future research, the writer recommends interviewing the actors to have further discussions regarding the topic.

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