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An Analysis of Indonesia Foreign Policy Under Jokowi's Pro-People Diplomacy

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Abstract

Under Jokowi's administration, Indonesia promotes "down to earth diplomacy" or also known as "pro-people diplomacy" by which he declared that Indonesia would focus on domestic affairs. It seems this policy will mostly be inward-looking paradigm compared with his predecessor, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who emphasized strengthened role of Indonesia in the region with his "zero enemy and thousands friends". The focus on domestic needs has raised concern from many observers on the less of Indonesia's presence in international stages. But if we see the dynamic today, it seems not the case to underestimate Indonesia role in global stage. Against these background, the central question of this article is; how is pro-people diplomacy constructed and what challenges that are possessed? By adopting pro-people diplomacy Indonesia has received strong international concerns of Indonesia aggressive way in dealing with foreign issues. Does pro-people diplomacy has taken Indonesia to move away from its presence on international stages? This article emphasizes that while pro-people diplomacy has focus on domestic needs, but Indonesia's engagement is even stronger.

Keywords: Jokowi, Indonesia, foreign policy, pro-people diplomacy

Abstrak

Di bawah pemerintahan Jokowi, Indonesia mencetuskan "diplomasi membumi" atau "diplomasi pro-rakyat" yaitu Indonesia akan memfokuskan pada isu-isu domestik. Tampaknya kebijakan ini akan lebih condong pada mengurus masalah-masalah domestik dibandingkan pemerintahan sebelumnya, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, yang menekankan pada penguatan peran Indonesia di kawasan dengan slogan "sejuta kawan nol musuh". Pergeseran kearah domestik ini telah menyita perhatian dari banyak pengamat terkait dengan menurunnya keterlibatan Indonesia di panggung internasional. Namun apabila kita melihat dinamika sekarang, terlalu dini untuk meragukan peran Indonesia di pentas global. Berdasarkan latar belakang ini, pertanyaannya adalah: bagaimana diplomasi pro-rakyat dibangun dan apa tantangannya? Dengan mengadopsi diplomasi pro-rakyat Indonesia telah memperoleh perhatian yang besar menyangkut cara Indonesia menyikapi isu-isu luar negeri. Apakah diplomasi pro-rakyat membuat Indonesia mundur dari pergaulan internasional? Artikel ini menekankan bahwa meskipun diplomasi pro-rakyat memfokuskan pada kebutuhan-kebutuhan dalam negeri, namun keterlibatan Indonesia di luar negeri semakin besar.

Kata-kata kunci: Jokowi, Indonesia, kebijakan luar negeri, diplomasi pro-rakyat

Introduction

Indonesian foreign policy direction under Jokowi's administration invites serious attention from regional and global level. Arrived in power with lack of international experiences, Jokowi made surprise with his new inward-looking foreign policy direction. In another word, he promotes "down to earth diplomacy" or also known as "pro-people diplomacy". Moreover, it becomes more interesting if we consider the current situation when ASEAN's trend diplomacy now is moving towards integration. It inevitably needs more active role from each members. But at the same time, Jokowi brings Indonesian foreign policy into domestic orientation. How does this style of diplomacy works under this circumstance?

Jokowi's step to swift direction to be more inward looking on his foreign policy to some extent understandable. He needs to figure out domestic problems by instrumentalizing foreign policy dimension. For instance as Indonesia's position in ASEAN has been very significant, inward-looking diplomacy appeared as contradiction with the Jakarta's image. Jakarta's active role in the region has been important and strategic position among the neighborhood. Consequently ASEAN expects more active role from Indonesia's foreign policy.

Against this background, this article explores Jokowi's pro people diplomacy. How Indonesia should take significant presence in global level under Jokowi's "pro people diplomacy"? What are the most likely challenges for Indonesia in dealing with neighboring countries that would arise under this new situation? This article suggests that Jokowi's administration should take careful action in defining pro-people diplomacy in order to avoid signaling a wrong message to international community, otherwise the Jokowi's new paradigm will easily misunderstood in the region.

This paper is designed to elaborate these questions. It is very imperative to have clear understanding the roots, background of the nature of Jakarta's current diplomacy, and the impact of new pro-people diplomacy proposed by Jokowi's administration. The following part will cover these points.

The nature of Indonesian foreign policy

Provided with large population and rich strategic resources, it is the strong reason for Indonesia prominence in regional and global affairs. Indonesia's ascent in regional and global is resulted from several factors; resources and clear vision hold by Indonesia's leaders. Indonesia's leadership has been admitted by world since its independence. Although as the new nation, leadership became dominant characteristics of Indonesia's post colonial in the region. But, internal instability appeared to destabilize

the country. Vision of leaders was quite related with their perspective on nationalism and independence. These perspectives backed up Indonesia in interacting with international community (Thompson, 2014).

Trying to see domestic needs as a focus, it inevitably presented a contradiction between Indonesia's own aspirations for strengthening domestic capacity and its expansionist policies in ASEAN to maintain regional security. The commencement of regional cooperation provided Indonesia with its chance to seize a leadership role, as stability could not be achieved without the support Indonesia, as Southeast Asia's largest nation. Yet, despite its role in ASEAN, Indonesia continued to be dependent on external powers that exposed Indonesia internal vulnerabilities.

Independent and active, or is known as "*bebas dan aktif*", have been the main principles of Indonesian foreign policy since the early period of the nation. It became doctrine for Jakarta in interacting with other states in the regional and global level. Through these couple words, Indonesia stated to be independence from any alliance or political block which exists in the global stage. At the same time it also implies Jakarta's *willingness* to enhance its role in international community.

The first dimension of "*bebas dan aktif*" doctrine shows Indonesia's respect for the sovereignty over the other states. By placing this dimension in the doctrine, it demands Indonesian government to not to interfere other state domestic political issues. As sovereignty has been sensitive aspect of every state, offending this aspect could easily bring countries to the conflict (Poole, 2014). Indonesia perceives each state has its own national autonomy that should be mutually respected. It thus also becomes one of main principle in ASEAN where Indonesia play pivotal role.

Under Yudhoyono's first term administration, it clearly placed international engagement as main priority of Indonesian foreign policy. Adding friends and reduce enemies. Yudhoyono had tried to enhance Jakarta's role in the regional and global level. He directed Indonesian foreign policy to an outward orientation based on democratic values. It can be seen in May 2005, in his first foreign policy speech since he was elected president. He defined Indonesian nationalism as 'a brand of nationalism that is open, confident, moderate, tolerant, and outward looking' (Yudhoyono, 2005). It also can be found on the other event when President Yudhoyono stressing tolerance as an important ingredient of freedom and democracy. For instance, in 2011 Bali Democracy Forum, Yudhoyono stated that, 'we believe that freedom must be coupled with tolerance and rule of law, for without them freedom leads to unbridled hatred and anarchy' (Yudhoyono, 2011). The same nuance also stressed at a speech when he was in London in 2012, Yudhoyono stated that Indonesia would be increasingly active in setting the norms related to overlapping territorial claims that

would guide regional countries and would emphasize 'the importance of having a set of norms and rules that could prevent violence and conflict caused by hatred and intolerance.

From here we can identify clearly how Yudhoyono directed his approach on foreign policy based on non-violence way. In contrast to the early post-Suharto period, when the government was still busy with the democratic institution development, Yudhoyono started his first term presidency by building foundation for Jakarta's active role in the international stage. His foreign policy platform refers to what called as "thousand friends-zero enemies". This paradigm became the direction of Yudhoyono foreign policy. To strengthen this paradigm working in the regional level, Marty Natalegawa thus promoted the term known as "dynamic equilibrium". Through this term Natalegawa emphasized that the dynamic situation in the region is something that could be managed by linked it into three aspects; security, common interest, and partnership.

In the practice of these norms, the traditionally independent and active foreign policy of Indonesia – as formulated by the first Indonesian Vice President Mohammad Hatta – has been adapted to the current period. While Hatta made metaphor of 'rowing between the two reefs' of the Eastern Communist and Western Capitalist blocs, Yudhoyono used the metaphor of 'navigating a turbulent ocean'. As implementation of this term, he then adopted 'constructive approach' as an instrument by which to interact with global and regional actors. This more active approach thus expected Indonesia as a peacemaker, confidence builder, problem solver, and bridge builder (Habir,2014).

Although the policy doctrine has been clear, however the goal seemed not clear yet. The real domestic situation showed less successful of Yudhoyono's administration in bridging the gap between foreign policy and the domestic policies. The instance can be seen from dimension of tolerance in domestic level. It has increasingly been viewed as paradoxical with the reality of Indonesian domestic. Conflict of religious triggered by intolerance had trend to increase. Indonesian Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and freedom to worship, but in fact the minority official religions such as Christians still face the possibility of discrimination. Increasingly, minority Muslim sects considered deviant, such as Ahmadiyya and Shiite Muslims, have also suffered from discrimination and violence.

The paradox became more severe when the government had often been indifferent or responded with discriminatory state legislation that encourages further attacks. For instance, in 2008 the national level policy through a joint decree of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Interior Ministry, and the Attorney General, barred Ahmadiyya Muslims from proselytizing. In the some local governments then issued legislation ranging from

closing Ahmadiyya mosques, banning the building of Ahmadiyya religious facilities, to the banning of Ahmadiyya believers in the local area (Djamin,2014). Provided with these official regulations, it then may facilitate some hard-lines Islamist group to take violence over the minority religious group. On the other side, moderate Indonesian Muslim who take majority size in Indonesia Muslim population, seemed reluctant to deal with this situation.

There are some factors that enabling majority Indonesian Muslim remain reluctant to speak out. First, moderate Indonesian Moslem fear to be accused supporting idea or faith of minority groups. In fact, they just disagree with the way of hard-liner Islamist group by treating violence over minority groups. Second, it is also influenced by government policy to take decisive action to hard-liner Islamist groups. If doing so, it would appear that the government has been dictated by western power to control the hard-liners.

Indonesia is regional position

One of the imperative policies after power transition from Sukarno to Soeharto was to do away with the turmoil 1960s and at the same time making Indonesian benign image in the region. The declaration of ASEAN in 1967 was as cornerstone for Indonesia's foreign policy post-Sukarno. The active role of Indonesia initiating the creation of ASEAN succeeds to show its image as friendly and good neighbor for countries in the region. The presence in ASEAN was also important politically for Indonesia. As quoted by Dewi Fortuna Anwar, ASEAN has at least six political functions for Indonesia, such as maintain the country's international credibility, as instrument to preserve regional harmony, as buffer for Indonesia's national security, to promote regional order, serve as international bargaining instrument, and to enhance Indonesia international stature (Anwar,2010).

Moreover, ASEAN also become arena for Indonesia to accelerate its benign image, as Indonesia perceived by neighbor states as a country committed to peaceful and management disputes under regional institution. At the same time, through ASEAN framework, given with large zone compared with other members, Indonesia could show its low profile characters and reduce prejudice of Indonesian hegemonic agenda in the region. It is very important to foster and preserve harmony among countries then could lead to the establishment of conducive regional environment. At this point, Indonesia played pivotal role for the region while increasing its international credibility.

Strong commitment added with the active role of Indonesia in the region can be traced, through the contribution in developing ASEAN. For instance the born of ASEAN Way, as foundation of ASEAN members in

interacting each other by emphasizing on the non interference principle, substantially had root in Indonesia's New Order operating techniques and legitimacy strategies. New Order norms such as *musyawarah* (consultation) and *mufakat* (consensus), strongly influenced the norms adopted in ASEAN. Jakarta's influence on ASEAN then also can be traced in ASEAN Charter 2007, by which ASEAN towards more institutionalized and rule-based organization. Indonesia's democratic value has much to do with the principle within the ASEAN Charter (Henry,2007).

Indonesia has also shared strong efforts in most critical moment in ASEAN. From the establishment of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) at the first Bali Summit in 1976, sponsored the birth to the Declaration of Concord), the second Bali Summit in 2003 (which established the concept of an ASEAN Community), the signing of the ASEAN Charter in Jakarta in 2007, and the third Declaration of Concord in Bali in 2012. Therefore from these explanations, we can see how significant Indonesia's engagement in ASEAN, based on its active principle.

The increasing integration of ASEAN to the global world has also made Indonesia shared its view based on its independent doctrine. Under strong turbulence of geopolitical constellation, Indonesia strengthens ASEAN independent dimension to bolster ASEAN's centrality in region. It is the strategic way to restrict ASEAN against external powers and to avoid big reliance over external partners. Marty Natalegawa expressed this way as "dynamic equilibrium", emphasizing that the dynamic situation in the region is something that could be managed (Natalegawa,2013).

Understanding Jokowi's pro-people diplomacy

David Singer proposed on foreign policy level of analysis is one of proper view in understanding Jokowi's pro people diplomacy, particularly to perceive its formation. He divided level of analysis of foreign policy in two stages; international and domestic stages (Singer, 1961:80). The international stage, also referred to systemic level, focuses on behavior of state actors that are influenced by international environment. The second stage is domestic stage or often referred as sub-system. It emphasizes on domestic factors, which influence state's foreign affairs. It encompasses state historical background, social religious tradition, public opinion, and geographical dimension. Level of analysis approach seeks influential factors in the formation of state's foreign policy. These become the foundation of state actors in constructing diplomacy model.

Thus, how are Jokowi's pro people diplomacy formed and what does it means for Indonesian foreign policy? How would it work in the relatively new circumstances of ASEAN Economic Community? Simply

understanding of this term could be defined as placing people's interest as a centre of Indonesia's foreign diplomacy. It aims to secure the needs of Indonesian people first and foremost. This idea also can be regarded as product of evaluation over his predecessor. Previous Indonesia's diplomacy approach, "thousand friends –zero enemies", seemed to have distance between the policy and domestic needs. Under this approach, foreign policy is often placed on the high profile level, but lack of roots in domestic aspect. Therefore, in practice Indonesia has often been viewed received less benefit from foreign diplomacy while other took more. Against this background, Jokowi's administration embraces new approach that so called "*diplomasi pro-rakyat*" or pro people diplomacy. It locates domestic need as center of Indonesia's foreign policy.

Jokowi's pro people diplomacy has its roots on free and active principles. It is blending of two strategies but with different emphasize. If Yudhoyono's diplomacy emphasized Indonesian presence in regional stage, pro-people diplomacy focus in optimizing all diplomacy activities should lead to domestic economic benefits. In this sense, domestic factor become important behind the formation of Jokowi's foreign policy.

The argument also could be strengthened by what people had expected from Jokowi during the elections. Provided with strong image as a figure who born from non-elitist people, Jokowi has been widely expected representing *wong cilik* or "poor people". Under that image, Jokowi then respected as populist figure. This framing also influences the way of Jokowi in constructing policy. It should not be elitist but must be populist. Domestic influences contribute significant role to the formulation of pro people diplomacy.

Following Jokowi's direction on pro-people's foreign policy approach, Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi translated its new approach on her first annual policy statement on 8 January 2015. According to her, Indonesia will focus on three priorities: maintaining Indonesia's sovereignty, enhancing the protection of Indonesian citizens, and intensifying economic diplomacy (Indonesian Cabinet Secretariat, 2015).

In another occasion she also stressed three imperative directions as derivative of pro-people foreign policy. First, strengthening Indonesia's economy through diplomacy activity. In order to achieve it, there must be mutually connection between dimension of foreign policy and economic development policy. Second, active in conducting bilateral mechanism as diplomatic instrument rather than multilateral forums. Resources would be directed to sponsors bilateral forum instead spending energy to active in multilateral forums. Third, enabling diplomat officers to be more active in promoting Indonesia's competitive advantages economically. Diplomat officers are strongly expected to play necessary things to integrate Indonesia with world market (Lutfia,2015).

Nevertheless, it does not mean that Jokowi disregards Indonesia's presence in international stage. Maintaining profile in international stage is still necessary to support national-domestic economic benefits. Pro-people diplomacy also could not be detached from geographic proximity consideration. The first circle is placed by ASEAN as the cornerstone of Indonesia foreign policy. Countries in East Asia follow the second stage and the third stage is neighboring countries in Asia Pacific region. Under this framework while the focus of pro-people diplomacy is to fulfill domestic needs, pro-people diplomacy should involve strategic players in each stage under inclusive regional architecture.

Potential challenges

What are the most likely challenges for Indonesia in dealing with ASEAN that would arise under this new situation? The concrete action of Jokowi's administration in implementing pro-people foreign policy aiming to fulfill domestic interest indeed has been attracting public support. For instance, it can be seen from the policy of burning and sinking vessels which committed with illegal fishing. Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that secure domestic needs are priority as well as protecting Indonesia's sovereignty. Will be accomplished by responding firmly to any intrusions into Indonesian territory and by settling maritime borders. Moreover, Jokowi has repeatedly stated that around 5,000 ships which mostly from neighboring Southeast Asian states and China, illegally crossed and operated in Indonesian waters every day (Parameswaran, 2015). The latest data from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, since October 2014 Indonesia has detained 157 vessels and sunk 151 of them. Most of them come from Vietnam, Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia (Tempo, 2016).

Total of sinking vessel by Ministry of Maritime and Fisheries

No	State	Sunk Vessel
1	Vietnam	50
2	Philippines	43
3	Thailand	21
4	Malaysia	20
5	Papua Nuigini	2
6	Indonesia	14

Source: **Tempo, 2016**

While the aggressive maritime policy as implementation of Jokowi's pro-people diplomacy has provoked various responses from international media, the affected countries of sinking vessels have not issued any harsh

reaction. China responded through Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei by asking the Indonesian side to make clarification and call Indonesia to adopt constructive way. The same response also delivered by Vietnam who sent its diplomatic note asking Indonesia to settle illegal Vietnamese fisherman in line with the strategic partnership between two countries (Vietnamplus,2015). These responses showed the reaction of affected countries is not as harsh as what has been feared. China and Vietnam's responses are still normative as both states have to show their concern on the people.

Another instance may also be viewed when Jokowi come with death penalty of drug traffickers. Despite harsh appeals by international community, particularly from the countries whose citizens were on death row, the President keep continue the executions. Jokowi's message is clear that the executions had to be exercised even with risk of harsh responses from affected countries or losing friends (Juwana,2015). It applied also to even Indonesia traditional close friend Australia whose citizens were executed.

While in one hand Indonesia tried to enforce national law regarding drugs, in another hand it also rised diplomatic consequences among involved countries. Like the sinking vessel policy, both of these cases had invited large critics from international community. Indonesia's image as friendly states has been deteriorated. However, it is indeed very impressive policy for domestic public, as the policy directly linked with Indonesia national interest.

Under pro-people diplomacy, Jakarta seems would not turn its back on the world, outlining the active role it wanted to play in ASEAN as well as other regions including the Indian Ocean, the South Pacific and the Middle East. However, I argue that given Jokowi's active role in regional and international forum, the perception that Jakarta may focus less on international stage is likely to persist. It is also parallel with international criticism over narrow nationalism diplomacy model as bases of Jokowi's pro-people diplomacy. Several evidences have countered the pessimistic view on Jokowi's regional orientation as well as narrow nationalism.

First, the official statement of Retno Marsudi during her official visit to Washington in September 2015, dismissed these worries. She emphasized that since Jokowi's administration inaugurated in 2014, Indonesia's engagement with international community is even stronger. It is achieved through optimizing bilateral mechanism. Second, through multilateral framework, in April 2015 Indonesia became host country for Asia-Africa Conference aiming to revive Asia-Africa strategic partnership. This event has important meaning for Indonesia to leverage its profile among countries in Asia-Africa. Engagement in the Pacific also has been elevating through becoming associate membership in the Melanesian Spearhead Group and the chairmanship of the IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association).

Third, the visiting of foreign minister Retno Marsudi to Tehran and Riyadh in January 2016 also prompts Indonesia's presence in international stage. Retno's visiting to Middle East was aimed to take active role in promoting stable relation of both countries. Written in the letter of President Jokowi passed to Saudi King Salman bin Abdul Aziz and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Indonesia emphasized the importance of a good relationship between both countries (Kwok, 2016). The latest moment was the active engagement of Indonesia in hosting OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) in February 2016 with strategic result in strengthening support of Islamic Countries to Palestinian freedom. Furthermore for Indonesia, the opening of Indonesia honorary consulate in Ramallah has followed up OIC summit. All these have showed to us the strong commitment and engagement of Indonesia in international stages under Indonesia's pro people diplomacy.

However, for the ASEAN context this article notices that maintaining this situation for the long term is also not good for Indonesia's interaction in the region. It is because the international perception could move to any direction without control. Therefore, this article suggests that Jokowi's administration should take careful action in defining pro-people diplomacy in order to avoid signaling a wrong message to other ASEAN members, otherwise the Jokowi's new paradigm will easily misunderstood in the region. As Indonesia has been admitted as unofficial leaders of ASEAN, it is necessary for Jakarta to keep its active role not only through bilateral level but also multilateral forums.

Conclusion

Jokowi's pro people diplomacy has been arguably as counteraction to what Yudhoyono's thousands friends and zero enemies. Under Yudhoyono's foreign policy direction, there were distance between the policy and domestic needs. Foreign policy is often placed on the high profile level, but lack of roots in domestic aspect. As evaluation, Indonesia has often been viewed received less benefit from foreign diplomacy while other gain more.

To answer these evaluations, Jokowi's administration embraces new approach that so called "*diplomasi pro-rakyat*" or "pro people diplomacy". Jokowi's pro-people diplomacy has been inward focus style of Indonesia foreign policy. It places people's interest as a center of Indonesia's foreign diplomacy securing the needs of Indonesian people first and foremost. Moreover, pro people diplomacy become quite interesting discourse due to while ASEAN's trend diplomacy now is moving towards integration in which it is needed more active role from each members, Indonesia's new foreign policy is moving toward domestic.

However, this article notices that despite there is a major change in styles, Jokowi's pro people diplomacy still grabs basic elements of "free and active" and not leaving its concern on international profile. Our discussion has showed that pro-people diplomacy maintain continuity while trying to focus on domestic needs. It is imperative for maintaining profile in international stage to support national-domestic economic benefits.

As we have evaluated above, Jokowi's decision to swift direction to be more inward-looking in his foreign policy to some extent understandable. First and foremost it comes as evaluation from Yudhoyono's policy which seemed less of impact on domestic needs. Second, strong image of Jokowi as a figure who born from non-elitist people and representing wong cilik. This framing strongly influences the way of Jokowi's constructing policy marked his commitment to meet with his campaign promise.

But at the same time this new policy inevitably possesses challenges particularly in Indonesia's relation with other ASEAN members. Jakarta's active role in the region has embraced important and strategic position among the neighborhood. ASEAN is the cornerstone for Indonesia's foreign policy. It is also quite understandable if ASEAN put more expectation from Indonesian foreign policy. Provided with largest population and rich resources, Indonesia is central for ASEAN neighboring countries. However, in order to avoid misunderstanding from other ASEAN members, this article argue that it is still necessary for Indonesia to make sure its diplomatic position in the region.

Inward-looking foreign policies to certain degree bring out international concerns for Indonesia's way in managing disputes with neighbors states. Reflecting from what Jokowi's did on sinking vessels and death penalty, he seemed very stick and gave limited space to solve the case through diplomatic way. It is true that policy like sinking illegal fishing vessels or death penalty over drug traffickers is to fulfill Jokowi's commitment to domestic audience. But it is necessary to anticipate any potential implication in shaping Jakarta's performance in the international community. Jokowi's inward-looking foreign policies might give impression that Jakarta cares less for regional diplomacy. It is one of important challenges that Indonesia has to deal with carefully in order to avoid wrong diplomatic gesture. Taking active engagement in international forums would raise benefit to balance the worries of international community.

For the ASEAN context, this article also notices that maintaining this situation for the long term is also not good for Indonesia's interaction in the region. The perception could move to any direction without control. Jokowi's administration should take careful action in defining pro-people diplomacy in order to avoid signaling a wrong message to other ASEAN members. It is also necessary for Jakarta to keep its active role not only through bilateral level but also multilateral forums.

This article has captured that Jakarta under pro-people diplomacy is still active in instrumentalizing its international presence through Asia Africa strategic partnership, Asia Pacific regional cooperation, and Organization of Islamic Cooperation. These are important to show Jakarta commitment in handling regional and global issues while the strategic focus of pro-people diplomacy is to boost domestic benefits.

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