

INDONESIA'S FOREIGN POLICY UNDER PRABOWO: A SHIFT TOWARD STRATEGIC ASSERTIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's foreign policy has traditionally followed the *Bebas dan Aktif* (Free and Active) doctrine, emphasizing neutrality while actively engaging in global affairs. However, the election of Prabowo Subianto in 2024 marks a significant shift toward a more assertive and strategic approach. While maintaining Joko Widodo's focus on economic diplomacy, Prabowo has expanded Indonesia's priorities to include national security, defense, and global partnerships. His administration has actively pursued key initiatives such as joining BRICS, strengthening maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, and expanding military cooperation with major global powers. This study employs a qualitative thematic analysis of existing literature to examine these policy shifts and their implications for Indonesia's position on the world stage. The findings indicate that while economic diplomacy remains a central pillar, Prabowo's approach reflects a broader vision that integrates economic interests with national security and strategic alliances. His leadership emphasizes Indonesia's sovereignty, defense modernization, and a stronger regional and global presence. By balancing economic partnerships with increased military engagement, Prabowo aims to position Indonesia as an influential middle power capable of shaping regional and international dynamics. Overall, this study highlights how Indonesia's foreign policy under Prabowo represents a transition from economic pragmatism to a more comprehensive strategy that reinforces national interests while fostering strategic global collaborations.

Keywords: foreign policy, democratic government, doctrine, strategic partnerships, diplomacy

ABSTRAK

Kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia secara tradisional mengikuti doktrin Bebas dan Aktif, yang menekankan netralitas sekaligus keterlibatan aktif dalam urusan global. Namun, terpilihnya Prabowo Subianto sebagai presiden pada tahun 2024 menandai pergeseran signifikan menuju pendekatan yang lebih tegas dan strategis. Sambil mempertahankan fokus Joko Widodo pada diplomasi ekonomi, Prabowo telah memperluas prioritas Indonesia untuk mencakup keamanan nasional, pertahanan, dan kemitraan global. Pemerintahannya secara aktif mendorong inisiatif utama seperti bergabung dengan BRICS, memperkuat keamanan maritim di kawasan Indo-Pasifik, dan memperluas kerja sama militer dengan kekuatan global utama. Studi ini menggunakan analisis tematik kualitatif terhadap literatur yang ada untuk mengkaji perubahan kebijakan tersebut serta dampaknya terhadap posisi Indonesia di panggung dunia. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun diplomasi ekonomi tetap menjadi pilar utama, pendekatan Prabowo mencerminkan visi yang lebih luas yang mengintegrasikan kepentingan ekonomi dengan keamanan nasional dan aliansi strategis. Kepemimpinannya

menekankan kedaulatan Indonesia, modernisasi pertahanan, serta kehadiran yang lebih kuat di tingkat regional dan global. Dengan menyeimbangkan kemitraan ekonomi dan keterlibatan militer yang lebih besar, Prabowo bertujuan untuk menempatkan Indonesia sebagai kekuatan menengah yang berpengaruh dalam membentuk dinamika regional dan internasional. Secara keseluruhan, studi ini menyoroti bagaimana kebijakan luar negeri Indonesia di bawah kepemimpinan Prabowo mengalami transisi dari pragmatisme ekonomi ke strategi yang lebih komprehensif dalam memperkuat kepentingan nasional dan membangun kolaborasi strategis di tingkat global.

Kata kunci: kebijakan luar negeri, pemerintahan demokratis, doktrin, kemitraan strategis, diplomasi

1. Introduction

Indonesia's evolving foreign policy must be understood within the broader context of growing geopolitical uncertainty, intensifying great power rivalries, and rising security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. These developments have created a pressing need for strategic recalibration. In response to this, President Prabowo Subianto, elected in 2024, has initiated a shift from his predecessor's economy-centric diplomacy toward a more assertive and security-oriented foreign policy approach.

Indonesia claims its identity as a democratic nation based on the fundamental principles of *Pancasila*, which emphasize five main pillars in governance while also serving as a legacy in achieving national aspirations. "*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*" (Belief in Almighty God) is the first pillar, affirming that Indonesia upholds spiritual values and religious freedom while prioritizing tolerance and national harmony. The second pillar is "*Kemanusiaan yang Adil dan Beradab*" (Just and Civilized Humanity), which highlights the importance of respecting human rights and ensuring fair treatment for every individual without

discrimination. The third pillar is "*Persatuan Indonesia*" (The Unity of Indonesia), which serves as the nation's distinctive identity in maintaining nationalism and unity. This is then reflected in the motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" (Unity in Diversity), which reinforces the importance of pluralism and harmony amidst the country's rich anthropological diversity of ethnicities, religions, races, and cultures. The fourth pillar is "*Kerakyatan yang Dipimpin oleh Hikmat Kebijaksanaan dalam Permusyawaratan/Perwakilan*" (Democracy Led by Wisdom in Deliberation and Representation), which emphasizes that sovereignty resides in the hands of the people and is realized through systems and democratic patterns, such as elections, active participation in decision-making, government oversight, and a strong *trias politica* system.

At the same time, "*Keadilan Sosial bagi Seluruh Rakyat Indonesia*" (Social Justice for All Indonesian People) forms the fifth pillar, which articulates the equal distribution of welfare and opportunities for all citizens, focusing on equitable economic development, strengthening the political

sector, and enhancing national resilience to maintain stability and sovereignty in facing global challenges and its realities.

With this foundation, Indonesia continues to strive to strengthen its role at both regional and international levels. As one of the most populous countries in the world and the largest economy in Southeast Asia, Indonesia's political and economic developments have significant impacts on the Indo-Pacific region and the broader global landscape. In foreign policy, Indonesia has long adhered to the *Bebas dan Aktif* (Free and Active) doctrine, which assures the importance of maintaining neutrality while actively engaging in various global issues.

However, the recent election of Prabowo Subianto as president in 2024 marks a significant shift in Indonesia's foreign policy direction. Many anticipate that he will adopt a more assertive and strategic approach, emphasizing national sovereignty and security alongside economic interests. His strong stance reflects a desire to enhance Indonesia's role in global politics while ensuring that national interests remain protected in an increasingly complex international landscape.

Before serving as president, Prabowo Subianto held the position of Minister of Defense under Joko Widodo's administration. His background in defense has influenced his foreign policy direction, which continues the economic approach of his predecessor but with a greater emphasis on security and strategic partnerships. During Joko Widodo's presidency, Indonesia's foreign policy was

driven by economic priorities, focusing on infrastructure development, trade agreements, and foreign investment.

Meanwhile, in his first 100 days in office, Prabowo demonstrated his commitment to continuing these economic initiatives while also expanding Indonesia's focus on defense, security, and geopolitical alliances. At the beginning of his administration, he conducted a series of diplomatic visits to strengthen Indonesia's position on the international political landscape and enhance strategic relationships with key global partners. This evolution in foreign policy reflects a shift from the previous administration's economy-centered approach toward a broader and more assertive strategy, aiming to position Indonesia as a major regional power. This study argues that these changes can be understood through a constructivist framework, which highlights how Indonesia's national identity and foreign policy priorities continue to evolve in response to global challenges and opportunities.

The objective of this paper is to explicate Prabowo's foreign policy inclination, positioning them as a strategic evolution from those of his predecessor. The main goal is to depict Prabowo as a visionary and decisive leader who seeks to strengthen Indonesia's sovereignty while pursuing global partnerships predicated on economic and security well-being.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Indonesia as a regional powerhouse

Over the years and since its independence, Indonesia has been growing as a regional powerhouse that has influenced Asia's political and economic dynamics. Indonesia has the largest and most populous economy in Southeast Asia, which implies that it has a significant role in the region's economic growth (Cahya et al, 2023). Within this context, Indonesia assumed the leadership of the ASEAN body in 2023, and this underscored its commitment to the region's economic growth. The country is poised to drive the region's growth and enhance economic resilience through its abundant natural resources, strategic location, and youthful workforce. The country's foreign policy approach is evident in its interaction with neighbors within ASEAN. In its chair period, Indonesia pursued priorities aligned with its national agenda, which relied on sustainable development and digital transformation to pursue post-pandemic economic recovery (Hourn, 2024).

From this context, the country is positioned as a significant influence within the region's economic affairs, which means that its political dynamics also influence international issues. Qudsiati and Sholeh (n.d.) also note that Indonesia is strategically placed within the geopolitical context since it is at the meeting points of two oceans. Based on its position, the country impacts maritime security issues, which means that the regional security architecture is incomplete without Indonesia's support. The larger implication is that its foreign policy

approach has national and international significance in economic, political, and security matters.

Although Indonesia is considered one of the economic powerhouses in the region, it is still regarded as a middle power within international affairs due to its limitations in certain areas. Wicaksana and Karim (2022) extend the perspective that Indonesia is a middle power, taking a position between the stronger and weaker nations. The article notes that Indonesia's situation as a middle power is due to its limited military and economic capabilities, which affect its ability to control the external environment. Much as this is the case, Wicaksana and Karim (2022) caution against viewing Indonesia merely as an object of the influence and interests of larger powers. Rather, the country remains an active member of the international community despite its challenges in exercising influence through multilateral diplomacy, mainly in managing its immediate region and global cooperation. It is expected that Indonesia's continuous engagement in these areas will help elevate its position within the hierarchy of the international actors.

The article by Wicaksana and Karim (2022) effectively situates Indonesia's position both regionally and globally in a way that captures its influence and capabilities. As a middle power, Indonesia adopts a diplomatic approach that contributes to a security environment predicated on a rules-based order as its vital infrastructure while having cooperative

diplomacy as a favored approach. In this context, Indonesia's foreign policy orientation shapes its relationships with other actors in the international system, reflecting its position as a middle power.

2.2. Free and Active Doctrine

Since gaining independence, Indonesia has adhered to the Free and Active doctrine. As noted by Simatupang and Panggabean (2022), this doctrine has guided Indonesia's foreign policy since 1948, although it has been influenced by the personalities and leadership styles of the country's presidents. The *Free and Active* doctrine is formally enshrined in Article 3 of Law No. 37/1999 on Foreign Relations, and was adopted during the Cold War era, a period characterized by the intense rivalry and conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. In this context, Indonesia sought to avoid alignment with either bloc and instead embraced a stance of neutrality.

The article by Simatupang and Panggabean (2022) explain that the concept of 'free' meant Indonesia's non-involvement in military alliances, as was the case during the Cold War. The notion of 'active' referred to the country's commitment to pursuing peace and avoiding conflicts that could have escalated tensions during the Cold War. Despite the restraint preferred by the Republic of Indonesia, President Sukarno adopted a confrontational approach in light of the need to promote communism within the region (Syarip, 2020). Even so, subsequent regimes have sought to remain

within the confines of the 'Free and Active' doctrine while actively engaging in international affairs. Essentially, this policy approach has been a defining element of Indonesia's foreign relations for decades but has also been subject to evolution in different areas.

Much as the 'Free and Active' doctrine was adopted during a period in which Indonesia sought to maintain neutrality, its policy approach has not been passive in any way. The notion of passivity in Indonesia's foreign policy may stem from its efforts to avoid conflict with other nations over ideological differences. Within this context, the free and active doctrine has emphasized independence while pursuing outcomes that promote social justice, well-being, and lasting peace. Simatupang and Panggabean (2022) articulate the idea that Indonesia's political stance leans towards the support of international efforts to maintain world peace based on the principle of independence.

The notion of independence refers to a country's freedom any forms of colonial domination, as well as its ability to make decisions in the international arena without pressures from other actors. Indonesia has been emphatic about the need for countries to maintain their sovereignty while making foreign policy decisions, which are pegged on advancing their well-being and that of the global political landscape.

In this regard, Indonesia has been pursuing diplomatic engagements to advance its economic and security position, particularly within the ASEAN region.

Highlighting the active role of the foreign policy that has defined the country for decades, Syarip (2020) notes that the country participated in seven free trade agreements within the region. Furthermore, Indonesia has also been exploring further engagements and agreements with other countries, including China and South Korea.

It is postulated that Indonesia has leveraged the use of free trade agreements to achieve its foreign policy objective of maintaining geopolitical and geoeconomic relevance. From this perspective, Indonesia has avoided a passive policy stance, maintaining neutrality while emphasizing the need for independent decision-making and participating in actions that strengthen its regional position.

2.3. Joko Widodo's Foreign Policy Approach

While Indonesia has consistently relied on a free and active foreign policy approach, each president has pursued it from a different perspective, with Joko Widodo adopting an economic-driven inclination. Ascending to the presidency in 2014 with limited experience in foreign affairs, Widodo was initially expected to focus more on domestic issues. Domestically, Widodo's first term was characterized by significant economic growth despite the weakening of global growth and declining world trade (Negara, 2019).

Negara (2019) further notes that Widodo managed to ensure a 5% economic growth annually between 2014 and 2018,

contributing to a rise in Indonesia's GDP to USD 1 trillion by 2017. This progress was largely attributed to reforms introduced by the president, such as reducing bureaucratic red tape and improving the ease of doing business in Indonesia.

While there were speculations that Widodo would focus solely on the domestic front, he defied such expectations by pursuing a robust foreign policy framework that also predicted the enhancement of the global economic standing of the country (Setiawan, 2024). This policy was defined by the establishment of multilateral and bilateral trade agreements, alongside efforts in attracting foreign direct investments in Indonesia. An example is the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement, whose implementation led to progress in exports of products such as rubber, plastics, and mineral products. Overall, Widodo has been persistent in achieving economic growth through a combination of internal reforms and the use of an active foreign policy framework that attracted investment in the country.

Beyond attracting foreign direct investment, Widodo's policy was also predicated on infrastructural development through global partnerships. Widodo earned the reputation of being an 'infrastructure president' due to his emphasis on the country's infrastructure as a means to facilitate sustained economic growth. According to Setiawan (2024), infrastructural development was a central component of Widodo's economic

diplomacy, as this approach would enhance Indonesia's global economic connectivity. Importantly, this economic approach remained aligned with the free and active doctrine, as there was a need to ensure the nation's economic well-being. Setiawan (2024) further notes that infrastructure development were intended to attract foreign direct investments from countries such as Japan and China.

This approach led to strategic collaborations, such as developing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with China. The BRI project is an approach to replacing ASEAN regionalism, promoting complex regional infrastructure and industrial cooperation beyond the region (Rosyidin & Pattipeilohy, 2020). Increased engagement with China also reflected a response to its increasing power and influence on global issues, prompting Indonesia to pursue partnerships beyond ASEAN. The association between Indonesia and China faced criticism, particularly regarding concerns over debt dependency and the potential erosion of national sovereignty (Setiawan, 2024).

The potential inability to repay Chinese loans raised concerns about increasing Indonesia's financial vulnerability. However, Widodo conceived this as the most potent way of enhancing the country's competitiveness while attracting foreign direct investment. Japan also emerged as a strategic partner in developing maritime infrastructure and the advancement of Indonesia's manufacturing capabilities.

Ultimately, this position made Widodo a leader committed to ensuring the economic well-being of Indonesia regardless of the countries he had to cooperate with.

Despite Indonesia's preference for a defensive strategy of foreign policy, it was under Widodo's leadership that the country adopted a more precise and assertive approach in pursuing its objectives. Rosyidin and Pattipeilohy (2020) refer to this assertiveness as a *realpolitik* approach that inspired Widodo's international affairs experts, given his limited experience in foreign policy. The author further note that Widodo did not assume the presidency with any strong views on the position that Indonesia should assume in the world, nor did he demonstrate a particular passion for the subject. As a result, experts who were part of his government pushed much of the foreign policy developments. Regardless, this led to the establishing of a more assertive Indonesia in the international political arena, with a clear emphasis on safeguarding national sovereignty and resisting any pursuits that threaten the country's domestic interests.

2.4. Prabowo's Foreign Policy Approach

The election of Prabowo Subianto as the President of Indonesia has been regarded as a signal in the potential policy shift in foreign affairs, given the leadership approach that contrasts with that of Joko Widodo. Subianto was inaugurated in October 2024, and according to Rizal Sukma, an advisor to President Widodo,

Subianto is expected to become a ‘foreign policy president,’ just as Widodo was known as an ‘infrastructure president’ (Peterson, 2024). It is anticipated that Subianto will adopt a more hands-on approach in the country’s foreign policy. The main focus areas are repairing the country’s reputation as a democracy and reinforcing its non-aligned foreign policy stance. The Widodo administration contributed to the damages experienced in Indonesia’s foreign policy areas.

While functioning as defense minister in Widodo’s administration, Subianto had already laid the foundation for an active foreign policy approach. The then-minister had visited Europe, Middle East and countries such as Malaysia, China, and Japan to promote the idea that his administration would focus on its ASEAN neighbors and those from other regions. Subianto’s background is considered to impact his foreign policy inclinations significantly. Unlike his predecessor, Subianto spent much of his childhood outside of Indonesia in countries such as England, Malaysia, Thailand, Swaziland, and Singapore since his father was forced into exile during Sukarno’s presidency (Anwar, 2024).

Other aspects including his military education and position in the previous cabinet, have further enhanced Subianto’s geostrategic and geopolitical understanding. As the elected president, Subianto traveled extensively, visiting sixteen countries between April to September 2024, indicating

his inclination towards high-level diplomacy.

Further, Prabowo indirectly criticized his predecessor’s approach by noting that its neighbors did not respect Indonesia and that it had limited hard power, and a lot needed to be improved to develop a strong Indonesia. In this regard, one can view Prabowo’s foreign policy as likely to be influenced by the realist perspective on an anarchical international system defined by pursuing self-interests by nations. To this effect, there will be an emphasis on Indonesia’s well-being while also promoting an assertive image in its international relations.

2.5. The Constructivist Theory in Foreign Policy

The constructivist perspective in international relations and foreign policy is predicated on the view that human awareness and consciousness are at the core of international politics. Wicaksana (n.d.) contends that constructivism is not a theory like realism or the balance of power but rather involves an expansion of the scope of international relations by embracing factors and actors that liberalism and realism fail to consider.

The author also notes that the ideals of constructivism are rooted in the philosophy of Kant, Weber, and Vico, where there is the conception that God creates the natural world while humans make a historical one and can, therefore, change it as they wish. Thus, human actions and views of the world

largely determine the outcomes of the international political system within a constructivist framework.

While constructivism emphasizes the essence of the state's primacy, there is also an acknowledgment of the role of other actors, including the social community, state agencies, think tanks, and international organizations. Within this perspective, constructivists appreciate the influence of human awareness and consciousness in international politics and relations between nations. In this regard, the implication is that a leader's view of the world will affect the type of policies they pursue in international relations.

Beyond this, identity plays a critical role in shaping how states interpret global events and adopt foreign policy responses (Erbas, 2022). In Indonesia's case, decades of interaction with both Western and Eastern powers—while maintaining its non-aligned stance—have contributed to the construction of an identity as an independent, sovereign, and peace-oriented middle power. This identity is rooted in the Free and Active doctrine and is reinforced by Indonesia's historical resistance to alignment during the Cold War, its leadership within ASEAN, and its consistent advocacy for equitable global governance. Under Prabowo, this identity is being reinterpreted to include a stronger emphasis on strategic autonomy, defense modernization, and global assertiveness. While still committed to independence and neutrality, Prabowo's administration leverages this constructed identity to justify

a more proactive global role—joining BRICS, deepening defense ties, and reinforcing maritime security in the Indo-Pacific—without abandoning Indonesia's foundational principles. This evolving identity informs the country's efforts to balance global partnerships with sovereignty, as it seeks to assert itself as a resilient and influential middle power in the face of growing geopolitical rivalry.

This foreign policy transition also reflects a shift in Indonesia's constructed identity—from a passive non-aligned actor to a confident, sovereign middle power asserting itself in global and regional arenas.

3. Research Method

The paper employs a qualitative approach to answering the research question. The qualitative method analyzes existing studies, articles, and publications on foreign policy in Indonesia during and before Prabowo's presidency. The qualitative approach is preferred in social sciences because it helps explicate phenomena by analyzing human experiences, values, and beliefs. Oranga and Matere (2023) contend that qualitative research helps gain a deeper, more comprehensive, and detailed description of phenomena from non-numeric data rather than hypothesis testing.

The preference for this approach in this study is because it allows the researcher to explore the issue from different perspectives and consider the insight and opinions of others on the subject. The essence of the research method is to explain the principles

of and how Prabowo's foreign policy approach compares to that of his predecessors.

In line with the qualitative approach, the sources for analysis were retrieved from articles with high-quality evidence. The researcher used the web to search for peer-reviewed articles on foreign policy in Indonesia. Some search terms used include 'free and active doctrine in Indonesia,' 'foreign policy in Indonesia over the years,' 'Prabowo's foreign policy approach,' and 'Indonesia's relations with other nations.' The search yielded thousands of articles and other publications, and an overview of the abstract helped identify the most relevant sources to be used for analysis. Following the identification of the articles, the next stage is the analysis, where the researcher relies on a thematic approach that explicates the contents of the articles. The data analysis is presented in the section below, leading to the conclusion.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Prabowo's Asta Cita Vision

In defining a framework to guide the implementation of his strategy, Prabowo has inclined towards Asta Cita, a model guided by eight vision areas. Prabowo has noted over time that attaining progress in Indonesia is a formidable journey requiring an unwavering vision. To this end, he outlined the eight quick impact programs defined as visions to ensure Indonesia attains its goals and expectations.

The first vision is to strengthen the

foundation of Pancasila ideology, human rights, and democracy (Subianto, 2024). Under this vision, the Pancasila ideology is one where there is a need to strike a balance between the interests of society and those of the people. Essentially, the vision is guided by the need to ensure that the interests of the rich and elite do not prevail over those of the weak in society.

The second vision relates to consolidating the national defense and security system while fostering self-reliance (Subianto, 2024). Within this vision, there is an appreciation of the need to have the capabilities of hard power while also focusing on the country's self-sufficiency in areas such as energy, food, water, digital economy, blue economy, and even the Syariah economy.

Beyond this, the third aspect is the continuation of infrastructure development while also improving employment opportunities. Achieving this vision is through the country's commitment to promoting entrepreneurship and expanding the creative industries. Subianto also recognizes the need to ensure developments in all areas that align with economic well-being and the empowerment of marginalized groups.

The fourth vision denotes the commitment to enhancing human resource development, gender equality, and the promotion of the sciences, technology, education, health, and sports achievement.

Meanwhile, the fifth vision emphasizes the development of natural resource-based

industries and downstream processing that lead to domestic value addition (Subianto, 2024). The vision is guided by the elements of nationalism and the essence of building domestic capabilities to enhance the country's competitiveness and self-sufficiency.

The sixth vision eradicates poverty by focusing on empowerment at the grassroots levels while pursuing economic growth and equity. The goal is to create a more balanced economy by improving infrastructure, supporting small businesses, and expanding access to essential services. Through strengthening local economies, this approach aims to reduce poverty and ensure that economic progress is felt by all, not just in major cities but across the entire nation.

Under the seventh vision, reform intensifies to help the country address corruption, gambling, drugs, and smuggling issues. This focuses on strengthening political, legal, and bureaucratic reforms to create a more transparent and effective government. By improving law enforcement and governance, this vision aims to build a safer, fairer, and more accountable Indonesia.

The last vision is to ensure that Indonesia is a prosperous and just society by enhancing harmony in the areas of environmental, natural, cultural, and religious tolerance. While these eight Asta Cita visions reflect domestic priorities, several are already being translated into Indonesia's foreign policy under Prabowo. For example, the second

vision—consolidating national defense and fostering self-reliance—is reflected in Prabowo's pursuit of military partnerships with Russia and India, as well as the increased defense budget and joint maritime exercises in the Indo-Pacific. The fifth vision—developing natural resource-based industries and downstream processing—is evident in Indonesia's decision to join BRICS, which aims to create more balanced global economic relations and reduce dependence on Western financial institutions. These policy moves show that Asta Cita is more than a rhetorical framework; it underpins Indonesia's strategic efforts to assert economic sovereignty, strengthen national defense, and realign its global partnerships to support long-term national interests. Through these actions, Prabowo's administration is actively operationalizing Asta Cita as a guiding principle in shaping Indonesia's evolving role on the global stage.

4.2. Indonesia's Entry into BRICS

As one of the policy initiatives under Prabowo, Indonesia has become a member of BRICS, which aligns with the essence of strategic partnerships geared towards the country's economic expansion. BRICS is an organization composed of major global southern countries, and they share the same objectives with Indonesia regarding establishing a just economic order and movement from the US dollar's reliance on international transactions (Anwar, 2024).

Indonesia's foreign policy under

Prabowo is seen as one that seeks to further the economic progress achieved under Joko Widodo through the exploration of strategic new partnerships. Beyond this, the inclination towards BRICS indicates that Indonesia is not approaching foreign policy within the context of parochial engagements but is rather adopting a globalized approach. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that Indonesia's membership in BRICS is a strategic approach towards improving collaborations and cooperation with other developing nations, pegged on sustainable development, mutual respect, and equality (AlJazeera, 2025).

The BRICS group comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Ethiopia. Indonesia's accession into this bloc under Prabowo is not merely symbolic—it builds on a history of strategic engagements with several BRICS members. For example, Indonesia has maintained strong economic and infrastructure partnerships with China, particularly through projects initiated under the BRI (Setiawan, 2024; Rosyidin & Pattipeilohy, 2020). With India, Indonesia has increased maritime and defense cooperation, including joint naval exercises and strategic dialogues focused on Indo-Pacific security (Saha, 2024). Indonesia also conducted joint military drills with Russia in the Java Sea in late 2024, reflecting a growing defense alignment beyond its traditional partners (Saha, 2024). In the Gulf region, trade volumes with the United Arab Emirates have expanded, with

recent investment agreements in energy and logistics aligning with Prabowo's economic diplomacy goals (Anwar, 2024). These interactions provide a strong foundation for Indonesia's entry into BRICS and demonstrate that Prabowo's administration is actively pursuing diversified global partnerships.

The countries have some of the fastest-growing economies and seek to destabilize the Western-imposed structures, impeding effective business engagements. Indonesia's membership in BRICS allows it to access alternative financial institutions to those of the West while also enhancing the country's bargaining power in investment and international trade negotiations. Further, it indicates a foreign policy approach where the country intends to actively participate in global issues and promote a fair and inclusive structure. The active extra role played by Prabowo in international relations aligns with the constructivist view where the leader's identity impacts their approach to foreign policy.

4.3. Indo-Pacific Maritime Strategy

Much as Prabowo's administration is pursuing collaborations beyond the ASEAN region, maritime security is strongly emphasized within the Indo-Pacific region. Within the Indo-Pacific region, Indonesia has to deal with China's territorial claims and military activities in the South China Sea, which have raised tensions with other ASEAN nations. According to Pradnyana (2024), while Indonesia does not have a

direct claim to the South China Sea, the nine-dash line by China overlaps with Indonesia's economic zone around Natuna Island. The implication is that this will likely create a potential future conflict.

As part of Asta Cita's vision, Prabowo has emphasized strengthening the country's military capabilities. Within this context, the administration has taken steps toward bolstering its security through a higher budgetary allocation to the defense sector. The country has been engaging in joint military drills with the US to enhance its security capabilities (Raditio, 2024). Even so, the nature and extent of this cooperation are likely to be limited, considering Indonesia's position as a non-aligned country.

Prabowo has also expressed optimism that China and the US can resolve their rivalries in approaches that do not threaten the Indo-Pacific region's stability. Essentially, the foreign policy approach by Prabowo is largely focused on strengthening the Indo-Pacific region rather than a confrontational engagement.

Despite this, Prabowo's actions and sentiments indicate an inclination to enhance the country's military capabilities. Prabowo is wary of the likelihood that Indonesia, a nation that still needs many improvements, may be subject to the whims of powerful nations. The president is shaping his foreign policy approach to reflect a strengthening of the country's security and defense sectors.

Based on constructivist ideals, Prabowo's history as a defense minister

played a significant role in achieving the nation's security goals and pursuits. Effectively, Prabowo's foreign policy approach will continue to reflect an inclination towards ensuring maritime security.

4.4. Military and Defense Partnerships

Prabowo has pursued military and defense partnerships with Russia and India to build its capabilities. As noted, Prabowo served as defense minister and expressed displeasure at Indonesia's relative position due to its limited military capabilities. In November 2024, Indonesia conducted a joint bilateral military drill with Russia in the Java Sea to improve diplomatic relations (Saha, 2024). Prabowo has been seeking to improve relations with Russia, which is part of the disinclination toward the United States.

Vision two under Asta Cita is seen to be predicated on consolidating the national defense and security systems and pursuing military and defense partnerships with Russia and India. The partnerships are also seen as part of avoiding confrontations with China while countering regional security threats. The proactivity evidenced by Prabowo towards this end is part of his assertiveness in pursuing partnerships meant to strengthen rather than weaken Indonesia's position in regional and international affairs.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of evidence on Indonesia's past and current foreign policy, it is evident that Prabowo's approach

indicates a strategic evolution from Joko Widodo's economic-driven policy. The actions pursued by Prabowo seek to depict his effectiveness and strategic foresight in international diplomacy, positioning him as a decisive and visionary leader who strengthens Indonesia's sovereignty while fostering balanced global partnerships.

Prabowo's first few months in office have been defined by the pursuit of partnerships at a global level, such as through entry into BRICS and engagement with Russia and India in strategic areas. The entry into BRICS seeks to build on Widodo's economic-driven approach as Indonesia's membership grants it access to better financial tools and new markets in the Global South.

Essentially, this will play a significant role in guaranteeing the country's economic ascendancy. Also evident in Prabowo's foreign policy has been his inclination towards military and defense partnerships that elevate Indonesia's position. The approach reflects the leader's influence in foreign policy, considering his past in the defense ministry, and seeks to assert the country's capabilities and dominance. By bolstering its security capabilities, Indonesia will have better defense mechanisms considering the increasing tensions in the South China Sea. To this end, Prabowo is insistent on guaranteeing the sovereignty of Indonesia and pursuing assertiveness in international relations as part of being influential in the global political system.

From a constructivist perspective,

Prabowo's foreign policy orientation is not merely a reaction to external pressures but a reflection of Indonesia's evolving identity in the international system. His strategic assertiveness is shaped by a reinterpretation of Indonesia's long-held values—such as sovereignty and non-alignment—into a more proactive and globally engaged posture. This identity-based approach helps explain why his administration seeks to redefine Indonesia's role from a traditionally neutral actor to a more influential middle power committed to shaping regional and global outcomes.

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