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## Joko Widodo's 'Bebas-Aktif' Foreign Policy Approach: Continuity and Change

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### Abstract

Unlike his predecessors, Indonesian President Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo was unusually inward looking in his foreign policy approach in his first term (2014-2019). Jokowi often skipped important international diplomacy events, preferring to focus his energy on handling domestic affairs. It resulted in some observers lamented that his choice had degraded Indonesia's diplomatic standing internationally. Since the beginning of his second term in 2019, Jokowi has started to be more active in his foreign policy approach. He began to participate in international diplomatic events more than before, and even he has been more active in contributing to international affairs, including in contributing to promote peace. This article argues that foreign policy under the Jokowi presidency is the manifestation of continuity and change.

**Keywords:** Indonesia foreign policy, Joko Widodo, *bebas-aktif*, international diplomacy

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## Introduction

Upon assuming the Indonesian presidency in 2014, Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo declared the discontinuation of his predecessor Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's foreign policy strategy, known as "thousand friends, zero enemies" (Lundry 2018). The strategy focuses on increasing the country's presence in international forums. Instead of following his predecessor's policy, Jokowi has advocated for a more transparent transactional approach to benefit Indonesia (Lundry 2018; Mietzner 2015), resulting in a more inward-looking focus. Throughout his first term in government, Jokowi's inward-looking *bebas-aktif* approach to foreign policy became evident. He sent his then-vice president, Jusuf Kalla, to represent Indonesia at international meetings at multilateral forums. In contrast, Jokowi actively negotiates bilateral agreements with many foreign state counterparts for economic reasons (Anwar 2019). Consequently, Jokowi's foreign policy strategy diminished Indonesia's standing in international forums (Rosyidin 2019). This focus leads to less clearly defined positions on specific foreign policy issues, less Indonesian leadership in international affairs, and perhaps a more nationalistic response to some international disputes (Connelly 2014). It was earlier predicted that Jokowi would likely adopt a foreign policy that is more Indonesia-centric (Mietzner 2015, 134). Given Jokowi's early unwillingness to participate in international forums, primarily those hosted by the United Nations (UN), the opinions of foreign academics seem reasonable.

However, Jokowi's foreign policy approach has gradually shifted during his second term in office (2019-2024). He has remotely participated in several international forums since the COVID-19 outbreak, and has personally attended international forums such as the G20 in Italy in 2021, COP26 in the United Kingdom, and the Arabian Countries Conference in Dubai (BPMI Setpres 2021). Additionally, he has visited two countries in conflict, Ukraine and Russia (Shira 2022) on an unexpected mission of peace, leading to subsequent polarisation in his home country

and criticism from foreign commentators. Despite the controversy, Jokowi's visit to countries in conflict signified a shift in his foreign policy, from passive to active. This could catalyse Indonesia to restore its international role, as Jokowi has an excellent opportunity to creatively define the *bebas-aktif* idea as outlined in the Foreign Relations Act of 2009. The practical meaning of *bebas-aktif* is that Indonesia does not desire to join any international power bloc but will actively participate in and encourage peace missions in any location (Sukma 1995).

This article discusses Jokowi's strategy to revive the *bebas-aktif* foreign policy from the standpoint of his pragmatist approach and domestic economic focus in his first term in office, to broaden the approach in his current second term. His approach now includes aims such as optimising the nation's strength in the capital of economic, social, and cultural resources to expand the middle power in peace and world harmony maintenance.

The structure of this paper is as follows. First, it looks at the evolution of *bebas-aktif* foreign policy from its beginnings to the present day. It will be followed with a discussion on the change of Indonesia's foreign policy approach under Jokowi. Following is an examination of the continuity in Indonesia's foreign policy approach, despite some changes in presidential practice by President Jokowi. The conclusion is a comment on reinstating the *bebas-aktif* foreign policy principle in the context of the 1945 Constitution-mandated international relations and peace missions.

This article argues that foreign policy under the Jokowi presidency is the manifestation of continuity and change. Despite some changes, the practice of Indonesia's *bebas-aktif* foreign policy remains intact because other state apparatuses, including the vice president, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other players in foreign policy, including non-state actors such as Muslim organisations, still continue and nurture the policy's key principles. The only change in the foreign policy approach is the president's personal approach to practicing foreign policy.

## The Evolution of the *Bebas-Aktif* Foreign Policy

A country's foreign policy is determined primarily by two sets of criteria. The first is the country's place within the current operational international political environment, and the second is an economic, social, and political force within the state's borders. These sets of internal and external factors influence foreign policy. However, changes in these determinants cause parallel shifts in a state's foreign policy priorities. Since independence, Indonesia has maintained a stable foreign policy (Batabyal 2002).

It is necessary to examine the evolution of the *bebas-aktif* foreign policy approach in early and modern Indonesia. Thus, it is possible to observe how this principle has withstood foreign challenges faced by each Indonesian leader and how the most recent leader has been able to draw lessons from the past.

*'Rowing Between Two Corals'* (*'Mendayung Diantara Dua Karang'*), the title of founding father Mohammad Hatta's speech on September 2, 1948, in front of the National Working Committee regarding Indonesia's position in international relations, was a metaphor for the Indonesian situation at the time. According to Hatta, Indonesia needed to focus on its domestic interests as a newly independent nation rather than aligning with the United States (US) or the Soviet Union, which had their own agendas. In this aspect, Hatta stressed, Indonesia required substantial assistance from other nations (Hatta 1958). Consequently, he declared on another occasion that Indonesia prefers to have a thousand friends. Considering this, Indonesia will promote peace and foster friendly relations with other nations based on mutual respect. Furthermore, Indonesia must establish diplomatic ties with various countries for economic purposes (Hatta 1953). According to his daughter, Halida Nuria Hatta (2022), Hatta's views on foreign policy framework were influenced by his passionate desire to provide a dignified life for the Indonesian people after a lengthy struggle for independence from colonial rule.

Hatta highlighted the foundations of Indonesia's independent and active foreign policy (*'politik bebas-aktif'* or 'independent and active politics'). Hatta included three necessary premises in his *bebas-aktif* concept. First, the conduct of foreign policy should be founded on the Pancasila (Indonesia's foundational five ideological principles). Second, the objective of foreign policy should be to protect the national interest as outlined by the 1945 Constitution. Third, an autonomous strategy would best support the pursuit of national interest. Indonesia's foreign policy should be conducted pragmatically; that is, it should be "resolved in light of its interests and carried out following the events and facts it must confront" (Hatta 1953).

These three aspects, constituting the 'spirit' of Indonesia's foreign policy, could not be isolated from the national situation background. Hatta stated that, as a young nation, Indonesia required many allies to defend its independence and territorial integrity. In addition, the nation's economy must be sustained to foster its growth. Therefore, Hatta did not want Indonesia to join one of the two polarised powers between the US and the Soviet Union, nor did he want to build a new alliance with third world countries (Hatta 1958). Hatta stated that, despite this, Indonesia would actively participate in the UN's promotion of global peace. He categorically rejected the notion of Indonesian neutrality because neutrality tends to have a negative connotation and is pragmatic to a degree (Hatta 1953).

However, observers of Indonesian foreign policy find studying the *bebas-aktif* premise tedious, as every Indonesian leader executes foreign policy essentially identically. As indicated in Table 1, Indonesian leaders' interpretation of the *bebas-aktif* foreign strategy has been consistent over time, with only minor changes. Confident leaders utilise the *bebas-aktif* policy to obtain economic benefits, while others seek to achieve political status. A few leaders have attempted to pursue both economic and political interests, and only a few have had no interest in repeating their predecessors' focuses.

No	President/Vice President	<i>Bebas-aktif</i> Principle	
		Interpretation	Objective
1	Muhammad Hatta	Anti-colonialism Independence Pragmatism	National interest
2	Sukarno	Anti-colonialism	Political interest
3	Suharto	Pragmatism	Economic growth
4	B.J. Habibie	Human rights	Political interest
5	Abdurrahman Wahid	Realism	Economic interest
6	Megawati Sukarnoputri	Regional outlook	Political interest
7	Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono	'Independent and active plus'	Regional leader

**Table 1.** Interpretation of the *Bebas-Aktif* Foreign Policy by Indonesian Leaders

In his historical analysis of the growth of the *bebas-aktif* concept, Rizal Sukma (1995, 314) describes a constant attempt to produce a great painting in three stages (Hatta, Sukarno, and Suharto). Hatta's original sketch of the three significant components—anti-colonialism, independence, and pragmatism—during the Liberal Democracy period. Sukarno's Guided Democracy emphasised anti-colonialism, and the Suharto's New Order period was the most effective in completing the 'painting', and progressed through two stages. The first emphasised internal strength through economic development, in which pragmatism replaced radicalism; the second adopted a more assertive foreign policy. Suharto believed that pursuing a *bebas-aktif* policy necessitated a stronger focus on pragmatism, and that accomplishing national goals was defined by amassing internal strength through economic growth. From

Suharto's perspective, it was evident that if Indonesia was to be acknowledged by the international world, its capabilities must be strengthened. Internal capacity refers to the country's cultural, economic, and social traits and distinguishing features (Hadiwinata 2008). Considering this perspective, Ann Marie Murphy (2012) presents a detailed argument that Indonesians believe their country's size, strategic location, and internal accomplishments qualify it for a leadership role in international affairs. This belief is embodied in the 1948-promulgated *bebas dan aktif* ideology, which continues to serve as the guiding premise of Indonesian foreign policy. The 'independent' component asserts that Indonesia should determine its foreign policy independent of the dictates of the world's major powers, while the 'active' component asserts that Indonesia should have a significant role in influencing world affairs.

President B.J. Habibie was appointed after Suharto stepped down from power in 1998 due to widespread protests. Habibie's presidency dealt with several complex international issues from the start, including a primary focus on resolving the situation in then-Indonesian-occupied East Timor. Another significant contribution was establishing a solid foundation for robust human rights diplomacy. Through this diplomacy, Indonesia increased its domestic capacity for human rights promotion and protection and paved the way for becoming a key player in global human rights diplomacy (Mulyana 2018).

After Habibie's presidency ended, Abdurrahman Wahid (known as Gus Dur) was elected the country's first democratic leader. Gus Dur's administration pursued a proactive foreign policy, made possible by acquiring the resources necessary for economic recovery and guarantees from the international community about regional issues and enhancing Indonesia's worldwide reputation (Karim 2022). Gus Dur's foreign policy was less extreme than some early blusters would lead one to believe, and ultimately remained traditional and broadly consistent with the New Order direction, though not entirely (Smith 2000). Meanwhile, the following president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, only reiterated her predecessors'

ASEAN-centric foreign policy emphasis (Chakrabarty 2021; E Weatherbee 2005).

However, for Indonesia's sixth president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, foreign policy was one of his most significant accomplishments. Yudhoyono believed that he had transformed Indonesia's traditional foreign policy doctrine of *bebas-aktif* into a new '*bebas dan aktif plus*' ('independent and active plus') concept. Therefore, Yudhoyono often described himself as a 'foreign policy President' more active in that field than his predecessors (with the exception of Sukarno). In Yudhoyono's estimation, this new concept preserved Indonesia's non-bloc stance while extending it by enhancing outreach and involvement. Yudhoyono claimed that, under his leadership, Indonesia had become a "regional power and global actor". As such, Indonesia cannot remain silent but must ponder the fate of the world. There is little doubt that Yudhoyono played a key part in Indonesia's increased international prominence under his leadership (Mietzner 2015).

Altogether, this history illustrates that each Indonesian leader has subjectively interpreted the execution of the *bebas-aktif* principle since Hatta developed the term in 1948 (Weinstein 1976). The subjectivity of Indonesian leaders' perception of *bebas-aktif* foreign policy is triggered by the country's problems in rows between the US and China. Novotny (2010) has explored in depth the challenges that, in various contexts, place Indonesia in a predicament. However, if Indonesia adheres to its *bebas-aktif* principle and maintains its strength, it may be simpler to confront the two rival nations. In addition, the *bebas-aktif* was merely an 'unofficial concept' until the Foreign Relations Act of 2009, when the concept was formally acknowledged. However, this regulation provides no practical explanation of *bebas-aktif* beyond its definition and purpose. Article 4 of the Act only states the technique of implementing foreign policy through innovative, proactive, and anticipatory diplomacy, rather than merely routine and reactive, principled, and stance-oriented, as well as rational and approach-oriented.



## **Change in Indonesia's Bebas-Aktif Foreign Policy**

### **Indonesia's Diminished International Role**

In 2014, Jokowi's ascension as Indonesia's most prominent political figure profoundly affected the country's foreign policy orientation. Initially, it seemed as though Jokowi had no interest in foreign policy. Instead of serving as a president of foreign policy like his predecessor, Yudhoyono, Jokowi pledged to be solely concerned with healthcare, education, transportation, and employment issues (Mietzner 2015). Later, Jokowi's refusal to attend multiple multilateral UN forums held demonstrated his lack of interest in foreign issues. During his initial term in office, Jokowi consistently abstained from attending UN high-level summits for five consecutive years, opting to delegate this responsibility to his vice president, Jusuf Kalla. As a result of Jokowi's reluctance to engage in foreign dialogue, Indonesia's status on the global stage diminished (Rosyidin 2019).

In the realm of politics, Jokowi is a realist. Profit-and-loss calculations are ingrained in his psyche because of his experience as an entrepreneur. He believes that Indonesia must gain from foreign policy. Even when present at international forums, Jokowi frequently uses them to engage in bilateral discussions with other participating nations to benefit investments in domestic economic development. For example, during the G20 Summit in Brisbane in 2014, Jokowi stated that making friends with many countries would benefit Indonesia. In other words, profit should be the driving force behind Indonesia's foreign policy. This viewpoint has implications for Jokowi's diplomatic style, which favours bilateralism over multilateralism. Jokowi was enthusiastic about holding bilateral meetings with delegates at other multilateral forums, including the G20, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the East Asian Summit, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). These bilateral meetings were held to investigate cooperation to reach agreements that

would benefit Indonesia. In addition, Jokowi held 16 bilateral meetings during the G20 Summit in Osaka in June 2019 (Rosyidin 2019). Furthermore, during the ASEAN Summit in Thailand in 2022, Jokowi met with five ASEAN countries in bilateral meetings. The topics covered in these bilateral meetings varied, but economic issues dominated (Rosyidin 2019). Therefore, according to Dewi Fortuna Anwar (2019), the Jokowi administration has prioritised an economic-oriented and pragmatic foreign policy to a greater extent than any other administration since the Suharto regime's early years. Although it is common practice in international relations to conduct bilateral relations through a multilateral forum, they are significant. Multilateral forums represent the greater international community's interests, such as advocating for human values, developing international conventions, and negotiating various international cooperations. Bilateral forums that examine just bilateral strategic concerns cannot fulfil this function. Therefore, multilateral forums are crucial to Indonesia's ability to convey its viewpoint on current and future international issues (Rosyidin 2019).

Nevertheless, from the perspective of economic cost-benefit, multilateralism is inefficient in terms of incentives, as the same agreement is offered to all governments regardless of compliance costs. This issue is mitigated by bilateralism, which allows for more personalised agreements but at the expense of increased transaction costs (Thompson and Verdier 2014). Given this viewpoint, Asher (1962) simplifies multilateral coordination and bilateral financing. Views on multilateral versus bilateral have been extensively debated from various perspectives, yielding pros and downsides. Both approaches have their benefits and challenges (Balogh 1967). As a result, the idea emerged to integrate them into a novel technique called literalism, which blends the two methods. Priority should be given to a multilateral forum addressing a global issue over a bilateral forum, if the forum is furnished with a critical proposal demonstrating the country's stance on the issue.

With Jokowi's visit to Ukraine and Russia in June 2022 and then holding the G20 Presidency, it is time for Indonesia to reassume its international role in supporting the world's sustainable peace (Debarre 2018; Mahmoud and Makoond 2017; Mechoulan et al. 2016) and boosting national well-being through multilateral and bilateral forums (Asher 1962; Black 1976; Mattelaer 2019). Concerning this momentum, implementing the *bebas-aktif* foreign policy should be adapted to maximise the internal capital in general outlooks and earn economic advantages.

Jokowi took on board the total diplomacy concept during his second term in office, whereas his first term was more government-cantered. In his first term, Jokowi's vision and mission were characterised by a pragmatist diplomatic approach based on the *bebas-aktif* idea (Widodo and Kalla 2014). Meanwhile, in his second term, Jokowi reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening Indonesia's leadership in regional and international forums and organizations, including participation in ASEAN and the UN Security Council and prioritising total diplomacy, peace diplomacy, and humanitarian diplomacy to advance national interests (Widodo and Ma'ruf 2019). During several peace mediation efforts throughout his initial tenure, Jokowi exhibited a solid commitment to peace by actively and constructively engaging in resolving the Iran-Saudi Arabia conflict in 2016, the Rohingya problem in Myanmar, and promoting peace in Afghanistan via the Indonesia-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral meeting in 2018. Indonesia also initiated Indo-Pacific concepts for ASEAN to adopt (Rosyidin 2019).

Jokowi's peace mission persisted throughout his second term, during which he visited two conflicting nations, Ukraine and Russia, in June 2022, with dual objectives (Shira 2022). The first mission of Jokowi, as mandated by the 1945 Constitution, was to find a peaceful solution for the conflicting nations, using the *bebas-aktif* principle. Jokowi's second mission was to find another solution to the conflict on behalf of the G20 Presidency by inviting the two nations' presidents to the G20 leaders meeting in Bali, Indonesia, in November 2022. G20 members reacted

differently to this idea, with some in favour, some opposed, and the rest abstaining (Basu 2022; Widakuswar 2022). Ultimately, the summit in was not attended by the two leaders, with their ministers representing them instead.

Nevertheless, international relations analysts expressed divergent viewpoints regarding Jokowi's visit to Ukraine and Russia. According to Marques (2022), the Jokowi visit was more than just image politics; it also tested the Indonesian non-bloc principle. Following his visit, media outlets condemned its ineffectiveness in ending the conflict between the two states for three reasons. First, the goal of Jokowi's journey was not solely for peace but for domestic purposes, namely securing the grain supply network for Indonesia. This visit was essential for guaranteeing Jokowi's domestic political support, as grain is vital to food production (such as instant noodles) in Indonesia. Therefore, if the price of fast food continues to increase, Jokowi would be severely criticised by the opposition (The Conversation 2022). Another critique was that Indonesia has adequate expertise in mediating global conflicts beyond ASEAN states (VOA 2022) or Islamic nations in conflict.

The other crucial factor was that Jokowi's 'figure' was not accepted as a mediator by the conflicting sides. In addition to his lack of interest in foreign issues, he was overlooked by international communities. Diplomatic practice is new to Jokowi, and he views himself first and foremost as a home reformer, not a global statesman. Suppose the domestic changes he has urged in infrastructure and anti-corruption are implemented. In that case, they will facilitate economic growth and allow Indonesia to play a more significant role in international affairs (Connelly 2014).

In response to opponents to his peace mission, Jokowi (2022) stressed that the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has contributed to the global economic and energy crisis, so he flew there to find a solution. This statement marks a shift in his views on an important international issue that he almost ignored during his first term in office. Throughout his

first term, Vice President Jusuf Kalla consistently represented him in international forums. However, in October 2019, after the outbreak of COVID-19, President Jokowi travelled for the first time to three multilateral forums: the G20 meeting in Rome, the COP26 forum in Glasgow, and the Arabian countries meetings in Dubai (BPMI Setpres 2021). Jokowi expressed the Indonesian perspective on the issues in each of these gatherings. The essential fact is that he has changed his mind on the international issue, regardless of the ideas he expressed in those venues.

### **Indonesia's Bebas-Aktif Approach: Continuity**

Despite the change in presidents' individual approaches, Indonesia *bebas-aktif* policy remains intact. Even if a president was largely absent in international diplomacy events, such as Jokowi, the overall approach did not change. Indonesia still pursued an independent and active policy in international affairs. In the absence of Jokowi, his vice-president (Jusuf Kalla) substituted his role by attending, participating, and negotiating in international diplomatic events. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also continued to be active in nurturing the *bebas-aktif* policy, ensuring the principles remain intact.

Non-state actors have increasingly been supportive toward the *bebas-aktif* policy. Former Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan J. Wirajuda introduced the foreign policy reform known as '*diplomasi total*' ('total diplomacy'), which involved all aspects of society and, as such, was reconfigured as something more inclusive and all-encompassing than merely a means for foreign service officers to advance Indonesia's foreign policy objectives. The foreign ministry office defined total diplomacy as the "tool and manner used in diplomacy with the participation of all stakeholders and the exploitation of all channels of influence (*'lini kekuatan'*) or multi-track diplomacy (Keller 2013).

Considering the 1945 Constitution's mandate for total diplomacy, the role of non-state actors is critical in bolstering the *bebas-aktif* principle of foreign policy. Religion, according to Azyumardi Azra (2022), has historically played an important role not just in the lives of believers **but also in civic and political life across Asia. Thus, the roles of Indonesia's** major Islamic organisations Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in peacebuilding can be enhanced by heightening their participation in promoting peace in Muslim countries or communities in conflict, such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Palestine, Mindanao, and southern Thailand. In some instances, the involvement of these two significant Islamic associations is more acceptable than formal missions undertaken by state envoys, particularly at the grassroots level. For instance, in 2018, Indonesia successfully mediated a protracted conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan, followed by the implementation of peace education by organizations such as NU, the most prominent Islamic traditional organization formed in 1929. NU is also ready to send teachers and build schools in Afghanistan. Similarly, Indonesia was able to mediate the lengthy religious war in Mindanao, Philippines, successfully, even though it was not conducted by a government agent alone but by NU and Muhammadiyah figures.

Considering NU's and Muhammadiyah's role, Anak Agung (in Rosyidin 2019) asserts that policymakers' religious attitudes, beliefs, and constituency influence Indonesia's foreign policy. Rosyidin (2019) argues that the personal leader of the country has a significant impact on the foreign policy approach. Hence, this viewpoint is not acceptable in a general context. Considering this perspective, Rizal Sukma (2004) states that Islam had little influence on domestic and international policymaking before the reform era. It is only since the overthrow of the Suharto government in May 1998 that Islam has emerged as a formidable political force in Indonesia. Political Islam has increasingly influenced Indonesian politics and policymaking since the resurgence of Islam.

In other words, religion is a socio-cultural factor which Indonesia must place carefully as the centre of its foreign diplomacy. Religious diplomacy is currently gaining interest among academics alongside post-secular subjects. Religion is usually regarded as a source of conflict and violence, according to Walsh (2012), who also argues that the European Enlightenment caused many to disregard religion's importance in public affairs. However, this is changing for several reasons, including the failure of attempts to create a healthy society without religion. Walsh dares to **actualise Jurgen Habermas' 'post-secular' proposition to introduce religion into the public arena, considering this truth.** He then proposes a more precise analysis: "If we contemplate the search for peace throughout history, we cannot disregard religion's contribution."

Religion has advanced the cause of peace in numerous profound and substantial ways, including its calls for nonviolence, restraint of acquisitiveness, forgiveness, reconciliation, and the just war theory. In addition, Walsh claims that the human desire for peace originated in religious principles universally held by the world's religions and predate modern secular movements or ideologies. Walsh argues that religion's influence on problems of peace and security should be acknowledged for two reasons. Firstly, it is more honest and scientific to recognise the influence of religion in international affairs. Secondly, by identifying and comprehending religion's function, one can limit its detrimental impact while fostering its positive potential.

Many other academics share Walsh's ideas. However, their excellent work on religion as a hopeful answer for international peace and security, and the global crises in general, exists only as academic dialogue. No world leader, not even from Islamic nations, has proposed religion as a global solution within the diplomatic context of the international community. In this context, the Religion Twenty (R20) would be an excellent occasion to propose religion as a global peace and crisis resolution source. As the initiator of this scenario, Indonesia, represented by NU, the country's largest religious association, is particularly interested

in turning it into a form of diplomatic capital in addition to an economic one, as is typical for most industrialised nations (Arifin 2022; Suaedy 2022).

It would not be strange for Indonesia's future diplomatic capital to be religion. In fact, this may be the diplomatic prowess of Indonesia. Most international relations specialists have identified domestic economic strength as crucial in elevating a nation's status and global influence. For example, Haas (2013) agrees that domestic economic strength is crucial for effective diplomacy, while Paalberg (1995) suggests a comparable paradigm for foreign policy, suggesting that the plan for foreign economic leadership should begin at home in the context of macroeconomic and microeconomic policy.

The R20, a forum of religious leaders of the 20 biggest economies in the world (G20), is an excellent point of diplomatic innovation, given that Indonesia's economic situation prevents it from functioning as a diplomatic capital and as a tool for reaching Indonesia's position as a middle-power leader, which contradicts the *bebas-aktif* foreign policy's initial objective. In addition, the R20 has gained pace to implement the mandated diplomatic innovation described in the 2009 Act, which comprises cultural (including religious) and economic sources. In this circumstance, there are two potential strategic options to consider. The pragmatic component of *bebas-aktif* is the recontextualisation from anticipating what Indonesia wants from international relations, to focusing on what Indonesia offers the world. The following stage will harness Indonesia's cultural impact in promoting world peace, particularly in religiously inspired conflicts. Due to Indonesia's inability to play a functional part in global hostilities, such as those between Russia and Ukraine or between China and the US, in the case of Taiwan, Indonesia is likely the most rational actor.

Jokowi's mission to restore Indonesia as a middle power is translated economically through the growth of domestic capital strength; cultural capital, on the other hand, demands a similar strategy. In this



setting, the question is how to sustain moderate Indonesian Islam's peacebuilding diplomacy. Because Islam has always been considered throughout Indonesia's foreign policy history, the Islamic religion has only taken on a simple form (Burhani 2012). In this framework, Indonesian authorities have considered Islam inside foreign policy for domestic political reasons (Sukma 2004).

## Conclusion

This article demonstrates that there is both continuity and change in Indonesia's foreign policy. President Joko Widodo's inward-looking approach in the first term of his presidency was unusual, but it did not mean that the Indonesia's foreign policy completely changed. Although Jokowi personally often skipped international events, Indonesia was represented by its bureaucracy and other state apparatuses, continuing and nurturing the *bebas-aktif* policy through its participation.

Jokowi's first term foreign policy showed a remarkable pragmatic approach that narrowly focused on gaining domestic economic advantages from international relations. During his initial tenure, Jokowi's policies focused on bolstering the domestic economy, particularly developing extensive infrastructure. Nevertheless, because of the constrained budget allocated for the project, he sought foreign investment to facilitate the operation of his initiative. However, now in his second term, Jokowi has focused on encouraging global peacebuilding in the midst of escalating major conflict threatening global economic stability.

Considering this, Indonesia upholds the momentum to sustain the international *bebas-aktif* approach, which aims to demonstrate the country's unwavering dedication to the peace mission outlined in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution. Nevertheless, by rowing between the polarised world political alliances, such as the US, China, and Russia, with a 'pragmatism-modified' foreign policy, Indonesia might create its

purpose to become a middle power outside these significant powers. Indonesia's role in peace mission operations in Asian countries, particularly Muslim countries, is crucial. Since Islam has been featured superficially in Indonesian foreign policy discourse up to this point, it is time for a more in-depth examination. Moreover, religion in Asia has transitioned from private ceremonies to being a subject of public discourse. Furthermore, NU and Muhammadiyah, two significant Islamic religious organisations, support the government's peace diplomacy by promoting moderate Indonesian Islamic principles. Given that foreign policy reformulation is ongoing, it is necessary to engage in more open discussions to finalise it. This will allow for public input and criticism, enhancing the academic basis of the innovative and strategic foreign policy model required by the 1945 Constitution and the 2009 Act on Foreign Relations.

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