

# From Stability to Power Projection: An Analysis of Indonesia's Shifting Foreign Policy Orientation during the Reigns of Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto

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## Abstract

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The leadership transition from President Joko Widodo to President Prabowo Subianto marked a change in the style and direction of Indonesia's foreign policy. These changes are influenced by the domestic interests and personal character of each leader in making various political decisions that are important for Indonesia globally. This difference is essential to analyse, especially in the midst of rising global geopolitical tensions, multipolarity challenges, and pressing national needs. Therefore, this study raises the research question of why Indonesia's foreign policy orientation at the beginning of President Prabowo Subianto's administration shifted in approach compared to the era of President Joko Widodo's administration? To answer the research question, this article utilises Gideon Rose's Innenpolitik theory, finding that the foreign policies produced by the two leaders were based on domestic configurations, including political and economic ideology, national character, and socio-economic structure. Through a qualitative approach with narrative analysis, this article also finds that personal interpretations formed from background, professional experience, and individual characteristics influence the foreign policy orientation of the two leaders.

**Keywords:** Joko Widodo, Foreign Policy, Free and Active, Prabowo Subianto

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy is identified as a state's strategy for acting internationally to fulfil national interests (Neack, 2008). In this case, foreign policy reflects how states form bilateral and multilateral relationships with other international actors. External and internal factors also influence the formation of a country's foreign policy. External factors, including the structure of the international system, global power dynamics, and global geopolitical changes, can affect a country's strategic position and calculations (Wicaksana, 2023). Then, internal factors such as

domestic pressures, institutional structures, economic conditions, and national identity shape a country's capacity to respond to global issues (Rose, 1998). In this case, these two factors interact with each other and complexly influence the preferences and behaviour of states in the international arena.

Additionally, one of the key elements in the foreign policy formulation process is the role of state leaders (Wertheim, 2020). State leaders are not only policy implementers but also decisive actors in interpreting national interests and diplomatic strategies, guided by their vision, ideological preferences, personal backgrounds, and perceptions of global dynamics (Hermann, 1990). In addition, state leaders also have relative autonomy to set foreign relations priorities, especially in a political system that provides ample space for the executive regarding international affairs. Therefore, when a new leader takes office in a country, the country's foreign policy may change or continue in the same direction as the previous leader (Neack, 2019).

In the context of Indonesia's foreign policy, the principle of Free and Active Policy serves as the primary foundation for Indonesia in conducting its foreign relations with other countries. This principle was first coined by Mohammad Hatta in 1948 as a form of affirmation of Indonesia's stance in the global political area, especially amid polarisation between the Western and Eastern Blocs during the Cold War (Sadewa & Hakiki, 2023). This principle has also become the identity of Indonesian diplomacy. It has been maintained by various government regimes, although in different approaches according to the leadership of the president in office. Furthermore, the word 'Free' is interpreted as an attitude of not taking sides with any power in international conflicts that occur, while the word 'Active' is interpreted as Indonesia's active participation in creating world peace and voicing the interests of developing countries (Neack, 2008).

Each Indonesian leader has brought their interpretation and approach to implementing the principle of Free and Active Policy. Under President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) from 2014 to 2019, Indonesia's foreign policy was oriented towards economic diplomacy and infrastructure development with global economic cooperation efforts to support domestic growth (Wardhani & Dugis, 2023). During this period, Indonesia's economic diplomacy focused on increasing investment, promoting exports, and fostering development cooperation through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the Group of Twenty (G20) forums (Wicaksana, 2023). Meanwhile, from 2019 to 2024, strengthening Indonesia's national sovereignty and geopolitical role in the region are essential issues that are prioritised in Indonesia's foreign policy. It can be seen in the response to the North Natuna issue related to unilateral claims by China and Indonesia's efforts to maintain ASEAN centrality in the context of the rivalry between the United States and China in the Indo-Pacific (Aridati & Martinus, 2024). Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia played an important role in vaccine diplomacy and global health solidarity. Then, leadership in the G20 Presidency in 2022 is considered as Indonesia's efforts in post-pandemic economic recovery (Anwar, 2019; Wardhani & Dugis, 2023).

Based on the two periods of Jokowi's administration, the principle of Free and Active is flexible and contextual. The meaning of the word 'Free' manifested in the flexibility of Indonesia's attitude which can bridge domestic orientations and international demands adaptively, while 'Active' is described by strategic participation in voicing national interests, encouraging regional cooperation, and playing a constructive role in various international forums (Anwar, 2019; Wicaksana, 2023). Therefore, Indonesia's foreign policy in the Jokowi era represents a pragmatic approach to diplomacy that upholds independence in determining attitudes on global issues, particularly in terms of Indonesia's consistent support for Palestinian independence and rejection of normalisation with Israel during the two periods of government (Maksum & Surwandono, 2024).

On the other hand, Indonesia's leadership turnover in 2024, led by President Prabowo Subianto, demonstrates a firm, strategic, and militaristic stance, with a focus on defence and repositioning Indonesia in the global order (Myers, 2025). In addition, Prabowo also shows a tendency to expand Indonesia's economic diplomacy space globally through intensive cooperation in investment, trade, and defence. This is reflected in the foreign visits made for more than two weeks to several strategic partner countries of Indonesia. The decision to join the Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) organisation is also one of the political decisions that the international community has highlighted. Therefore, Indonesia's foreign policy under Prabowo's administration is geared towards establishing Indonesia's strategic position as an ambitious middle power in the Indo-Pacific region (Umar, 2023). Although President Prabowo is in the early stages of Indonesia's governance, this trend opens a space for discussion on the new direction of Indonesia's foreign policy, particularly in terms of consistency with the fundamental values of Indonesia's foreign policy in the face of increasingly complex global rivalries (Anwar, 2024).

Moreover, this article will discuss the analysis of the formation of Indonesia's foreign policy during the reign of the newly inaugurated President Prabowo compared to the previous leader, President Jokowi. Various decisions taken by Prabowo have been controversial and different from Indonesia's foreign policy approach during Jokowi's administration, making this issue essential to discuss. The limited number of studies that specifically examine the relationship between personality and domestic factors in shaping Indonesia's foreign policy direction for both leaders is another reason to see the urgency of discussing this topic. In addition, the relatively recent transition of power in President Prabowo's administration signifies the need for a comprehensive initial analysis to understand the changing dynamics and paradigms of the previous leadership through the study of International Relations.

This article raises the research question of why Indonesia's foreign policy orientation at the beginning of the Prabowo Subianto administration experienced a shift in approach compared to the era of President Joko Widodo's administration?. Based on this, the findings suggest that the change in foreign policy orientation resulted from a combination of domestic factors and the differing leadership styles of the two leaders. The difference not only reflects the change in leadership style, but also the interpretation of the principle of Free and Active Politics in Indonesia's foreign policy. Furthermore, this article will help analyse the different foreign policy orientations of President Jokowi and President Prabowo in their interpretation of the Free and Active principle. This article will also identify significant factors, such as domestic factors and leaders' backgrounds, that shape Indonesia's foreign policy by both presidents.

The article is divided into five sections to further analyse Indonesia's foreign policy in the Prabowo and Jokowi eras. The first section will discuss the theory of *Innenpolitik* as a framework for understanding the dynamics of foreign policy, including the factors that form the basis for the formation of foreign policy direction in the era of the two leaders. The second section will explain the research method employed, which utilises a qualitative approach based on a literature study to examine the dynamics of foreign policy in a descriptive and analytical manner. Data sources come from official documents, policy reports, results of international seminars by experts, journal articles, and credible national and international media. The third section contains discussions and analysis results that focus on an in-depth study of the direction of Indonesia's foreign policy during the two government regimes, linking the *Innenpolitik* theory as an analytical tool. The analysis is conducted descriptively to explain the reasons behind the formation of policy orientations and approaches, as well as the policy implications adopted in response to global and regional challenges. The last section will summarise the main findings of the analysis and provide recommendations for future research.

## **2. INNENPOLITIK THEORY**

According to Rose (1998), Innenpolitik theory is an approach that explains how domestic factors influence a country's foreign policy by examining the country's needs, interests, and internal dynamics. A country's foreign policy choices also depend on the decisions of leaders and political elites within the domestic sphere of a country. Leaders will examine the three main variables in this theory that shape the country's foreign policy, namely political and economic ideology, national character, and socio-economic structure (Rose, 1998). These three variables will also directly explain a country's national needs and material capabilities, so the perception or understanding of state leaders is important in interpreting this. Furthermore, the interpretation of state leaders is also influenced by their background, experience, knowledge, and beliefs, which can impact the definition of a state's national needs and material capabilities. These will affect the formation of short-term, medium-term, and long-term foreign policy for the country (Rose, 1998).

Firstly, political and economic ideology is defined as the basic principles adopted by a country in organising its political system, government, and economic management patterns. This ideology influences a country's actions in formulating internal and external strategies to fulfil national interests. In this case, ideology can not only be sourced from the constitution, historical construction, or inherent political culture, but also depends on the background of the ruling leader (Rose, 1998). Secondly, national character is reflected in the collective identity of a country in the international world. It can be formed through colonial experience or normative orientation towards the international system. National character is not static, but can be influenced by the way leaders represent the nation's identity to the international community (Rose, 1998). Finally, the socio-economic structure encompasses the objective conditions of a country, including geography, demography, and the level of development progress, which serve as a form of material capability used to determine diplomatic capabilities and strategies in carrying out foreign policy (Rose, 1998).

Furthermore, the personality of a leader also affects the understanding and interpretation of these three variables in prioritising various issues that shape a country's foreign policy (Hermann et al., 2001). In this case, the personality of the leader can be observed in three aspects: the intellectual background, the practices or activities carried out, and the characteristics consistently exhibited in decision-making (Rosenau, 1968). First, a leader's intellectual background and professional experience will influence the way they perceive global power structures, assess international risks, and establish diplomatic relationships (Rosenau, 1968). Second, the practices or activities undertaken create specific strategic preferences towards foreign partners to assess domestic elite interests, external geopolitics, and potential threats (Rosenau, 1968). Ultimately, publicly visible personality characteristics reveal ideological values and leadership styles through the way individuals present themselves in international forums and manage relationships with partners (Rosenau, 1968).

This is also in line with Neack's (2019) explanation that foreign policy becomes a form of personalised expression of the leader's perceptions and priorities towards the international world. Therefore, leaders with strong characteristics, accompanied by experience and authoritative backgrounds, tend to adopt a foreign policy approach that is more oriented towards national power (Preston, 2001). It differs from technocratic or civilian leaders, who generally emphasise policy rationality by prioritising stability as a key step in foreign policy (Dyson, 2012). Therefore, the personality of the leader becomes a bridge between domestic factors and responses to the external environment in shaping the country's foreign policy (Preston, 2001).

In the end, this article will explain these three aspects in analysing the foreign policies of the two leaders by linking important variables in Innenpolitik theory, namely political and economic ideology, national character, and socio-economic structure as forms of Indonesia's national interest to assess how complex domestic factors-both structural and symbolic-are

interpreted by the country's leaders into the form of foreign policy. Using this analytical framework, this article will examine how the diverse backgrounds, professional experiences, and leadership characteristics of Jokowi and Prabowo shape the interpretation of national interests and their respective diplomatic strategy choices.

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

This article employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with the literature study method as the primary technique for collecting and analysing non-numerical data (Lamont, 2015). It will provide a theory-based analysis by explaining foreign policy orientation through an in-depth interpretation of political dynamics, leaders' perceptions, and the construction of national interests in the domestic context. This article will also link various independent variables with dependent variables through hypotheses discussed in previous literature (Neuman, 2014).

Primary data sources are used to directly identify the meanings, policy preferences, and articulation of national interests represented by the foreign policies of Presidents Jokowi and Prabowo. It also helps researchers explore how each leader interprets the principle of Free and Active, as communicated to the domestic public and the international community. The primary data are sourced from official documents, including presidential vision and mission documents, such as Nawa Cita and Asta Cita, presidential candidate debate transcripts, state strategic documents, and official documents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Then, secondary data are sourced from scientific journal articles, academic books, mass media, research institute reports, and international seminars with related themes, helping to capture the dynamics of Indonesia's more current foreign policy direction, accompanied by previous analyses from researchers.

Furthermore, an analysis process in the form of data triangulation is employed, along with narrative content analysis, to study phenomena through various methods and data sources (Bryman, 2012). This technique was also employed to develop a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of Indonesia's foreign policy direction under two different leaderships, by explaining the official narrative behind the presented data. The combination of narrative content analysis and data triangulation techniques provides a strong analytical framework for understanding the relationship between leaders' perceptions, domestic factors, and foreign policy. With this approach, the findings are expected to present a more comprehensive, reflective, and contextualised picture of the direction of Indonesia's foreign policy in two different periods of government.

### **4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the results of an analysis of Indonesia's foreign policy orientation during the administrations of President Prabowo Subianto and President Joko Widodo. Through the analysis of three main variables – political and economic ideology, national character, and socio-economic structure – this section will examine the correlation between these variables and political narratives, strategic orientations, and foreign policy tendencies. To support a more in-depth analysis, the leader's background, activities, and personal character will also be discussed as important aspects that support the formation of Indonesia's foreign policy. Then, this section will also provide an in-depth understanding of the changes in Indonesia's foreign policy practices during the two regimes.

#### **4.1 Foreign Policy Analysis of the Prabowo Subianto Administration**

Indonesia's foreign policy under President Prabowo Subianto reflects a strategic transformation influenced by the configuration of domestic factors and the leader's characteristics. In the transition of power from the previous administration, Prabowo introduced a more assertive and militaristic leadership style, with an orientation towards the results of

rational calculations in assessing changes in the international structure. Therefore, the foreign policy approach taken is not only determined by external pressures, but also by the leader's subjective perception of national needs and capacities. Djumala (2024) identified three main aspects in looking at Prabowo's personality that lead to the direction of Indonesia's foreign policy, namely military background, business activities, and character. These three aspects will influence the leader's preference for representing national interests through political and economic ideology, national character, and socio-economic structure (Rose, 1998).

First, Prabowo's intellectual background as an alumnus of the Magelang Military Academy, former Commander of the Special Forces Command (Kopassus), and Commander of the Army Strategic Reserve Command (Kostrad) is a key factor in various foreign policy decisions made. Djumala (2024) explains that Prabowo's military education and career not only shaped a structured and hierarchical leadership pattern but also opened up significant strategic networks in both the domestic and international environments. In this case, foreign policy during Prabowo's administration became an extension of the national defense strategy, as the military not only functioned as a defense tool but also as a diplomatic actor in safeguarding the country's interests (Anwar, 2024).

President Prabowo's militaristic preferences also have implications for the interpretation of political ideology and perspectives on foreign bureaucracy. Through this militaristic preference, the international political system is viewed as an arena that requires states to appear strong, assertive, and centralised. Therefore, foreign institutional structures, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic missions, are considered essential instruments that must be efficient and able to clearly and directly voice national interests (Djumala, 2024). This aligns with the notion that leaders with a military background tend to view international relations as an extension of domestic control over security and legitimacy, thereby making state power the primary tool for gaining respect in the international arena (Li, 2019).

Other evidence is provided by Prabowo's statement in the Third Presidential Candidate Debate on January 7, 2024, namely 'to develop a strong defence to safeguard national interests and be respected by other countries'. This statement is an explicit articulation of Prabowo's vision priorities, demonstrating Indonesia's foreign policy intentions to emphasise defence power as a diplomatic tool in enhancing Indonesia's bargaining position globally. Furthermore, Marsetio (2024) explains that Indonesia's Free and Active Policy will be more flexible by adopting Prabowo's strategy from his previous period as Indonesia's Minister of Defence, which promoted multilateral cooperation to maintain balanced relations in the ASEAN region and with the United States. This strategy will position Indonesia more strongly to maintain its sovereignty and contribute to regional peace and stability.

The shift in approach was also evident in the formation of diplomatic institutions at the beginning of the administration. The selection of a Minister of Foreign Affairs from a military background was an early indicator that Indonesia's foreign policy would be increasingly coordinated through a security and defence approach. The appointment of Ambassadors to strategic countries, such as Washington and Beijing, from among those with close ties to military institutions, reinforced the view that Indonesia's diplomacy would be more geared towards managing the global balance of power directly and operationally (Yadav, 2025). At the same time, this has been balanced out by Prabowo's large tent coalition, which incorporates most political parties, with 48 ministers and 58 vice ministers. Prabowo has also proposed slashing the government budget by 8.5 per cent and transferring much of the money to a new sovereign wealth fund under his control (Myers, 2025). Therefore, diplomacy is no longer interpreted merely as a normative channel, but as part of the strategic planning of state defence (Aridati & Martinus, 2024).

In addition to changes in the leadership structure of diplomacy, budget policies also indicate a stronger military priority. The increase in the national defence budget to IDR 25 trillion in 2025 reflects the government's intention to strengthen Indonesia's military posture in response to regional and global geopolitical challenges. This increase can be understood as a response to changes in the regional strategic environment as well as an effort to strengthen Indonesia's position in strategic multilateral forums, such as the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting and Indo-Pacific defence cooperation. Overall, Indonesia's foreign policy demonstrates considerable potential for hierarchical and top-down approaches, as evident in the Prabowo administration (Aridati & Martinus, 2024; Djumala, 2024).

Secondly, business activities in the mining, coal, fisheries, and plantation industries make the economic sector the next sector to be prioritised in Prabowo's foreign policy. Djumala (2024) mentioned that Prabowo's career as a businessman had an impact on his pursuit of greater investment and trade globally. It can be seen from Prabowo's 16-day visit to several countries, which involved collaboration in the economic sector and engagement in geopolitical discussions, as a form of economic diplomacy aimed at improving domestic economic conditions (Fajri, 2024a). These visits were not only an effort to explore cooperation in trade, food, energy, and defence technology, but also reflected economic intentions towards the initial consolidation of Indonesia's repositioning in the current multipolar geopolitics (Anwar, 2024; Fajri, 2024a).

This also has an impact on the formation of the eight Asta Cita missions under Prabowo's leadership era, the majority of which are based on prioritising Indonesia's economic and geopolitical sectors. The focus of Asta Cita, which includes a comprehensive agenda for strengthening the domestic economy, industrial downstreaming, food security, energy, and increasing the added value of natural resources (Wisnubroto, 2024), reflects the important role of socio-economic structures in shaping foreign policy. Indonesia's socio-economic structure, which is still characterised by regional inequality, high unemployment, and dependence on primary commodity exports, encourages the government to make foreign policy a tool to promote domestic development. It is also in line with the trend of Global South countries that increasingly emphasise resource nationalism in international negotiations to strengthen national economic sovereignty as a basis for international partnerships (Sulaiman, 2025).

On the other hand, external factors, including regional economic pressures, have also impacted Prabowo's stance on implementing a pragmatic Free and Active Policy in the regional economic, political, and security sectors (Fajri, 2024b). External factors, such as the presence of minilateral alliances in the economic and military sectors in the Asia Pacific—such as the Quad, AUKUS, and the expansion of RCEP influence—have become Prabowo's reference for being more active in determining Indonesia's position in the region (Djumala, 2024). One of the controversial aspects of Prabowo's foreign policy towards the Free and Active interpretation is Indonesia's membership in BRICS. Indonesia's membership in BRICS is considered a form of active participation in global forums, promoting the common interests of developing countries (Fajri, 2024b). Indonesia's joining BRICS also shows a foreign policy pattern that emphasises the principle of strategic balancing towards the world's major powers, without explicitly siding with a particular bloc. This approach is consistent with the basic principle of Free and Active, which prioritises independence in foreign decision-making while simultaneously opening space for active engagement within the framework of regional strategic and economic cooperation (Anwar, 2024; Sulaiman, 2025). Within this framework, Indonesia seeks to position itself as a middle power that can act as a bridge of communication and regional stabiliser.

The direction of Indonesia's foreign policy is also influenced by Prabowo's character, which is flexible, easy to interact with, and has numerous international connections, as he has been immersed in the global sphere since childhood (Djumala, 2024). A survey conducted by Katadata Insight Centre in 2023 ranked Prabowo first out of ten world figures capable of

representing Indonesia in international forums due to his hands-on approach to multilateral foreign policy (Aridati & Martinus, 2024). This is also evident in various statements from elites regarding Prabowo's victory as President, including congratulations and expressions of appreciation for cooperation from India, France, China, Canada, Malaysia, the United States, and Japan (CNN Indonesia, 2024). In addition, Prabowo is also a nationalist, advocating for anti-Western democracy and self-reliance. This stance is echoed by other Asian powers, such as Japan, South Korea, China, and India, through their good neighbour policy. Hence, Indonesia's involvement in BRICS aligns with Prabowo's character, who seeks to present Indonesia's high-profile face in the international world through active diplomatic activities (Myers, 2025).

Based on this, Prabowo's political decision is seen as a continuation of the spirit of solidarity among developing countries and a rejection of Western domination, which has long been part of Indonesia's national character narrative in the international world. It is a reinterpretation of old values that prioritise strategic logic and material interests over ideological interests (Wardhani & Dugis, 2023). This national character refers to the formation of a more assertive, pragmatic, and opportunistic Indonesian foreign policy, but upholds the principle of independence that has characterised Indonesian diplomacy since independence (Yadav, 2025). In addition, the transition from diplomacy with a moralistic approach to a more outcome-based approach has become the national character of Indonesia's foreign policy during the Prabowo Subianto administration. This is due to the increasingly prominent role of leader professionalism in forging strategic partnerships bilaterally and multilaterally. This approach also marks Indonesia's repositioning as a more confident regional power and not just a norm follower, but also an agenda setter in forums such as BRICS or ASEAN+ (Anwar, 2024).

#### **4.2 Foreign Policy Comparison of Joko Widodo's Administration**

In contrast to the Prabowo administration, Indonesia's foreign policy during the Jokowi administration showed a relatively stable, technocratic, and national interest-oriented character. In this case, Jokowi directed foreign policy as an instrument to support the domestic development agenda, primarily through economic diplomacy and infrastructure diplomacy (Wardhani & Dugis, 2023). This approach aims to position Indonesia as a strategic hub in global trade routes and enhance its economic competitiveness through strengthened connectivity. In addition, Jokowi's focus on foreign policy stability is also based on the belief that certainty in foreign relations will strengthen investor confidence and national development, which has been listed in *Nawa Cita* as a strategic policy that has links to efforts to establish global relations (Maksum & Surwandono, 2024; Warburton, 2016).

Jokowi-era foreign policy operates within a complex global and regional context. At the global level, the Jokowi administration is faced with the escalation of the trade war between the United States and China, which has an impact on supply chains and global economic uncertainty (Warburton, 2016). On the other hand, the Southeast Asian region is experiencing multidimensional crises, including the military coup in Myanmar, tensions in the South China Sea, and escalating strategic rivalries within the Indo-Pacific framework. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has been ongoing since early 2020, poses a significant challenge for Indonesia in promoting health diplomacy and regional solidarity as a major issue. Therefore, Indonesia's foreign policy at that time was based on a more cautious, non-confrontational approach, and based on stability and national economic interests (Anwar, 2019).

Like the previous analysis of Indonesia's foreign policy during the Prabowo administration, this analysis will also be carried out during the Jokowi administration, examining three key aspects: the intellectual background, the practices or activities undertaken, and the characteristics exhibited (Rosenau, 1968). In this case, Indonesia's foreign policy is more inward-looking, focusing on people-to-people diplomacy (Bland, 2021). Jokowi also affirmed that the continuity of the fundamental values of Indonesian foreign policy

based on international justice and solidarity characterised Indonesia's foreign policy at that time (Anwar, 2019).

In terms of intellectual background, Jokowi is a graduate of Gadjah Mada University, where he studied Forestry, and did not have a history of involvement in organisations during his undergraduate education. Instead, he often spent his time hiking and engaging in nature activities rather than discussing politics (Bland, 2021). A more technical and applied education with a concentration on forest conservation, ecology, and land planning keeps the substance of ideological discourse, politics, and global strategic studies away from academic discussions and the campus intellectual elite (Bland, 2021; Warburton, 2016). The lack of exposure to political debate or ideological influence tends to make Jokowi's character as a leader politically pragmatic (Warburton, 2016). Furthermore, Jokowi also has a career as a furniture businessman and exporter in Solo, who is active in export-import activities of furniture products. Based on his experience and business, Jokowi tends to focus on economic development, with a preference for avoiding politics and bureaucracy (Bland, 2021).

Various explanations about Jokowi's background and activities before becoming president align with Jokowi's statement that he does not think too much about theory and prefers a field approach. This statement serves as the primary foundation for various political decisions related to foreign policy, prioritising economic development as the primary goal. Jokowi reflects a political ideology that avoids engaging in excessive alliances and tends to favour strategic partnerships based on concrete benefits (Anwar, 2019). Additionally, it reflects a national character that is expressed in the way Jokowi does not appear confrontational internationally, with a tendency to establish relationships based on practical interests rather than principles (Bland, 2021). This character enables Indonesia to have a leader who prioritises morals, so that development partnerships are more characterised by trust and calm (Anwar, 2019).

Some foreign policies that represent the absence of an ideological foundation in Jokowi's foreign policy orientation include the decision to adopt a moderate and defensive diplomatic stance, emphasising trade, infrastructure, and investment cooperation issues. Jokowi prefers to attend economic forums, such as the Belt and Road Forum, World Economic Forum, and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Summit, rather than political forums (Wicaksana, 2023). In fact, at the G20 forum, which was intended to be a platform to affirm Indonesia's position as a middle power, Jokowi only emphasised his role as a bridge to development and economic stability. Another thing is also evident in the response to the South China Sea conflict, where Jokowi's lack of effort in putting forward strong rhetoric is notable. Instead, Jokowi prioritises infrastructure development in North Natuna. This reflects Jokowi's national character, which maintains sovereignty and avoids escalation (Anwar, 2019).

Furthermore, Jokowi's disengagement with international politics has been reflected in the selection of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is entrusted entirely to Retno Marsudi. Jokowi fully entrusts the role to a professional technocrat who runs foreign diplomacy bureaucratically. In this case, Jokowi chose to minimise intervention in the direct decision-making of foreign issues except on issues directly related to his economic agenda and domestic reputation (Wardhani & Dugis, 2023). Therefore, Indonesian foreign policy in the Jokowi era involves less of an expression of personally held ideological values, but rather an administrative response to domestic needs (Maksum & Surwandono, 2024).

Finally, the characteristics shown by President Jokowi refer to the figure of a leader with a 'humble man' image, promoting domestic products, being close to the people, and prioritising equitable development. Jokowi is better known as a popular leader who does not seem elitist and presents himself as an unpretentious figure, thanks to his non-luxurious and straightforward appearance in various public appearances. This character plays a crucial role in strengthening Indonesia's national character, particularly through the people's diplomacy

approach, which describes the operational form of foreign diplomacy based on domestic interests, especially in the context of economic inclusion and empowerment of the people's productive sector. The people's diplomacy has become a concrete action by Jokowi in various direct visits to various trading partner countries to open market access for local products, such as furniture, food, textiles, coffee, and other small business products to Australia, China, and Middle Eastern countries (Bland, 2021; Warburton, 2016).

Therefore, Indonesia's Free and Active Policy under Jokowi's administration shows a foreign policy direction that is oriented towards economic and infrastructure development. Jokowi also streamlined the bureaucratic process, making it easier for foreign investors to do business in Indonesia across several sectors. It has made Indonesia rise rapidly from 120th to 73rd in the world in terms of ease of doing business (Bland, 2021). Efforts to implement the principle of people-centred development mean that the role of the state extends beyond establishing relations with other countries for macro or geopolitical interests, to also providing direct benefits to the community as a priority. In this regard, Jokowi asked Indonesian Ambassadors not only to focus on protocols, but also to be active in promoting exports and investments that have a real impact (Bland, 2021; Connelly, 2015). The people's diplomacy, which was originally elitist, has also become participatory by attempting to create distribution channels to reach small and medium-sized economic actors (Anwar, 2019).

Jokowi is more active in international forums related to economic development and trade, such as the G20, APEC, and RCEP, than in the United Nations (UN) forum. Jokowi considers participation in the UN to be normative, ideological, and symbolic, and will only spend the budget to participate in the organisation (Maksum & Surwandono, 2024). This is in contrast to Prabowo, who prioritises multilateral forums and improving Indonesia's global image. Therefore, Jokowi's Free and Active diplomacy tends to be less aggressive, while Prabowo brings a more confident, aspirational, and assertive foreign policy of self-reliance (Aridati & Martinus, 2024). Jokowi views diplomatic engagement as a means to attract investment, create jobs, and enhance Indonesia's position in global supply chains (Warburton, 2016). In addition, Jokowi does not put forward normative agendas, such as democratisation, global justice, or universal human rights, that Indonesia had previously articulated frequently in various international forums during the Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono administration (Umar, 2023). Jokowi views that open conflict or hardline positions can disrupt economic cooperation and threaten the domestic investment climate because they contradict his priority development orientation (Sadewa & Hakiki, 2023; Wicaksana, 2023).

Based on some of the efforts made by Jokowi in carrying out Indonesia's foreign policy globally, it can be seen that it is in line with Indonesia's socio-economic structure, which is overwhelmed by development inequality between regions and the problem of limited infrastructure, which is considered to be an obstacle to the country's economic growth (Aridati & Martinus, 2024). The increasing dependence on traditional sectors, such as agriculture and raw commodities, makes infrastructure development and access to international markets a top priority. Therefore, Jokowi's foreign policy aims to attract direct investment and enhance the domestic business climate by initiating bilateral cooperation with China, Japan, and South Korea in infrastructure development and technology transfer. Diplomacy also involves leaders and high-ranking officials to create the impression that Indonesia is a country ready to cooperate pragmatically and productively in economic development (Umar, 2023).

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This article examines the dynamics of Indonesian foreign policy formation during the administrations of President Joko Widodo and President Prabowo Subianto, using Gideon Rose's theory of *Innenpolitik*. This theory explains that a country's foreign policy is shaped by the configuration of domestic factors, which are analysed through three main variables: political and economic ideology, national character, and socio-economic structure. Through an analysis

of the two leaders, this article demonstrates that each leader exhibited distinct foreign policy orientations, resulting from differences in background, professional experience, and personal characteristics.

The primary finding of this analysis is that the Jokowi administration tends to view foreign policy as an instrument of domestic development, emphasising economic diplomacy, maintaining stability in foreign relations, and fostering infrastructure cooperation. This is influenced by Jokowi's technocratic character and business background, which focuses more on concrete benefits and performance efficiency. In contrast, the Prabowo administration has demonstrated a more assertive, strategic, and proactive foreign policy direction. Prabowo's military background and business involvement have led to foreign policy interpretations that emphasise national power, geopolitics, and Indonesia's repositioning within the global order.

Future research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the interaction between international structures and domestic preferences that underpin the formation of Indonesian foreign policy. A mixed-methods approach, combined with interviews with elites, can be used to strengthen empirical evidence on the preferences, perceptions, and meaning-making of foreign policy by expert foreign policymakers.

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