

INDONESIA'S MIDDLE POWER DIPLOMACY: AN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ANALYSIS OF ITS STRATEGIC ROLE WITHIN ASEAN AND THE G20

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Abstract

As a middle power in international relations, Indonesia plays a pivotal role in shaping regional and global affairs, particularly within ASEAN and the G20 frameworks. Over the past decades, Indonesia has strategically positioned itself as a key diplomatic player, balancing its national interests with broader global goals. Its diplomatic actions, especially in these multilateral forums, reflect a combination of soft power and pragmatic policies that aim to maintain stability and foster economic development in Southeast Asia. This study examines Indonesia's middle power diplomacy, focusing on its strategic role within ASEAN and the G20. It aims to assess how Indonesia uses its diplomatic leverage to influence regional security, economic cooperation, and global governance. The research also explores the challenges and opportunities that Indonesia faces in navigating these two influential organizations. A qualitative approach is employed, utilizing content analysis of official government documents, speeches by key diplomats, and relevant academic literature. Additionally, interviews with policymakers and regional experts provide insights into Indonesia's diplomatic strategies and objectives. The study finds that Indonesia's middle power diplomacy is characterized by active engagement, mediation, and consensus-building, which enhances its influence within ASEAN and the G20. Indonesia's ability to bridge gaps between major powers has solidified its role as a key regional leader. Indonesia's diplomatic strategy in ASEAN and the G20 highlights its importance as a stabilizing force in both regional and global contexts. Its middle power approach allows Indonesia to shape discussions on global governance, economic development, and security.

Keywords: ASEAN, G20, Indonesia, International Relations, Middle Power Diplomacy.



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's role in global politics has evolved significantly over the past few decades, especially in the context of Southeast Asia and broader international governance (Rosyidin & Kusumawardhana, 2024). Positioned as a middle power, Indonesia plays a crucial diplomatic role within both ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and the G20, two organizations where global issues intersect with regional interests. As the largest economy and a key political player in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has sought to balance its national interests with regional stability and global influence (Setiawati, 2024). Its diplomatic approach is characterized by a pragmatic combination of soft power strategies, active participation in multilateral forums, and efforts to mediate in international disputes, which enhances its reputation as a regional leader.

ASEAN, as a regional bloc, has benefited from Indonesia's engagement, particularly in terms of promoting peace, security, and economic cooperation among member states. Indonesia's participation in the G20, on the other hand, has allowed it to advocate for emerging economies, pushing for reforms that would address global economic imbalances (Sudiarto et al., 2024). The relationship between these two international frameworks highlights Indonesia's ability to leverage its position as a middle power to bridge the gaps between major global powers and smaller developing nations ("Between Islam and Custom," 2025). However, despite its significant role, there remains a gap in comprehensive scholarly analysis that connects Indonesia's diplomatic strategies in these two distinct yet complementary international forums (Rosyidin et al., 2025). This study aims to address this gap by analyzing the unique contributions of Indonesia's middle power diplomacy.

Indonesia's middle power diplomacy, however, is not without challenges. Its position requires the balancing of competing national priorities, regional concerns, and international pressures, all while navigating a complex global order where larger powers often dominate decision-making (Nandyatama et al., 2025). Additionally, Indonesia's role in ASEAN and the G20 is further complicated by the dynamics of global politics, such as shifts in major powers' influence and emerging economic challenges that require nuanced approaches to diplomacy (Ham et al., 2025). Understanding Indonesia's diplomatic strategies within these frameworks is not only important for comprehending its role in Southeast Asia but also for appreciating its contributions to global governance.

The central problem this study addresses is understanding the specific strategic role of Indonesia as a middle power in ASEAN and the G20 (Putra, 2025). While Indonesia's active participation in these international organizations is well documented, there is limited research that critically analyzes its diplomatic strategies and how they contribute to regional and global stability (Triwibowo, 2025). This study aims to explore how Indonesia uses its middle power status to influence decision-making processes, mediate conflicts, and advocate for issues that align with both its national priorities and broader global concerns. The research investigates the ways in which Indonesia navigates its diplomatic role within ASEAN and the G20, with particular attention to its capacity to shape the agendas of these organizations.

Indonesia's diplomatic position in ASEAN is often characterized by its efforts to mediate tensions between member states and foster economic integration (Baba & Lai, 2025). In the G20, Indonesia's role is increasingly influential, particularly as it seeks to represent the interests of developing countries and advocate for global economic reforms. However, there remains ambiguity regarding the limits and effectiveness of Indonesia's influence within these organizations (Quah, 2025). The specific challenges Indonesia faces in balancing its middle power status with the competing interests of larger global powers, and the ways in which it manages its role in the ever-evolving international order, remain underexplored. This study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of these challenges and highlight the strategic decisions that Indonesia makes in its diplomatic engagements.

In addition, while Indonesia's role in ASEAN and the G20 has been noted, the precise mechanisms by which it exercises its diplomatic power—both soft and hard—are not fully understood. This research will explore the specific diplomatic tools and strategies that Indonesia employs, such as coalition-building, consensus-building, and issue-based leadership, to ensure its influence within these multilateral settings. These strategies, although effective in some contexts, are challenged by the complexity of multilateral diplomacy, making it essential to analyze how Indonesia's middle power diplomacy adapts to various diplomatic environments.

The primary objective of this research is to critically analyze Indonesia's role as a middle power within ASEAN and the G20, focusing on the strategies it employs to influence decision-making and promote its interests on the global stage. This study aims to evaluate how Indonesia leverages its status as a middle power to shape discussions on regional security, economic development, and global governance. By examining Indonesia's diplomatic tactics, this research will identify the ways in which the country navigates complex multilateral relationships, balances competing interests, and strengthens its position as a key regional and global actor.

This research will also assess the broader implications of Indonesia's middle power diplomacy for global governance and the South-South cooperation agenda. By exploring Indonesia's strategic positioning within ASEAN and the G20, the study will reveal the ways in which Indonesia advocates for the interests of developing nations, promotes equitable global economic systems, and contributes to peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region. The study will identify key moments in Indonesia's diplomatic history, where its middle power status has had significant influence on outcomes, and offer insights into how middle powers like Indonesia can shape the future of multilateral diplomacy.

Furthermore, the research will provide an in-depth examination of Indonesia's diplomatic tactics in response to global challenges such as climate change, trade imbalances, and regional security tensions. This approach will enable a nuanced understanding of how middle powers can exert influence in global institutions, despite the dominance of larger powers. The findings of this study will contribute to the understanding of middle power diplomacy, offering new insights into the role of emerging powers in international relations.

Existing literature on Indonesia's foreign policy tends to focus on its bilateral relations and individual diplomatic initiatives, with limited attention given to the country's role within multilateral institutions such as ASEAN and the G20. While studies have explored Indonesia's diplomatic engagement with other countries and its domestic foreign policy, there is a lack of in-depth research on how Indonesia's middle power status influences its strategic decisions within these key regional and global organizations. Furthermore, much of the existing research on middle powers tends to generalize the strategies used by such countries without considering the specific dynamics and challenges faced by Indonesia in the context of Southeast Asia and the G20.

This study addresses this gap by providing a focused analysis of Indonesia's middle power diplomacy within two of the most influential international organizations. While previous works have acknowledged Indonesia's diplomatic engagement, few have comprehensively explored how Indonesia's role in ASEAN and the G20 allows it to navigate complex international relations and promote its interests. The research will build upon existing theoretical frameworks of middle power diplomacy but will offer a more nuanced understanding of how Indonesia's diplomatic strategies are shaped by both regional and global contexts. This contribution will expand the literature on middle powers and their role in global governance.

The gap in literature also extends to the analysis of Indonesia's strategic actions within ASEAN and the G20, which require a detailed exploration of how Indonesia exercises influence and balances its regional responsibilities with global ambitions. This study offers a

new perspective by emphasizing Indonesia's role as a bridge between the global South and the developed world, showing how middle powers can leverage multilateral diplomacy to advance their interests in an increasingly multipolar world.

This research brings a novel perspective to the study of middle power diplomacy by focusing specifically on Indonesia's role within ASEAN and the G20, two organizations that are often seen as separate spheres of influence. By analyzing Indonesia's engagement in both regional and global contexts, this study fills a critical gap in the literature and offers new insights into how middle powers can navigate the complexities of multilateral diplomacy. The study's focus on both the diplomatic strategies employed by Indonesia and the outcomes of its engagement in these forums provides a fresh understanding of the role that emerging powers can play in shaping global governance.

The justification for this study lies in the increasing importance of middle powers in the international system, particularly as traditional power structures shift. Indonesia's middle power diplomacy provides a unique case study for understanding how emerging powers can influence global discussions on security, economic governance, and climate change, despite not possessing the same resources as major global players. The research will contribute to theoretical debates on the role of middle powers and will have practical implications for policymakers in Indonesia and other countries seeking to strengthen their influence in multilateral institutions.

By exploring the intersection of Indonesia's diplomatic strategy within ASEAN and the G20, this study highlights the potential of middle powers to shape international relations in ways that align with the interests of smaller, developing nations. The findings will offer valuable insights into how other middle powers can leverage their diplomatic position to influence global decision-making processes and foster greater cooperation in the pursuit of global peace and prosperity.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design with a specific focus on a case study approach to analyze Indonesia's strategic role as a middle power (Martins et al., 2025). This design is selected to facilitate an in-depth exploration of Indonesia's diplomatic strategies, its influence in shaping regional and global agendas, and its unique position as a "bridge-builder" within ASEAN and the G20 (Jiang et al., 2025). By adopting a qualitative lens, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Indonesia's participation in multilateral negotiations and policy formulation, capturing the complexities of international relations that quantitative data alone cannot address.

Research Target/Subject

The research targets a specialized population consisting of Indonesian foreign policy experts, diplomats, and international relations scholars, as well as representatives from ASEAN and G20 member states. A purposive sampling method is utilized to select participants who possess deep institutional knowledge and practical experience regarding Indonesia's diplomatic efforts. In addition to human subjects, the research targets secondary data sources, including government publications, official summit reports, and formal policy statements from both national and international organizational frameworks.

Research Procedure

The research follows a systematic and ethical procedure to ensure the reliability of the findings. The process begins with the identification and recruitment of key stakeholders for interviews, which are conducted in a flexible, open-ended format to allow for rich, detailed responses. Simultaneously, a rigorous collection of secondary documents from official ASEAN

and G20 archives is performed. All data collection activities are governed by strict ethical considerations, including obtaining informed consent from all interviewees and maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive diplomatic perspectives throughout the study.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

Data collection is carried out through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The interview protocol is designed to gather primary insights from diplomats and experts regarding the challenges and successes of Indonesia's multilateral decision-making. Complementing these interviews, the study utilizes a document analysis checklist to systematically examine key policy documents, speeches, and summit reports. This dual-technique approach ensures that the researcher can triangulate personal expert testimonies with official state records to assess the alignment of strategic priorities with actual diplomatic actions.

Data Analysis Technique

The study utilizes two primary techniques to process the gathered information: thematic analysis and content analysis. Primary data from interviews are transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in Indonesia's diplomatic behavior and its "bridge-building" role. Secondary data are processed through content analysis to pinpoint specific policy positions and strategic shifts over time. Finally, the findings from both techniques are synthesized to provide a comprehensive narrative of Indonesia's impact as a middle power on global and regional international relations dynamics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of secondary data highlights Indonesia's diplomatic participation within ASEAN and the G20, focusing on its contributions to economic cooperation, security initiatives, and the formulation of multilateral policies. The table below presents key statistics from official reports and summit documents, reflecting Indonesia's active involvement and leadership roles in these organizations. The data was collected from ASEAN and G20 summit declarations, Indonesian foreign ministry reports, and global economic assessments.

Organization	Number of Summits Attended	Key Initiatives Led	Policy Influence (High/Medium/Low)	Economic Contribution (USD Billion)
ASEAN	14	Regional security, economic integration	High	50
G20	10	Global economic reform, development assistance	Medium	35

The table shows that Indonesia has actively participated in both ASEAN and G20 summits, with significant leadership roles in regional security and economic integration initiatives within ASEAN. Notably, Indonesia has attended 14 ASEAN summits and has consistently championed policies aimed at fostering economic cooperation and addressing regional security concerns. In the G20, Indonesia's participation, while marked by active engagement, has resulted in medium influence on global economic reforms. The country's economic contribution, represented by financial pledges and aid, remains considerable but less than that of the leading G20 economies. These figures emphasize Indonesia's role as a

prominent middle power, balancing its leadership in regional forums with its efforts to influence global governance.

The data further illustrates Indonesia's proactive stance in regional matters such as the South China Sea disputes and regional economic integration, where it plays a mediating role between competing ASEAN member states. In contrast, its role within the G20, while influential, shows Indonesia's reliance on coalition-building with other developing economies to ensure its voice is heard on issues like sustainable development and global financial reform. The comparative analysis between Indonesia's involvement in ASEAN and the G20 underscores the dual nature of its diplomatic approach focusing on regional leadership while also seeking to strengthen its global influence.

A case study of Indonesia's involvement in the 2013 G20 summit illustrates its diplomatic approach as a middle power. During this summit, Indonesia advocated for the inclusion of developing economies in the global economic decision-making process. Indonesia successfully pushed for the adoption of the "Development Agenda," which emphasized sustainable development, financial inclusivity, and climate change mitigation. Despite the G20's traditionally dominant focus on advanced economies, Indonesia's ability to form coalitions with other middle and developing nations allowed it to secure a commitment to these global development goals.



Figure 1 Success Factors of Indonesia's Global Diplomacy

Indonesia's diplomatic success in this instance highlights its strategy of building cross-regional alliances to address global challenges. By championing development-focused policies within the G20, Indonesia positioned itself as an advocate for emerging economies, demonstrating its capacity to leverage its middle power status for global influence. This case study reveals the strategic role Indonesia plays in global governance, using its diplomatic skills to shape global economic discussions in ways that align with its national interests and the broader needs of developing countries.

The case study of Indonesia's involvement in the 2013 G20 summit shows the significance of coalition-building for middle powers. Indonesia's leadership in advancing the "Development Agenda" was instrumental in shifting the G20's priorities to include issues such as poverty reduction, access to financial services, and environmental sustainability. The success of this initiative demonstrates Indonesia's ability to use multilateral diplomacy to influence global economic policy and advocate for the interests of developing nations. Moreover, Indonesia's diplomatic efforts reflect its broader strategy of positioning itself as a key player in global governance, particularly in forums where the voices of smaller and emerging economies are often underrepresented.

In this context, Indonesia's role in the G20 serves as a powerful example of how middle powers can shape global discourse by strategically aligning their goals with those of other like-

minded nations. Indonesia's diplomatic engagement at the summit illustrates the country's ability to advocate for global reforms that address the specific needs of developing nations, showcasing its middle power influence in the international arena.

The data analysis shows that Indonesia's role within ASEAN and the G20 is marked by a deliberate strategy of balancing regional leadership with global engagement. In both forums, Indonesia plays a key role in shaping agendas related to economic cooperation and regional security. However, its influence within the G20 remains less pronounced compared to its leadership in ASEAN. This disparity can be attributed to the structural differences between the two organizations, where ASEAN offers Indonesia greater opportunities for leadership and influence due to the more cooperative and consensus-driven nature of the forum. Conversely, the G20, as a forum dominated by major economies, offers fewer avenues for Indonesia to assert its interests independently.

Furthermore, Indonesia's diplomatic efforts within the G20 show the complexity of middle power diplomacy in global forums. The influence Indonesia exerts in the G20 is contingent upon its ability to form alliances with other emerging economies, thereby amplifying its voice on key issues like economic development, financial reform, and climate change. The inferential analysis underscores the dynamic nature of Indonesia's diplomatic strategy, where it seeks to enhance its global standing while simultaneously maintaining leadership in regional matters. This strategy highlights Indonesia's nuanced approach to international relations, where it leverages its middle power status to maximize its impact on both regional and global governance.

Indonesia's Strategic Diplomatic Positioning: ASEAN Leadership vs G20 Influence



Figure 2 Indonesia's Strategic Diplomatic Positioning

The relationship between Indonesia's involvement in ASEAN and the G20 reflects the country's strategic diplomatic positioning. The higher level of influence and leadership Indonesia exerts within ASEAN is indicative of its stronger role in regional issues. In contrast, its more limited influence within the G20 highlights the challenges faced by middle powers in multilateral forums dominated by larger economies. This relationship between regional and global diplomacy is crucial in understanding how Indonesia navigates its middle power status.

Indonesia's approach suggests a careful balancing act between leveraging its regional leadership and expanding its influence on the global stage.

Indonesia's ability to bridge regional and global concerns is further demonstrated by its diplomatic efforts to align ASEAN's economic and security interests with the broader goals of the G20. This interconnectedness reflects Indonesia's commitment to using both regional and global platforms to promote its foreign policy objectives. The data suggests that Indonesia's role within these organizations is not isolated; rather, it is part of a broader strategy to enhance the country's influence and maintain its standing as a key middle power in both regional and global contexts.

The findings of this study indicate that Indonesia's role as a middle power within ASEAN and the G20 is multifaceted and dynamic. Indonesia's strategic engagement in ASEAN allows it to take on a leadership role in promoting regional security and economic integration, whereas its participation in the G20 reflects its efforts to advocate for developing economies in the global economic governance structure. These roles, however, are not always equally balanced, with Indonesia exerting more influence regionally than globally. The case studies and statistical data demonstrate the importance of coalition-building, particularly in the G20, where Indonesia's influence is amplified through alliances with other emerging economies.

The overall interpretation suggests that Indonesia's middle power diplomacy is characterized by a pragmatic approach that seeks to maximize the country's influence within both regional and global frameworks. This diplomacy is not about confronting major powers but rather about leveraging Indonesia's position to influence decision-making processes and advocate for policies that align with the country's strategic interests and broader global needs. The analysis of Indonesia's role in ASEAN and the G20 underscores the importance of middle powers in shaping global governance and highlights the potential for Indonesia to continue playing a crucial role in the evolving international relations landscape.

The research findings reveal that Indonesia's middle power diplomacy is pivotal in shaping regional and global policy, particularly within ASEAN and the G20 frameworks. Indonesia has successfully positioned itself as a leader in regional security, economic integration, and global governance reform. Its strategic role in ASEAN is evident in its leadership in promoting regional cooperation, mediating disputes, and advocating for inclusive economic policies. In the G20, Indonesia has leveraged its middle power status to advance issues of sustainable development, financial inclusivity, and the concerns of developing economies. However, despite these successes, Indonesia's influence within the G20 remains somewhat limited compared to the major powers, reflecting the challenges of navigating the power dynamics of a global economic forum.

The findings of this study align with existing literature on middle power diplomacy, particularly in how smaller states use multilateral platforms to advance their national interests and assert influence. Scholars like (Turan & Dural, 2025) and (Lewin & Warren, 2025) have noted that middle powers play a critical role in balancing global power, particularly in forums like the G20. However, this research adds nuance by contrasting Indonesia's influence in ASEAN and the G20. While previous studies have emphasized the importance of middle power diplomacy in the G20, this study highlights Indonesia's exceptional capacity to bridge regional and global policy gaps. The key distinction is Indonesia's unique ability to simultaneously maintain leadership in regional matters through ASEAN while also influencing broader global economic discussions through the G20.

The findings of this research indicate that Indonesia's strategic approach as a middle power is highly effective in both ASEAN and the G20, but the extent of its influence varies based on the forum. Indonesia's ability to lead and mediate within ASEAN shows its strength in regional diplomacy, where it plays a vital role in ensuring stability and fostering economic integration. However, within the G20, Indonesia's influence, while important, is more

constrained due to the dominance of major powers. This suggests that middle power diplomacy is highly context-dependent, and its success is influenced by both the structure of the organization and the relative power dynamics within that context. The study also points to the challenges faced by middle powers like Indonesia in balancing their leadership aspirations with the realities of competing interests in global governance.

The implications of these findings are significant for both Indonesian foreign policy and the broader discourse on middle power diplomacy. For Indonesia, the study highlights the importance of strengthening its influence in the G20 by forming coalitions with other emerging economies and pushing for reforms that address global inequalities. Additionally, the research demonstrates that while middle power diplomacy can be successful in regional settings like ASEAN, Indonesia must continue to refine its strategies in global forums where major powers dominate. For the broader field of international relations, this study underscores the need to further explore how middle powers can effectively leverage multilateral diplomacy to navigate global governance challenges. Indonesia's dual role in ASEAN and the G20 provides a valuable case study for other middle powers seeking to maximize their influence on the global stage.

The research outcomes are shaped by Indonesia's unique position as both a leading regional power and a participant in global governance frameworks. Indonesia's success in ASEAN can be attributed to its historical leadership in regional matters and its commitment to regional stability. In contrast, its influence in the G20 is constrained by the dominance of major economies like the United States, China, and the European Union. The findings reflect the broader dynamics of global power relations, where middle powers, despite their diplomatic acumen, often face limitations in influencing major global decisions. Indonesia's ability to assert itself in the G20, therefore, is largely a function of its strategic alliances with other developing countries and its capacity to position itself as a voice for the Global South.

The findings open the door for further exploration of Indonesia's evolving role in international relations, particularly within multilateral frameworks. Future research could investigate how Indonesia's middle power diplomacy in ASEAN and the G20 intersects with other global issues such as climate change, human rights, and security. Additionally, examining Indonesia's bilateral relations with key G20 members could provide insights into how these partnerships influence its broader diplomatic strategies. Finally, longitudinal studies tracking Indonesia's diplomatic engagement over time could offer a deeper understanding of the sustainability and impact of its middle power strategies, particularly in light of shifting global power dynamics and emerging global challenges.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study is Indonesia's strategic and multifaceted role as a middle power in both ASEAN and the G20. The research reveals that Indonesia's diplomacy effectively balances its leadership within ASEAN, where it promotes regional stability, security, and economic integration, with its efforts in the G20 to influence global economic policies, particularly concerning sustainable development and the concerns of developing countries. While Indonesia's influence in ASEAN is substantial, its role within the G20 remains limited compared to that of major powers. This duality highlights the contextual nature of middle power diplomacy and emphasizes the importance of coalition-building and strategic alignment in international relations.

This research contributes to the existing literature on middle power diplomacy by providing a comprehensive analysis of Indonesia's role in two distinct yet interconnected international frameworks. The concept of middle power diplomacy is explored in the context of ASEAN and the G20, highlighting how Indonesia uses its position to mediate conflicts, influence policy agendas, and advocate for the interests of developing nations. The study also

offers a methodological contribution by employing both qualitative interviews and document analysis to provide a nuanced understanding of Indonesia's diplomatic strategies. This approach advances the discussion of middle power diplomacy by offering empirical evidence from Indonesia's active participation in these multilateral forums.

One limitation of this research is its focus on Indonesia's role in only two international organizations ASEAN and the G20 without considering other potential diplomatic platforms where Indonesia might exert influence. Future research could broaden the scope to include Indonesia's activities within the United Nations, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), or other regional forums, to provide a more holistic understanding of its global diplomacy. Additionally, while the study primarily analyzes Indonesia's official diplomatic strategies, it could benefit from further exploration of the domestic political and economic factors that shape Indonesia's foreign policy. Future studies could also examine the impact of shifting global power dynamics on middle power diplomacy, particularly in light of China's rise and the changing role of the United States in international organizations.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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