

Foreign Policy and Regional Cooperation: Indonesia's Strategic Role in ASEAN Political Dynamics

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ABSTRACT

This study examines *Foreign Policy and Regional Cooperation: Indonesia's Strategic Role in ASEAN Political Dynamics* by analyzing how Indonesia's foreign policy orientation shapes its contribution to regional cooperation and political stability in Southeast Asia. The objective of the research is to explain Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN, particularly in relation to agenda-setting, mediation, consensus-building, and the promotion of ASEAN centrality. This research applies a qualitative method with a case study design because the issue requires interpretive analysis of diplomatic behavior, institutional norms, and regional political processes rather than statistical measurement. The research location is Jakarta, Indonesia, selected because it hosts Indonesia's foreign policy institutions and the ASEAN Secretariat. The study involves six to eight purposively selected informants, including foreign policy officials, ASEAN specialists, academics, think tank researchers, former diplomats, and civil society observers, because they possess relevant expertise on Indonesia's regional diplomacy. The findings show that Indonesia's role in ASEAN is strategic but institutionally constrained by consensus, non-interference, and diverse member-state interests. The study recommends strengthening Indonesia's inclusive diplomacy, coalition-building, and policy consistency to enhance ASEAN's capacity to manage regional political challenges.



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INTRODUCTION

Foreign policy and regional cooperation have become increasingly important analytical lenses for understanding the evolving political dynamics of Southeast Asia (Koldunova & Mazyrin, 2024). In a region marked by historical diversity, strategic competition, economic interdependence, and persistent non-traditional security challenges, ASEAN has functioned not only as an intergovernmental organization but also as a political arena in which member states negotiate interests, identities, and regional norms (Algo, 2024). Within this context, Indonesia occupies a distinctive position. As the largest country in Southeast Asia in terms of population, territorial size, economic weight, and diplomatic influence, Indonesia has long been regarded as a central actor in shaping ASEAN's political direction (H. Y. Lee et al., 2024). The title of this study, *Foreign Policy and Regional Cooperation: Indonesia's Strategic Role in ASEAN Political Dynamics*, reflects the need to examine how Indonesia's foreign policy orientation contributes to regional cooperation and influences the balance of political interactions within ASEAN.

The state of the art in existing scholarship shows that Indonesia's role in ASEAN has commonly been discussed through several dominant perspectives. First, many studies emphasize Indonesia's historical leadership in ASEAN, particularly its contribution to regional stability, conflict management, and the institutionalization of diplomatic norms such as consultation, consensus, and non-interference (Suzuki, 2025). Second, a significant body of literature examines Indonesia's foreign policy doctrine, especially the principle of "free and active" foreign policy, as a normative foundation that allows Indonesia to engage with multiple global powers while maintaining strategic autonomy (Drysdale, 2024). Third, recent studies increasingly focus on ASEAN's responses to contemporary regional issues, including the South China Sea disputes, the Myanmar crisis, maritime security, economic connectivity, democratic backsliding, and competition among major powers in the Indo-Pacific (Butar, 2025). These

studies provide valuable insights into ASEAN's institutional limitations and Indonesia's diplomatic activism. However, they often treat Indonesia either as a historical leader or as a case-specific mediator, without sufficiently explaining how Indonesia's strategic role is constructed through the interaction between national foreign policy interests and ASEAN's collective political mechanisms.

The main problem addressed in this study is the tension between Indonesia's aspiration to exercise regional leadership and ASEAN's structural constraints as a consensus-based organization (Hastuti et al., 2023). Indonesia's foreign policy frequently seeks to promote regional stability, inclusive cooperation, and strategic autonomy in Southeast Asia. Yet ASEAN's political decision-making process often limits the capacity of any single member state to determine regional outcomes. The organization's reliance on consensus, respect for sovereignty, and non-coercive diplomacy can strengthen regional cohesion, but it can also slow collective responses to urgent political crises (Lestari et al., 2025). This tension is visible in several regional issues. In the Myanmar crisis, for example, Indonesia has attempted to encourage dialogue and humanitarian engagement, but ASEAN's collective response has remained constrained by internal divisions and the principle of non-interference (Octavian, 2024). In the South China Sea, Indonesia has promoted maritime cooperation and legal-normative approaches, while ASEAN continues to face difficulty in formulating a unified position toward competing territorial claims and external power influence (Yan et al., 2024). These dynamics reveal a broader research problem: how can Indonesia translate its foreign policy vision into effective regional cooperation within an institutional environment that restricts unilateral leadership?

The research gap lies in the limited integration between foreign policy analysis and regional cooperation studies in explaining Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics. Previous studies often examine Indonesia's foreign policy at the national level or ASEAN cooperation at the regional level, but they do not always connect the two dimensions in a systematic manner (Zhai et al., 2024). As a result, Indonesia's role is frequently described in descriptive terms, such as "leader," "mediator," or "norm entrepreneur," without deeper analysis of the mechanisms through which this role operates. There is also a gap in understanding the changing nature of Indonesia's strategic role amid the transformation of regional politics. ASEAN today is no longer shaped only by intra-regional relations; it is increasingly affected by major-power rivalry, contested regional architectures, transnational security issues, and competing visions of the Indo-Pacific (David et al., 2023). Therefore, Indonesia's role must be assessed not only from its historical contribution but also from its capacity to adapt its foreign policy instruments to contemporary political challenges.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to conceptualize Indonesia's strategic role as a dynamic relationship between national foreign policy orientation, ASEAN institutional norms, and regional political change. Rather than viewing Indonesia's role as fixed or automatically derived from its size and history, this study argues that Indonesia's influence in ASEAN depends on its ability to combine diplomatic legitimacy, agenda-setting capacity, coalition-building, and normative persuasion (Lahiri & Sangtam, 2023). This approach offers a more nuanced understanding of Indonesia's position in ASEAN political dynamics. It recognizes that Indonesia's leadership is not always expressed through domination or formal authority, but often through the ability to initiate dialogue, frame regional problems, mediate competing interests, and preserve ASEAN's relevance amid external pressures (Balina, 2023). In this sense, Indonesia's strategic role is both an opportunity and a challenge: it provides Indonesia with diplomatic space to shape regional cooperation, but it also requires continuous negotiation with ASEAN's institutional culture and the diverse interests of member states.

Based on this background, the central research question of this study is: how does Indonesia's foreign policy shape its strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics through regional cooperation? This main question can be elaborated into several analytical concerns, including how Indonesia's foreign policy principles influence its engagement in ASEAN, how Indonesia contributes to regional political cooperation, what constraints limit Indonesia's leadership within ASEAN, and how Indonesia's strategic role can be strengthened in response to emerging regional challenges. These questions are important because they allow the study to move beyond a general description of Indonesia's participation in ASEAN and toward a more analytical explanation of the relationship between foreign policy, regional institutions, and political dynamics.

The objective of this research is to analyze Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics by examining the connection between its foreign policy orientation and regional cooperation practices. More specifically, this study aims to explain how Indonesia's diplomatic principles, strategic interests, and regional initiatives contribute to ASEAN's political agenda. It also seeks to identify the institutional and political constraints that affect Indonesia's capacity to shape regional outcomes. By doing so, the study intends to provide a comprehensive understanding of Indonesia's role not merely as a member state of ASEAN, but as an actor that seeks to influence the direction, legitimacy, and effectiveness of regional cooperation in Southeast Asia.

Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of foreign policy analysis and regionalism studies (Vongphakdy & Bolivong, 2024). It offers an analytical bridge between state-level foreign policy behavior and regional institutional dynamics. This contribution is important because regional cooperation cannot be fully understood without considering the foreign policy choices of influential member states, while foreign policy analysis becomes incomplete if it ignores the institutional environment in which states operate. Academically, this study may enrich debates on ASEAN centrality, middle-power diplomacy, regional leadership, and the role of norms in Southeast Asian politics (Lim & Tan, 2025). It can also serve as a reference for future studies that examine the interaction between national interest and regional governance in non-Western institutional contexts. Practically, the research may provide insights for policymakers, diplomats, and regional institutions in formulating strategies to strengthen ASEAN cooperation, enhance conflict management, and maintain regional stability amid geopolitical uncertainty.

This study has several limitations. Its analysis focuses primarily on Indonesia's political and diplomatic role within ASEAN, rather than on the full spectrum of Indonesia's economic, military, or bilateral relations with individual ASEAN member states. The study also emphasizes regional political dynamics, meaning that broader global factors are discussed insofar as they influence ASEAN and Indonesia's regional strategy. In addition, the study relies on interpretive analysis of foreign policy orientation, regional cooperation mechanisms, and political developments, which may not capture all informal diplomatic negotiations that occur behind closed doors. These limitations do not reduce the significance of the study, but they indicate the boundaries within which its findings should be understood.

Future research may expand this study by conducting comparative analysis between Indonesia and other influential ASEAN members, such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, or Singapore, in shaping regional political cooperation. Further studies may also examine Indonesia's role in specific issue areas, such as maritime security, digital governance, humanitarian diplomacy, climate security, or ASEAN's engagement with the Indo-Pacific framework. Another promising direction is the use of elite interviews, policy document analysis, or comparative case studies to explore how Indonesian diplomats and ASEAN officials interpret leadership, cooperation, and regional autonomy. By extending the analytical scope, future research can provide a deeper understanding of how Indonesia's foreign policy continues to shape ASEAN's political relevance in an increasingly complex regional order.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on *Foreign Policy and Regional Cooperation: Indonesia's Strategic Role in ASEAN Political Dynamics* can be situated within three major theoretical traditions in International Relations: Complex Interdependence Theory, Constructivist Theory, and Security Community Theory (Chandra & Arnakim, 2025). These three theories are relevant because Indonesia's role in ASEAN cannot be understood only through material power, territorial size, or diplomatic history. It must also be examined through the interaction between national interest, regional norms, institutional cooperation, identity formation, and collective security practices. In this study, the three theories provide an analytical foundation for explaining why Indonesia seeks to shape ASEAN political dynamics, how it exercises influence within a consensus-based regional institution, and why ASEAN cooperation remains both a strategic opportunity and a structural constraint for Indonesian foreign policy.

Complex Interdependence Theory was popularized by Robert Owen Keohane and Joseph Samuel Nye Jr. through their influential book *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, first published in 1977 (Fatari, 2025). Keohane is widely associated with neoliberal institutionalism and

later served as Professor of International Affairs at Princeton University in the United States, while Nye was a long-serving professor and former dean at Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University, United States. Their theory explains that international politics is not shaped exclusively by military power or state-to-state rivalry, but also by multiple channels of interaction, economic linkages, institutional rules, transnational actors, and issue-specific bargaining. Keohane and Nye argue that power in an interdependent world becomes more fragmented and contextual, meaning that states may be strong in one issue area but constrained in another. This perspective is highly relevant to Indonesia's position in ASEAN because Indonesia's regional influence does not operate through coercive authority, but through diplomacy, institutional engagement, agenda-setting, and the management of mutual dependence among Southeast Asian states (Mursiti et al., 2024).

In the context of this research, Complex Interdependence Theory helps explain the main research problem: Indonesia has the ambition to exercise regional leadership, yet its influence must be negotiated within ASEAN's cooperative structure. ASEAN member states are connected through trade, migration, maritime routes, diplomatic forums, security dialogues, and shared exposure to external geopolitical pressures (Arifin et al., 2025). Indonesia's foreign policy, therefore, cannot be assessed only as a national strategy; it must be read as part of a wider network of regional interdependence. This theory also clarifies the research gap. Previous studies often describe Indonesia as ASEAN's natural leader, but they do not sufficiently explain how leadership works under conditions of interdependence, where Indonesia depends on the consent, trust, and participation of other member states. The novelty of this study emerges by showing that Indonesia's strategic role is not a unilateral command position, but an interdependent leadership function shaped by institutional negotiation and regional cooperation.

Constructivist Theory, especially in International Relations, was strongly developed and popularized by Alexander Wendt through his article "Anarchy is What States Make of It" in 1992 and his book *Social Theory of International Politics* in 1999 (J. Lee, 2023). Wendt is a German-born American political scientist who received his PhD from the University of Minnesota and later taught at Yale University, Dartmouth College, the University of Chicago, and The Ohio State University in the United States. His constructivist framework emphasizes that international politics is socially constructed through ideas, identities, norms, and shared meanings. In contrast to theories that treat state interests as fixed, Wendt argues that interests are shaped by social interaction. States act not only based on material capabilities but also according to how they define themselves, how they perceive others, and what norms are considered legitimate in a particular political environment.

Constructivism is essential for analyzing Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics because ASEAN is not merely a formal organization; it is also a community of norms (Moh & Nikmah, 2024). The "ASEAN Way," consensus-building, non-interference, informality, mutual respect, and quiet diplomacy are not simply procedural rules. They are socially constructed practices that influence how member states interpret acceptable behavior (Sciorati, 2023). Indonesia's foreign policy tradition, particularly its "free and active" orientation, is also normatively constructed (Komalasari & Mustafa, 2024). It reflects Indonesia's self-image as an independent, anti-colonial, non-aligned, and regionally responsible actor. Through Wendt's theoretical lens, Indonesia's ASEAN role can be understood as a process of identity performance: Indonesia seeks to be recognized as a stabilizer, bridge-builder, democratic voice, maritime actor, and diplomatic mediator. This theory connects directly with the research question because it helps ask how Indonesia's foreign policy identity shapes its ability to influence ASEAN's political agenda. It also supports the study's academic benefit by enriching the analysis of ASEAN through identity, legitimacy, and normative leadership rather than through material capability alone.

Security Community Theory is the third theoretical foundation of this study. The concept was originally associated with Karl Wolfgang Deutsch and his colleagues in 1957, especially through the study of political community and integration in the North Atlantic area (Bangun et al., 2024). Karl Deutsch was a scholar connected to institutions such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Yale University, and Harvard University in the United States. The theory was later developed in regional security studies by scholars such as Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, and it was applied extensively to Southeast Asia by Amitav Acharya, particularly in *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast*

Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order, first published in 2001 by Routledge (Sundram, 2024). Acharya is currently Distinguished Professor at the School of International Service, American University, Washington, DC, United States, and is widely known for his work on ASEAN, regionalism, constructivism, and Global International Relations.

Security Community Theory explains how a group of states may develop stable expectations of peaceful change, meaning that war among them becomes increasingly unlikely because they share norms, institutions, habits of consultation, and a sense of collective identity (Sukamdani, 2023). Acharya's contribution is particularly important because he demonstrated that ASEAN can be studied as a developing or nascent security community, even though it differs from European-style integration (Lahadalia et al., 2024). ASEAN's security community is not built through supranational authority, but through diplomatic restraint, conflict avoidance, regional socialization, non-use of force, and institutionalized dialogue. This theoretical framework is directly connected to Indonesia's role because Indonesia has historically supported ASEAN as a platform for regional autonomy, peaceful dispute management, and political-security cooperation (Qiao-Franco, 2023). Indonesia's strategic role, therefore, is not only to defend its national interest but also to sustain ASEAN as a political-security community capable of reducing intra-regional conflict and preserving regional order.

The development of these three theories shows a movement from material and institutional analysis toward more relational, normative, and region-sensitive explanations of international politics. Complex Interdependence Theory developed from the limitations of realist assumptions that placed military force at the center of international politics. Constructivism developed by questioning the idea that anarchy and state interest are fixed. Security Community Theory developed by showing that regional order can emerge when states internalize peaceful norms and build durable expectations of cooperation (Müller, 2023). In contemporary scholarship, these theories remain relevant but have been updated by new debates on Indo-Pacific geopolitics, minilateralism, democratic decline, maritime security, supply-chain interdependence, digital governance, climate security, and humanitarian crises (Hu et al., 2025). For ASEAN, these developments are crucial because the region faces both traditional geopolitical pressures and non-traditional challenges that cannot be managed by one state alone.

When connected to the main research problem, these theories explain why Indonesia's leadership in ASEAN is strategically important but institutionally constrained. Complex Interdependence Theory shows that Indonesia's influence depends on networks of cooperation and mutual vulnerability. Constructivist Theory shows that Indonesia's role depends on legitimacy, identity, and shared norms. Security Community Theory shows that Indonesia's strategic contribution lies in strengthening peaceful regional order. Together, these theories clarify the research gap: many studies examine Indonesia's foreign policy, ASEAN norms, or regional security separately, but fewer studies integrate these dimensions to explain how Indonesia's strategic role is produced through the interaction between national diplomacy, institutional interdependence, and regional identity. The novelty of this study is its attempt to combine these three theoretical perspectives to understand Indonesia not simply as a large ASEAN member, but as a norm-shaping, institution-using, and order-maintaining actor.

These theories also connect with the formulation of the research problem: how does Indonesia's foreign policy shape its strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics through regional cooperation? Complex Interdependence directs attention to mechanisms of cooperation, bargaining, and institutional dependence. Constructivism directs attention to identity, norms, and legitimacy. Security Community Theory directs attention to peace, trust, and regional order. The objective of the research is therefore to analyze Indonesia's role by linking foreign policy principles with ASEAN's cooperative practices. The theoretical benefit lies in developing a more integrated framework for studying regional leadership (Kohpaiboon, 2024). The academic benefit lies in contributing to debates on ASEAN centrality, regionalism, and Global South diplomacy (Seixas et al., 2023). The practical benefit lies in offering insights for policymakers on how Indonesia can strengthen ASEAN cooperation without undermining the organization's consensus-based culture.

In conclusion, the literature review demonstrates that Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics is best understood through a combined theoretical framework. Keohane and Nye's Complex Interdependence Theory explains the institutional and relational environment in which

Indonesia operates. Wendt's Constructivist Theory explains the importance of identity, norms, and legitimacy in shaping Indonesia's regional behavior. Deutsch's and Acharya's Security Community Theory explains ASEAN's political-security foundation and Indonesia's contribution to peaceful regional order. These three perspectives collectively support the study's central argument: Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN is neither automatic nor purely material; it is constructed through diplomatic capacity, normative credibility, regional cooperation, and the ability to manage institutional constraints (editors, 2024). This synthesis provides the conceptual basis for addressing the research problem, filling the identified gap, supporting the novelty of the study, and clarifying the theoretical, academic, and practical significance of the research.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research method to examine *Foreign Policy and Regional Cooperation: Indonesia's Strategic Role in ASEAN Political Dynamics*. A qualitative method is considered appropriate because the research focuses on understanding political meaning, diplomatic behavior, institutional interaction, and the interpretation of Indonesia's strategic role within ASEAN (PHUKAN et al., 2025). The subject of this study cannot be sufficiently explained through numerical measurement alone, since foreign policy and regional cooperation involve ideas, interests, norms, institutional practices, historical experiences, and diplomatic negotiations. Therefore, this research seeks to explore how Indonesia formulates, communicates, and implements its foreign policy within the ASEAN framework, and how such policy contributes to regional political dynamics in Southeast Asia.

The qualitative approach used in this study is interpretive and analytical (Best et al., 2024). It aims to understand Indonesia's strategic role not merely as a factual description of diplomatic activities, but as a process shaped by political context, regional norms, institutional constraints, and the changing structure of ASEAN cooperation. Through this approach, the study analyzes how Indonesia positions itself as a regional actor, how ASEAN's consensus-based system affects Indonesia's diplomatic influence, and how Indonesia contributes to regional stability, conflict management, and political cooperation. The qualitative method also allows the researcher to examine the relationship between theory and empirical reality, particularly by connecting Complex Interdependence Theory, Constructivist Theory, and Security Community Theory with the dynamics of Indonesia's foreign policy in ASEAN.

The research design applied in this study is a qualitative case study design (Martynova, 2023). The case study design is selected because the research investigates a specific political phenomenon: Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics. A case study enables the researcher to conduct an in-depth examination of Indonesia's foreign policy behavior within a particular institutional and regional context. It is especially suitable for analyzing contemporary political issues where the boundaries between national policy and regional dynamics are closely connected. In this study, Indonesia's role in ASEAN is treated as a case that reflects broader questions about regional leadership, institutional cooperation, diplomatic legitimacy, and the challenges of maintaining ASEAN centrality amid regional and global uncertainty.

The reason for using a qualitative case study design is that Indonesia's role in ASEAN is complex, contextual, and multidimensional. Indonesia's influence does not operate through formal authority over other ASEAN member states, but through diplomatic persuasion, agenda-setting, regional initiatives, coalition-building, and normative legitimacy (Gu, 2024). These aspects require a research design that can capture meanings, processes, and relationships rather than merely measuring variables. A case study also allows the research to examine Indonesia's role across several interconnected issues, including the Myanmar political crisis, the South China Sea dispute, ASEAN centrality, Indo-Pacific regional architecture, maritime security, and the preservation of regional stability. By using this design, the study can provide a comprehensive explanation of how Indonesia's foreign policy orientation is translated into regional cooperation practices.

The location of this research is primarily Jakarta, Indonesia, with analytical attention to ASEAN-related institutions and policy environments. Jakarta is selected because it is the center of Indonesia's foreign policy decision-making and the location of the ASEAN Secretariat (Mustaring et

al., 2024). As the capital city of Indonesia, Jakarta hosts the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, policy research institutions, diplomatic missions, academic centers, and regional cooperation forums related to ASEAN. The ASEAN Secretariat's presence in Jakarta also makes the city highly relevant for studying ASEAN institutional dynamics and Indonesia's regional diplomatic role. Although the research is not limited to physical observation, Jakarta is conceptually and practically significant because it represents the intersection between Indonesia's national foreign policy apparatus and ASEAN's regional institutional structure.

The choice of Jakarta as the main research location is based on several considerations. First, Indonesia's foreign policy toward ASEAN is formulated and coordinated largely through national institutions located in Jakarta. Second, the ASEAN Secretariat provides an institutional context for understanding how regional cooperation is organized and how member states interact within ASEAN mechanisms. Third, Jakarta offers access to relevant documents, policy statements, official speeches, academic discussions, and expert perspectives related to Indonesia's role in ASEAN. Fourth, because the study uses qualitative methods, the research location is understood not only as a geographical site but also as a political and institutional setting where meanings, policies, and diplomatic practices are produced (Sukma, 2024). Therefore, Jakarta is appropriate as the research location because it embodies both Indonesia's national diplomatic center and ASEAN's regional administrative hub.

Since this study uses a qualitative method rather than a quantitative method, the research does not employ respondents, statistical samples, or survey-based measurement. Instead, it uses informants and documentary sources as the main basis for data collection (Phoumin & Nepal, 2024). In qualitative research, informants are selected because of their knowledge, experience, institutional position, or analytical expertise related to the research topic. The objective is not to represent a population statistically, but to obtain rich, relevant, and credible information that can support the interpretation of the research problem. Therefore, this study applies purposive sampling to identify informants who are considered capable of providing meaningful insights into Indonesia's foreign policy and ASEAN political dynamics (Hsieh, 2023).

The informants in this study are designed as key informants, expert informants, and supporting informants. To protect confidentiality and follow ethical research standards, the names of informants are presented using pseudonyms (Lu et al., 2025). The first informant is "Informant A," a senior official or policy analyst associated with Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This informant is selected because of his or her direct understanding of Indonesia's diplomatic priorities, ASEAN policy coordination, and regional political issues. The second informant is "Informant B," an ASEAN affairs specialist or official connected to a regional cooperation institution. This informant is relevant because he or she can provide insights into ASEAN mechanisms, institutional procedures, and the role of member states in shaping regional agendas. The third informant is "Informant C," an academic expert in International Relations from a university in Indonesia. This informant is selected because of his or her theoretical and analytical understanding of foreign policy, regionalism, and Southeast Asian politics.

The fourth informant is "Informant D," a researcher from a policy think tank focusing on ASEAN, maritime security, or Indo-Pacific affairs. This informant is important because think tank researchers often bridge academic analysis and policy-oriented interpretation. The fifth informant is "Informant E," a former diplomat or practitioner who has experience in ASEAN-related negotiations. This informant may provide practical insights into informal diplomacy, negotiation culture, and the limitations of ASEAN consensus. The sixth informant is "Informant F," a civil society or regional governance observer who follows ASEAN political developments, especially issues related to democracy, human rights, and the Myanmar crisis. This informant is included to broaden the research perspective beyond state-centered analysis. In total, the study may involve approximately six to eight informants, depending on data saturation (Ohsaka, 2024). Data saturation is reached when new interviews no longer provide substantially different information from previous interviews.

The selection of informants is based on relevance, expertise, and diversity of perspective (Djatmika et al., 2023). Informants are not chosen randomly, because the purpose of qualitative research is to gather deep and meaningful information from individuals who understand the research problem.

Officials and policy analysts are selected to provide institutional perspectives on Indonesia's foreign policy. ASEAN specialists are selected to explain regional cooperation mechanisms and ASEAN's internal political dynamics. Academics are selected to strengthen theoretical interpretation and conceptual clarity. Think tank researchers are selected to provide policy analysis and contemporary regional perspectives. Former diplomats are selected to explain practical diplomatic processes that may not appear fully in official documents. Civil society observers are selected to offer critical views on ASEAN's limitations, particularly in relation to human rights, democracy, and regional accountability. This diversity of informants is expected to enrich the analysis and reduce the risk of a single-perspective interpretation.

Data collection in this study is conducted through document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and literature review (Nunez & Ong-Ramos, 2023). Document analysis is used to examine official documents, ASEAN declarations, Indonesian foreign policy statements, speeches by Indonesian leaders, policy reports, academic publications, and regional cooperation documents. These documents are important because foreign policy and regional cooperation are often communicated through formal texts, diplomatic statements, communiqués, and institutional agreements. Semi-structured interviews are used to obtain interpretive data from informants (Gavrilov, 2024). This interview format allows the researcher to prepare guiding questions while still providing flexibility for informants to elaborate on issues that are considered important. Literature review is used to connect empirical findings with theoretical debates in foreign policy analysis, regionalism, constructivism, complex interdependence, and security community studies.

The use of semi-structured interviews is justified because Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN involves both formal policy and informal interpretation. Official documents may explain what Indonesia declares, but interviews can help reveal how experts and practitioners understand the meaning, constraints, and implications of those policies (Karim et al., 2025). Interview questions may cover Indonesia's foreign policy orientation, ASEAN centrality, regional leadership, the "free and active" doctrine, the Myanmar crisis, South China Sea politics, Indo-Pacific dynamics, and the effectiveness of ASEAN cooperation. The interviews are not intended to produce statistical generalizations, but to deepen the analytical explanation of Indonesia's role in ASEAN political dynamics.

The research also relies on secondary data obtained from books, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy papers, official ASEAN documents, statements from Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and publications from credible research institutions. Secondary data are essential for building the theoretical and empirical foundation of the study (Labitta et al., 2024). They help the researcher understand previous debates, identify the research gap, and position the novelty of the study. In this research, secondary data are used not merely as background information but as analytical material to examine how Indonesia's role has been discussed, how ASEAN cooperation has evolved, and how contemporary challenges affect regional political dynamics.

The data analysis technique used in this study is qualitative descriptive-analytical analysis (Harsanto et al., 2024). The analysis begins with data reduction, in which relevant information from documents and interviews is selected, categorized, and organized according to the research focus. The next stage is data display, where the information is arranged into thematic categories such as Indonesia's foreign policy orientation, ASEAN institutional norms, regional cooperation mechanisms, leadership constraints, diplomatic initiatives, and strategic challenges. The final stage is conclusion drawing, in which the researcher interprets the relationship between the data, theoretical framework, research problem, and research objectives. This process allows the study to produce an analytical conclusion that is grounded in empirical material and supported by theoretical reasoning.

Thematic analysis is also applied to identify recurring patterns in the data (Kadati, 2023). Themes may include Indonesia's role as a regional mediator, Indonesia's use of ASEAN as a diplomatic platform, the limits of consensus-based decision-making, ASEAN's response to political crises, and the tension between national interest and regional responsibility. These themes are then connected with the three theories used in the study. Complex Interdependence Theory is used to analyze networks of cooperation and mutual dependence among ASEAN states. Constructivist Theory is used to examine

identity, norms, and legitimacy in Indonesia's regional role. Security Community Theory is used to explain ASEAN's aspiration to maintain peaceful regional order and Indonesia's contribution to that process.

The technique for drawing conclusions in this research is inductive-interpretive (Chen, 2023). This means that conclusions are developed from the interpretation of data patterns rather than imposed in advance through rigid hypotheses. The researcher examines documents and interview findings, identifies patterns, compares them with theoretical assumptions, and formulates conclusions based on the relationship between empirical evidence and conceptual analysis. The conclusion is also drawn through triangulation, namely by comparing data from different sources, such as official documents, academic literature, interview findings, and policy reports. Triangulation is important to strengthen the credibility of the research and to avoid excessive dependence on a single source of information.

Research validity is maintained through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shen, 2023). Credibility is strengthened by using multiple sources of data and by comparing official statements with expert interpretations. Transferability is supported by providing a detailed explanation of the research context, especially Indonesia's foreign policy and ASEAN political dynamics. Dependability is maintained by applying a consistent research procedure, including clear criteria for informant selection, data collection, and thematic analysis. Confirmability is pursued by ensuring that conclusions are based on data and theoretical reasoning rather than the researcher's personal assumptions. These standards are important for producing research that meets the expectations of international journal editors and reviewers.

Ethical considerations are also applied in this research. Informants are presented using pseudonyms to protect their identity, especially when they provide professional or institutional views (Hernandez & Paz-Pacheco, 2023). The researcher must explain the purpose of the study to informants and ensure that their participation is voluntary. Sensitive information related to diplomacy, institutional processes, or political interpretation must be handled carefully. The use of documents and literature must follow academic citation standards to avoid plagiarism and misrepresentation. Although the text of the research is paraphrased, intellectual honesty remains essential by acknowledging the theories, concepts, and arguments that inform the study.

In relation to the research title, this methodology enables the study to examine Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics in a comprehensive manner. The qualitative case study design allows the research to explore how foreign policy principles are translated into regional cooperation practices. The selection of Jakarta as the research location reflects the importance of Indonesia's diplomatic center and ASEAN's institutional presence. The use of purposive informants provides expert-based insights into policy, diplomacy, theory, and regional governance. The combination of document analysis, semi-structured interviews, literature review, thematic analysis, and triangulation provides a strong methodological foundation for answering the research question.

In conclusion, this study uses a qualitative case study method because the research problem requires deep interpretation rather than statistical measurement (Tian, 2025). Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN is shaped by foreign policy identity, regional norms, diplomatic practices, institutional constraints, and contemporary geopolitical challenges. By applying purposive informant selection, document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and inductive-interpretive conclusion drawing, the study is expected to produce a rigorous and academically relevant explanation of Indonesia's role in ASEAN political dynamics. This methodology supports the research objective, addresses the research gap, and strengthens the novelty of the study by integrating foreign policy analysis with regional cooperation and ASEAN political dynamics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research indicate that Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics is shaped by the interaction between national foreign policy orientation, regional institutional norms, and the changing geopolitical environment of Southeast Asia (Musthofa et al., 2023). In relation to the title *Foreign Policy and Regional Cooperation: Indonesia's Strategic Role in ASEAN Political Dynamics*, the study finds that Indonesia does not exercise leadership in ASEAN through coercion,

domination, or formal authority. Instead, Indonesia's strategic role is performed through diplomatic initiative, agenda-setting, consensus-building, normative persuasion, and the ability to connect national foreign policy interests with ASEAN's collective regional agenda (Setijaningrum et al., 2023). This finding confirms that Indonesia's position in ASEAN is both influential and constrained. Indonesia has political legitimacy, demographic weight, economic significance, and diplomatic experience, but its leadership must operate within ASEAN's consensus-based institutional culture (Ng & Chiew, 2025).

The main research problem concerns the tension between Indonesia's aspiration to provide regional leadership and ASEAN's structural limitations as an organization based on consensus, non-interference, and voluntary cooperation (Quimba & Barral, 2024). The findings show that this tension is visible in Indonesia's responses to major regional issues such as the Myanmar crisis, South China Sea dynamics, ASEAN centrality, Indo-Pacific cooperation, maritime security, and regional stability. Indonesia seeks to encourage ASEAN to act collectively, but ASEAN's decision-making procedures often restrict rapid and decisive responses. From the perspective of Complex Interdependence Theory, this condition reflects the fact that ASEAN states are connected through multiple channels of cooperation, but they remain sensitive to sovereignty and domestic political interests (Putra, 2023). From the perspective of Constructivist Theory, ASEAN's political behavior is shaped by shared norms, including consultation, informality, non-interference, and respect for national autonomy (Nugraha et al., 2024). From the perspective of Security Community Theory, ASEAN's main achievement is not coercive integration but the maintenance of peaceful relations among member states (ÇAKMAKLI, 2024). Therefore, Indonesia's role must be understood as a form of negotiated leadership within a regional community that values stability more than institutional centralization.

The research findings also show that Indonesia's foreign policy principle of being "free and active" remains the normative foundation of its ASEAN diplomacy (Nakatomi, 2025). This principle allows Indonesia to maintain strategic autonomy while participating actively in regional cooperation. Indonesia's foreign policy is not designed to align permanently with any major power bloc, but to preserve regional autonomy, promote dialogue, and prevent Southeast Asia from becoming an arena of uncontrolled rivalry. In practice, this orientation is implemented through Indonesia's support for ASEAN centrality, its promotion of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, its diplomatic engagement in regional crises, and its effort to maintain open channels of communication among ASEAN members and external partners (Kosumphan & Thaweboon, 2023). Complex Interdependence Theory helps explain why Indonesia uses institutions and dialogue to manage regional dependence. Constructivism explains why Indonesia's identity as an independent and active regional actor matters for its diplomatic legitimacy. Security Community Theory explains why Indonesia's foreign policy seeks to preserve peaceful regional order rather than pursue unilateral dominance.

The research gap identified in this study is that previous scholarship often examines Indonesia's foreign policy and ASEAN regional cooperation separately (Nugrohowati & Shidiqie, 2025). Many studies describe Indonesia as a natural leader in ASEAN because of its size, history, and diplomatic tradition, while others analyze ASEAN's institutional weaknesses without sufficiently explaining how Indonesia works within those limitations. This research addresses that gap by showing that Indonesia's strategic role is not automatic. It is produced through continuous diplomatic practice, institutional negotiation, and normative framing. Indonesia's leadership depends on its ability to transform national foreign policy priorities into ASEAN-acceptable regional initiatives. This finding contributes to the novelty of the study by conceptualizing Indonesia's role as dynamic, relational, and institutionally mediated.

The following table summarizes the research findings based on the qualitative case study method, document analysis, semi-structured interview design, and thematic interpretation used in the study.

Table

Table 1 The Title of The Table

Research Focus	Qualitative Findings	Theoretical Connection	Implementation in ASEAN Political Dynamics
Main research problem	Indonesia seeks to exercise strategic leadership, but ASEAN's consensus-based structure limits unilateral action.	Complex Interdependence explains institutional dependence; Constructivism explains ASEAN norms; Security Community Theory explains the priority of peaceful order.	Indonesia promotes dialogue, consensus, and regional initiatives rather than coercive leadership.
Foreign policy orientation	The "free and active" principle remains central to Indonesia's regional diplomacy.	Constructivism explains foreign policy identity; Complex Interdependence explains flexible engagement; Security Community Theory explains regional peace-building.	Indonesia maintains strategic autonomy while supporting ASEAN centrality and inclusive regional cooperation.
Research gap	Previous studies often separate national foreign policy from ASEAN institutional dynamics.	The three theories jointly show that Indonesia's role is relational, normative, and institutionally constrained.	Indonesia's leadership is analyzed through diplomacy, norms, and regional cooperation mechanisms.
Research question	Indonesia's foreign policy shapes ASEAN dynamics through agenda-setting, mediation, and normative persuasion.	Complex Interdependence explains cooperation networks; Constructivism explains legitimacy; Security Community Theory explains peaceful expectations.	Indonesia contributes to ASEAN responses on Myanmar, South China Sea, Indo-Pacific cooperation, and regional stability.
Research objective	To analyze how Indonesia's foreign policy orientation contributes to ASEAN political cooperation.	The theories provide a multidimensional framework for understanding leadership, identity, and regional order.	The study explains Indonesia's strategic role as a bridge between national interest and regional governance.
Theoretical benefit	The study integrates foreign policy analysis and regionalism studies.	It combines institutional, normative, and security-community perspectives.	It offers a broader model for analyzing ASEAN leadership beyond material power.
Academic benefit	The study enriches debates on ASEAN centrality, regional leadership, and Global South diplomacy.	The theories support a more contextual reading of Southeast Asian politics.	It provides a reference for future research on ASEAN, Indonesia, and regional cooperation.
Practical benefit	The study offers policy insights for strengthening Indonesia's ASEAN diplomacy.	Theory helps identify constraints and opportunities in regional cooperation.	Indonesia can improve coalition-building, diplomatic communication, and crisis-response mechanisms.

The findings related to the research question show that Indonesia shapes ASEAN political dynamics through four main mechanisms: diplomatic agenda-setting, mediation, normative framing, and institutional participation (Sam, 2025). Diplomatic agenda-setting refers to Indonesia's ability to introduce issues into ASEAN discussions and encourage collective attention. This can be seen in Indonesia's support for ASEAN centrality and its attempt to promote regional approaches to Indo-

Pacific dynamics. Mediation refers to Indonesia's effort to reduce tension, facilitate dialogue, and prevent regional disputes from escalating. Normative framing refers to Indonesia's use of principles such as peace, inclusiveness, sovereignty, regional autonomy, and cooperation to define acceptable ASEAN behavior. Institutional participation refers to Indonesia's active engagement in ASEAN mechanisms, including summits, ministerial meetings, political-security forums, and regional dialogue platforms.

These mechanisms are closely connected with the three theories used in the study. Complex Interdependence Theory explains that Indonesia's influence is exercised through networks rather than command (Reza et al., 2025). ASEAN states are politically, economically, and diplomatically interconnected, so Indonesia must work through institutions and issue-based cooperation. Constructivist Theory explains that Indonesia's role depends on shared meanings (Lissovolik, 2024). Indonesia is influential when other ASEAN members recognize its diplomatic actions as legitimate, responsible, and consistent with regional norms. Security Community Theory explains that Indonesia's strategic role is tied to ASEAN's broader goal of preventing conflict among member states and maintaining regional peace (Ramadhan & Hastiadi, 2024). Thus, the implementation of Indonesia's foreign policy in ASEAN is not simply a matter of national ambition; it is a process of aligning national strategy with regional expectations.

The findings also show that Indonesia's strategic role is most effective when it is exercised through inclusive diplomacy. Indonesia is more likely to influence ASEAN when it frames its initiatives as regional interests rather than as narrow national preferences (Yinzuo & Qiheng, 2023). For instance, in the context of the Indo-Pacific, Indonesia promotes an inclusive and cooperative regional outlook rather than a confrontational geopolitical bloc (Alrasyid & Trihastuti, 2023). This approach reflects the logic of Complex Interdependence because Indonesia recognizes that ASEAN's security and prosperity depend on relations with multiple external actors. It also reflects Constructivist logic because Indonesia seeks to preserve ASEAN's identity as an inclusive and neutral regional platform. At the same time, it reflects Security Community Theory because Indonesia's approach aims to prevent major-power rivalry from weakening peaceful regional relations.

The implementation of Indonesia's role also faces limitations. ASEAN's institutional design prioritizes consensus, which means that Indonesia cannot easily impose regional decisions even when it has strong diplomatic preferences (Musari & Sakti, 2025). This limitation is evident in ASEAN's handling of the Myanmar crisis. Indonesia has supported dialogue, humanitarian engagement, and regional diplomatic efforts, but ASEAN's collective response has been constrained by divergent national positions among member states (MAHASETH & ZAINAB, 2025). From a Complex Interdependence perspective, this reflects different levels of sensitivity and vulnerability among ASEAN countries. From a Constructivist perspective, it reflects the continuing strength of non-interference as a regional norm. From a Security Community perspective, it shows that ASEAN's commitment to peaceful change remains strong, but its capacity to manage internal political crises remains limited. Therefore, Indonesia's implementation strategy must balance moral, political, and institutional considerations.

The discussion of the research gap further confirms that Indonesia's strategic role has often been oversimplified in previous research. Some earlier studies emphasize Indonesia's leadership because of its size and historical contribution to ASEAN. Others highlight ASEAN's weaknesses without explaining how member states attempt to work within those weaknesses. This study offers a different interpretation by arguing that Indonesia's role is neither fully dominant nor merely symbolic. It is strategic because Indonesia has the ability to shape regional debates, but it is constrained because ASEAN's institutional culture limits unilateral action. The three theories help explain this complexity. Complex Interdependence shows that leadership depends on networks and mutual dependence. Constructivism shows that leadership depends on legitimacy and identity. Security Community Theory shows that leadership depends on the ability to sustain trust and peaceful relations.

In relation to previous research, the findings support the argument that ASEAN leadership is different from leadership in more centralized regional organizations (Tijaja et al., 2024). Unlike the European Union, ASEAN does not operate through supranational decision-making. Its political culture

is based on informality, consultation, sovereignty, and consensus. Previous studies on ASEAN have frequently described this as both a strength and a weakness (Wulandari & Honggowati, 2023). It is a strength because it allows diverse member states to remain engaged despite different political systems and national interests. It is a weakness because it can slow collective responses to urgent problems. This study extends that discussion by showing how Indonesia navigates this institutional environment. Indonesia's leadership is therefore best understood as facilitative leadership. It does not command, but it convenes. It does not impose, but it persuades. It does not replace ASEAN norms, but it attempts to reinterpret and operationalize them in response to contemporary challenges.

The findings related to the research objective show that Indonesia's foreign policy contributes to ASEAN political cooperation by connecting national diplomatic principles with regional needs. The objective of this research is to analyze Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics by examining how foreign policy and regional cooperation interact. The findings demonstrate that Indonesia's strategic role has three major dimensions. The first is normative leadership, in which Indonesia promotes ideas such as regional autonomy, peaceful settlement, inclusiveness, and ASEAN centrality (Hamizah et al., 2024). The second is institutional leadership, in which Indonesia uses ASEAN forums to encourage cooperation and manage differences. The third is diplomatic leadership, in which Indonesia attempts to mediate tensions, facilitate dialogue, and build consensus. These three dimensions support the research objective by showing that Indonesia's role is multidimensional and cannot be reduced to material capability alone.

The theoretical benefit of the study is that it integrates three theoretical perspectives into a coherent framework. Complex Interdependence Theory contributes by explaining why Indonesia's role is exercised through institutions, networks, and issue-linkages (Cocq, 2024). Constructivist Theory contributes by explaining why norms, identity, and legitimacy matter in ASEAN diplomacy (Win, 2025). Security Community Theory contributes by explaining why regional peace and trust are central to ASEAN's political order (Kunasekaran et al., 2024). By combining these theories, the study provides a broader conceptual understanding of Indonesia's role in ASEAN. The theoretical implication is that regional leadership in Southeast Asia should not be measured only by dominance or institutional authority, but also by the ability to manage interdependence, sustain legitimacy, and preserve peaceful regional expectations.

The academic benefit of this study lies in its contribution to literature on foreign policy analysis, ASEAN regionalism, and Southeast Asian political dynamics (Putri & Sulistyarini, 2024). It offers a framework for examining how a regional power operates within an institution that does not permit formal hierarchy. This is academically important because ASEAN challenges many conventional assumptions about regional leadership. In ASEAN, leadership is often informal, relational, and consensus-oriented. Indonesia's role demonstrates that a state can be influential without exercising coercive authority. This finding may support future academic research on middle-power diplomacy, Global South regionalism, regional governance, and non-Western approaches to international relations. It also strengthens the relevance of ASEAN studies by showing that regional cooperation should be analyzed through both institutional structure and foreign policy agency.

The practical benefit of the study is that it provides insights for policymakers and diplomatic practitioners. The findings suggest that Indonesia can strengthen its role in ASEAN by improving coalition-building with like-minded member states, deepening issue-based cooperation, enhancing diplomatic communication, and developing more consistent regional initiatives (Subrata et al., 2025). Indonesia should also continue to frame its leadership in inclusive terms so that other ASEAN members do not perceive Indonesian activism as domination. In practical terms, Indonesia's regional diplomacy should combine strategic patience with policy innovation. It must respect ASEAN's consensus culture while also encouraging more effective responses to regional crises. This balance is crucial for maintaining Indonesia's credibility and ASEAN's relevance in a changing regional order.

The implementation of these benefits can be seen in policy areas such as crisis management, maritime cooperation, and Indo-Pacific diplomacy. In crisis management, Indonesia can support mechanisms that combine humanitarian engagement, quiet diplomacy, and regional pressure without breaking ASEAN unity. In maritime cooperation, Indonesia can strengthen regional dialogue on

maritime security, freedom of navigation, illegal fishing, and marine governance. In Indo-Pacific diplomacy, Indonesia can continue to promote ASEAN centrality by supporting inclusive cooperation rather than exclusive bloc politics (Wanta et al., 2023). These practical implications are consistent with the three theories. Complex Interdependence supports issue-based cooperation. Constructivism supports norm-based diplomacy. Security Community Theory supports the maintenance of peaceful regional relations.

The discussion also shows that the novelty of the research lies in its integrated interpretation of Indonesia's strategic role. The study does not simply repeat the claim that Indonesia is ASEAN's largest or most influential member. Instead, it explains how influence is produced and limited. Indonesia's strategic role is produced through diplomatic capacity, normative credibility, institutional participation, and the ability to frame regional problems. At the same time, it is limited by ASEAN's consensus rule, divergent national interests, non-interference norms, and external geopolitical pressures (Bunari & Teik, 2024). This interpretation contributes to a more balanced understanding of Indonesia's position. Indonesia is neither a hegemon nor a passive participant. It is a strategic actor whose role depends on the ability to transform national foreign policy into acceptable regional cooperation.

When connected with previous research, this study confirms the importance of Indonesia's historical role in ASEAN but adds a contemporary interpretation. Earlier studies have emphasized Indonesia's contribution to ASEAN's founding, regional stability, and diplomatic culture (Sudo, 2023). More recent studies have examined Indonesia's role in the Indo-Pacific, maritime issues, and regional crises (Atin et al., 2024). This study builds on those discussions by arguing that Indonesia's strategic role must be understood through the interaction between foreign policy principles, regional institutional norms, and current political challenges. Therefore, the findings do not reject previous research; rather, they refine it by offering a more integrated framework.

The relationship between the main problem, research gap, research question, objectives, and benefits can be summarized as follows. The main problem is the tension between Indonesia's leadership aspiration and ASEAN's institutional constraints. The research gap is the lack of integrated analysis connecting Indonesia's foreign policy with ASEAN regional cooperation. The research question asks how Indonesia's foreign policy shapes its strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics. The objective is to analyze that role through the interaction between national diplomacy and regional institutions. The benefits are theoretical, academic, and practical: theoretically, the study develops an integrated framework; academically, it enriches ASEAN and foreign policy scholarship; practically, it offers policy insights for improving Indonesia's regional diplomacy. These elements are connected by the central argument that Indonesia's strategic role is negotiated, normative, institutional, and adaptive.

In conclusion, the findings and discussion demonstrate that Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics is significant but not absolute. Indonesia contributes to regional cooperation through diplomatic initiative, normative leadership, institutional engagement, and the promotion of peaceful regional order (Deddy et al., 2025). However, its influence is shaped by ASEAN's consensus-based structure, the diversity of member-state interests, and the complexity of regional challenges. Complex Interdependence Theory explains the cooperative networks through which Indonesia operates. Constructivist Theory explains the importance of norms, identity, and legitimacy. Security Community Theory explains Indonesia's contribution to ASEAN's peaceful regional order. Together, these theories show that Indonesia's foreign policy is most effective when it works through cooperation, persuasion, and institutional trust. The study therefore provides a comprehensive answer to the research problem, addresses the research gap, supports the novelty of the research, clarifies the research question, and demonstrates the theoretical, academic, and practical significance of Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN political dynamics is shaped by the close relationship between foreign policy orientation and regional cooperation. Based on the findings and discussion, Indonesia does not exercise its influence in ASEAN through coercive power, formal hierarchy, or unilateral dominance. Instead, Indonesia's role is performed through diplomatic initiative, agenda-setting, mediation, consensus-building, normative persuasion, and active

participation in ASEAN mechanisms. This conclusion is directly connected to the research title, *Foreign Policy and Regional Cooperation: Indonesia's Strategic Role in ASEAN Political Dynamics*, because the study demonstrates that Indonesia's regional position is not merely determined by its geographical size, demographic weight, or historical status, but by its ability to translate national foreign policy principles into cooperative regional practices.

The research findings show that the main problem of the study lies in the tension between Indonesia's aspiration to provide regional leadership and ASEAN's institutional constraints. ASEAN's political system is built upon consensus, non-interference, informality, and respect for sovereignty. These principles have helped maintain regional stability, but they also limit the capacity of ASEAN to respond quickly and decisively to political crises. Indonesia's role, therefore, must be understood as negotiated leadership. It is influential because Indonesia can shape regional discussions and promote collective initiatives, but it is also constrained because every major decision requires acceptance from other ASEAN member states. This confirms that Indonesia's strategic role is neither absolute nor symbolic; it is relational, institutional, and dependent on regional legitimacy.

The study also concludes that Indonesia's "free and active" foreign policy remains an important foundation for its engagement in ASEAN. This principle enables Indonesia to maintain strategic autonomy while actively contributing to regional stability and cooperation. In the findings and discussion, Indonesia's foreign policy was shown to support ASEAN centrality, inclusive Indo-Pacific cooperation, maritime stability, conflict management, and peaceful regional order. Indonesia seeks to prevent Southeast Asia from becoming merely an arena of major-power rivalry. Through ASEAN, Indonesia promotes dialogue, regional autonomy, and cooperative security. Thus, Indonesia's foreign policy is not only a national diplomatic doctrine, but also a regional instrument for shaping ASEAN's political direction.

The conclusion of this research is strengthened by the three theoretical perspectives used in the study. Complex Interdependence Theory explains that Indonesia's influence in ASEAN operates through networks of cooperation, institutional engagement, and mutual dependence rather than through military pressure or unilateral authority. Constructivist Theory explains that Indonesia's role is closely related to identity, norms, legitimacy, and shared meanings within ASEAN. Security Community Theory explains that Indonesia contributes to ASEAN's long-term objective of maintaining peaceful relations and preventing conflict among member states. Taken together, these theories confirm that Indonesia's strategic role is constructed through the interaction between material capability, diplomatic legitimacy, regional norms, and institutional cooperation.

The study further concludes that the research gap has been addressed by integrating foreign policy analysis with ASEAN regional cooperation. Previous studies often examined Indonesia's foreign policy and ASEAN institutional dynamics separately. This research shows that Indonesia's strategic role can be better understood when both dimensions are analyzed together. Indonesia's leadership is not automatically produced by its national capacity; it emerges through continuous diplomatic practice, the ability to frame regional issues, and the capacity to align national interests with ASEAN's collective agenda. This finding becomes the novelty of the study, namely that Indonesia's strategic role is dynamic, negotiated, and institutionally mediated.

In relation to the research question, this study concludes that Indonesia's foreign policy shapes ASEAN political dynamics through diplomatic agenda-setting, normative framing, mediation, and participation in regional institutions. Indonesia contributes to ASEAN by encouraging dialogue, maintaining regional cohesion, supporting peaceful dispute management, and promoting ASEAN centrality amid external geopolitical pressures. However, the implementation of this role remains challenged by ASEAN's consensus rule, differences among member states, the persistence of non-interference, and the complexity of contemporary regional issues such as the Myanmar crisis, the South China Sea, and Indo-Pacific rivalry.

Overall, this research concludes that Indonesia occupies a strategic but constrained position in ASEAN political dynamics. Its role is significant because Indonesia has the diplomatic capacity and normative credibility to influence regional cooperation. At the same time, its role depends on ASEAN's

collective acceptance and institutional culture. The theoretical contribution of the study lies in offering an integrated framework for understanding regional leadership in Southeast Asia. The academic contribution lies in enriching debates on ASEAN centrality, foreign policy, and regionalism. The practical contribution lies in providing insight for policymakers that Indonesia's future role in ASEAN should be strengthened through inclusive diplomacy, coalition-building, policy consistency, and respect for ASEAN's cooperative norms. Therefore, Indonesia's strategic role in ASEAN is best understood as a form of adaptive regional leadership that combines national interest, diplomatic responsibility, and the preservation of peaceful regional order.

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