



Journal of Social and Political Sciences

Dorigné-Thomson, Christophe. (2021), Indonesia's African Foreign Policy Shift under President Jokowi. In: *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, Vol.4, No.3, 36-46.

ISSN 2615-3718

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1991.04.03.301

The online version of this article can be found at:
<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>

Published by:
The Asian Institute of Research

The *Journal of Social and Political Sciences* is an Open Access publication. It may be read, copied, and distributed free of charge according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

The Asian Institute of Research *Social and Political Sciences* is a peer-reviewed International Journal. The journal covers scholarly articles in the fields of Social and Political Sciences, which include, but are not limited to, Anthropology, Government Studies, Political Sciences, Sociology, International Relations, Public Administration, History, Philosophy, Arts, Education, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies. As the journal is Open Access, it ensures high visibility and the increase of citations for all research articles published. The *Journal of Social and Political Sciences* aims to facilitate scholarly work on recent theoretical and practical aspects of Social and Political Sciences.



ASIAN INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH
Connecting Scholars Worldwide

Indonesia's African Foreign Policy Shift under President Jokowi

Christophe Dorigné-Thomson¹

¹ Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia

Correspondence: Christophe Dorigné-Thomson E-mail: thomsonchristophe@gmail.com

Abstract

Under President Jokowi's leadership, Indonesia seems to have made Africa a foreign policy priority. Previously bounded by Bandung romanticism and lacking understanding on the contemporary strategic importance of Africa, Indonesia finally launched its own Africa+1 forum in April 2018 in Bali, the *Indonesia Africa Forum* (IAF), following an economic diplomacy framework and will to do business with Africa. For Jokowi, Bandung should be leveraged to mean business. Indonesia had previously struggled to institutionalize Asia-Africa intercontinental multilateralism through the *New Africa-Asia Strategic Partnership* (NAASP) launched during the 2005 Asia Africa Summit in Jakarta organized to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Bandung Conference; while other major Asian powers such as Japan, China, Malaysia, India or South Korea developed their own political, economic and cultural platforms with African countries. Closing a clear research gap, this original study allows a better comprehension of this foreign policy shift and of Indonesia's contemporary foreign policy towards Africa within Global Africa Studies. For more pragmatism and flexibility, this qualitative research, notably based on in-depth interviews with Indonesian and African diplomats, uses an eclectic analysis allowing a holistic approach combining levels of analysis and types of factors; thus increasing explanatory power.

Keywords: Indonesia, Africa, Asia-Africa, Indonesia-Africa, Foreign Policy, Jokowi, Global Africa Studies, External Powers in Africa

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Problem

Willing to turn the Bandung Spirit leverage into concrete business, President Jokowi made Africa "an Indonesian foreign policy priority" (Himawan and Tanjung 2017; Lumanauw and WBP 2017). The Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi called it moving "Beyond the Bandung Spirit" (Marsudi 2017).¹ Yet, limited material capacities in its foreign policy or non-traditional security threats such as the Covid-19 crisis can disturb the development of real power (Acharya 2014). Explaining Indonesia's late contemporary African engagement compared to other

¹ In an article in The Jakarta Post on February 2, 2017, titled "*Indonesia and Africa: Beyond the Bandung Spirit*", Minister Retno wrote: "*The focus of our relations will be economic cooperation*" (Marsudi 2017).

emerging powers triggered this research. While Indonesia tried to institutionalize Asia-Africa intercontinental multilateralism through the *New Africa-Asia Strategic Partnership* (NAASP) launched during the 2005 Asia Africa Summit in Jakarta organized to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Bandung Conference, other major Asian powers such as Japan, China, Malaysia, India or South Korea developed their own political, economic and cultural platforms with African countries, away from the Asia-Africa multilateralism promoted by Indonesia. Previously trapped in Bandung nostalgia and unaware of the new strategic importance of Africa in the 21st century, Indonesia finally launched its own Africa+1 forum in April 2018 in Bali, the *Indonesia Africa Forum* (IAF) obeying to an economic diplomacy paradigm and imperative to boost business with Africa (Anyu 2018); moving away from a continent-to-continent approach or complete intercontinental multilateralism (Kemlu 2018). Under Jokowi, relations with Africa seemingly enter the heart of Indonesia's national interests (BPPK-Kemlu and UMY 2016; Lumanauw and WBP 2017).

Before Jokowi, Indonesia favoured an Asia-Africa or continent-to-continent multilateral approach while other Asian powers did not. Indonesia has now joined the so-called “new scramble for Africa” (Carmody 2011, 2016). In the context of external powers’ competition to access African markets and resources, the institutionalization of Asia-Africa relations promoted by Indonesia through the NAASP did not operationalise. Indonesia lacked knowledge and capacity on Africa to lead the institutionalization of a large Asia-Africa platform like the NAASP (CDT with H. Wirajuda 2018). Each major Asian power prioritizes its national interests pursued through its own strategic means. Major emerging countries not only view Africa as part of their diplomatic agenda in a South-South Cooperation (SSC) perspective;^{2,3} but also clearly as a new market for their products and investments, and a source of natural resources (Carmody 2013; Darracq and Neville 2014; Iwata 2012; Van der Merwe, Taylor, and Arkhangelskaya 2016; Taylor 2014). Yet “emerging powers in Africa” like Indonesia cannot in reality be resumed to a kind of mercantilism.

1.2 Importance of the Problem

From the previous background and problem presentation, the research questions can be formulated as follows: what explains the Indonesian foreign policy shift towards Africa under President Jokowi; and how can Indonesia's current foreign policy towards Africa be interpreted? As an academic contribution, this research adds a reference to the theory of Indonesian foreign policy in the dynamic Asia-Africa and Indo-Pacific contexts. This exploratory, descriptive-analytic study based on empirical research brings an alternative perspective on Indonesian foreign policy to better grasp Indonesia-Africa and Asia-Africa interactions in general. Given that relations with Africa from an Indonesian perspective have rarely been studied, this work is original and innovative. Global Africa Studies are quickly developing. Indonesia's African policy has not been well studied yet compared to other emerging powers. Obviously disturbed by the Covid-19 crisis, this study still proposes a serious contribution to the underdeveloped field of Indonesia-Africa studies. Understanding Indonesia-Africa relations is a strategic topic given Indonesia's standing as a major emerging power or pivot state (Santikajaya 2016, 2017). This study modestly supports better relations and knowledge between Asia, Indonesia, and Africa and its countries. This research's findings could propel the emergence of more comprehensive and in-depth studies on the African continent from an Indonesian perspective; and vice versa.

1.3 Relevant Scholarship

No significant studies or seminal work on Indonesia's foreign policy towards Africa can be identified.^{4,5} Indonesia allows a new view on Asia-Africa contemporary links. Contemporary literature on Asia-Africa appeared more

² The SSC discourse is often presented as a mask dissimulating national interests (Van der Merwe, Taylor, and Arkhangelskaya 2016; Taylor 2014).

³ SSC combines seeking material benefits as well as human achievements in the Bandung solidarity tradition (Korkut and Civelekoglu 2013; Ndzenze 2018).

⁴ The short development on Indonesia in Africa in the collective book *Emerging Powers in Africa* is not satisfying. Yet the IAF had not taken place at the time of writing (Van der Merwe, Taylor, and Arkhangelskaya 2016).

⁵ The business guide published by the MOFA on Indonesia's economic presence in Africa is not academic (Eximbank and Kemlu 2018; Pramono 2012).

often in the early 2000s with the star topic of “China in Africa” (Amakasu Raposo de Medeiros Carvalho, Arase, and Cornelissen 2018). The literature has often presented a Western bias (Brautigam 2009; French 2014). But the rise of Asian research notably has permitted new narratives. Major Asian countries’ African engagements have been compared to assess the possibility of Asian partnerships in Africa (Iwata 2012, 2020). The issue of emerging powers in Africa has been studied using diverse paradigms: Marxist, critical, neo-liberal or more realist (Ayers 2013; Corkin and Naidu 2008; Darracq and Neville 2014; Davis 2018; Hirono 2019; Iwata 2012; Kato 2017; Korkut and Civelekoglu 2013; Kornegay and Landsberg 2009; Van der Merwe, Taylor, and Arkhangelskaya 2016; Zhao 2014). Different variables or determinants of Asian approaches towards Africa have been identified such as diplomatic reasons with for example China’s struggle against Taiwan and post-1989 sanctions or South Korea facing North Korea; the need to secure resources; or market access (Alden 2005; Darracq and Neville 2014; Iwata 2012; Van der Merwe, Taylor, and Arkhangelskaya 2016). The risk of “Black Solidarity” between Indonesian Papua and Africa has haunted Indonesia for decades (Deplu and UNDIP 1984).⁶ Power through a realist paradigm or pure mercantilism ignore more refined reasons for Asian engagement on the African continent; for example China and India in development assistance or the African defence sector (Boutin 2018; Ndzendze 2018). Yet Asian powers like China or India need to protect their citizens and assets in Africa causing an abandonment or at least a modification of the almost sacred non-intervention principle towards more pragmatic foreign policies (Hodzi 2019; Okolo 2015). Indonesia would have considered expanding in Africa before Jokowi if material or pure power factors were considered. Foreign policy determinants are complex and multiple. Due to the rising importance of Asia-Africa relations, Asian types of engagement towards Africa need to be apprehended.⁷ Mixing all forums of Asian and African countries into one Asia-Africa platform has been envisaged (Amakasu Raposo de Medeiros Carvalho, Arase, and Cornelissen 2018).⁸ This blending would deliver Indonesia’s idealistic intercontinental vision presented at the 2005 Asia Africa Summit (CDT with H. Wirajuda 2018).

1.4 Research Design

Filling a research gap, this research aims to study Indonesia’s foreign policy towards Africa in the 21st century especially under Jokowi, which calls for an exploratory approach due to the shortage of existing materials compared to China-Africa research for example. More specifically, this study inspects the shift of Indonesia’s African engagement from a multilateralist, idealistic, continent-to-continent involvement in the institutionalization of Asia-Africa relations through the NAASP declared in 2005 and again in 2015 at the Asia Africa Summit; to a more realist and materialist approach notably embodied in the IAF launched in April 2018. This investigation allows to better understand Indonesia’s foreign policy towards Africa as a sub-field within Asia-Africa studies and Global Africa Studies; and thus create knowledge on the African foreign policies of major Asian powers, especially through country-to-continent forums. Instrumental for state action, Indonesian elite and decision makers’ mindsets concerning Africa are looked into. Understanding the foreign policy shift from an idealist-multilateral approach to a pragmatic-bilateral approach in an economic diplomacy framework entails studying structural, institutional, ideational and psychological causal mechanisms (Parsons 2007); examining the essence and available theorizing of Indonesian foreign policy; and also seeking correlations through comparisons with other Asian powers more advanced in their African policies that tend to influence Indonesia’s own engagement.

The complexity of foreign policy cannot be apprehended with simplistic paradigmatic approaches denying certain levels of analysis or factors. Holistic approaches facilitate the analysis of foreign policies. Research on the African foreign policies of major external powers such as China, India, the UK, the US or France combine structural and agency level analysis; and ideational and material factors (Burton 2016; Carmody, Kragelund, and Reboredo 2020; Charbonneau 2016; Copson 2007; Duggan 2020; Erforth 2016; Gallagher 2011; Porteous 2008; Taylor 2014). Eclectic analysis provides a comprehensive and flexible framework for a holistic approach combining levels of

⁶ Online interview (September 2020) with the Indonesian Ambassador in Tunisia (2016-2021) Prof. Ikrar Nusa Bhakti.

⁷ To pursue their African interests and strategies, China and India have shifted towards increased multilateralism (AU, BRICS and other platforms) (Panda 2017).

⁸ Profesor Jepang Yoichi Mine: “these country-to-region summits may well be reorganized into a single region-to-region (Afro-Asian or Afrasian) forum, thereby avoiding duplication and unnecessary competition and opening up a way of dynamic mutual learning between Asians and Africans, rather than one-way transfer of knowledge from a big Asian country to dozens of separate African nations” (Amakasu Raposo de Medeiros Carvalho, Arase, and Cornelissen 2018).

analysis and types of factors; therefore increasing explanatory power. Eclectic analysis “*seeks to extricate, translate and selectively integrate analytical elements – concepts, logics, mechanisms and interpretations – of theories or narratives that have been developed within separate paradigms but that address related aspects of substantive problems that have both scholarly and practical significance*” (Sil and Katzenstein 2010).

A complex and debatable reality, Indonesia's delayed contemporary engagement with Africa and more substantial interest under Jokowi transcends the question of paradigms, requiring combined explanations as a real scholarly problem (Lake 2013). Problem-driven, this research began from an interrogation on why Indonesia stuck to the NAASP, its multilateral approach to Africa; not forming its own country-to-continent forum, the IAF, until 2018. This interrogation widened to Indonesia's contemporary African foreign policy, which calls for examining various causal mechanisms and processes creating or explaining the depth of the studied phenomena. Causality requires flexibility and freedom that paradigmatic bounded research can hinder. Research on Indonesian foreign policy in general or China-Africa relations reveals that a universal theory is inexistent. Interplay always occurs between agency and structure, material and ideational factors. Eclectic analysis towards middle-range theories supports pragmatism, linking causal mechanisms from various paradigms for the formulation of more holistic research outputs. Given the absence of a unique theoretical perspective to comprehend Indonesian foreign policy (Nguiragool 2012), eclectic combinations of paradigms, notably of realism or neoliberalism that share a rationalist or positivist ontology combined with constructivism, are employed to gather structure or the international system and agency notably domestic politics; but also ideational factors like perceptions or educational background of foreign policy elites and realist material factors like power and wealth distribution (Santikajaya 2017; Shekhar 2018).

2. Method

This study seeks to describe and analyse Indonesia's foreign policy towards Africa in the 21st century under President Jokowi as an analytical descriptive research. The focus of this study is directed at state foreign policy, an important part of state power. Thus, the level of analysis is at the state level and state actors. Given the eclectic analysis approach, the systemic level remains a concern; although structure is a human creation. Analytical methods like Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) appear insufficient especially concerning foreign policy content or ideas. Empirical, inductive and flexible methods born from primary and secondary data sources, as used in this study, seem more relevant. Qualitative methods, mostly in-depth interviews with Indonesian and African diplomats based in Indonesia and Africa, have provided this study's primary data; with the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) standing as the main primary source.⁹ Data from sources in the Military and the Police¹⁰ as well as ASEAN was also obtained. Snowballing and purposive sampling from mostly the author's private network determined the sources. Interviews were conducted in Indonesia mostly; online since the Covid-19 crisis. The Indonesian MOFA library in Jakarta also provided primary data. Secondary data was gathered from books on foreign policy topics relating to Indonesia and other Asian and external powers in Africa, research reports, print and digital mass media, journals and papers. This data made this research more comprehensive and empirically illustrated.

3. Results

3.1 The Bandung Spirit linkage and NAASP deadlock

Indonesia Africa friendly historical ties are symbolically enshrined in the Bandung principles or the *Dasasila* promulgated at the Bandung Conference in April 1955 (Lee 2010); marking the birth of SSC and of the “close support and cooperation” between Indonesia and Africa (Kemlu 2017). A strategic ally, Africa is also a partner for Indonesia in the Group of 77 in the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) or the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). For African countries, Indonesia becomes visible as a potential new partner and

⁹ such as the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and President Jokowi's special envoy for Africa in 2018, Dr. Hassan Wirajuda (CDT with H. Wirajuda 2018).

¹⁰ relating to peacekeeping operations in Africa, defense cooperation or non-traditional threats for example.

model with its democratic credentials, dynamic economy and well-managed demographic diversity.¹¹ Indonesia's socio-political profile can appear attractive for African countries due to a similar attention to stability and development in a relatable context and configuration.

Indonesia-Africa cooperation covers various fields such as health and family planning, forestry, agriculture and fisheries, environment, women's empowerment and democracy. Economic cooperation is aimed at trade, energy, infrastructure and the maritime sector. Although limited, Indonesia provides human and institutional capacity building, financing and technical assistance (Bilateral, NAM and SSC) to African countries. Indonesian companies, both SOEs and private, are increasingly getting involved in Africa (Pramono 2012).¹² In the Jokowi era, Indonesia prioritises economic engagement and cooperation in its relations with Africa. Indonesia aims to go "beyond the Bandung Spirit" (Marsudi 2017). But how to fulfill the potential relating to the strong symbolic historical links between Indonesia and Africa? Bandung created the concept of Afro-Asian solidarity that conserves emotional and symbolic power. Yet no transcontinental or transregional Asia-Africa platform has been operationalised. During the 2005 Asia Africa Summit coupled to the Bandung Conference 50th anniversary celebration, Indonesia launched the unimplemented and unoperationalised NAASP. Bandung idealism and a feeling of historical responsibility drove Indonesia towards the NAASP multilateral framework; symbolically and historically charged yet impossible to institutionalise. Ignoring the NAASP, other Asian powers built their own specific frameworks and country-to-continent forums. Indonesia actually focused internally since *Reformasi*. Africa seemed far and not yet a foreign policy priority. When the domestic situation is weak, Indonesia cannot implement a widened foreign policy; domestic politics founding all Indonesian foreign policy (Sukma 2003). The rise of the Indo-Pacific concept brings Africa into Indonesia's geopolitical *Weltanschauung* and elite mindsets.

3.2 The Birth of a more Pragmatic Framework: the Indonesia Africa Forum (IAF)

Despite the prestige of the Bandung Conference and Afro-Asian Solidarity, Asian countries in the 21st century engage independently with Africa; not through an Asian continental bloc. Asia Africa relations have materialised in a series of forums or summits launched by major Asian powers such as the *Tokyo International Conference on African Development* (TICAD) for Japan in 1993; the *Forum on China-Africa Cooperation* (FOCAC) for China in 2000; the *Korea Africa Forum* (KOAF) by South Korea from 2006 or the *India-Africa Forum Summit* (IAFS) by India from 2008 (Iwata 2012, 2020). ASEAN's giant, Indonesia only organized its first country-to-continent forum with Africa, the IAF, in April 2018 (Kemlu 2018). Institutionalising more concretely Indonesia's engagement with African countries, the IAF fully prioritises economic relations following the will of President Jokowi to leverage Bandung's legacy for concrete business with Africa, in accordance with his interpretation of the national interest as increasing the economic prosperity the Indonesian people. Placed directly under the President's patronage and organized by the Indonesian MOFA, the IAF does not take place at the Summit or Ministerial level; contrary to the country-to-continent forums or summits of other major Asian powers that bring together African Presidents and Ministers to boost socio-political, economic and cultural relations. During those summits, billions of dollars of investment and aid from Asian powers are usually declared. The IAF appears more modest than the platforms of other major Asian powers in line with Indonesia's weaker material capacities. Moreover, Jokowi himself is known to be humble and dislike international political forums without concrete business outcomes.

Given its status as host country of the Bandung Conference, Indonesia benefits from a positive *a priori* and a special position in Asia-Africa not yet really leveraged. President Jokowi is conscious of the increasingly strategic role of Africa for major powers and for Indonesia. Jokowi nominated his closest ally, a key political entrepreneur and power broker, and the most prominent figure in his cabinet, General (Ret.) Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, as Chair of the newly-created Indonesian Task Force for Africa Infrastructure. Luhut has been very active in seeking

¹¹ Although threatened by democratic backsliding according to many researchers (T. P. Power and Warburton 2020) and other weaknesses. The impact of the Covid-19 crisis is also not evaluated

¹² Pertamina acquired its first overseas oil field in Algeria. Indofood dominates the instant noodle market in Nigeria or Ghana under the Indomie brand; expanding throughout Africa. Other companies such as PT DI, PT KAI, Kalbe Farma, Wings Group, Sinar Mas, Indorama or Gajah Tunggal are growing fast on the African continent.

infrastructure projects and other deals in Africa. Indonesia organized the *Indonesia Africa Infrastructure Dialogue* in August 2019 in Bali (Kemlu 2019). Sharing the same colonial experience and recognised for its support to African independences, Indonesia benefits from a positive image and soft power in Africa. Africa also often supports Indonesia diplomatically.¹³

Since the New Order, Indonesia's foreign policy was more focused on its sub-region; ASEAN being described as the cornerstone of Indonesia's foreign policy (Anwar 2017, 2020). With its accession to the G-20 under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), Indonesia gained more prestige; presenting itself as the world's largest Muslim-populated democracy and a dynamic economy despite its domestic plagues such as corruption or poverty. SBY's foreign policy doctrine of "*a thousand friends zero enemies*" lacked focus for any significant strategic expansion outside Southeast Asia.

In the flexible respect of the *bebas aktif* doctrine, Jokowi has brought Indonesia to better assert its interests; proving more selective and pragmatic in its foreign policy choices and partnerships. In this perspective, Africa forms part of Jokowi's agenda at least in terms of business; calling for a deeper focus. The example and competition of other major Asian and emerging powers combined to Indonesia's thirst for expansion and recognition raised the intensity of Jokowi's and thus Indonesia's willingness to engage with Africa. Yet, the Indonesian strategy towards Africa remains somewhat unsophisticated; contrasting with the important potential of Indonesia-Africa ties.

3.3 The Impact of Jokowi's Leadership

Indonesia's shift towards engaging Africa more concretely, especially for business, originates directly from President Jokowi. Siding mere rhetoric, Jokowi started Indonesia's contemporary African journey. Africa allows Indonesia to internationalise its state foreign policy; offering the possibility of envisaging great power status in the future in the sense of Pardesi who defines great power as the ability to become a major power in at least one external region (Pardesi 2015). In ASEAN, Indonesia faces major obstacles to impose its views creating frustration as seen with Myanmar. Africa can form part of Indonesia's post-ASEAN foreign policy (Sukma 2009; Suryadinata 1996). The state integrated effort notably through Indonesian State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) initiated by Jokowi to expand towards Africa can be seen as a first for Indonesia; marking an historical change. As opposed to Indonesia's traditional foreign policy academic description as inward-looking and unambitious, Jokowi reveals a more proud and confident Indonesia. Indonesia's domestic problems remain heavy so that Jokowi's African expansion appears as a true achievement.

In the Jokowi era as well as before, foreign policy remains in the hands of the President and his closest aides and allies; somewhat isolated for some of its major parts from political and interest competition (McRae 2019). Modest and still in its early stages, Indonesia's shift towards the African continent validates this reality. Pragmatic and humble, Jokowi sidelined the NAASP deadlock. Africa has entered Indonesia's elite mental map from the top. Africa is now perceived as an opportunity for Indonesian expansion notably for Indonesian SOEs. Similarly to China, Indonesian SOEs can see Africa as a laboratory for their internationalization. Major Indonesian MNCs like Indofood for instant noodles already dominate some African markets like Nigeria or Ghana. Jokowi's push for economic diplomacy has forced Indonesian foreign policy to execute quicker as seen in the new African engagement. Like on the domestic scene, infrastructure development in Africa has been prioritised. Indonesian SOEs seek contracts to build railways, buildings and ports all over Africa; following the examples of China, Brazil or Turkey. Indonesia Inc. lead by the state underlines the true rise of Indonesia on the global stage. An Africa policy is a prestige marker. Jokowi's African move actually resonates domestically since it can be perceived as a way to legitimize his national politics and programs precisely focused on infrastructure development. Recognition and demand for Indonesian capacities in Africa highlight domestic success. The continuity of Indonesia's African expansion after Jokowi is an issue. Leadership change could scrap the promising start; as well as the impact of the Covid-19 crisis.

¹³ For example, Egypt was the first country to recognize Indonesia's independence. Indonesia also benefits from the support of African countries on the issue of West Papua at the United Nations.

3.4 Beyond Economic Drivers

Contrary to the doxa, economic determinants are important but surpassed by or submitted to sovereignty issues in the hierarchy of external powers' interests for engaging with Africa. Notwithstanding the economic diplomacy paradigm, this is also the case for Indonesia. Trade or natural resources are important but secondary explanations.¹⁴ Emerging powers like China, India or Turkey seized the African opportunity at the beginning of the 21st century. Indonesia waited until 2018 and the Jokowi presidency; although the economic opportunity had been present all along. China's highest interests or its *raison d'État* in Africa are not material interests but national sovereignty, stability and unity notably the One China policy (Rolland 2021). Indonesia's *raison d'État* impacts its African foreign policy. The protection of Papua for example is linked to Indonesian territorial integrity and unity. The *raison d'État* is non-negotiable contrary to material interests.

Suharto's foreign policy had been said to be in priority about status and recognition (Suryadinata 1996). It is similar under Jokowi. Indonesia's new African ambition appears as a signalling tool, a way to show Indonesia's rising status and development success domestically and internationally. Africa is also essential for Indonesia for better international recognition through peacekeeping or the African bloc at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). International recognition fluidifies domestic rule.

Finally, African agency and sovereignty also condition external power success in Africa. African elites defend their interests thus framing relationships to their advantage following Bayart's theory of extraversion (Bayart 2000, 2015). Indonesia has to be able to understand and negotiate with those primary actors while preserving a positive image with African populations. Appearing as too driven by material interests without bringing a developmental impact to Africans can ruin an African policy. Indonesia's narrative will need to be flexibly adjusted with the evolution of its African presence.

3.5 The Role of Ideas

Ideational mechanisms are key to explain Indonesia's African policy. The primacy of material drivers in the literature on external powers in Africa has been exaggerated. Material factors derive from ideas and perceptions. Emerging countries have material needs yet they cannot be resumed to mere neo-colonial actors. Their states possess a diversity of interests with state survival and sovereignty on top of the pyramid. These emerging states also face African states, their agency and their interests. The NAASP did not institutionalise given the absence of an epistemic community capable of formulating an Afro-Asian idea; and the form and content of an Afro-Asian transcontinental platform. The European Union (EU) formalised firstly thanks to ideas as the strongest causal mechanisms above structures or institutions (Parsons 2002). In Asia and Africa, conceptions of sovereignty or regionalisation differ as showed with the different philosophies of ASEAN and the African Union for example. Idealising Bandung, Indonesia could not develop an ideational framework for the NAASP in the Afro-Asian transregional context. The idea of Africa for Indonesia also lacked clarity. Sukarno declared Asia and Africa possessed weak power and thus had to gain moral, spiritual and ideational power (Gerits 2016). Indonesia's material rise still needs to follow Sukarno's wish to develop impactful links with the African continent and its people.

Both Jokowi and his main ally Luhut possess entrepreneurial ideational mindsets. Luhut is also a former General giving him a special capacity of implementation in Indonesia's complex environment. Coupled to Chinese ideational influence notably linked to "China in Africa,"¹⁵ this pragmatic mindset permitted the operationalization of the foreign policy shift towards Africa. The new idea of Africa in the Indonesian leadership's mindset has been translated into the IAF and Luhut's task force for infrastructure notably.

¹⁴ According to the UN Comtrade Database (<https://comtrade.un.org>), Indonesian trade with Africa was highest between 2011 and 2014; before the Jokowi shift.

¹⁵ The so-called Chinese model if it exists can be itself traced to Japanese developmental models; China having been strongly supported by Japan in its economic rise.

3.6 Indonesia's Knowledge Production Deficit

The quality of ideas can be linked to the quality and capacity in knowledge production and education. Indonesia suffers in this domain; negatively impacting its foreign policy. Indonesia's late and still constrained contemporary engagement towards Africa; and the NAASP deadlock as a matter of fact; underline this correlation. African studies have been mostly inexistent in Indonesia. Despite the Afro-Asian narrative, Africa was not a region of interest for Indonesia until Jokowi. No funding was therefore focused on studying Africa academically. Academic research in Indonesia is strongly subject to state and business interests. Since Africa is now of interest the academic world starts to consider the continent. This process happened in Turkey in the early 2000s (Eyrice Tepeciklioğlu 2016). Indonesia lags behind other major emerging countries in terms of research and academic capacities, notably in social sciences. Its universities are underfunded. Academics have to look for outside projects to make ends meet. Indonesia's actual success in Africa will be conditioned by Indonesia's knowledge production on Africa. Nations like China are investing massively on their research concerning Africa.

3.7 The NAASP: an apparent failure but future success?

The NAASP multilateral attempt failed to operationalise given the inexistence of a defined Afro-Asian idea and epistemic community; the diversity of sovereignty definitions and political cultures; state rivalries; historical aspects and memory; and lack of material capacity and knowledge of African dynamics notably on the Indonesian side. The NAASP was also not endorsed by the African Union (African Union 2013). The Indonesian MOFA understood early it could not implement the NAASP platform. Other major Asian powers were not interested. Yet Indonesia persisted to launch again a slightly revamped NAASP in 2015 as merely a new declaratory effort (BPPK-Kemlu 2010). A vast regime like the NAASP surpassed Indonesian leadership capacities. Institutionalising abilities indeed depend on material and ideational powers to unite players with competing interests (He and Feng 2020; Young 1991). Despite Indonesia's new pragmatic, more entrepreneurial and more feasible African approach lead by Jokowi and his entourage especially Minister Luhut, the NAASP could be beneficial ahead for Indonesia if its material and knowledge abilities grow strongly. Blending the various country-to-continent Africa forums of Asian powers for example could encourage partnerships and collaboration; supporting a real Afro-Asian community; and placing Asians and Africans on the same level (Amakasu Raposo de Medeiros Carvalho, Arase, and Cornelissen 2018). The NAASP is thus not a complete chimera.

4. Conclusion

All external powers, developed or emerging, struggle to find the proper African strategy that needs to be flexible to adapt to the evolving and diverse African context; and take into account African agency originating both from elites and civil society. Indonesia is no exception. Its lack of knowledge on Africa and state capacity deficit could lead to substantial mistakes in relationship to the continent; as seen with the NAASP previously. Co-construction with Africans and knowledge production determine success in Africa. Still at the dawn of its contemporary African engagement, Indonesia does not yet face the major problems an increasing continental presence creates for interest protection. It benefits from a sort of beginner's luck that will disappear given the potentially rapid increase of its continental weight with the development of such billion dollar projects as railways construction in Congo for example (Alawi 2020). Lead by President Jokowi's laudable effort and pragmatism, an increased awareness about Africa among Indonesian elites has developed. Although declared a priority, the continent *de facto* remains a secondary priority. Perceiving and engaging Africa strategically; mobilising the necessary ways, means and ends; and making sure serious mistakes are avoided; will remain a tremendous challenge. Years ahead will tell if Indonesia can raise its capacities; especially following the impact of the Covid-19 crisis, still difficult to evaluate at the time of writing.

Acknowledgments

No funding of any kind was received for this paper. The author would like to specially thank Burhan Djabir Magenda, Edy Prasetyono and Meidi Kosandi from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Indonesia, for their guidance and support.

References

- Acharya, Amitav. 2014. *Indonesia Matters: Asia's Emerging Democratic Power*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.
- African Union. 2013. 12 *The Integration of the New Africa-Asia Strategic Partnership (NAASP) into African Union Structures and Processes (Item Proposed by the Republic of South Africa) Assembly of the Union - Twentieth Ordinary Session - 27-28 January 2013 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*.
- Alawi, Muhlis Al. 2020. "INKA Gandeng 4 BUMN Kerjakan Proyek Perkeretaapian Rp 167 Triliun Di Kongo." *Kompas.com*. <https://money.kompas.com/read/2020/10/15/051000126/inka-gandeng-4-bumn-kerjakan-proyek-perkeretaapian-rp-167-triliun-di-kongo?page=all>.
- Alden, Chris. 2005. "China in Africa." *Survival* 47(3): 147–64.
- Amakasu Raposo de Medeiros Carvalho, Pedro Miguel, David Arase, and Scarlett Cornelissen. 2018. *Routledge Handbook on Africa-Asia Relations*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Anwar, Dewi Fortuna. 2017. "Indonesia, ASEAN and Regional Stability (Inaugural Lecture as a Member of the Social Sciences Commission of the Indonesian Academy of Sciences); Auditorium, Secretariat of the Vice President, Jakarta; 16 February 2017."
- . 2020. "Indonesia and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific." *International Affairs* 1(June 2019): 111–29.
- Anya, Agnes. 2018. "Multi-Million Dollar Deals Made at RI-Africa Forum." *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2018/04/11/multi-million-dollar-deals-made-at-ri-africa-forum.html> (May 27, 2017).
- Ayers, Alison J. 2013. "Beyond Myths, Lies and Stereotypes: The Political Economy of a 'New Scramble for Africa.'" *New Political Economy* 18(2): 227–57.
- Bayart, Jean-François. 2000. "Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion." *African Affairs* Vol. 99(395): 217–67.
- . 2015. "L'Afrique Dans Le Monde : Une Histoire d'extraversion." *Critique internationale* 5: 97–120. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24563500>.
- Boutin, Kenneth. 2018. "Feeding the Lion: China and Defence Development in African States." *Defense and Security Analysis* 34(3): 232–48.
- BPPK-Kemlu. 2010. *Laporan Pelaksanaan Focus Group Discussion "Prospek NAASP Sebagai Perekat Solidaritas Dan Kerjasama Asia-Afrika"* Badan Pengkajian Dan Pengembangan Kebijakan Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia. Jakarta.
- BPPK-Kemlu, and UMY. 2016. *Final Report "Pembentukan Forum Kerjasama Ekonomi Indonesia-Afrika"* BPPK Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia and Program Studi Ilmu Hubungan Internasional Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. Jakarta.
- Brautigam, Deborah. 2009. *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Burton, Antoinette. 2016. *Africa in the Indian Imagination: Race and the Politics of Postcolonial Citation*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Carmody, Pádraig. 2011. *The New Scramble for Africa*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- . 2013. "Globalising Solidarity or Legitimizing Accumulation? Brazilian Strategies and Interests in Africa." *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 24(2013): 81–99. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42912415>.
- . 2016. *The New Scramble for Africa - 2nd Edition*. Malden: Polity Press.
- Carmody, Pádraig, Peter Kragelund, and Ricardo Reboledo. 2020. *Africa's Shadow Rise: China and the Mirage of African Economic Development*. London: Zed Books.
- CDT with H. Wirajuda. 2018. *Interview with Dr. Hassan Wirajuda*. 17 April 2018, Jakarta, Pusdiklat Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia.
- Charbonneau, Bruno. 2016. *France and the New Imperialism. Security Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa*. New York: Routledge.
- Copson, Raymond W. 2007. *The United States in Africa. Bush Policy and Beyond*. London and New York: Zed Books.

- Corkin, Lucy, and Sanusha Naidu. 2008. "China & India in Africa: An Introduction." *Review of African Political Economy* 35(115): 115–16.
- Darracq, Vincent, and Daragh Neville. 2014. "South Korea's Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa Fortune. Fuel and Frontier Markets." *Chatham House Research Paper* (October): 1–24.
- Davis, Alexander E. 2018. "Solidarity or Hierarchy?: India's Identification with Africa and the Postcolonial Politics of Race." *India Review* 17(2): 242–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2018.1452415>.
- Deplu, and UNDP. 1984. *Perkembangan Di Afrika Dan Politik Luar Negeri R.I.; Kerjasama Departemen Luar Negeri R.I. Dan FISIP UNDP*.
- Duggan, Niall. 2020. *Competition and Compromise among Chinese Actors in Africa. A Bureaucratic Politics Study of Chinese Foreign Policy Actors*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Erforth, Benedikt. 2016. "Mental Maps and Foreign Policy Decision-Making: EURAFRIQUE and the French Military Intervention in Mali." *ERIS-European Review of International Studies* 3(2): 38–57.
- Eximbank, and Kemlu. 2018. *Road To Africa. Kajian Potensi Ekonomi Dan Risiko Negara-Negara Benua Afrika*. Jakarta: Indonesia Eximbank.
- Eyryce Tepeciklioğlu, Elem. 2016. "African Studies in Turkey." *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 13(50): 3–19.
- French, Howard W. 2014. *China's Second Continent: How a Million Migrants Are Building a New Empire in Africa*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Gallagher, Julia. 2011. *Britain and Africa under Blair. In Pursuit of the Good State*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.
- Gerits, Frank. 2016. "Bandung as the Call for a Better Development Project: US, British, French and Gold Coast Perceptions of the Afro-Asian Conference (1955)." *Cold War History* 16(3): 255–72. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2016.1189412>.
- He, Kai, and Huiyun Feng. 2020. "The Institutionalization of the Indo-Pacific: Problems and Prospects." *International Affairs* 96(1): 149–68.
- Himawan, Adhitya, and Erick Tanjung. 2017. "Jokowi: Membangun Ekonomi Afrika Harus Tanpa Merusak Afrika." *Suara.com*. <https://www.suara.com/bisnis/2017/07/11/135907/jokowi-membangun-ekonomi-afrika-harus-tanpa-merusak-afrika> (May 26, 2019).
- Hirono, Miwa. 2019. "Asymmetrical Rivalry between China and Japan in Africa : To What Extent Has Sino-Japan Rivalry Become a Global Phenomenon ? Asymmetrical Rivalry between China and Japan In." *The Pacific Review*: 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2019.1569118>.
- Hodzi, Obert. 2019. *The End of China's Non-Intervention Policy in Africa The End of China's Non-Intervention Policy in Africa*. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Iwata, Takuo. 2012. "Comparative Study on 'Asian' Approaches to Africa: An Introductory Reflection." *African Study Monographs* 33(December): 209–31. <http://repository.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/dspace/handle/2433/169673>.
- . 2020. *New Asian Approaches to Africa: Rivalry and Collaboration*. ed. Takuo Iwata. Delaware: Vernon Press.
- Kato, Hiroshi. 2017. "Japan and Africa : A Historical Review of Interaction Japan and Africa : A Historical Review of Interaction and Future." *Asia-Pacific Review* 24(1): 95–115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13439006.2017.1320162>.
- Kemlu. 2017. "RI Foreign Minister: Indonesia-Africa Cooperation Has a Long History." *Kementerian Luar Negeri Indonesia*. <http://www.kemlu.go.id/en/berita/Pages/indonesia-africa-cooperation-has-long-history.aspx> (May 27, 2019).
- . 2018. "Concept Paper 'Indonesia – Africa Forum' Bali, 10-11 April 2018." *Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia*.
- . 2019. "Kunjungan Menko Maritim Dan Investasi Ke Afrika Selatan Untuk Memperkuat Satgas Infrastruktur Indonesia Ke Afrika." *Konsulat Jenderal Republik Indonesia di Cape Town, Afrika Selatan*. <https://kemlu.go.id/capetown/id/news/3847/kunjungan-menko-maritim-dan-investasi-ke-afrika-selatan-untuk-memperkuat-satgas-infrastruktur-indonesia-ke-afrika>.
- Korkut, Umut, and Ilke Civelekoglu. 2013. "Becoming a Regional Power While Pursuing Material Gains." *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 68(1): 187–203.
- Kornegay, Francis A., and Chris Landsberg. 2009. "Engaging Emerging Powers: Africa's Search for a 'Common Position.'" *Politikon* 36(1): 171–91.
- Lake, David A. 2013. "Theory Is Dead, Long Live Theory: The End of the Great Debates and the Rise of Eclecticism in International Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 19(3): 567–87.
- Lee, Christopher J. 2010. *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
- Lumanauw, Novy, and WBP. 2017. "Jokowi: Afrika Prioritas Politik Luar Negeri Indonesia." *Beritasatu.com*. <https://www.beritasatu.com/ekonomi/458259/jokowi-afrika-prioritas-politik-luar-negeri-indonesia> (May 27, 2019).

- Marsudi, Retno LP. 2017. "Indonesia and Africa: Beyond the Bandung Spirit." *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2017/02/06/indonesia-and-africa-beyond-the-bandung-spirit.html>.
- McRae, Dave. 2019. "Indonesia's South China Sea Diplomacy: A Foreign Policy Illiberal Turn?" *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 00(00): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2019.1601240>.
- Van der Merwe, Justin, Ian Taylor, and Alexandra Arkhangelskaya. 2016. *Emerging Powers in Africa: A New Wave in the Relationship?* <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ecn&AN=1662973&site=ehost-live>.
- Ndzendze, Bhaso. 2018. *China and India's Development Cooperation in Africa. The Rise of Southern Powers*. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Nguitragool, Paruedee. 2012. "God-King and Indonesia: Renegotiating the Boundaries between Western and Non-Western Perspectives on Foreign Policy." *Pacific Affairs* 85(4): 723–43.
- Okolo, Abutu Lawrence. 2015. "China's Foreign Policy Shift in Africa: From Non-Interference to Preponderance." *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies* 10(2): 32–47.
- Panda, Jagannath P. 2017. "Institutionalizing the African Reach: Reviewing China's and India's Multilateral Drives." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 52(6): 853–72.
- Pardesi, Manjeet S. 2015. "Is India a Great Power? Understanding Great Power Status in Contemporary International Relations." *Asian Security* 11(1): 1–30. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2015.1005737>.
- Parsons, Craig. 2002. "Showing Ideas as Causes: The Origins of the European Union." *International Organization* 56(1): 47–84.
- . 2007. *Choice Reviews Online How to Map Arguments in Political Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Porteous, Tom. 2008. *Britain in Africa*. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Power, Thomas P, and Eve Warburton. 2020. *Democracy in Indonesia: From Stagnation to Regression?* eds. Thomas Power and Eve Warburton. Singapore: ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.
- Pramono, Siswo. 2012. *Exploring Africa: Mainstreaming Indonesia's Economic Diplomacy in Non-Traditional Markets*. Jakarta: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.
- Rolland, Nadège. 2021. *A New Great Game? Situating Africa in China's Strategic Thinking*. Seattle, Washington.
- Santikajaya, Awidya. 2016. "Walking the Middle Path: The Characteristics of Indonesia's Rise." *International Journal* 71(4): 563–86.
- . 2017. *Not Just the "Other Emerging Powers": Indonesia, South Africa and Turkey in the Transformation of Global Order*. Jakarta: UI -Press.
- Shekhar, Vibhanshu. 2018. *Indonesia's Foreign Policy and Grand Strategy in the 21st Century. Rise of an Indo-Pacific Power*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Sil, Rudra, and Peter J. Katzenstein. 2010. *Beyond Paradigms: Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sukma, Rizal. 2003. *Islam in Indonesian Foreign Policy: Domestic Weakness and the Dilemma of Dual Identity*. London: Routledge-Curzon.
- . 2009. "Indonesia Needs a Post-ASEAN Foreign Policy." *The Jakarta Post*. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/06/30/indonesia-needs-a-postasean-foreign-policy.html>.
- Suryadinata, Leo. 1996. *Indonesia's Foreign Policy under Suharto: Aspiring to International Leadership*. Singapore: Times Academic Press.
- Taylor, Ian. 2014. *Africa Rising? BRICS—Diversifying Dependency*. Woodbridge: James Currey.
- Young, Oran R. 1991. "Political Leadership and Regime Formation: On the Development of Institutions in International Society." *International Organization* 45(3): 281–308.
- Zhao, Suisheng. 2014. "A Neo-Colonialist Predator or Development Partner? China's Engagement and Rebalance in Africa." *Journal of Contemporary China* 90(90): 1033–52.