

## The Rise of Emerging Donors: Exploring Motives Behind

## Indonesian AID's Development Assistance to African Countries

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*This research examines the motivations behind Indonesia's development assistance to African countries through Indonesian AID, highlighting Indonesia within the broader context of the rise of emerging donors in global development. A qualitative explanatory approach was employed, with data collected via semi-structured interviews with a key policymaker and library research. The data were then analyzed using the foreign policy analysis framework with a pluralist perspective, which integrates both domestic and international factors. The findings reveal that Indonesia's aid to Africa is driven by a combination of pragmatic material interests, such as promoting economic diplomacy and expanding trade opportunities, and normative aspirations, including South-South cooperation and enhancing Indonesia's international standing. The study under discussion highlights the intersection of several factors, including leaders' idiosyncrasies, domestic politics, and global politics, which collectively influence the motivations behind aid. This intersection transcends the conventional binary of normative versus material drivers. By focusing on Indonesia's involvement in Africa, this research addresses a gap in the literature on Indonesia's developmental assistance, which has predominantly focused on Oceania, thereby illustrating the intricate interplay between domestic and international factors in the foreign aid strategies of emerging donors. The paper concludes that Indonesia's approach reflects a nuanced donor identity, offering practical implications for understanding the evolving landscape of South-South cooperation and the diversification of global development assistance.*

**Keywords:** Emerging donors; development assistance; Indonesian AID; Africa; motive.

### Introduction

Global development aid is witnessing the rise of donor countries outside of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) (Dreher et al., 2013), as major developing countries such as India and China have poured a massive amount of development assistance. For instance, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (2024)

reported, as of August 2024, the allocation over 300 lines of credit (LOCs) worth US\$32 billion to 68 countries worldwide, particularly its neighboring countries. Meanwhile, AidData, a research lab based at W&M's Global Research Institute, recorded 1,326 Chinese aid commitments worth US\$84.3 billion to 137 countries and regional organizations (Custer et al., 2023),

almost twice of the US' development aid in 2021 worth US\$42.3 billion (OECD, 2022)

Indonesia, one of the prominent Global South actors, has also increasingly attracted scholars' attention as a potential emerging donor. The empirical work on Indonesian aid mostly concentrates on neighboring regions, especially Oceania (see Azis & Satriawangsa, 2024; Wardhani & Dugis, 2020) where aid programs are often interpreted as instruments to reduce external support for Papua's separatism. Given Africa's growing economic and strategic significance (Mutsa et al., 2011), the paper suggests that it is worth discussing Indonesian aid to the region. To note, the Indonesian AID—the country's foreign aid agency—recorded 22 programs in Africa between 2019 and 2024, more than in Oceania, making Africa as the second-highest regional recipient after Asia (31) (Lembaga Dana Kerja Sama Pembangunan Internasional, n.d.) . The study proposes a research question: what motivates Indonesia's development assistance to African countries delivered through the Indonesian AID during that period?

Some literature such as Dorigné-Thomson (2022) and Heryadi et al. (2024) have scrutinized its practices in Africa, as the former views it as an extension of the developmental state under the 7th president, Joko Widodo, and the latter examines the implementation of South-South Cooperation (SSC) in education sector. However, both studies do not offer comprehensive explanations—combining both domestic and international drivers—

on why Indonesia allocates more aid to Africa than to Oceania, which situates closer than the former. Furthermore, this study tests whether Indonesia's stated normative commitments (e.g., Bandung spirit, South–South solidarity) hold when juxtaposed with material objectives such as economic diplomacy, state-owned enterprises market expansion, and status enhancement.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore the debate on normative vis-à-vis material motives in development aid. Normative interests—motivated by shared values and collective norms—can be understood as a concern for maintaining particular normative frameworks that guide actors' choices (Husi, 2015), which can be seen through South–South cooperation (Muhr, 2016). Meanwhile, material interests are usually shaped by actors' economic circumstances, which pushes them to pursue preferences aligned with their material conditions (Cavaille & Neundorf, 2016).

In terms of major OECD donors, Maizels & Nissanke (1984) argue that their bilateral aid allocations are predominantly explained by pragmatic donor-interest variables such as their political and security ties, trade linkages, as well as investment presence. This pattern was later confirmed by Rahman & Giessen (2017), who find that Bangladesh's forest development aid by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the European Union (EU) advances each donor's informal interests such as : (1) drawing on consultants

as well as products and services from the donor's country; (2) expanding favorable markets for the donor's economy; (3) increasing the donor's geopolitical as well as policy influence in recipient countries; (4) obtaining information that is independent from the recipient government; and (5) shaping good governance as a prerequisite for investment from donor countries.

However, the case is not limited to Global North donors, as some literature suggests that donors in the Global South behave similarly. For example, behind China's aid expansion to African countries that triggers competitive responses from G7 countries, the country desires to secure projects for its corporations, become their largest trade partner, foster dependency through trade and natural resource investments, as well as seek political support from African nations in international organizations to boost its global influence at the end (Kilama, 2016). In addition, the country employed a similar method during the COVID-19 pandemic, which allowed China's biotech industry to gain international exposure through vaccine aid (Azis & Basen, 2023).

This research also aims to expand the literature on Indonesia's role as a nontraditional donor, especially in Africa, as many existing studies focus on Oceania. Moreover, we argue that it is crucial to incorporate both international and domestic levels as factors driving the provision of assistance to obtain a more comprehensive answer than previous studies have provided.

## Methodology

This research is a qualitative explanatory study designed to analyze the causes behind a specific case. In this research, we dig into the motives behind Indonesia's foreign aid to Africa through Indonesian AID. Two complementary methods were utilized to gather relevant data: a semi-structured interview and a library research.

The semi-structured interview was adopted to gain an in-depth and detailed understanding of the subject matter (Bryman, 2012). In addition, the interview aimed to provide contextual clarification and validate findings derived from publicly available sources. We select the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Indonesian AID, Iwan Nur Hidayat, as the interviewee, and he has granted his consent to be named and quoted in this study. The use of a single elite interview follows the logic of purposive sampling, where the specific participant is selected to meet the criteria in order to address the research questions (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025), rather than to fulfill the sample size usually required by probability sampling.

Furthermore, the semi-structured interview also inherently aligned with our approach using open-ended questions, which give the respondents latitude to articulate fully their responses (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002). Therefore, the flexibility was maintained to allow the respondent to elaborate freely and provide insightful answers that might go beyond the predetermined questions. Afterwards, the evaluation stage was conducted to filter the collected information, allowing us to focus on the data that was

most relevant and valuable for the research. Moreover, library research was conducted to gather theoretical foundations and contextual information from credible secondary sources, including academic publications, official websites, and news outlets. Hence, this research can provide a comprehensive exploration of the case.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### Foreign Policy Analysis

It is essential to examine the motivations behind Indonesian development aid to African countries within the framework of foreign policy analysis (FPA). Investigating the motives is like unravelling a black box from an airplane accident. This inquiry necessitates a systematic examination of the factors that influence the policymaking processes resulting in observable policy outcomes. The motives operate as explanandum, which are to be explained or understood. They are displayed by decisions made by human decision-makers with reference to or having known consequences for entities external to their nation-state. In contrast, factors that influence those decisions act as explanans (Hudson & Day, 2020).

The complexity of foreign policy makes it challenging to devise a single approach that can comprehensively analyze and explain a foreign policy simultaneously (Dugis, 2007). As mentioned by Hill & Light (1985), every approach or theory has its own strengths; however, it also has respective weaknesses. This situation requires FPA scholars to adopt an organizing principle of some sort, to facilitate breaking down the

“big picture” into smaller, more digestible analytical components (Hudson & Day, 2020), which can be translated into “levels of analysis”. Kenneth Waltz, in his book *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (1959), offered three levels of analysis to explain phenomena in international relations, which were then adapted into FPA: the individual, the state, and the international system. Those levels of analysis were broadened by (Hudson & Day, 2020) into five major categories: the individual decision-maker, group decision-making, culture and identity, domestic political contestation, and national attributes and the international system.

### Pluralism in Foreign Policy

Aside from levels of analysis that are useful for reviewing the big picture from smaller perspectives, there is a distinctive view stressing the importance of combining two different levels of analysis—domestic and international—as explanans, known as the pluralist approach. What is crucial for pluralists to understand foreign policy outcomes is analysis of the influences derived from domestic and transnational sources—not necessarily tied to the state (Alden & Aran, 2017). Stephen S. Rosenfeld, a notable foreign affairs correspondent for *The Washington Post*, in his article in *Foreign Affairs* notes how the complexity of domestic politics has made decision-making in foreign policy more challenging, illustrating that various levels of analysis should be considered simultaneously. Despite the elites, particularly the president, having a huge amount of power in foreign policy,

Rosenfeld nonetheless argued that they must convince the country at large of what should be done in deciding a foreign policy (1974).

Robert Putnam's two-level game is a derivation of the pluralist approach, attempting to explain the challenges imposed by both domestic and international pressures on foreign policy decision-makers. Putnam (1988) argued that it is important to aim at a "general equilibrium" theory that accounts simultaneously for the interaction of domestic and international factors, as decision-makers cannot ignore pressures coming from both levels. Within domestic politics, they have to consider each political group's interests pressuring them to pursue favorable gains, while at the international level, they should take account of "the adverse consequences of foreign developments".

He specifically uses an international negotiation on coordinated economic policy involving the United States, Japan, and Germany at the 1978 Bonn Summit to illustrate his theory. However, we propose the usage of theory beyond its original example, as Putnam (1988) notes that it offers a theoretical approach to "When?" and "How?" domestic and international politics determine international relations. Therefore, this study applies the theory to examine the domestic and international factors that influence Indonesia's development aid to African countries.

Putnam (1988) later categorizes interactions<sup>1</sup> within the international level as Level I and domestic political dynamics

as Level II, where the actors at this level can consist of bureaucratic agencies, interest groups, social classes, or even public opinion, which would debate over whether the country should implement an international deal. According to him, "expectations of rejection at Level II may abort negotiations at Level I without any formal action at Level II". In other words, any potential domestic opposition voices could be obstacles for the state's decision on the international stage.

Furthermore, Putnam (1988) mentions three factors determining the domestic acceptance of a foreign policy, which he calls "win-set". Firstly, decision-makers should consider domestic political dynamics, which include distribution of power, each major actor's preferences, and potential coalition among actors. Secondly, national political institutions influence the size of the win-set. He notes that a foreign policy is more likely to formulate if the policymakers are more independent of their domestic constituents. However, a stronger state's autonomy from domestic pressures—e.g. authoritarian regime, the weaker its relative bargaining position internationally, as its diplomats have minimum ability "to claim credibly that domestic pressures preclude some disadvantageous deal" (Putnam, 1988). Lastly, the decision-makers' strategies at Level I also determine the result, for instance, they could offer side-payments to attract national support in order to achieve a deal with foreign actors.

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1 The author originally uses "negotiation", but we replace it with "interactions" to accommodate the theory within our study.

### Material and Normative Interests

Before exploring differences between material and normative interests, it is important to understand what is “national interest” itself. Nuechterlein (1976) defines it as “the perceived needs and desires of one sovereign state in relation to other sovereign states comprising the external environment. He further divides the national interest of a country into four basic needs, namely defense interests; economic interests; world order interests; and ideological interests.

Some literature associate material interest with national interest itself. For instance, Knudsen (1979) attempts to identify objective criteria of material advantages in foreign policy. Meanwhile, O'Brien (2013) states that interests “...relate to security, prosperity and well-being”. From the perspective of material interests, aid can be seen as “means of promoting bilateral trade or rewarding political allies” (Dreher et al., 2011). In other words, material interests advocate pragmatic goals through channeling aid to certain targeted countries.

On the other hand, it is misleading to separate normative from the national interests, as the latter are shaped by the society's constitutive principles, which makes it unique to that society (Clinton, 1986). This interest type is similar to Nuechterlein's ideological interests, which encompasses the preservation and promotion of values that the citizens of a nation-state collectively uphold and regard as universally desirable. In terms of international cooperation, normative interests do not simply describe reality but prescribe certain specific modes of

economic and political behavior (Six, 2009), or as O'Brien (2013), equating normative interests with value-driven factors, notes that it aims “to transform political and social behavior of others”. Thus, while normative interests emphasize solidarity as the basis for cooperation, material interests suggest that cooperation is pursued with an eye toward the tangible benefits that can be gained (Suhita et al., 2023).

### **Indonesian Foreign Policymaking**

The pluralist forms can be observed in Indonesian foreign policymaking, as Nazala (2022) notes that external and internal factors have shaped foreign policy makers and their strategies. An example of it, that he cited, was when former Minister of Foreign Affairs Hassan Wirajuda introduced the concept of *intermestik*—an abbreviation of *internasional* dan *domestik* (international and domestic)—to portray how Indonesian foreign policy should “bridge between the international and domestic sides”. The fusion of international and domestic pressures on Indonesian foreign policy formulation was also acknowledged by a prominent Indonesian IR scholar as well as foreign affairs advisor to former president B.J. Habibie, Dewi Fortuna Anwar (2010). This circumstance cannot be separated from the emergence of democracy after *Reformasi* in 1998, as Laksmana (2011) noted, “complicated foreign policymaking because of the proliferation of interested parties and stakeholders, and the importance of public opinion.”

However, in some cases, Indonesian foreign policy formulation does not reflect

public opinion, as it has traditionally been in the hands of a few individuals (Nazala, 2022). Using the case studies of Indonesian foreign policy in the South China Sea under Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jokowi, Sulaiman (2019) described how Indonesian foreign policy was primarily driven by leaders' decisions shaped by the strategic culture. Notably, leaders' enormous power and the dominant role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remain the central features in dictating Indonesian diplomacy (see Huijgh, 2016; Wicaksana & Wardhana, 2021).

Despite their dominant role, elites never leave the dynamics of domestic politics behind in all their strategies on Indonesian foreign policy. When Jokowi first came into office in 2014, his administration adopted a new diplomatic style, widely known as *diplomasi pro-rakyat* (pro-people's diplomacy), which prioritized domestic needs at the heart of Indonesian foreign policy. Andika (2016) argued that this approach was a response to the evaluation of Jokowi's predecessor, Yudhoyono, who seemed to lack roots in domestic aspects. We will explore further the differences of both diplomatic styles in the following part.

### **The Entanglement of Domestic and International Factors**

This part discusses the interaction between domestic and international factors which encourages Indonesia to allocate the official development assistance to Africa. As we have mentioned earlier, a comprehensive understanding of the formulation of Indonesian official development assistance

to African countries requires consideration of both the domestic and the international factors. Therefore, it is vital to have a sufficient understanding of both factors in prior to explaining their interaction which finally determines Indonesia's decision. On the domestic level, we find that the combination of leaders' idiosyncrasy and decision-making dynamics influence the program, while on the international level, this can be explained by the prevailing international order, and the rise of Global South, notably Africa itself. All in all, we see that the interplay of domestic and international factors blends both normative and material interests behind the provision of aid.

#### Domestic Factors

When Jokowi took power, he promoted a more pragmatic diplomatic style than Yudhoyono's style. This was reflected in the reduction of high-level tendencies in Indonesian foreign policy, which is contributed by Jokowi's strong image as a populist, who represents *wong cilik* ('the poor') (Andika, 2016). This political image drives Jokowi's diplomatic style, which is more casual than Yudhoyono's, as evidenced by his active engagement on various social media platforms, where he reports his personal diplomatic activities to the public. According to Wicaksana & Wardhana (2021), this approach has brought closer linkages between foreign policy and ordinary citizens.

We believe that this contrast can be attributed to each persona traits, as leaders' personality is associated with the policy

(Medeiros et al., 2022). Despite having various explanans on both domestic and international level, foreign policy makes a point of leader's prominent role in its formulation and implementation (Jervis, 1976; Sarini, 2023). As someone who has a business background (Prasodjo & Hannigan, 2021), Jokowi is a very goal-oriented leader. For him, foreign policy is about "no profit, no deal" (Sarini, 2023). Meanwhile, Yudhoyono's vanity pushes Indonesia's more prominent role on the international level as the consequence of his personal life experience (Fealy, 2015). One might argue that Indonesia's aid allocation to Africa makes pragmatic feature of Jokowi's foreign policy questionable, however, as we discuss later, its status as emerging region supports this characteristic instead.

It is also worth mentioning the role of bureaucratic politics behind aid allocation in both administrations. Muhibat (2014) notes that Indonesia's involvement in foreign development cooperation during the early years of Yudhoyono's administration was fragmented as many programs were separately managed by line ministries or agencies. For example, the Ministry of Education and Culture managed three scholarship programs, while the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Public Works conducted technical cooperation with the Global South countries.

Later, in 2010, the concept of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) was formally integrated into Indonesia's foreign policy through the Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2010–

2014, mandating a comprehensive policy framework and institutional strengthening for development cooperation. This breakthrough was followed by the establishment of the National Coordination Team on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (NCT SSTC) in 2011, which consists of the Ministry of National Development Planning (Bappenas), the Ministry of State Secretariat, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Finance (Muhibat, 2014). This initiative represented the first major milestone in Indonesia's institutionalization of its development aid.

However, Muhibat (2014) argues that the absence of strategic vision and objectives restrained Indonesia's development cooperation under Yudhoyono's presidency, which results in having only demand-driven and one-off programs. Furthermore, Winanti & Alvian (2021) also observes another constraint emerges from the inter-ministerial contestations concerning the objectives and institutional framework of Indonesia's development cooperation architecture. Thus, the formation of Indonesian AID slightly before the beginning of Jokowi's second term presidency was viewed as a harmonization of foreign aid policy (Azis & Satriawangsa, 2024). In addition, the Ministry of Finance (2020) through *Peraturan Menteri Keuangan (PMK) Nomor 84/PMK.08/2020 Tentang Tata Cara Pelaksanaan, Penatausahaan, Pemantauan, Evaluasi, Dan Pelaporan Pemberian Hibah Kepada Pemerintah Asing/Lembaga Asing* (transl: the Article 4 of the Minister of Finance Regulation (PMK) Number 84/PMK.08/2020 on Procedures

for the Implementation, Administration, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting of Grants to Foreign Governments or Foreign Institutions) mandates the CEO of Indonesian AID 's responsibility for grant disbursement, which allows a prerogative power for the agency to determine suitable aid programs, even though its operational is still overseen by a steering committee consisting of Bappenas, the Ministry of State Secretariat, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Finance.

Domestic acceptance also plays an important role in designing foreign assistance programs. A poll conducted by Australian think-tank Lewy Institute in 2021 found that most Indonesians view foreign policy pragmatically. They picked "protecting the jobs of Indonesian workers" (92%), "protecting Indonesian citizens abroad" (91%), and "strengthening the Indonesian economy" (91%) as the three primary issues which are very important or fairly important to achieve in foreign policy (Bland et al., 2021). Simultaneously, 80% respondents say that providing foreign aid to developing countries is one of the most important issues in promoting peace and conflict resolution, suggesting significant public opinion backing for the program.

Moreover, the weakening oversight of the body during Jokowi's era supports a more relaxed policymaking atmosphere, providing easier domestic acceptance. Feulner (2024) observes the emergence of autocratic legalism under Jokowi, where the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR) was systematically involved in reducing the scrutiny of draft

legislation, limiting deliberation, and narrowing public consultation to serve elite interests. This idea was confirmed by the former Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, Mahfud MD, and a 2019–2024 DPR member, Masinton Pasaribu, who stated that several government-proposed bills almost never faced obstacles in the parliament (Dongoran, 2024). Mochtar (2024) further notes that political parties with differing views or opposing Jokowi's wishes will be positioned as opponents who must be dealt with through influence, division, criminalization, or other means to ensure they comply with his desires and interests.

#### International Factors

International order plays a significant role in shaping international relations, including states' behavior. According to Bull (1977), international order is "a pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society". On the other hand, states also can actively advocate their ideas on it, for example Indonesia has historically championed global decolonization via the 1955 Bandung Conference and contributed to maintaining regional order in Southeast Asia as a founding member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Umar, 2023). Iwan Nur Hidayat (Interview, May 26, 2025) explains that Indonesia's past experience as a colonized country encourages the government to allocate aid to other former colonized countries, particularly in Asia and Africa, to show its solidarity.

Furthermore, Umar (2023) observes that recent literature on international order has increasingly centered on the institutionalization of liberal values that has taken shape since the end of the Cold War. According to Deudney & Ikenberry (1999), the liberal international order (LIO) has four key features: 1) the integrative nature of interstate relations under globalization; 2) the institutionalization of order through rules and formal institutions; 3) the pursuit of economic benefits derived from international cooperation; and 4) the inclusion of states with diverse economic systems in cooperative frameworks. Both Yudhoyono and Jokowi have responded differently to the LIO. The former sought to demonstrate Indonesia as a “responsible member of the international society” by promoting Indonesia’s identity as an emerging and home-grown democracy, while the latter raised skepticism of the order, emphasizing the democratization process should impact on the realization of equitable development (Umar, 2023). On the other hand, it is worth mentioning the rise of Africa as the future world economic powerhouse. Mutsa et al. (2011) notes that the resource-rich continent is among the fastest-expanding economic regions today, creating a range of opportunities in various sectors, including retailing, telecommunications, banking, infrastructure-related industries, resource-related businesses, and all aspects of the agricultural value chain. At the same time, non-DAC donors such as China and India attempt to capitalize this golden moment, offering aid without specific requirements which was usually stipulated by the established development

assistance regime (Woods, 2008). Paczyńska (2023) argues that the more diversified donor regime presents an opportunity for African states to exercise greater agency when deciding which donors to establish relationships with and for what purposes.

### The Fusion of Both Factors

Indonesian foreign policy under Jokowi is characterized by a greater emphasis on pragmatism and materialism, which prioritizes the needs of its own people (Andika, 2016; Purba, 2022; Rosyidin, 2017). Jokowi’s foreign policy is characterized by four principal features: the revival of nationalist ideology, a tendency to narrow the concentric circles of Indonesia’s strategic interests, an emphasis on grounding national power in domestic capabilities, and a reduction of the concept of national interest to primarily material gains (Rosyidin, 2017).

The pro-people diplomacy contrasts with Yudhoyono’s approach, as the former aims to empower the nation through the improvement of economic capacity and a reduced tendency towards normative motives or non-material purposes. In his inauguration speech for the second term, Yudhoyono (2009) stated that “Indonesia will cooperate with any country which shares our intentions and goals, primarily to build a peaceful, just, democratic, and prosperous world order”, suggesting that normative values significantly guided Indonesian foreign policy under his administration. Furthermore, when interviewed by Acharya (2014), Yudhoyono’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marty Natalegawa, described Indonesia as a “regional

power with global interests and concerns,” indicating that the administration was ambitious to bring Indonesia onto the world stage (Rosyidin, 2017).

To implement the doctrine, Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi emphasized that strengthening economic diplomacy is one of the key priorities in Indonesian foreign policy under Jokowi's presidency (Humas, 2015). According to the CEO of Indonesian AID, Iwan Nur Hidayat, development grants provided by the Indonesian AID are integral to this strategy (Interview with Iwan Nur Hidayat, May 26, 2025). While grants do not offer immediate benefits like loans, they are intended to raise awareness of Indonesian products through programs within target countries, particularly in non-traditional markets.

Jokowi's political image largely influences this pragmatic style of foreign policy. It does not mean his foreign policy abandons the fundamental doctrine of independent and active (*bebas-aktif*) (Anwar, 2010). However, it prioritizes material needs while maintaining relationships with other countries. Instead of engaging Indonesia in forums that merely promote normative commitments, which can be seen as too elitist, Jokowi attempted to incorporate more economic issues into his foreign policy, which seems more realistic for his young voters. This populist image is underpinned by the fact that he did not come from the military or the mainstream parties' elites who dominated Indonesian politics under Suharto's New Order (Wicaksana & Wardhana, 2021), and also his status as a member of the Indonesian Democracy Party

of Struggle (PDI-P)—he was dismissed from the party as of December 14, 2024—which always voices commitment to the *wong cilik* (Aspinall, 2010).

In addition, the materialistic aspects of Jokowi's foreign policy are also supported by his domestic economic policies, defined as new developmentalism, which is characterized by a normative commitment to an activist state that can engineer rapid economic growth, direct industrial upgrading, and ensure economic redistribution (Warburton, 2018). His administration promoted a state-led industrial policy, prioritizing improvements in Indonesia's global rankings, the institutionalization of state-sponsored welfare and social protection initiatives, and, notably, the revitalization of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) as catalysts for economic growth (Warburton, 2018). Jokowi's background as a member of the nationalist PDI-P also amplifies his state-led economic development since the party inherits the tradition of Sukarnoist nationalism (Aspinall, 2010), which champions state's dominant role in the economy through putting SOEs as its driving forces (Fakih, 2020).

The dominant role of SOEs in Jokowi's economic policy aligns with Indonesia's material interests, which view the aid as a tool of power projection or a means to gain tangible benefits by providing development assistance to African countries. According to Winanti & Alvian (2021), the Indonesian government employs the aid program as part of expansion schemes to nontraditional markets, including Africa, which is seen as the emerging market (Mutsa et al., 2011).

To meet this objective, Indonesia has established the Indonesia–Africa Forum to facilitate market and capital expansion to Africa.

There are many cases where SOEs cooperate with Indonesian AID to provide goods as grants to African countries. One example, according to the CEO of Indonesian AID, is when PT Bio Farma was appointed by Indonesian AID to supply pentavalent vaccine as part of the organization's program to donate vaccines to Nigeria in 2023 (Interview with Iwan Nur Hidayat, May 26, 2025). The Indonesian Ministry of Finance stated that the program is part of broader efforts to expand the market for Indonesian health products, as well as to accelerate registration and market approval of PT Bio Farma's vaccines by NAFDAC in Nigeria (Kementerian Keuangan Republik Indonesia, 2023). The CEO of Indonesian AID further explains that the program played a groundbreaking role in fostering deeper economic cooperation between Indonesia and African countries. Following the donation, Biovaccines Nigeria Limited (BVNL) and the Nigerian government ordered over eight million doses of the pentavalent vaccine from PT Bio Farma (Fitriani, 2023).

Additionally, some Indonesian SOEs also managed to secure contracts in some African countries without participating in Indonesian AID programs. In 2018, the Minister of Public Works and Public Housing, Basuki Hadimuljono, announced that Namibia had appointed PT Wijaya Karya, an Indonesian state-owned construction company, to build 2,000 units of social housing (Gumelar, 2018). Previously, the company had complet-

ed the construction of 5,000 houses in Algeria. On the other hand, an Indonesian SOE consortium consisting of PT Industri Kereta Api, PT Len Industri, PT Barata Indonesia, PT Merpati Nusantara Airlines, and PT Dirgantara Indonesia won a US\$11 billion bid to provide rolling stock for the Democratic Republic of Congo's railway projects in 2020 (Hastuti, 2020). Furthermore, the former three also joined a consortium that won the bid for a solar power plant construction, signifying that Africa has become a platform for Indonesia to showcase its developmental success, notably in infrastructure (Dorigné-Thomson, 2022).

While the massive involvement of Indonesian SOEs in Africa's development marks the linkage between domestic-level and material interests at the international level, it does not invalidate the role of normative interests in driving Indonesian foreign aid to African countries. The normative dimension of Indonesian foreign policy is often illustrated by the terminology of *Kerjasama Selatan-Selatan* (SSC), which is perceived as a mechanism to alter the Global South's asymmetrical relations with the dominant Global North (Winanti & Alvian, 2021). In their vision and mission, Widodo & Kalla (2014) mentioned the intensification of SSC as one of their foreign policy priorities to "build international cooperation and a world order that is more just, equal and mutually beneficial". Furthermore, the normative approach highlights a country's experience with colonialism and underdevelopment as the primary factors behind this initiative.

Sukma (1995) observed, in his article discussing the evolution of Indonesian foreign policy, that regardless of the regime, Indonesian foreign policy has always been based on the nation's ideology, *Pancasila*, and *Undang-undang Dasar 1945* (the 1945 National Constitution). Even though they may not directly dictate how Indonesia should conduct its foreign policy, they offer important values that should shape it, and their role is also acknowledged in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' foreign policy framework (Sukma, 1995; Tahalele, 2020). For instance, normative values like humanitarianism and social justice in *Pancasila* underpin Indonesian support for anticolonialism and greater equality among nations, which is then translated into equal cooperation with fellow Global South countries. The importance of the anticolonialism struggle is also mentioned in the first paragraph of the constitution, which states that: "Whereas independence is the inalienable right of all nations, therefore, all colonialism must be abolished in this world as it is not in conformity with humanity and justice" (Tahalele, 2020). The CEO of Indonesian AID mentioned that the commitment derived from the preamble of the 1945 Constitution had been proven by Indonesia's decision to send 500,000 tons of rice to India in 1946, despite the country's own hardships during its first year of independence (Interview with Iwan Nur Hidayat, May 26, 2025).

The normative interest is also constituted by the signing of the Jakarta Commitment by the Indonesian Government and 26 development partners in 2009. In

addition to affirming its significant role in development cooperation as a provider country, the document also portrays the government's intention to reform the structure of donor–recipient relations from a top–down to a more equal setting (Tahalele, 2020). To realize this structural transformation, the government replaced the use of 'assistance' narratives with 'partnership' in all official government documents.

Another normative point guiding Indonesian development aid is Bandung spirit, as the 1955 Bandung Conference was premised on a normative vision for an egalitarian international order (Umar et al., 2025). The CEO of Indonesian AID said that the spirit facilitates Indonesia's AID efforts to channel aid to African countries, as it brings a common ground between the donor and the receiver (Interview with Iwan Nur Hidayat, May 26, 2025).

Moreover, it is worth noting that Indonesia's status as a middle power plays a crucial role in determining its official policy for providing aid. As Rosyidin (2017) noted, the Indonesian foreign policy approach can be seen as a move by a middle power with limited resources, which prevents it from becoming a global power. Indonesia is neither so strong as to overly influence the international system, nor so weak as to be merely a spectator (Rosyidin, 2017). With its limited resources, Indonesia's development assistance amount was relatively lower than that of other larger donors, such as DAC countries and China. According to Direktorat Jenderal Pengelolaan Pembiayaan dan Risiko Kementerian Keuangan (transl.

the Directorate General of Budget Financing and Risk Management at the Ministry of Finance) (2023), Indonesia received a grant worth Rp26.90 trillion (US\$1.74 billion) in 2023, while allocating Rp219.04 billion (US\$14.21 million) for the outflow grants. The awareness of Indonesia as a middle power was articulated in Jokowi's vision and mission for the 2014 Presidential Election: "We will enhance our global role through middle power diplomacy that positions Indonesia as a regional power with selective global engagement" (Widodo & Kalla, 2014).

This part has illustrated the complex relationship between the domestic level and the pragmatic and normative motives behind Indonesian development aid to African countries. Dorigné-Thomson (2022) might argue that Indonesia's African foreign policy reveals the need for expansion of the Indonesian developmental state to serve its highest interests relating to regime stability, sovereignty, security or political legitimacy; however, it goes beyond those pragmatic motives, as the CEO of Indonesian AID, Iwan Nur Hidayat, said that it contains various motives.

## Conclusion

Indonesia's development assistance to African countries, delivered through Indonesian Aid, reflects a blend of economic pragmatism and international engagement. Findings suggest that Indonesia's aid is driven by the pursuit of new economic opportunities and the desire to enhance its global profile as an emerging donor. It aligns with the main argument proposed by Winanti & Alvian

(2021) that Indonesia's current SSC policies show a convergence of its material and normative interests, marking the emergence of 'interest-based Third World solidarity'.

By integrating domestic political considerations with international ambitions, Indonesia demonstrates a flexible approach that adapts to evolving global dynamics. These insights suggest that Indonesia's aid policy serves as a tool for foreign relations and also reflects its broader development and diplomatic objectives.

The study emphasizes the importance of considering internal and external factors when examining emerging donor behavior. Further research could investigate the long-term impact of Indonesia's assistance on its African partners and compare its approach with that of other nontraditional donors, thereby enriching our understanding of global development cooperation.

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