

## Reinforcing Indonesia's Maritime Identity: Strategic Narratives within the Belt and Road Initiative Framework

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### ABSTRAK

Studi ini mengkaji komunikasi strategis Indonesia dalam kerangka Poros Maritim Dunia (PMD), dengan menggunakan konsep narasi strategis yang terdiri atas narasi sistem, identitas, dan kebijakan (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2013). Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana visi PMD diproyeksikan untuk memperkuat posisi diplomatik Indonesia di kawasan Indo-Pasifik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa narasi sistem digunakan untuk mempromosikan *rules-based order*, narasi identitas menegaskan peran Indonesia sebagai negara maritim dan *middle power*, sementara narasi kebijakan mendukung implementasi inisiatif *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific* (AOIP) untuk menciptakan kolaborasi regional yang saling menguntungkan. PMD sebagai narasi strategis dipakai Indonesia untuk mengambil manfaat dari *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI) yang diinisiasi Tiongkok, dengan tetap mempertahankan otonomi strategis dan kepemimpinannya di tingkat regional. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti tiga tahapan narasi strategis yakni pembentukan, proyeksi, dan penerimaan oleh audiens global. Namun, terdapat limitasi berupa kurangnya evaluasi empiris terkait efektivitas narasi ini di tingkat domestik maupun internasional. Untuk penelitian berikutnya, disarankan fokus pada analisis persepsi pemangku kepentingan regional dan publik domestik terhadap narasi PMD, serta pemanfaatan media yang lebih mendalam untuk memaksimalkan penerimaan global.

**Kata kunci:** narasi strategis, diplomasi, komunikasi global, Poros Maritim Dunia, Belt and Road Initiative

### ABSTRACT

*This study examines Indonesia's strategic communication within the framework of the global maritime fulcrum, utilizing the theoretical framework of strategic narratives, which encompasses system, identity, and policy narratives (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2013). This study analyzes how the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) vision is projected to enhance Indonesia's diplomatic standing in the Indo-Pacific region. The findings reveal that system narratives are employed to promote a rules-based order, identity narratives reinforce Indonesia's role as a maritime nation and middle power, while policy narratives support the implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) to foster mutually beneficial regional collaboration. GMF as a strategic narrative is utilized by Indonesia to benefit from the China-initiated Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), while maintaining its strategic autonomy and leadership at the regional level. Additionally, this research also highlights the three stages of strategic narrative: formation, projection, and reception by global audiences. However, the research is limited by the lack of empirical evaluation regarding the effectiveness of these narratives both domestically and internationally. Future research should focus on analyzing stakeholder perceptions at the regional level and domestic public reception of the GMF narrative, as well as exploring deeper utilization of media to maximize global reception.*

**Keywords:** strategic narrative; diplomacy; global communication; Global Maritime Fulcrum; Belt and Road Initiative

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as the world's largest archipelago with 16,771 verified islands by 2021 (KKP, 2022), has a deep maritime heritage. From historical records, the nation's maritime glory reached its peak during the Majapahit Kingdom (1293-1478), and the nation's maritime identity is reflected in culture and songs such as "*Nenek Moyang*" by Ibu Sud. However, a challenging history, including colonization, has led to the fading of maritime traditions and identity among modern Indonesians (Burhanuddin et al, 2016). In an effort to revive this maritime glory, President Joko Widodo introduced the *Poros Maritim Dunia*/Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF/GMF) agenda in 2014. This agenda aims to re-establish Indonesia as a strong, independent and sovereign maritime nation, while strengthening its position in the international arena. In his first speech after being sworn in as president, Jokowi emphasized the importance of having an "*cakrawarti samudera*" or oceanic horizon to make Indonesia a great and prosperous country (Setkab, 2014). In addition, this agenda was delivered internationally at the 9th East Asia Summit in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, which emphasized the importance of the sea for Indonesia's future, especially with the existence of three strategic Indonesian Archipelagic Sea Routes (ALKI).

In line with GMF's vision, the Indonesian government issued Presidential Regulation No. 106/2015 on the Implementation of Public Service Obligations for Freight Transportation in the Framework of Sea Toll Implementation. This was followed by supporting ministerial regulations to ensure sea transportation connectivity in Indonesia. In the sea highway development plan, Rp243 trillion was allocated for the development of 24 strategic ports, including five hub ports such as Belawan Port/Kuala Tanjung, Tanjung Priok Port/Kalibaru, Tanjung Perak Port, Makassar Port, and Bitung Port, as well as 19 feeder ports that support them (Ministry of Transportation, 2015; Vibizmedia, 2015). In addition, the government also allocated Rp39.5 trillion for port development and Rp53.15 trillion for ship procurement during 2015-2019 (Oktaveri, 2014). By 2022, the number of Sea Toll routes has grown to 34 routes based on the decision of the Ministry of Transportation (Hubla Dephub, 2022).

To support this large budget requirement, Indonesia established strategic cooperation with China through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Indonesia-China diplomatic relations have been established since 1950, although they were interrupted due to domestic political events. Under President Joko Widodo's administration, this relationship has strengthened through BRI cooperation, which was introduced by President Xi Jinping in 2013 as a global initiative for transcontinental infrastructure development (Jiao & Yunbi, 2013). In the context of BRI, Indonesia has become China's main partner with major projects such as the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail line, as well as industrial estates in North Sumatra, North Kalimantan, North Sulawesi, and Bali (Litelnoni, 2019; Ministry of Industry, 2017). On the one hand, Indonesia's interests are met with infrastructure development capital to support the GMF agenda, and on the other hand, by joining Indonesia, China can strengthen its maritime silk road. China is strengthening BRI with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to create a channel of funds, given that Southeast Asian countries are the main region targeted by this BRI policy (Cnnindonesia.com, 2018). On the sidelines of the G20 meeting, Jokowi and Xi Jinping held a bilateral meeting that included the signing of cooperation papers between Indonesia and China, including the Cooperation Plan for Joint Promotion within the GMF and BRI Framework (BPMI Setpres UN, 2022).

However, while the respective agendas of GMF and BRI are compatible with each other, the process does not always run smoothly. There are various obstacles that will be faced regarding this BRI cooperation. GMF is not only limited to expanding connectivity between domestic islands. Today, there are unpredictable changes in the region due to the increasing intensity of the struggle for influence among major countries and their interests. While China has never directly claimed the Natuna Islands, incidents of violations by Chinese fishing boats and coast guards in Indonesia's EEZ indicate tensions in the region. This poses a dilemma for Indonesia, between making BRI cooperation a stepping stone to realize the GMF agenda or struggling alone to realize these ideals (Sulistiyani, et al, 2021). Another challenge is the issue of debt trap diplomacy, which is often associated with the BRI agenda. By providing massive aid or investment, recipient countries face

the risk of dependency that can undermine their economic and political sovereignty (Priangani et al., 2021). As a lending country, China has the potential to influence recipient countries' policies in accordance with its interests. In 2021, Indonesia's debt to China reached US\$17.7 billion or equivalent to Rp248.4 trillion. There are concerns that economic dependence on China could affect the dynamics of bilateral relations, including potential pressures on national sovereignty (Sorongan, 2023).

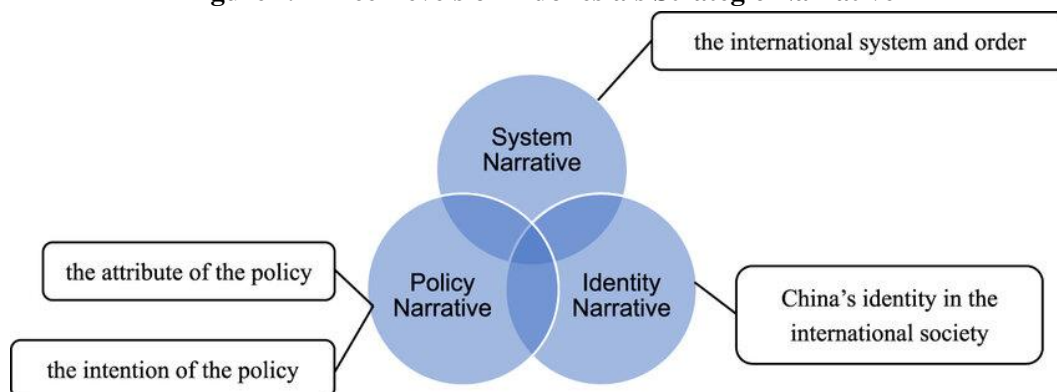
Despite the obstacles, this situation also opens up opportunities for Indonesia to play a central role as a middle power in regional geopolitics. By initiating the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), Indonesia shows its position as a country that encourages a collective approach to facing Indo-Pacific challenges (Ministry of Defense, 2021). This research aims to examine the strategic narrative that GMF can be used as a strategic communication instrument to deal with BRI amid complex geopolitical dynamics. Furthermore, it aims to understand how Indonesia uses strategic communication to strengthen its maritime identity, as well as capitalize on opportunities and overcome challenges arising from cooperation with the BRI. Thus, this research makes an important contribution to the study of international relations and strategic communication in Indonesia's maritime context.

## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Strategic narratives are important tools in conveying domestic and international political interests. Ba (2019) highlights the role of strategic narratives in bilateral relationships, such as between China and Singapore, as an instrument of diplomacy. Van Noort (2020) shows how visual communication in the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI) supports Chinese identity and the legitimacy of the BRI project, while a subsequent study (2021) examines the ability of strategic narratives to influence policy adoption in target countries through the alignment of material interests and ontological security (van Noort 2020). Langendonk (2020) observes the use of BRI strategic narratives to change geopolitical ecologies, such as in the Netherlands, by influencing collective decision-making. Van Noort (2020a) also emphasizes the importance of aesthetic dimensions, such as the symbol of the ship in the MSRI, that build maritime and historical identity. These symbolic elements contribute to the global appeal of strategic narratives.

Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle (2013) provide a definition that "*Strategic narratives are a means for political actors to construct shared meanings about the past, present, and future of international relations to shape the opinions and behavior of actors at home and abroad.*" (Miskimmon et. al., 2013). Strategic narratives in his view can also be evaluated through three stages, namely formation, projection and acceptance (Miskimmon et. al., 2017).

**Figure I: Three Levels of Indonesia's Strategic Narrative**



*Source: adapted from Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle (2018)*

Figure I shows the three main elements of narrative strategy identified by Miskimmon, O'Loughlin and Roselle (2013): system narratives, identity narratives and policy narratives. These three elements are

interconnected and form the basis of how political actors create and project strategic narratives to influence audiences, both domestic and international. Based on Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle (2018), the three elements can be operationalized in this research, as follows:

1. **System Narrative:** Describes the international framework and global order. For Indonesia, this narrative relates to the principle of rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region (Anwar, 2020, Riyanto et. al., 2023).
2. **Identity Narratives:** Building the country's image. China utilizes the BRI to assert its status as a global economic power, while Indonesia projects itself as a maritime and middle power (Riyanto et. al., 2023).
3. **Policy Narrative:** Conveys specific policy objectives, such as Indonesia's AOIP initiative to promote dialog and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific (Riyanto et. al., 2023).

These three elements complement each other to create a strong strategic narrative, maximize Indonesia's diplomatic position, and reduce great power dominance. Digital media plays an important role in extending the reach of this narrative (Graaf, Dimitriu, & Ringsmose, 2015). This paper highlights how Indonesia can strengthen its maritime identity and utilize strategic narratives to maintain sovereignty and promote beneficial cooperation, particularly in the face of regional dynamics influenced by the BRI initiative. This approach contributes to a more peaceful, inclusive and sustainable world order.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand, explain, and explore the meaning of certain phenomena in a social and cultural context (Akhdev Pratiwi & Witono, 2024). This approach is appropriate to explore Indonesia's strategic narrative in the GMF agenda amid China's BRI influence. Research is considered a systematic investigation to analyze facts and data (Harahap, 2020). Sugiyono (2013) asserts that research aims to obtain useful scientific data, while Merriam and Tisdell (2015) highlight the importance of understanding the meaning of individual experiences in a particular context. This is in line with Siregar and Harahap (2019), who emphasize the interpretation of phenomena based on context.

A descriptive approach was used to comprehensively describe the situation (Abdussamad, 2021). Data were collected through desk research and semi-structured interviews. Desk studies included sources such as books, journals and official reports (Hayati & Afriani, 2022), while interviews explored the views of key stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Assegaff et al., 2024). Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility to capture rich information (Sugiyono, 2013). Data validity was checked through source triangulation to ensure accuracy (Sugiyono, 2013). Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, including reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification, which helped researchers identify relevant patterns and themes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research reveals how the idea of GMF promoted by President Joko Widodo provides a strategic response to geopolitical and geoeconomic dynamics in the region, especially in the context of China's BRI. GMF not only reflects national aspirations to re-recognize Indonesia's maritime identity but also becomes an important instrument in dealing with changes in the global order. In this discussion, the strategic narrative of GMF is explained through three main approaches: system narrative, identity narrative, and issue or policy narrative (See Table I).

### *System Narratives: A Rules-Based International Order*

The system narrative in GMF emphasizes the importance of a rules-based approach to international order to create regional and global stability. In the Maritime Diplomacy White Paper (2019), Indonesia sets

out the principle of diplomacy that prioritizes resolving disputes through diplomatic channels based on applicable norms. This approach is designed to:

- a. Addressing geopolitical tensions, such as the conflict in the South China Sea (SCS), where China's *Nine-Dash Line* claim intersects with Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in North Natuna.
- b. Ensure ASEAN centrality as a cooperative regional framework, as affirmed in Jokowi-Kalla's initial vision (2014). ASEAN centrality is considered a major force that strengthens cooperation and reduces tensions due to conflicting interests in the region.

Indonesia is also trying to take advantage of its strategic position as a maritime nation amidst the shifting geoeconomic center of gravity from the West to East Asia, as emphasized in the 9th East Asia Summit in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. This rules-based approach is seen as effective in maintaining a balance between the major powers, namely the United States (through the Free and Open Indo-Pacific/FOIP agenda) and China (through BRI).

**Table 1. Narrative Levels, Strategic Focus & Practical Implications**

Narrative Level	Strategic Focus	Practical Implications
System Narrative	ASEAN centrality, inclusiveness, and rules-based order.	Maintaining the stability of the Indo-Pacific region amid geopolitical rivalries.
Identity Narrative	Indonesia's role as a middle power and bridge builder.	Create open and inclusive cooperation between ASEAN and major powers such as the US and China.
Policy Narrative	Use of AOIP to promote regional cooperation.	Integration of BRI with regional needs through maritime trade routes and connectivity.

*Source: Processed by researchers (adapted from Riyanto et. al., 2023).*

### ***Identity Narratives: Reorienting Maritime Identity***

Through the GMF policy, Indonesia demonstrates its commitment as a contributor to stability and peace in the Indo-Pacific region. The Jokowi administration emphasizes the importance of a proactive stance in creating rules-based regional stability, taking into account global geopolitical and geoeconomic dynamics that can affect national resilience (Maritime Diplomacy White Paper, 2019). Within the GMF framework, Indonesia's position as a middle power is strengthened through selective engagement on regional and global issues, accompanied by strengthening the domestic and regional maritime domain (Sriyanto, 2018). This strategic narrative is reflected in Indonesia's vision that does not take sides in regional initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (PRC), Act East (India), and Free and Open Indo-Pacific (US), but chooses to synergize with initiatives that are in line with national interests. This stance allows Indonesia to contribute positively to regional stability without losing policy autonomy (Indonesia Ocean Policy Document, 2019). Such efforts are one form of Indonesia's response to increasingly complex regional challenges, including traditional security challenges such as great power rivalries, territorial disputes in the South China Sea, and the arms race in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, non-traditional security challenges such as climate change, natural disasters, cyber security, and threats to maritime security, such as IUU fishing and smuggling, are also of concern. Through this approach, Indonesia seeks to cement its role as an inclusive leader and mediator in the Indo-Pacific.

### ***Issue or Policy Narratives: Responses to BRI and the LCS Conflict***

The policy narrative promoted in the GMF aims to capitalize on Indonesia's strategic geographical position as the main route between two oceans. President Jokowi affirmed his commitment to make Indonesia the *locus of* a great civilization through the vision of a "World Maritime Axis" (Tempo.co, 2014). One of the concrete steps in supporting this vision is the AOIP initiative, which is recognized as a strategic instrument to overcome rivalries in the region. The AOIP emphasizes the principles of rules-based order, transparency, openness, and inclusiveness, which are in line with ASEAN's fundamental values. The initiative also reflects the principles of a sustainable economy and the need for regional connectivity, as seen in efforts to strengthen trade links, infrastructure, and maritime cooperation. This is in line with Indonesia's GMF vision that focuses on developing maritime potential and connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans, making AOIP a strategic platform to create regional stability while promoting economic integration.

AOIP reflects Indonesia's maritime diplomacy that prioritizes regional cooperation and the sustainability of regional stability (Nurmawati, 2022; Yamin & Windyamadaksa, 2017). This policy narrative is designed to answer challenges while capitalizing on regional opportunities, by placing Indonesia as a major player capable of bridging differences between countries. In the context of maritime diplomacy, this narrative is not only a foreign policy guide but also a tool to strengthen Indonesia's position on the global stage. To strengthen the discussion of strategic narratives, this research also looks at three important stages in strategic narratives. Each stage is very important to assess whether Indonesia's strategic narrative through GMF is effective in achieving its goals.

### ***Formation Stage***

The GMF narrative is constructed by the government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then conveyed to domestic and international audiences through leaders' speeches, media, interstate diplomacy, and strategic events. This process reflects the concept of strategic narratives that involves the formation, projection, and reception of narratives by internal and external audiences (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2018). GMF serves to strengthen policy legitimacy while building a positive image of Indonesia globally. The acceptance of this narrative is the key to success, because the understanding and support of related parties determine policy implementation.

Indonesia's GMF narrative is based on its strategic geographical position between two continents and two oceans, making Indonesia a major world trade and shipping route. The Joko Widodo (Jokowi) administration is using this advantage to strengthen domestic and regional maritime influence, including forming alliances in the Indo-Pacific to maintain regional stability and security. The GMF concept is influenced by the ideas of Rizal Sukma and Andi Widjajanto. Rizal Sukma defines GMF as a vision to make Indonesia a united, prosperous and authoritative maritime power; a doctrine to guide maritime-based foreign policy; and a strategy to maintain the balance of power between the United States (US) and China. Meanwhile, Andi Widjajanto emphasized the importance of military power as a strategic element in safeguarding national interests and playing a balancing role in great power rivalry.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi also strengthened GMF through the AOIP framework, which is a strategic response to regional rivalries. The AOIP reflects Indonesia's efforts to maintain stability through maritime diplomacy. General (Ret.) Luhut Panjaitan has also played an important role in strengthening Indonesia's strategic position, both domestically and internationally. GMF aims to make Indonesia an archipelagic state that utilizes its geographical identity to strengthen its global position. The Jokowi administration sees maritime identity as the basis for inclusive and sustainable national development. GMF is a platform to showcase Indonesia's active role in maintaining regional stability, synergizing with initiatives such as BRI, and applying a non-aligned approach to the world's major powers. Through GMF, Indonesia affirms its identity as a maritime nation and a key player in Indo-Pacific dynamics, contributing to peace, stability and rules-based global development. This strategy strengthens Indonesia's position as a credible and innovative partner in addressing geopolitical and geoeconomic challenges in the region.

### ***Projection Stage***

This research reveals that President Joko Widodo's GMF initiative has significant strategic implications for media ecology and regional geopolitical dynamics. Indonesia's efforts to project maritime power are carried out by taking into account geopolitical rivalries, especially between the United States (US) and China. In the context of the China-initiated BRI, Indonesia supports the initiative as long as the principle of sovereignty is maintained and provides tangible benefits to the people. Indonesia's foreign policy, which is careful and strategic, seeks to balance national interests with regional geopolitical dynamics. This is emphasized by the government that BRI is aligned with the GMF agenda, but must still support regional stability and people's welfare (Zhao, 2015). Indonesia actively manages geopolitical tensions through ASEAN centrality as a key strategy. The AOIP, which is a collective ASEAN initiative, reinforces ASEAN centrality by providing a framework based on inclusiveness, transparency, and rules-based order. The AOIP is not meant to replace ASEAN's role, but to expand ASEAN's collaborative approach in dealing with regional challenges, such as geopolitical rivalries and non-traditional security issues. As such, the AOIP supports, not undermines, ASEAN's centrality as the main axis of regional cooperation and guardian of stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

By emphasizing regional cooperation, Indonesia positions ASEAN as a neutral platform to moderate the interests of major powers. The principles of dialogue, diplomacy and respect for international law form the basis of Indonesia's response to regional dynamics. This can be seen in forums such as the *Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting* (ACFMM) and the ASEAN-RRT Summit, where Indonesia calls for the importance of security stability and economic cooperation, particularly in the South China Sea region. GMF also reflects Indonesia's awareness of its geographical potential as a connector of two oceans and two continents. Maritime infrastructure programs, such as inter-island hub-and-spoke networks and Roll-on/Roll-off (Ro-Ro) sea transportation services, strengthen national and regional connectivity. In forums such as the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) and the ASEAN-RRT Summit, the government promotes synergies between the BRI and the ASEAN Masterplan to enhance regional integration.

Indonesia's success in proposing the AOIP is a strategic milestone that emphasizes Indonesia's important role in the Indo-Pacific. The AOIP, which emphasizes the principles of inclusiveness, transparency, and ASEAN centrality, was widely accepted by ASEAN member states. This rules-based approach supports regional stability and fosters mutually beneficial cooperation. Through active diplomacy and strategic vision, GMF is not only a national agenda, but also a tool to build Indonesia's leadership in ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific. By promoting inclusive multilateralism, Indonesia has become a key actor in maintaining stability, promoting economic cooperation, and strengthening regional connectivity. The adoption of the AOIP at the 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok confirms Indonesia's success in building a geostrategic approach that is relevant nationally and globally.

### ***Reception Stage***

Indonesia's participation in the BRI demonstrates China's strategic recognition of Indonesia's importance as a key partner in ASEAN. Xi Jinping's 2017 statement calling Indonesia the hub of the Indian and Pacific Oceans emphasizes Indonesia's central role in the BRI maritime trade and connectivity project. However, the rollout of the AOIP as Indonesia's strategic framework raised concerns on the Chinese side, particularly regarding the possibility of the AOIP supporting the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy. Nonetheless, China's acceptance of the AOIP demonstrates the success of Indonesia's strategic narrative. By emphasizing the centrality of ASEAN, China supports the principles of inclusiveness, openness, and non-intervention in the AOIP, as affirmed in various international forums such as ASEAN-China (10+1) and President Jokowi's visit to China in 2022. China is also actively synergizing the BRI with the AOIP through concrete measures such as the opening of trade "fast lanes", infrastructure support, and strengthening regional connectivity.

At the G20 Bali 2022, this synergy was further strengthened through the joint statement of Indonesia and China. Both countries agreed to uphold the principle of open regionalism and synergize BRI with the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025. This is an affirmation of China's commitment to multilateral cooperation that is aligned with Indonesia's strategic vision. China's acceptance of the AOIP reflects the success of the GMF narrative that emphasizes Indonesia's position as a strategic maritime nation. By utilizing ASEAN's centrality as a diplomatic platform, Indonesia has succeeded in building a framework that is inclusive and accepted by major powers such as China. The synergy between BRI and AOIP underscores Indonesia's ability to project a geopolitical vision that is not only domestically beneficial but also creates regional stability and cooperation in Southeast Asia.

From the discussion, this research shows that Indonesia's GMF plays an important role in creating stability in the Indo-Pacific region through three levels of narrative: system, identity, and policy, which support each other in strengthening Indonesia's position as a middle power as well as a counterweight to the rivalry between the US and China. According to Baskara Pradipta, BRI creates complex geopolitical dynamics, with the potential for friction between major powers. However, Indonesia through its strategic narrative (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2013) managed to link China's BRI initiative with ASEAN's AOIP. The AOIP opens BRI access to maritime trade routes while reducing political tensions in the region.

Indonesia's strategic narrative appeals to domestic and international audiences by aligning shared values, interests and needs. Concrete examples are the Maritime Diplomacy White Paper and the AOIP Framework, which offer a dialogue and diplomacy-based approach to resolving geopolitical crises. Indonesia's diplomacy has made ASEAN the center of regional cooperation. The AOIP initiative creates space for synergies between BRI and regional development needs, especially through trade integration and connectivity. In the interview, Baskara Pradipta emphasized that this approach not only promotes economic growth but also strengthens regional stability. The focus on economic cooperation creates a mechanism for peaceful resolution through dialogue, strengthening ASEAN's position as a major actor in the Indo-Pacific. This strategy reflects Indonesia's successful narrative that blends national interests with global geopolitical dynamics. Through inclusive diplomacy, Indonesia ensures the BRI can be aligned with the AOIP, creating synergies between regional stability, cooperation and growth.

## CONCLUSION

Indonesia, as an archipelago with a strong maritime identity, faces geopolitical challenges in the Indo-Pacific, especially through China's BRI. To answer this challenge, Indonesia utilizes a strategic narrative-based communication strategy to strengthen its maritime identity while maintaining regional stability through the GMF and AOIP approaches. This research uses qualitative methods and the strategic narrative theoretical framework (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2013), with data analysis from in-depth interviews and strategic documents such as the Maritime Diplomacy White Paper and AOIP. The results show that Indonesia's strategic narrative covers three main levels. At the system level, Indonesia emphasizes ASEAN centrality and rules-based order as an effort to maintain regional stability amid geopolitical rivalry between the US and China. At the identity level, Indonesia portrays itself as a middle power and bridge builder, utilizing its strategic role to build open and inclusive regional cooperation. At the policy level, the AOIP initiative is utilized to encourage synergies with BRI, create economic opportunities, reduce political tension, and strengthen connectivity between countries.

This research highlights Indonesia's success in transforming ASEAN from an arena of great power rivalry to a center of inclusive cooperation. This strategy not only strengthens Indonesia's position in the Indo-Pacific region, but also creates stability that supports economic growth and regional integration. However, this study has limitations in terms of geographical coverage of the Indo-Pacific region and the qualitative methods used. Further research is recommended to explore how Indonesia's strategic narrative is received by a wider international audience and its impact on bilateral relations with countries outside



ASEAN. The results of this research are expected to be the basis for developing more comprehensive strategic policies to strengthen Indonesia's maritime identity at the global level.

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