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Indonesia's Strategy to Build Geopolitical Identity as a *Middle Maritime Power* in the Indo-Pacific Through the World Maritime Axis (PMD) Policy in the Era of the Joko Widodo Administration (2014-2019)

Rikko Yan Lado Ae^{1*}, Roberto Octavianus Cornelis Seba², Indra Wisnu Wibisono³¹Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia, 372022058@student.uksw.edu²Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia, roberto.seba@uksw.edu³Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia, indra.wibisono@uksw.eduCorresponding Author: 372022058@student.uksw.edu¹

Abstract: This study analyzes Indonesia's strategy in building a geopolitical identity as a middle maritime power in the Indo-Pacific region through the Global Maritime Fulcrum (GMF) policy during the Joko Widodo administration (2014–2019). The background of this study is based on the increasing geopolitical dynamics of the Indo-Pacific as the epicenter of great power rivalry, which demands Indonesia to strengthen its strategic position and identity as an archipelagic nation. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach based on literature studies with reference to Middle Power Theory as a theoretical framework, as well as the concepts of maritime geopolitics, the Indo-Pacific, and maritime diplomacy as conceptual frameworks. The study shows that the GAM does not only function as a maritime sector development policy, but also as a grand strategy in shaping Indonesia's identity as a middle maritime power.

Keywords: Global Maritime Axis, Middle Maritime Power, Indo-Pacific, Geopolitical Identity.

INTRODUCTION

The development of international politics after the cold war shows an increase in geopolitical, geostrategic, and geoeconomic dynamics, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. The region is the center of the world's attention because it is a vital international trade route, connecting the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The Indo-Pacific region is a strategic space that experiences significant geopolitical dynamics due to the rivalry of major powers, such as the United States and China. The region has shifted to a *new epicenter* of world strategic rivalry after the end of the dominance of the Asia-Pacific discourse during the Cold War. The Indo-Pacific is now a space for geopolitical revitalization that brings together the economic, defense, and diplomatic interests of major powers such as the United States and China. This competition makes middle *power countries* have opportunities as well as challenges in strengthening their geopolitical position and identity. This condition makes the maritime aspect

a determining factor in the foreign policy of countries in the region. Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world consisting of 17,380 thousand islands (Geospatial Information Agency, 2024), with a strategic position flanked by two continents and two oceans. This geographical location makes Indonesia not only a sovereign country but also a strategic arena in global political dynamics. In addition to the crucial position of Indonesia's global trade routes, the abundant potential of marine resources makes maritime as one of Indonesia's main strengths (Bateman & Bergin, 2011). This is certainly a potential that can be optimally utilized by Indonesia from economic, security and diplomatic aspects.

As a country located at the crossroads of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Indonesia not only has high geostrategic value but also a heavy responsibility for regional stability. Indonesia is located at the pivot point between the North Natuna Sea, the Strait of Malacca, and ALKI (Indonesian Archipelago Sea Channel) which is the main route for 40% of world trade. Despite having extraordinary geopolitical potential, for many years Indonesia has tended to be *land-based* and has not placed the maritime sector as the main framework of its strategy. Awareness of the importance of maritime potential prompted President Joko Widodo at the beginning of his administration in 2014, precisely on November 13, 2014 at the East Asia Summit, in Naypyidaw, Myanmar, to launch the vision of the World Maritime Axis (LDC). This vision was not only proposed at the beginning of President Joko Widodo's administration, but in the 1990s, Prof. AB Lopian had also prepared a similar idea (Yani, 2015). In his government speeches, President Jokowi emphasized that the sea is no longer just a separator between islands, but a link that is able to integrate the nation's strength. This idea was then used as one of the great visions of national development as well as the direction of Indonesia's foreign policy. This concept is not only a reflection of Indonesia's geographical condition as the largest archipelagic country in the world, but also as a strategic response to global dynamics that place the Indo-Pacific as the center of geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic competition.

The World Maritime Axis Vision emphasizes five main pillars that are the foundation of Indonesia's maritime policy. First, rebuilding Indonesia's maritime culture, which is restoring the nation's identity as a seafaring nation that is firmly rooted in the history of the archipelago. Second, maintaining maritime security and territorial sovereignty, which means strengthening defense capabilities and maintaining territorial integrity from various threats, including illegal fishing, territorial boundary violations, and potential armed conflicts in the region. Third, managing marine resources in a sustainable manner to be able to provide economic benefits while maintaining the balance of marine ecology. Fourth, strengthening maritime diplomacy by encouraging international cooperation in the fields of security, trade, and the marine environment. Fifth, building maritime infrastructure and connectivity through ports, sea tolls, and other means of sea transportation to support national and global economic integration (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014). PMD has become a new identity for Indonesia which affirms its position as a maritime country as well as an instrument in strengthening Indonesia's position in the international political arena. The introduction of PMD is a systematic effort to renew Indonesia's identity from a mere *archipelagic state* to a *maritime power* that has a geopolitical orientation to the sea. The PMD places maritime as the base of Indonesia's economic, diplomatic, and defense power in the midst of the Indo-Pacific dynamics.

The PMD is basically a *grand strategy* that aims to rebuild the nation's *maritime consciousness* while strengthening Indonesia's defense, economic, diplomacy, and maritime governance capabilities. From a geopolitical perspective, PMD is not just a sectoral policy, but an effort to affirm Indonesia's identity as a *middle maritime power*, a medium country that is able to play a real influence in the region through its maritime power. The concept of *middle power* itself refers to a country that, although not a major power, has diplomatic, military, economic, and normative resources capacity that can shape regional agendas and dynamics. By

projecting itself as a *middle maritime power*, Indonesia seeks to increase its bargaining power in the midst of great power competition as a balancer (*balacer*) and bridge *builder* for major power countries while maintaining the strategic *autonomy* that has been the foundation of its foreign policy.

This revival of maritime identity is not only political rhetoric, but also a form of Indonesia's repositioning in the international structure. In international relations, Indonesia is often categorized as a *middle power*, which is a country that does not have a dominant capacity like *great powers*, but has diplomatic capabilities, *regional influence*, and domestic stability that allow it to play a constructive role. In the external environment, the increasing tensions in the South China Sea, especially in the North Natuna Sea during the period, were also a catalyst that further clarified Indonesia's position as an influential maritime actor. Indonesia's assertiveness in defending its sovereignty, strengthening its military presence in Natuna, and fighting for UNCLOS-based maritime governance shows that Indonesia is not only reactive, but also seeks to shape regional norms and stability (Yani, 2015). This is an important characteristic of a *middle maritime power* that has the capacity to influence regional dynamics through a balanced combination of *hard power* and *soft power*. However, building a geopolitical identity is not an instant process. This requires policy consistency, long-term strategies, and the ability to integrate various national instruments in one large framework.

In order to play a role as a *middle maritime power*, Indonesia needs synchronization between foreign policy, maritime capability development, maritime defense modernization, maritime diplomacy, and national maritime governance. This is in line with the middle power approach that relies on cooperative, multilateral, and normative diplomacy and is in line with Alfred Thayer Mahan's Sea Power theory which emphasizes the importance of control over sea routes, fleet strength, and maritime resource management. Thus, PMD's vision not only actualizes Indonesia's geographical potential, but also emphasizes national geopolitical strategies in facing the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific. It is in this context that research on Indonesia's strategy in building a geopolitical identity as a *middle maritime power* through the World Maritime Axis policy is very relevant. This study not only seeks to explain the technical achievements of PMD, but also assesses how these policies contribute to the process of constructing Indonesian identity in the geopolitical architecture of the Indo-Pacific. This study helps to understand the extent to which the PMD functions as a geopolitical strategy, how it shapes Indonesia's role in the Indo-Pacific, and how the policy navigates the complexities of relations with major powers.

Thus, this research is present to fill the study gap related to the relationship between PMD and the formation of Indonesia's geopolitical identity. This research is important to understand how Indonesia affirmed its position as a *middle maritime power* in the period 2014–2019, the extent to which PMD functions as a geopolitical strategy and not just a maritime sector development policy, and how these policies affect the dynamics of diplomacy and security Indonesia's maritime system in the midst of great power competition in the Indo-Pacific. A number of previous studies have placed PMD as a domestic development agenda, a marine economic program, strengthening the Indonesian Navy, or a solution to non-traditional security challenges. In fact, PMD has a much broader geopolitical dimension, especially related to the development of Indonesia's identity as a *middle maritime power*. In addition, there has not been much research examining the extent to which the PMD serves as a tool to navigate the great power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific and strengthen Indonesia's position in the regional order. This research not only examines maritime policy technically, but also assesses how PMD is used to shape Indonesia's role, identity, and influence in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, this study will show how diplomacy, maritime security, and geopolitical strategies interact in driving Indonesia's position as a regional actor that is able to maintain strategic autonomy amid increasing global rivalry. With this research, it is also hoped that it can answer the question of

why in the second term of President Joko Widodo's administration, this policy did not become a *foreign policy strategy*. On the other hand, this research also has a practical contribution for policymakers in evaluating and developing the direction of Indonesia's foreign policy, especially in the maritime sector in the future.

METHOD

The source of data from the study is secondary data. Secondary data is data collected by researchers from previously available sources (Hasan, 2002:58). This data was obtained from scientific literature and academic publications such as research journals, scientific articles, reports of international institutions, official government documents (Jokowi's State Speech on PMD, RPJM 2014-2019, Maritime Diplomacy Document, *ASEAN Outlook on Indo Pacific Document*), maritime infrastructure data, geopolitical and maritime security data, Indo-Pacific diplomacy data. This data is used to strengthen theoretical analysis of Indonesia's strategy in building a geopolitical identity as a *middle maritime power* in the Indo-Pacific through the World Maritime Axis (PMD) policy in the era of the Joko Widodo Administration (2014-2019).

This study uses library *research* techniques as the main method in data collection. This technique is carried out by collecting, reading, studying, and analyzing written sources that are relevant to the research topic. These sources include government policy documents, scientific articles, academic journals, official reports of state institutions, and reliable media publications that discuss the topic in question.

Through literature studies, researchers can gain a deep understanding of the context of Indonesia's foreign policy regarding maritime and the relationship between the policies of the World Maritime Axis and geopolitical strategies in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, this technique also allows researchers to conduct a comparative analysis of various academic views and government policies related to Indonesia's maritime issues.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reorientation of Indonesia's Geopolitical Strategy through the World Maritime Axis

The World Maritime Axis (PMD) is a milestone in the strategic change in the direction of Indonesia's maritime policy and foreign policy in the era of the Joko Widodo administration for the 2014-2019 period. This policy was born from the structural awareness that Indonesia's geographical position as the largest archipelagic country in the world has not been fully utilized as a source of geopolitical and geoeconomic power. During the previous period, Indonesia's development orientation tended to be *land-oriented* so that the marine and maritime sectors were in a perrier position in the national development agenda. PMD then comes as a response to domestic challenges in the form of inequality of connectivity between islands, weak management of marine resources, and external challenges in the form of increasing rivalries in the Indo-Pacific region. Conceptually, PMD is not only a sectoral policy, but also a *grand strategy* that aims to strengthen Indonesia's geopolitical identity as a *middle maritime power*.

President Joko Widodo in his inaugural speech in 2014, emphasized the importance of serious efforts to restore Indonesia's position as a maritime country. He emphasized that the sea, ocean, strait, and bay are the foundation of the future of the nation's civilization, which has been neglected because of the development orientation that is too centered on land. Therefore, Jokowi called for the revival of the nation's maritime spirit as reflected in the motto *of jalesveva jayamahe*, which affirms Indonesia's glory at sea (Indonesian Cabinet Secretariat, 2014). In line with this view, historian Singgih Tri Sulistiyono explained that the concept of the World Maritime Axis (PMD) represents the maritime paradigm and archipelago insight which is rooted in the identity of the Indonesian nation as a maritime nation formed through its historical journey (Sulistiyono, 2016). In this context, the sea is seen not as a dividing boundary, but as

a means of unifying between regions, like land infrastructure that connects regions. This view is reinforced by HS Tisnanta who emphasizes that the maritime cultural mentality is an integral part of Indonesian human identity, which is integrated with the sea and not solely framed by the land perspective (Tisnanta, 2014)

Changes in a country's foreign policy are a phenomenon that cannot be separated from the dynamics of domestic and international factors. To explain these changes, there are several approaches that can be used, one of which is the *levels of analysis* approach which was first introduced by Kenneth Waltz in his work *Man, the State, and War* (1959). Waltz divides the level of analysis into three levels, namely the individual (*first image*), the country level (*second image*), and the third level, which is international (*third image*). At the individual level, foreign policy is influenced by the character, perceptions, experiences, and ideological preferences of leaders. In this context, policy changes can occur when there is a change in leadership or a change in the leader's personal orientation towards certain international issues. This means that psychological factors and leadership style are important variables in explaining the shift in the direction of diplomacy or international strategy of a country. At the state level, foreign policy is influenced by domestic political structures, elite power configurations, economic conditions, public opinion, and pressure from interest groups. Policy changes can arise in response to internal dynamics such as regime transitions, institutional reforms, economic crises, or changes in national development priorities. Meanwhile, at the level of international structures, it emphasizes that the structure of international anarchy and the distribution of global power are the main determinants of state behavior. In anarchist systems, states act to defend their security and interests so that foreign policy changes are often a response to changing balances of power, geopolitical rivalries, or regional and global dynamics (Waltz, 1959).

The direction of the change in President Jokowi's government's policies is influenced by various individual, state and national factors in the international arena as explained by Waltz. This shows a shift in decision-making orientation that originally tended to emphasize the image of a democratic state and domestic interests, towards a more pragmatic approach oriented to concrete national interests. In its implementation, the PMD brought significant changes in Indonesia's foreign policy orientation. Indonesia's foreign policy, which continues to emphasize the principle of free and active, is beginning to be interpreted more concretely in the form of maritime diplomacy. Indonesia not only plays a role as *a norm entrepreneur* in ASEAN, but also as an agenda setter in maritime security issues, maritime connectivity, and regional marine governance (Indrawati & Nugroho, 2018). This change is reflected in Indonesia's increasing focus on bilateral and multilateral maritime cooperation, such as the strengthening of the ASEAN *Maritime Forum*, the *Indian Ocean Rim Association* (IORA), as well as active diplomacy on the issue of *illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing* (IUU *Fishing*) (Amri & Zahidin, 2023). This approach is in line with the *character of the middle power* which emphasizes *niche diplomacy* and contribution to regional stability.

Changes in Indonesia's foreign policy are also reflected in Presidential Regulation number 16 of 2017 concerning Indonesia's maritime policy which aspires to realize a "maritime state" that is advanced, sovereign, independent, strong and able to make a positive contribution to regional and world security and peace with national interests (White Paper on Maritime Diplomacy, 2019). The change in Indonesia's foreign policy in the 2014-2019 period is not radical in the basic principle of a free and active foreign policy, but rather in the form of strategic adjustments to the dynamics of the international environment and the needs of national development.

Institutionalization of Maritime Identity in Domestic Politics and Diplomacy

Maritime identity has been an important component of Indonesia's domestic and foreign policy since the launch of the World Maritime Axis (PMD) vision at the beginning of President Joko Widodo's administration. Domestically, the narrative of the revival of maritime identity

was initiated as part of *national-building*, affirming Indonesia as *an archipelagic state* with a rich maritime history from the Sriwijaya and Majapahit eras (Aufiya, 2017). This is further strengthened by the establishment of government policy and regulatory structures through the establishment of the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment which is tasked with taking care of government affairs related to maritime. This reintroduction of identity not only appears in the development of port infrastructure and the strengthening of the maritime sector, but is also strengthened through foreign policy discourse that projects Indonesia as a credible maritime power in the Indo-Pacific (Putri, 2023).

Maritime diplomacy activities within the framework of Indonesia's Maritime Policy refer to Indonesia's active involvement in various forums for negotiations and dialogues, both at the bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels, as well as the use of national instruments and assets to fight for national interests in the maritime sector. This diplomacy is not only representative, but also strategic in strengthening Indonesia's position in global maritime governance. In its implementation, maritime diplomacy is realized through seven main programs, namely: increasing Indonesia's leadership in various maritime cooperation at the bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels; strengthening an active role in creating and maintaining global maritime peace and security; increased contribution to the drafting of international norms and regimes in the field of oceans; accelerating the completion of maritime boundary negotiations with neighboring countries; acceleration of the submission of the determination of the boundary of the extension of the continental shelf in accordance with the provisions of international law; increasing the representation of Indonesian citizens in international organizations in the maritime sector; and the determination and standardization of island names as part of strengthening sovereignty and territorial identity (White Paper on Maritime Diplomacy, 2019).

The formation of state identity can also be seen through a constructivist lens that emphasizes that identity is not a fixed attribute, but rather is formed through the interaction between domestic practices and external relations. Indonesia's maritime identity is not only a product of domestic policy, but also the result of the projection of maritime diplomacy in multilateral forums such as IORA, G20, and ASEAN. Through this diplomacy, Indonesia reaffirmed its identity as a maritime state that plays a role in maritime security, maritime governance, and regional connectivity. It functions as *an identity-building*, which is a policy tool that connects national interests, political leadership vision, and international perception of Indonesia. The realization of PMD shows how this internal strategy reflects the internalization of maritime identity politically, so that it is not only a symbol, but also a concrete and strategic foreign policy direction (Indrawati & Nugroho, 2018).

Indonesia as a Middle Maritime Power in the Indo-Pacific Strategy Architecture

Middle Maritime Power is a derivative of *middle power* which refers to a country that has significant maritime capacity both geographically, economically, and militarily but is not classified as *a great naval power*. Countries that fall under this characteristic rely on maritime diplomacy, regional cooperation, and strengthening maritime governance to expand their influence. Conceptually, the qualification of a country that characterizes a *middle maritime power* is seen through three main dimensions, namely:

1. The dimension of maritime material capabilities, which includes the area of the sea, geostrategic position, fleet strength, and contribution to the marine economy. In the perspective of Kenneth Waltz's theory of international structure, capability is an important factor in determining a state's position in the international system. Although not a dominant power, countries with significant maritime capacity have room to play a strategic role in maritime security issues, trade routes, and marine resource management.

2. The behavioral dimension, which is the state's ability to be active in maritime diplomacy, build coalitions, and contribute to the formation of international maritime norms. In this context, *middle maritime power* countries are not only *rule takers*, but also *rule shapers* in issues such as maritime security, freedom of navigation, and marine resource management. This approach is in line with the characteristics of *middle power diplomacy* which emphasizes multilateralism and normative leadership (Cooper, 1993).
3. The dimension of identity and policy orientation, namely how the country builds its geopolitical identity as a maritime country and makes it the basis of foreign strategy. This identity then translates into policies such as maritime diplomacy, strengthening regional cooperation, and active participation in international maritime organizations and regimes.

The launch of the PMD Vision marks the rearticulation of Indonesia's national identity as a maritime country. At the domestic level, the narrative of the revival of maritime culture is used to rebuild Indonesia's consciousness as *an archipelagic state* that has a history and strategic importance in global trade routes. This identity is not only symbolic, but is translated into policies for the development of marine infrastructure, and the strengthening of inter-island connectivity, as well as maritime security. As *a maritime identity*, PMD is not just a slogan, but reflects the integration between domestic priorities and the practice of maritime diplomacy in international forums (Putri, 2023).

Indonesia's position as a *middle maritime power* can also be seen from its approach to regional and global cooperation. Indonesia rejects exclusive alliances that can bind strategically and opts for inclusive cooperation through multiculturalism cooperation such as the AOIP (*ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*). Indonesia's active participation in the AOIP demonstrates a commitment to regional stability that contains international law and collective collaboration, rather than military dominance or alliance blocs. This is consistent with the character of *middle power* that prioritizes diplomacy, dialogue, and stable regional challenges (Khairunisa & Aryani, 2021).

As the largest archipelagic country in the world with more than 17,000 islands, Indonesia has a strategic geographical position that historically and contemporaneously forms the basis for its national strength. The concept of *an archipelagic state* is not only a recognition of international law under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982), but also a key framework in Indonesia's development, defense, and foreign diplomacy policies. Indonesia officially gained recognition of the concept based on the 1957 Juanda Declaration, which was later integrated into the 1982 UNCLOS so that all *archipelagic waters* became part of the country's full territorial sovereignty. This recognition is not only legal formal, but also strengthens Indonesia's position in managing marine resources and vital international shipping lanes globally (Hidayatullah, 2026).

Indonesia's strength as *an archipelagic state* is mainly reflected in three main dimensions: maritime sovereignty and security, maritime economic potential, and maritime foreign policy. First, in terms of security, its status as an archipelagic country provides legitimacy for Indonesia to enforce the law in *archipelagic sea lanes* and domestic waters, which is important in the face of threats such as piracy, illegal fishing (*IUU fishing*), and maritime border disputes (Dao et al, 2024). Second, Indonesia's strength is also reflected in the great potential of maritime resources, both from an ecological and economic perspective. The strategic sea area between the Indian and Pacific Oceans makes Indonesia an important route for international trade, so Indonesia's role in maintaining maritime trade security makes a significant contribution to regional stability (Pulungan, 2024). Third, politically and diplomatically, its identity as an archipelagic country has placed Indonesia in an important position in international relations.

Through the *framework of the Global Maritime Fulcrum* and its participation in international maritime forums, Indonesia projects itself as a strategic actor that contributes to

better maritime governance and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The diplomacy built not only strengthens the active free foreign policy, but also expands Indonesia's role in issues such as marine protection, disaster management cooperation, and advocacy for archipelago issues at the global level (Putri, 2023; Hidayatullah, 2026). In addition, *the archipelagic state* also forms the foundation of a distinctive national identity. The narrative of Indonesia's maritime power is not only related to geographical aspects, but also to historical and cultural dimensions, which strengthen national legitimacy in managing the sea as a strategic space for socio-economic development and national defense (Saputra et al, 2024). This dynamic shows that the strength of *the archipelagic state* is not a static concept, but a structural capability that is integrated in Indonesia's domestic and foreign policies.

World Maritime Axis Policy as an *Identity-Building Instrument*

Geopolitically, the world's maritime axis is a strategic concept built to take advantage of Indonesia's strategic geographical position as an archipelagic country located in the Indo-Pacific region. The 5 pillars of PMD were explained by Rahadi Wangsapermana in simple terms, namely maritime development means how Indonesia can improve maritime infrastructure and capacity such as shipports and other sea-related activities with the aim that Indonesia can utilize the sea as a means of efficient transportation and logistics, the management of maritime resources means that Indonesia as a maritime country must be wise in using our marine resources such as fish, oil and natural gas, the government must ensure that these resources are used for the benefit of the people and not solely exploited by foreign parties, maritime security means that security conditions and marine protection must be maintained from threats, both military and non-military threats. Non-military threats such as marine overfishing and pollution, and maritime diplomacy are in line with the optimization of *soft power* that encourages Indonesia's avoidance of regional threats and increased bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the maritime sector. Indonesia must be active in international diplomacy to fight for maritime interests and be able to influence international policies related to the sea and ensure that Indonesia's interests must always be prioritized, and maritime culture means that Indonesia must have a culture that loves the sea and appreciates the importance of the sea for our daily lives. Culture about the importance of the sea and how to protect it must be taught to the next generation of the nation (Wangsapermana, 2024).

A country's maritime identity refers to the image, role and position of that country in the global maritime political and economic system. Not only that, active diplomacy practices are also able to affirm the role and position of the state in the international order. Indonesia's maritime identity is positioned as the result of a combination of geographical advantages, strategic policies, and interaction with global and regional actors through diplomacy mechanisms. The vision of the world's maritime axis not only promotes Indonesia as an archipelagic country, but as a major actor in international maritime governance that contributes to global maritime security, connectivity, and development (Rijal, 2019).

Maritime diplomacy is defined as the use of instruments of international relations to advance national maritime interests and expand diplomatic space in relevant multilateral and bilateral forums. The process of active diplomacy contributes to the formation of Indonesia's maritime identity through various important mechanisms including:

1. The dissemination of the narrative of the PMD idea as a foreign policy framework provides a clear strategic narrative that Indonesia is not only an archipelagic country geographically, but also a major actor in the global maritime order.
2. Indonesia has included issues of maritime security, connectivity and sustainability in the main diplomatic agenda as a consolidation of the foreign relations maritime agenda which shows a shift from the domestic archipelago paradigm to a global maritime identity reflected through Presidential Regulation Number 16 of 2017 concerning Indonesia's Maritime Policy

(KKI), normatively including where clay, sustainable resource governance, and maritime diplomacy as a key policy pillar.

3. The definition of international legitimacy through participation in multilateral organizations as well as maritime trade cooperation as a country that plays a role in the global order.

In building *Identity Building*, Indonesia has 4 diplomacy goals contained in the 2019 Indonesian Maritime Diplomacy White Paper, namely:

1. Protecting Indonesia's maritime territory and the right to exclusive economic zones, continental shelves, and extensions of the continental shelf of the marine environment are top priorities for Indonesia's diplomacy agenda.
2. Ensuring the achievement of the welfare of the Indonesian people and inter-regional connectivity in Indonesia through maritime diplomacy instruments.
3. Ensuring regional stability based on international legal rules and leadership in global maritime issues.
4. Strengthening national capacity to achieve the goals set in Indonesia's maritime policy, and also the importance of providing technical assistance to partners in the region such as the Pacific and Africa in maritime issues.

The development of identity as a maritime country is also carried out by Indonesia as an effort to realize its identity as a *middle maritime power* through cooperation including:

Table 1. A form of Indonesian cooperation in defense and security.

Name	Member States	Types of Cooperation	Collaboration Topics
<i>Malacca Strait Patrol</i>	Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia	Trilateral	Coordinated patrols in the Straits of Malacca
Maphilindo	Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia	Trilateral	Dealing with transnational problems, sea patrols, air patrols in the Sulu Sea.
<i>ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific</i>	ASEAN	Multilateral	Guiding ASEAN's various engagements in neighboring regions, namely the Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific.
<i>Multilateral Naval Exercise KOMODO (MNEK)</i>	54 countries in the world	Multilateral	Holding joint exercises between navies, strengthening global cooperation among maritime powers to formulate solutions to various challenges, as well as increasing collective awareness of the importance of maritime security.

Source: Samy & Kusumadewi, 2021 (Journal of International Relations, Universitas Airlangga)

Indonesia's Maritime Diplomacy in the Indo Pacific Architecture

Indonesia's maritime diplomacy includes the practice of international relations that positions maritime issues as a key pillar in bilateral and multilateral interactions. Indonesian diplomacy through organizations such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) plays an important role in building the country's maritime identity in the regional order. Indonesia's participation in IORA since 2015 has been used as a medium to promote PMD ideas and fight for the security, connectivity and maritime development agenda in the Indo-Pacific region (Nisa, 2020). Indonesia is also an important initiator in the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), which is seen as an instrument of regional maritime cooperation that expands the space of Indonesia's maritime diplomacy in the context of the Indo-Pacific geopolitics (Yudilla, 2021).

Indonesia's maritime diplomacy is not only carried out through political negotiations, but also through participation in global maritime norms and governance such as cooperation in the International Maritime Organization (IMO), maritime security cooperation, and maritime crime prevention policies. This approach contributes to Indonesia's image as an actor that strengthens national maritime governance, while affirming national identity internationally (Ramadhani et al, 2025). Maritime diplomacy also includes a defense dimension, such as *navy diplomacy*, joint exercises, and non-traditional security initiatives such as countering piracy, maritime terrorism and *IUU Fishing*. This multidimensional approach strengthens Indonesia's maritime sovereignty narrative while expanding diplomatic networks related to regional and global security (Samy & Kusumadewi, 2021).

Maritime Infrastructure Development as a Dimension of Geopolitical Reorientation

In the first period of Joko Widodo's administration (2014-2019), various preparations in making Indonesia a *middle maritime power* country continued to be sought, one of which was through the development of maritime infrastructure. The main program of maritime infrastructure development, namely sea tolls and port logistics networks, is designed with the aim of reducing logistics costs between regions and increasing the distribution of goods between islands. This toll program was launched in 2015 with an initial plan to complete the development of around 24 strategic ports consisting of several main hub ports and feeder ports for the national maritime logistics network, as stipulated in the national medium-term development plan (RPMJ) 2015-2019.

In addition to the implementation of port development, the sea toll project also implements a model of ship routes that are developed to facilitate the distribution of goods between domestic ports through the construction of around 24 commercial ports, 1,481 non-commercial ports, as well as the procurement of new ships with an estimated investment value for the sea toll program and this port reaches around IDR 700 trillion or approximately US\$53 billion (Rahman & Zainudin, 2019). In addition to the main development of sea tolls and maritime connectivity, there is also the construction of marine and fisheries centers (SKPT) to increase the number of centers-; new economic growth libraries in coastal areas and small islands. According to data from the presidential secretariat office, as of 2017 (a 3-year report of the Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla administration) 12 SKPT were built from Sabang to Merauke. In addition to physical development, towards a *middle maritime power country*, Indonesia also implements other supporting programs such as fishermen's insurance and fishermen's banks in accordance with the objectives of the 2nd PMD band.

Table 2. Data captain maritime economy

Data captain maritime economy through infrastructure development and supporting programs	
12.581 Fishermen's insurance beneficiaries	1.3 trillion Budget allocation of the Fishermen's Micro Bank
295 Newly built kpal	61 Port and Revitalization
46 Logistic performance index <i>ranking</i>	294 Fishermen's insurance recipients/districts

Source: Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla government achievement report (Presidential Secretariat Office, 2019)

As an archipelagic country with a strong maritime character, ports in Indonesia have a strategic function as a gateway for human mobility and distribution of goods, as well as the main support for national trade and industrial activities. Based on data from the Ministry of Transportation, in 2020 the number of ports in Indonesia was recorded at 2,439 units, an increase of 38.6% compared to the previous year. In the same period, the construction of the pier also increased by 41.3%, with the total length of the pier reaching 43,144 meters. In addition, the number of sea transportation fleets increased by 14.2% to reach 93,737 units. A number of ports with the highest level of activity include Tanjung Priok Port, Merak Port, Tanjung Perak Port, and Bakauheni Port. Among these ports, Tanjung Priok Port is known as the largest port in Southeast Asia (Rizaty, 2021).

Strengthening Maritime Capabilities as an Effort to Maintain Sovereignty

In terms of security, Indonesia is improving maritime capabilities through the modernization of the Indonesian Navy, strengthening Bakamla, and coordination between maritime law enforcement agencies. This effort reflects the *policing* and *diplomatic functions* of the maritime power as stated by Booth (2007). Indonesia's maritime capabilities include strategic capabilities in maintaining maritime connectivity, territorial security, and the effectiveness of maritime infrastructure to support national development. In addition, the aspect of maritime capabilities is not only in the form of physical but also includes diplomacy and international cooperation capabilities, where Indonesia's strategy in increasing resilience and engagement in the Indo-Pacific shows the first coordinated approach in maintaining critical maritime infrastructure in the midst of global power competition (Nurjanah et al, 2025).

One form of readiness of Indonesia's maritime capabilities as *a middle maritime power* is through maritime sovereignty, within 5 years (2014-2019), hundreds of illegal fishing perpetrators *have* been arrested and processed to justice.

Table 3. Data on illegal fishing violations cases 2014-2019

2014-2019	
824	Arrested illegal fishing perpetrators
188	Cases are processed in court
636	Completed cases

Source: Joko Widodo-Jusuf Kalla government achievement report (Presidential Secretariat Office, 2019)

The implementation of PMD shows Indonesia's consistent efforts to transform maritime identity from mere narrative to policy practice. Despite facing limitations, the PMD has succeeded in strengthening Indonesia's position as a *relevant middle maritime power* in the geopolitical dynamics of the Indo-Pacific. Efforts to strengthen Indonesia's maritime capabilities are carried out through a comprehensive strategy that involves strengthening maritime security, modernizing the main tools of the weapon system (alutsista), increasing regional cooperation, and improving the governance of maritime law enforcement agencies.

The Indonesian government has been pushing for the modernization of naval power as part of its maritime defense strategy to improve patrol effectiveness, hybrid threat mitigation, and more professional management of marine resources, including through the procurement of patrol vessels, warships, and advanced surveillance technologies. This is considered an important element in realizing the achievement of *Asta Cita*, which is a national strategic ideal in strengthening maritime sovereignty. In addition, efforts to strengthen the maritime security system also involve the establishment and transformation of institutions such as the Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla) towards a *more integrated sea and coast guard* model, in order to improve law enforcement coordination in Indonesian waters and reduce overlapping tasks between agencies.

According to operational data from the Ministry of *Defense* and the annual report of the Indonesian Navy, the number of warships (KRI) operated increased from around 151 units in 2014 to around 171 units in 2019, as part of the *Minimum Essential Force (MEF)* phase II (2015–2019) program aimed at improving Indonesia's combat readiness and maritime deterrence (Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia, 2015; 2019). In addition, the construction and operation of large patrol vessels such as the *Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV)* class by the Maritime Security Agency of the Republic of Indonesia (Bakamla) began to be strengthened in this period, including the operation of the *Tanjung Datu KN* in 2018 to increase supervision of Indonesia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Based on data from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, there has been a significant increase in law enforcement against *illegal fishing* practices during 2014–2019, with more than 500 foreign fishing vessels being dealt with as part of the maritime sovereignty enforcement strategy (KKP, 2019). This policy not only increases the deterrent effect against water violations, but also strengthens state control over national marine resources. In parallel, the development of supporting infrastructure such as ports, *maritime domain awareness systems*, and coordination between maritime security agencies is strengthened through the World Maritime Axis policy framework contained in the 2015–2019 RPJMN. In the 2014–2019 period, Indonesia's maritime strengthening is not only realized through the development of physical infrastructure, but also through increasing the strength of maritime defense, intensifying law enforcement operations, and reforming maritime security institutions. Jokowi has experienced a measurable increase both in terms of the quantity of defense equipment, supervision capacity, and the effectiveness of law enforcement at sea.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research analysis, the World Maritime Axis (PMD) policy in the 2014–2019 period can be understood as an important strategy in Indonesia's efforts to build a geopolitical identity as a *middle maritime power* in the Indo-Pacific region. This policy not only focuses on economic development and maritime infrastructure, but also serves as a foreign policy instrument that emphasizes Indonesia's strategic position in trade routes and global connectivity. Through a cooperative approach to diplomacy, multilateralism, and inclusive initiatives such as the *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*, Indonesia seeks to assert its role as a balancing force in the region without abandoning the principle of active free foreign policy. The implementation of the five pillars of PMD, which includes maritime cultural

development, marine resource management, infrastructure development and maritime connectivity such as sea toll programs and port strengthening, maritime diplomacy, and enforcement of maritime territorial sovereignty, shows a combination of *soft power* and *hard power strategies* that are typical of medium-sized maritime countries.

However, this study also shows that the sustainability of PMD as a *geopolitical grand strategy* still faces a number of challenges, especially in the aspect of policy institutionalization and consistency of implementation across government periods. After the initial period of its implementation, the orientation of maritime policy is no longer the main agenda that is explicitly mainstreamed in the national development strategy. This has caused some PMD initiatives to not fully develop into a long-term policy framework that is integrated into Indonesia's development planning and foreign policy system. Thus, the PMD can be understood as an important phase in the process of redefining Indonesia's maritime identity, but it still needs institutional strengthening in order to function as a sustainable geopolitical strategy.

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