

What Role Has the Concept of “In-Betweenness” Played in Explaining Turkey and Indonesia’s Foreign Policy?

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Background

The global theater has been experiencing a rise in multipolarity for decades. As economic development and military capacity grow, some states’ ambitions have become more apparent. With increasing geopolitical competition, Europe and Asia are emerging as central players on the global stage. Partnerships and alliances under the banner of liberal democracy are being pursued, while centers of authoritarian governance are also forming alliances. However, the term “Cold War 2.0” does not adequately characterize the current global space. Since the 1980s, the affordability of cargo shipping has led to intimate interdependency in global supply chains. Today, this interconnectedness characterizes great power competitions, creating an entangled rivalry unlike the Cold War.

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Within this evolving power structure, there are states who find themselves in-between great powers in terms of culture, history, geography, and governance model. These in-between states are the focus of this article characterized by their pursuit of multiple alignments and diversification of partnerships. In-betweenness is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the space for sovereign decision making could be oppressed by the power constraints. On the other hand, the multiple layers of belonging have the potential to capacitate in-between states with leverage and relational capital when negotiating their national interests.

Parallel to Manners' "Normative Power Europe"² thesis, the European Union (EU) has been fostering democratic values and norms for decades through its external actions and diplomacy. From the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), European Endowment for Democracy (EED), enlargement processes, to the multiplicity of partnerships, the promotion of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law have been omnipresent. However, despite the decades of democratization endeavors, from the early 2000s up until the present moment, the world has witnessed mixed results of such promotion. Democratic backsliding has concurrently been the buzzword in both academic and policy domains. The inherent ambiguity of the EU's democratic agenda, and the growing assertiveness of external state actors are the principal, yet not exclusive, reasons behind such developments.

In the context of the rise of more authoritarian countries such as Russia and China, the EU and Japan have acted as a kind of counterbalance that would provide options for the two countries analyzed in this article, Turkey and Indonesia. In Asia, promotion of democratic values and norms has been fast-tracked by the role of the US and important allies, particularly Japan. The hub-and-spoke system has provided countries in the region with the necessary public goods and security they seek as they explore paths of development and move away from post-colonial baggage. For

2 Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 235–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00353>.

example, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific is a formidable attempt to promote the values of a rule-based regional and international order.

In the European theater, Turkey, which bridges the African-European-Asian continent, emerges as one prominent in-between case in point. This dynamic is visibly manifested by the Turkish engagement in the United Nations (UN)'s Black Sea Grain Initiative following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. The recent approval of Finland's membership in The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with Turkey's conditionalities also appears to be one of the ironies of history, seen from the lens of Turkey's application for EU membership since 1999.

On the Asia-Pacific stage, Southeast-Asian countries find themselves in between two giants, the US and China. In this power dynamic, Japan as one of the most important American allies in East Asia also plays a significant role in counterbalancing China. Leader of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and a regional hegemon, Indonesia, seems to be gradually active in bridging the conflicting worldviews of major powers. The elegant success of President Joko Widodo (also known as Jokowi) as the host of the 2022 G20 Bali summit at the height of heated tensions between the US and China, along with the ongoing War in Ukraine, was the best practice of Indonesia's in-between diplomacy. At this event, Widodo was able to put Biden and Xi on the same negotiation table, and Zelensky on the screen while Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lavrov being in the room.

From the above preliminary overview, the central question arises: what role has in-betweenness played in Turkey and Indonesia's bilateral relations with the EU and Japan respectively since 2000s?

With the growing complexity of world affairs, with the ones mentioned above being just a handful of examples, multidisciplinary approaches are needed more than ever to decipher the big trends and the nuances of global politics. This article examines the evolving foreign policies of Turkey and Indonesia, focusing on

their unique positions at the intersection of international relations, comparative politics, and area studies (Europe and Asia). By drawing on history, economics, and international law, it explores how Turkey and Indonesia's "in-betweenness" has influenced their foreign policy decisions and shaped their bilateral relations with the EU and Japan.

In the following sections, this article will first present the theoretical framework of classical realism as the analytical lens employed in addressing the questions raised. This will be followed by discussions on: (1) the disentanglement of the ambiguities of the EU's promotion of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in its international relations, and the case of Turkey; (2) relations between Japan and Indonesia; and (3) Turkey and Indonesia's in-betweenness compared: linkage between domestic diverse identities and external balancing acts. The conclusion will synthesize the analysis and mention the limitations of the paper.

Theoretical Framework: Classical Realism

Attentive to the constant reshuffling of power balance in international relations, classical realism appears to offer us the most adequate equipment to analyze the regional political dynamics at play. For the purpose of this paper, realism is understood as the philosophical point of departure to viewing the world. A fundamental assumption of realism is the absence of a supreme political authority in international relations. As such, states (or any set of groups dwelling in anarchy) must be attentive to the balance of power—i.e., to the potential capabilities of others, to the distribution of those capabilities across states, and, most crucially, to changes to the balance of power over time.³ The centrality of the state while not dismissing the important roles of non-state actors and market forces is another pillar of realism. Beyond the anarchy assumption, states must also attend to the intentions of others (an enormous problem as such intentions,

3 Jonathan Kirshner, *An Unwritten Future: Realism and Uncertainty in World Politics*. Princeton University Press, 2022, 14.

especially projecting into the future, can never be known with certainty), as behavior in world politics is a function of both power and purpose.⁴ While power may be the ultimate arbiter of disputes between states...purpose, what states want will define the nature and intensity of the disputes between them.”⁵

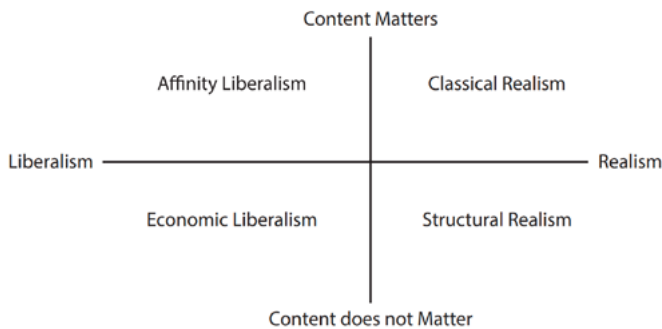
As Jonathan Kirshner (2022) convincingly argues, contrary to the reductionist hyper-rational realism, with rationality rooted in Rational Expectations Theory (RET), as well as deterministic structural realism, epitomized by Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics* (1979) and Mearsheimer’s *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (2001), classical realism takes both the structural of international relations and actors’ agency into account. As such, contingency of circumstances and political choices, as well as uncertainty are core pillars of classical realism. Graph 1 below situates classical realism within sub-categories of realism and liberalism. In this demarcation, constructivism lies in the perpendicular line to both realism and liberalism.

An unconventional yet honest articulation of the study of international relations is offered by Kirshner (2022): “The study of world politics will never be a science, at least as the way that term is conventionally used. To understand, explain, and anticipate events in international relations, it is necessary to have an instinct for and attentiveness to politics, a facility with rudimentary economic theory, and a grasp of the relevant history— in all cases tempered by self-consciousness about what simply cannot be known and the inescapable limits to the objectivity of the analyst. Or what might be thought of in another setting as approaching the task at hand armed with three chords and (a constant striving for) the truth.”

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

Graph 1. Liberalism, Realism and Constructivism



Source: Kirchner 2022, 76

Allowing space for contingency does not mean giving complete explanatory power to uncertainty nor abandoning analytical rigor. Rather, it is the honest recognition of the validity of assumptions and the limits of analysis in political science. It is not and can never be scientific the same way natural science is. But this does not imply that it is not rigorous. It is because social relations are slippery and causes and effects of social phenomena invariably change over time, complexities that are compounded by the fact that events will lend themselves to a multiplicity of interpretations. This is not nihilism—to the contrary, it is analytical modesty, and an attentiveness to the discipline required to distinguish what, as students of world politics, we can and cannot hope to achieve.⁶

Equipped with classical realist attentiveness to the delicate balance of power, interests, ideologies, norms, historical memory, and geographical conditions, we will now turn to the first section: ambiguities of the EU’s democracy promotion.

6 Kirchner, 5

The Ambiguities of the EU's Promotion of Democracy, Human Rights, and the Rule of Law in Its International Relations: The Case of Turkey

We will first critically assess the ambiguities of the EU's promotion of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in general, before turning to the case of Turkey, on its rugged road to Europe.

Normative Power Europe: Lighthouse Keeper of Democracy, Human Rights, and the Rule of Law?

One prominent ENP scholar, Tanja Börzel, challenges the conventional wisdom of the West promoting democracy and 'the illiberal rest' promoting autocracy"⁷ by exploring the impact of non-democratic regional powers, such as Russia, China, and Saudi Arabia, on US and EU democracy promotion. She discovers that "western democracies do not unequivocally engage in democracy promotion. Similar to nondemocratic regimes, they have a tendency to prioritize stability and security over democratic change." Meanwhile, "non-democratic regimes do not necessarily engage in autocracy promotion. Rather, they seek to undermine Western efforts at democracy promotion if they see their political and economic interests or their political survival at stake." Furthermore, Börzel argued that domestic factors are much more relevant for the (in-)effectiveness of international democracy promotion than the activities of non-democratic actors".

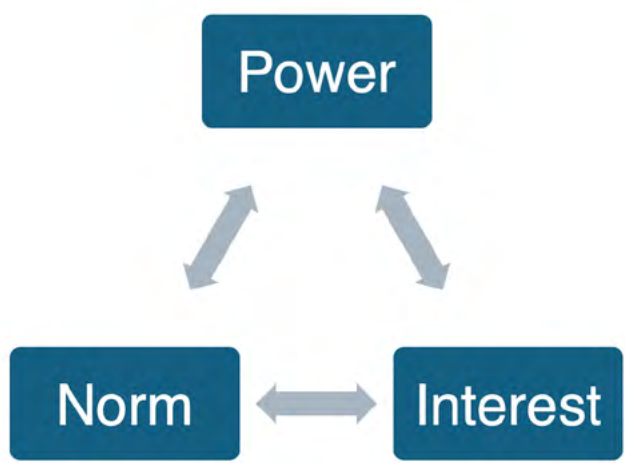
Meanwhile, according to Aydın-Düzgüt (2020), non-democracy can also conduct "democracy-support" policies to advance their economic and political interests. In addition, "the primacy of strategic drivers in democracy support is not unique to non-democracies. It can be argued that this is so often the case in

7 T. A. Börzel, "The noble west and the dirty rest? Western democracy promoters and illiberal regional powers," *Democratization*, 22, no.3 (2015): 519–535. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2014.1000312>

established Western democracies such as the US.”⁸ It is also the case “in other non-Western democracies such as Japan and India which have both invested in international democracy support mainly as a way to push back China”. Drawing from Turkey’s engagement in the Arab Spring, Aydın-Düzgit (2020) argues further that “non-democracies may even be more active than democratic governments in supporting democratic transitions, dependent on the extent of the strategic stakes served by democracy.”

At first glance, this may seem paradoxical. But closer inspection into the entanglement of decision-making calculus, one finds that power is intricately entrenched into the formation of interest and norms. As such, while the projection of power may be latent, it is nevertheless present in all formulations of interest and the construction of norms (Graph 2).

Graph 2. Entanglement of Decision-Making



8 Senem Aydın-Düzgit, “Can Non-Democracies Support International Democracy? Turkey as a Case Study,” *Third World Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (2020): 264–283, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1636643>.

There are countless examples where strategic interests and pragmatic concerns trump democratic values in the EU's diplomatic approaches, within and beyond its neighborhood. To mention just a few, in an interview conducted in March 2014, Jerzy Pomianowski stated that some embassies in Azerbaijan did not want to be seen funding democracy projects when negotiating an energy deal. In many cases, EU member states want to remain neutral.”⁹ In another ENP country, Georgia, although “the EU claims that resilience should not be conflated with support for authoritarian stability, it can be observed that the resilience turned coincided with a period of EU's relative passivity towards Georgia both in terms of democratic conditionality and new incentives.”¹⁰

In the same report, Lebanidze argues that “more attention to resilience measures, which is more focused on capacity building and output legitimacy...may tempt the EU to further neglect democracy and human rights in its neighborhood. The recent reenergizing relations with autocratic countries such as Belarus and Egypt prove this trend.¹¹ Relations with China and Russia have also been documented to be particularly strategic and value-free as “normative goals are often overridden by more mundane economic or strategic interests.”¹² In the Western Balkans, the EU and the US often emphasized the strategic containment of radical Islam or of Russian influence over value-driven policy goals such as democracy consolidation and the rule of law.¹³

9 Tuomas Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe, Once Again: A Conceptual Analysis of an Ideal Type,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49, no. 6 (2011): 1183–1204, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2011.02194.x>.

10 Bidzina Lebanidze, *Resilience and democracy: Can a pragmatic EU still promote democracy in Georgia?* Georgian Institute of Politics. 2020. <https://gip.ge/publication-post/resilience-and-democracy-can-a-pragmatic-eu-still-promote-democracy-in-georgia/>

11 Ibid, 3.

12 Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe,”

13 Florian Bieber and Nikolaos Tzifakis, *The Western Balkans in the World: Linkages and Relations with Non-Western Countries*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429243349>.

Inconsistency in the application of norms is also widely observed. According to Mayer, the EU aims to apply human rights provisions in trade agreement consistently but, in reality, different trade agreements have seen different interpretations of such rights.¹⁴ Critical scholars on the Normative Power Europe thesis further ask the question "...whether or not normative power is simply an expression of (Eurocentric) imperialism? ...whether or not the foreign policy of a normative or civilizing power may be considered legitimate at all and, if so, on what grounds."¹⁵

According to Chandler, the state-building process of EU enlargement has been able to be highly regulatory precisely on the basis that the regulatory mechanisms invest political responsibility in the candidate countries while denying the EU's domination.¹⁶ Beyond power asymmetry is the latent pursuit of economic and security interests of the EU, which is a much more complex and ambiguous one, that of the denial of power: the desire to avoid any investigation of their interests, of *their* capacities. State-building is the practice of denying the empire. The problem with non-Western states from the Balkans to Africa is their subordination and weakness in relation to the Western powers. It is this subordination which raises awkward questions of policy responses and of political responsibilities and above all the question of Western political purpose: what does the West have to offer? This question is an unsettling one for Western governments and international institutions which acutely feel the lack of a sense of political purpose today and fear their inability to act in a way that openly projects their power.¹⁷

The implicit pursuit of interest and projection of power, hidden by the technocratic language to de-politicize the debates further helps the EU to circumvent political responsibilities

14 Mario Telò and Frederik Ponjaert, (eds). *The EU's Foreign Policy : What Kind of Power and Diplomatic Action ?* Ashgate, 2013.

15 Knud Erik Jørgensen, et al. (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of European Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC: SAGE Publications, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473915190>.

16 David Chandler, *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-Building*. Pluto, 2006.

17 Chandler, 190.

and accountabilities. Analyzing the innovations in strategies of democracy support with the introduction of European Endowment for Democracy (EED), Tordjman (2017) highlights the ambivalent role of ambiguity in bringing about effective pluralism in authoritarian environments. Intriguingly, while ambiguity may serve as an enabling factor and generate consensus around misunderstandings that are usually well recognized by the relevant stakeholders, it may also affect the coherence, legitimacy and efficiency of the interventions, especially when new democracy support devices are exhibited in parallel to political negotiations that may lead to compromises over respect towards human rights and advancement of political liberties.¹⁸

Another mechanism of ambiguity lies in the informalization of the EU's international relations. According to Fahey and Bazerkoska, EU international relations are increasingly subject to degrees of informalization, where soft law or non-binding instruments are used in key EU international relations contexts of controversy, evading scrutiny, judicial review, institutional analysis, and removing citizen scrutiny.¹⁹

The rise in the replacement of binding bilateral or multilateral agreements by soft law instruments is also well-documented in the literature (see Ott 2020²⁰ and Wessel 2021²¹). Parallel to this is the employment of the vague terms such as “strategic partnership” in plenty of the EU's documents relating to its external relations. While the ambiguity allows flexibility for political maneuvers facing uncertainty, the normative values of the rule of law and

18 Simon Tordjman, “Ambiguity as a Condition of Possibility: The European Endowment for Democracy and Democracy Promotion in the Caucasus” *Studies of Transition States and Societies* 9, no. 1 (2017): 11.

19 Nicolas Levrat, et al. (eds). *The EU and Its Member States' Joint Participation in International Agreements*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022.

20 Anca Ott, “Informalization of EU Bilateral Instruments: Categorization, Contestation, and Challenges,” *Yearbook of European Law*, vol. 39 (2020): 569–601, <https://doi.org/10.1093/yel/yeaa004>.

21 Ramses A. Wessel, “Normative Transformations in EU External Relations: The Phenomenon of ‘Soft’ International Agreements.” *West European Politics*, vol. 44, no. 1 (2021): 72–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2020.1738094>.

democratic accountability that the EU has preached to other actors for decades are potentially undermined. Following these lines of critique, there is little surprise that while there is empirical support for the thesis that the EU is recognized as being a model with regard to various norms in world politics, there is also skepticism as to whether the EU lives up to its own professed ideals.²²

The Case of Turkey: Rugged Road to Europe

Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, the pivotal geographical position, multicultural demography, and the Ottoman history have made the competing narratives of identities and governance model inevitable.

Turkish nationalism represents an orthogonal dimension to the dichotomous narratives of Kemalist western-style modernization and neo-Ottoman embracement of the cultural and religious roots. While the political and cultural realities are much more nuanced, Table 1 offers a preliminary comparison to highlight their distinctness.

Table 1. Comparison between Kemalism and Neo-Ottomanism

	Kemalism	Neo-Ottomanism
Governance model	Democracy under tutelage	Authoritarianism
Religious position	Secularism	Sunni-Islam dominance
Economic policy	Corporatism	Neoliberalism
Civilizational vision	(western) Modernization	Traditional conservatism
Symbolic figure	Mustafa Kemal Atatürk	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
Political party	Republican People's Party (CHP)	Justice and Development Party (AKP)

22 Tuomas Forsberg, “Normative Power Europe, Once Again: A Conceptual Analysis of an Ideal Type,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49, no. 6 (2011): 1183–1204, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2011.02194.x>.

The in-betweenness of Turkey stems from both its internal competing narratives and external strategic calculus of power balance. The relations between Turkey and the EU are also largely influenced by the competing visions for the organization of state and society. Thus, when looking at the costs and benefits, it is important to look at a state's options, assess how reforms may affect domestic politics, and examine the standing of the EU within the target country.²³

At the 1999 Helsinki Summit, Turkey obtained the official candidate status for EU membership. Nevertheless, while the European Council in Helsinki recognized Turkey's candidacy," it stopped short of opening accession negotiations, arguing that the country first had to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria for membership.²⁴

From the late 1990s and the early 2000s, Europeanization was popular in general political discourse. Echoing Table 1, Üstün (2018) informs us that there were two competing perceptions on the journey to EU membership—i.e., a process for achieving the level of contemporary civilization Atatürk set as the target for modern Turkey and a way imperialist forces could dictate their interests.²⁵ But such diverging views did not explicitly undermine Turkish aspiration to join the EU.

When the AKP came to power in 2002, former university professor, Ahmet Davutoğlu, was appointed as Chief Adviser to the Prime Minister and Ambassador-at-Large. He later became the Minister of Foreign Affairs (2009) and the Prime Minister (2014). His book *Strategic Depth* (2001) became the blueprint for the Turkish foreign policy making, which is characterized by

23 Paul Kubicek, "Political Conditionality and European Union's Cultivation of Democracy in Turkey," *Democratization* 18, no. 4 (2011): 910–931, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2011.584732>.

24 Nathalie Tocci, *Turkey's European Future: Behind the Scenes of America's Influence on EU-Turkey Relations*. New York University Press, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.18574/9780814784457>.

25 Çiğdem Üstün, *The Rise and Fall of Europeanization: What is Next for Turkey-EU Relations?* Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2018.

strengthening relations with countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Europe, and Russia. Growing diplomatic activeness was also observed in international organizations like the UN. These developments were at the time perceived as aligned with the ENP, seen as a part of the Europeanization process.²⁶

From 2002 to 2005, the opening of membership chapters marks the target to be fulfilled by the incumbent AKP government. Yet since the opening of accession negotiations in 2005, the 1999-2005 golden years in EU-Turkey relations have come to a (temporary) halt, as the relationship has slipped back into a vicious dynamic.²⁷ With the open opposition from leaders of the member states, notably President Nicolas Sarkozy and Chancellor Angela Merkel, in 2007, France blocked the opening of an additional five chapters.²⁸ The ongoing disputes between northern and southern Cyprus makes the road to Europe even more rugged. Achieving a solution in Cyprus is not an explicit condition for Turkey's EU membership. However, in everything but name, a solution in Cyprus has become a condition for Turkey's EU membership.²⁹

The stranded process of EU membership due to overwhelming political concerns undermines the credibility of the EU in remaining committed. Concurrently, Turkish aspiration of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, anchored in Europeanization gradually becomes delusional. Following the systemic drawbacks in Europeanization, AKP and the ruling conglomerate started to formulate alternative plans. The moral panic³⁰ and psychological scar then become symbolic deposits to be instrumentalized and stigmatized by the ruling elites when opportunities arise.

26 Ibid, 33.

27 Nathalie Tocci, *Turkey's European Future: Behind the Scenes of America's Influence on EU-Turkey Relations*. New York University Press, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.18574/9780814784457>.

28 Ibid, 5.

29 Ibid, 121.

30 Çiğdem Üstün, *The Rise and Fall of Europeanization: What is Next for Turkey-EU Relations?* (Berlin: Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2018).

The EU and US approaches to political liberalization often coincide with economic liberalization, which can negatively impact real democratic progress. Baylies' (1995) example of Africa is applicable elsewhere, including Turkey. While political conditionalities may assist the development of democratic movements, there is an irony in that structural adjustment risks undermining the state reforms seen to be essential to them. Equally, democratization may challenge the process of economic restructuring being imposed.³¹

Nowadays, the most important relations between the EU and Turkey appears to be the EU-Turkey Statement on migration management reached in 2016. The EU's externalization of migration policy to avoid responsibility and accountability while respecting the non-refoulement legal norms has been well documented in the academic and policy literature (Lehner 2019,³² Dagı 2020,³³ Yılmaz-Elmas 2020,³⁴ Kassoti and Idriz 2022³⁵).

31 Carolyn Baylies, "Political Conditionality' and Democratization," *Review of African Political Economy* 22, no. 65, (1995): 321–337, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056249508704143>.

32 Roman Lehner, "The EU–Turkey 'deal': Legal Challenges and Pitfalls," *International Migration* 57, no. 2 (2019): 176–185, <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12462>.

33 Dogachan Dagı, "The EU–Turkey Migration Deal: Performance and Prospects," *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 25, no. 2 (2020): 197–216, <https://doi.org/10.54648/EERR2020019>.

34 Fatma Yılmaz-Elmas, "EU's Global Actorness in Question: A Debate over the EU-Turkey Migration Deal/AB'nin Sorgulanan Kuresel Aktorlugu: AB-Türkiye Goc Mutabakati Uzerine Bir Tartisma," *Uluslararası İlişkiler / International Relations*, vol. 17, no. 68 (2020) : 161–, <https://doi.org/10.33458/uidergisi.856887>.

35 Eva Kassoti and Narin Idriz, "The Internal Effects of the EU-Turkey Deal on Turkey's Migration and Asylum System," *The Informalisation of the EU's External Action in the Field of Migration and Asylum*, vol. 1, T.M.C. Asser Press, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-487-7_12.

Relations between Japan and Indonesia

Contrary to the relations between the EU and Turkey which see parallel development between normative and pragmatic concerns, the relations between Japan and Indonesia are characterized by the salience of pragmatism throughout. The absence of the membership prospect due to the difference in nature of polities between Japan as a state and the EU as a regional integrative entity is another major difference between the two bilateral relations.

Japan and Indonesia established diplomatic relations in 1958, in the midst of Indonesia's anti-colonial struggles between 1945 and 1949. Approaching the end of the colonization by the Dutch East Indies from 1800 to 1949, in 1942, the Empire of Japan invaded southeast Asia, including the nowadays Indonesia. The Japanese occupation ended in 1945, with the defeat of the empire by the Allied forces. It is useful to put the relations between Japan and Indonesia into historical perspectives, in comparison with other lines of linkage. Beyond the Japanese occupation, and the Dutch colonization, the historical dominance of Chinese empires in East Asia also feeds into the Indonesia's fear and mistrust of foreign powers.³⁶

The colonial history makes Indonesia wary of foreign governments' influence on its political and economic sovereignty. In 1955, Indonesia's first president Sukarno hosted the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, West Java. This conference laid out the foundation for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) for newly independent states in Asia and Africa, during the Cold War.

As a resource-lacking country, Japan's foreign policy has been largely characterized by pragmatic concerns over resource-extraction. The mercantilist approach was shared by other investors. "A PSI leader...characterized both Japanese and American investors as 'vultures'."³⁷

36 Daniel Novotný, *Torn between America and China: Elite Perceptions and Indonesian Foreign Policy*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010.

37 Franklin B. Weinstein, *Indonesian foreign policy and the dilemma of dependence: from Sukarno to Soeharto*. Cornell University Press, 1976.

With the “economic miracles” during the *Trente Glorieuses* (roughly 1945 to 1973) and the dismantlement of the Gold Standard in the 1980s, the appreciation of the Yen elevates the cost of labor. This, in turn, reduces the global competitiveness of Japanese firms. To boost economic competitiveness, the Japanese government set up Official Development Assistance (ODA) to build infrastructure for economic activities to flourish, financed by Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in southeast Asian countries and beyond.

The logic of the developmental state³⁸ has been prominent in East Asia.³⁹ As Chang (2015) convincingly argues, protectionist state-led industry building has been the most effective way to build the economy from scratch, applicable to rising economies and mature economies alike.⁴⁰

Following the utilitarian logic, Japan may place a lower priority on democracy aid because democratic development in recipient countries does not directly provide economic benefits to Japan.⁴¹ Indeed, pragmatic concerns and non-intervention doctrine were the dominant lines of thinking in Japan’s foreign policy making. Only when Japan was pressured by western states did it incorporate democracy promotion in its ODA. As illustrated by Ichihara⁴², the inclusion of democracy promotion as one of the purposes of Japanese foreign aid provision partially resulted from *gaiatsu* for that purpose. The tepid Japanese response to the military crackdown on pro-democracy movements in Burma and China at the end of the 1980s led the media in the US and Europe to criticize Japan. This criticism at least partially led political parties on the governing and opposing sides...to move toward

38 Saori N. Katada, *Japan’s new regional reality: Geoeconomic strategy in the Asia-Pacific*, Columbia University Press, 2020.

39 Saori N. Katada, *Japan’s New Regional Reality: Geoeconomic Strategy in the Asia-Pacific* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

40 Ha-Joon Chang, *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective*. NBN International, 2015.

41 Maiko Ichihara, “Japan’s Democracy Support to Indonesia.” *Asian Survey* 56, no. 5 (2016): 905–930, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2016.56.5.905>.

42 Ibid, 911

the creation of the ODA Charter of 1992 (the first guidelines on Japanese foreign aid), which stated that Japan would provide foreign aid by paying attention to the direction of democratization in recipient countries.

Following this development, since the 2000s, democracy promotion has been systematically incorporated into the Japanese ODA and foreign policies. In 2006, the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity initiative was launched by Foreign Minister Taro Aso. The Abe administration also targets the rule of law and democratic governance as the priorities in national security and foreign policy gestures. This is an ostensible departure from the country's traditional foreign policy posture, which has avoided bringing values to the forefront of foreign policy.⁴³

With the rise of China and the assertive leadership of Xi Jinping who came to power in 2013. The Abe administration also prepares more hawkish policy announcements such as Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) in 2016. Faced with the growing power of China, there is also an increasing convergence of interests and common strategic outlook between Jakarta and Tokyo...In the context of the uncertainty that arises from the rise of China, several leaders emphasized that there is a need for Japan to stay engaged in the security arrangements in Southeast Asia. The counterweight offered by the multiplicity of foreign partners is the most dominant logic of foreign policy making throughout Indonesian diplomatic history. However, due to the urgency of domestic infrastructure-building and the need for funds, Indonesia does not always have the say in front of major foreign investors.

The geopolitical rivalry between Japan and China can also be observed in their competing bids in the high-speed railway construction plans connecting Jakarta and Bandung. The governmental agency of ODA, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), proposed a soft loan to conduct the project in the 2010s. However, China offered cheaper deals with the waiver of official loan guarantee. Following his trips to both Tokyo and

43 Maiko Ichihara, "Japan's Democracy Support to Indonesia," *Asian Survey* 56, No. 5 (2016): p. 905, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2016.56.5.905>.

Beijing in 2015, President Widodo finally decided to opt for the Chinese bid. Both economic and political calculations were decisive, following intense lobbying of both countries. Yet when it opens in July [2023] it will be several hundred million dollars over budget and four years behind schedule, because of pandemic-related, land-acquisition and other delays and environmental controversies.⁴⁴

Turkey and Indonesia's In-Betweenness Compared: Linkage between Domestic Diverse Identities and External Balancing Acts

Since the mid-2000s, the world has increasingly witnessed the emergence of new poles of powers from the Global South challenging the long prevailed global distribution of power among the immediate post-Cold War era's winning Western countries.⁴⁵ Established in 2008, G20 marks the milestone of global reshuffling of power balance.

In the era of multipolarity, rising economies and states may favor a transformation of global order to better reflect the distribution of power. In 2013, Fontaine and Kliman estimate that the more likely scenario is fragmentation of the global order. Principles which the order has advanced would become less universally binding; different parts of the world would interpret and apply the order's principles based on local consensus or the desires of the regionally dominant power. Institutions and arrangements that have successfully regulated key areas of state behavior would become less effective as they are replicated. Such fragmentation would be inimical to all countries that depend upon an open and stable world for their peace and prosperity.⁴⁶ While

44 "Banyan: Bad Blood on the Tracks" *The Economist* 447, no. 9341 (8 April 2023): 47. *ProQuest*, <https://www.proquest.com/magazines/banyan-bad-blood-on-tracks/docview/2797723165/se-2>.

45 Emel Parlar Dal, (ed.). *G20 Rising Powers in the Changing International Development Landscape: Potentialities and Challenges*. Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2022.

46 Richard Fontaine and Daniel M. Kliman, "International Order and Global Swing States," *The Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (2013): 93–109, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2013.751653>.

changes to the balance of power over time may be the primal engine of conflict,⁴⁷ if such transformation can be wisely managed by both established powers and newly emerged giants, the new global order has the potential to become more democratic and just.

As neighbors to the EU and Japan, Turkey and Indonesia have the greatest potential to become the new regional hegemons, if they have the purpose in mind and the capacity to act. While the mounting normative dissensus and contestation over the world order are as old as international relations, with the rise of China and assertive moves of Russia around the 2010s, it has since been manifesting itself in a starkly intense manner. Following this development, Turkey and Indonesia as in-between states could enable the bridge among contesting worldviews. Nevertheless, one shall not be naïve as to dismiss their own political and economic agendas which remain contingent at best. Before comparing the in-betweenness of Turkey and Indonesia in both their internal and external dimensions, it is crucial to first define in-betweenness.

In-betweenness

In-betweenness is defined as geographical, historical, political, and cultural intertwining identity and positionality which are not only conditioned by the spatial attribute of one state in relation to others, but also, if not more so, realized and performed by state actors in contingent manners.

In-betweenness of states is characterized by the geographical affiliation with continents, such as Turkey lying in the middle of Asia, Africa, and Europe. It is also performed by the multiple national attachments and importantly, potential rejection as well. Such that in-betweenness transcends the binary distinction of identity and belonging. In portraying the ambiguity in post-colonial state identity, Bhabha (2012) articulates that it lies in the stage of colonial signifier in the narrative uncertainty of culture's

47 Jonathan Kirshner, *An Unwritten Future: Realism and Uncertainty in World Politics*. Princeton University Press, 2022.

in-between.⁴⁸ The ambiguity, in turn, could be strategically played out in advancement of political objectives when actors see fit.

The concept of in-betweenness in the political and economic positioning of states transcends the simple dichotomy of democratic and authoritarian tendencies. It encompasses supply chain interdependencies, trade relations, and a multitude of strategic and symbolic alliances. In-betweenness also extends beyond the well-established concept of hedging behavior in international relations, emphasizing the significance of culture, identity, community, and belonging. While it aims to diversify relations and partnerships to avoid over-reliance on a single state or bloc, it is not solely strategic.

In academic literature, similar terms to in-between states include, while not limited to, torn countries⁴⁹ and cusp states.⁵⁰ In *The Clash of Civilizations?* (1993), Huntington characterized Turkey as “the most obvious and prototypical torn country” as it bridges three continents and host to a plethora of identities.⁵¹

The multiplicity of belonging lies in both internal and external dimensions of the state. The influence of domestic and foreign policies on each other goes both ways. While the external behavior of the state can be conditioned by the imagined judgment of domestic audiences, the external political dynamics also formulate and shape the identity construction of citizens and subjects. As the nature of politics, the crosscutting lines of attachment coexist in an uneasy and dynamic equilibrium.

Chan defines cusp states as those that are under some significant cross influence or pressure. This broad definition captures a diverse and rich array of phenomena whereby governments and societies

48 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. Taylor and Francis, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203820551>.

49 Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, No. 3 (1993): pp. 22–49, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20045621>

50 Marc Herzog and Philip Robins, *The Role, Position and Agency of Cusp States in International Relations*, ed., (London: Routledge, 2014).

51 Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22–49, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20045621>.

are subject to possible identity dissonance, cultural ambivalence, or strategic vulnerability.⁵²

At the same time, their rather special position at the crossroads of cultures, or as occupants of a pivotal strategic position, confers upon Cusp States important advantages and opportunities to exploit their cultural versatility, to adapt to international trends, and to hedge and balance against competing foreign powers...and that gives their diplomacy special standing, leverage and credibility in the eyes of pertinent foreign audiences. Being located at the intersection of competing foreign spheres of political or cultural influence and having often attained rather impressive socio-economic-political development, some Cusp States have managed to gain effective diplomatic autonomy in the shadow of their larger neighbors.⁵³

Change and Continuities of Turkish In-between: from Kemalist Western Modernization to Neo-Ottoman Foreign Policy, Promoting Multipolarity, While Advancing Islamic Ideologies

The most prominent representation of Turkey as in-between has been in reference to Europe and the Middle East”.⁵⁴ As such, it has ties with all, and different levels of historical and cultural affinities with each and yet is not completely grounded in any of the surrounding regions.⁵⁵ The in-betweenness has been at times employed in its advantage, while others, it has been suppressed by the embracement of one identity above others.⁵⁶

In 2002, the AKP came to power. In 2003 Erdoğan became the Prime Minister. In 2004, Erdoğan’s Chief Adviser Ahmet Davutoğlu announced *Zero Problems with the Neighbors* as one of the leading principles of Turkish foreign policies. In his own words,

52 Marc Herzog and Philip Robins, (eds). *The Role, Position and Agency of Cusp States in International Relations*. Routledge, 2014.

53 Ibid, 168.

54 Ibid, 25.

55 Ibid, 26-27.

56 Ibid, 27.

Turkey “should be seen neither as a bridge country which only connects two points, nor a frontier country, which sits at the edge of the Middle East or the West”.⁵⁷ Instead of limiting Turkey to the two blocks, Davutoğlu argues that “Turkey’s new geographical imagination, based on its geography, history and identity, accorded it a new role in mediating”⁵⁸ and wide engagement with the neighborhood, ranging from Africa to Western Balkans.

Turkey’s transition into active international mediation started as a personal initiative of then-foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in late 2000s⁵⁹ starting from the “dispute between the Palestinian factions, Israeli control of Golan Heights, ongoing civil war in Somalia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina’s rocky relationship with its neighbor Serbia”.⁶⁰ Despite Turkey’s general failure to facilitate agreements in most of its mediation efforts, this foreign policy tool became useful domestically.⁶¹ Beyond efforts at domestic recognition, Davutoğlu’s preference for establishing multiple bilateral alliances on a regional basis, and improved relations with neighboring countries was also aimed at counterbalancing traditional allies such as the US, the EU and NATO.⁶²

As discussed in the previous sections, while the AKP government implemented neoliberal and democratic reforms during the early 2000s, the systematic denial of EU membership acts as an invitation for them to change course strategically. Graph 3 shows the year 2005 as the turning point of Turkish democratization efforts, in parallel to the return of the vicious cycle in EU membership application. Turkey also starts to

57 Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007,” *Insight (Turkey)* 10, No. 1 (2008): p. 77–96. <https://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/ahmet-davutoglu-turkeys-foreign-policy-vision-an-assessment-of-2007.pdf>

58 Marc Herzog and Philip Robins, *The Role, Position and Agency of Cusp States in International Relations*, ed., (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 36.

59 Doğa Ulaş Eralp, *Turkey as a Mediator: Stories of Success and Failure*. Lanham, Mayland USA: Lexington Books, 2016.

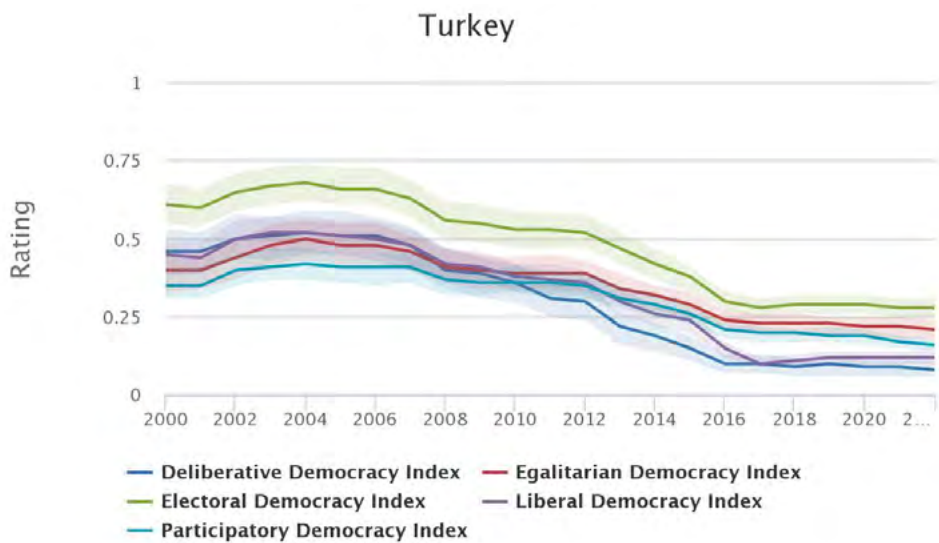
60 Doğa Ulaş Eralp, *Turkey as a Mediator: Stories of Success and Failure* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016), p. xiii.

61 Herzog and Robins, 38.

62 Ibid, 47.

rebalance the external relations⁶³ by distancing itself from the west and establishing relations with partner such as Russia, from whom Turkey purchases several weapon systems such as the polemical S-500 aerial missile defense system.

Graph 3. V-DEM data in Turkey (2000-2022)



Source: Varieties of Democracy (2023) (https://v-dem.net/data_analysis/CountryGraph/)

However, the authoritarian turns from 2005 and exacerbated in the 2010s⁶⁴ were not without consequences for the consistency and legitimacy in its mediating endeavors. Indeed, the “gap between the pro-democracy rhetoric in Turkey’s foreign policy and its authoritarian domestic politics is a threat to the credibility of Turkey as a mediator.”⁶⁵

63 Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, “The European Union and the Black Sea Region in Search of a Narrative or a New Paradigm.” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 16, no. 3 (2014): 286–299, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2014.928534>.

64 Zenonas Tziarras, *Turkish Foreign Policy: The Lausanne Syndrome in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*. Springer International Publishing AG, 2022.

65 Eralp, *Turkey as a Mediator*.

With the domestic presidentialization of politics, autocratization, insistence on neoliberalism, and promotion of political Islam,⁶⁶ Turkey's in-betweenness has been undermined, ultimately weakening Turkey's position and role⁶⁷ because it limits Turkey's pragmatism and flexibility as a mediator in protracted conflicts.⁶⁸ The anachronistic ambition of the AKP to restore the Ottoman past was also called upon by critics as under the call for multipolarity, the expansionist pursuit may well be hidden.

Continuity of Indonesian In-between: Pragmatism and Balance of Power

Indonesia's "foreign policy doctrine of '*bebas dan aktif*' ('free and active') was coined by then-Vice President Muhammad Hatta in 1948 as a response to the polarization of the emerging Cold War."⁶⁹⁵² In the same speech, he succinctly describes the danger of living in-between bipolar giants as *rowing between two reefs*.⁷⁰ Retrospectively, this vivid illustration still applies to the entangled rivalry characterizing today's great power competitions.

According to Sukma (2003), the politics of *bebas-aktif* as defined by Hatta consisted of four significant premises. First, the conduct of Indonesia's foreign policy should be based on an ideological foundation: the state's philosophy of Pancasila.⁷¹

66 Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*. I.B. Tauris, 1994.

67 Meliha Benli Altunışık, "The Trajectory of a Modified Middle Power: An Attempt to Make Sense of Turkey's Foreign Policy in Its Centennial." *Turkish Studies*, 2022, 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2022.2141624>.

68 Ibid, xiv.

69 Fuadi Pitsuwan, "Smart Power Strategy: Recalibrating Indonesian Foreign Policy." *Asian Politics & Policy* 6, no. 2, (2014): 237–266, <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12107>.

70 Daniel Novotný, *Torn between America and China: Elite Perceptions and Indonesian Foreign Policy*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010.

71 As stated in Paragraph 4 of the Preamble of the Constitution of Indonesia, Five principles in Sanskrit are: (1) Belief in the One and Only God; (2) Just and civilized humanity; (3) The unity of Indonesia; (4) Democratic life led by wisdom of thoughts in deliberation amongst representatives of the people; (5) Achieving social justice for all the people of Indonesia.

Second, foreign policy should be aimed at safeguarding the national interest as defined by the state's Constitution. Third, the pursuit of national interests would be best served through an independent foreign policy. Fourth, Indonesian foreign policy should be conducted pragmatically, namely, it should be resolved in the light of its own interests and should be executed in consonance with the situations and facts it has to face.⁷²

While the foundational nature of Indonesia's independent and active doctrine is a 'constant,' its implementation could be recalibrated (Denoon 2018: 118) depending on the needs at the moment.⁷³⁶ Founder and leader of the Non-Aligned Movement since the Cold War era, Indonesia's in-betweenness has been operationalized as "policy of equidistance" and "balancing act" by former president Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-2001); and by former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as "a thousand friends, zero enemy" echoing Turkish former PM Ahmet Davutoğlu's *Zero Problems with the Neighbours* (2004) doctrine.

When Yudhoyono proclaimed the 'thousand friends, zero enemy' slogan of his foreign policy, Jokowi bluntly stated, 'What's the point of having many friends but we only get the disadvantages? Many friends should bring many benefits (Sulaiman 2019: 616).⁷⁴ Following this line of thinking, Indonesian in-betweenness can be characterized as characterized as attracting FDI from diverse state actors in order to counterbalance one from another, in particular, the US, China, and Japan.

In Novotny (2010)'s words, the current process of China's ascendancy is welcome in Jakarta insofar as it helps Indonesia to eliminate negative implications of the perceived assertive and unilateralist policies of the United States. Yet, the discussion on China also highlighted the elite's continuing deep-rooted

72 Rizal Sukma, *Islam in Indonesian Foreign Policy*. Routledge Curzon, 2003.

73 David B. H. Denoon, *China, the United States, and the Future of Southeast Asia*. New York University Press, 2017.

74 Yohanes Sulaiman, "What Threat? Leadership, Strategic Culture, and Indonesian Foreign Policy in the South China Sea." *Asian Politics & Policy* 11, no. 4 (2019): 606–622, <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12496>.

suspensions and uneasiness about Beijing's perceived expansionist aspirations.⁷⁵

Indonesian stance towards China illustrates its in-betweenness in a peculiar way as it relates to the fear/respect complex for the Chinese dominance in the distant past, the discrimination and stigmatization towards the ethnic Chinese population in Indonesia as they control most of the economic resources and holdings, the deep distrust towards China due to its expansionist threat, and the desperate need for Chinese investment for infrastructure-building. The back and forth of Widodo towards the competing claims of sovereignty in South China Sea illustrates this complex vividly "a few months after renaming waters around Natuna Island into North Natuna Sea, Indonesia in the end quietly backtracked on renaming the sea."⁷⁶ For Indonesia and other southeast Asian countries, balancing between national sovereignty along with territorial integrity and trade relations with China is equivalent to walking on the tightrope.

In short, facing the existential threat from and economic dependence on China, Australia, Japan, India and ASEAN countries are all considered as important elements in Jakarta's hedging strategy. Indonesian policymakers clearly want the country's foreign relations to remain on an open course and remain multidirectional.⁷⁷

Comparison between Turkish and Indonesian In-between

From the analysis above, one observes that Turkey's in-between character has been shaped by the gradual abandonment of EU membership aspiration in the mid-2000s, and the pursuit to establish diplomatic relations with non-western countries. This

75 Daniel Novotný, *Torn between America and China: Elite Perceptions and Indonesian Foreign Policy*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010.

76 Sulaiman, "What Threat?," 618.

77 Daniel Novotný, *Torn between America and China: Elite Perceptions and Indonesian Foreign Policy*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010.

runs parallel to the autocratization and concentration of power in the hands of the AKP ruling elites with the instrumentalization of Islam for political gains.

However, in Indonesia, while there is constant recalibration of foreign policies facing changing political environment at home and abroad, non-alignment has remained the strategy to counterbalance one power from another. Since the establishment of the *bebas dan aktif* (free and active) foreign policy doctrine, it has served as the lighthouse to guide the policy makers in troubled waters, as to how to row in two reefs without getting the boat sinking. Nonetheless, when examining the trade dependency of Indonesia on China, the aspiration remains largely constrained by economics. However, Indonesia welcomes other trade partners to mitigate the consequences of over-reliance and potential political influence of China through trade.

Contrary to Turkey, who experiences re-orientation of foreign policies with its main partners, Indonesia experiences more continuity than change in terms of the overarching principle of pragmatism and the enterprise of power balance.

Conclusion

We live in extraordinary moments in world history. With rising multipolarity, conflicting claims over the global order are also on the rise. Underneath the EU's normative discourse on democracy and the rule of law, lies the projection of power and strategic interests of industries. In practice, democracy does not come alone. Democracy comes with many conditions and impositions.

The lens of classical realism equips us with attentiveness to the relation and employment of power for politically determined ends. In the age of intense great power competition with entrenched interdependency, in-betweenness allows states to maneuver diplomatic relations. As the external dimension of politics is intricately linked to the domestic one, the way in-betweenness is employed shapes the perception of actors regarding their identities with reference to the others.

While in-betweenness in Turkish foreign policy has transformed from western alignment to the distancing from this club following the sense of rejection by the EU and AKP's consolidation of power, the presence of Japan and the US is welcomed by Indonesia as they offer counterbalance weight to resist Chinese domination.

Only when regional powers like the EU and Japan understand the nature of the political dynamics in their respective neighborhoods, can they effectively cater to the needs of their regional partners, notably Turkey and Indonesia. While this is not a guarantee of diplomatic success, it significantly enhances the legitimacy and credibility of the EU and Japan vis-à-vis their counterparts to foster a more harmonious approach in their respective regions.

In the age of uncertainty, global engagement on each issue will no longer resemble a boxing match—where victory and defeat can be rapidly judged in terms of decisive punches or counter punches—as it will be a chess grandmasters' game, where each move will have to be mindful of several other pieces on the board and the game is played as part of a long strategic interaction.⁷⁸

Beyond the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), non-alignment also manifests in the gap between normative discourse and practical implementation. To bridge this gap and promote a more peaceful and just world order, established powers must address the genuine concerns of emerging powers. Meanwhile, emerging powers should strive for the common good of global peace and justice. Translating this ideal into practice is a shared challenge for all humanity. Ultimately, this article aims to contribute to this collective effort, no matter how modest its contribution may be. □

78 Sunil Khilnani, et al. *Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century*. Centre for Policy Research, 2012.