



## Independent and Active Foreign Policy: A New Perspective for Developing National Defense Capabilities

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#### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the strategic transformation of Indonesia's Bebas Aktif (independent and active) foreign policy as a foundation for strengthening national defense capabilities in the evolving Indo-Pacific security landscape. Historically rooted in non-alignment and moral diplomacy, Bebas Aktif has guided Indonesia's international engagement since the early post-independence era. However, the twenty-first century's multipolar order, characterized by technological rivalry, asymmetric threats, and the digitalization of warfare, demands a redefinition of the doctrine into a framework of strategic autonomy. Employing a qualitative-descriptive approach supported by document and thematic analysis, this research examines the convergence of diplomacy, defense modernization, and technological adaptation as instruments of national resilience. The findings reveal that Indonesia's evolving policy behavior increasingly reflects instrumental neutrality, in which defense diplomacy and multilateral cooperation enhance sovereignty without dependency. Furthermore, the adoption of Network-Centric Warfare (NCW), cyber diplomacy, and defense-industrial partnerships illustrates Indonesia's transition from moral leadership to strategic maturity. Nonetheless, challenges persist in interagency coordination, cyber vulnerability, and industrial capacity. The study concludes that integrating diplomacy and defense within a comprehensive national strategy anchored by technological innovation and human capital development is imperative for Indonesia to maintain sovereignty and influence amid global power competition. Thus, Bebas Aktif emerges not as a relic of neutrality but as a dynamic doctrine of adaptive resilience in the Indo-Pacific era.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's foreign policy, famously known as the *Bebas Aktif* (independent and active) principle, has served as the cornerstone of the nation's diplomacy since the early post-independence era. Initially conceptualized by Mohammad Hatta in 1948, the doctrine aimed to ensure that Indonesia would neither align itself with any major power bloc nor remain passive in addressing global issues. In practice, this principle reflected Indonesia's aspiration to assert

strategic autonomy while contributing actively to international peace and stability. However, in the twenty-first century characterized by rapid geopolitical realignments, the rise of asymmetric threats, and the growing intersection between diplomacy and defense the conventional interpretation of *Bebas Aktif* requires a profound redefinition.

This transformation is driven by structural shifts in the Indo-Pacific order, where geopolitical contestation increasingly intertwines with technological, economic, and informational domains. The emergence of *hybrid warfare*, cyber espionage, and gray-zone conflicts has challenged the boundaries between peace and conflict, demanding a multidimensional form of statecraft that merges diplomacy with defense innovation (Ciorciari, 2024). Within this evolving environment, Indonesia's foreign policy must no longer rely solely on moral persuasion or non-alignment but also on tangible strategic capacities, including defense-industrial partnerships, cyber resilience, and intelligence cooperation. The *Bebas Aktif* principle once symbolic of Indonesia's moral autonomy is now being reshaped into a framework of *strategic pragmatism*, where engagement, adaptation, and technological sovereignty form the new pillars of national resilience.

At the same time, Indonesia's diplomatic identity as a bridge-builder faces growing demands for measurable capability. The regional expectation for Indonesia to act as a stabilizing power within ASEAN and the wider Indo-Pacific hinges not only on its political neutrality but also on its readiness to address transnational crises from maritime insecurity to digital threats. This strategic recalibration aligns with broader middle-power behavior, in which states enhance influence by leveraging defense diplomacy, multilateral initiatives, and technological innovation without compromising autonomy (Beeson & He, 2024). Accordingly, *Bebas Aktif* now functions less as a passive doctrine of avoidance and more as an *active framework of engagement*, positioning Indonesia to shape, rather than merely respond to, the evolving dynamics of global power competition.

Recent scholarship emphasizes that Indonesia's geopolitical position at the maritime crossroads between the Indian and Pacific Oceans makes it a pivotal actor in regional stability and global supply-chain security (Laksmiana, 2023). This geostrategic location grants Indonesia both opportunities and vulnerabilities: it sits astride vital sea lanes like the Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok Straits, through which nearly 40 percent of global trade passes annually. Indonesia's maritime geography thus defines its role as both a *guardian* of connectivity and a *potential battleground* in great-power competition. The country's ability to ensure freedom of navigation and secure its vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) directly influences the economic stability of the Indo-Pacific. Yet, as power dynamics shift toward an increasingly multipolar order, the *Bebas Aktif* principle must evolve beyond its Cold War origins to address the new realities of defense modernization, cyber operations, and strategic technology competition (Sukma, 2024).

The intensification of great-power rivalry manifested through initiatives such as the AUKUS security pact, the revitalization of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), and the expanding influence of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has placed Indonesia in a delicate yet strategic position. Each of these arrangements reshapes regional balance: AUKUS amplifies defense technology cooperation among Western allies, the Quad reasserts the U.S. strategic footprint in Asia, and the BRI extends China's infrastructure diplomacy deep into the archipelago. In this environment, Indonesia faces the constant challenge of maintaining strategic neutrality without drifting toward irrelevance. The *Bebas Aktif* doctrine rooted in autonomy demands careful navigation of these power networks. Heiduk and Wacker (2023) argue that

Indonesia's strength lies in its capacity to act as a "norm entrepreneur," leveraging diplomatic flexibility to mediate competing interests while safeguarding its independence. However, this balancing act requires continuous adaptation: remaining equidistant between powers no longer guarantees stability when influence is increasingly exerted through technology, data, and digital finance rather than conventional military force.

Simultaneously, Indonesia's traditional diplomatic strength its reputation as a bridge-builder and promoter of regional peace faces mounting pressure from the need to modernize its defense posture and technological base. As Suryadinata (2023) observes, Indonesia's regional influence historically derived from moral legitimacy and leadership within ASEAN. Yet the growing sophistication of regional security challenges ranging from cyberattacks and disinformation to maritime incursions and gray-zone operations demands a tangible demonstration of capability, not just rhetoric. Diplomacy without credible defense capabilities risks appearing symbolic, while defense without diplomacy undermines Indonesia's soft-power appeal. This duality forces Jakarta to rethink the *Bebas Aktif* doctrine as a *comprehensive national strategy* one that integrates military, economic, and digital dimensions under a single policy architecture.

The modern reinterpretation of *Bebas Aktif* thus entails the adoption of *strategic pragmatism* a recalibration of foreign policy that allows Indonesia to engage deeply with multiple actors while safeguarding its sovereignty and defense interests. This pragmatism does not signify abandonment of principles, but rather a shift from ideological non-alignment to *functional autonomy*: the ability to pursue issue-based cooperation without structural dependence. Indonesia's participation in multilateral frameworks such as the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), and joint cyber resilience initiatives illustrates this evolution. As Karim (2024) argues, Indonesia's approach increasingly mirrors the behavior of "middle powers" like South Korea and India states that employ defense diplomacy not as a pathway to alliance but as an instrument of *instrumental neutrality*, leveraging cooperation while retaining strategic discretion. This nuanced approach aligns with global trends where middle powers exercise influence by acting as mediators, innovators, and standard-setters in emerging security and technology domains (Rahman, 2024).

Yet, Indonesia's path toward strategic maturity remains incomplete. The institutional separation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kemlu) and the Ministry of Defense (Kemhan) often results in fragmented policy execution and slow response to dynamic geopolitical shifts. Cyber defense, industrial collaboration, and maritime security initiatives frequently operate in silos, diluting Indonesia's diplomatic leverage. To transform *Bebas Aktif* into an integrated framework, Indonesia must cultivate whole-of-government coordination that harmonizes diplomacy, defense, and digital governance. Moreover, technological empowerment must accompany moral leadership: participation in AI governance, digital trade norms, and cyber-ethics forums can amplify Indonesia's influence far beyond conventional diplomacy. As recent analysis by Zhang (2025) indicates, the future of power in the Indo-Pacific will be defined by "networked interdependence" states that command trust in both physical and digital infrastructures will shape the next era of global governance. For Indonesia, aligning *Bebas Aktif* with such multidimensional statecraft is not an option but an imperative for preserving sovereignty amid accelerating transformation.

Moreover, the digital transformation of warfare through artificial intelligence, satellite-based surveillance, and data-driven command systems has blurred the boundaries between

diplomacy, defense, and technology policy (Kementerian Pertahanan RI, 2024). In this environment, the capacity to integrate Bebas Aktif with adaptive defense planning determines whether Indonesia remains a policy follower or becomes a strategic leader in the Indo-Pacific. The contemporary relevance of Bebas Aktif, therefore, lies not merely in neutrality, but in the capability to engage, innovate, and defend anchoring Indonesia's foreign policy within a new paradigm of comprehensive national resilience.

The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as the central stage of contemporary power competition. Intensified military modernization by China, the United States, Japan, India, and Australia, coupled with strategic initiatives such as AUKUS and the Quad, has reshaped the regional balance of power (Medcalf, 2022). For Indonesia, whose geostrategic position bridges the Indian and Pacific Oceans, this environment demands an adaptive foreign policy that integrates diplomatic flexibility with defense resilience. The traditional dichotomy between foreign affairs and defense strategy can no longer sustain national security in an era defined by cyber warfare, hybrid conflicts, and information dominance (Kearn, 2023).

A critical gap lies in Indonesia's limited operationalization of its *Bebas Aktif* policy as a functional defense strategy. While the doctrine promotes neutrality and inclusivity, it has not always translated into clear strategic behavior in addressing transnational threats, defense-industrial collaboration, or technological modernization. Scholars such as Anwar (2023) and Liff (2024) note that Southeast Asian states increasingly rely on defense diplomacy as a tool of strategic hedging balancing cooperation and competition between great powers. Yet, Indonesia's engagement remains predominantly political rather than technological or capability-driven. This creates a strategic void between normative diplomacy and the pursuit of tangible defense strength.

Furthermore, the advancement of defense technologies, particularly those associated with *Network-Centric Warfare* (NCW), artificial intelligence (AI), and autonomous systems, has redefined modern military strategy (Kania, 2023). As global defense ecosystems shift toward data-driven, interconnected warfare, Indonesia's defense diplomacy must expand beyond traditional alliances and arms procurement to encompass digital defense collaboration, cybersecurity capacity building, and dual-use technological innovation (Liu & Lim, 2022). The absence of a coherent linkage between foreign policy formulation and technological capability development weakens Indonesia's long-term strategic posture in the Indo-Pacific.

In the regional context, Indonesia's leadership within ASEAN and its promotion of the *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific* (AOIP) have demonstrated a diplomatic preference for inclusivity and non-confrontation. However, the AOIP's emphasis on normative principles such as dialogue, cooperation, and international law has not been matched with defense-oriented implementation strategies (Hayton, 2023). As a result, Indonesia's strategic influence risks being overshadowed by countries with stronger defense-industrial ecosystems. Bridging this gap requires a reinterpretation of *Bebas Aktif* not as a policy of non-alignment, but as an adaptive strategy of *active strategic autonomy* one that blends soft diplomacy with technological and defense modernization.

Existing studies tend to analyze Indonesia's foreign policy from a diplomatic or economic standpoint, while limited attention is given to its defense dimension and integration with industrial development. For instance, Rahmawati and Nugroho (2023) examined the evolution of Indonesia's non-aligned diplomacy but overlooked how defense cooperation shapes long-term national resilience. Likewise, Pratama (2024) highlighted Indonesia's regional leadership within ASEAN but did not assess the correlation between diplomacy and military readiness.

Consequently, there remains a conceptual and empirical void in understanding how Bebas Aktif can evolve as a policy framework that strengthens defense capabilities while preserving Indonesia's non-aligned identity.

This study addresses that gap by exploring how Indonesia's Bebas Aktif foreign policy can be strategically reformulated to enhance defense capability development in response to complex global and regional challenges. It argues that a redefined Bebas Aktif must not merely emphasize neutrality, but should also institutionalize cross-sector collaboration between diplomacy, defense industries, and technological innovation. By aligning foreign policy objectives with national defense modernization, Indonesia can sustain its strategic autonomy while ensuring resilience in an era of digital and asymmetric warfare.

## **METHODS**

This research adopts a qualitative–descriptive methodology to analyze how Indonesia's Bebas Aktif foreign policy can be reformulated to strengthen national defense capabilities in the context of the Indo-Pacific's shifting security dynamics. The qualitative approach is appropriate because it emphasizes the exploration of meanings, interpretations, and contextual relationships within Indonesia's foreign and defense policy framework rather than statistical generalization (Creswell & Poth, 2023). The study aims to understand the evolving logic of foreign policy adaptation, strategic autonomy, and defense diplomacy through the interpretation of official documents, policy papers, and scholarly analyses.

### **1. Research Design**

The study uses a constructivist paradigm, which assumes that social and political realities are constructed through discourse, interaction, and institutional behavior (Baxter & Jack, 2022). This perspective is particularly relevant to the *Bebas Aktif* doctrine, which has evolved through Indonesia's historical engagement with global power structures. The constructivist lens allows the researcher to assess how changing perceptions of neutrality, autonomy, and strategic engagement are reflected in Indonesia's foreign policy language, defense planning, and diplomatic behavior. The research design follows three analytical stages:

1. Contextual Mapping, to identify the evolution of Indonesia's *Bebas Aktif* policy since the post–Cold War era.
2. Comparative Assessment, to contrast Indonesia's diplomatic and defense strategies with those of similar middle powers such as India, South Korea, and Finland.
3. Integrative Analysis, to propose a conceptual model linking foreign policy adaptation with defense capability enhancement, emphasizing networked defense systems, cyber diplomacy, and multilateral cooperation.

This multi-stage design ensures analytical depth and coherence in tracing the connection between political intent and defense transformation.

### **2. Data Collection**

Data were collected through documentary research (library research), focusing on both primary and secondary sources. Primary data consist of official documents such as the White Paper on Defense 2024, the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN 2020–2024), and Ministry of Foreign Affairs annual reports. These materials provide insights into the institutional direction and policy discourse surrounding Indonesia’s strategic posture.

Secondary data include peer-reviewed journal articles, think-tank reports, and international policy papers published between 2020 and 2025 by institutions such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), and Lowy Institute. The inclusion of both domestic and international sources enables triangulation between Indonesia’s self-perception and external evaluations of its policy effectiveness (Bowen, 2022).

The selection criteria for all data sources are based on relevance, reliability, and recency. Each document must (1) explicitly address Indonesia’s foreign or defense policy, (2) analyze its strategic implications in the Indo-Pacific, and (3) be published by an academic or governmental institution. Sources that rely on opinion journalism or unscholarly commentary were excluded to ensure analytical rigor and factual accuracy.

### 3. Data Analysis Technique

The study applies content analysis and thematic analysis as its main analytical tools. Content analysis was used to extract recurring patterns, discursive trends, and conceptual frameworks from the textual data (Krippendorff, 2024). Specifically, the analysis focused on identifying how Indonesia’s foreign policy documents articulate terms such as “strategic autonomy,” “non-alignment,” “defense cooperation,” and “technological modernization.”

The coding process was conducted manually through iterative reading and conceptual categorization, emphasizing three thematic clusters:

1. Diplomatic Orientation – the evolution of Indonesia’s strategic neutrality and participation in multilateral institutions (e.g., ASEAN, AOIP, UN Peacekeeping).
2. Defense Modernization and Technology – references to innovation, cybersecurity, and industrial cooperation under DEFEND ID.
3. Strategic Partnerships – cooperation patterns with key partners (Korea, Japan, France, and India) for defense capability enhancement.
4. The second stage of analysis used thematic synthesis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) to connect the identified patterns into broader conceptual insights. Themes were clustered into three analytical domains: (1) *policy transformation*, (2) *capability integration*, and (3) *strategic resilience*. Each theme was then cross-referenced with empirical evidence from defense agreements, policy papers, and previous academic research.

### 4. Validity and Reliability

To ensure credibility, this study applies triangulation of data sources and peer-debriefing techniques. Triangulation was achieved by comparing findings from academic journals, government documents, and think-tank analyses to minimize interpretive bias. Peer debriefing was conducted by consulting senior scholars specializing in international relations and defense studies, ensuring that theoretical assumptions and empirical findings align with current scholarly standards (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2023).

Reliability was strengthened through a systematic coding protocol and audit trail documentation. Each document was recorded with metadata publication date, author affiliation, and institutional origin to allow transparent cross-verification. This process ensures that the interpretation of Indonesia's foreign policy evolution can be independently validated by future researchers.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Indonesia's *Bebas Aktif* foreign policy reformulation reveals a multi-dimensional transformation that bridges diplomacy, defense, and technological innovation. Building upon the qualitative-descriptive approach and thematic coding outlined in the previous section, the findings present an integrated view of how Indonesia's foreign policy behavior is evolving in response to the Indo-Pacific's shifting strategic landscape. The results demonstrate that while *Bebas Aktif* continues to serve as a normative compass guiding Indonesia's diplomatic conduct, its operational interpretation increasingly reflects strategic pragmatism, defense cooperation, and digital modernization.

Thematically, the study identifies three core patterns that encapsulate the doctrine's ongoing transformation: (1) the redefinition of neutrality into strategic autonomy, (2) the rise of defense diplomacy as an extension of foreign engagement, and (3) the incorporation of technological and cyber dimensions into national resilience. These patterns collectively signify a paradigmatic shift from policy idealism to strategic functionalism, where Indonesia's diplomatic initiatives are increasingly aligned with measurable defense capabilities.

Historically, *Bebas Aktif* was formulated in an era when international politics was defined by bipolar rivalry and ideological competition. The twenty-first century, however, introduces new forms of contestation ranging from information warfare and supply-chain vulnerabilities to AI-driven surveillance and cyber coercion (Raska & Bitzinger, 2023). This evolving threat environment renders traditional diplomacy insufficient for protecting sovereignty. As a result, Indonesia's foreign policy institutions have gradually expanded their scope to encompass defense-industrial collaboration, cybersecurity governance, and strategic partnerships that transcend ideological boundaries. This process represents what Ciorciari (2024) describes as "functional alignment without alliance" a diplomatic model that combines political flexibility with operational depth.

The results also highlight that Indonesia's foreign policy is no longer purely reactive to external pressures. Instead, it demonstrates an emerging capacity for *strategic agenda-setting*. By spearheading initiatives such as the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), Indonesia has positioned itself as a regional norm entrepreneur advocating for inclusivity and a rules-based order (Khairul & Rahman, 2024). Yet, the challenge lies in translating normative commitments into tangible defense and security outcomes. The empirical data indicate that Indonesia's engagement remains disproportionately diplomatic, with limited institutional synchronization between foreign policy decision-making and defense implementation.

Through the content and thematic analyses applied to official documents and academic sources, three interlocking domains were identified as crucial to understanding the modern application of *Bebas Aktif*:

1. Diplomatic Orientation and Institutional Behavior, referring to Indonesia's evolving participation in regional and multilateral mechanisms.

2. Defense Modernization and Industrial Partnerships, involving initiatives that promote defense self-reliance, including the DEFEND ID consortium and international technology transfer.
3. Technological Integration and Cyber Strategy, covering the adoption of NCW, AI, and cyber diplomacy as tools for sovereignty and influence.

These domains form the structural foundation of the results and discussion section. They serve not only to explain Indonesia's strategic transformation but also to assess how effectively policy intent is translated into defense capability.

The findings further reveal that Indonesia's Bebas Aktif principle now operates within a context of polycentric power competition, where the traditional binary between East and West has been replaced by a complex network of interdependencies. The Indo-Pacific is no longer defined solely by maritime boundaries but also by digital corridors, infrastructure connectivity, and information networks (Medcalf, 2023). Indonesia's approach neither confrontational nor subordinate illustrates a nuanced attempt to maintain equilibrium in this multipolar environment. It leverages diplomacy as a platform for technological cooperation, intelligence exchange, and the development of regional security norms.

Moreover, the study underscores that Indonesia's evolving foreign policy has begun to exhibit the characteristics of what scholars term a "middle-power strategy." Such strategy combines the moral authority of non-alignment with the pragmatic pursuit of influence through coalition-building, economic diplomacy, and technological engagement (Beeson & He, 2024). The middle-power framework situates Indonesia not as a passive observer but as an active stabilizer capable of shaping the Indo-Pacific's security architecture through persuasion and partnership rather than coercion.

The qualitative evidence gathered from defense policy documents and international analyses also indicates that the Bebas Aktif doctrine increasingly reflects the logic of comprehensive security a concept that integrates political, economic, environmental, and technological resilience under one policy umbrella. As Putra and Mahendra (2024) observe, Indonesia's current policy formulation emphasizes not only traditional deterrence but also societal preparedness and digital defense. This suggests that the *Bebas Aktif* principle has matured into a holistic strategy encompassing both state-centric and transnational dimensions.

In the course of analysis, three significant tensions emerged within Indonesia's foreign policy architecture:

1. Normative–Operational Tension, between moral leadership and practical defense engagement.
2. Civil–Military Coordination Gap, between diplomatic institutions and defense bureaucracy.
3. Technological–Ethical Dilemma, concerning the use of AI and surveillance technologies within democratic governance frameworks.

These tensions are not unique to Indonesia; they mirror broader middle-power challenges across the Indo-Pacific. Yet, Indonesia's unique historical commitment to independence and multilateralism provides it with an advantage in crafting adaptive solutions. Addressing these tensions will determine whether the reformulated *Bebas Aktif* doctrine achieves long-term sustainability.

Importantly, the results emphasize that the link between foreign policy and defense capability is now mediated by technology. Indonesia's ability to modernize its defense sector, manage cyber threats, and participate in data-driven intelligence networks directly shapes its diplomatic leverage. As such, the *Bebas Aktif* doctrine must be reinterpreted through the lens of *technological sovereignty* the capacity to maintain strategic autonomy within global digital ecosystems (Huang & Kim, 2023).

The upcoming discussion therefore explores how these empirical findings align with theoretical frameworks of strategic autonomy, defense diplomacy, and comprehensive security. It elaborates on how Indonesia's *Bebas Aktif* evolves from a Cold War-era doctrine into a twenty-first-century strategy that integrates political principle, military capability, and technological advancement. The analysis proceeds in four stages:

1. A historical reinterpretation of the *Bebas Aktif* principle in the Indo-Pacific context.
2. An examination of defense diplomacy as a policy instrument bridging external and internal security.
3. An assessment of network-centric and cyber capabilities as new dimensions of foreign policy.
4. A critical discussion of institutional and structural challenges in operationalizing this strategic transformation.

Collectively, these sections reveal how Indonesia's foreign policy is navigating the delicate balance between principle and pragmatism, autonomy and cooperation, and sovereignty and interdependence. The discussion not only situates Indonesia within regional geopolitics but also highlights its potential to lead norm development and technological innovation in Southeast Asia.

Ultimately, the empirical synthesis underscores that the success of *Bebas Aktif* in the twenty-first century will depend on Indonesia's capacity to institutionalize its adaptive characteristics transforming moral non-alignment into operational readiness, and translating diplomatic capital into defense resilience. The discussion that follows therefore articulates both the progress and the persisting gaps within Indonesia's strategic transformation, offering insights relevant to policymakers, scholars, and defense planners seeking to understand the future trajectory of Indonesia's international role.

### **1. Evolution of Indonesia's *Bebas Aktif* Doctrine in the Contemporary Context**

Indonesia's *Bebas Aktif* foreign policy has undergone a profound transformation since its inception in 1948. Initially conceptualized to preserve Indonesia's sovereignty and avoid entanglement in bipolar power rivalry, the doctrine served as both a moral and strategic compass during the Cold War. However, the post-Cold War environment, and more recently, the emergence of the Indo-Pacific concept, have redefined the logic of foreign policy from ideological neutrality to strategic engagement (Leifer, 2023).

Indonesia's position as a maritime nation at the confluence of two major oceans grants it strategic depth but also exposes it to complex security dynamics. The shifting regional order characterized by U.S.–China rivalry, the proliferation of advanced military technology, and the securitization of supply chains demands that Indonesia recalibrate the *Bebas Aktif* doctrine into a more pragmatic framework. This evolution aligns with what Acharya (2022) describes as the “post-non-aligned era,” in which middle powers like Indonesia must engage selectively while maintaining strategic autonomy.

The contemporary interpretation of *Bebas Aktif* is therefore not merely a continuation of neutrality but a reflection of strategic flexibility. Through mechanisms such as ASEAN, the East Asia Summit (EAS), and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), Indonesia seeks to reinforce a rules-based order that safeguards its autonomy without direct confrontation. As Anwar (2024) argues, Indonesia's diplomatic behavior has shifted from reactive balancing to active strategic shaping, where defense diplomacy and industrial cooperation now underpin political engagements.

This transformation is also visible in the national strategic documents. The Defense White Paper (2024) explicitly integrates foreign policy objectives with defense modernization priorities, identifying *regional stability through cooperation* as a core instrument of deterrence. This shift indicates that Indonesia no longer perceives diplomacy and defense as separate domains but as mutually reinforcing pillars of national resilience.

In summary, the evolution of *Bebas Aktif* illustrates Indonesia's effort to remain consistent with its foundational principles while adapting to contemporary realities. Rather than rejecting power politics, Indonesia seeks to redefine engagement through inclusivity, technological partnership, and regional leadership.

## **2. Defense Diplomacy as a Strategic Instrument of Foreign Policy**

One of the most visible manifestations of Indonesia's evolving foreign policy is the rise of defense diplomacy the use of military cooperation, training, and strategic dialogue as tools of foreign engagement. Defense diplomacy allows Indonesia to advance its national interests without relying on coercive power, a method increasingly used by countries that practice *strategic hedging* (Tan, 2023).

Indonesia's defense diplomacy has expanded considerably since 2010, with over 40 bilateral and multilateral defense cooperation agreements currently active. These include partnerships with South Korea (KFX/IFX fighter jet project), France (Scorpène-class submarine co-production), and Japan (maritime domain awareness and cyber cooperation). The Defense Industrial Policy 2023–2030 (Kemhan RI, 2023) identifies these engagements as essential to achieving *strategic autonomy* a state in which Indonesia's defense readiness no longer depends entirely on foreign suppliers.

Defense diplomacy also reinforces Indonesia's role within ASEAN's security architecture. Through the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), Indonesia promotes the exchange of best practices, joint exercises, and confidence-building measures. These multilateral mechanisms strengthen Indonesia's diplomatic posture and reduce the risk of escalation in contested maritime zones such as the Natuna Islands.

However, the implementation of defense diplomacy is not without challenges. According to Hamid (2023), the lack of policy synchronization between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs often weakens the coherence of Indonesia's external messaging. While foreign policy emphasizes neutrality, defense initiatives sometimes signal strategic alignment creating interpretive ambiguity. This demonstrates the urgent need for a whole-of-government approach where diplomacy, defense, and industry operate under a unified strategic narrative.

In this sense, defense diplomacy functions as both a policy tool and a strategic buffer balancing the pursuit of security cooperation with the preservation of autonomy. As Liff and Rahman (2024) note, Indonesia's participation in joint training with the United States and Japan

has improved its maritime capabilities without compromising its independent stance, embodying the essence of *Bebas Aktif* in practice.

### 3. Integration of Technology and Network-Centric Warfare (NCW)

The third dimension of Indonesia's evolving foreign and defense policy lies in the technological transformation of its military doctrine. Modern defense capability is increasingly defined by connectivity, information superiority, and decision-making speed principles that underpin *Network-Centric Warfare (NCW)* (Almeida & Zhang, 2024).

Indonesia's defense modernization roadmap, as outlined in the *Defense Industry Transformation Agenda 2025–2035* (Kemhan RI, 2024), emphasizes the integration of digital command-and-control systems, satellite-based intelligence, and cybersecurity. These initiatives demonstrate an effort to align Indonesia's defense diplomacy with the global shift toward information-driven warfare.

Partnerships with South Korea and Turkey have been pivotal in this regard. For example, the joint development of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and combat management systems reflects a growing emphasis on interoperable platforms. Moreover, Indonesia's collaboration with France's Thales Group in radar and surveillance technology contributes to maritime situational awareness in the Natuna Sea a critical area for asserting sovereignty.

NCW is not merely a military upgrade but a strategic reconfiguration of how Indonesia perceives security. Through AI-assisted surveillance and data-sharing protocols, Indonesia can transition from reactive defense to predictive threat assessment. However, this digital evolution also introduces new vulnerabilities. Cyberattacks targeting defense infrastructure have increased by nearly 30% between 2021 and 2024, according to data from Badan Siber dan Sandi Negara (BSSN, 2024). This necessitates a dual-track strategy: enhancing cyber resilience while institutionalizing *cyber diplomacy* to manage regional norms on digital warfare.

Furthermore, NCW requires cross-sectoral human resource development. The integration of defense engineers, data scientists, and cyber analysts into defense policy frameworks exemplifies Indonesia's effort to bridge its technological and diplomatic ecosystems. As Singh (2023) highlights, states that link technological innovation to foreign policy agendas gain both deterrence capability and diplomatic leverage an outcome Indonesia is progressively achieving through hybrid defense diplomacy.

### 4. Challenges in Operationalizing the *Bebas Aktif* Doctrine

Despite progress, several challenges continue to constrain the practical realization of Indonesia's modernized *Bebas Aktif* doctrine.

1. **Institutional Fragmentation.** The dual management of foreign policy and defense policy often leads to bureaucratic inefficiency. Coordination gaps between Kemlu (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and Kemhan (Ministry of Defense) hinder strategic coherence. As Yani (2023) notes, Indonesia still lacks a centralized national security council capable of harmonizing diplomacy and defense decisions a structure already institutionalized in countries like Japan and South Korea.
2. **Limited Defense Industrial Base.** Although the DEFEND ID consortium represents a major step forward, Indonesia's defense industrial ecosystem remains constrained by funding, R&D capacity, and export competitiveness. According to the Global Defense Industry Report (2024), Indonesia's defense exports account for less than 0.2% of global

- arms trade, far below comparable economies such as Turkey (1.8%) or South Korea (3.1%). Strengthening domestic production requires greater investment in joint ventures, intellectual property management, and supply-chain localization.
3. **Technological and Cyber Vulnerabilities.** The increasing reliance on digital systems and AI-based platforms exposes Indonesia to sophisticated cyber threats. The Asia-Pacific Cybersecurity Index (2024) ranks Indonesia 7th in ASEAN, below Singapore and Malaysia. Without integrated cyber doctrines and interagency coordination, NCW adoption could create operational blind spots rather than strategic advantages.
  4. **Diplomatic Ambiguity.** While Indonesia promotes inclusivity and non-alignment, its selective partnerships sometimes create perceptions of favoritism. For instance, stronger engagement with Western partners in technology transfer could alienate non-Western counterparts. This highlights the challenge of maintaining equilibrium in great-power relations a test of *Bebas Aktif*'s enduring flexibility.

### 5. Reformulating *Bebas Aktif* for Strategic Resilience

To address these challenges, Indonesia must reconceptualize *Bebas Aktif* through an integrative defense-diplomacy framework. This entails several key strategies:

**Institutional Integration:** Establish a *National Strategic Coordination Council* linking foreign affairs, defense, and industrial policy. Such an entity would ensure unified national security decision-making and crisis coordination.

1. **Defense Industrial Reform:** Expand the mandate of DEFEND ID to include start-up incubation, dual-use technology R&D, and regional export promotion. This reform aligns with Indonesia's vision of becoming a middle power with technological autonomy by 2045 (Kemenperin, 2025).
2. **Digital and Cyber Diplomacy:** Institutionalize *cyber dialogue platforms* under ASEAN frameworks to shape regional norms on data protection, AI ethics, and digital deterrence. As Wijayanto (2024) argues, states that lead in cyber norm-building gain both diplomatic legitimacy and strategic influence.
3. **Human Capital Modernization:** Integrate AI, robotics, and systems engineering curricula into defense universities and civil-military institutions. This builds a technologically literate defense community aligned with NCW requirements.
4. **Strategic Partnerships 2.0:** Shift from traditional defense procurement toward co-development partnerships emphasizing intellectual property sharing and sustainability. This model, used successfully in South Korea's defense industrialization, offers a blueprint for Indonesia's long-term autonomy.

### 6. Synthesis: Diplomacy–Defense Convergence as a Strategic Imperative

The convergence of diplomacy and defense marks one of the most critical strategic transformations in Indonesia's modern statecraft. For decades, national security and foreign policy were treated as distinct spheres the former confined to the Ministry of Defense and the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), and the latter guided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the moral compass of the *Bebas Aktif* principle. This institutional dualism reflected the Cold War logic, in which diplomacy served as the instrument of peace and defense as the guarantor of sovereignty. However, in the twenty-first century, this separation has become increasingly untenable. The boundaries between military and diplomatic functions have blurred as global security is now defined by interdependence among diplomacy, technology, economics,

and information systems. Indonesia's ability to remain sovereign and influential depends on its capacity to integrate these domains into a coherent and adaptive strategic framework capable of addressing the multidimensional nature of modern threats.

The evolution of warfare and state competition has redefined how nations project power and influence. Traditional military dominance is no longer sufficient; influence now emerges from the ability to coordinate diplomacy, defense, and technology under a unified national strategy (Nye, 2023). Hybrid conflicts combining cyberattacks, disinformation, and economic coercion require synchronized responses that transcend bureaucratic silos. Indonesia's policy community increasingly recognizes this reality. The White Paper on Defense 2024 explicitly calls for the "harmonization of external diplomacy and national defense" as a prerequisite for achieving resilience in the Indo-Pacific. This harmonization entails the creation of shared objectives between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Kementerian Luar Negeri*) and the Ministry of Defense (*Kementerian Pertahanan*), ensuring that diplomatic engagement supports defense modernization and that security strategies align with Indonesia's broader foreign policy vision.

Historically, *Bebas Aktif* emphasized neutrality and moral leadership in international relations. Today, it is evolving into a framework for strategic collaboration, where defense diplomacy plays a central role in sustaining Indonesia's autonomy. Through multilateral forums such as the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus), Indonesia actively promotes regional dialogue and practical cooperation in counterterrorism, cyber defense, and maritime security. These initiatives reflect the country's commitment to confidence-building and collective security, while simultaneously strengthening its own defense capabilities. Indonesia's leadership in UN peacekeeping missions and humanitarian assistance further exemplifies the merging of diplomatic credibility with operational readiness turning defense activities into tools of diplomacy and symbols of regional stability (Rahman, 2024).

The technological dimension further accelerates this convergence. The rise of *Network-Centric Warfare (NCW)* and artificial intelligence-based defense systems requires strong international partnerships, both for capability development and for norm creation in digital governance. Indonesia's collaborations with South Korea, Japan, and France in defense technology development underscore this interdependence. These partnerships are not merely transactional; they serve as platforms for Indonesia to exercise *technological diplomacy* a form of engagement where innovation, cybersecurity, and industrial cooperation become instruments of influence (Munandar, 2024). By integrating defense industry policy with foreign cooperation, Indonesia diversifies its technological sources, reduces dependency, and reinforces its strategic autonomy.

At the same time, the fusion of diplomacy and defense redefines the concept of national power. No longer confined to military capacity or diplomatic rhetoric, power in the contemporary era derives from institutional coherence and the ability to translate policy intent into measurable capability. This requires breaking down bureaucratic barriers, enhancing civil-military communication, and embedding diplomatic considerations into defense planning. Indonesia's current challenge is to cultivate what Koga and Katsumata (2023) describe as a *comprehensive security culture* a governance ecosystem that unites political, economic, and defense sectors under a shared vision of resilience. This paradigm shift demands not only policy innovation but also educational and organizational reform: diplomats must understand security strategy, while military leaders must grasp international law, negotiation, and cross-cultural engagement.

In practical terms, this convergence allows Indonesia to project stability through cooperation rather than coercion. It legitimizes defense modernization by framing it within transparent and multilateral mechanisms, reducing regional suspicion and reinforcing Indonesia's long-standing reputation as a peaceful yet capable actor. The integration of diplomacy and defense thus transforms *Bebas Aktif* from a moral ideal into a strategic doctrine of adaptive resilience a living policy that enables Indonesia to navigate complex global dynamics while safeguarding its independence. As power competition intensifies in the Indo-Pacific, Indonesia's success will depend not on isolation or alignment but on its strategic agility: the ability to merge diplomacy, defense, and technology into a single, flexible architecture of national strength.

### 6.1 The Logic of Convergence

At the conceptual level, diplomacy and defense are complementary mechanisms for achieving the same goal: the protection of national interests and the preservation of state autonomy. Diplomacy secures legitimacy and influence through persuasion, while defense ensures credibility and deterrence through capability. When coordinated effectively, the two create a virtuous cycle of "cooperative deterrence" a condition in which peace is maintained not by isolation or military superiority, but by the credible demonstration of readiness, partnership, and trust (Storey & Chong, 2024).

Indonesia's *Bebas Aktif* doctrine provides the normative foundation for this integration. Its independent dimension safeguards national sovereignty and freedom of maneuver, while its active dimension mandates participation in shaping regional order. Convergence thus transforms *Bebas Aktif* from a static moral statement into a dynamic strategic practice. Neutrality is reinterpreted as *active resilience* a state of balance where Indonesia simultaneously engages with multiple partners, builds deterrence through transparency, and mitigates dependency by diversifying cooperation.

### 6.2 Institutional and Strategic Manifestations

Empirically, the process of convergence is reflected in Indonesia's evolving institutional behavior. The Defense White Paper (2024) explicitly calls for "*integrated policy harmonization between diplomacy and defense*" as a prerequisite for national resilience. The document outlines how defense diplomacy is no longer peripheral but central to Indonesia's international engagement, encompassing military exchanges, defense-industry cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and capacity-building in disaster relief.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has likewise incorporated defense priorities into its Foreign Policy Vision 2045, identifying technology transfer, cybersecurity cooperation, and maritime security as key pillars of Indonesia's external relations. Joint task forces between Kemlu, Kemhan, and state-owned defense enterprises under DEFEND ID now operate as hybrid platforms for both negotiation and implementation. This reflects a structural departure from the old paradigm of sequential coordination toward a model of simultaneous policy formulation.

At the operational level, Indonesia's participation in ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) exemplifies this synthesis. Through joint maritime exercises, counter-terrorism drills, and peacekeeping training, Indonesia leverages defense collaboration to reinforce diplomatic credibility. By exercising leadership in non-traditional security domains such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) Indonesia projects an image of a

*civilizational bridge*: a state capable of uniting diverse actors through cooperative defense initiatives (Rahman & Subramaniam, 2023).

### 6.3 Technology as the Catalyst of Convergence

Technology has emerged as the principal catalyst accelerating the diplomacy–defense nexus. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI), space-based surveillance, and digital communications has blurred the boundaries between civilian and military innovation. Defense diplomacy now extends beyond physical exercises to include cyber dialogue, data-sharing frameworks, and joint research on dual-use technologies.

Indonesia’s collaboration with France’s Thales Group, South Korea’s Hanwha Systems, and Japan’s NEC Corporation illustrates how defense-industrial partnerships serve both technological and diplomatic purposes. These relationships enhance Indonesia’s interoperability with regional and global partners while transferring knowledge that strengthens domestic industry. Simultaneously, participation in multilateral cyber forums such as the ASEAN Cybersecurity Cooperation Strategy (2023 – 2030) positions Indonesia as an advocate for digital sovereignty and ethical AI governance.

This technological diplomacy complements the ongoing transition toward Network-Centric Warfare (NCW). By adopting interoperable communication architectures and AI-driven threat analysis, Indonesia not only modernizes its defense posture but also gains a seat in the emerging global dialogue on information warfare norms. As Nugraha (2024) observes, “digital defense cooperation is the new diplomacy of trust,” where credibility derives from transparency in data protection and responsible innovation.

### 6.4 Theoretical Implications: From Dualism to Synergy

From a theoretical standpoint, the diplomacy–defense convergence challenges the classical dichotomy that separates *soft power* and *hard power*. Indonesia’s evolving strategy demonstrates that influence in the Indo-Pacific is achieved through smart power, the purposeful combination of persuasion, legitimacy, and capability (Nye, 2023).

The soft components of *Bebas Aktif* dialogue, inclusivity, and moral legitimacy remain essential, but they gain operational depth only when reinforced by credible defense capabilities. Conversely, defense initiatives achieve legitimacy and sustainability when embedded in transparent diplomatic frameworks. This bidirectional relationship aligns with contemporary scholarship on *comprehensive security*, which views national strength as an ecosystem of mutually reinforcing dimensions rather than a hierarchy of instruments (Koga & Katsumata, 2023).

The synergy also redefines Indonesia’s international identity. Rather than oscillating between great-power influences, Indonesia projects itself as a “stabilizing middle power” a state that mediates, moderates, and modernizes simultaneously. By merging diplomacy and defense, Indonesia transforms its long-standing role as a bridge between civilizations into a strategic function: maintaining equilibrium among competing powers while safeguarding its technological and territorial integrity.

### 6.5 Strategic Benefits and Risks

The benefits of this convergence are substantial. First, it enhances policy coherence, allowing Indonesia to pursue external initiatives that are immediately supported by defense readiness. When foreign policy priorities are synchronized with military planning and

technological capability, strategic messaging becomes more credible and consistent. Second, it improves interoperability with partners and within the ASEAN framework, thereby amplifying Indonesia's influence in regional security governance. Shared exercises, coordinated maritime patrols, and cyber capacity-building programs strengthen both Indonesia's defense competence and its diplomatic reputation as a reliable regional actor. Third, convergence strengthens crisis management capacity; Indonesia's experience in coordinating humanitarian operations during natural disasters such as the 2018 Lombok earthquake and 2022 Natuna evacuations demonstrates how military assets can be diplomatically leveraged for regional goodwill and soft power projection.

However, several risks accompany these advantages. Over-militarization of foreign policy could erode the moral capital historically associated with *Bebas Aktif*, a principle that has long differentiated Indonesia's diplomacy through its commitment to peaceful engagement. Excessive dependence on imported technology may create structural vulnerabilities in supply chains, leading to strategic exposure to cyber espionage and foreign surveillance (Kurniawan, 2024). Moreover, limited civilian oversight in defense diplomacy risks blurring accountability, generating perceptions of militarized diplomacy inconsistent with Indonesia's constitutional mandate to "participate in maintaining world peace." To mitigate these risks, Indonesia must institutionalize civil-military transparency, strengthen legislative review mechanisms, and invest in domestic innovation to reduce external dependencies. In doing so, convergence can remain a force multiplier for sovereignty anchored in democratic accountability and technological self-reliance rather than power projection.

## **6.6 Diplomacy–Defense Convergence in Regional Practice**

Comparatively, Indonesia's approach mirrors the "whole-of-government" strategies adopted by other Indo-Pacific middle powers such as South Korea, India, and Australia. Each of these states integrates diplomatic engagement with defense industrialization to navigate great-power rivalry. Indonesia's unique contribution lies in framing this integration through moral pragmatism maintaining neutrality while participating actively in confidence-building measures.

Indonesia's peacekeeping deployments under the UN banner further exemplify convergence in practice. Participation in missions in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has strengthened Indonesia's international profile as a contributor to global security. The experiences gained from these missions feed back into national defense reform and enhance the professionalism of the TNI. Thus, diplomacy and defense form a feedback loop in which international engagement fuels domestic modernization, and vice versa.

## **6.7 Toward an Integrated Strategic Culture**

The ultimate expression of convergence is the emergence of an integrated strategic culture a mindset shared across diplomatic, military, and industrial institutions that prioritizes collaboration over compartmentalization. Building such a culture requires reforms in education, bureaucracy, and inter-agency coordination. The establishment of joint programs between the Indonesian Defense University (Unhan RI) and the Foreign Ministry's Policy Planning Center demonstrates an encouraging trend toward cultivating dual-competence professionals who understand both global politics and strategic technology.

In the long term, Indonesia's ability to sustain sovereignty amid multipolar competition will depend less on neutrality per se and more on strategic agility the capacity to reconfigure

alliances, technologies, and doctrines in real time without compromising national principles. Strategic agility converts the traditional notion of *Bebas Aktif* from a passive avoidance of alignment into an *active management of complexity*.

## 6.8 Conclusion of the Synthesis

The diplomacy–defense convergence embodies Indonesia’s evolution from normative leadership to strategic maturity. It represents a recalibration of power where moral legitimacy, technological capability, and policy coordination coexist symbiotically. Unlike major powers that rely on coercive instruments, Indonesia derives influence from its ability to combine credibility with trust to build deterrence through cooperation and to assert independence through engagement. This transformation illustrates Indonesia’s recognition that diplomacy alone is insufficient in the face of modern multidimensional threats. True stability emerges from an equilibrium between persuasion and preparedness, between principled neutrality and operational strength.

In essence, the *Bebas Aktif* doctrine in its modern form is no longer a slogan of neutrality but a framework of national resilience. It defines Indonesia not by what it avoids but by what it enables: collective security, equitable technology access, and inclusive regional governance. The doctrine’s evolution reflects a shift from a moral to a *strategic universalism*, in which Indonesia’s diplomacy seeks to construct a fair and balanced regional order rather than to merely mediate among competing powers. By anchoring defense modernization within diplomatic ethics, Indonesia demonstrates that strategic ambition and moral consistency can coexist.

Moreover, this convergence underscores Indonesia’s growing role as an architect of cooperative security. Through initiatives such as the *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)*, peacekeeping participation, and defense-industrial partnerships, Indonesia contributes to shaping regional norms that prioritize stability over confrontation. This role aligns with its aspiration to function as a “bridge of civilizations,” where peacebuilding, capacity enhancement, and mutual respect replace deterrence-based hierarchies. The integration of defense diplomacy into Indonesia’s broader foreign policy agenda has therefore expanded its strategic vocabulary from “non-alignment” to “adaptive alignment,” emphasizing flexibility without dependency.

The synthesis also highlights the strategic centrality of technological diplomacy. As artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities, and unmanned systems reshape global defense ecosystems, Indonesia’s success will hinge on its ability to combine innovation with responsible governance. The state’s engagement in regional cyber dialogues and AI ethics frameworks illustrates a forward-looking understanding that sovereignty in the twenty-first century extends into the digital realm. Technological collaboration, when embedded in diplomatic trust, becomes both a shield and a bridge protecting national interests while enabling regional cooperation. Thus, Indonesia’s pursuit of technological self-reliance through DEFEND ID and foreign partnerships signals not militarization, but modernization anchored in openness and accountability.

Finally, the diplomacy–defense convergence affirms that Indonesia’s strategic identity rests on its capacity for adaptive leadership. Rather than positioning itself as a passive recipient of global shifts, Indonesia actively shapes its environment through multi-vector engagement. It exemplifies how middle powers can sustain autonomy by cultivating a balance between deterrence and dialogue, capability and credibility. The durability of this model will depend on continued policy coherence, cross-sectoral collaboration, and investment in knowledge-based security. If maintained, Indonesia’s convergence of diplomacy and defense will stand as a

blueprint for strategic resilience proving that power in the Indo-Pacific need not be defined by dominance, but by wisdom, innovation, and integrity in statecraft.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Indonesia's Bebas Aktif doctrine remains a central foundation of national foreign policy, but its relevance in the twenty-first century depends on its ability to evolve from a principle of non-alignment into a doctrine of strategic autonomy. In the context of multipolar rivalry, technological disruption, cyber threats, and Indo-Pacific security competition, Bebas Aktif must be redefined as an adaptive strategic framework that combines independence, pragmatism, defense modernization, and multi-vector diplomacy.

The study finds that diplomacy and defense are increasingly interconnected. Bebas Aktif provides the normative foundation, while defense diplomacy functions as its operational instrument. Indonesia's participation in defense-industrial cooperation, cybersecurity partnerships, multilateral exercises, and Indo-Pacific initiatives reflects a shift from passive neutrality toward active strategic participation. However, this transformation remains constrained by fragmented coordination between foreign policy, defense planning, cyber strategy, and defense-industrial development.

A key recommendation is the establishment of a National Security Coordination Council to harmonize the roles of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, defense industry, cyber institutions, and other strategic actors. Such institutional integration is necessary to ensure that Indonesia's external commitments align with internal defense objectives and long-term sovereignty goals.

Technological modernization is also identified as a crucial pillar of contemporary Bebas Aktif. The development of Network-Centric Warfare, AI-driven command systems, unmanned platforms, cyber defense infrastructure, and secure digital communication must be supported by domestic research, human capital development, and structured knowledge-transfer partnerships. Technological mastery should not be treated merely as procurement, but as a form of diplomacy and sovereignty.

The study further emphasizes the importance of cyber diplomacy, defense-industrial reform, and geoeconomic strategy. Institutions such as DEFEND ID could strengthen Indonesia's autonomy if supported by intellectual property protection, procurement reform, innovation incentives, and long-term industrial planning. At the regional level, Indonesia must translate the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific into practical security mechanisms, including cyber task forces, maritime domain awareness networks, and multilateral training hubs.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the study of middle-power foreign policy adaptation by showing how a long-standing diplomatic doctrine can be recontextualized to address modern strategic challenges. Ultimately, Bebas Aktif should no longer be understood merely as a moral compass or historical legacy, but as a living doctrine of strategic resilience. Its future relevance will depend on Indonesia's ability to harmonize independence with interdependence, principle with pragmatism, and diplomacy with defense in order to strengthen sovereignty, technological capability, and regional influence.

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#### CATATAN : KESIMPULAN MOHON DITULIS RINGKAS

1. Judul jelas, ringkas, dan mampu mencerminkan fokus penelitian sehingga menarik perhatian pembaca.
2. Abstrak ditulis padat, memberikan gambaran menyeluruh tentang tujuan, metode, hasil, dan kesimpulan sehingga memudahkan pembaca memahami inti penelitian.
3. Pendahuluan menyajikan latar belakang yang kuat, relevan, serta menunjukkan urgensi penelitian.
4. Metode dijelaskan sistematis, detail, dan transparan sehingga penelitian dapat dipahami.
5. Hasil dan pembahasan disajikan logis, dengan analisis mendalam yang menghubungkan temuan dengan teori dan penelitian terdahulu.
6. **Kesimpulan mohon diringkas sesederhana mungkin.**
7. Daftar pustaka lengkap, relevan, dan menggunakan sumber terpercaya, memperkuat validitas penelitian.